

**Quality and Productivity Commission**  
**34<sup>th</sup> Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program**  
**"Leading with Excellence"**

**2021 APPLICATION**

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12-point font):

**NAME OF PROJECT: REMOTE COURTROOM HEARINGS**

**DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: APRIL 30, 2020**

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2020)

**CHECK HERE IF THIS PROJECT IS BEING SUBMITTED FOR THE COVID-19 IMPACT AWARD ONLY.** (Projects must be implemented on or before December 31, 2020. **Note:** Projects implemented less than one year ago will not be eligible for any other PQA awards. In addition, once a project is submitted, you cannot submit the same project for awards consideration in subsequent years).

**PROJECT STATUS:**  Ongoing  One-time only

**HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT?**  Yes  No

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.

1 The Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles (Court) initiated the  
 2 Remote Courtroom Hearings (RCH) – Here for You | Safe for You (HFYSFY) project in  
 3 response to California’s COVID stay-at-home orders. RCH functions on a Cisco Webex  
 4 (Webex) platform that enables attorneys and litigants to appear in court remotely while  
 5 eliminating the contagion risks associated with in-person attendance.  
 6 This online meeting platform extends remote hearings to Criminal, Juvenile  
 7 Delinquency and Juvenile Dependency litigations. Approximately 160 Courtrooms are  
 8 designated to use Webex via telephone and video at no cost to participants. RCH  
 9 courtrooms are equipped with cameras, conference phones, and microphones. The  
 10 Court furnished associated justice partners with the equipment and training required to  
 11 utilize the system for interviews and conferences.  
 12 Roughly 430,000 people participated in remote Juvenile and Criminal hearings since  
 13 implementation of the project as of April 2021. Most participants that have taken  
 14 advantage of RCH are residents of the County of Los Angeles.  
 15

**BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY**

| (1)<br>ACTUAL/ESTIMATED<br>ANNUAL COST<br>AVOIDANCE | (2)<br>ACTUAL/ESTIMATED<br>ANNUAL COST SAVINGS | (3)<br>ACTUAL/ESTIMATED<br>ANNUAL REVENUE | (1) + (2) + (3) =<br>TOTAL ANNUAL<br>ACTUAL/ESTIMATED<br>BENEFIT | SERVICE<br>ENHANCEMENT<br>PROJECT   |
|---|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| \$  | \$   | \$  | \$   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY**

|  |                         |   |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| <b>SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b><br>Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles<br>111 North Hill Street, Room 105E<br>Los Angeles, CA 90012 |                         | <b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b><br>213-633-0126                                   |
| <b>PROGRAM MANAGER’S NAME</b><br>Snorri Ogata, Chief Information Officer<br>EMAIL: sogata@lacourt.org  |                         | <b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b><br>213-633-0126                                   |
| <b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b><br>Sylvia White-Irby, Judicial and Executive Support Director   | <b>DATE</b><br>06.22.21 | <b>TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b> 213-633-0126<br><b>EMAIL:</b> SWIRBY@LACOURT.ORG |
| <b>DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b><br>Sherri R. Carter, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court  | <b>DATE</b><br>06.22.21 | <b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b><br>213-633-0112                                   |

**\*\*ELECTRONIC, WET, OR SCANNED SIGNATURES ARE ACCEPTABLE\*\***

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**1<sup>st</sup> FACT SHEET – LIMITED UP TO 3 PAGES ONLY:** Describe the **challenge(s), solution(s), and benefit(s)** of the project **to the County**. What quality and/or productivity-related outcome(s) has the project achieved? Provide measures of success **and specify assessment time frame**. Use Arial 12 point font.

**Challenge:**

Stay-at-home orders issued in March 2020 obliged the temporary closure of many court services. Soon after, constitutional mandates required reimplementing of key court services. Court leadership pivoted quickly to respond with safe alternative of providing these services remotely. Simultaneously, the primacy of protecting community welfare drove the effort. Technological advancement was a top priority for the Court even before the pandemic. As such, the required operational capacity and knowledge was available for application to this unforeseen disaster. RCH supported not only the Court’s prior goals of expanding access through technology, but also the of the Court, community and justice partners to keep court users safe during the pandemic.

**Solution:**

Development of the Court’s Webex platform for collaboration meetings was under way before the State initiated emergency orders. After emergency orders were issued, the Court’s technology services department reconfigured the basic communicational features of Webex to perform hearings remotely. Cameras, conference phones, microphones and Webex accounts were installed in Juvenile Dependency, Juvenile Delinquency, and Criminal courtrooms to enable RCH participation. Hearings in these departments have proceeded through RCH since April 2020.

Private meeting rooms are supported through Webex in each RCH courtroom. Static URLs and meeting IDs were established for litigants and agencies to connect and participate in the project. A separate Webex account and the required equipment were also installed for Los Angeles Police Department interview rooms and for Juvenile Delinquency detention areas. All participating parties can connect through either personal or office devices, such as smartphones, tablets, or computers. All that is required is an internet connection. Absent these common means of communication, participants can also connect via telephone, if video is not required.

