



NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

*Window of Opportunity: A Framework for the
Future of the Judicial Branch of Lake County*



JUSTICE 2025

**STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
OF
THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
CIRCUIT COURT OF LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

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A Message from the Chief Judge

The Judicial Branch plays a vital role in our system of government. As the Circuit Court of Lake County prepares for the next several years, we should reflect on how far we have come and plan to face the challenges that lie ahead. We set the strategic agenda for excellence for the next nine years within this framework plan.

While our court organization undoubtedly looked quite different when the circuit judges initially embraced the strategic planning process, the Court's essential vision remains unchanged: to provide the people of Lake County a court system that fairly and impartially administers justice, efficiently resolves disputes, and protects the rights of all.

As we navigate the challenges of operating a court organization, our focus must support a growing and diverse population. We remain committed to system-wide improvements that allow us to maintain our effectiveness in protecting the rights of children, families, victims, and other vulnerable people. In addition, we will continue to ensure that the justice process and related programs operate expeditiously, objectively, and are cost effective.

While satisfied with the technological advances we have made, we have daring plans to implement new technologies to allow the court to become even more efficient. Using technology to improve access to court documents and implementing electronic filing for all case types will further transparency, accessibility, and efficiency. These ongoing improvements are vital to maintaining public trust and confidence in our justice system.

The complexity of legal proceedings can frustrate those who encounter the court and the court organization. Victims, witnesses, and self-represented litigants may confront mystifying instructions contained in sometimes obscure legal language. We will continue to work with our justice partners to simplify court processes and forms so that they are more comprehensible and available to everyone.

As we move toward the future, we take every opportunity to achieve our ultimate goal of excellence in the administration of justice, while never straying from our focus of protecting the rule of law and ensuring justice for all.

*Jorge L. Ortiz
Chief Judge*

***E**ssayist Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., the father of one of the most influential U.S. Supreme Court Justices stated, "Greatness is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving. We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, but sail we must, and not drift, nor lie at anchor."*

Strategic Framework

Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, Lake County

2016 marks the beginning of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit's third decade of operating within a court-wide strategic framework or plan that establishes priorities and performance objectives for the Judicial Branch. This Strategic Framework builds on previous Nineteenth Judicial Circuit strategic plans, and introduces new ideas on how to achieve continuous improvement in the quality of justice and related services provided in Lake County. Because this Strategic Framework is based upon the core values of the court, it will guide the achievement of the long-term goals that the dedicated judges and professional staff of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit seek to accomplish. A more specific set of shorter term objectives is included under each of the long-term goals to help focus court activities in the next nine years and to help measure progress toward achieving long-term goals. This plan maintains the focus on achieving and sustaining a fair, accessible, and independent judiciary while providing the flexibility to react more quickly to the evolving needs, issues, and allocation of available resources within our court community.

This Strategic Framework is based upon the core values of the court. These values lead to achieving the long-term goals that the dedicated judges and professional staff of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit seek to accomplish. A more specific set of shorter term objectives that the court will focus on during the next nine-years is included. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list of activities that may be undertaken in the next nine years. Rather it is a series of system-wide initiatives to be implemented.

Principles

This Strategic Framework Plan is grounded in the following three principles:

- **First:** Continuous Quality Improvement in the Delivery of Justice. This management philosophy, grounded in the mission, vision, and values of the court, constantly strives to improve the services offered to all who use the courts.
- **Second:** Inclusiveness and Collaboration. This principle recognizes all of the internal and external clients of the court and provides a method by which they can provide input into the court processes that affect them.
- **Third:** Capacity Building. This principle proactively seeks to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses, lessons learned from previous improvement efforts, and continuously build the capacity to respond to the unanticipated challenges that inevitably arise.



MISSION STATEMENT of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit:

The Mission of the Circuit Court of Lake County is to serve the public by being dedicated to equality, fairness, service, and access to justice for all.

The Mission of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit incorporates the role of the judiciary as the third branch of government. The judiciary is entrusted with the essential role of preserving the rule of law while protecting public safety. Courts are expected to remain focused on the core mission of resolving cases brought before them in a fair and timely matter. Yet because courts are an impartial forum for resolving disputes, they are under pressure to become more involved in social problems that were once addressed by families, churches, schools, and social welfare agencies. The Nineteenth Circuit continually strives to perform its mission effectively and efficiently while remaining accessible, innovative and responsive to the community we serve.

