



Vermont Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs  
110 State St., Montpelier, VT 05633 Telephone: 802-828-2891

Memorandum

To: Chairwoman Robin Scheu and House Appropriations members  
From: Annie Noonan, LR & Ops Mgr., VT State's Attorneys and Sheriffs)  
cc: Tim Lueders-Dumont, SAS Executive Director  
Date: 1/15/2025  
Re: FY25 Budget Adjustment Memo

Thank you for allowing us to present our FY25 BAA information to the Committee this morning. The information listed below will provide more detail regarding our request in the BAA. Please feel free to reach out to me or our Executive Director Tim Lueders-Dumont with questions or for clarification on this request.

First, there is some good news. Subsequent to our testimony this afternoon, I was contacted by ADS CFO Kate Slocum who was following our testimony regarding the SharePoint costs. Kate and I compared information and invoices, and were able to identify that the potential increased costs for this fiscal year FY25 will be approximately \$168,500, not the \$405,000 that I had advised you today. One of the two bills that our Department had attributed to a SharePoint cost was the annual SLA bill, not SharePoint. Kate and I ran the estimated SharePoint costs for the remainder of this fiscal year. To date we have paid \$42,500, and can anticipate an additional \$18,000 for the next 7 months at \$126,000. Together, those unbudgeted costs for SAS will total approximately **\$168,500**. While our Department is only a very small percentage of the State's SharePoint users (approximately 2%), we are using a massive amount of the SharePoint storage due to the video and voice data from law enforcement which our staff must review in the course of their decision-making regarding charging, prosecution, referral to treatment or diversion, etc.; and to provide to defense counsel. There are often multiple police officers at incidents/crime scenes – all with the body camera and cruiser cameras running. Jim Lipinski of ADS had discussed our SharePoint utilization and has been reviewing other possible options. As noted, VSP is testing a new system that, if VSP and ADS give it a positive evaluation, it may be an option for SAS.

2 Our transition to a new criminal case management system (CMS) was precipitated by the vendor of our current system (JustWare) phasing out the product in June 2022 and refusing to support it. SAS engaged in the extensive RFP process, assisted by ADS, BGS and AGO, and contracted with MatrixProsecutor for a new system. With ADS' assistance, SAS secured \$1.7M in ARPA funds to pay Matrix. However, the ARPA funds did not extend to the costs of our Project Management consultant BerryDunn, whose support has been invaluable to this project work. SAS has only 2 IT staff to support the 175 employees in our field and central offices. We have no money in our FY25 budget to pay the project management team from BerryDunn. We anticipate needing **\$60,000** for the remainder of the fiscal year so BerryDunn can continue to support our CMS transition.

3. When the funding for the SAS Victim Advocates transitioned to our budget a few years ago, the amount of funding appropriated to our budget for these 27 positions was only for salary and benefits. No operating expenses were included, and due to this fact, the State's Attorneys' budget has been covering expenses for the VA budget line. This is putting additional pressure on the SA line. With no operating costs in the VA budget line, we request the funding for this cost. The ADS SLA costs for these employees is **\$38,000** which is not in the Victim Advocates' budget.

4. The statutorily mandated audits of the Sheriffs' office had for many years been conducted by McSoley and McCoy auditors. This fiscal year, they decided not to bid on the contract. Only on auditing company – CLA – bid and was awarded the contract. Our Department pays 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the bill, and the Sheriff pays 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. Our current budgeted amount was based upon the traditional costs to our budget of \$38,700. This year, the expected costs to our budget will be \$80,000 due to the switch in auditing company. We need an approximately **\$41,300** for the unbudgeted costs of these audits.

5. The impact of the mental health issues in Vermont has resulted in an unprecedented amount of court ordered MH evaluations, and defense counsel entering not-competent pleas. In addition, DMH has contracted with a California firm for their mental health evaluations, and if we need to bring those experts to court, the expense for their travel and testimony hits our budget hard. In many cases, both the judges and defense counsel are demanding in-person (not remote) testimony. We budgeted our mental health evaluation costs at \$140,000 which has traditionally covered our costs. To date, we have paid out \$94,730. We are anticipating this trend to continue. The Administration has listed \$34,730 in the BAA, but based upon our YTD monthly expenses, the unfunded costs might exceed **\$80,000** for these evaluations.

6. With more non-English speaking defendants in the criminal system, the Judiciary has been ordering translation for transcripts of court hearings. SAS bears this cost. We budgeted \$58,200 and have spent \$43,200. We anticipate needing another **\$28,000**.

7. Over the years, in order to meet budget demands, we have cut into operating expenses, including our staff training line. Our attorneys are required to have annual continuing legal education (CLE) in order to maintain their law license, and the Department wants to ensure that the staff receives training and education in important caselaw and practice. We have only \$10,000 in training funds for 140 SAO staff and need approximately **\$30,000** more in this FY.

In summary:

SharePoint unbudgeted costs: \$168,500

Project management support from BerryDunn for criminal case mgmt. system transition: \$60,000

SAS Victim Advocates ADS SLA costs: \$38,000

Sheriffs' audits from CLA: \$41,300

Mental health evaluation costs: \$80,000

Translation transcription services: \$28,000

SAS staff training: \$30,000

**Total: \$445,800**

Final note: We are concerned about our vacancy savings in State's Attorneys, Victim Advocates, and Sheriffs budgets. Based upon our current trend in making up the needed savings, we would need to hold vacant 4 FTEs in the State's Attorneys' budget; 1 FTE in the Victim Advocate budget; and 2 FTEs in our State Transport Deputy program/Sheriffs' budget.

Please reach out to me or Tim Lueders-Dumont if you have any questions about these issues and requests.

We greatly appreciate the guidance and assistance from our colleagues at State Finance and Management and the Agency of Digital Services; from our House Appropriations liaison Representative Squirrel and from the all the members of the Appropriations Committee.

cc:

F&M Commissioner Greshin and Deputy Commissioner Hardy Merrill

F&M Budget Analyst Will Anderson

ADS CFO Kate Slocum

Erin Pedley, Sr. Staff Assoc.

Maria Blair, Assoc. Fiscal Officer