

Analysis
Judicial Department
Family Court Enhancement Project Grant

Analyst: Steve Bender

Request: Approve, retroactively, the submission of a federal grant application to the Office on Violence Against Women in the U.S. Department of Justice for a Justice for Families Program grant, in the amount of \$550,000, for the Multnomah County Circuit Court Family Court Enhancement Project.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Analysis: The application guidelines for the grant were released in December 2016, and the application was due on January 12, 2017. The Department provided the Emergency Board Co-Chairs with notice of intent to apply for the grant more than ten days prior to submitting the application.

The Judicial Department (OJD) is applying for grant funds made available under the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women's Justice for Families grant program. This is the second application for program funds. OJD successfully applied for a \$400,000 Family Court Enhancement Project (FCEP) Demonstration Grant in 2014. In January 2017, OJD applied to the program a second time, for continued funding of the Family Court Enhancement Project. The FCEP is operated by the Multnomah County Family Court, and provides assistance to *pro se* litigants in domestic relations cases. *Pro se* litigants access courts without the assistance of an attorney. FCEP helps *pro se* litigants who have been subject to domestic violence access the court, and supports training of judges, court staff and attorneys, with the goal of improving how the court adjudicates domestic violence issues.

The new grant would cover expenditures over a three-year period, beginning in October 2017. The moneys would be used to fund two staff positions in the Multnomah County Circuit Court, plus associated services and supplies costs. The grant would also support working with Portland State University to analyze and improve court services to underrepresented populations. The grant has no state match requirements, and there are no requirements to continue any grant-supported activities or services after the grant expires. The Office on Violence Against Women will provide award notifications by October 2017.

The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the submission of the federal grant application be retroactively approved. If the application is successful, OJD will request a Federal Funds expenditure limitation increase in the 2018 session.