CORE VALUES of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit:

I. Fairness and Integrity

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit embodies fairness through the equal and impartial treatment of all people. All members of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit strive to treat each person seeking court services equally, without bias or favoritism, and to serve the public uninfluenced by legally-irrelevant considerations. This core value includes:

- Respect for the Rule of Law
- Impartiality of the Judiciary
- Highest Standards of Ethical Behavior

II. Quality of Court Organization Services

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit is committed to the effective, efficient and consistent administration of justice. This core value includes providing the highest quality of service to the public through:

- Proactive leadership in making system improvements
- Effective and efficient business processes
- Performance measurement and accountability
- Fiscal responsibility and accountability



III. Professionalism in Providing Court Organization Services

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit demonstrates respect for the people it serves by the manner in which its members interact with the public. Members of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit acknowledge the dignity of each person who comes to the court, responding to individual concerns with courtesy, understanding, and compassion. This core value includes:

- Professional, respectful and courteous service to all
- Open and healthy communication with justice partners and stakeholders encouraging involvement and inclusion in provision of services as appropriate.

IV. Professionalism in Staff Capacity to Deliver Excellent Service

Professionalism in providing court organization services will be enhanced if staff of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit is skilled, competent, and motivated. In addition to treating staff with dignity and respect, the organizational culture will foster:

- Inclusiveness, where diverse, talented and committed personnel are proud to be part of the court organization
- Professional and personal growth
- Innovation and risk-taking

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN, TRENDS AND IMPLICATIONS

Leaders of the courts in Illinois, and specifically those in the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, face a myriad of challenges to ensure fairness, timeliness, transparency, accountability, and other quality-of-service outcomes every single day. Our Circuit does so while keeping an eye on the horizon for new challenges and changing public expectations of the justice system. Court systems are complex organizations to lead. Highly trained professionals with individual based authority (elected selection process, *e.g.*, Circuit Judges) must be accountable to themselves, the public they serve, and the external funding sources. The environment in which the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit operates is influenced directly and indirectly by many external factors.

The following is a graphical representation of that planning environment:



TRENDS

A trend is a series of related events or activities that appear to have a demonstrable direction over time. Trends can be categorized in different ways-- by type: *e.g.* continuation, cyclical, emerging; or by subject matter: *e.g.* social, economic, political, technological, etc. Conducting trend analysis is an important step in a strategic planning process. It helps assess: (1) the nature, magnitude, and sources of demands likely to be placed on the Court in the upcoming years; and (2) the implications of the demands for the Court's structure, organization, and operations in the future.

The following is a high-level summary of the trends that have a high probability of influencing the long-range direction of our court organization.

SOCIAL/CULTURAL TRENDS describe the changes in the composition, order and structure of interactions among individuals within society. In large part, they define the potential size and types of consumers of court services. A few of the most significant social trends likely to impact the Court in the future are as follows:

1. Slowing population growth.
2. Aging of the population.
3. Increasing racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.
4. Changing family composition.
5. Increasing expectations placed on service providers (*e.g.*, more informed consumers demanding better services).

ECONOMIC TRENDS describe the probable influence on the court system due to changes in the economy and impact on individual well-being, the nature and composition of work and the work force, and societal prosperity. Economic trends directly affect the composition of court caseloads and influence the basic resources available to support the courts and justice system. A few of the most significant economic trends likely to impact the Court in the upcoming years are:

1. Sluggish growth in housing costs, which affects the tax base.
2. Increasing income inequality.
3. Increasing use of part-time, temporary, and contractual employees.
4. Increasing e-commerce/e-business.
5. Increasing urbanization

TECHNOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC TRENDS describe changes in the composition, application and broader social effects of tools and scientific developments and breakthroughs. Technological trends shape the types of demands confronting service organizations and hold the potential for dramatically altering the way organizations do their work and serve their customers. Scientific trends shape new

litigation areas and create a need for specialized expertise. A few of the most significant technological and scientific trends that will impact the Court in the future are:

1. Rapidly changing information technology and telecommunications.
2. Expanding the wireless revolution to all facets of court operations.
3. Differing patterns of technology usage by members of different generations.
4. Increasing use of cloud technology.
5. Increasing number of data security issues, including identity theft, cyber-threats, and consequent growth in security technology.
6. Increasing legal challenges to privacy issues, life sciences and bioethics.
7. Continuing need for networking of information (information sharing).
8. Increasing demands for services 24-hours a day, 7-days a week.

