



MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH

Priorities & Strategies for Minnesota's Judicial Branch

Focus on the Future

FY2010-FY2011

Minnesota Judicial Council



CONTENTS

Letter from the Chief Justice.....	2
Judicial Council Membership	3
Introduction	4
Judicial Branch Vision, Mission and Core Values	5
STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE	6
Priority 1A: Demonstrate the need and build support for obtaining the resources needed to insure the provisions of and access to justice.....	7
Priority 1B: Continue efforts to fully integrate MNCIS and to maximize its use through continual training.....	8
Priority 1C: Implement technological initiatives aimed at reducing workloads for court administration staff.....	9
Priority 1D: Provide centralized Self Represented litigant Services to Minnesotans	10
Priority 1E: Plan for access and service delivery levels in the context of anticipated future fiscal constraints	11
STRATEGIC GOAL 2: ADMINISTERING JUSTICE FOR EFFECTIVE RESULTS	12
Priority 2A: Integrate a judicial problem-solving approach into court operations for cases involving alcohol and other drug (AOD) addicted offenders.....	13
Priority 2B: Provide early resolution of family law cases	14
Priority 2C: Begin planning for a multi-disciplinary task force aimed at examining family law in general and the family court process (trial and appellate levels) to identify areas where improvements could be made	15
Priority 2D: Evaluate and, if appropriate, expand the Family Appellate Mediation Pilot Program	16
STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PUBLIC TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND IMPARTIALITY ...	17
Priority 3A: Continue the performance standards implementation initiative	18
Priority 3B: Continue efforts to implement education and development opportunities for Judicial Branch employees.....	19
Priority 3C: Recognize the 20th Anniversary of the Race Fairness in the Courts Study	20
Priority 3D: Encourage and facilitate communication and collaboration between the Minnesota Judicial Branch and Minnesota Tribal Courts.....	21



Letter from the Chief Justice

Dear Fellow Minnesotans:

Minnesota's courts have a national reputation for professionalism, efficiency, and innovation. They have earned this reputation by taking seriously the need to periodically assess judicial branch performance and identify new and innovative ways of more effectively handling cases and delivering quality services as cost efficiently as possible. This document is the result of our most recent self-assessment.

Since the last strategic plan was developed for our courts in 2006, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has undergone many changes with the goal of improving our ability to fulfill our core mission: *To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.* The Branch has worked to reduce administrative costs, increase our efficiency and make use of new information technologies to improve service to court users, streamline our work, and reduce operational costs..

We remain committed to providing excellent service, more efficient operations and more effective use of judicial resources in the years ahead. But we will need the support of our partners in the Executive and Legislative Branches, along with our justice system partners and the citizens of this state, to sustain this commitment to improvement during the difficult economic times ahead.

Our new plan is the result of many months of study by the Judicial Council's ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee, ably led by Judge Robert Benson, and of discussion with judges and court employees throughout the state. The result is a set of goals and priorities designed to produce a more efficient, effective, and equitable court system. It is our blueprint for the future.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Magnuson
Chief Justice



2008-2009 Judicial Council Membership

Hon. Eric C. Magnuson (Chair)
Chief Justice, Supreme Court

Hon. Charles Porter
Judge, Fourth District

Sue K. Dosal
State Court Administrator

Hon. G. Barry Anderson
Associate Justice, Supreme Court

Hon. Douglas Richards
Chief Judge, Fifth District

Jeffrey G. Shorba
Deputy State Court Administrator

Hon. Edward Toussaint Jr.
Chief Judge, Court of Appeals

Hon. John R. Rodenberg (Vice Chair)
Judge, Fifth District

Gerald J. Winter
District Administrator, First District

Hon. Thomas Kalitowski
Judge, Court of Appeals

Hon. James Florey
Chief Judge, Sixth District

Shelly Ellefson
District Administrator, Third District

Hon. William E. Macklin
Chief Judge, First District

Hon. Michael L. Kirk
Chief Judge, Seventh District

Mark S. Thompson
District Administrator, Fourth District

Hon. David L. Knutson
Judge, First District

Hon. Paul A. Nelson
Chief Judge, Eighth District

Chuck Kjos
Court Administrator, Olmsted County

Hon. Kathleen Gearin
Chief Judge, Second District

Hon. Gerald J. Seibel
Judge, Eighth District

Hon. Bill Johnson
Chief Judge, Third District

Hon. John Maturi
Chief Judge, Ninth District

Hon. James Swenson
Chief Judge, Fourth District

Hon. Timothy Bloomquist
Chief Judge, Tenth District

Hon. Denise D. Reilly
Judge, Fourth District



Introduction

In July 2007 the Judicial Council formed the Strategic Planning Workgroup to review the FY07-09 Strategic Plan and to recommend changes for the FY10-11 Plan.

