



# MEMORANDUM

Prepared for: JWM – General Government

Date: April 18, 2021

By: Misty Mason Freeman, LPRO Director

Re: LPRO Budget Request

**LPRO: LEGISLATIVE POLICY AND RESEARCH OFFICE**

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Each biennium, legislative agencies prepare budgetary requests for consideration by the Joint Ways and Means Committee. Below are the budgetary requests for the Legislative Policy and Research Office (LPRO) for the 2021-23 biennium.

## SUMMARY

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LPRO is a relatively new agency, established in 2016 by Senate Bill 1569. Prior to 2016, the office existed as Committee Services. The formation of LPRO indicated the legislature's interest in strengthening the research arm of the office, as well as ensuring a larger number of staff, especially legislative analysts, were employed in ongoing, year-round positions for greater longevity, knowledge of the legislative process, and deepened expertise in each policy area.

As the agency begins to fully realize the transition from Committee Services to the Legislative Policy and Research Office, several updates to the budget would support our success. These include:

1. Affirming the establishment of an additional Deputy Director position, funded internally through a reconfiguration of allotted FTE
2. Affirming changes related to the pay equity and reclassification work implemented by the branch in January 2021
3. Affirming the establishment of two Language Access Services positions, as directed by the Presiding Officers and considering allocating an additional FTE for an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter
4. Considering allocating additional FTE to LPRO for the following:
  - Additional continuing Committee Assistants and a Senior Committee Assistant to support session and interim work
  - A continuing GIS Analyst to support legislators with mapping beyond Redistricting efforts
  - Research Analysts, distinct from Legislative Analysts, to offer more capacity and research-specific expertise in the office
5. Considering reconfiguring our Communications Coordinator position, formerly used for a Legislative Analyst 1, into a fellowship opportunity

Other priorities for the LPRO budget include:

6. Redistricting, which will continue into the next biennium, in part due to Census data delays
7. Training for LPRO staff, to focus on:

- Leadership training for Lead/Principal Analysts
- Writing, facilitation, and research training for all staff

## **AFFIRMING STAFFING UPDATES**

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### **Request 1: Affirm the establishment of an additional Deputy Director position, funded internally through a reconfiguration of allotted FTE**

This Director was appointed as interim November 2019 and confirmed as permanent Director September 2020. During this time, I established a leadership team to help strengthen and grow the three key functional areas of the office:

- Committee Services
- Policy Research
- Administration

Previously, LPRO had operated with a single Deputy Director. I added a second Deputy so that one Deputy, chosen for their expertise and experience in Committee Services could focus on that functional area, while the second Deputy, chosen for expertise and experience in Policy Research, could shepherd that work. This has been of great benefit to the office, which has grown in both areas.

The addition of a second Deputy position is one that can be covered internally by shifting around the FTE allotted to LPRO.

### **Request 2: Affirm changes related to the pay equity and reclassification work implemented by the branch in January 2021**

The third functional area of LPRO's work is Administration, which includes such important work as keeping up the public record, answering inquiries from the public, and running the audio/video systems during committee meetings. Staff are overseen by the Support Services Supervisor. This position was previously called "Publications Manager," but in the Segal reclassification process, the position was more accurately characterized to reflect the supervisory function over the continuing and session Committee Assistant staff and the Front Desk Specialist.

Other changes proposed by Segal Consulting and Employee Services were implemented in January 2021.

For LPRO staff, the reclassification included a retooling of the Legislative Analyst position descriptions, from a 4-level series (Legislative Analyst 1-4) to 3-level series: Lead or Principal Legislative Analyst, Senior Legislative Analyst, and Legislative Analyst. The process also involved retooling the position descriptions for the Committee Assistant series, from a complicated collection of Coordinators and Executive Support positions to 4 positions: Senior Committee Assistant, Committee Assistant, Front Desk Specialist, and Session-Only Support Staff.

The pay equity review resulted in a limited amount of "red circling" of employee compensation, but in most cases remained the same or increased the pay for staff.

