

The Commission's biennial budget before you was created based on information our agency submitted last summer, and was issued last fall.

Since then, our agency's needs have developed and changed.

Our staff started working remotely at a time when we had almost no electronic document management and little experience with working remotely. We have had to develop new systems, and those have shown us newly-urgent needs that we didn't know about when this budget was created.

Our agency's anticipated federal revenues have grown increasingly uncertain. Those federal revenues rely on the availability of federal funds, which often is reduced and curtails our federal contracts. Our federal revenues also rely on our ability to close cases in given time frames, which has been negatively impacted by all that COVID has entailed: an 8% increase in complaints received; staff that has to work remotely; staff that is working remotely, out sick, out on leave, and turning over; and an backlog of cases that's increased 10%. If we can't close as many cases, we lose federal funds, and that assumes that our contracts will be unaffected by federal limits.

For the fourth initiative on investigator reclassifications, we are not able to fund the federal expenditures listed for the fourth initiative, and must ask for this initiative to be changed.

We ask that this initiative be revised to remove the federal expenditures and to increase the General Fund cover the entire initiative.

- As I noted the other day, initiative #4 lumps together one employee-initiated reclassification in FY 2021-2022 and a management-initiated reclassification that applies to the other 5 investigator positions for both years.
- The employee-initiated reclassification in a position entirely supported by the General Fund that is accruing interest retroactively, so funding that portion of the initiative truly is urgent.
- We are concerned that the budget may not contain accurate information with respect to the cost of the employee initiated reclassification because we asked the Bureau of the Budget about it today, and they were just calculating it at our request. The cost for that *appears* to be (or may be) \$18,123 in FY2021-2022; that position is entirely covered by the General Fund and continues to accrue interest.
- Aside from this, the remaining portion of the initiative is for management-initiated reclassification of 5 investigator positions.
- If that is not an option, I urge the Committee to find a way to revise the initiative to ensure that the employee-initiated reclassification funds remain in the FY2021-2022 budget.

Since this budget was created, we have had to concede that we have an absolutely urgent need to have funding for technology costs.

We ask to have the Committee add an initiative for technology costs in the amount of \$39,619.56.

- Our agency handles our own technology, and our Director of Operations does all IT, website, building, finance, budget, and other unallocated work, and she can no longer be the person handling all emergency needs for computer issues. In the year since the pandemic sent our staff home, our computers, network, software, zoom, wifi, software etc have become absolutely essential; if a staffer's computer isn't working, their work is

stopped dead until our Operations Director can fix it. the same is true for our Commissioners as they try to review documents in preparation for public hearings. Emergency calls for help to this one person from 18 other people requires our Operations Director to set aside other key work she is doing - our budget projections, our annual report, paying our bills in the state systems, working on grant projects, providing data as needed in response to legislative matters, etc. The Operations Director simply cannot be on call 24 hours per day to fix problems that stop other employees from getting work done. She spends days fixing computers when she needs to be working on other, higher-level work. We have avoided asking for help with IT as long as possible and simply can't avoid it any longer. The cost of working with OIT is using their subscription services - paying monthly to lease computers for each employee of our agency and commissioners (who call our Operations Director on the weekend), access to the network, and desktop support.

- The cost for this would be \$39,619.56 per year (\$173.77 monthly rate for 14 employees and 5 Commissioners, or \$3301.63/monthly).
- *If we don't include our 5 Commissioners in this level of support, the cost goes down to \$29,193 annually (\$173.77 monthly rate for 14 employees, or \$2432/monthly).*

If the Committee can include both initiatives - a new technology initiative and a revised investigator reclassification initiative- in the budget, that would be fantastic. We know also that may not be possible.

Our top priorities have to be the employee-initiated investigator reclassification in FY2021-2022 and new funding for technology costs.

It is critically important that we do not to let the General Funds in the entire investigator reclassification initiative be lost to us by deleting the initiative altogether.

We are willing to defer the management-initiated reclassification initiative to the supplemental budget if need be, when we know more about our federal revenues.

I am so sorry to make this changed request at the last minute, which I've never done before. But, COVID-19.

Thank you for considering this.

-Amy Sneirson

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