



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

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Judicial Branch Technology: Court
Modernization Funding, Fiscal Year 2021–22

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Submitted by

Judicial Council Technology Committee
Hon. Kyle S. Brodie, Chair

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Executive Summary

The Budget Act of 2020 (Stats. 2020, ch. 7) and Budget Act of 2021 (Stats. 2021, ch. 69) each appropriated \$25 million for the continued modernization of trial court operations for a total of \$50 million over two fiscal years. The Judicial Council directed the Technology Committee to recommend allocations of funding and provide regular updates on approved allocations. This is a status update on the current fiscal year's Court Technology Modernization Funding.

Relevant Previous Council Action

The Budget Act of 2020 included a \$25 million appropriation for the continued modernization of California's trial courts. At the Judicial Council's July 24, 2020 meeting, the Chief Justice directed the Technology Committee to recommend a proposal for allocating the funding.

At the September 25, 2020 Judicial Council meeting, the council approved 13 programs for fiscal year (FY) 2020–21 for which the \$25 million would be used, directed the Technology Committee to recommend allocations to trial courts, and requested reports on each program's progress.

At the November 13, 2020 Judicial Council meeting, the council approved clarifying the description of the Trial Court Digital Services program for FY 2020–21 to include physical and

remote courtrooms, thereby providing courts additional flexibility for improving access to justice through further modernization and the expanded use of technology.

At the January 22, 2021 Judicial Council meeting, the council approved \$12.5 million in direct allocations to the trial courts for FY 2020–21 and received a status update. Of the remaining \$12.5 million, \$10 million was retained to fund branchwide initiatives and \$2.5 million was held in reserve for program adjustments that could occur during implementation.

At the March 12, 2021 Judicial Council meeting, the council approved allocating an additional \$4.3 million to trial courts for FY 2020–21: \$2.6 million from the \$10 million identified for branchwide initiatives and \$1.7 million from the \$2.5 million held in reserve. That funding expanded participation in four branchwide programs. The council also approved the allocation of the remaining \$800,000 held in reserve for 32 courts that were engaged in digitizing their paper records.

At the October 1, 2021 Judicial Council meeting, the council approved the allocations recommended by the Technology Committee for FY 2021–22: \$15 million in direct allocations to the trial courts for local projects and \$10 million in allocations to support and continue Judicial Council programs that have branchwide benefits, of which \$1.9 million was allocated to the five courts leading development of technologies for branchwide use.

Analysis/Rationale

The Legislature appropriated \$25 million each year, for two years, to the judicial branch for further modernization of trial court operations. The projects from FY 2020–21 modernization funding demonstrated the technological diversity in the branch and highlighted opportunities for collaboration between courts for further modernization efforts. The feedback and lessons learned from that fiscal year also led to multiple process improvements for FY 2021–22, including development of the California Courts Connected framework, a guide to help courts achieve branchwide technology goals (Attachment A), and forming a branch workstream (Attachment B) to evaluate project proposals.

Local projects

For FY 2021–22, courts submitted project proposals for 201 projects across 20 program categories, for a total of over \$43 million in requested funding. The Court Technology Modernization Fund workstream (an ad hoc team of judicial branch members) evaluated those proposals and submitted recommendations to the Technology Committee for additional review and approval. The Technology Committee approved 140 of the proposals in September 2021. Following council approval of allocations in October 2021, courts were able to determine which of the 140 approved projects they intended to develop with their allocation.

Although 140 proposals were approved, the available funding was not enough to implement them all. Courts have therefore begun work on 95 projects in 13 program categories, as shown in the table below. Some courts have initiated multiple projects in the courthouse program category. Other courts have partnered together on case management projects, such as a collaboration

between Del Norte, Inyo, and Siskiyou to replace the case management systems at their respective courts. Additionally, a collective of 32 courts utilizing the Tyler Technologies Odyssey case management system are also collaborating on a project that will enhance the system at all 32 courts. The breakdown of those projects is as follows:

Program Category	Number of Courts	Number of Projects
Case Management Systems	44	11
Electronic Records Management	22	27
Jury Management Systems	5	5
Courthouse	16	25
Collaboration & Office Tools	2	2
State and Local Integrations	4	4
Web Solutions	1	1
Remote Records Access and Search	3	3
Interactive Customer Service	1	1
Remote Appearances	7	7
Data	2	2
Infrastructure	5	5
Cyber Security	2	2

Intra-branch agreements were sent to courts in October 2021 and all courts received disbursements for their local projects by early January 2022. The first progress reports received from courts in December showed that most projects were in the project initiation phase.

