



Sustainable Funding for Effective and Fair Law and Justice Systems

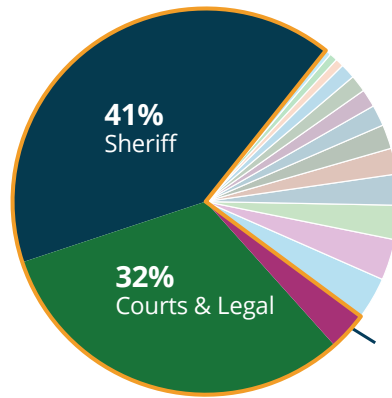
JUSTICE FUND



A dedicated funding source for public safety

Pierce County's General Fund is primarily dedicated to public safety and justice, with the Sheriff's Office alone accounting for about 41% (approximately \$407M). Together with the courts, Prosecuting Attorney, Assigned Counsel, Juvenile Court, District Court, and Emergency Management, more than 76% of the General Fund supports public safety.

While some departments benefit from dedicated revenue sources, public safety relies almost entirely on the General Fund. The Justice Fund would establish a dedicated funding source for public safety and criminal justice, improving long-term stability.



Pierce County's General Fund Budget

(2026–2027) totals \$967 million.

Public Safety and Criminal Justice:
\$730 million (76%) of the General Fund

Remaining 24%:
Supports essential services like elections, finance, parks, planning, property assessment, and more.

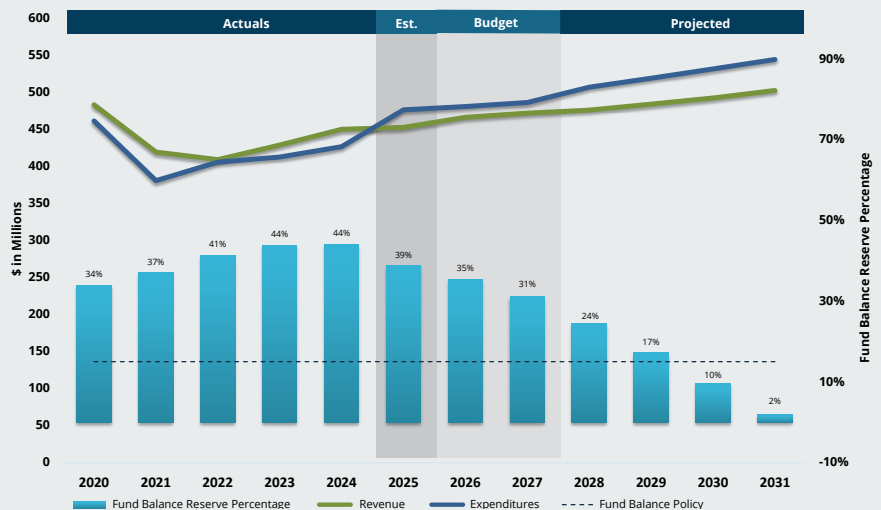
3%
Emergency Management and Medical Examiner

Addressing our structural deficit

Pierce County faces a growing structural deficit as long-term costs grow for state mandates, compensation, and core services.

While current fund balance levels are sufficient to sustain County services through the 2026–27 biennium, without new, stable revenue sources or changes to spending, reserves are projected to decline below the 15% policy threshold in future biennia.

Budget reserves are projected to fall below 15% by 2030.



Legislature offers new funding option

In 2025, the Legislature passed HB 1015, giving counties the option to adopt a 0.1% local sales tax for public safety, or \$1 for every \$1,000 spent. If adopted, Pierce County could generate more than **\$27 million annually**, providing nearly a 4% increase in public safety funding to support modest cost increases and targeted improvements.

Forward Together:

Public safety work group proposal

Pierce County's law and justice departments formed a work group in Fall 2025 and reached consensus on a framework and funding plan if approved by the County Council. The work group included the following departments:

- Assigned Counsel
- District Court
- Executive's Office
- Finance
- Juvenile Court
- Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- Sheriff's Office
- Superior Court



Goal: Ensure stable, sustainable funding for public safety; help our law and justice departments adjust and adapt to changing needs.



