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2014-15 Governors Budget - District Courts

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Mission:

The mission of the judicial branch is to provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair, competent, and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

Statewide Outcome(s):

District Courts supports the following statewide outcome(s).

Strong and stable families and communities.

People in Minnesota are safe.

Efficient and accountable government services.

Context:

The district courts have original statewide jurisdiction in all civil and criminal actions within district boundaries. There are ten judicial districts, and 289 district court judges. Each year, about 1.5 million cases are filed in Minnesota's district courts. A family court division, juvenile court division, probate division, and a traffic and ordinance violations bureau exist in the district court.

There are district courts in 99 locations across the state with more geographic representation than any other state entity, providing access and justice to citizens in every county. Judges are assisted in their adjudicative work by law clerks (who perform legal research) and court reporters (who record trial proceedings). Court administration staff at the county and district level manages scheduling, case flow, finance, personnel and juries. Judicial District Administrators and staff assist the Chief Judge in each district in carrying out his/her responsibility as the administrative head of all courts within the district.

The adjudicative functions of the District Courts have an impact on all Minnesota citizens.

For the district courts, General Fund direct appropriations are the primary funding source. For FY 2012-13, General Fund direct appropriations account for 96.8 percent of funding for the district courts. Federal grants represent 0.9 percent of funding for the district courts. The balance of funding is from special revenue funds and other grants and gifts, representing 2.3 percent of district courts funding. The district courts collect nearly \$200 million in revenues annually. These revenues are distributed to the state general fund, other state agencies, local units of government and crime victims in the form of restitution.

Strategies:

The District Courts conduct their adjudicative and administrative functions in support of three strategic goals to deliver the judicial branch mission and to support the statewide outcomes:

Access to Justice – Ensuring the justice system is open, affordable, effective, and accountable to the people it serves.

Administering Justice for Effective Results – Working across branches of government and with other stakeholders to improve outcomes for and the delivery of services for children, families, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) addicted offenders who come into the courts.

Public Trust, Accountability and Impartiality – Through education, outreach to diverse communities and a commitment to system-wide customer service and accountability, improving citizens' understanding of and confidence in the Third Branch of government.

To further these three strategic goals, the branch's strategic plan outlines future priorities. Each of the specific priorities addresses challenges facing the court system by targeting judicial branch resources in a focused

manner on achievable and measurable strategies. Implementation of these priorities takes place over the life of the strategic plan with specific performance measures to evaluate their success. The FY 2012-2013 Judicial Branch Strategic Plan can be found at <http://www.mncourts.gov>.

Results:

It is the policy of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to establish core performance goals and to monitor key results that measure progress toward meeting these goals in order to ensure accountability of the branch, improve overall operations of the court, and enhance the public's trust and confidence in the judiciary.

Throughout the year, the district courts are directed to review performance measures results. They are provided regular reports to facilitate this review and to determine and implement corrective actions. This review of results is shared with the Judicial Council (the branch's governing body) twice a year.

The performance goal of timeliness indicates whether the district courts are handling cases in a timely manner. There are several measures the district courts use to gauge timeliness, including clearance rate, time to disposition, and age of pending caseload.

Overall, the district courts are meeting the goal of timeliness.

- The current Clearance Rate for district courts is 100 percent. Clearance rate is the number of cases settled divided by the number of new cases filed. A clearance rate of 100 percent indicates the district courts are keeping up with cases filed. This goal is being met.
- The percent of cases statewide that are not meeting Time to Disposition timing standards is holding steady. Time to Disposition assesses the length of time it takes to process cases compared to the Judicial Council objectives for timely case processing. The goal is to have only one percent of cases pending beyond the timing objective. This measure is holding steady at 2.3 percent for all case groups. The Major Criminal case group (felony and gross misdemeanor cases) had the highest percentage of cases not meeting the established timing standards for dispositions at 7.0 percent in 2011.
- As of June 30, 2012, six percent of all cases were pending disposition beyond established timing objectives, which is an improvement over the previous year. Age of Pending is a measure of court backlog at a point in time, and the goal is to have only one percent of cases pending beyond the timing standard. The most backlogged case group is Domestic Abuse at 12 percent in 2012 compared to eight percent in 2011. The Major Criminal case group is the second most backlogged and is holding steady at 11 percent.

Contributing to these results is the continued efforts of the district courts to expand the use of technology and reengineer business processes to increase efficiency and reduce costs, while continuing to provide Minnesota with quality justice.

To address processing delays in the Major Criminal case group, resulting from a lack of resources brought on by judicial vacancies, public defender shortages, and other justice partner staff reductions, a series of meetings between District Chief Judges and Chief Public Defenders were held to address scheduling and other ideas to resolve issues within existing financial constraints.

The first phase of the Court Payment Center (CPC) was completed in 2011. The CPC centralizes the processing of hundreds of thousands of payable citations filed each year in 85 district courts. In addition the CPC allows for the payment of fines by credit card 24/7 through the web and over the phone, automates the calculation and distribution of fees to state and local government, and automates the referral of overdue fines to the branch's collection agent the MN Department of Revenue. This initiative provides new and more efficient ways for the public to pay outstanding fines, frees up local court staff to concentrate on high priority court work, and increases collections and revenues for cities, counties and the state. The last two district courts, Hennepin and Ramsey, are scheduled to come onto the CPC in the FY 2014/2015 biennium.

eCourtMN is a multi-year transformational project to move the branch from an historic framework of paper files to an electronic information environment. Nine district courts are serving as pilots for the voluntary eFiling of various cases and two district courts are piloting mandatory eFiling for civil and family cases. The goal is to increase efficiency, reduce costs and improve convenience for litigants, attorneys and the public.

