

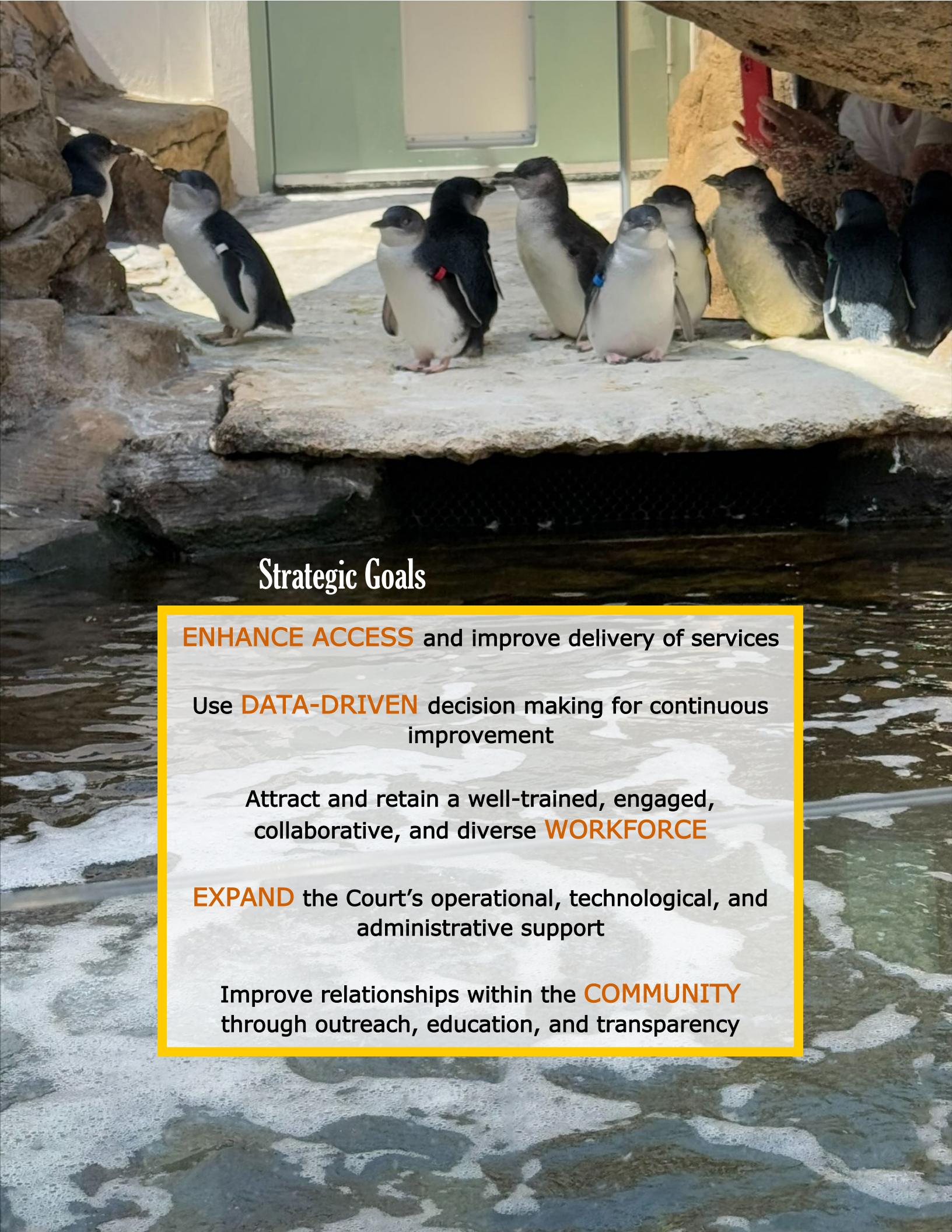
APPROVED BUDGET

FISCAL YEAR 2025-26

JULY 1, 2025 TO JUNE 30, 2026

Superior Court of California
County of Orange





Strategic Goals

ENHANCE ACCESS and improve delivery of services

Use **DATA-DRIVEN** decision making for continuous improvement

Attract and retain a well-trained, engaged, collaborative, and diverse **WORKFORCE**

EXPAND the Court's operational, technological, and administrative support

Improve relationships within the **COMMUNITY** through outreach, education, and transparency

October 31, 2025

As we begin the 2025-26 fiscal year, the slowing economy continues to adversely impact the Judicial Branch and Trial Courts across California. The State's 2025 Budget Act addressed an \$11.8 billion shortfall, and many state agencies have noted ongoing uncertainty in the fiscal outlook for the coming years. Although the Court's Approved Budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year stands at \$282.4 million, early forecasts suggest fiscal headwinds will continue to await us in the future.