Guiding principles:

- Fulfill essential obligations and statutory requirements
- Don't go backwards on existing capacity for justice partners
- Make progress on departments' strategic priorities
- Be responsive to community needs
- Leverage data and technology to make decisions and maximize efficiencies

What a Justice Fund could support

The Justice Fund would maintain current funding for law enforcement and the courts, while allowing targeted, evidence-based investments in staffing, equipment, and programs that prevent crime and reduce recidivism. The appropriations listed inside this document reflect examples from the work group's proposed 2026–27 Justice Fund appropriations plan, including:



Stabilize law enforcement staffing through continued hiring incentives for deputies and corrections.



Strengthen courts by sustaining lower caseloads and expanding therapeutic courts through a new judicial department.



Modernize equipment and technology with expanded body cameras, evidence systems, court IT, and protective gear.



Support prevention and reentry by expanding proven programs that reduce re-offending and improve community safety.

Justice Fund

Appropriations proposals

Justice Fund appropriation proposals by department highlight how funds would be invested across public safety and justice services.

Sheriff's Office

\$25.375 million

Body-worn cameras for corrections deputies

Expands body-worn camera deployment for corrections deputies to improve safety, accountability, and documentation. Ongoing funding totals \$1.14 million.

Evidence technology management unit

Creates a dedicated Evidence Technology Management Unit to oversee digital evidence systems, compliance, and technical support. This ongoing investment totals \$614,230.

Law enforcement and corrections hiring incentives and retention payments

Continues hiring and retention incentives to help recruit and retain law enforcement and corrections staff amid nationwide shortages. Ongoing funding totals \$480,000, with an additional one-time \$1.1 million investment for retention payments for eligible Corrections (detention) officers employed as of July 1, 2026.

SWAT vehicle

Provides a one-time investment to replace or upgrade a specialized SWAT vehicle used in high-risk incidents. Funding totals \$500,000.

Personal protective respirators and certifications

Funds personal protective respirators and required certifications to enhance responder safety during hazardous incidents. This one-time investment totals \$250,000.

Public safety facilities – 2002 jail renovation

Supports major capital improvements to the County Jail originally constructed in 2002, addressing aging infrastructure and safety needs. One-time funding totals \$21.29 million.

Justice & Public Safety Information Technology (Finance – IT)

\$6.447 million

Digital evidence management system

Funds the build and ongoing support of a countywide digital evidence management system to securely store, manage, and share video, audio, and digital files across law and justice partners. The 2026–27 biennial cost totals \$2.12 million, including a one-time system build and infrastructure support. Anticipated future cost savings from consolidating legacy systems are expected in later years.

District Court case management system – LINX build

Supports one-time development of new case management functionality for District Court, replacing an end-of-life state system and improving data accuracy, reporting, and information sharing. Funding totals \$167,500.

Prosecuting Attorney case management system enhancements

Provides one-time funding to enhance case management functionality within LINX for the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, improving workflow efficiency and data sharing with justice partners. Total investment is \$1.06 million.

Transcription tool for media files

Provides an automated transcription tool to convert audio and video files into searchable text, improving efficiency and accessibility. Ongoing costs total \$3,000.

LINX backlog reduction

Invests in reducing a backlog of LINX system enhancements requested by the courts and public safety agencies. This one-time investment totals \$3.10 million.

New Superior Court Judicial Department

\$989,670

24th Judicial Department

Provides ongoing funding to establish a new Superior Court judicial department, expanding court capacity and improving case processing efficiency. Investments support judicial and courtroom staff, two legal assistant positions, and Clerk of the Superior Court support needed to manage increased caseloads, reduce backlogs, and expand therapeutic court options. Total ongoing funding is \$989,670.

Juvenile Court

\$1.671 million

Body-worn cameras for detention officers

Expands the use of body-worn cameras for detention officers to improve accountability, transparency, and safety. Ongoing funding totals \$43,080.

Public records officer position

Adds a dedicated public records officer to ensure timely, accurate, and compliant responses to public records requests. Ongoing funding totals \$144,140.

Positive youth development (PYD) programs

Maintains Positive Youth Development programs that focus on prevention, skill-building, and reducing youth involvement in the justice system. Ongoing funding totals \$1,484,180.

Re-entry programs (Executive-led)

\$900,000

Re-Entry Programs

Supports one-time investments in reentry services that help people leaving incarceration successfully transition back into the community. Funding totals \$900,000.

Department of Assigned Counsel

\$168,360

Investigator / process server position

Adds an investigator/process server position to support Assigned Counsel case preparation, service of legal documents, and timely court proceedings. This ongoing investment totals \$168,360.

Prosecuting Attorney's Office

\$118,390

Artificial intelligence legal research tools

Invests in AI-assisted legal research and case management tools that help prosecutors analyze case law, draft documents, and share information more effectively across the justice system. This investment improves efficiency and supports high-quality prosecution with \$118,390 in ongoing funding.

Justice Fund Appropriations summary

2026 costs are partial-year; 2027 reflects a full year.
2028–29 figures reflect the work group’s proposal for the next
biennium and are not included in the 2026–27 budget.

Proposal	Department	Duration	FTEs	2026	2027	2028-2029
Digital Evidence Management System - LINX Build	Finance - IT	One-time	7.00	940,000	1,034,000	
Digital Evidence Management System - Infrastructure	Finance - IT	Ongoing	-	-	150,000	300,000
Digital Evidence Management System - Cost Savings	Finance - IT	Ongoing	-	-	-	(893,720)
Investigator Process Server 2 Position	Assigned Counsel	Ongoing	1.00	40,570	127,790	-
24th Judicial Department - Two Legal Assistants	Clerk of Sup. Crt.	Ongoing	2.00	65,140	205,200	448,070
District Court Case Management System - LINX Build	Finance - IT	One-time	1.25	167,500	-	-
Pathways to Progress Program	District Court	Ongoing	-	-	-	500,000
Re-Entry Programs	Executive	One-time	-	450,000	450,000	-
Body-Worn Cameras for Detention Officers	Juvenile Court	Ongoing	-	21,540	21,540	43,080
Public Records Officer Position	Juvenile Court	Ongoing	1.00	36,240	107,900	232,260
Positive Youth Development (PYD) Programs	Juvenile Court	Ongoing	-	742,090	742,090	1,834,180
Prosecuting Attorney Case Management System Enhancements	Finance - IT	One-time	3.75	502,500	552,750	-
Transcription Tool for Media Files	Finance - IT	Ongoing	-	-	3,000	6,000
Artificial Intelligence Tools (Westlaw Co-Counsel)	Prosecuting Atty.	Ongoing	-	57,750	60,640	130,520
Body-Worn Cameras for Corrections Deputies	Sheriff's Office	Ongoing	-	722,000	415,000	850,750
Evidence Technology Management Unit	Sheriff's Office	Ongoing	3.00	165,090	449,140	966,780
Law Enforcement and Corrections Hiring Incentives	Sheriff's Office	Ongoing	-	240,000	240,000	480,000
Equipment - SWAT Vehicle	Sheriff's Office	One-time	-	500,000	-	-
Sheriff Corrections Retention Payments	Sheriff's Office	One-time	-	1,100,000	-	-
Equipment - Personal Protective Respirators/ Certifications	Sheriff's Office	One-time	-	200,000	50,000	100,000
LINX Backlog	Finance - IT	One-time	11.00	1,475,000	1,622,500	-
24th Judicial Department	Superior Court	Ongoing	3.00	173,330	546,000	1,175,270
Public Safety Facilities - 2002 Jail Renovation	Facilities Mgmt.	One-time	-	-	21,293,870	-
Public Safety Facilities - Partial Debt Service Support	Facilities Mgmt.	Ongoing	-	-	-	5,652,090
			33.00	7,598,750	28,071,420	11,825,280