Performance Measures	Previous	Current	Trend
Statewide Clearance Rate	101%	100%	declining but meeting goal
Statewide Time to Disposition -- % of caseload not meeting disposition timing objectives	2.3%	2.3%	steady
Major Criminal Time to Disposition -- % of caseload not meeting disposition timing objective of 12 months	8.1%	7.3%	improving
Statewide Age of Pending -- % of currently pending cases not meeting timing objectives	7%	6%	improving
Age of Pending -- Domestic Abuse case group	8%	12%	declining
Age of Pending -- Major Criminal case group	11%	11%	steady

Performance Measures Notes:

Data are from the *Judicial Branch 2011 Performance Measures – Key Results and Measures Annual Report* and from the *Judicial Branch 2012 Performance Measures – Key Results and Measures Annual Report*. Both reports can be found at <http://www.mncourts.gov>.

Clearance Rates used 2007 data for the previous period and 2011 data for the current period. Rates exclude the Minor Criminal case type.

Time to Disposition used 2010 data for the previous period and 2011 data for the current period. Data reported reflects cases disposed beyond the 99th percentile. Cases disposed beyond the 99th percentile are considered to have not met timing objectives.

Age of Pending is a point in time measure. Data from 6/30/2011 was used for the previous period and data from 6/30/2012 was used for the current period. Data reported reflects cases pending beyond the 99th percentile; cases beyond the 99th percentile are a measure of backlog.

District Courts**Current, Base and Governor's Recommended Expenditures**

(Dollars in Thousands, Biennial Totals)

	General Funds	Other State Funds	Federal Funds	All Funds
Current Biennium Expenditures (FY 2012-13)	\$470,338	\$16,461	\$20,092	\$506,891
Current Law Expenditures (FY 2014-15)	\$473,656	\$12,864	\$25,256	\$511,776
Governor's Recommended Expenditures (FY2014-15)	\$502,825	\$12,864	\$25,256	\$540,945
\$ Change from FY 2014-15 Current Law to Governor's Rec	\$29,169	\$0	\$0	\$29,169
% Change from FY 2014-15 Current Law to Governor's Rec	6%	0%	0%	6%

District Courts**Sources and Uses**

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Biennium FY14-FY15			
	General Funds	Other State Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds
BALANCE FORWARD IN		\$12,141	\$1,403	\$13,544
REVENUE		\$12,478	\$23,853	\$36,331
TRANSFERS IN		\$350		\$350
APPROPRIATION	\$502,825	\$0	\$0	\$502,825
SOURCES OF FUNDS	\$502,825	\$24,970	\$25,256	\$553,051
BALANCE FORWARD OUT		\$12,105		\$12,105
EXPENDITURES	\$502,825	\$12,864	\$25,256	\$540,945
PAYROLL EXPENSE	\$433,030	\$559	\$3,754	\$437,344
OPERATING EXPENSES	\$67,218	\$1,285	\$21,450	\$89,953
OTHER FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS	\$609	\$11,020		\$11,629
GRANTS, AIDS AND SUBSIDIES	\$134		\$52	\$186
CAPITAL OUTLAY-REAL PROPERTY	\$1,833			\$1,833
USES OF FUNDS	\$502,825	\$24,970	\$25,256	\$553,051

District Courts

Governor's Changes

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY 14	FY 15	FY 14-15 Biennium	FY 16	FY 17	FY 16-17 Biennium
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Maintain Core Justice Operations

The Governor recommends funding to maintain core justice operations, including compensation increases for court staff and judges, increased employer-paid pension contributions to the Judge Pension Fund, and anticipated cost increases for employee health insurance. Employee-paid contributions to the Judge Pension Fund would also be increased.

Performance Measures:

Maintaining existing staff and services will allow the Courts to continue to undertake initiatives designed to increase efficiency, reduce costs, improve public services and resolve cases promptly and without delay.

General Fund	Expenditure	9,756	19,413	29,169	19,413	19,413	38,826
	Net Change	9,756	19,413	29,169	19,413	19,413	38,826
Net All Change Items	General Fund	9,756	19,413	29,169	19,413	19,413	38,826
	Net Change	9,756	19,413	29,169	19,413	19,413	38,826

District Courts
All Funds FTE by Activity

	Current	Forecast Base	Governor's Recommendation
Activity	FY 2013	FY 2015	FY 2015
Budget Activity: Trial Courts	2,612.3	2,432.9	2,612.1
District Courts	2,612.3	2,432.9	2,612.1

District Courts**Revenue Summary**

(Dollars in Thousands)

		Biennium FY14-15			
		General Fund	Other State Funds	Federal Funds	All Funds
Non Dedicated	ALL OTHER	47,984			47,984
	Subtotal	47,984			47,984
Dedicated	FEDERAL GRANTS		0	9,510	9,510
	DEPARTMENTAL EARNINGS		943		943
	INVESTMENT INCOME		50		50
	ALL OTHER		11,485	14,343	25,828
	Subtotal		12,478	23,853	36,331
	Total	47,984	12,478	23,853	84,315