Project Stage	Number of Projects
Project initiation	38
Requirements	11
Procurement	19
Development	9
Testing	3
Deployment	7
No stage reported	8

Branchwide projects

In addition to funding to courts for local projects, \$10 million of the modernization funding was allocated to support and continue branchwide Judicial Council programs. Programs receiving allocations this cycle furthered the goals of the *Strategic Plan for Technology 2019–2022* to promote the digital court, advance IT security and infrastructure, and innovate through the IT community. These programs include the Virtual Customer Service Center, Voice to Text pilot, and trial court digital services.

The Virtual Customer Service Center available to the public from the branch self-help portal website continues to expand the “chatbot” and live chat programs. The chatbot provides users with a chat function to quickly obtain answers for frequently asked questions. The chatbot for name changes launched in March 2021 and had received nearly 9,000 questions from site visitors by the end of 2021. An expansion of chatbot services to automatically answer small claims related questions is scheduled for late February 2022 and development is underway for a similar chatbot for family law. The live chat, in which a live person answers questions via the online chat interface, launched in October 2021 for family law, followed by small claims in November 2021. By the end of 2021, over 600 live chats were completed for family law and more than 700 live chats were completed for small claims. An integration between the chatbot and live chat was launched in early February of 2022. The integration provides a way for website visitors to submit questions to the chatbot for general information and answers. If more complex questions are asked, the visitor is seamlessly transitioned to a live person for a live chat. The types of questions answered by the live chat are being reviewed for potential improvement of automated chatbot content and performance.

As part of the branchwide Voice to Text pilot program, 13 courts implemented the CA Courts Translator software from July 2021 to January 2022. The software enhances access in multiple languages conveniently for informal situations outside of the courtroom such as interacting with a clerk at a service window. The CA Courts Translator software was used by more than 110 court staff to facilitate conversations at clerk counters and in self-help services. A total of 846 conversations with almost 6,000 messages were translated by the software. Members of the public that used the software gave it an average rating of four out of five stars. Expansion of the Voice to Text program includes implementation of the CA Courts Translator v2 application that has been developed based on feedback from the 13 pilot courts. The new version is planned for release in March 2022.

Modernization of trial court websites continues under the FY 2021–22 allocations with a total of 22 small and medium-sized websites successfully launched on the new templates as of January 2022. The new templates use a mobile-first design that provides an optimal experience for smartphone court customers, Spanish translation of all pages, and analytics tools to monitor web performance and customer satisfaction. An additional 10 court websites are slated for launch this year, including larger courts such as Alameda and Riverside.

Three of the branchwide programs utilize court-developed technology and are led by five courts that are working on solutions for statewide use:

- **Building the Digital Ecosystem Phase II:** Santa Clara, Los Angeles, Orange, and Monterey are collectively working as the development team for Phase II of CourtStack, a common IT platform for case management systems (CMS) to leverage tools such as identity management and case searching. The development team is refining the project scope which includes continued architectural enhancements and design, CMS integrations, and providing maintenance and ongoing support. Placer is participating in Phase II of the project to assist the development team in the design and implementation of CourtStack for courts using the Journal Technologies eCourt CMS.
- **Court Notify and Hearing Reminder Services:** The Court Notify service provides automated messaging for court appearances regardless of CMS or jury system solution. Hearing Reminder Services (HRS), a component of Court Notify, sends automated email and text notifications to public users who have subscribed to the service. HRS launched in Los Angeles in early February 2022 and planning is underway to begin a pilot to roll out this service to other courts.
- **Electronic Court of Appeals Records and Transcripts (eCART) v1.0:** Formerly known as Transcript Assembly Program (TAP), eCART is a software program that automates the trial court's labor-intensive process of compiling a civil clerk's transcript and produces an electronic record that can be securely transmitted to the appellate court. Los Angeles is leading the development effort and several courts have asked to participate in the first round of pilots.

