



2017 - 2021 Strategic Plan

April 2017



Third Judicial Circuit Court
Detroit, MI

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Letter from Court’s Leadership

Strategic Planning Committee

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Supporting Work – Available Upon Request:

A: 2016 Strategic Planning Surveys and Focus Groups – Summary of Findings

B: Trends Information

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

In February, 2016 Chief Judge Robert J. Colombo, Jr. and Executive Court Administrator, Zenell Brown, discussed and determined the need for developing a five-year strategic plan for the Third Judicial Circuit Court. A strategic plan was needed to help the Court identify its priorities, lay out future action to continuously improve the Court and provide a blue print for the Court's direction.

A committee of volunteer judges and management was formed and charged with the responsibility of developing a strategic plan. Interviews were conducted with Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey of Praxis Consulting, Inc. and the National Center for State Courts to identify a qualified person or entity to lead the Court in developing a strategic plan. The committee unanimously selected Dr. Wagenknecht-Ivey and a contract was executed in July, 2016.

In August, 2016 Dr. Wagenknecht-Ivey met with court leadership including the Chief Judge, Presiding Judges, Executive Court Administrator and Deputy Court Administrators to learn all about the Court including its strengths, weaknesses and challenges. It was agreed that surveys would be developed from questions created by court officials and that the surveys would be submitted to judges, employees, partners and stakeholders of the Court. In addition, there were three focus groups moderated by Dr. Wagenknecht-Ivey who provided answers to questions and information that would be used in developing the strategic plan. For the very first time in the history of this Court, court employees have been given a significant opportunity to provide input as to the direction that this Court should take in the future. This inclusive process allowed us to identify the expectations of everyone who works in the Court including our partners, stakeholders and customers. We thank everyone who took the time and effort to answer our survey and/or participate in our focus groups.

The Strategic Planning Committee met on November 17 and December 8, 2016 and January 19, February 23, and March 23, 2017. The committee has: (1) considered the responses to our surveys and focus groups; (2) analyzed population, social, demographic and external trends in Detroit and Wayne County Michigan; (3) reviewed internal trends of the Court with respect to filings, dispositions, types of cases, jury trials, bench trials, time for resolution of case types, and staffing levels and patterns; and (4) considered the results of the public satisfaction surveys.

The committee has identified six strategic focus areas that include (1) facilities and parking, (2) employee satisfaction, work environment, pay and benefits, (3) technology, (4) case management and operational efficiencies, (5) access to services and programs and (6) external relations with stakeholders, partners and customers. These strategic focus areas are consistent with this Court's mission to provide accessible and equal justice with timely dispute resolution. Long range goals and objectives and strategic projects also are included for each strategic focus area. The projects, which have been assigned to a person and/or team to complete, set forth our annual priorities and will help the Court measure progress and accomplishments each year. The most important part of a strategic plan is to implement it. We are committed to following-through on this Plan with the help of our many great judges, managers, and staff. It is this Court's hope that this strategic plan will create a clear vision and roadmap for the future and provide a quality environment for all who work in and with the Court.

 
Hon. Robert J. Colombo, Jr. date: Zenell Brown date:
Chief Judge, Third Judicial Circuit Court Executive Court Administrator

Strategic Planning Committee

Hon. Robert Colombo Chief Judge	Hon. Timothy Kenny Presiding Judge, Criminal Division
Hon. Kathleen McCarthy Presiding Judge, Family Division	Hon. Virgil Smith Presiding Judge, Juvenile Division
Hon. Patricia Fresard Presiding Judge, Civil Division	Hon. David Allen, Civil Division
Hon. Annette Berry Civil Division	Hon. Karen Braxton Juvenile Division
Hon. Eric Cholack Family Division	Hon. Richard Halloran Family Division
Hon. Catherine Heise Criminal Division	Hon. Edward Joseph Juvenile Division
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Ms. Yvette Blackmon Director of Jury Services	Ms. Benita Cheatom Director of Human Resources
Mr. Michael Gruich Director of IT	Ms. Janice Hiller Deputy Director, Purchasing and Facilities Mgt.
Mr. Toby Horner Deputy Chief Financial Officer	Mr. Todd Kidwell Deputy Director of IT
Ms. Erin Lincoln Legal Director/Assistant Friend of the Court	Ms. Tammi Palmer Director of Case Processing
Ms. Lyn Roberts Chief Financial Officer	Ms. ToieLynn Smith Manager, Specialty Court Services/Juvenile
Mr. Eric Weems Director of Purchasing and Facilities Management	Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey Consultant, PRAXIS Consulting, Inc.

