



STATE OF INDIANA

MIKE BRAUN, Governor

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TO: Chad Ranney, State Budget Director

FROM: Jennifer Ruby, Public Access Counselor (PAC)

DATE: June 27, 2025

RE: FY 26 SPENDING PLANS & STRATEGIC SPENDING REDUCTION PLANS
ALIGNED TO FY26 BUDGETS

Please accept our answers to your questions for your report, as follows.

1. How the spending plan will achieve the reserve target.

This office has been understaffed since February 2024. Therefore, this office should not have fully used its payroll allocation for the FY24 or FY25. Additionally, there has been cost savings in 2025 related to the lack of staff for the PAC office.

In light of the above information, we foresee making our target via the following actions:

- Starting July 1, 2025, OALP through MOU with PAC will pay for the part-time legal intern (two (2) days per week) until August 8, 2025 and a part-time paralegal (four (4) days per week) until June 30, 2026.
- Our new Attorney's first payroll will not be until September.
- We may downgrade the Senior. Attorney position to Attorney, which has a starting salary of \$63,000 (0-2 years experience).
- Costs for statewide training will be reduced by providing virtual-video trainings where appropriate.
 - When travel to a training site is necessary, we will use State fleet vehicles and use the State's hotel discounts or the current-PAC's personal discounts (Hilton Honors, AAA, etc.) to cover those costs.

2. The agency's plan to comply with the policies in the FMC.

The PAC will read and follow the policies in the FMC.

3. Any cost savings identified by the agency.

Most of our cost savings will be unused payroll in the past 16 months, OALP's assistance in providing a legal intern and paralegal to the PAC Office at its cost, and the new attorney position may not be filled until mid-August.

We will need to spend what we have to address heavy workload of prior and incoming requests and complaints.

4. Any opportunities to prioritize federal spending rather than state funding.

While federal law is outside of our jurisdiction, we may look into whether there are any education or public-access grants that the office may be eligible to apply for – realizing, of course, if we do accept such grants there will be increased work and reporting.

5. Anticipated federal grant opportunities or renewals through June 30, 2026, which include a state match component.

Please see response to Question 4.

6. The agency's staffing plan.

In addition to the PAC in place, please see our response to Question 1 for explanation of current staffing plan/coverage.

We will assess and create a new plan six (6) to nine (9) months after full staffing with the Agency Head, Senior Attorney and Paralegal and determine if additional staff is needed, if current staff is sufficient, or if staff can be reduced.

7. An analysis of open contracts.

We know of no open contracts, outside of Westlaw and other software contracts.

8. The agency's anticipated procurement and technology needs through June 30, 2026, including any anticipated new procurements or contract renewals.

Below is our plan to address such costs or identified need to support the agency's mission/responsibility.

Covered costs:

- OLAP will meet most technology needs for summer legal intern and paralegal for the next year.

- Printer/copier/fax machine and shredder seem to be in good shape, at this point.
- Currently using the IDOA supply closet for basic office supplies.
 - However, we may need to purchase our own as the year progresses but anticipate these will be a minor portion of the budget.

Needs/future costs:

- Technology set up for Attorney.
- Office furniture, computer and other equipment for Attorney and paralegal.
 - We will check with State surplus before making any new purchases.
- Consider a practice-management system for the PAC to increase efficiency.
 - State is considering leveraging resources into one practice management system; we would like to be part of this discussion and/or would like to benefit from and be part of that outcome.
- Awaiting review of cost savings for the whole state in using a uniform vendor of Westlaw, Lexis Nexis, or other.

9. An analysis of the agency’s capital plans, if applicable.

We have no capital plans.

10. Any anticipated exceptions to FMCs or state policies, along with the justification for the requested exception.

Our main exception is that we would like a waiver on the 5% mandatory reduction to cover the costs, but likely the benefits, associated with hiring the Senior Attorney position. We submitted the waiver with the approval of Secretary Hershman on June 20, 2025, which she approved.



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TO: Chad Ranney, State Budget Director

FROM: Jennifer Ruby, Public Access Counselor (PAC)

DATE: June 27, 2025

RE: Addendum to FY 26 SPENDING PLANS & STRATEGIC SPENDING
REDUCTION PLANS ALIGNED TO FY26 BUDGETS

The following addendum explains how funds will be used if our waiver-request is approved. Waiver approval will allow the Office of the Public Access Counselor (OPAC) to fulfill two crucial operational needs:

- 1) Hiring a quality Senior Attorney candidate vital to carry out OPAC's powers and duties at IC 5-14-4-10, including reviewing complaints for advisory opinions. This role would still be paid below average for a starting attorney in Indiana.
 - Per data from ZipRecruiter.com, the average entry-level attorney salary for Indiana is \$95,752.
 - Attorneys with 5 or more years of experience are automatically classified by the State as Senior Attorneys. The starting salary for Senior Attorney is \$85,020.
 - The 5% mandatory reserve may cap the attorney salary at \$66,681 because of the approximately \$44,454 in benefits required. This would require OPAC to hire a new attorney with 0-3 years of experience.
 - This is not feasible in the modern job market in Indiana, and it would leave our office with no deputy PAC to support the operations to meet our requirements under Indiana law.
 - Furthermore, Indiana is facing an attorney shortage as is, making the process of hiring an attorney highly competitive.

2) Educating the Public on the Open Door Law and Access to Public Records Act as mandated in IC 5-14-4-10 (1), requiring our office to establish and administer training about the rights and responsibilities under the public access laws.

- OPAC regularly receives requests for training from all levels of government throughout the State.
- OPAC needs the remaining operational expenses to pay for, not only in office needs like office supplies and equipment, but to present ODL and APRA training throughout the State per the statutory mandate.

To meet the 5% mandatory reserve from our total annual budget, which would be \$16,970, the funding would have to be taken from the Senior Attorney position payroll, or non-payroll operational expenses (in which the latter only accounts for \$13,112.13 of our budget for in office needs and training travel).

Therefore, the OPAC requests a waiver of the 5% mandatory reduction for FY26. We will be mindful of our budget and look for cost savings whenever they are obtainable.



State of Indiana

State Budget Agency
State House #212
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-5610

Mike Braun, Governor
Chad Ranney, Director

Approved Fiscal Year 2026 Strategic Spending Reduction Plan

Agency Name: Office of the Public Access Counselor

Pursuant to applicable state budgeting and financial management guidelines, the undersigned hereby affirm that the Fiscal Year 2026 Strategic Spending Reduction Plan submitted for the above-named agency has been reviewed and is approved for implementation. This approval signifies the plan submitted is in alignment with agency priorities, applicable legal requirements, and available funding levels.

Chad E. Ranney

State Budget Director

Date: August 25, 2025

Lisa Hershman

Secretary of Management and Budget

Date: 8/25/25

Jennifer Ruby

Public Access Counselor

Date: ~~7/30/25~~ 8/22/2025

Ensuring that Indiana's priorities are funded today and tomorrow.