POLICY AND POLITICAL TRENDS describe the expansion of public expectations of courts to resolve disputes impartially and authoritatively and the expansion of court influence on functions once relegated to other branches of government. Litigation has entered arenas of life once beyond the jurisdiction of courts, such as religion, sports, and education as well as areas once reserved for the family, such as medical decisions of the terminally ill. The courts are more actively involved in developing, implementing, monitoring, and modifying responses to social issues, such as:

1. Increasing public expectation that courts will be involved in societal problems once assigned to families, schools, churches or other social agencies. These include cases ranging from employment rights, to sex discrimination, to toxic waste disposal, to endangered species to name just a few.
2. Increasing legislation for specific crimes, including increasing domestic terrorism threats to homeland security.
3. Increasing number of litigants and court participants who do not speak English, who are self-represented, and who have mental health, addiction or co-occurring disorders.
4. Increasing scrutiny on the use of public tax dollars and at the same time pressure to continue unfunded mandates and increase user fees.
5. Increasing encroachment on judicial independence, and the expansion of judicial independence to encompass court control over their own destinies.



IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COURT

The major trends noted above will not occur independently but rather simultaneously. These trends, of course, are interrelated and some will reinforce others while all will likely change the way this Court conducts business. Examples of some potential impacts include:

- Increasing court involvement in the resolution of social issues, including substance abuse, immigration, same sex marriage, transgender issues, health care, human trafficking, environmental issues, elder issues, human genetics, and privacy, which will alter the composition of court caseloads and more importantly court workload.
- Increasing numbers of self-represented litigants, non-English speaking court participants, and litigants with mental health, addiction and co-occurring disorders will increase case processing times.
- Changing role of judges to accommodate more problem-solving and therapeutic jurisprudence.
- Retiring staff/judicial officers (*e.g.*, aging workforce, losing institutional knowledge).
- Increasing demands that drive the court organization toward reactive, rather than proactive, actions, thus increasing the difficulty of maintaining focus on strategic priorities.
- Declining court infrastructure (*e.g.*, facilities, technology, security).
- Declining funding at both the state and county level with increasing costs (*e.g.*, pension, healthcare).
- Increasing unfunded mandates (new laws) and requiring counties to shoulder a greater proportion of court costs.
- Increasing use of alternative dispute resolution programs and administrative adjudication programs.
- Increasing pressure to increase user fees at the same time consider fee waiver requests, deal with inability to pay fines and fees and to make restitution.
- Greater need to enhance efficiency through the use of technology to increase access and allow for doing business remotely/electronically. This also means dealing with the “Digital Divide” between those who can use technology provided and those who cannot.
- Reducing levels and types of services provided to those sentenced to probation and related programs that are based on Evidence-Based Practices.
- Changing prison release/reform policies for adults and juveniles – revamping role and services of probation and parole with impact on jail and detention center.
- Continuation of the Courts commitment to procedural justice.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The purpose of an **organizational assessment** is to help the court organization holistically evaluate its capacity both now and in the future in light of its purpose and its desired vision. As noted in the Trends section above, courts are involved in more societal problems than ever before, and perhaps this can be seen as a vote of confidence for the way courts resolve disputes fairly and finally. Our Court has developed a growing array of specialized services to meet these challenges that range from providing mediation and arbitration services to solving specific community problems in non-traditional adjudicatory forums. These include drug courts, mental health courts, veteran courts and self-representation services, to identify just a few.

Dedicated judicial officers and support staff have all made the commitment to serve in the judicial branch of government and, for many it is their life's calling. For court leaders, developing a "process" to plan and guide the system in the future is a challenge. Conducting a comprehensive internal self-assessment, reflecting all aspects of court operations contributes to continuous quality improvement. These practices allow the court organization to demonstrate the effectiveness of programs and integrated service delivery approaches, and to identify outcomes affecting court users and citizens alike. Court leaders critically assess the court's ability to conduct its business differently and will continue to change in the future.

The on-going assessment process embraces six reflective steps:

- What happened?
- What were your/team's lessons learned?
- What were the positives and negatives?
- What do the data/results tell us?
- What else could we have done differently?
- What should the organization do differently/same next time?

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN THE DELIVERY OF AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Continuous Quality Improvement is not a project or initiative, but an ongoing process by which the court makes decisions to improve services and evaluate progress toward achieving its goals. It is most effective when it becomes a natural part of the way everyday work is done. Success is defined through meeting the needs of those we serve. This continuous improvement process is implemented by a broad review of court operations periodically in a search for areas that are working well and those in need of improvement. The "dashboard" concept of court performance measurement captures well this idea of continuous monitoring. The dashboard alerts us to potential problem areas, and invites more scrutiny of those particular issues, rather than a systematic look at the entire system.



Continuous Quality Improvement begins with identifying specific desired outcomes, which are the strategic goals of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit listed below. Outcome or performance measures are tools used to track progress and to establish accountability within an organization and its external clients. When measures identify an area of court operations where performance is less than satisfactory, that area is examined more closely to identify the source of the problem, alternative strategies are proposed to remedy the problem, then implemented. Monitoring through performance measures continues to ensure that the remedy did indeed address the problem and that no further issues arose.

