

2023 Budget Supplemental Questions

Please answer the following questions in a word document and return to Council. The answers to these questions will be provided to council as supplemental information. While not part of the physical budget presentation to Council, departments should be prepared to answer questions Council may have on these supplemental questions. If you feel that you have provided an answer in a previous question, please don't repeat your answer, simply refer to the earlier question/answer.

Strategic Goals

1. Provide your 2023 strategic goals; how are they different from 2022? In what way, if at all, are your strategic changes demonstrated in your budget request?

Our court's primary goals in 2023 will focus on incorporating lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure our court is in the best position to serve our community in the foreseeable future. Our 2022 goals largely focused on increasing judicial capacity and personnel in order to best keep up with our growing workload. We are not requesting any additional personnel as part of our 2023 budget.

The COVID-19 pandemic compelled our court to quickly adjust in order to keep operations up and running. The use of technology was a critical piece of this adjustment. The pandemic won't be the last environmental hazard that our court will face, and we are launching a comprehensive technology project in 2023 that will outfit all of our courtrooms with the necessary technology for long-term sustainability of remote proceedings. Additionally, this project will place our court in the best position to provide access to justice for individuals that are not always able to appear for court in-person. Based on recent legislation and rule changes, it is clear that our legislature and Supreme Court intend to push courts in this direction in the coming future. This project is made possible by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, and we are thankful for the support from both the Executive and Council's Office in this regard, and request that these funds continue to be made available.

Our juvenile court detention population reached a historic low during the COVID-19 pandemic. This historic low has remained relatively constant as we reach the resolution of the pandemic. Our court has requested additional funds in 2023 to remodel our detention center so that the size of our operations is equivalent to the amount of youth we serve. This is the best way to care for our community's youth while balancing fiscal responsibility.

Our court continues to direct resources towards the backlog created by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are making good progress in this endeavor, especially considering the 2 additional judges that our court received and the additional court commissioner. We have also added new support positions to our court operations to help our court resolve the current caseload. These personnel changes encompassed our primary 2022 goals.

Ongoing discussions continue to take place regarding space considerations for our operations. It is worth mentioning that we have a brand new courtroom earmarked for construction on the third floor of the courthouse. Even with this additional courtroom, we still don't have an equivalent number of courtrooms for all of our judicial officers. We look forward to continued dialogue around this topic.

National, state and local landscape:

1. What are the federal, state and local issues facing your work? What risks or opportunities does that create for you in 2023 and beyond? What is your plan to leverage the opportunity or mitigate the risk? What support do you need?

We are continuing to monitor the implementation of Engrossed 2nd Substitute House Bill 1320 and the *State v Blake* decision. The Washington State Legislature may choose to conduct further work on either of these topics during the 2023 Washington State Legislative Session. Should this occur, our court will be closely monitoring the impacts of any proposed legislation and will work strategically with the Executive's Office and Council to determine a coordinated response.

2. What, if any, new mandates do you have impacting your work? Are they funded or unfunded? What is the plan for accomplishing the work?

Both items mentioned in the previous response are impacting our court's business and we have adequate procedures and resources in place to address the current workload impacts. Our court is not aware of any other upcoming mandates, but we will be closely watching the Legislature during the next legislative session.

Programs

1. List programs, projects and services within your department funded through federal COVID/ARPA funds. What, if any, of those programs are you recommending ongoing funding for and what is the source of ongoing funding?

We have earmarked our entire ARPA appropriation for the comprehensive courtroom technology project mentioned earlier. We strongly recommend that this project receive continued funding so that our courtrooms all have the technology that meets our modern business needs.

2. What new programs are you launching for 2023? What need or efficiency is that new program addressing? How is that program funded for sustainability? What metrics are in place to determine effectiveness?

Our court has no expanded programming planned for 2023.

3. If different than #2, what are your areas of significant investment? What are you not doing because of that investment?

N/A

Internal Operations

1. What is your department doing to streamline processes or deliver services in a new way? How do your budget allocation requests play into these innovations? Are there ways which a different budget approach, e.g. several departments sharing a resource, could achieve the same or better results in a more cost-effective way?

Our court's newest example of innovation is reflected within our request to remodel space within our detention operations. Our detention facility is in dire need of change based on the significantly less youth that we serve compared to when the facility was built. We believe that this project will create efficiency within our court's budget and provide a higher quality of service to our youth.

2. What, if any, hiring challenges are you experiencing? How is that affecting your level of service or internal operations? How are you mitigating those operational challenges and/or what is your plan for recruitment?

Recruiting qualified employees is a significant challenge right now across all positions for our court. We are struggling to find applicants that meet minimum qualifications, and we are also losing employees to other employers that offer broader remote work conditions. Certain positions within our court are not eligible for remote work. This creates issues from a recruiting and retention perspective. We are attempting to mitigate these challenges by offering different incentives and perks that are within our control. Other more substantive incentives for our positions (such as salary) are not within our court's control. We are hopeful that Council will take action on any recommendations from the current class and compensation study in order to keep our compensation levels equivalent to our competitors.

3. Please provide a list of all vacant position titles, position codes, date vacated, and date first posted. This should be a separate page or spreadsheet attachment.

Please see the attached Vacancy Report. Although we have positions that are currently vacant, most of these vacancies are in the recruitment process and/or are being considered for potential funding for consolidation efforts within our detention center. For example, our court dissolved our detention kitchen operations in 2022 and we are currently advertising a Request For Proposal for a new food service vendor. Some of the funding related to our dissolved kitchen positions will be used for the newly contracted food services.

4. What effect has the increase of inflation and/or supply chain issues had on your department? What, if any, services, or projects have you had to adjust to accommodate for this? (i.e. moving to outside contracted services, delaying of project starts and/or purchasing, redistribution of workload, etc.)

The availability of technology equipment has been severely affected by supply chain issues. Any project or modification of operations that involves additional technology must be planned well in advance. Expectations around reasonable timeframes for delivery is communicated to all stakeholders so the delay is widely distributed and understood.

Successes

1. Take this opportunity to share one significant success in your department over this past year. What made it a success?

The addition of 2 more superior court judges has provided an immediate positive impact. Adding this additional judicial capacity has placed our court in a much better position to hear cases efficiently and without delay. It also increases the number of jury trials that we may hear on a daily basis, which also creates opportunity for the court to clear the backlog of criminal cases more swiftly. This effort couldn't have been possible without the partnership from the Executive's Office and the Council. We are extremely appreciative of the willingness to help that has been shared by all involved in this legislative change. This relationship between our branches is very important to us and we would like to make it known that the Executive's Office and Council were integral to this success.