## **LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES**

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### **Request 3: Affirm the establishment of two Language Access Services positions, as directed by the Presiding Officers and consider allocating an additional FTE for an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter**

In November 2020, the Presiding Officers asked a legislative branch work group, led by this Director, to develop a proposal for providing language access services for the legislature.

The work group proposed that the legislative branch hire two employees: a Language Access Coordinator, to develop and implement a plan to provide language access services for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) community members; and a Spanish Language Interpreter to provide in-house Spanish language interpretation and translation. These two positions were approved by the Presiding Officers and assigned to LPRO to develop position descriptions and conduct a recruitment.

The work group recommended the following priorities for language access staff:

- Single point of contact for the public to access language services
- Oral (simultaneous) interpretation for testifying in committees
- Oral interpretation for answering constituent queries
- Oral interpretation for meetings with legislators
- Written translation for website materials, including meeting agendas, information about bills, and instructions for how to engage with the legislative process
- Signage for wayfinding at the Capitol

In addition to the positions proposed by the work group, an ASL interpreter would be a valuable addition to language access services for the legislature. For deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing Oregonians who speak ASL as a first language and may identify as LEP community members, this position would support further access to legislators and the legislative process.

## **GROWING INTO A LEGISLATIVE POLICY AND RESEARCH OFFICE**

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### **Request 4: Consider allocating additional FTE to LPRO (please see Appendix 1 for costs)**

During the 2019-21 biennium, LPRO staffed 41 legislative committees, 4 task forces, and 28 work groups, which included working with the Secretary of State's office on Ballot Measures and staffing three Special Sessions. Analysts responded to more than 80 research requests, including an overview of the federal CARES Act, a 335-page bill signed into law March 27<sup>th</sup>, for which our 35-page summary was published April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The office's continuing staff included approximately 20 continuing legislative analysts (including the Deputy Directors), 8 continuing committee assistants (2 of whom are double-filling positions), the front desk specialist and the director.

### **Consider additional continuing Committee Assistants and a Senior Committee Assistant to support session and interim work**

Critical to LPRO's ability to continue providing this level of service is the allocation of additional FTE for continuing committee assistants. While supplemented during session by seasonal staff, LPRO is experiencing increasing levels of off-season work that are stretching committee assistants thin. My request is for 3 Committee Assistants (funding the 2 that are double-filling positions and adding one more) and for 1 Senior Assistant. The Senior Assistant differs from the Committee Assistant in their role as a mentor and lead worker, something that is particularly important assisting the Support Services Supervisor during session and in growing continuing staff during the interim.

### **Consider adding a continuing GIS Analyst to support legislators with mapping beyond Redistricting efforts**

LPRO has had a limited duration GIS Analyst on staff since December 2020 to support the legislature's Redistricting efforts. Redistricting is ideally meant to conclude before July 1, but due to delays in receiving data from the US Census Bureau, we expect the committees to continue working at least through October 2021.

Additionally, LPRO has had requests for GIS mapping outside Redistricting efforts. Examples include mapping:

- Languages spoken in each legislative district, including locations of limited English proficiency Oregonians
- Locations of behavioral health care providers statewide
- School groups visiting the Capitol, to understand which areas of the state are visiting
- Water bodies researched, monitored, and treated for harmful algae blooms
- Demographics of Oregon vs. demographics of state legislators over time
- And more!

Having a continuing GIS Analyst on staff with LPRO would give us capacity to dig into a variety of policy topics in a spatial way that can provide additional ways of understanding issues and potential solutions.

### **Consider adding research Analysts, distinct from Legislative Analysts, to offer more capacity and research-specific expertise in the office**

Soon after LPRO was established, several new Legislative Analysts were hired with the goal of directing their efforts toward building out the office's research capacity. However, due to the increasing workload related to committee services-related work without accompanying increases in committee staff, these analysts quickly were assigned to

staff committees, task forces, and work groups, leaving them little time to focus on responding to research requests and publishing policy research.

Today, Legislative Analysts are doing well at responding to current research requests; however, as the volume and complexity of requests continues to grow, Research Analysts would strengthen LPRO's ability to provide this service to the legislature.