2017 – 2021 Strategic Plan

April 2017

Section 1: Overview

The Third Judicial Circuit Court of Michigan embarked on a strategic planning process in mid-2016 to develop a court-wide, comprehensive roadmap for making needed changes and improvements. Continuing its commitment to excellence and innovation, the Court's leadership sought an inclusive and extensive process to critically review where the Court is now, identify future challenges and opportunities, and define what the Court wants to look like – and be – in the future.

The strategic planning process, which was facilitated by Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey of PRAXIS Consulting, Inc., was customized to meet the Court's needs. It included extensive outreach through surveys and focus groups, the formation of a diverse and representative strategic planning committee, and an extensive analysis of internal and external trends and information from the outreach efforts.

The Court's Strategic Plan is presented below. It includes:

1. Revised mission, vision, and core values.
2. Summary of implications of internal and external trends.
3. Summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
4. Description of Strategic Focus Areas along with long-range goals and objectives.

See the Court's companion document – ***Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects*** – for a list of the Court-wide and Divisional projects the Court is working on to make progress on key strategic focus areas and long-range goals.

Section 2: Mission, Vision, and Core Values

The Court's revised mission, vision of the future, and core values are presented below.

Mission of Third Judicial Circuit Court

The Court provides accessible and equal justice with timely dispute resolution.

Vision of the Future

As a national leader in court performance and the administration of justice, the Court is recognized for:

- Using innovative and best practices;
- Building trust and confidence in the judicial branch; and
- Providing exemplary public service, programs, and work environment including professional facilities and effective technology.

Core Values

- Fair:* We are just, impartial, inclusive, and honorable in all we do.
Proactive: We anticipate and prepare in advance for opportunities and challenges.
Responsive: We are flexible and react quickly to changing needs and times.
User-friendly: We are accessible and understandable.
Collaborative: We involve and work well with each other, court users, and partners.

Section 3: Trends Analysis and Implications

The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed a myriad of external trends including social, demographic, economic, technological, and policy/political trends. It also reviewed internal trends and data including filings, dispositions, fiscal/budget, and staffing levels. Below are plausible implications of the trends on the Court.

Implications of External and Internal Trends:

1. Changing needs and increasingly diverse court users. Wayne County's population is increasingly diverse and faces many challenges such as lower education rates, high poverty, and lower pay. Additional services are needed throughout the County to meet the growing and changing needs of the population. The Court also must continually enhance its services to respond to changing needs. Continued collaboration among the Court and justice system and community partners will be essential in the future.
2. Growing expectations and demands on the Court. Societal expectations are changing and the political climate remains challenging, resulting in increased demands on and challenges for the Court. For example, the public expects: (1) 24x7 access to information and services; (2) the ability to do business with the Court electronically/remotely; (3) convenience; (4) timely – immediate – services; (5) swift resolution to complex legal matters; and (6) fair and equal treatment. Additionally, the political and economic climate remains challenging. Budgets/fiscal resources are tight. There is increased scrutiny on how public resources are spent. There is increasing competition and need for limited and insufficient resources for public services. The Court must be more proactive and flexible to meet and respond to increasing expectations and needs. Finally, the Court must be more proactive in educating people about and preserving the integrity of the judicial branch of government. Responding effectively to growing expectations and demands will help increase the public's trust and confidence in the Court.
3. Growing need for equal access and effective programs. The Court is committed to providing equal access, enhancing and expanding court services per the needs of court users, and providing effective programs. The Court recognizes the need to help court users (e.g., litigants/defendants, families, youth, elderly, and the disenfranchised) navigate the legal process and ultimately succeed (e.g., comply with orders, avoid re-offending, etc.). Increasing accessibility and making the Court more understandable also are important in the future. This will require expanding services and assistance such as self-help, language/interpreter, and navigation. It also will require improvements to facilities, parking, and technology (e.g., e-filing, making more information available online and through the website). Additionally, strengthening and expanding programs such as mental health and substance abuse and well as using evidence-based needs and risk assessment tools and practices will help achieve better case outcomes for court-involved youth and litigants. Families also can be better served by consolidating matters in one location and with one judge. Finally, the Court also needs to respond more effectively to primary and secondary trauma experienced by litigants, jurors, judicial officers, and employees
4. Need to keep pace with technological advances. Technology is changing rapidly – at warp speed. Keeping pace with technological advances is critically important but extremely challenging for the Court. The Court must continue to make technological improvements (e.g., improve and expand e-filing, improve case management systems) and implement innovations to enhance