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit has long enjoyed a reputation for high quality justice, and is committed to ensuring fairness, due process, and equal protection for all litigants. At the same time, the Court is fortunate to have a judiciary recognized as one of the most distinguished in the country, and a highly talented and experienced administrative staff dedicated to quality public service. In order to promote **Public Trust and Confidence**, which is essential to maintaining an orderly democratic society and one of five key performance standards, the judges and court staff have adopted the following areas to focus improvement efforts on over the next several years:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Strategic Focus Area 1: | Enhance Access to the Court/Justice |
| Strategic Focus Area 2: | Protect Children, Families, Elderly, and Other Vulnerable Populations |
| Strategic Focus Area 3: | Improve Court Operations and Timeliness of Case Processing |
| Strategic Focus Area 4: | Improve Relationships with the Public and External Partners |
| Strategic Focus Area 5: | Enhance Capacity Building in ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources • Technology • Court Facilities |

Strategic Focus Area 1: Enhance Access to the Court/Justice

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit remains committed to continuing efforts to enhance access to numerous court services, programs, and facilities. This includes assisting everyone who uses the Court to better understand the requirements necessary to complete their business. Specifically, it means using technology to improve electronic and remote access to the Court; improving physical access to court facilities; and making court proceedings understandable to vulnerable populations, such as those who are self-represented, do not speak English, have physical disabilities, or are elderly.

In the timeframe covered by this plan, the Court will focus on the following improvements:

- ◆ Providing court users with information, resources, and appropriate assistance to help them complete their court business, for example self-help information and assistance, language assistance, and clear signage.
- ◆ Providing meaningful educational opportunities to court users regarding court procedures, court services and what to expect when they have court business.
- ◆ Enhancing the ability of court users to communicate and conduct business with the court electronically using electronic filing, smart court documents, remote motion/court calls, video-conferencing, probation client services, interactive web services, and other existing and emerging technologies to provide excellent service.
- ◆ Increasing the availability of court and case-related information through online and remote access.

Strategies:

- A. Identify and eliminate barriers to court access at all levels of service.
- B. Ensure that interactions with the court are understandable and convenient.
- C. Expand the availability of legal assistance, advice, and representation for litigants with limited financial resources.
- D. Improve services and programs to assist self-represented litigants.
- E. Use technology to make the services of the court more accessible, secure, and convenient to use while maintaining cost effectiveness.
- F. Increase qualified interpreter services in court proceedings and seek to expand services to additional court venues; increase the availability of language-assistance services to all court users.
- G. Ensure that court facilities accommodate current and future workflow and technological needs.
- H. Promote the expansion of and types of court-related services offered in all remote court facilities.
- I. Enhance accessibility of court facilities by continually improving signage, directories, displays of calendars and receptionist services.
- J. Continue to support the use of new technology to improve accessibility to physically challenged court users.
- K. Provide training opportunities for staff on providing customer service to the disabled.



Strategic Focus Area 2: Protecting Children, Families, Elderly, and Other Vulnerable Populations

Active and visible judicial involvement is critical to the success of the court's collaborative efforts to effectively support children, families, elderly, and individuals with various dependency issues. These collaborative efforts require coordination with numerous service providers, and that takes time, resources, and attention. The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit will continue to engage with the broader justice system, human service agencies, and other community stakeholders to improve their collective response to vulnerable populations requiring court related services.

The Court will continue to embrace evidence-based practices to ensure accountability to the victims and our community in general. The Court will also continue to develop methods and programs to hold those convicted of crimes accountable, thus reducing their likelihood of re-offending --which is central to protecting the citizens of Lake County.

In the timeframe covered by this plan, the Court will work on the following improvements:

- ◆ Develop an action plan that will enhance and expanded legal representation in cases involving abuse, neglect, delinquency and dependency.
- ◆ Continuing judicial education on the impact of child abuse, neglect, elder abuse, and other emerging societal issues.
- ◆ Processing of domestic violence cases, including procedures and resources.
- ◆ Improving support for the national effort to collect data, enhance awareness, and determine the issues affecting the elderly.
- ◆ Monitoring of guardianships, requiring guardians and executors to provide information necessary for the court to reduce the danger to the elderly.
- ◆ Ongoing evaluation of adult treatment programs.
- ◆ Ensuring successful termination from probation (adult and juvenile).
- ◆ Evaluating of internal court organization programs vis-a-vis community-based programs.
- ◆ Increasing the safety and security in housing of youth in detention and residential programs.