The Workgroup made a special effort to reach out to all Judicial Branch judges and employees in the development of the new plan. The Workgroup surveyed judges and court employees, presented information on the draft plan at a bench meeting in each judicial district and met with the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. In addition, Workgroup representatives met with the Judicial District Administrators and Directors (JAD), the Executive Committee of the Minnesota Association for Court Management (MACM), the Executive Board of the Minnesota District Judges Association (MDJA), and State Court Administration managers and supervisors.

It became clear to the Workgroup early in the process that the current fiscal constraints facing the Judicial Branch necessitated restraint in terms of recommending new projects. Concern was expressed by judges and court staff that core judicial branch services to the public should take precedence over new initiatives and that many of the strategic initiatives currently underway should be completed before new initiatives are undertaken.

The Judicial Council, in recognition of current fiscal constraints facing the Judicial Branch and of the initiatives and projects already underway, determined that the new plan should address only three areas:

- Initiatives aimed at the development and maintenance of adequate personnel, financial and service infrastructure in order to ensure the provision of, and access to justice;
- Affordable initiatives that are already under way and will not be completed at the end of the current plan; and
- Initiatives that will reduce or contain current expenditures or provide additional cost effectiveness and efficiency critical to the efficient operation of the Judicial Branch.

The Judicial Council believes this strategic plan will serve as a roadmap for the judicial branch – guiding judges and court employees as they perform their work, prioritizing the use of scarce judicial branch resources, and measuring the success of the courts as we strive to achieve our mission.



Judicial Branch Vision, Mission, and Core Values

The elements of this strategic plan are designed to support the mission, vision, and core values of the Minnesota Judicial Branch:

Vision

The general public and those who use the court system will refer to it as accessible, fair, consistent, responsive, free of discrimination, independent, and well-managed.

Mission

To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

Core Values

Core values that the judicial system must embrace if it is to perform successfully its unique role in society:

Judicial Independence and Accountability

Equal Justice, Fair and Respectful Treatment of All

Customer Focused – Internally and Externally

Accessible

Affordable

Quality Commitment to Excellence and Quality Work
Environment

Commitment to Effective Communication

Predictability of Procedures

Balance Between Individualized Justice and Predictability of
Outcome



STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

A justice system that is open, affordable, understandable, and provides appropriate levels of service to all users

ISSUE

Ensuring access to justice for all citizens is an enduring concern for Minnesota's court system. It is also an increasingly challenging one, as caseloads rise, the needs of litigants become more complex, and resources become more scarce.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has experienced underfunding for the past three biennia.

- In FY04-05 the Branch was underfunded by \$23 million.
- In FY06-07 no restoration of funding was secured.
- In FY 08-09 the Branch was underfunded by an additional \$19 million.
- Most recently the FY10-11 budget was further reduced.

This chronic underfunding has resulted in a 9% staff shortage, delayed cases and extensive service reductions for Minnesotans. The Judicial Branch is at a tipping point—further under-funding will erode the justice system with collateral economic consequences for counties and increased public safety risks.

ACCESS PRIORITIES

The Access to Justice priorities focus on the need to increase awareness and build support for obtaining sufficient resources for the Judicial Branch and the need to continue efforts to build on the technological momentum and expertise in the state, with the goals of expanding the capacity of the judicial branch to efficiently process cases, enhancing timely access to information by court users and justice partners, and helping unrepresented litigants navigate the legal process.