access, services, efficiency, etc. Anticipating future technology needs and advocating for requisite resources will be needed in the future. It also is important to better merge business processes with technological solutions, which will ensure the technology supports court operations and end users. Finally, technological changes and advances will require ongoing training to ensure the technologies are used to their fullest.

5. Need for efficient operations and improved internal communication. With increasing demands and existing staff, the Court must continually improve and streamline work processes, modernize court procedures, and do business differently in the future. Additionally, it is increasingly important for Court divisions to share appropriate [electronic] information to better serve litigants and families involved in multiple divisions. Overcoming resistance to change and a mindset of “this is the way we have always done it” will be a challenge in the future.
6. Workforce challenges. Changes are needed in the County and Court’s human resource and employee relations practices (e.g., pay, benefits, work rules, hiring and promotional practices) to ensure the Court can recruit and retain a qualified workforce. Progressive labor practices and competitive pay/benefits are needed. However, making advancements will be challenging given the history, past practices, and current conditions. The Court and the unions will need to work together to make needed changes.

Additionally, the composition and needs of the Court’s workforce continue to change. The Court has a large proportion of judges and employees eligible to retire. Their departure will leave a void in institutional knowledge. Succession planning, training and development, and providing advancement/promotional opportunities for remaining staff are critically important for maintaining a high level of performance and engagement during transitions. It will be increasingly important to train and educate new judges, new employees, and develop future judicial and administrative leaders of the Court.

Recruiting and retaining a new and younger workforce also poses challenges for the Court with limitations on pay, incentives, career advancement and growth opportunities, the ability to maintain an innovative, flexible, and technologically advanced work environment, and the like. Building a team-based organizational culture that values workforce diversity (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, skills), challenges and engages everyone, and provides employees with a strong sense of purpose also is needed in the future.

In sum, the Court faces numerous workforce challenges. It must continue to lead and advocate for changes in this area. Doing so will help ensure the Court maintains a qualified and engaged workforce.

7. Filings and Workload. The number of filings in most case types is declining. However, the numbers fail to accurately reflect and account for (1) the complexity of legal matters in the cases and (2) the additional hearings, motions, and post-adjudication matters heard by judicial officers and processed by employees, which for the criminal, domestic relations, and juvenile divisions are ongoing for many years. Additionally, given the dynamic environment, the caseloads and workloads of the Court will continue to change and shift. Having the ability to accurately report the Court’s workload along with the ability to shift resources (i.e., fiscal, human, physical) as needed will be increasingly important in the future.

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8. Use and Level of Resources: Securing additional resources is expected to be challenging in the future. The Court, as with all government institutions, will continue to experience pressure to do “more with less.” Additionally, the number of judgeships and staffing levels may be questioned in the future due to: (1) the declining population of Wayne County; (2) the declining number of filings (in most case types); and (3) the call for increased efficiencies using technology (e.g., automating manual processes, ability to do business with the Court electronically) and other innovative practices such as reengineering work processes and service delivery. In sum, the Court will need to continue to advocate for additional resources and demonstrate a prudent use of existing by using them efficiently, effectively, and strategically.

