



## JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

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# REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

For business meeting on July 18–19, 2019

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**Title**

Judicial Branch Administration: Court  
Innovations Grant Program Award

**Agenda Item Type**

Action Required

**Effective Date**

July 22, 2019

**Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected**

None

**Date of Report**

June 28, 2019

**Recommended by**

Judicial Branch Budget Committee  
Hon. David M. Rubin, Chair

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### Executive Summary

After consistent monitoring of the Court Innovations Grant Program contingency fund balance and its component funding categories and discussion of alternatives to maximize the grant allocation, the Judicial Branch Budget Committee recommends awarding a grant totaling \$108,000 to the Superior Court of Solano County for their Drug Court Case Management e-database project from the collaborative courts funding category. This grant will fund the testing of new approaches for expanding innovative and efficient services.

### Recommendation

The Judicial Branch Budget Committee (JBBC) recommends that the Judicial Council, effective July 22, 2019:

1. Approve an award of \$108,000 to the Superior Court of Solano County for the Drug Court Case Management e-database project from the Court Innovations Grant Program under the collaborative court programs funding category; and

2. Authorize staff to send the Notice of Intent to Award to the Superior Court of Solano County and to work with the court to negotiate and execute an intra-branch agreement by August 1, 2019.

### **Relevant Previous Council Action**

The Chief Justice and the Judicial Council have been committed to expanding innovative and efficient services and programs to improve access to justice statewide. The Governor's proposed 2016 budget included funding to further these goals, proposing \$30 million for court innovations and efficiencies. Following legislative modification, and in accordance with category limitations contained in the Budget Act of 2016, the Judicial Council approved \$11.3 million to be allocated to collaborative court programs; \$7.5 million to self-help, family and juvenile court programs; \$4.7 million to other efficiencies across all types of court programs; and \$625,000 to the Judicial Council for grant program administration. Additionally, 3 to 4 percent of the funding in each category was approved to be retained as a contingency for unforeseen costs courts encounter over the three-year grant period. The grant period began June 1, 2017, and ends June 30, 2020.

In June 2016, the Chief Justice appointed the Ad Hoc Working Group for Innovations Grants to create rules for the program. On August 25, 2016, the council approved the request for applications (RFA), making it the "rule book" for awarding innovation grants. The JBBC then became responsible for evaluating the resulting grant proposals and awarding grant monies through a competitive process. The JBBC released the RFA on September 1, 2016, and final applications for the Court Innovations Grant Program were submitted by October 31, 2016.

In March 2017, the council awarded \$23.5 million in total grants for projects designed to improve court efficiency and increase the public's access to justice. The council also allocated \$625,000—out of the statutorily authorized \$1.25 million—for administration costs and retained 3 to 4 percent of each category's funding for unforeseen expenses incurred by grant-funded projects.

In June 2017, the council delegated to the Judicial Branch Budget Committee the authority to decide whether to approve funding adjustments.<sup>1</sup> The delegation requires the JBBC to use the same criteria used in deciding the original awards and to report quarterly to the council about any authorized adjustments.

### **Analysis/Rationale**

Through its delegated power, the JBBC has reviewed and approved, when appropriate, project increases in awards. As of the date of this report, the balance of the contingency fund is \$746,975.42, allocated as follows:

- \$723,244.81 for collaborative court projects;
- \$10,497.62 for self-help, family, and juvenile court projects; and

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<sup>1</sup> Circulating Order No. CO-17-04.

- \$13,132.62 for other efficiency projects.

The JBBC reviewed and discussed several alternatives to ensure the grant program funds were maximized while adhering to the grant category limitations, the requirements of the original RFA process, and the current project needs. Such efforts included seeking interest from the courts awarded grants under the collaborative court category and the self-help, family, and juvenile court category (which make up the majority of the contingency fund) in receiving additional monies to address unforeseen project needs or for expansion. These efforts resulted in several increases in awards; however, the collaborative courts category balance provided an opportunity for further efforts.

The JBBC evaluated the original application submissions under the collaborative courts category that were not recommended for award in March 2017. The committee focused on those projects that scored within a suitable range and could be implemented within the remaining fiscal year. The members directed staff to reach out to the courts, gauge interest in implementing the projects, and coordinate with the interested courts to submit updated project implementation plans and budgets reflecting the modified time frame, adjusting a three-year project to a one-year project.

The JBBC evaluated the updated application from the Superior Court of Solano County for their Drug Court Case Management e-database system during the May 29, 2019, in-person meeting. The members voted to recommend that the Judicial Council approve the project for a grant award.

The Drug Court Case Management project provides an opportunity for the branch, through outcomes evaluation, to gauge the effectiveness of this type of program. Further, products, services, materials, or technology resulting from this grant-funded program will be shared throughout the branch for use by all courts.

As with the other grant-awarded courts, the Superior Court of Solano County will collaborate with other courts to share information, reduce duplication of effort, identify differences in approaches to each project, and share best practices. Communication and sharing of information and ideas increase the likelihood of success and keep the door open for innovation in courts of all sizes.

### **Policy implications**

There are no policy implications from approving this request.

### **Comments**

This item was not circulated for public comment.

### **Alternatives considered**

The committee considered not taking action to maximize the use of grant monies in the collaborative courts category. However, the JBBC determined that the courts and the branch

would benefit from the award to an additional project to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches in the collaborative courts process supported by technology.

The committee also considered issuing a second RFA and providing courts the opportunity to submit applications under the collaborative courts category for the remaining fiscal year. The JBBC determined that there was not sufficient time for the RFA issuance, court application development, and evaluation.

### **Fiscal and Operational Impacts**

The legislation establishing the Court Innovations Grant Program requires the council to develop and implement a plan to disseminate information about the innovative practices funded through this program. The legislation also requires the council to consider the adoption of appropriate modifications to the California Rules of Court and other judicial branch policies, procedures, and programs to support the expansion of successful programs funded through this grant.

As with the original courts receiving funding from the Court Innovations Grant Program, the Superior Court of Solano County will be required to report quarterly to the Judicial Council on expenditures, impacts, and potential savings associated with the funded project. This information will then be compiled and used by council staff to develop an annual report to the Department of Finance and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee on the grant program, its impacts, and any potential savings.

If approved, the addition of this project will not have a significant impact on the administration costs of the grant program as monitoring and evaluation of the project may be absorbed within the current grant administration activities.