



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Public Defender's Office
Department No.: 023
Agenda Date: October 21, 2025
Placement: Administrative Agenda
Estimated Time: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: 4/5

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director: Tracy M. Macuga, Public Defender
Contact: Deepak Budwani, Chief Financial & Administrative Officer, 805-568-3589
SUBJECT: Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the Public Defender to Apply for Grant Funding from the California Office of the State Public Defender's Expanded Public Defense Grant – Holistic Defense Program

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Adopt and authorize the chair to execute a Resolution authorizing the Public Defender, or designee, to submit an application with the Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD) for the Expanded Public Defense (Holistic Defense) Grant Program, due October 28, 2025, for the award period of March 3, 2026 through June 1, 2028, with an anticipated award of \$850,000; and
- B. Determine that the above actions are government fiscal activities or funding mechanisms which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment and are therefore not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(b)(4) of the CEQA guidelines.

Summary Text:

The Public Defender's Office requests Board authorization to apply for funding through the California Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD) Expanded Public Defense Grant Holistic Defense Program. This 26-month state grant will support Project BRIDGE (Building Resilience, Inclusion, Defense, Growth and Equity), a countywide initiative that connects culturally rooted community engagement

with modern data driven infrastructure to strengthen holistic defense. If awarded, the grant would provide up to \$850,000 to fund a legal promotora, a full-time Spanish interpreter, digital integration staff, and cultural and trauma informed training. These investments will expand language access, deepen community trust, modernize data systems, and strengthen workforce capacity to deliver equitable, holistic representation.

Discussion:

The OSPD Expanded Public Defense Grant provides counties with funding of \$14.25 million to establish or expand holistic defense initiatives that address the underlying drivers of justice involvement and improve representation through interdisciplinary teams, language access, technology, and training. Allowable uses include staffing for social work and interdisciplinary functions, interpreter services, technology and data infrastructure, and professional development. No local match is required.

The Public Defender's Office proposes to apply for a Large Scope award of \$850,000 to implement Project BRIDGE. Project BRIDGE advances holistic defense through four integrated components:

- First, a legal promotora will build trust and facilitate communication with Spanish-speaking and indigenous language communities, particularly in North County, connecting clients and families to defense and social service resources and increasing participation in court and diversion processes.
- Second, a full-time Spanish interpreter will institutionalize language justice by providing timely interpretation and translation during attorney client meetings, court proceedings, and community outreach, ensuring that language is never a barrier to meaningful defense.
- Third, digital integration staff will modernize the department's technology infrastructure by building workflows in eDefender, integrating data with Box.com, and creating Power BI dashboards to track outreach, service linkages, interpreter usage, and outcomes in real time.
- Finally, cultural and trauma-informed training will strengthen staff capacity to deliver culturally responsive, interdisciplinary, and client-centered defense, ensuring that all interactions reflect shared frameworks for engagement.

These investments directly align with statewide holistic defense goals and address identified gaps in language access, community engagement, technology infrastructure, and workforce development. If approved, the Public Defender will submit the grant application by the October 28, 2025 deadline. To date, the grant agreement has not yet been made available. Public Defender staff will return to your Board for approval to accept the grant agreement, if awarded. Awards are anticipated to be announced in December 2025 with a 26-month grant term.

Background:

The OSPD Expanded Public Defense Grant Holistic Defense Program was established through recent State Budget investments to strengthen local public defense infrastructure statewide. It is the first dedicated state funding source in California specifically focused on holistic defense. Administered by the Office of the State Public Defender, the grant is part of a broader initiative to expand language access, community engagement, and data capacity in county-based public defense systems, particularly in historically under-resourced jurisdictions.

Project BRIDGE was developed in alignment with these state objectives and funding parameters, positioning Santa Barbara County to build durable infrastructure in language access, community engagement, data integration, and culturally responsive defense services.

Performance Measure:

The Public Defender will use enhanced technology platforms including eDefender, Box.com, and Power BI to track performance across all four grant components. Key performance indicators will include:

- Number of legal promotora outreach events, client contacts, and successful service linkages
- Number of interpreter service requests fulfilled, languages supported, and turnaround times for translation and transcription
- Successful hiring and onboarding of the IT position, and development of data integration processes between systems
- Completion of Extract, Transform, Load (ETL) pipelines and deployment of dashboards tracking legal promotora, interpreter, and service data
- Timeliness and quality of grant performance reports submitted to OSPD
- Measurable improvements in client engagement, service coordination, and reporting accuracy

Performance data will be collected continuously and reviewed regularly to assess progress toward program goals, ensure compliance with state reporting requirements, and inform future planning.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: No. If awarded, staff will return with a budget revision to appropriate the funding.

Fiscal Analysis:

Estimated position costs are reflected below and include annual increases to account for projected cost-of-living adjustments and step increases. The first-year salary is prorated for the partial year with an estimated position start date of May 1, 2026. Future years' costs will be included in the Public Defender's proposed budgets for FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28.

Funding Source	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28	Total
General Fund				
State	\$65,900	\$418,000	\$366,100	\$850,000
Federal				
Fees				
Total	\$65,900	\$418,000	\$366,100	\$850,000

Staffing Impacts:

The grant will fund 1.0 FTE Holistic Defense Advocate, 1.0 FTE Legal Office Professional II, and 1.0 FTE Computer Systems Specialist I in the Public Defender's Office for the duration of the program. If awarded, staff will return with an amended salary resolution to add these new full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.

Position Request Summary

Legal Position Title	Number of FTE	Estimated Cost
Social Services Worker / Social Services Worker Senior PS/L	1.0	\$135,200*
Legal Office Professional II	1.0	\$121,700*
Computer Systems Specialist I	1.0	\$138,800*
Total	3.0	\$395,700*

*Annualized position cost in FY 2025-26.

Special Instructions:

Please return one Minute Order to Deepak Budwani at dbudwani@countyofsb.org.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Resolution

Contact Information:

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