Fiscal Impact and Policy Implications

As the allocations are funded from the court modernization appropriations, there will be no direct fiscal impact to other funds. Many local projects that courts are developing were informed by the understanding that the allocations consist of one-time funding and therefore focused their efforts within this constraint. Permanent ongoing funding is needed to expand the types of solutions that can be deployed to provide better access to justice and the ability to maintain and support the tools that are already in use.

Next Steps

The Technology Committee and Judicial Council staff will continue to track project implementation plans, measure outcomes, and coordinate with courts to assess whether adjustments in funding are needed for success within an approved project. The Technology Committee will provide the council with regular progress updates as additional information is received.

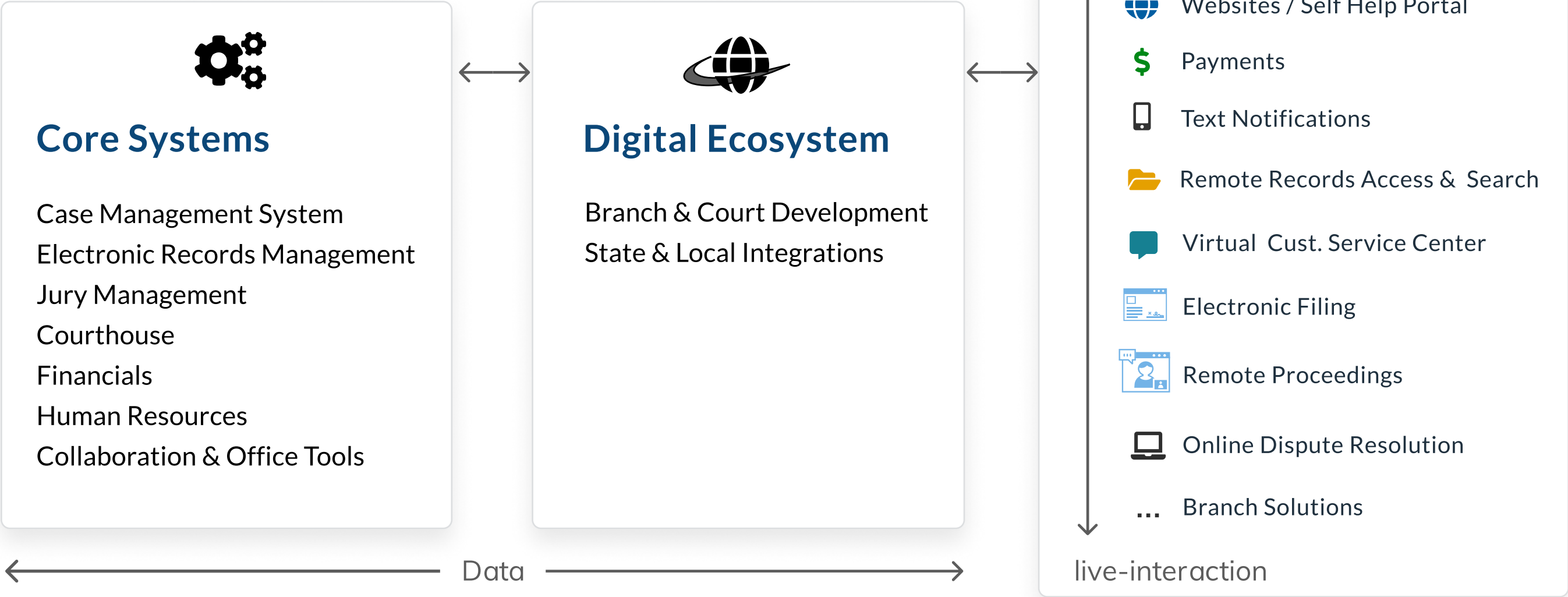
Attachments and Links

1. Attachment A: California Courts Connected framework diagram
2. Attachment B: Court Technology Modernization Workstream membership list



California Courts Connected

Courts Connected initiatives leverage technology to create core systems that enable digital solutions to meet the evolving court services needs of Californians and our justice system partners.



Court Technology Modernization Funding Workstream

As of August 26, 2021

**Hon. Kyle S. Brodie, Executive Sponsor
and Chair**

Judicial Council Technology Committee
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County of San Bernardino

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County of Los Angeles

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