Section 4: Organizational Assessment

Below is a summary of the Court’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) per the survey and focus group results and observations of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Judicial Officers and Staff – knowledgeable, dedicated, fair, experienced, helpful, etc. 2. Timely resolution of disputes/effective case management 3. Customer service 4. Array of programs and services 5. Judicial and Administrative Leadership 6. Specialty Courts and other court programs 7. Employee ratings on Strength of the Workplace Questions – e.g., understand what is expected, supervisors care, commitment to doing quality work, etc. 8. Improving teamwork and employee morale 9. Outreach and education 10. Diverse workforce (e.g., employees) 11. Settlement Agreement with County 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilities and parking – unprofessional, difficult to navigate, inadequate and costly parking 2. Technology – remote access, manual processes, etc. 3. Difficult to navigate court process – difficult to understand, etc. 4. Beginning court sessions timely; reducing wait times for hearings to begin 5. Relationship with some partners 6. Inadequate mental health and substance abuse services 7. Pay and benefits 8. Communication and feedback 9. Training and development 10. Don’t have one culture, one campus, one team – fragmented 11. Lack diversity in rest of judiciary/FOC referees
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve facilities and parking 2. Better use of/improve technology 3. Strengthen relations with external partners and the community 4. Enhance and expand services and programs 5. Continue to improve court performance – timely hearings, timely resolution, procedural fairness, impartial and fair treatment, etc. 6. Build trust and confidence in the judicial branch 7. Continue to implement innovations, best practices, and operational efficiencies; build a culture of continuous improvement 8. Improve pay and benefits of employees 9. Improve employee engagement, satisfaction, and the work environment (e.g., training and development, career advancement) 10. Enhance community outreach and education 11. Use available funding/reserves effectively 12. Leverage settlement agreement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of funding/fewer resources 2. Declining or inaccessible services and facilities 3. Staff turnover and impending retirements 4. Failure to develop/maintain positive external relations (e.g., with partners, stakeholders, public) 5. Loss of control, independence, and autonomy (from other branches) 6. Statutory changes, unfunded legislated mandates, and other state requirements 7. Being ill-prepared for emergencies/crises – e.g., Cyber-attacks/inadequate cyber security, active shooter, natural disasters 8. Uncertain political climate 9. Inability to implement innovations and operational efficiencies 10. Loss of faith or confidence in the legal/justice system

Section 5: Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs)

This section presents the Court’s strategic focus areas, which are the vitally important areas the Court must focus on in the coming years to fulfill its mission, work toward its vision, and be responsive to the feedback and input from strategic planning survey respondents and focus group participants.

- Strategic Focus Areas**
(not in order of priority)
1. Facilities
 2. Employee Satisfaction, Work Environment, and Pay and Benefits
 3. Technology
 4. Case Management and Operational Efficiencies
 5. Access, Services, and Programs
 6. External Relations

Below is a description of each Strategic Focus Area. Also included are long-range goals and objectives – or strategies – for achieving the goals.

The Court’s annual strategic projects for each focus area are presented in a separate Companion Document: ***“Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects.”*** This document includes the Court-wide and Divisional projects for the year.

SFA 1: Facilities

Description: The Court currently provides services from four locations: Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, Frank Murphy Hall of Justice, Lincoln Hall of Justice, and Penobscot Building. The multiple locations are confusing and inconvenient for court users and court partners, and create inefficiencies and redundancies for the Court. First, part of the Lincoln Hall of Justice campus has been condemned. Additionally, many of the Court's facilities are inadequate and need significant improvements. Some buildings need to be cleaned and painted. The air and environment need to be safe. Heating, cooling, and elevator systems need improvement, and parking is insufficient and unaffordable. Also, facilities are not accessible to the disabled, lack sufficient space, need roof and plumbing repairs, etc. Finally, court facilities need modernizing and other amenities (e.g., cafeteria, auditorium, outlets).

The Court's vision, which is consistent with the negotiated settlement agreement with the County, is to create one Court facility or campus housing all divisions, or two locations where the criminal division is located near the jail. The Court will continue to work with the County and others to secure accessible, professional, and safe facilities in accordance with the negotiated settlement agreement that meet the needs of court users, partners, judicial officers, and staff, and are consistent with industry standards.

Survey and Focus Group Findings: Strategic Planning and focus group participants identified the Court's facilities as an area for improvement. Specifically, parking and ADA access were identified as significant barriers to accessing or using the Court. Also, improving facilities/parking was among the highest rated future priorities for the Court. In fact, facilities and parking were rated the single most wanted change/improvement in the next 1-2 years by both external partners and judicial officers and staff. Specific suggestions for improvement included:

1. More accessible and affordable parking for court users and employees
2. Improve access for the disabled
3. Enhance safety, security, and emergency preparedness
4. Reduce delay in entering the buildings through security
5. Improve cleanliness and building maintenance (e.g., elevators, air/heat flow, paint, replace carpeting, leaking roofs, windows, and plumbing systems)
6. Improve and modernize courtrooms, offices, and public areas
7. Ensure adequate space to separate litigants, victims, jurors, family members, etc.
8. Consolidate facilities into one building or one campus

Long Range Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court will have state-of-the art facilities on one or two campuses located in or near downtown Detroit.