The five Access to Justice priorities are:

- 1A. Demonstrate the need and build support for obtaining the resources necessary to insure the provision of and access to justice.**
- 1B. Continue efforts to fully integrate MNCIS and to maximize its use through continual training and system updates.**
- 1C. Implement technological initiatives aimed at reducing workloads for court administration staff.**
- 1.D. Provide centralized Self Represented Litigant Services to Minnesotans.**
- 1.E. Plan for access and service delivery levels in the context of anticipated future fiscal constraints.**



Strategic Goal 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Priority 1A: Demonstrate the need and build support for obtaining the resources necessary to ensure the provision of and access to justice

ISSUE

This initiative recognizes the growing concern that the Judicial Branch will be unable to meet its constitutional obligation to provide justice in an efficient and effective manner if sufficient staff and judges are not provided to perform judicial branch core services. It further recognizes concerns about the Branch's ability to take on new initiatives if core services are not being performed.

Courts must actively work to educate funding and policy groups, as well as the public, about the judicial system and the challenges the courts face.

All Judicial Branch judges and employees should participate in efforts to increase awareness of the essential role played by courts at the appellate and the trial court levels. Judges and court staff must also work to develop sound relationships with the Legislature, the Executive Branch, and with justice system partners.

OBJECTIVE

- Better understanding on the part of policy makers about the essential core government function provided by the Judicial Branch.
- Development/enrichment of local personal relationships with legislators.
- Support for judicial branch funding by policy makers and the public.
- Support for judicial branch innovations by justice partners.

STRATEGIES

- Continue Criminal Justice Forum
- Initiate Civil Justice Forum
- Seek out opportunities for media placements of events/projects/milestones that emphasize Judicial Branch effectiveness, cost efficiency and expanded use of technology.
- Continue efforts to educate policy makers and the public about the courts and duties of judges.



Strategic Goal 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Priority 1B: Continue efforts to fully integrate MNCIS and to maximize its use through continual training and system updates.

ISSUE

Although MNCIS is now operational in all 87 counties the need for on-going training, enhancements and system performance continue. These efforts remain a priority through the next biennium.

OBJECTIVE

- Improve performance of existing information technologies and support new initiatives as resources permit.
- Seek expanded broadband access in rural areas.
- Maximize existing resources for system updates.
- Seek expanded MNCIS training opportunities.

STRATEGIES

- Participate in Tyler User Group to prioritize targeted enhancements.
- Provide training to employees on MNCIS processes based on specific data quality needs.
- Utilize training opportunities through district user groups based on case type.
- Provide customized MNCIS learning for individuals through e-learning methods.
- Evaluate cost structure for telephone services and identify VOI opportunities where financially feasible.



Strategic Goal 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Priority 1C: Implement technological initiatives aimed at reducing workloads for court administration staff.

ISSUE

One of the most critical issues facing the Judicial Branch today is the diminishing staff levels in our trial courts. Funding levels for the courts have declined with no corresponding decrease in workloads or in the services citizens expect.

Recognizing that the funding situation will not improve in the near future, the Branch is committed to finding ways to maintain levels of services with fewer people.

OBJECTIVE

Implement technological initiatives to:

- reduce workloads for court administration staff;
- Reduce cost of court operations; and
- Increase collection of revenue.
 - for court staff.
 - Reduced costs of operations.
 - Improved collections of revenue owed to state and local government and to communities.

STRATEGIES

- Implement Centralized Payables processing in 85 counties.
- Implement:
 - E-Citation
 - Auto Assessment of fines
 - Phone and Web payment
 - Auto-referral of overdue debt



Strategic Goal 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Priority 1D. Provide centralized Self-Represented Litigant Services to Minnesotans.

ISSUE

The number of litigants who proceed without an attorney is on the rise nationally and in Minnesota. The number of pro se defendants in Hennepin County’s Housing Court, for example, is more than twice the number who use an attorney. Nationally, only a small portion of low-income litigants in need of legal assistance have access to lawyers. The law and court processes are complex and difficult for non-lawyers to understand and navigate. This initiative continues the judicial branch commitment to access to justice for its citizens.

The Statewide Self-Help Center annually provides services to over 300,000 pro se litigants via a “virtual self-help center” on the judicial branch’s website and public workstations in each courthouse where litigants can access the site, use interactive software to complete forms, and phone SHC staff for assistance.