Strategies:

- A. Measure and regularly report on Court organization performance in service- related programs.
- B. Develop mechanisms for collection and dissemination of current education and awareness information relating to family, elder, and victim issues as well as their related treatment services to the judiciary and appropriate functional areas within the court organization.

- C. Survey families and other vulnerable populations to determine their satisfaction with court processes.
- D. Ensure that appropriate programs and services are available to those sentenced to probation or compliance by monitoring changing demographics and implementing best-practices strategies grounded in evidence-based research.
- E. Address community issues through collaboration with justice system and public service partners, the Bar, universities, and other organizations.
- F. Promote public safety by providing effective supervision, rehabilitation and treatment of adult offenders and court-involved youth.
- G. Implement Federally mandated PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) standards for juvenile detention and the in-house residential complex.

Strategic Focus Area 3: Improve Court Operations and Timeliness of Case Processing

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit is committed to improving the administration of justice. Every person has the right to a prompt, fair, and impartial hearing. The pursuit of justice thus requires that cases be heard in a timely manner and processed efficiently, which in turn requires effective case processing and efficient management of information and resources.

In this era of dwindling resources, the judicial branch must review and modernize operations and policies to ensure that public resources are used most effectively, efficiently and responsibly. The Court will ensure that court operations are efficient and effective and that court programs achieve positive outcomes while preserving the highest standards of impartiality and due process. Streamlining court operations and work processes, and strengthening court programs also are priorities of the Court. These improvements include using technology more effectively, reducing redundancies, and offering effective, evidence-based, programs in-house to enhance our status as a high performing court system. Streamlining court operations will also improve timeliness of case processing. The Court is committed to enhancing scheduling practices so there is adequate time to hear matters and having all parties arrive and hearings commence on time.

Implementation of these improvements require: 1) an updated case management system that provides: accurate information upon which decision makers can rely; 2) the management of cases across divisions; 3) easy access to case information; and, 4) streamlined and documented procedures and processes.

In the timeframe covered by this plan, the Court will work on the following improvements:

- ◆ Managing cases according to approved guidelines and court-wide policies to increase efficiency, and fair and timely case processing.
- ◆ Publishing a caseload management plan for each Court division that embraces time standards and other best practices.



- ◆ Promoting timely case resolution by providing optimal resources to all judges of the Circuit.
- ◆ Improving the efficient use of jurors by examining new approaches for verifying trial readiness, calling jurors for service, and assembling efficient sized panels.
- ◆ Publishing periodic performance reports on the many programs of the Court.
- ◆ Adopting better technology to produce timely and reliable data needed to improve internal operations and work processes.
- ◆ Using additional evidence-based practices system wide.
- ◆ Evaluating innovative and effective programs and technologies used by other jurisdictions.

Strategies:

- A. Ensure procedural fairness for litigants by providing appropriate opportunities to be heard, respectful treatment, impartial case processing, and clear explanations of court procedures and decisions.
- B. Manage cases and workloads efficiently and effectively according to case needs.
- C. Collaborate with each Court Division and members of the Lake County Bar Association on programs and services to improve desired outcomes.
- D. Expand effective programs, services and specialty courts as appropriate resources become available.
- E. Provide Court organization services in a convenient and timely manner.
- F. Uphold the integrity of court orders, protect court user safety, and clearly define compliance requirements; improve the collection of fines, fees, and forfeitures and the compliance of probation orders in the timeline contained in the court order.
- G. Explore the development of additional CourTools reports in the court case management system.
- H. Research opportunities to automate current manual processes (*e.g.*, AOIC vouchers and forms)

Strategic Focus Area 4: Improve Relationships with the Public and External Partners

A. Public

Public confidence in the judicial system is nurtured by understanding the work of the courts and the court organization. The public, as tax payers and court users, deserve a better understanding of the role and functions of the court in society, the services provided by the court organization, and the achievements, needs, and priorities of the Court.

As the public comes to rely on technology to conduct business and obtain information, the Court must continue to adapt how it interacts and communicates with the public. Although the method of delivery is important, the content of communications is more so.

In the timeframe covered by this plan, the Court will focus on:

- ◆ Improving communication with the public to help them better understand the issues that affect the delivery of justice.
- ◆ Employing new technology, including social media, to enhance communications with the public.
- ◆ Evaluating all outreach projects, materials produced in support of these programs, and materials contained on the Court's website to ensure they are current and reflect the Court's mission, values, and desired consumer outcomes.

Strategies:

- A. Educate the community about the role of the Court by participating in public meetings, conducting community forums, and promoting civics education.
- B. Provide up-to-date information and reports to the public on Nineteenth Judicial Circuit (Court organization) services, achievements and performance through a variety of media resources.
- C. Review the current communication plan, strategies, and branding with a view toward developing an action plan for the modernization of each section of the communication plan.
- D. Develop an implementation plan for Rich Site Summary (RSS) feed for the court organization.
- E. Develop implementation plan for expanded use of social media in support of the Court's mission, while maintaining current media relations.
- F. Review, and if necessary, modify all special court programs, including, Law Day, Veteran's History Project, Law Library Week, Law Merit Badge, Speakers Bureau, Courthouse Tours, Constitution Day, Bill of Rights Day, National Adoption Day, and Juror Appreciation Week.
- G. Explore training opportunities for staff to become more culturally competent and attentive to the needs of diverse court users.
- H. Review the role of the Court's Public Information Officer (PIO) and outreach efforts.
- I. Create public service announcements via web-based videos, brochures regarding the court's role in society as the third branch of government.
- J. Develop an informational program for self-represented litigants, including web-based videos and seminars held in conjunction with outreach programs of the Lake County Bar Association, Illinois Judges Association, the State Bar Association, and local colleges.



B. External Partners

The judiciary, including the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, helps to preserve our democracy by maintaining the rule of law and a civil society. Strong collaborative relations and effective communications are essential to an effective judicial system. The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, although an independent branch of government, is dependent on other branches and partners to achieve its goals, achieve positive outcomes for the community, and deliver justice. Today, in Lake County, it is important for the Court to build public trust and confidence by strengthening relationships with our partners and stakeholders.

Communications from the Court and court organization should convey timely, relevant, and meaningful information to justice system partners working in collaboration with the Court, and funding entities allocating scarce resources. In every circumstance, success depends upon timely communication of clear, concise information.

In the timeframe covered by this plan, the Court will focus on:

- ◆ Proactively educating the Court's constituents about the third branch of government and its role and function in our society and community.
- ◆ Communicating and collaborating effectively with justice system partners, the legal community, and other local, state, and federal agencies with whom courts must cooperate in order to improve service delivery.
- ◆ Seeking opportunities to work with local and national associations, legal service organizations, and other community organizations to collaborate on appropriate projects and initiatives.
- ◆ Reviewing all reports prepared by the court organization to determine how to make them more effective, targeted, and timely.

Strategies:

- A. Disseminate information on Court services, achievements, and performance to external partners, including all stakeholders and members of the bar.
- B. Work with external partners to accomplish a shared vision, common goals while exchanging information about each other's priorities, functions, programs, and requirements.
- C. Routinely share outcome reports on Court performance not only internally with judges and judicial personnel; but with justice system partners and on the Court's website as appropriate.
- D. Explore and implement, as appropriate resources become available, new court programs and services directed at court users (e.g., limited English proficient customers, filing fees, victim restitution, specialty courts, adult and juvenile probation programs).

Strategic Focus Area 5: Capacity Building

A. Human Resources

An exemplary court system must maintain a strong workforce and a positive work environment. The Court is committed to ensuring judicial personnel are professional, competent, diverse, fairly compensated, and properly trained, while ensuring the work environment is respectful and motivating.

In the timeframe covered by this plan, the Court will work on the following improvements:

- ◆ Providing judges the tools they need to operate in the digital court environment.
- ◆ Reviewing and modernizing performance management practices for both judicial and court administrative personnel, which includes updating technology hardware and software to support this modernization.
- ◆ Expanding cultural awareness and sensitivity training for judges and court personnel.
- ◆ Increasing the flexibility, frequency, and cost effectiveness of training.
- ◆ Investigating and supporting appropriate grant opportunities.

Strategies:

- A. Evaluate and improve management techniques, allocation of funds, internal operations, and services; support the sharing of effective management practices with all divisions and units within each division.
- B. Expand professional development, education, and cross-training for judges and all levels of court staff.
- C. Ensure that the Employee Performance Management System promotes individual accountability by assessing the current system and making changes as needed.
- D. Enhance employee contribution and connection to their work by seeking broad feedback and encouraging innovative and collaborative approaches to improve work processes, resource allocation, and customer service.
- E. Meet current and future employee and court organizational needs that will support service excellence by implementing a Human Capital Resources Strategic Plan.
- F. Expand web-based video and computer-based training opportunities for judicial officers and staff.
- G. Strengthen the Court's commitment to workforce diversity through expansion of diversity program recruitment, education and training.
- H. Strengthen internal communication and workplace satisfaction through greater use of technology, periodic forums with court personnel, and communication action plans for all initiatives.
- I. Provide system-wide training opportunities to increase understanding of new case management techniques, case processing improvements, technology applications.



B. Technology

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit is committed to continuing to use, improve and invest in technology to enhance court performance, and thus better serve the public. The Court does not adopt new technology simply because it is new, but based upon its ability to solve pressing business-process problems, provide prompt, reliable information to decision makers, and improve service to the public.

