



Budget Change Request

Change request information

Title Reorganize Felony Unit Legal Support Services
Number B-24-04 Department 24 - Public Defense
Requester Jose Vargas
Published by Jennifer Smith Publish Date 2023-08-24
Change Type Policy Change

Board outcome *(to be entered by budget after Board action)*

Board Decision
Board Changes

Funds affected

Fund 0010 - General Fund
General Fund Affected? Yes More Than One Fund Affected? No

Policy request priority and connection to the strategic plan

Priority # 3 Strategic Plan Responsive Law,

Does this request include federal, state, or private grants?

Grant Funded? None
Grantor and timeframe Not Applicable

Does this request affect current positions or propose new positions?

HR Payroll e-mailed? Yes Position Impact Adds Position(s)
Current position numbers affected New Position

What do you need and why? Include any unexpected and external requirements.

Statement of Need

Thurston County Public Defense (TCPD) is requesting one (1) full time Paralegal I position to join the adult felony unit. Currently, TCPD employs one (1) adult felony paralegal position to support fourteen (14) adult felony trial attorneys. In addition to supporting 14 attorneys, our current paralegal is responsible for leading a team of four (4) legal assistants in their daily duties and filling those duties due to staff absences.

A one (1) to fourteen (14) paralegal to attorney support ratio creates significant span of control issues and fails to meet the business needs of the unit.

The adult felony unit is the most complex litigation team within the Department providing hundreds of representations for clients facing the most serious criminal matters in the State of Washington. As a result of the nature of the litigation and volume of cases, attorneys require additional paralegal support to adequately represent their clients, meet court demands, and comply with their respective ethical responsibilities. The essential functions of a paralegal, amongst other functions, includes drafting legal memorandums, legal caselaw research, and writing legal motions to assist attorneys. The unit is severely limited in assigning paralegal duties to meet the demands of fourteen (14) trial attorneys.

Both the Washington State Bar Associations (WSBA) Standards of Indigent Defense Standard 7, and Thurston County Ordinance 10.100.070 require: "Public defense attorneys shall have adequate numbers of investigators, secretaries, word processing staff, paralegals, social work staff, mental health professionals and other support services, including computer system staff and network administrators. These professionals are essential to ensure the effective performance of defense counsel during trial preparation, in the preparation of dispositional plans, and at sentencing."

Adding an additional paralegal to our adult felony unit so we have two (2) paralegals supporting fourteen (14) adult felony trial attorneys complies with both the WSBA Indigent Defense Standards and our own Thurston County ordinance for legal support.

How will this change the performance of your office or department?

Statement of Need

The additional paralegal position in the adult felony unit would enhance the unit's organizational structure by resolving the span of control issue, meeting the immediate needs for the trial attorneys, and providing additional support to legal support staff. We would be able to divide the unit into two teams wherein one (1) paralegal would support 7 attorneys with two (2) legal assistants direct reports respectively. This additional support to the trial attorneys could also result in quicker case resolution which would be a cost savings to the County.

This request supports Thurston County Strategic Initiative #18 "Develop, hire and retain a quality, stable, diverse, and thriving workforce" and TCPD's strategic plan to support professional development and professional growth.

Expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions plus current budget level

Assumptions

Based on FY 2019 through FY 2022 expenditure trends and the FY 2023 forecasted end of fiscal year balance, TCPD forecasts an conservative ending balance of approximately \$375,000 for FY 2024 and FY 2025 (approximately 4.5% of budget authority). TCPD wishes to maintain a 2% budget balance (authority) per fiscal year as reserve (approximately \$175,000) and adjust the forecasted ending balance to \$200,000 per fiscal year.

Current Budget Level

FY 2023 budget = \$8,596,181.00

What happens if this isn't funded? Are there other options?

Impacts and Alternatives

Attorneys will continue to struggle to meet the demands of performing their duties as trial attorneys. Legal research and writing will continue to fall onto the attorney's workload potentially extending the length of cases due to time constraints. The organizational structure of the unit will continue to struggle with operational efficiencies and staff dissatisfaction. Professional development and promotional opportunities Department wide will not be increased. We will continue place a tremendous amount of stress on our one paralegal position to support fourteen (14) attorneys. We had our last paralegal resign, in part, due to the strain of one position attempting to meet the demands of the team.

How does this request affect other offices and departments?

Impact to Other Departments None

Which Other Departments are Affected? Not Applicable

Operating Transfer Needed? Yes

Operating Transfer Coding and Amount To be determined if approved.

Personnel Information

FTE	Number	Name	Start Date	End Date
1.00	@ Paralegal I / nonu10	PARALEGAL I		
1.00	< Total			

Operating Revenue Line Items

Org Code	Object Code	Object Description	Project Code	2024	2025
5260G040	397001	O/T-GENERAL FUND		3,000	-
			Total:	3,000.00	-

Capital Revenue Line Items

Org Code	Object Code	Object Description	Project Code	2024	2025
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Operating Expenditure Line Items

Org Code	Object Code	Object Description	Project Code	2024	2025
0124B810	510000	SALARIES		61,212	63,048.00
0124B810	521000	SOCIAL SECURITY		4,683	4,823.00
0124B810	522000	RETIREMENT		5,748	5,920.00
0124B810	523000	MEDICAL/DENTAL/LIFE		26,016	27,276.00
0124B810	524000	WORKERS COMPENSATION-L&I		360	360.00
0124B810	525000	UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION		184	189.00
0124B810	526000	PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE		133	137.00
0124B810	527000	LONG TERM DISABILITY		349	359.00
0124B810	531000	SUPPLIES		200	200.00
0124B810	549000	MISCELLANEOUS		2,500	-
0124B810	549007	MISC-TRGN/CONF REGISTRATION		500	500.00
0124B810	599526	O/T-IT RESERVE		3,000	-
5260G040	535000	SMALL TOOLS & MINOR EQUIPMENT		3,000	-
			Total:	107,885.00	102,812.00

Capital Expenditure Line Items

Org Code	Object Code	Object Description	Project Code	2024	2025
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