The anticipated benefits of providing self-help resources to litigants are:

- improved quality of hearings, as pro se litigants with access to self-help centers will have more accurate paperwork and be better prepared for court

- increased access for non-English speakers, as some self-help resources are available in several languages
- improved trust in the court system as a result of better understanding of court procedures and more control over the process

OBJECTIVE

Provide accurate timely and meaningful information about court processes to self represented litigants to:

- Enhance access to court.
- Reduce costs and create efficiencies.
- Improve the ability of judges to make a decision on the merits.

STRATEGIES

- Obtain grant funding to meet growing demand for current services and develop partnerships.
- Continue web content development, training and outreach, and evaluation of services.
- Design, pilot test and assess new services.



Strategic Goal 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Priority 1E: Plan for access and service delivery levels in the context of anticipated future fiscal constraints.

ISSUE

The Minnesota Judicial Branch will be faced with twin challenges in the future:

- ◆ significant budget constraints; and
- ◆ a smaller available workforce, or at a minimum, significant competition for a limited pool of workers.

In response to the challenges, the Judicial Council created the Access and Service Delivery Workgroup (ASD) to develop options for restructuring delivery systems, redesigning business processes, expanding the use of technology and prioritizing functions to provide appropriate levels of access and services statewide at the lowest cost. The Workgroup reported its recommendations in January 2008 and the Judicial Council then established two implementation Workgroups to oversee the additional research, analysis, and implementation of the ASD recommendations.

OBJECTIVE

- Continue to develop and implement plans for re-engineering access and delivery systems in the Judicial Branch.
- Reduce cost of operations.
- Maintain acceptable levels and alternative means of access.

STRATEGIES

- Implement Access and Service Delivery 2 Committee recommendations.
- Implement staffing to the lowest norm.
- Communicate with justice partners regarding proposed changes.
- Begin planning for FY12-13 biennium.



STRATEGIC GOAL 2: ADMINISTERING JUSTICE FOR EFFECTIVE RESULTS

Adopting approaches and processes for the resolution of cases that enhance the outcomes for individual participants and the public

ISSUE

Over the last two decades, Minnesota courts have worked diligently to become increasingly efficient. Minnesota judges carry caseloads that are 49% greater than judges in comparable state court systems. Yet, efficiency is not an adequate measure of a successful justice system. Striving for more effective outcomes for court participants is the focus of this goal.

In recent years, new strategies have been tested and proven promising in achieving more effective outcomes for court participants who continually come back into the justice system because underlying substance abuse, mental health, or other psychosocial problems have not been addressed. These approaches stress a collaborative, multidisciplinary problem solving approach for addressing the underlying problems as well as the legal issues that bring these individuals into court in the first place.

Judicial approaches which target the early resolution of cases involving families and children and are more likely to produce effective case outcomes are another strategic focus for the judicial branch.

EFFECTIVE RESULTS PRIORITIES

The priorities for administering justice for effective results during this strategic planning period are to:

- 2A. Integrate a judicial problem-solving approach into court operations for dealing with alcohol and other drug (AOD) addicted offenders**
- 2B. Provide early resolution of family law cases**
- 2C. Begin planning for a multi-disciplinary task force aimed at examining family law in general and the family court process (trial and appellate levels) to identify areas where improvements could be made.**
- 2D. Evaluate and, if appropriate, expand the Family Appellate Mediation Pilot Program**



Strategic Goal 2: ADMINISTERING JUSTICE FOR EFFECTIVE RESULTS

Priority 2A: Integrate a judicial problem-solving approach into court operations for cases involving alcohol and other drug (AOD) addicted offenders

ISSUE

In recent years, alternative and demonstrably more effective judicial strategies for dealing with AOD- addicted persons, and particularly criminal offenders, have evolved both in Minnesota and other states. Known as “problem solving approaches,” these strategies use the coercive power of the court, in collaboration with prosecution, defense, probation, and treatment providers, to closely monitor the defendant’s progress toward sobriety and recovery through ongoing treatment, frequent drug testing, regular court check-in appearances, and use of a range of immediate sanctions and incentives to foster behavioral change. This priority calls for a broad and fundamental shift in how Minnesota’s courts deal with AOD-addicted offenders.

The Judicial Council recognizes the effectiveness of problem-solving courts and recommends, to the extent possible, that current courts be maintained and that robust evaluation efforts be accomplished to bolster the justification for these courts.