In the timeframe covered by this plan, the Court will focus on:

- ◆ Improving the efficiency of case processing through implementation of e-filing capabilities in all cases and in all courts.
- ◆ Implementing the use of e-Citation to electronically transfer citation information from law enforcement into the Court's case management system.
- ◆ Implementing the use of e-Warrant and e-Search Warrant to electronically exchange information with law enforcement and other justice system partners.
- ◆ Implementing a technologically advanced case management system.
- ◆ Implementing an automated modern risk-needs assessment instrument.
- ◆ Upgrading support systems, such as TRACKER, Caseload Explorer, and Jury Management, to better help court personnel working in those service areas to better serve the public.
- ◆ Using technology to provide efficient access to court documents while ensuring the security of confidential information.
- ◆ Strengthening information systems security to guard against cyber-attacks and theft of information.

Strategies:

- A. Publish the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Information and Technology Plan (ITP).
- B. Publish the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Disaster Recovery Plan (DR).
- C. Develop and publish an on-going technology user training program.
- D. Utilize technology to ensure timely access to court documents, proceedings, and services by expanding video and web conferencing opportunities, providing internet and online services, and employing other means to broaden accessibility of court information and services.
- E. Modernize the case management system to improve information gathering, case tracking, and data exchange.
- F. Explore the implementation of e-Bench system/tool to help manage their workloads.
- G. Implement e-filing system that is consistent with the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit technology plan.

- H. Secure resources necessary to align and deliver technological services and solutions to fully support court operations, sustain proven programs and fund innovative initiatives.
- I. Simplify and enhance information systems and related technological tools operating within the court organization.
- J. Protect the Courts' records by implementing best practices, employing technology to secure information, and conducting annual inspections and security awareness training.
- K. Develop business processes that will provide greater transparency, accountability, and security of the court organization.
- L. Ensure that the Courts and court organization can function during emergencies by maintaining a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that is well coordinated with all justice system partners, continually updated, tested and status/progress is routinely communicated.

C. Facilities

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit provides services to the community in multiple locations throughout Lake County. A vibrant court system requires facilities that are accessible, safe, secure, well maintained, and most important, fit for purpose. Priorities in this area include completion of the current capital improvement plan and publication of facilities plan to address future growth in the Adult Probation, Psychological Services Divisions, the Court's juvenile in-house residential treatment program (FACE-IT), and support programming throughout the court organization.

In the timeframe covered by this plan, the Court will focus on:

- ◆ Evaluating current facilities for adequacy of growth potential, serviceability of infrastructure, parking, and the need for building upgrades, including public and work areas, or decommissioning.
- ◆ Assisting the County in developing a funding strategy to pay for new, alternative, and/or remodeled facilities, working with appropriate partners.
- ◆ Enhancing and implementing, consistent with court security leadership, extended hours of operations for selected court programs.

Strategies:

- A. The Court will collaborate with justice system partners to effectuate necessary improvements to court facilities.
- B. The Courts' facilities will meet the needs of court participants, staff, and judges, and will have the image worthy of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit.



- C. The Court will work with the County of Lake on the feasibility of shared facilities that can be used to meet justice partner needs and maintain the necessary safety, security and independence that comes with the use of a shared facility.
- D. The Court will ensure that court facilities are one hundred percent accessible, meet the changing laws and standards regarding space and services, and adaptable to accommodate judges, court employees, clients, and court users.
- E. The Court will continue to enhance the safety and security of all of those who work in or use the courts at all facilities by conducting a comprehensive annual Security Assessment in conjunction with the Sheriff's Office, and implement security enhancements based on risk levels and best practices. This includes updating disaster preparedness and emergency operational plans.

HOW WE WILL IMPLEMENT THESE PLANS

The Court's Strategic Framework Plan is ambitious especially in light of the increasing expectations and limited resources the Court will face in the future. Nonetheless, following through on the strategic framework and priorities is paramount if the Court is to continue to provide high levels of judicial and staff services in the years ahead.

Success in implementing the strategic framework plan will require focus and perseverance on the part of the Court's judicial and administrative leadership and all staff. Specifically, as a framework to the future, success in part will depend on aligning the Court's fiscal and other resources, and making judicial, management and operational decisions, with the Court's direction and priorities.

In addition, in order to ensure that the Strategic Framework Plan remains vibrant for the Court in the years ahead, it will be important to: 1) communicate and build support for the plan, 2) involve many judges, managers, and staff in the Court's initiatives/programs/activities, 3) regularly monitor progress on the strategic initiatives/programs/activities, and 4) review and modify the Strategic Framework Plan at least annually or sooner if conditions warrant.