Objective 1: Explore scenarios/options that address the Court's needs.

Objective 2: Meet regularly and negotiate with the County over terms.

Objective 3: Communicate and collaborate with other justice system partners and stakeholders.

Objective 4: Define facility, space, and parking needs, and develop state-of-the-art specifications.

Objective 5: Lead and direct the planning, development, and construction phases.

Objective 6: Seek support and assistance from the public and external partners.

Objective 7: Promote and support traditional and alternative funding methods.

Objective 8: Assess potential costs and savings for facility options.

Objective 9: Seek grants and other funding opportunities to enhance state-of-the art features.

Objective 10: Conduct ongoing review to maintain new facilities.

Goal 2: The Court’s facilities will be accessible, professional, safe, and will meet the needs of court users, partners, judicial officers, and staff in accordance with leading industry standards.

Objective 1: Evaluate the Court’s facilities pursuant to appropriate and leading industry standards.

Objective 2: Enhance safety, security, and emergency preparedness.

Objective 3: Reduce wait times for entering court facilities.

Objective 4: Improve navigation and movement throughout facilities.

Objective 5: Clean, remodel, and better maintain existing space, equipment, and building infrastructure.

Objective 6: Seek support from public, court users, and partners.

See the Court’s ***Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects*** for a list of court-wide and divisional strategic projects for this Strategic Focus Area.

SFA 2: Employee Satisfaction, Work Environment, and Pay and Benefits

Description. Having a skilled, engaged, and satisfied workforce is vitally important to the Court's future and overall success. The Court sees the value of, and need for, changes that will improve pay and benefits, the work environment, and employee satisfaction. Collaborating with, and obtaining the cooperation of, the County and unions will be necessary to make needed improvements.

Specific areas for improvement include:

1. Updating and modernizing compensation (i.e., pay and benefit) practices and job classifications;
2. Ensuring fair, equal, and sufficient pay, and affordable benefits, for employees;
3. Modernizing the performance management system;
4. Creating one court culture characterized by innovation, teamwork, customer service, change, empowerment, and coaching.
5. Developing a motivating work environment where employees are: (a) engaged and feel valued and appreciated; (b) treated fairly; and (c) rewarded and recognized for their contributions.
6. Communicating and sharing information more effectively at all levels and within and across Divisions/Departments.

Survey and Focus Group Findings. In addition to many of the above, survey and focus group participants suggested improvements in the following areas:

1. Ensure consistent application and enforcement of policies and supervisory practices across all locations and Departments.
2. Develop a common purpose and establish priorities.
3. Build a culture that embraces and rewards change and new ideas (including use of technology).
4. Improve hiring and promotional practices.
5. Improve orientation/onboarding practices.
6. Strengthen management and supervisory practices.
7. Provide more training and cross-training opportunities.
8. Provide career advancement, promotional, and growth/development opportunities.
9. Develop a meaningful reward and recognition program.
10. Implement other perks/incentives of value such as alternative/flexible work arrangements.
11. Conduct more team/morale building activities throughout the Court
12. Solicit ideas from and involve staff in making changes.
13. Improve information sharing, transparency, and follow-through.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court will provide fair pay and competitive benefits.

Objective 1: Develop a fair market compensation strategy using data and best practices.

Objective 2: Advocate for fair and competitive pay and benefits with the County.

Objective 3: Update and modernize positions/job classifications.

Objective 4: Educate employees on full compensation package.

Objective 5: Negotiate with unions to find areas of compromise that work for the Court and employees.

Goal 2: The Court's workforce will be skilled, engaged, and satisfied.

Objective 1: Strengthen orientation and onboarding processes.

Objective 2: Improve communication, information sharing, and transparency.

Objective 3: Solicit ideas from and involve staff in making changes and improvements.

Objective 4: Clarify expectations and provide training, coaching, and feedback to employees.

Objective 5: Strengthen the performance management/appraisal process.

Objective 6: Implement contemporary work rules and policies.

Objective 7: Provide incentives to employees.

