

Agenda Item #13.1
For Council Meeting of: January 27, 2026

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: TERESA STRICKER, CITY ATTORNEY
SUBJECT: APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
AGREEMENT WITH THE CENTRE FOR ORGANIZATION
EFFECTIVENESS FOR A DEPARTMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF
THE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

The City Attorney's Office recommends that the Council, by motion, appropriate \$47,620 from unassigned General Funds to the City Attorney's professional services budget to fund a departmental assessment of the City Attorney's Office by The Centre for Organization Effectiveness. This item is requesting appropriations for one-time funding.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The appropriation of funds for a Professional Services Agreement with The Centre for Organization Effectiveness in an amount not to exceed \$47,620 allows an organization with extensive experience with California city attorney and county counsel offices to assess the City Attorney Office's departmental structure and staffing levels to identify additional opportunities for operational efficiencies and process improvements. The analysis will include comparisons of other comparable City Attorney Offices, staffing models and work processes.

GOAL

This item supports Council Goal #1 - Achieve and Maintain Budgeting Excellence and Fiscal Stability by implementing long-lasting solutions that ensure the City's structure, resources, and staffing levels are effectively aligned with both current and anticipated service demands for the City.

BACKGROUND/PRIOR COUNCIL REVIEW

On February 19, 2025, City Council conducted a goal setting workshop with the purpose of building alignment with the City Council's vision for the upcoming fiscal year. During this first phase of the City's Strategic Planning Project, the Council developed goals and

objectives to inform the City's budget development process and provide a roadmap for organizational success. Amid financial constraints and growing expectations for public services, the City of Santa Rosa identified the need to better align its resources with community priorities and long-term fiscal goals.

To further explore the City's financial outlook and potential service reductions, Council held study sessions on April 15 and May 6–7, 2025. (25-0272, 25-0299)

On June 3, 2025, Council adopted the final report of City Council Strategic Priorities 2025-27 identified during the workshop held on February 19, 2025. (25-0319)

On June 17, 2025, in accordance with its Strategic Priorities report for the two-year planning period of 2025-2027, Council requested an agenda item to consider hiring an external consultant to conduct departmental efficiency assessments. (25-0090.) That same day, the FY 2025–26 Operations and Maintenance Budget and Capital Improvement Program Budget were adopted. (25-0429)

On October 21, 2025, the City Council approved a Professional Services Agreement with Raftelis Financial Consultants, in an amount not to exceed \$144,550, to provide assessments for three departments: Planning and Economic Development, Housing and Community Services, and Transportation and Public Works. Raftelis's proposal included an option to expand its assessment to the City Attorney's Office, Santa Rosa Water, and Information Technology for an additional \$122,750.

ANALYSIS

Faced with City-wide financial constraints, as well as department-specific budget cuts, increased operational costs and increasing needs city-wide for legal services, the City Attorney's Office is eager to identify and implement additional operational efficiencies and process improvements. The CAO believes that conducting a departmental assessment is a crucial step to maximizing operational efficiency.

This assessment will provide a data-driven way to align limited legal service resources with the City's highest priorities, by identifying outdated processes and misalignments between workload and staffing levels. By doing so, the City Attorney's Office can ensure that its legal service delivery to every City department is sustainable and responsive to community needs.

After thoughtful consideration and an evaluation of several alternatives, the City Attorney's Office has chosen The Centre for Organization Effectiveness, a Joint Powers Authority, (COE) to assess the City Attorney's Office. COE was founded in 1993, and is dedicated to advancing the public good by inspiring excellence in leaders and organizations. COE has a long history of serving agencies across the State of California with over 90% of its clients serving the public directly (e.g., cities, counties, transit districts, water agencies, schools, etc.). COE has expertise in assessing California public agencies and has substantial experience working with California public sector law offices, including full-service city attorney offices and county counsel offices which are unique among municipal agency departments.

COE's experience with public law offices includes the County of Napa and the Cities of San Diego, Sunnyvale, and San Lois Obispo. COE understands the legal and ethical framework, statutory mandates, and confidentiality requirements that both inform and constrain public law offices. COE has the expertise to identify process improvements, evaluate CAO workloads realistically, distinguish between discretionary and non-discretionary functions, and ensure that recommended efficiencies do not compromise confidentiality requirements, attorney professional responsibilities, or the quality of legal services.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding for the \$47,620 one-time expense is requested to be appropriated from the unassigned General Fund reserves.. The updated budgeted Fiscal Year 2025-26 deficit of the General Fund is \$8,412,821 including this amount.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, the recommended action is not a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not have a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. In the alternative, the recommended action is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the recommended action may have a significant effect on the environment.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Proposal for City Attorney's Office Department Assessment

PRESENTER(S)

Teresa Stricker, City Attorney