Last fiscal year, the Judicial Branch faced a 7.95% funding reduction, with Trial Courts shouldering a \$97 million statewide reduction in ongoing funding. Partway through the 2024-25 fiscal year, the Trial Courts received a partial restoration of \$42 million statewide; however, an ongoing statewide reduction of \$55 million remains for the 2025-26 fiscal year, with our Court's share at \$3.04 million. Even without the restoration of previous cuts, this year's budget includes targeted support to maintain critical judicial branch programs and services, including \$40 million statewide in ongoing funding to address rising trial court operating costs—of which Orange County's share is \$3.00 million. One-time funding was also provided to address workload increases resulting from Proposition 36, which voters passed in 2024.

Within this framework, the Court continues to invest in modernization, technology, and our workforce. Funding this year supports efforts to upgrade court infrastructure, enhance digital services, and expand tools that improve access to justice and operational efficiency. We remain committed to supporting our employees through training and development, recognizing their vital role in successfully serving our public.

The Court also continues to implement new statutory requirements that reflect changing social priorities, such as Ability to Pay relief and mandated collaborative courts programs, ensuring that we remain responsive to community needs. Looking ahead, our focus remains on long-term stability, prudent fiscal management, and innovation—sustaining our mission to deliver fair, timely, and accessible justice to all.

We are deeply grateful to our judicial officers and staff for their continued dedication, professionalism, and resilience in the face of ongoing challenges. Your commitment to excellence allows the Court to advance its mission and uphold the public's trust in the judiciary.



Maria D. Hernandez

Hon. Maria D. Hernandez
Presiding Judge



David H. Yamasaki

David H. Yamasaki
Court Executive Officer



VISION

Equal Access, Timely Dispute
Resolution, Equal Justice

MISSION

To serve the public by
administering justice and
resolving disputes fairly,
efficiently, and expeditiously

VALUES

Access | Collaboration |
Fairness | Innovation |
Integrity | Respect |
Service Excellence |
Transparency

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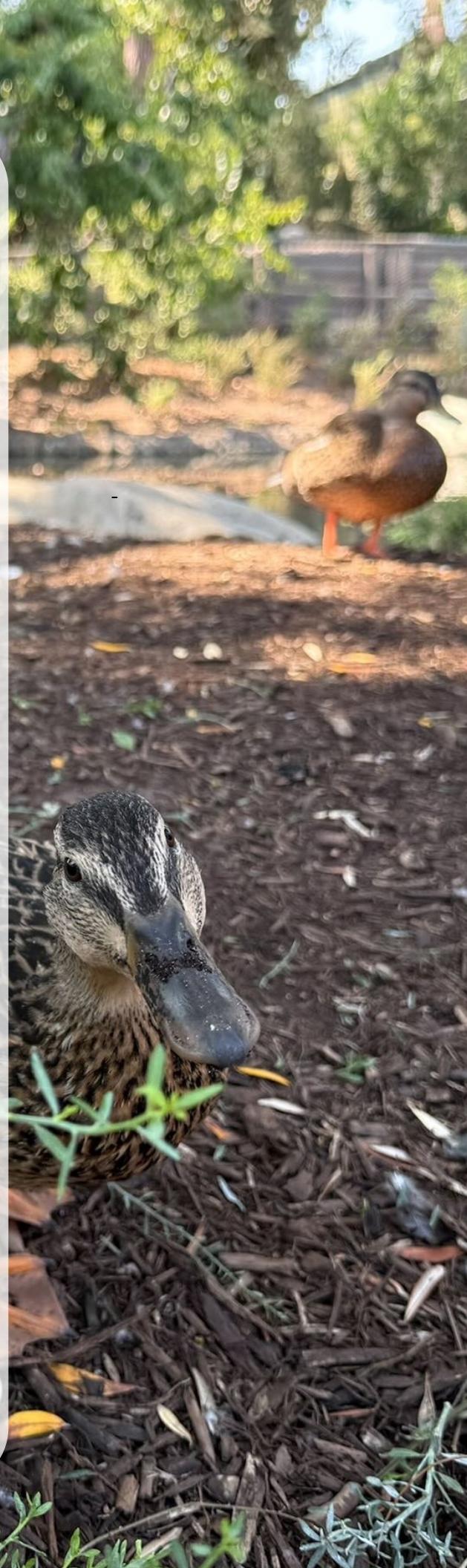
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About SCOC

The Superior Court of Orange County (SCOC or Court) serves 3.2 million residents in the third most populous county in California. The Court is currently the second largest trial court in the State in terms of [workload and funding](#).