Objective 8: Train and develop employees, supervisors, and managers.

Objective 9: Cross train employees to increase efficiency and enhance professional growth and development.

Objective 10: Provide career advancement and promotional opportunities.

Objective 11: Develop the next generation of leaders and managers.

Objective 12: Reward and recognize staff for excellent attendance, job performance, and service.

Objective 13: Promote a safe work environment.

Goal 3: The Court will have one consistent, inclusive, and innovative court culture.

Objective 1: Increase cross-departmental collaboration, coordination, and communication.

Objective 2: Apply policies and procedures consistently throughout the Court.

Objective 3: Conduct court-wide or interdepartmental team and morale building activities.

Objective 4: Foster innovative thinking.

Objective 5: Solicit ideas from and involve staff in making changes and improvements.

A list of the Court's strategic projects for this Strategic Focus Area can be found in the companion document: ***Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects.***

SFA 3: Technology

Description. Investing in and using available technology to its fullest is a high priority for the Court. Technology improvements and advances are needed to manage and process cases effectively, increase efficiency, reduce duplication, and improve access to information and resources. E-filing, improved and integrated case management system, electronic audio/video court recording system, updated video-conferencing equipment, modern computers and printers, mobile devices, and mobile apps are examples of improvements needed.

Additionally, the Court is committed to being proactive and strategic when making technological improvements. This includes: (1) understanding and melding court business needs with the appropriate technological solutions; (2) pursuing complementary technological innovations that will improve efficiency and services; (3) involving end users and partners in identifying technology needs and opportunities; (4) protecting privacy and securing confidential information; and (5) training judicial officers and staff.

In sum, the Court wants to create a culture that embraces technology and is technologically savvy. It, therefore, must continue advocating for needed fiscal and staff resources to ensure the growing and evolving needs of the Court are met.

Survey and Focus Group Findings. Survey and focus group participants also identified technology improvements as a high priority for the future. Specific examples noted by respondents were:

1. Improve computers, equipment, IT/case management systems, document management system, courtroom technology, digital signage, and software.
2. Increase/expand ability to do business with the Court remotely/electronically (remote access, e-filing, website improvements – forms, information).
3. Implement technological innovations (e.g., texting jurors and probationers, using mobile apps).
4. Give users input into making changes to Odyssey.
5. Provide access to and share information across systems.
6. Move to a paperless/paper-on-demand system.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court's technology will improve access, services, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Objective 1: Expand ability to do business with the Court remotely/electronically.

Objective 2: Update and modernize hardware and software (e.g., computers, mobile devices, audio/video recording equipment, other equipment such as printers, scanners).

Objective 3: Move to paperless/paper-on-demand system.

Objective 4: Provide access to and share appropriate information across systems.

Objective 5: Protect privacy and confidentiality of information.

Objective 6: Strengthen cyber-security.

Objective 7: Evaluate effectiveness of existing technology.

Objective 8: Anticipate and pursue innovative technological solutions that provide equal access to justice, enhance services, and improve efficiency.

Objective 9: Involve and collaborate with end users, partners, and stakeholders in defining needs, planning, and implementation.

Objective 10: Evaluate and advocate for needed resources.

Objective 11: Provide ongoing training and support to judicial officers, employees, and other users (of the technology).

See the Court's ***Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects*** for a list of court-wide and divisional strategic projects for this Strategic Focus Area.

SFA 4: Case Management and Operational Efficiencies

Description. The Court resolves cases in a timely manner in accordance with the Michigan Supreme Court's time standards. It will continue to use disposition, case age, and other data to monitor, evaluate, and improve case management practices ensuring timely resolution of cases. The Court also will continue to promote and pursue outcome and procedural fairness in all that it does.

The Court is committed to continuous improvement. It will work to improve case management practices and streamline operations. It also will work to eliminate unnecessary delay, provide timely hearings and services, and implement process improvements to make the Court more efficient and effective. Examples include implementing consistent case management practices, streamlining work flow, and eliminating operational redundancies.

Additionally, outcome and procedural fairness are high priorities for the Court. Greater emphasis on implicit bias and procedural fairness are needed to improve perceptions, increase compliance with orders, and increase trust, respect, and confidence in the Court.

Finally, the Court does not have a unified Family Court. It has not yet implemented the one family, one judge concept. Families will be better served in the future when the Court creates a unified Family Court.

Survey and Focus Group Findings. While timely resolution of cases was identified as a strength of the Court overall, survey and focus group participants also identified areas for improvement related to timely services, case management practices, and internal efficiencies. Suggestions for improvement included:

1. Reduce wait times and provide timely services
2. Begin motions, hearings, and trials on the day and time they are scheduled to start.
3. Improve and standardize work processes.
4. Better use technology to streamline workflow and reduce work process redundancies.
5. Expand alternative dispute resolution (e.g., mediation, arbitration).
6. Streamline work processes/increase efficiency of court operations
7. Improve procedural fairness, which includes handing cases effectively and treating all fairly and with respect (e.g., improve opportunities for court users to be heard/present their side of the story; help court users understand what they need to do when they leave the courtroom/courthouse; explain rulings/decisions to the parties; show care and concern for parties).

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court will resolve all matters in a timely manner in accordance with the law.

Objective 1: Improve case management by using best practices.

Objective 2: Streamline workflow/work processes within Divisions and between Court and Clerk's Office.

Objective 3: Implement consistent procedures and practices within and across Divisions.

Objective 4: Use technology to improve case management and operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Objective 5: Use data/information to monitor and improve compliance with time standards and expeditiously manage dockets.

Objective 6: Use effective methods for moving cases and reducing unnecessary delay (e.g., avoid taking cases under advisement, reduce number of adjournments).

Objective 7: Train and increase awareness of judicial officers and employees on efficient and effective case management/case processing practices.

Objective 8: Evaluate the effectiveness of changes/improvements.

Goal 2: All court litigants will be treated with courtesy and respect.

Objective 1: Treat all litigants professionally and with respect.

Objective 2: Serve all litigants in a timely manner.

Objective 3: Demonstrate empathy and understanding.

Objective 4: Explain procedures, rulings, and orders.

Objective 5: Provide litigants with an opportunity to be heard and understood.

Objective 6: Demonstrate neutrality by applying legal principles and procedures consistently.

Objective 7: Train and educate judicial officers and employees.

See the Court's ***Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects*** for a list of court-wide and divisional strategic projects for this Strategic Focus Area.

SFA 5: Access, Services, and Programs

Description. Improving access, services, and programs are high priorities for the Court. In response to changing demographics and needs of litigants and other court users, the Court sees the need to improve access to information, resources, and court services and programs. It also will work to make the Court's procedures more understandable and user-friendly.

Expanding services and programs that meet court users' needs also are vitally important objectives in the future. This includes improving access to legal services for indigent parties, enhancing services for self-represented litigants, providing navigation and language assistance, improving the experience for jurors, improving mental health and substance abuse services, expanding specialty courts and programs, and bolstering services for juveniles and families, to name a few. The Court will continue to collaborate with providers, partners, and stakeholders to strengthen services and programs.

The Court also will provide the highest quality of customer service to all court users. Specifically, all court users will be treated fairly and professionally, and will receive timely service.

Finally, the Court is committed to being innovative and responsive. The Court will pursue and implement innovative programs and services and promising practices. It also will use evidence-based tools including risk and needs assessments to improve long-term and post-judgment outcomes for litigants, youth, and families. Ongoing monitoring will occur to help facilitate success.

Survey and Focus Group Findings. Survey and focus group results also point to needed improvements in this area. Specific suggestions for improvement included:

1. Ensure fair, professional, and respectful treatment by all judicial officers, courtroom personnel, and court employees.
2. Enhance customer service including answering questions, providing information, and helping court users navigate the courthouse and court process.
3. Ensure court procedures and processes are understandable to litigants/users.
4. Improve/expand self-help services.
5. Improve legal assistance for indigent parties.
6. Provide consistent, understandable information and instructions (e.g., forms, procedures).
7. Expand mental health and substance abuse services and programs.
8. Improve the juror experience.
9. Enhance services for youth and families.
10. Enhance pre-trial, probation, and supervision programs for adults.
11. Increase consistency across all Departments (e.g., hours, procedures).

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Court services will be easily accessible.

Objective 1: Provide convenient court/service locations.

Objective 2: Identify and address access barriers.

Objective 3: Enhance and expand informational and educational resources available onsite and online.

Objective 4: Expand court user education and outreach opportunities.