OBJECTIVE

Maintain current problem-solving courts and evaluate their effectiveness to the extent financial resources permits.

STRATEGIES

- Provide funding to existing operational drug courts.
- Complete evaluation of drug courts.
- Commence planning for statewide access to problem solving courts.



Strategic Goal 2: ADMINISTERING JUSTICE FOR EFFECTIVE RESULTS

Priority 2B: Provide early resolution of family law cases

ISSUE

Family Early Case Management (ECM) is an emerging model for processing marital dissolution cases more effectively and efficiently, especially in cases involving disputed issues such as custody and parenting time. It involves more active and aggressive judicial management early in the case to help facilitate early settlement of disputed issues.

An additional component of this model is the use of Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) to settle disputed issues early in the dissolution case, as an alternative to the expensive and time-consuming process of conducting custody evaluations. ENE is a short-term, confidential, evaluative process using a male and female team of experienced custody evaluators to facilitate prompt dispute resolution in custody and parenting time matters.

The benefits of using these approaches in family cases involving children are significant:

- reduced cost and acrimony among the parties
- earlier resolution and certainty for the children
- increased settlement rates
- reduced time from filing to judgment
- fewer number of appeals and post judgment motions to modify decrees
- reduced need for full custody evaluations and custody trials

Jurisdictions throughout the state have begun experimenting with the use of the Initial Case Management Conference and the Early Neutral Evaluator model in family law cases. Programs have been developed and implemented at the local level. Training for neutrals has been provided on a volunteer basis by judges from the Fourth Judicial District. Preliminary information demonstrates that these serve as important case management tools in the early and effective resolution of family law cases. Jurisdictions should be encouraged to continue experimentation in this area.

OBJECTIVE

Less adversarial and more timely, efficient, cost effective resolution of cases involving children and families..

STRATEGIES

- Expand capacity by promoting ECM/ENE pilot establishment in each judicial district.
- Provide evaluation to demonstrate replicability.
- District-wide implementation facilitated by existing pilots.



Strategic Goal 2: ADMINISTERING JUSTICE FOR EFFECTIVE RESULTS

Priority 2C: Begin planning for a multi-disciplinary task force aimed at examining family law in general and the family court process (trial and appellate levels) to identify areas where improvements could be made

ISSUE

Over the past two decades the Minnesota Legislature has implemented statutes and created study groups aimed at reducing conflict in dissolution, annulment, legal separation and paternity proceedings in order to foster collaborative parenting arrangements. The Legislature has enacted statutory methods for enforcing visitation orders, methods of aiding in child access, as well as sanctions and remedies for violation of visitation orders. It has mandated participation in parenting programs and has sought to utilize language in the statutes that is less stigmatic, is less likely to foster conflict, and more accurately describes parenting responsibilities through substitution of the term “parenting time” for visitation throughout the statutes. Most recently, in 2007 it overhauled the method used to calculate child support, adopting an “incomes shares method”.

At the same time the Legislature has directed the State Court Administrator’s Office to examine various aspects of the area of family law:

- 1995 – Supreme Court Advisory Task Force on Visitation and Child Support
- 1998 – Supreme Court Advisory Task Force on Parental Cooperation
- 2008 – State Court Administration Workgroup on Presumption of Joint Physical Custody.

In spite of these efforts, the family law arena continues to be plagued by emotional trauma, acrimony and extended, unresolved parental conflict.

OBJECTIVE

Begin planning for a multi-disciplinary task force aimed at examining family law in general and to the family court process (trial and appellate) to identify where improvements could be made.

STRATEGIES

- Solicit 3-4 judges who are willing to participate on a steering committee.
- Where possible rely on research and technical assistance from the Institute for Advancement of American Legal System.
- Make recommendations to the Judicial Council for the creation of a Family Law Task Force only when adequate, non-state funding is secured.



Strategic Goal 2: ADMINISTERING JUSTICE FOR EFFECTIVE RESULTS

Priority 2D: Evaluate and, if appropriate, expand the Family Appellate Mediation Pilot Program.

ISSUE

The Minnesota Court of Appeals has developed and implemented an appellate mediation pilot program for family law. The program is structured to reinforce and work cooperatively with the early-neutral-evaluation and other mediation processes in the district courts.

