



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Legistar File Number: 25-707

October 21, 2025

Introduced: 10/2/2025

Current Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Matter Type: General Agenda Item

- a. Authorize the Office of the Public Defender to submit an application for the purpose of obtaining financial assistance from the State of California Office of the State Public Defender's Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant in the amount of \$850,000 with a grant service term of March 2, 2026-May 15, 2028; and
- b. Designate and authorize the Public Defender, Assistant Public Defender, Administrative Department Head for the Public Defender's Office, or Designee to execute grant documents and applications for the Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Authorize the Office of the Public Defender to submit an application for the purpose of obtaining financial assistance from the State of California Office of the State Public Defender's Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant in the amount of \$850,000 with a grant service term of March 2, 2026-May 15, 2028; and
- b. Designate and authorize the Public Defender, Assistant Public Defender, Administrative Department Head for the Public Defender's Office, or Designee to execute grant documents and applications for the Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant.

SUMMARY:

The 2025-2026 Budget Act (SB 102) appropriated funding to support the expansion of public defense services statewide, specifically focusing on holistic defense-a client-centered approach to public defense that integrates legal advocacy with critical support services such as social work, housing, employment, substance use treatment, and mental health resources. The State of California Office of the State Public Defender has made \$14,250,000 available statewide through the Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant, encompassing a grant service term of March 2, 2026-May 15, 2028, with up to \$850,000 available per Public Defender office. The Office of the Public Defender seeks to submit an application for \$850,000 to hire additional social workers, building upon limited current staffing and expanding capacity to provide holistic support to clients. Funds will also support data collection to evaluate outcomes and cover allowable indirect costs.

DISCUSSION:

The 2025-2026 Budget Act (SB 102) appropriated funding to support the expansion of public defense services statewide, specifically focusing on holistic defense. The State of California Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD) has made \$14,250,000 available statewide through the Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant, encompassing a grant service term of March 2,

2026-May 15, 2028, with up to \$850,000 available per Public Defender office.

Allowable uses of funding under the Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant are specific to holistic defense initiatives and implementation. Holistic defense is a client-centered approach to public defense that addresses client needs beyond their immediate criminal cases, including underlying drivers of criminal legal system involvement and its collateral consequences. This approach integrates legal advocacy with critical support services such as social work, housing, employment, substance use treatment, and mental health resources.

Pending Board of Supervisors' approval, the Office of the Public Defender intends to apply for \$850,000 through the Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant to fund the hiring of additional social workers, enhancing holistic support services for Public Defender clients.

Currently, the Public Defender employs one holistic defense social worker, which is insufficient to meet community need. Utilizing this funding to expand holistic defense capabilities will allow the Office of the Public Defender to more effectively assess and respond to the underlying issues that contribute to a client's involvement in the justice system, ultimately supporting alternatives to incarceration, reducing recidivism, and eliciting more sustainable, successful long-term outcomes for Public Defender clients. A portion of the funding will be allocated to data collection efforts to evaluate the impact of the grant and client outcomes, as well as to cover allowable indirect costs.

Should the proposed application be selected to receive funding, the Office of the Public Defender shall return to the Board for authorization to receive the award. The Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant does not require matching funds.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/COMMITTEE ACTIONS:

County Counsel's Office has reviewed and approved as to form.

FINANCING:

This item has no impact on the General Fund and no impact on the FY 2025-26 Adopted Budget for the Office of the Public Defender.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS:

Expanding holistic defense services aligns with the Board of Supervisors' Safe and Resilient Communities Strategic Goal by addressing the root causes of justice involvement, thereby reducing recidivism and promoting long-term stability. By integrating social services into legal defense, this approach supports more equitable outcomes and helps justice-involved individuals reintegrate successfully into the community.

- ☐ Well-Being and Quality of Life
- ☐ Sustainable Infrastructure for the Present and Future
- ☒ Safe and Resilient Communities
- ☐ Diverse and Thriving Economy
- ☐ Administrative

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Attachments:

Attachment A: Expanded Public Defense Services (Holistic Defense) Grant Request for Applications