



## JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

455 Golden Gate Avenue · San Francisco, California 94102-3688

[www.courts.ca.gov](http://www.courts.ca.gov)

---

# REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

*Item No.: 20-152*

For business meeting on: July 24, 2020

---

**Title**

Allocations and Reimbursements to Trial  
Courts: Model Self-Help Pilot Program  
Report on Midyear Reallocation and Funding  
for 2020–21

**Agenda Item Type**

Information Only

**Date of Report**

July 5, 2020

**Submitted by**

Bonnie Rose Hough, Principal Managing  
Attorney  
Center for Families, Children & the Courts

**Contact**

Bonnie Rose Hough, 415-865-7668  
[bonnie.hough@jud.ca.gov](mailto:bonnie.hough@jud.ca.gov)

---

### Executive Summary

The Model Self-Help Pilot Program has been operating in five California courts since 2002. The program testing technological solutions has determined not to continue its participation, and the Judicial Council approved making a midyear reallocation to the remaining projects for 2019–20 to expand their Model Self-Help Pilot Projects using technology. This report describes the results of that reallocation.

### Relevant Previous Council Action

On April 16, 2020, by circulating order, the Judicial Council approved a recommendation from the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee to make a midyear reallocation of \$191,400 in Model Self-Help Pilot Grant funds for 2019–20 from the Model Self-Help Technology project to the four remaining projects as a result of the fifth court's inability to continue participation. The remaining programs were to be asked to submit a short application to set out how they would use all or a portion of the funds to expand their model services to self-represented litigants using technology. The Judicial Council directed that staff submit an informational report to the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee and Judicial Council later this fiscal year, with a recommendation for ongoing use of these funds for the next fiscal year.

## **Analysis/Rationale**

### **Midyear reallocation**

On February 21, 2020, Judicial Council staff alerted the self-help center directors and court executive officers for the four remaining programs to the possibility that they would be able to apply for this funding and encouraged them to start planning their proposals. On April 20, 2020, staff sent the application to each of the courts with a due date of May 5, 2020.

The Superior Courts of Butte and Fresno Counties determined not to apply for additional funding. The Superior Courts of San Francisco and Los Angeles Counties both submitted applications for the remaining funding, with three projects each in priority order.

These proposals were reviewed by three reviewers at the Judicial Council. They recommended funding for the following projects based on the priorities identified by the court. This fully funds the first priorities and a significant amount of the second priorities.

The San Francisco project was awarded \$124,778 to build a robust virtual self-help center that supplements its current service model. The court anticipates that the new virtual self-help center will improve customer experience, expedite and enhance legal assistance, and accommodate a broader range of legal needs. It will develop five new service mediums:

1. Online multilingual workshops and one-on-one appointments scheduled through Calendly and administered through Zoom;
2. Chatbot services to triage litigants, answer their inquiries, and connect them to relevant legal resources and staff;
3. Multilingual tutorial and “how-to” videos and podcasts embedded on the court’s website to facilitate independent form completion and legal education;
4. Phone hotline for case assessment, telephonic legal assistance, and channeling litigants to other service delivery mediums (e.g., online or in-person workshops and appointments); and
5. Partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) (e.g., social services, food banks, domestic violence agencies) to disseminate information about the expanded self-help legal services to a broader population, and to host onsite portals for litigants to use to obtain self-help services at those community agencies.

The Los Angeles proposal was awarded \$66,622 to develop and enhance online resources. They will purchase “team” software subscriptions and training courses to enable in-house teams of self-help staff and JusticeCorps Fellows to develop and enhance e-learning content for remote online self-help services and procedural education, JusticeCorps recruitment and training materials, and self-help staff training materials. These teams will be able to quickly enhance online materials currently under development and build new resources available for statewide use in Spanish and English. The court will also purchase flat screens and the computer equipment to operate them, and public access computers for the use of self-represented litigants for multiple workshop rooms in self-help centers in courthouses throughout the county to further facilitate the use of online resources and remote delivery of workshops and other self-help

assistance in courthouse-based self-help centers. Screens and computers in multiple workshop rooms in several centers will facilitate safe distancing in the delivery of self-help services for those litigants who need in-person assistance for prioritized matters, and for litigants unable to access remote services online from home or to print completed documents. It will facilitate remote delivery of workshops and expert one-on-one services, maximizing the effective use of expert staff from the court.

These projects appear to provide the opportunity to provide excellent models and resources that can be shared with courts throughout California.

### **Funding for 2020–21**

The May Revision of the Governor’s budget includes a proposed cutback of 5% funding for Model Self-Help Projects. Given that the budget situation has changed dramatically this year, staff does not make a recommendation for allocations for 2020–21 at this time. Instead, the Trial Court Budget Committee can consider this as part of their overall review of the budget.

### **Fiscal Impact and Policy Implications**

Two Model Self-Help Programs will receive reallocated funds to provide expanded services in their model using technology.

There will be Judicial Council and court staff costs associated with this reallocation, but these costs will be mitigated by the expansion of services and the opportunity to share best practices and materials developed with courts throughout the state.

### **Attachments and Links**

None.