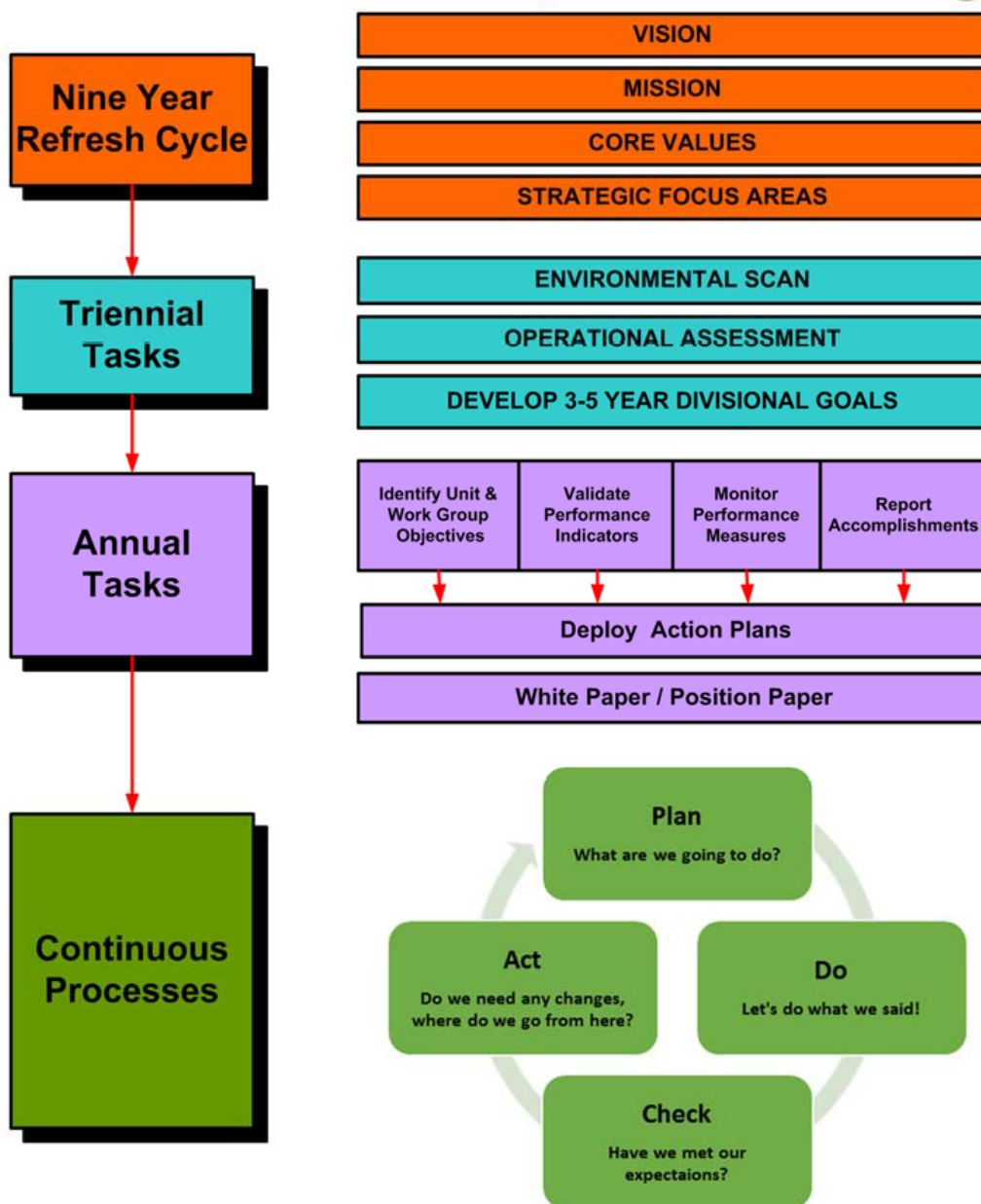
The values, standards, strategies and goals articulated in this strategic framework plan will be implemented as follows:

- By tracking and reporting progress in the annual State of the Judiciary report;
- By assigning individual tasks to the various standing and special judicial committees; and,
- By maintenance of trends analysis to make adjustments in the plan, as needed.

The following graphic depicts the development and monitoring process for this Strategic Framework Plan:



19th Judicial Circuit Strategic Framework Model



Every project big or small is successful largely due to the effort of a number of judges and staff who have given their valuable advice or lent a helping hand. The Court sincerely appreciates the support and guidance of Dr. Victor (Gene) Flango, Ph.D., who was instrumental in making this project a success.