

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

MEETING DATE:

August 18, 2026

AGENDA SECTION:

Reports

DEPARTMENT

Administration

SUBMITTED BY:

Nick Lemmer

ACTION REQUESTED

Authorize staff to apply for the 2026 Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative Grant to fund previously planned security upgrades in the Justice Center with a project cost not to exceed \$400,000 and a 50% local match not to exceed \$200,000.

NARRATIVE

Background

Initiated by the Minnesota Judicial Branch and funded during the 2026 Minnesota Legislative Session, the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative Grant Program provides state funding to local governments responsible for courthouse safety. Administered by the Safe and Secure Courthouse Grant Advisory Panel, the program aims to help counties implement security best practices established by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

Key Grant Requirements & Timelines:

- Matching Requirement: Requires a 50% local match (financial or in-kind) from the applicant.
- Eligible Projects: Upgrades, replacement, or new investment in physical security infrastructure.
- Completion Deadline: All funded project components must be fully completed by June 30, 2028.
- Application Deadline: September 8, 2026.

Discussion

To address previously identified essential security needs and move the Justice Center toward optimal security standards, staff intends to submit a grant proposal with the following key improvements:

1. Electronic Access Control System (EACS): Upgrade exterior building entrances and interior doors with new security control hardware, proximity devices (fob) readers and locks.
2. Hardware Updates: Replacement of existing obsolete door controller boards with new security control hardware.
3. Surveillance System Expansion: Install additional security cameras and CCTV monitors to eliminate coverage gaps.
4. Security Glass: Replace transaction window glass with impact-resistant structural security glass in three high-volume public interaction areas:
 - Court Administration (2 windows)
 - Probation
 - County Attorney's Office
5. Main Public Entrance Screening: Replace and upgrade current screening infrastructure with a new magnetometer and X-ray inspection system.

Financial/Budget Impact

- Estimated Total Project Cost: Approximately \$400,000*
- Grant Funding Requested: \$200,000
- Local Match Required (50%): \$200,000

*Project cost is an estimate based on quotations received and estimates based on preliminary contractor discussions and comparable recent equipment purchases. Quotes are being developed and will be included in the application. Staff is therefore submitting this request for an amount “not to exceed” the estimate.

The Finance Department has verified that the local matching funds can be accommodated through the County Capital Plan. The Capital Plan currently allocates over \$200,000 specifically for Justice Center security upgrades in 2028. Adjustments could be made within the Capital Plan to shift these funds forward to Fiscal Year 2027 to align with project schedules upon award notification.

ATTACHMENTS

- 2026-Grant-Information-and-Award-Guidelines



Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative Grant Program
Information and Award Guidelines
July 24, 2026

During the 2026 Minnesota Legislative Session, Chief Justice Hudson initiated, and the 2026 Legislature funded, the fourth installation of grant funds to support safety and security as part of the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative Grant Program. Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea established the program in 2017 for the distribution of grants to government entities responsible for providing or maintaining a safe and secure courthouse or other facility where court proceedings are held.

The Safe and Secure Courthouse Grant Advisory Panel, chaired by Fourth Judicial District Judge Patrick Robben, will assist the Chief Justice in the administration of the \$4 million appropriated by the Legislature during the 2026 session for this initiative. It is the Advisory Panel's intent that the allocated funds be distributed to as many projects as possible. Funding priority will be given to counties with the greatest need.

The Advisory Panel is comprised of the following representatives:

Profession	Members
Chair	Judge Patrick Robben, Fourth Judicial District
County Attorney	Shane Baker, Kandiyohi County Ryan Hansch, McLeod County
County Commissioner	Kurt Mortenson, Otter Tail County Kirby Moynagh, Wright County David Ebinger, Clay County Brad Milbrath, Waseca County
County Administrator	Dennis Genereau, Carlton County Kristen Trebil-Halbersma, Cook County
County Sheriff	Sheriff Lon Thiele, Steele County Commander Tim Harris, Washington County
Minnesota State Bar Association	Nicole Kettwick, Brandt Kettwick Defense Nicole Tabbut, Pemberton Law
Public Defender	Aaron Zurek, Fifth Judicial District John Riemer, Second Judicial District
Judicial Branch	Jeff Shorba, State Court Administrator Judge Jennifer Verdeja, Second Judicial District Sarah Lindahl-Phieffer, Judicial District Administrator Paula Lang, Deputy Judicial District Administrator Jason Sturgis, Security/Emergency Manager

The National Center for State Courts, a leading expert on courthouse security, has established best practices for court building security – guidelines describing the security measures that should be in place with respect to a comprehensive set of topics covering court buildings and court operations. Grant award applicants are urged to review this document at the following link: [National Center for State Courts: Steps to Best Practices for Court Building Security](#) (2022).

Award Criteria

In awarding the funds, priority will be given to projects that demonstrate a strong commitment on the part of leadership in each court building to the fundamentals of courthouse security and a strong desire to put in place effective measures in the pursuit of sound courthouse security. Projects that benefit multiple counties are encouraged.

The project should begin the process of improving courthouse security or implement an essential step to move toward an effective level of security.

Justice partners should have shown a commitment to improve courthouse security.

The applicant should demonstrate an on-going commitment to the improvement of courthouse security.

The project must have a defined, realistic plan to meet the project goals, and ongoing activities. The project must be completed by June 30, 2028.

Applications will be reviewed and scored by the Safe and Secure Courthouse Grant Advisory Panel. Questions one through six of the application will be rated from 0 – 20. Questions seven through ten will provide the Advisory Panel with additional background information needed to make an informed decision on distribution of grant funds.

Additional Requirements

The application must be authorized by a county board and must demonstrate a 50% financial or in-kind match to the amount requested in the application. The financial match is the direct outlay of funds by the grantee to support the project. In-kind match consists of contributions of time and/or services of current staff members or new employees, building structures, land, equipment, materials, space, or supplies provided to the project by the grantee or others on behalf of the grantee working directly on the project. Past in-kind services on a project will not be eligible to be included in the 50% local match requirement. In addition, the project itself must represent a new investment or the upgrade or replacement of existing security infrastructure; applicants cannot request funding for a project that is already completed or for personnel. If applicable, the application must show that resources will be available for any on-going costs associated with the award.

Once an award is granted, the recipient must sign an agreement and set up the appropriate budgets for the approved funds. The Minnesota Judicial Branch State Court Administrator's Office will coordinate the payment of funds to the agency.

The recipient will be responsible for submitting a final report to the State Court Administrator showing project details and the financial amount of actual expenditures. The final report must be completed by July 31, 2028.

Application Submission and Deadline

The application should be transmitted electronically to Jennifer Super, State Court Administration at Jennifer.Super@courts.state.mn.us. Electronic signatures will be accepted.

The application must be received by Jennifer Super on or before September 8, 2026.

Timelines for Award Process and Distribution of Funds

The award Schedule is:

July 24, 2026	Application and fund details are available through the Judicial Branch website.
September 8, 2026	Application due date to be eligible for an award.
September- October 2026	Advisory Panel reviews applications
November 2026	Advisory panel completes final review and scores all applications.
November 9, 2026	Chief Justice Gaïtas completes final approval of awards
Mid-November 2026	Grant applicants are notified of awards.
December 2026	Agreements are signed and awards sent to recipients.

Contact Information

Any questions about the application process can be submitted to Jennifer Super at Jennifer.Super@courts.state.mn.us or (612) 369-0458.