FY 2025-26 approved budget of \$282.4 million supports:

The Public – FY 2024-25 filings totaled 428,432, up by 8% from the prior fiscal year with notable increases in Limited Civil, Felony, and Infraction case categories. Hearings held totaled 935,919, which was on par from the prior fiscal year. Of the pre- and post-disposition hearings held in FY 2024-25, 76% were criminal matters. 646 in-person jury trials were conducted over 2,959 days last fiscal year. Of the total days in trial, 70% were spent on Criminal litigation types.

SCOC is dedicated to continuously advancing the development and use of technology to increase access to justice and modernize service delivery. This ongoing journey of technological innovation has significantly transformed the look and feel of the public's court experience. In addition to five full-service justice centers and four facilities offering specialized services within the County of Orange's 700 square miles, SCOC also has a strong online presence. Virtual access to many [online court services](#) is now available 24/7.

Virtual court services. During FY 2024-25, the [My Court Portal](#) accepted 203,317 payments totaling \$37 million, and also processed electronic-correspondence from the public. New to FY 2024-25, the Court also launched the Civil Fee Payment Portal via the Court's public website and Court mobile application, which allows parties to pay for select fees for unlimited civil, limited civil, small claims, and complex case types. Copy requests for many civil records after a certain date, and certain family law records, continue to be available to initiate through online services. In FY 2024-25, 12,000 self-represented litigants were served remotely via live video through Self-Help Live Kiosks located in branch courts, with additional support available through the [Self-Help Portal](#) and Mobile App.

Remote hearings. In FY 2024-25, 17% of all court hearings were held remotely. The top four case types, in terms of percentage of hearings, that were held using virtual online platforms with 10,000 or more total hearings were: Limited Civil (55%), Probate (50%), Unlimited Civil (44%), and Infractions (42%).

The Workforce – SCOC continues to rebuild its workforce by finding innovative ways to recruit and retain skilled, diverse, and engaged employees.

New positions. Two new positions will be created to bring relief and additional support to existing staff.

Staff compensation. SCOC prioritizes its investment in fair staff compensation. Over 78% of planned expenditures is for competitive salaries, benefits, and merit-based incentives.

State Mandates – The trial courts have been tasked with the implementation of several important priorities for the Legislature and Governor.

SB 129 (Pretrial Release Program). The Budget Act of 2021 appropriated funding for the implementation and operation of ongoing court programs and practices that promote safe, efficient, fair, and timely pretrial programs.

AB 716 (Remote Access to Court Proceedings). AB 716 requires courts to provide, at a minimum, a public audio stream or telephonic means by which to listen to courtroom proceedings when the courthouse is physically closed, except when the law authorizes or requires the proceedings to be closed. Funding over two years was included in the Budget Act of 2022.

CARE Act (Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment). The CARE Act allows petitioners to request voluntary treatment, services, support, and a housing plan for respondents who have untreated severe mental illnesses.

Proposition 36. Approved by voters in the November 2024 election, this measure changed state law to allow certain drug and theft offenses to be charged as felonies and strengthened penalties for repeat offenders. One-time funding was included for the courts in the Budget Act of 2025 to address the observed increase in workload.

Ability-to-Pay. Under California Law, the Judicial Council was required to develop an online tool through which every superior court must offer ability-to-pay determinations for qualifying infraction cases. Orange went live with the [MyCitations](#) online tool in June 2024.



Pictured: Therapy Dog Day for Employees July 2, 2024 at Central Justice Center

Court Infrastructure – SCOC's technology and facilities budgets reflect continuing efforts to enhance the court's technological capabilities to improve access to court services and expand and improve court user physical access to services.

Technology upgrades. The effort to equip all 150 courtrooms with hybrid equipment continues. Hybrid equipment will integrate evidence presentation equipment with sound systems that fulfill the requirements of AB 716.