The Court of Appeals workgroup, consulting with family law practitioners, bar association groups, and district court judges, designed the pilot program to improve outcomes for families, reduce the time from filing to final resolution, reduce costs to families and the courts, to reduce family conflict during the appellate stage, to increase judicial efficiency, and to maximize litigant satisfaction. The pilot program began operation in September 2008.

Since September 2008, the program has had a fifty-percent success rate, which is equal to or higher than averages from other states with similar programs. In addition, the program has settled cases equivalent to a month and a half workload of three judges.

OBJECTIVE

- Provide more efficient and timely resolution of family law cases at the appellate level.
- Reduce costs to litigants and courts.
- Encourage voluntary settlement, reduce family conflict level during appellate resolution, and reduce recurrent litigation in district courts and in the Court of Appeals.

STRATEGIES

- Continue Family Appellate Mediation Pilot Program and monitor current structure and pilot project rules.
- Increase geographic range of trained mediators and increase slightly the current number of mediators.
- Develop a training model for new mediators.
- Analyze results of program evaluation
- Begin to develop formal rules for permanent family appellate mediation.
- Achieve self-sustaining status within Minnesota Court of Appeals structure.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PUBLIC TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND IMPARTIALITY

A justice system that engenders public trust and confidence through impartial decision-making and accountability for the use of public resources

ISSUE

An overwhelming majority of Minnesotans have confidence in the state's judicial branch as an institution. Minnesotans believe judges are well-equipped to do their jobs and that court employees are helpful and courteous.

Nearly 40% of Minnesotans say they know little or nothing about the court system. Nearly half of Minnesotans say they think courts are out of touch with what's going on in their communities and Minnesotans also have concerns about the timeliness and cost of bringing a case to court, and the judiciary's treatment of persons of color.

Courts must take an active role in continually assessing their performance, the perspectives and experiences of litigants and actively work to educate funding and policy groups, as well as the public, about the judicial system and the challenges the courts face.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

There are three priorities to ensuring public trust, accountability and impartiality during this strategic planning period:

- 3A. Continue the performance standards implementation initiative and publish results.**
- 3B. Continue efforts to implement education and development opportunities for Judicial Branch employees to improve productivity and enhance cultural awareness.**
- 3C. Recognize the 20th Anniversary of the Race Fairness in the Courts Study.**
- 3D. Encourage and facilitate communication and collaboration between the Minnesota Judicial Branch and Minnesota Tribal Courts.**



Strategic Goal 3: PUBLIC TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND IMPARTIALITY

Priority 3A: Continue the performance standards implementation initiative

ISSUE

In 2007 the Judicial Council established court performance goals and a process for monitoring progress toward meeting those goals.

Performance goals are necessary to ensure accountability of the judicial branch, improve overall operations of the court, and enhance the public's trust and confidence in the judiciary.

This effort will continue efforts to implement the performance goals and progress monitoring efforts.

Court performance goals:

1. **Access to Justice:** The Minnesota Judicial Branch will be open, affordable, and understandable to ensure access to justice.
2. **Timeliness:** The Minnesota Judicial Branch will resolve cases and controversies in a timely and expeditious way without unnecessary delays.
3. **Integrity and Accountability:** The Minnesota Judicial Branch will ensure the integrity and accountability of its performance by maintaining a record system that is accurate, complete, and timely.
4. **Excellence:** The Minnesota Judicial Branch will achieve excellence in the resolution of cases and controversies by accurately and fairly determining the facts and by applying and clearly enunciating statutory, common, and constitutional law.

5. **Fairness and Equity:** The Minnesota Judicial Branch will provide due process and equal protection of the law, and will ensure that individuals called for jury duty are representative of the population from which the jury is drawn.

6. **Quality Court Workplace Environment:** The Minnesota Judicial Branch will ensure that judicial officers, court personnel, and jurors are qualified to perform their duties and have the materials, motivation, direction, sense of mission, and commitment to do quality work.

OBJECTIVE

Continue the performance standards implementation initiative to:

- Ensure accountability of the branch,
- Improve overall operations of the court, and
- Enhance the public's trust and confidence in the judiciary.