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**Benefits:**

The project achieved several quality and productivity-related outcomes. Many of the Court's justice partners and litigants save time and money from traveling, parking, and spending a significant part of their day at Court. Beyond the HFYSFY benefits, parents and children in the Juvenile Dependency/Delinquency matters are not burdened with complications arising from missing work, leaving classrooms and rearranging personal obligations to participate in court hearings.

In addition, at the outset of the pandemic the Court collaborated with the Sheriff, Public Defender and over 30 city police agencies to establish interim video arraignment capability. This arrangement resulted in a reduction of detainee transportations, as well as, a private method of communications for detainees and their appointed attorneys.

Juvenile Dependency is the shining star of RCH. Most case type incurred backlogs through COVID limitations. Extensive resources will be required to process these matters. However, the Juvenile Dependency department's comprehensive and enthusiastic adoption of RCH reduced their case backlog during the pandemic.

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**Linkage to the County Strategic Plan – 1 page only.** Which County Strategic Plan goal(s) does this project address? Explain how. Use Arial 12-point font.

The RCH project addresses all of the Los Angeles County Strategic Plan goals.

RCH supports Goal I: **“Make Investments That Transform Lives”** by transforming lives that are directly affected by access to court services. Justice partners and community members taking part in RCH did not need to delay court procedures due to live attendance requirements. Many if not all the participants had not experienced comprehensive remote court proceedings prior to RCH. RCH’s remote attendance capacities increased the Court’s focus on COVID prevention initiatives and reformed service delivery within our justice system.

RCH supports Goal II: **“Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities”** by reducing the cost and time required of members of the County workforce to participate in remote procedures. Wages lost through traveling and unnecessary work absences are minimized. The remote platform of RCH supports the wellness of our community directly by eliminating exposure to COVID in courtrooms. RCH makes environmental sustainability our daily reality by establishing a more cost-effect and more efficient court system environment. Reduction of emissions and crowding affect the external environment too.

RCH supports Goal III: **“Realize Tomorrow’s Government Today”** by pursuing development of our workforce in training and equipping both community members and justice partners with the ability to perform in a technologically advanced venue the likes of which most had little, if any, exposure prior to the project. RCH embraces digital government for the benefit of our customers and communities directly, through the digital nature and delivery of services. It pursues operational effectiveness and accountability by eliminating access to justice due to COVID – pandemics are no excuse for justice delayed. Finally, it engages our customers, communities, and partners in a very direct and impactful way. Work and personal lives continued without risking the health and well-being of everyone involved.

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**COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY):** If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. Please indicate whether these benefits apply in total or on a per unit basis, e.g., per capita, per transaction, per case, etc. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation. Use Arial 12-point font

**Cost Avoidance:** Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these are costs to the County or to other entities.

**Cost Savings:** A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these were expenditures by the County or by other entities.

**Revenue:** Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

| (1)<br>ACTUAL/ESTIMATED<br>ANNUAL COST<br>AVOIDANCE | (2)<br>ACTUAL/ESTIMATED<br>ANNUAL COST SAVINGS | (3)<br>ACTUAL/ESTIMATED<br>ANNUAL REVENUE | (1) + (2) + (3)<br>TOTAL ANNUAL<br>ACTUAL/ESTIMATED<br>BENEFIT | SERVICE<br>ENHANCEMENT<br>PROJECT   |
|---|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| \$  | \$   | \$  | \$   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

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While the project did not achieve direct cost savings, the health benefits and time savings achieved through RCH are profound. Additionally, the manner in which RCH united the Court with community members and justice partners across the county at a time which in-person collaboration was impossible is unprecedented. Additional cost avoidance and savings were likely experienced by participating justice partners (such as the District Attorney, the Public Defender, Probation, County Counsel, the Department of Children and Family Services, Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, the Children’s Law Center and dozens of police departments and City Attorney offices). These entities were equipped, connected, and trained to participate in RCH at no cost. Members of the community did not need to pay for gas, parking, food etc. to attend on-site. Additionally, they maintained a greater ability to attend to their work and personal matters more fully outside of a physical courtroom.

Please also consider this project for the COVID-19 Award.

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**FOR COLLABORATING DEPARTMENTS ONLY**

*(For single department submissions, do not include this page)*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>DEPARTMENT NO. 2 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> |   |
| <b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>  | <b>DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> |
| EMAIL: _____                                      | EMAIL: _____                                |
| <b>DEPARTMENT NO. 3 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> |   |
| <b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>  | <b>DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> |
| EMAIL: _____                                      | EMAIL: _____                                |
| <b>DEPARTMENT NO. 4 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> |   |
| <b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>  | <b>DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> |
| EMAIL: _____                                      | EMAIL: _____                                |
| <b>DEPARTMENT NO. 5 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> |   |
| <b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>  | <b>DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> |
| EMAIL: _____                                      | EMAIL: _____                                |
| <b>DEPARTMENT NO. 6 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> |   |
| <b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>  | <b>DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> |
| EMAIL: _____                                      | EMAIL: _____                                |
| <b>DEPARTMENT NO. 7 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> |   |
| <b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>  | <b>DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> |
| EMAIL: _____                                      | EMAIL: _____                                |