This request is to add 5 FTE to LPRO, specifically for Research Analysts. If approved, this would require development of a new position description, rather than use of the Legislative Analyst position description. I propose assigning one Research Analyst to each policy area team, to serve that grouping of topics and committees with policy research support. The policy area teams are:

- Health Care, Human Services & Education
- Business, Labor, Transportation & Housing
- Rules, Veterans & General Government
- Judiciary
- Natural Resources

**Request 5: Consider reconfiguring our Communications Coordinator position, formerly used for a Legislative Analyst 1, into a fellowship opportunity**

Neither Communications Coordinator nor Legislative Analyst 1 have proven to be useful classifications for LPRO. However, we often have projects which would be mutually beneficial opportunities for recent graduates and for LPRO. I propose using the FTE currently identified as a Communications Coordinator to offer an LPRO fellowship, similar to a limited duration position that is recurring. Similar to a graduate student internship, LPRO would seek to provide exposure to the legislative process and offer opportunities to gain valuable experience with the office. Meanwhile, LPRO would receive an infusion of talent and additional early-career candidates in the pipeline for future Legislative and Research Analysts.

## **REDISTRICTING**

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**Request 5: Continued funding for Redistricting efforts**

LPRO staff are currently supporting the once-in-a-decade work of the legislature to redraw state and congressional legislative districts for Oregon. The state constitution requires redistricting to be done by July 1 the year after the receipt of decennial Census data. Due to COVID-19 and other administrative hurdles, the US Census Bureau will not be able to deliver data to Oregon in time to meet that deadline. Efforts to determine the best course of action given a mid-August timeframe for receiving the data are ongoing, but likely entail LPRO staff involvement through October 2021 or later.

2021-23 costs related to Redistricting include:

- Contract with DAS for the ESRI Redistricting Tool, the web-based platform for drawing, reviewing, and offering feedback on proposed district maps (see Appendix 2 for software costs)
- Limited Duration staffing of GIS Analyst to prepare maps
- Potential costs for in-person road show hearings

## **TRAINING**

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### **Request 6: Increased budget for LPRO staff training**

As a relatively new agency, the amount of funding budgeted for individual line items continues to need adjustment. Specific to staff training, there are certain areas that I request be made a priority.

First, the new position description for the Lead/Principal Analyst includes duties related to a lead worker. I propose that each person in such a role have training to strengthen their understanding of the power and responsibility that go along with leadership. I also want to give them the tools to be effective mentors and lead others towards success.

Second, I propose making certain trainings part of the LPRO staff experience, so that regardless of who is assigned to a given research request or committee, legislators can be assured that LPRO can fulfil our commitment to excellence. The areas I want to strengthen in our staff are:

- Writing: from staff measure summaries to research memos, emails and everything in between, I want to make sure LPRO staff continually improve our written communication
- Facilitation: as we receive more assignments to support work groups and task forces beyond administrative tasks, I want to make sure LPRO staff are equipped with the tools to facilitate good meetings in a nonpartisan and objective manner
- Research: the volume and complexity of the research requests received by LPRO continues to increase, and I want to make sure LPRO staff have training to take them on effectively

## **CONCLUSION**

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LPRO is an agency with a relatively short tenure, however, we have made great strides towards realizing the transition from Committee Services to the Legislative Policy and Research Office. The list of budgetary requests from LPRO is significant but not hastily compiled. These represent the tools that will take the office to the next level in service to the legislature. Thank you for your consideration.

## **Appendix 1. Cost for Staffing Policy Option Packages, compiled by Joshua Sweet, Financial Services**

### Analysts:

- 5 18 month Research Analysts
- 1 24 month GIS Analyst
- 1 18 month Fellow
- \$56,000 Services & Supplies
- **\$1,470,204 Total including S&S**

### Committee Assistants:

- 1 21 month Senior Committee Assistant
- 1 21 month Committee Assistant
- \$16,000 Services & Supplies
- **\$299,750 Total including S&S**

### Language Access:

- 1 24 month Language Access Coordinator
- 1 24 month Language Access Interpreter
- 1 21 month Language Access Interpreter
- \$24,000 Services & Supplies
- **\$599,159 Total including S&S**