STRATEGIES

- Promote regular use of current reports and tools into court management activities.
- Develop additional reports and tools for courts to use to measure compliance with the performance goals and key results.
- Continue data quality efforts.
- Issue Annual Report.



Strategic Goal 3: PUBLIC TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND IMPARTIALITY

Priority 3B: Continue efforts to implement education and development opportunities for Judicial Branch employees.

ISSUE

Training and education are important components in achieving the Judicial Branch’s strategies and priorities. Currently, court employees are asked to take on more work, often with different kinds of cases and in varying areas of court. Cross-training of employees becomes increasingly necessary as does maximizing the use of the Judicial Branch case management and other technology applications. The purpose of education and training are:

- ◆ To provide the court system with a productive and skillful workforce capable of meeting the current and future responsibilities of the judiciary;
- ◆ To encourage employees to participate in achieving the courts’ strategic priorities;
- ◆ To promote constructive workplace relationships in a healthy and diverse workforce; and
- ◆ To assist employees in achieving career and individual development goals.

It is of primary importance and benefit to the Minnesota Judicial Branch and to the public that those responsible for providing judicial branch services continue their professional education throughout the period of their employment in the courts.

OBJECTIVE

- Increase employee skill development and efficiency to enrich public trust and confidence with Judicial Branch customers.
- Expand Judicial Branch capability when diversity issues impact work or effectiveness and provide workforce retention and succession training..
- Enable staff, clients and customers to work together in a respectful, productive work environment.

STRATEGIES

- Provide training that supports business efficiency initiatives.
- Provide accessible relevant education and skills development opportunities for managers and supervisors.
- Develop and implement education for managers and supervisors to address statewide management goals as a follow up to the Quality Work Place Survey and for maximizing individual and team performance.
- Provide technology skill development courses to court employees.
- Provide customized learning for individual employees through e-learning methods.



Strategic Goal 3: PUBLIC TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND IMPARTIALITY

Priority 3C: Recognize the 20th Anniversary of the Race Fairness in the Courts Study

ISSUE

On December 20, 1990, the Minnesota Supreme Court created the Task Force on Racial Bias in the Courts (Task Force). The first Task Force meeting was held on January 17, 1991. On June 10, 1993, the Task Force released its Final Report. The same day, the Supreme Court also ordered the creation of the Implementation Committee on Multicultural Diversity and Racial Fairness in the Courts, now known as the Racial Fairness Committee, to implement and monitor the recommendations of the Task Force’s Report.

Significant progress has been made on implementing the recommendations of that report. Yet racial fairness concerns persist.

OBJECTIVE

Recognize the 20th Anniversary of the Race Fairness Task Force to focus continued justice system attention on issues of racial fairness in the court.

STRATEGIES

Plan and execute a recognition event to highlight progress made and identify continued challenges in race fairness in the courts.



Strategic Goal 3: PUBLIC TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND IMPARTIALITY

Priority 3D: Encourage and facilitate communication and collaboration between the Minnesota Judicial Branch and Minnesota Tribal Courts.

ISSUE

State courts and tribal courts have a range of common responsibilities. Both have the responsibility to provide justice to the citizens of this state. Both seek to use public resources effectively and efficiently. The parallel and sometimes overlapping responsibilities require open lines of communication between the two court systems. Person-to-person communication and sharing information among tribal and state judges and court staff can lead to improved respect, understanding, and cooperation between the two court systems.

This Strategic Goal seeks to facilitate more effective State-Tribal Court cooperation and communication. The State-Tribal Court Forum will be responsible for assessing current levels of interaction and cooperation, for facilitating improvement and for consulting on appropriate educational opportunities and materials for judges and court employees.

OBJECTIVE

- Raise understanding and awareness of State Court judges and personnel on State-Tribal issues.
- Develop rules/procedures for dealing with State-Tribal Court jurisdiction issues.
- Increase cooperation/collaboration with Tribal Courts on matters of common interest.

STRATEGIES

- Encourage State Court members of the State-Tribal Court Forum to pursue policies consistent with this Strategic Goal.
- Have State-Tribal Court Forum report annually to the Judicial Council .
- Develop open, mutually respectful communication between local State and Tribal Courts.

“Next to doing right, the great object in the administration of justice should be to give public satisfaction.”

-John Jay, the first United States Chief Justice



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH**