

Register of Wills

**FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET TESTIMONY
APRIL 27, 2022**

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, President Clarke and Members of City Council. I am Tracey Gordon, Register of Wills and Clerk of Orphans' Court. Joining me today are Emilio DiGregorio, Deputy of Government Affairs and Erald Dika, Finance Director. I am pleased to provide testimony on The Register of Will's Fiscal Year 2023 Operating Budget.

DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS

Mission: The Register of Wills & Clerk of Orphans' Court (ROW) serves the residents of Philadelphia with professionalism, compassion, and integrity in overseeing the administration of estates, the issuance of marriage licenses, as well as the fee collection and record keeping of all Philadelphia County Probate Estates, Trusts, Guardian Accounts, and Marriage Licenses and Records.

Plans for Fiscal Year 2023: Over FY23, The Register of Wills Estate Administration Program's core mission will be to continue to educate Philadelphians on the need for estate planning, the Probate Fee Deferral Program benefit, as well as stabilizing the Archives Collection. This will be in conjunction to the continuation of the Estate Administration's Program of providing essential services, which include virtual probates, to the Philadelphia Community while the global pandemic continues. The Community Outreach Department will take the lead in educating Philadelphians on the complexities of the probate process while emphasizing the need for heirs to act quickly to protect their inheritances. By educating the community about proper estate planning, the Register of Wills will be able to proactively address the Tangled Titled crisis plaguing Philadelphia. The formation of a Community Outreach team has alleviated the Tangled Title problems by informing the public about the proper steps to ensure that their wealth can be passed on. To further reinforce the current Probate Deferment Initiative ("PDI") program the Register of Wills will introduce a legal team to address PDI cases and related problems. The continuation of a Fee Deferral Program will be an immediate solution for the financial hurdles that prohibit many within the Philadelphia community when probating an estate. The Fee Deferral Program will continue to work with low-income constituents to defer the costly probate process. With the continuation of these two new programs the Register of Wills will be able to execute its mission to reduce poverty and protect generational wealth across the City of Philadelphia. The additional funding requesting in the justifications for outreach, will improve upon racial disparities with targeted marketing and a dedicated legal team to handle all PDI cases and related issues.

Additionally, the Register of Wills office will focus on stabilizing its Archive Facility and Historical Documents. Digitization is essential to secure the integrity of the records housed within the facility and will streamline the process required to access these records. This, however, is dependent on new funding. While we are applying for grants to begin this project we require a hand from the administration to begin the digitization. Specifically, the Register of Wills would direct your attention to the historic flooding, which occurred in September 2021. The Register of Wills archives was fortunate that no files were damaged during the severe storm, however, the concern is extremely high that future floods will result in

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damage to our archives. The need to digitize the records is a must to preserve the history of all individuals who have ever filed any document at the Register of Wills or the Orphans' Court.

Furthermore, the office is also seeking a new system that is more efficient with our operation. A key finding from our state audit was our current system's incapability to perform certain functions was an inefficiency to the internal control policy. We will require the system to be replaced at some point.

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BUDGET SUMMARY & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS

Please refer to attached FY23 Budget Hearing Summary Charts in section 1: Staff Demographics Summary, section 2: Employment Levels, section 3: Financial Summary by Class, section 6: Participation Rate and Goal.

PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW

Proposed Funding Request:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2023 General Fund budget totals \$ 4,678,067, a \$ 355,386 increase over Fiscal Year 2022 estimated obligation levels. The funding will continue to support the Register's vision to educate the public about tangled titles that for far too long have created racial inequality throughout the City of Philadelphia. With little else changed, this budget represents the amount needed to maintain current staffing levels and provide funding for the successful operation and initiatives of the office.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$4,130,872 in Class 100, a \$133,427 increase over FY22 estimated obligation levels. This funding will maintain the office's 73 full-time positions in addition to the office's part time, season, and temporary positions.
- \$406,959 in Class 200, \$221,959 increase over FY22 levels estimated obligation levels, to support the Register's vision regarding racial disparities created through tangled titles. In addition, this funding will allow for the office to maintain its professional services, update its case-management software, continue to lease office rentals, provide necessary transportation, postage, and maintain equipment repairs.
- \$140,236 in Class 300/400, no additional funding over FY22 estimated obligation levels. The allotment is not an increase or a decrease to the previous FY22. This funding will maintain office supplies, computer equipment and printing costs associated with Orphans' court mandated filings, and the office's archived records.

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STAFFING LEVELS

The department is requesting 73 budgeted positions for FY23, two additional positions compared to FY22. These positions ensure outstanding customer service and a user-friendly environment to those requiring the Register of Wills and Orphans' Court's services. The Register of Wills continues to look for ways to provide the City of Philadelphia the absolute best services through its diverse staff.