The budget also includes resources to fund major projects such as the modernization of the court's on-premise Oracle databases, the continuation of Vision case management system (CMS) modernization, design and implementation of a new CMS for adult and juvenile collaborative courts, and further development of Grand Central, a reusable and configurable application that enables multiple justice partners to exchange information with the various court CMSs.

Building upgrades. In addition to an extensive facility modification to fire, life, and safety systems at the Santa Ana courthouse, SCOC will continue to upgrade the security and appearance of its facilities.

The Court, Then and Now

The State's FY 2025-26 budget uses a combination of borrowing, payment deferrals, fund-shifting, and targeted spending efficiencies to stabilize finances. Part of the \$97 million statewide reduction to trial court funding was restored; however, a \$55 million ongoing reduction remains. SCOC will receive 84.7% of its projected funding need, which is 1.2% below the statewide average. The timeline below highlights key events that have shaped the Court's current and future financial outlook.



Court Analytics Virtual Environment (CAVE)

CAVE provides secured and quick access of current and historical case file information for all litigation types.

Transition from WAFM to Workload Formula Replaces WAFM

In 2013, the Judicial Council adopted the [Workload-Based Allocation Method \(WAFM\)](#), based on the Resource Assessment Study (RAS), leading to a \$13 million permanent reallocation of the Court's base funding. WAFM has now been replaced by a new workload formula, which serves as the basis for determining trial court allocations from the Judicial Council.



Safe Access to Justice

The [Court implemented triage booths](#) to assist the public with hearings and appointments while maintaining health and safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.

| 2016

| 2017

| 2018

| 2019

| 2020

| 2021

Court User Portal (CUP)

Court users can access enhanced online services to conduct court business such as requesting an extension, establishing a payment plan, or submitting case documents electronically.

[Text-to-Pay Service Implemented](#)



Self-Help Services Funding Increase

The [FY 2018-19 Enacted Budget](#) allocates an additional \$19.1 million to enhance court-based self-help centers. The Court operates six Self-Help Center Locations, providing essential support to self-represented litigants as they navigate the court system.



Base Funding Reduction of \$12.6 Million

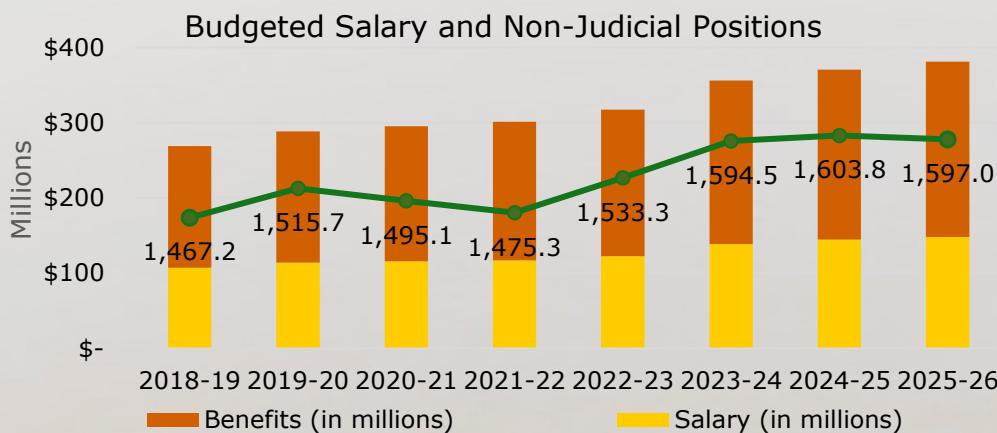
In the [FY 2020-21 Enacted Budget](#), trial courts experienced a \$176.9 million reduction in base funding (\$12.6 million for Orange), reflecting ongoing efforts to address statewide budget constraints.

Funding Restoration and FY 2021-22 New Funding

Following prior reductions, trial courts received restored and new funding in the [FY 2021-22 Enacted Budget](#), including \$70 million in ongoing funding for pretrial release programs to help manage additional cases and promote safe, efficient pretrial procedures.

The Court's new Five-Year Strategic Plan is unveiled.





AB 177 Repeal of Criminal Fees
Pursuant to [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 177](#), the courts no longer have authority to collect specified criminal fees.

Equitable Funding for Trial Courts

The [FY 2022-23 Enacted Budget](#) includes a \$100 million ongoing General Fund increase to promote fiscal equity among the trial courts, with ongoing funding for:

- Operational cost increases
- Fiscal equity among trial courts
- Offset of AB 177 revenue loss
- Backfill of redirected CIVA revenues
- New judgeships

Partial Restoration

After the \$97 million cut, \$42 million was restored in the same year, reducing the net impact to \$55 million.



● **Prop 36 Implementation Funding and New Funding**
As part of the [FY 2025-26 Enacted Budget](#), legislators approved \$110 million in one-time funding to support implementation of Proposition 36. Of this amount, \$30 million was allocated to trial courts to address the additional cases and hearings resulting from the measure's treatment-mandated felonies.

New Operational Funding for Trial Courts

In addition, the FY 2025-26 budget included \$40 million in new funding to help trial courts address rising operational costs. However, this funding does not fully offset the ongoing \$55 million shortfall stemming from the prior statewide reduction.

| 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027

CARE Act

In October 2023, [The CARE \(Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment\) Act](#) was introduced in California's court system, commencing in seven counties, including Orange County.

Funding Adjustments for Trial Courts Amid Fiscal Challenges

The [FY 2024-25 Enacted Budget](#) reflects a \$97 million reduction in trial court funding, driven by ongoing budget constraints and the need to address the state's fiscal challenges.



FY 2025-26 Trial Court Statewide Funding Percentage = 85.9%



AB 199 Reduction of CIVA

Pursuant to [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 199](#), the civil assessment (CIVA) fee of \$300 for failure to appear in Court is reduced to \$100. Also, the fees collected are deposited in the State General Fund rather than the Trial Court Trust Fund.

FY 2024-25 Accomplishments

Court Executive Office (CEO)



Implementation of a Delay Reduction Campaign. This priority aligns with Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero's goal to reduce the time from the filing of a case to its disposition. In Orange County, we have kicked off this campaign with an educational session with the Court's judicial officers on key principles of calendar management, including data to track the Court's progress and guidance on using a special calendar for our Civil division.

Court Technology Services



The summary judgment process was automated by CTS' Vision team. This process recovers full bond payments after forfeiture has been declared. The procedure, which was previously tracked manually in Excel, is now incorporated into the Vision case management system. This automated tracking process is expected to bring greater efficiency and accuracy to the Fiscal team.

Court Technology Services



CTS migrated Voyager's database from the OCSC data center to Oracle's Cloud Infrastructure (OCI). Voyager was enhanced to provide the Clerk Review Module for Name Change eFiling transactions to assist Clerk's in reviewing documents and standardizing reasons for rejection.

Finance & Administration



Delegations completed 5,346 service work orders including preventative maintenance, reactive maintenance, and facility modifications. 106 facility modification projects addressed emergencies, replaced equipment past its useful life, improved safety and security, improved energy efficiency, and ensured that court operations continue uninterrupted.

Finance & Administration



Procurement collaborated with Accounting & Fiscal Services and Financial Planning in closing fiscal year 2024-25, completing 1,756 purchase order lines totaling \$44,043,369.

Accounting enhanced Claims Central, an application that manages submission, tracking, and processing of claims.

Finance & Administration



CaveGPT is an AI tool for data analysis developed by the Business Analytics Team. It sources data directly from the Court Analytics Virtual Environment (CAVE), a centralized operations data repository. Users engage with CaveGPT by asking natural-language questions about court operations, and it delivers real-time insights on key drivers, trends, correlations, as well as anomalies observed along with explanatory text.

Finance & Administration



After years of hard work on the Hazard Mitigation grant project, the Emergency Response and Security Services (ERSS) team has finished installing the second generator at Harbor Justice Center (HJC).

General Counsel



The Court hosted 66 court tours during the school year, which gave 2,480 students the opportunity to explore the workings of the court, learn about the legal system, and meet dedicated legal professionals at one of four justice centers: Central, Harbor, North or West.

Human Resources



Achieved full staffing of all Court Reporter positions through strong collaboration with management and Court Reporter staff. Enhanced communication and engagement through an increase in courtwide video production. Additionally, launched a courtwide Mental Health and Wellbeing initiative that introduced new courses, a Wellness SharePoint site, lunchtime drop-in sessions, and Therapy Dog visits to promote employee wellness.