Objective 5: Use technology to enhance remote access and ability to do business with the Court electronically.

Objective 6: Solicit input and suggestions from court users.

Goal 2: The Court's programs and services will meet the needs of court users.

Objective 1: Evaluate/assess current services and programs.

Objective 2: Increase understanding of court users' needs.

Objective 3: Improve legal services to indigent parties.

Objective 4: Improve and expand assistance provided to court users.

Objective 5: Improve support and services to families, children, and youth.

Objective 6: Enhance mental health and substance abuse services/programs.

Objective 7: Centralize, consolidate, and better coordinate services within and across Divisions of the Court.

Objective 8: Implement and/or expand the use of evidence-based tools and other innovative programs.

Objective 9: Collaborate with community and treatment providers to enhance and expand services and programs.

Objective 10: Advocate for funding and other resources to provide needed programs and services through the Court and in the community.

Goal 3: All court users will be treated fairly and professionally.

Objective 1: Foster and reinforce a culture of customer service excellence.

Objective 2: Use input/feedback from the public/court users to improve customer service.

Objective 3: Increase training of judicial officers and employees (e.g., customer service, implicit bias, procedural fairness).

A list of the Court's strategic projects for this Strategic Focus Area can be found in the companion document: ***Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects.***

SFA 6: External Relations

Description. The Court has many external partners all of whom are critically important to the Court's overall effectiveness. Positive relations and open dialogue are essential for the Court to fulfill its mission and work toward its vision of the future. Additionally, the Court sees the need to educate the public about the Court and third branch of government. Increased understanding and outreach are needed to enhance public relations.

The Court is committed to building and strengthening collaborative relations with all external partners. It will continue to work with the County advocating for needed funding and resources. Working with the Clerk's Office also is a high priority. The Court will work to improve cooperation and communication, address areas of mutual concern, and improve services to court users. It also will communicate with and involve the legal community and justice system and community partners in enhancing services and efficiencies. Working with the unions, SCAO, the media, and other executive and legislative partners also will yield benefits as the Court strives to make systemic improvements that will improve court performance and enhance trust and confidence in the judicial branch.

Survey and Focus Group Findings. Below are specific improvement suggestions from survey and focus group participants:

- a. Improve communication and cooperation between the Clerk's Office and the Court; work together to make improvements and achieve common goals.
- b. Increase collaboration and communication among Court, County, and other external partners and stakeholders.
- c. Increase public education and community outreach.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court will communicate and collaborate effectively with partners and stakeholders.

Objective 1: Educate partners and stakeholders on the Court's role, mission, and priorities.

Objective 2: Develop and expand collaborative opportunities.

Objective 3: Form new partnerships.

Objective 4: Enhance open dialogue and information sharing.

Objective 5: Work with partners to solve problems and improve areas of mutual interest.

Objective 6: Solicit and use feedback and suggestions from partners and stakeholders.

Goal 2: The Court will educate the public and promote its activities.

Objective 1: Form positive/strengthen media relations.

Objective 2: Expand public education and community outreach.

Objective 3: Use multiple, modern communication methods to share information and educate the public.

Objective 4: Participate in news events and other forums for disseminating information, answering questions, etc.

See the Court's ***Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects*** for a list of court-wide and divisional strategic projects for this Strategic Focus Area.

Conclusion

The Third Judicial Circuit Court's strategic planning process was a success. It was inclusive, data driven, and highlighted many important matters facing the Court in the coming years. Additionally, it built and resulted in consensus around the Court's future direction and priorities as laid out in this five-year Plan. We are now excited to begin the implementation journey, which includes working on court-wide and divisional strategic projects in each of the Strategic Focus Areas.

The Court's annual priorities are presented in a companion document – ***Operational Plan – Annual Strategic Projects***. Court-wide and Divisional Strategic Project Teams will be formed to work on and complete the various initiatives each year. The Teams will be comprised of many members of the original Strategic Planning Committee as well as additional judicial officers and employees from all areas of the Court. The Court's Judicial and Administrative Leadership will monitor progress and assist as needed throughout the implementation phase.

Annually the Court will review and celebrate its accomplishments. It also will review the direction and priorities of the Court, and will modify the course as needed. Finally, each year, the Court will identify new strategic projects, continuing the Court's journey of excellence and continuous improvement.