NEW HIRES

Please refer to attached FY23 Budget Hearing Summary Charts in section 8: New Hires Information.

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PERFORMANCE, CHALLENGES, AND INITIATIVES

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION

Performance Measure	FY21 Year-End	FY22 Target	FY23 Target
Median in-person wait time for Probate Filings ¹	35	40	40
Median timeframe to fulfill a research request (days) ²	8	10	10
Median time from filing to certification ³	5	5	5

¹The ROWs Estate Services continues operating under COVID-19 safety protocol and is on target for Q2 of FY22. ROW is alert of the new guidelines and continue to operate with precaution. ROW is operating under an appointment basis; however, also is servicing walk-ins. As the City of Philadelphia eases mandates the level of walk-ins increases.

²The ROWs Estate Services continues operating under COVID-19 safety protocol. In addition to the appointment basis only ROW is attending to walk in as well. The ROWs appointment/walk-ins volume has increased given that the City of Philadelphia has eased mandates for COVID-19 operating protocols.

³The ROWs Estate Services continues operating under COVID-19 safety protocol and is on target for Q2 of FY22. We are alert of the new guidelines and continue to operate with precaution. We are operating under an appointment basis; however, we also are servicing walk-ins. As the City of Philadelphia eases mandates the level of walk-ins increases.

Program FY23 Strategic Goals

- Introduction of PDI dedicated staff
- Stabilization of the Register of Wills Historic Archives
- New IT System

ORPHAN’S COURT ADMINISTRATION

Performance Measure	FY21 Year-End	FY22 Target	FY23 Target
Median timeframe to review E-Filing, GTS, and Manual petitions (days) ¹	55	55	55
Median timeframe for application process (days) ²	19	19	19
Median timeframe to fulfill a request for a copy of marriage record (days) ³	7	7	7

¹The ROWs Orphans' Court continues operating under COVID-19 safety protocol. In addition to the appointment basis only ROW attending walk in as well. The ROWs appointment/walk-ins volume has increased given that the City of Philadelphia has eased mandates for COVID-19 operating protocols.

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²The ROWs Orphans' Court continues operating under COVID-19 safety protocol and is on target for Q2 of FY22. ROW is alert of the new guidelines and continue to operate with precaution. ROW is operating under an appointment basis; however, also is servicing walk-ins. As the City of Philadelphia eases mandates the level of walk-ins increases.

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Program FY23 Strategic Goals

- Stabilization of the Register of Wills historic archives
- New IT System

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OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS

Federal and State (Where Applicable)

NA

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CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE

Please refer to attached FY23 Budget Hearing Summary Charts in section 4: Contracts Summary.

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EMPLOYEE DATA

Please refer to attached FY23 Budget Hearing Summary Charts in section 7: Staff Demographics.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

- 1. Provide the name of your language access coordinator, the date of your last department training, and a link to the posting of your language access plan.**

The Register of Wills language access coordinator is Erald Dika Finance Director. The supervisors and deputies were trained in FY19.

<https://www.phila.gov/media/20191010135314/Register-of-Wills-2019-Language-Access-Plan.pdf>

- 2. Breakdown new hires and existing staff by race and language. Breakdown how many front-line personnel are trained to provide language access services.**

The Register of Wills supervisors and deputies have received the language access training.

ROW STAFF

The ROW currently employs 68 employees

White - White background - 33

Black or African American 29

Hispanic or Latino - 6

Bilingual Front-Line Staff

Record Clerk 2 Portuguese

Record Clerk 2 Arabic

Record Clerk 1 Spanish

Record Clerk 1 Spanish

Record Clerk 2 Spanish

- 3. How many requests for language access services did your department receive in the past year? How many language access services were delivered by staff? Breakdown language access services provided, by language, including but not limited to the language line, translation of public notices and documents, website language services, and advertisement/publication services.**

As a smaller City department, the Register of Wills Office follows the plans and guidelines of the City of Philadelphia. The Register of Wills defers to the City's language access plan. We have received 2000 requests in Spanish which were serviced by staff. All of the requests were performed in the Marriage License division frontline staff. The Row also contracted interpretation services from language line in French.

- 4. Explain what your department has done to improve language access services over the past year.**

The Register of Wills has worked diligently with the language access agency since the end of FY2020 to improve our service to the public. In addition to its own language service plan found at the above link we work with our new contact to coordinate the language access services.

CLIMATE CHANGE

1. How has climate change affected your department's provision of services?

The Register of Wills Estate Administration & Orphans Court department has re-envisioned its provisions of services to adapt to the new climate change and the demand of our services. Due to Covid-19 pandemic & variants the need for our services has increased in the areas of probate, inheritance tax, and records requests. Currently our services are provided both in person and virtual schedule appointments. The volume of requests has increased, however, to adhere the Covid19 safety guidelines we can only schedule so many in person appointments at the time. This however does prohibit us not to attend walk in as well.

2. How might worsening climate change increase costs and demands for your department?

Worsening climate changes would not increase costs or demands from our department. Unless Covid-19 Safety protocols are changed, we foresee continued pandemic services at current levels.

3. How does your department intend to mitigate and adapt to climate change?

The Row continues to operate effectively and efficiently. Resources can be reprogrammed to address issues adapting to the climate change. We also have been exploring outside funding resources such as federal grants and the engagement of lobbyist to help secure funding.

1. Staff Demographics Summary

Staff Demographics Summary (as of December 2021)				
	Total	Minority	White	Female
Number of Full-Time Staff	68	35	33	36
Number of Exempt Staff	68	35	33	36
Number of Executive Staff (deputy level and above)	7	3	4	3
Average Salary, Full-Time Staff	\$58,724	\$56,839	\$60,723	\$56,173
Average Salary, Exempt Staff	\$58,724	\$56,839	\$60,723	\$56,173
Average Salary, Executive Staff	\$101,675	\$105,361	\$98,910	\$105,361
Median Salary, Full-Time Staff	\$54,688	\$52,000	\$55,000	\$50,740
Median Salary, Exempt Staff	\$54,688	\$52,000	\$55,000	\$50,740
Median Salary, Executive Staff	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$95,479	\$90,000

2. Employment Levels

Employment Levels (as of December 2021)		
	Budgeted	Filled
Number of Full-Time Positions	71	68
Number of Part-Time Positions	2	2
Number of Exempt Positions	71	68
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)	8	7
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions	\$58,217	\$58,724
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions	\$52,559	\$54,688

3. Financial Summary by Class

Some departments may also want to provide financial summary tables for other funds, such as the Grants Fund. Departments should delete any budget lines that have \$0 in every year (i.e. if a department has no Class 500 appropriations, actuals, or proposed appropriations, the Class 500 row should be deleted).

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY21 Original Appropriations	FY21 Actual Obligations	FY22 Original Appropriations	FY22 Estimated Obligations	FY23 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY23-FY22
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$3,956,193	\$4,174,663	\$3,956,193	\$3,997,445	\$4,130,872	\$133,427
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$125,000	\$216,264	\$185,000	\$185,000	\$406,959	\$221,959
Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment	\$140,236	\$88,253	\$140,236	\$140,236	\$140,236	\$0
	\$4,221,429	\$4,479,180	\$4,281,429	\$4,322,681	\$4,678,067	\$355,386

4. Contracts Summary

"Large" is defined as meaning that an RFP was required.
 Departments should focus on contracts that have been conformed to date.
 Any departments that have large contracts with non-profit providers are encouraged to provide board makeup information in the optional "Non-Profit Vendor Demographics" table below.

M/W/DSBE Participation on Large Professional Services Contracts

Top Five Largest Contracts, FY22

Vendor Name	Service Provided	Dollar Amount of Contract	RFP Issue Date	Contract Start Date	Ranges in RFP	% of M/W/DSBE Participation Achieved	\$ Value of M/W/DSBE Participation	Total % Participation - All DSBEs	Total \$ Value Participation - All DSBEs	Local Business (principal place of business located within City limits) [yes / no]	Waiver for Living Wage Compliance ? [yes / no]
CounterPoint	Technology Support	\$40,000	12/1/2006	1/1/2007	MBE:	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	Yes	Yes
					WBE:	0%	\$0				
					DSBE:	0%	\$0				
Pugliese Associates	Communications	\$77,000	5/1/2021	7/1/2021	MBE:	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	No	Yes
					WBE:	0%	\$0				
					DSBE:	0%	\$0				
TML Communications	Marketing Strategy	\$20,000	10/1/2021	1/31/2022	MBE:	100%	\$20,000	100%	\$20,000	Yes	Yes
					WBE:	0%	\$0				
					DSBE:	0%	\$0				
The Creative Group	Video Production	\$15,775	10/1/2021	1/31/2022	MBE:	21%	\$3,313	21%	\$3,313	Yes	Yes
					WBE:	0%	\$0				
					DSBE:	0%	\$0				

Non-Profit Vendor Demographics

N/A

5. Performance Measures Table

Please refer to narrative of FY23 Budget testimony.

6. Participation Rate and Goal

The Contracts Summary table is for **professional services contracts only**.
 The Contract Participation Goal table is for **all** contracts (Public Works, SS&E, and Professional Services, combined).

Contracts Summary (Professional Services only)

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY22 YTD (Q1 & Q2)
Total amount of contracts	\$59,098	\$187,657	\$216,309	\$137,000	\$87,000	\$57,990
Total amount to M/W/DSBE	\$0	\$70,501	\$92,538	\$35,775	\$18,270	\$0
Participation Rate	0%	38%	43%	26%	21%	0%

Total M/W/DSBE Contract Participation Goal (Public Works; Services, Supplies & Equipment; and Professional Services combined)

	FY21	FY22	FY23
M/W/DSBE Contract Participation Goal	21%	21%	21%

FY23 Budget Hearing Summary Charts - Register of Wills

7. Staff Demographics

Totals in this table should tie out to numbers in tables 1 and 2 above.
 Biracial employees should be included under "Other."
 The number of employees who identify as non-binary (i.e. employees who do not identify as either female or male) should be included in the text box below the table, along with salary detail.

Staff Demographics (as of December 2021)					
Full-Time Staff			Executive Staff		
	Male	Female		Male	Female
	African-American	African-American		African-American	African-American
<i>Total</i>	9	21	<i>Total</i>	0	3
<i>% of Total</i>	13%	31%	<i>% of Total</i>	0%	43%
<i>Average Salary</i>	\$55,431	\$59,901	<i>Average Salary</i>	\$0	\$105,361
<i>Median Salary</i>	\$55,000	\$52,000	<i>Median Salary</i>	\$0	\$90,000
	White	White	0	White	White
<i>Total</i>	21	12	<i>Total</i>	4	0
<i>% of Total</i>	31%	18%	<i>% of Total</i>	57%	0%
<i>Average Salary</i>	\$65,296	\$52,721	<i>Average Salary</i>	\$98,910	\$0
<i>Median Salary</i>	\$62,979	\$52,195	<i>Median Salary</i>	\$95,479	\$0
	Hispanic	Hispanic	0	Hispanic	Hispanic
<i>Total</i>	2	3	<i>Total</i>	0	0
<i>% of Total</i>	3%	4%	<i>% of Total</i>	0%	0%
<i>Average Salary</i>	\$50,465	\$43,884	<i>Average Salary</i>	\$0	\$0
<i>Median Salary</i>	\$50,465	\$45,000	<i>Median Salary</i>	\$0	\$0
	Asian	Asian	0	Asian	Asian
<i>Total</i>	0	0	<i>Total</i>	0	0
<i>% of Total</i>	0%	0%	<i>% of Total</i>	0%	0%
<i>Average Salary</i>	\$0	\$0	<i>Average Salary</i>	\$0	\$0
<i>Median Salary</i>	\$0	\$0	<i>Median Salary</i>	\$0	\$0
	Other	Other	0	Other	Other
<i>Total</i>	0	0	<i>Total</i>	0	0
<i>% of Total</i>	0%	0%	<i>% of Total</i>	0%	0%
<i>Average Salary</i>	\$0	\$0	<i>Average Salary</i>	\$0	\$0
<i>Median Salary</i>	\$0	.	<i>Median Salary</i>	\$0	\$0
	Bilingual	Bilingual	0	Bilingual	Bilingual
<i>Total</i>	2	4	<i>Total</i>	0	0
<i>% of Total</i>	3%	6%	<i>% of Total</i>	0%	0%
<i>Average Salary</i>	\$74,892	\$42,913	<i>Average Salary</i>	\$0	\$0
<i>Median Salary</i>	\$74,892	\$42,500	<i>Median Salary</i>	\$0	\$0
	Male	Female	0	Male	Female
<i>Total</i>	32	36	<i>Total</i>	4	3
<i>% of Total</i>	47%	53%	<i>% of Total</i>	57%	43%
<i>Average Salary</i>	\$61,595	\$53,991	<i>Average Salary</i>	\$98,910	\$105,361
<i>Median Salary</i>	\$56,621	\$50,740	<i>Median Salary</i>	\$95,479	\$90,000

Detail for non-binary employees, if applicable:

FY23 Budget Hearing Summary Charts - Register of Wills

8. New Hire Information

Date range is 7/1/21 to December 2021 increment run. Detail for any hires since then can be added in the text box below the table.

New Hires (from 7/1/2021 to December 2021)

	Total Number of New Hires	Malayalam	Spanish	Albanian	Italian	Mandarin
Black or African American	2	0	0	0	0	0
Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hispanic or Latino	1	0	0	0	0	0
White	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	0	0	0	0	0

Detail for new hires since December 2021, if applicable: