



Judicial Council of California

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Subject Details (With Text)

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Title

Trial Court Budget | Update to the Funds Held on Behalf of the Trial Courts Policy (Action Required)

Summary

The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee recommends adopting revisions to the current policy and guidelines for the Funds Held on Behalf of the Trial Courts program. The revisions include newly defined criteria, streamlining of the submission process, and implementation of a reimbursement model to distribute funding to the participating trial courts. Revising the current policy and guidelines will support transparency and accountability of the program. Under the Judicial Council-approved program, trial courts can request that Trial Court Trust Fund-reduced allocations be retained in the Trial Court Trust Fund as restricted fund balance for the benefit of those courts. The funds are allocated back to the courts by the Judicial Council for the purposes stated in the approved requests.

Recommendation

The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee recommends the Judicial Council, effective March 15, 2024:

1. Require that trial courts submit new requests using new funding from the previous fiscal year or unspent funding from a previously approved funds-held-on-behalf project to be considered for a new project because the original project has been completed or surrendered;
2. Allow trial courts to submit amended requests only to (1) amend the amount of funds for an existing project and/or (2) extend the fiscal year period to implement a previously approved project;
3. Establish one annual submission deadline in September, after all courts have completed their year-end financial closeout process (requests will go to the council at its January meeting for consideration);
4. Strongly encourage trial courts that have submitted a request for consideration to send a representative to the Fiscal Planning Subcommittee meetings;
5. Redesign the application form to make it easier to complete and review and ensure it includes relevant project and fiscal information needed for consideration and tracking of the request;
6. Implement a monthly reimbursement model so that the funds are held in the Trial Court Trust Fund on behalf of the court, as originally intended. Courts will be reimbursed monthly based on actual expenses submitted and recorded in the Judicial Council Phoenix accounting system. For courts that might have difficulty paying for upfront costs, there will be a process for them to request early distribution of funding prior to the submittal of actual expenditures related to the project; and

7. Make language amendments to the current policy to reflect the recommendations and delete outdated references.