



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

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

Agenda Number:

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Public Defender's Office
Department No.: 023
Agenda Date: March 10, 2026
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 *TM Macuga*
Contact: Paloma Moran, Fiscal and Business Analyst
SUBJECT: Acceptance of \$850,000 State Grant to Expand Holistic Public Defense Services in Santa Barbara County

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Human Resources, CEO Budget

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Adopt a Resolution (Attachment A) authorizing the Public Defender to accept the \$850,000 award from the California Office of the State Public Defender for the Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant to support Project BRIDGE (Building Resilience, Inclusion, Defense, Growth & Equity) for the period from February 1, 2026, through June 1, 2028;
- B. Adopt an amendment to the Salary Resolution (Attachment B) to add one (1.0 FTE) Legal Office Professional II, one (1.0 FTE) Computer System Specialist I, and one (1.0 FTE) Social Services Worker, PS./L to the Public Defender's Office, effective March 16, 2026;
- C. Approve Budget Revision Request (BJE) No. 0010957 (Attachment C) to increase appropriations by \$850,000 in the Public Defender General Fund for Salaries and Benefits (\$65,900) and the Committed Public Defender Programs Fund Balance (\$784,100), funded by unanticipated grant revenue from the California Office of the State Public Defender; and
- D. Determine that the above actions are government fiscal activities or funding mechanisms that do not involve any commitment to any specific project that 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 approval to accept an \$850,000 state grant from the California Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD) to expand holistic defense services countywide. The grant funds Project BRIDGE (Building Resilience, Inclusion, Defense, Growth, and Equity), a 26-month initiative that improves language access, community engagement, and technology integration for indigent defense clients, particularly in North County. Approval of this item authorizes the Public Defender's Office to implement the grant-funded services beginning in March 2026, with no impact on the County General Fund.

Discussion:

Your Board has been asked to approve the acceptance and implementation of \$850,000 in grant funding awarded by OSPD for expanded holistic defense services. Approval authorizes the Public Defender's Office to receive and expend the awarded funds, establish grant-funded positions, and carry out the activities described in the approved Project BRIDGE proposal within the State-defined grant term. On October 21, 2025, your Board authorized the Public Defender's Office to submit this grant application.

Upon Board approval, the Public Defender's Office will implement Project BRIDGE as a 26-month initiative to strengthen language access, community engagement, and data-driven service delivery. Grant-funded activities will be integrated into existing operational structures and supervised by permanent management staff to ensure compliance with state requirements and County policies. The Office will administer the grant in accordance with OSPD's conditions, including fiscal controls, allowable-use restrictions, and biannual programmatic and Expenditure reporting. 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.

Project BRIDGE includes defined performance measures that will be tracked throughout the grant term to support Board oversight and state reporting. These measures focus on service delivery, efficiency, and outcomes. Data will be reviewed internally quarterly and reported to OSPD in accordance with grant requirements.

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 OSPD, 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.

Santa Barbara County's Project BRIDGE proposal was competitively selected based on identified service gaps and the County's capacity to implement grant-funded services within the existing public defense infrastructure. The project builds on existing Public Defender operations, technology platforms, and community partnerships and does not require new County facilities or changes to County policy. Grant-funded positions are limited-term and fully funded by the State.

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; recommend approval of BJE No. 0010957 attached.

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 year costs will be included in the Public Defender's proposed budget for FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28. There is no impact to the General Fund by accepting this grant.

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

*Prorated position cost for FY 2025-26.

Staffing Impacts:

The grant will fund 1.0 FTE Holistic Defense Advocate (classification title: Social Services Worker/Senior PS/L), 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.

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 Paloma Moran at pmoran@countyofsb.org. Please also route one copy of the minute order and one copy of the fully executed Salary Resolution to HRPositionControl@countyofsb.org.

Attachments:

- Attachment A** – Board Resolution
- Attachment B** – Salary Resolution
- Attachment C** – BJE No. 0010957
- Attachment D** – OSPD Grant Agreement

Contact Information:

Paloma Moran
 Fiscal and Business Analyst, Public Defender’s Office
pmoran@countyofsb.org