

Strategic Plan for San Francisco Superior Court

Mission Statement

The purpose of the San Francisco Superior Court is to assure equal access, fair treatment, and the just and efficient resolution of disputes for all people asserting their rights under the law.

GOAL – Quality of Justice and Service to the Public

Issue Statement: The Court provides the highest quality of services for all people who access court services.

Quality of Service. Ensure that all court users receive the highest quality of service from all court personnel, being mindful of the increasing diversity of our community and evolving needs of court users. Introduce modern service delivery methods that leverage technology to ensure service quality as well as options for court users who expect and prefer technology.

- Increase the frequency of customer service training for staff, with a focus on those serving the public.
- Expand Live Chat on public website, implement online dispute resolution.

Accessibility. Ensure public trust and confidence by making procedures and processes fair, equitable and understandable.

Facilities infrastructure. Provide and maintain safe, dignified and functional facilities to accommodate the needs of court users and justice system partners in San Francisco.

- Advocating for a new criminal courthouse and Juvenile Justice Center.
- Advocating for ongoing renovations and repairs needed to maintain the Juvenile Justice Center and Hall of Justice facilities until the facilities can be replaced.
- Working collaboratively with the Judicial Council to ensure ongoing maintenance and effective utilization of the Civic Center Courthouse.
- Commitment to reopening the children’s waiting rooms.

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Criminal. In collaboration with the Court's Justice Partners, focus on improving criminal case processing to ensure the unbiased, fair, and timely disposition of criminal cases which will benefit victims, defendants, and the public. Develop better statistical reporting and information systems to aid in the planning and implementation of criminal court processes to improve the efficiency and quality of criminal court services for all parties and criminal court participants.

Traffic. Continue to support and implement ability-to-pay initiatives to minimize the impact of high traffic fines and fees on low-income court users.

Unified Family Court. Strengthen the services provided to families and youths through greater collaboration and innovative efforts with the Court's justice and community partners. Continue to improve access to the judicial process through technology and e-filing. Utilize trauma-informed principles when addressing issues involving children, including youth in the dependency and juvenile justice divisions, and encourage family-centered case resolutions that focus on inclusion of youths' voices in decisions that affect their lives.

Civil. As appropriate, review and enhance case processing procedures to ensure fair and efficient resolution of all civil cases. Improve efficiencies of judicial, staff assignments and information systems related to limited and general jurisdiction civil cases. Expand, where possible, the use of electronic filing and other features of electronic access to court case documents.

Probate and Mental Health. Ensure broad access for all to services provided by the division. Continue to expand the use of technology to allow remote access to court services. Enhance public access to court records where consistent with the law by expanding use of electronic filing and expanding the database of on-line records. Promote general and specialized educational opportunities and training for bench officers and staff. Increase community and stakeholder outreach.

Jury. Continue to improve facilities and jury program services that enhance the satisfaction of jurors serving the Court. Focus on long-term improvement in how prospective jurors are summoned and efficiently utilized.

Complex Litigation. Maintain, enhance, and promote complex litigation departments that provide fair and efficient resolution of complex cases through innovative and effective judicial management.

Dispute Resolution Programs. Develop and promote innovative problem-solving programs and practices that promote negotiated resolutions to cases in a way that is fair and just.

Collaborative Courts. Document the effectiveness of its current programs (Drug Court, Behavioral Health Court, Community Justice Center, Veterans Justice Court, Family Treatment Court, Juvenile Reentry Court, Young Adult Court), assess the implementation process and participate in stakeholder meetings for new programs. Educate the court and the community about the concepts and effectiveness of collaborative courts.

Community Outreach and Education. Maintain a well-coordinated, active public education program in which judges and other court personnel help educate the public about the role and operation of the courts.

GOAL – Access, Fairness, Equity and Diversity

Issue Statement: The Court must ensure that all people who need court services have equal access and receive equal treatment.

Public Access and Awareness. Conduct outreach to inform the community regarding court services and operations and the role of courts in their community.

- Continue to provide free access to civil public records and investigate ways to expand into other areas where permitted by law.
- Increase access to court records online.
- Maintain operations throughout the pandemic.
- Increased public relations about court operations.

Language Access. Continue to provide interpreter services, court signage, and written materials in languages other than English to assist court users.

Self-Represented Litigants. Continue the implementation and institutionalization of services to self-represented litigants, including enhancing court outreach, improving customer service, and expanding the range of self-represented services available to the public.

Access for Individuals with Disabilities. Ensure that facilities and services are accessible and that the needs of people with disabilities are accommodated in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Diversity of Court Personnel. Publicize employment opportunities on social media and at community events, local schools and community colleges and collaborate with responsible entities to ensure robust and diverse candidate pools and encourage the professional development of a diverse work force within the court.

Education and Training. Develop and conduct educational and training programs for employees and bench officers focused on elimination of bias and cultural awareness.

- Develop and implement training for navigating change and challenges to further the court’s mission in a united and effective manner.

Fairness. Identify and work to eliminate all forms of bias, and the appearance of bias in court operations and ensure that all court users are treated fairly by providing fairness training to all court personnel.

Allocation of Resources to Promote Access. Analyze and allocate resources to ensure that all court users get equal access to court services.

GOAL – Independence and Accountability

Issue Statement: The Court must protect the ability of judicial officers to decide disputes in accordance with the facts and law and exercise appropriate discretion and independent decision-making and must reasonably account for its use of public resources.

Maintaining Its Constitutional Role. Identify and work to eliminate barriers to independent and informed decision-making in all judicial departments and support strategies for preserving the independence of judicial decision-making.

Court Leadership. Encourage judicial and court personnel to participate actively in Judicial Council and other state, national, and international activities to help formulate policies that improve the administration of justice, network with other court personnel, formalize outreach to the community, and advocate for court resources.

Planning and Budget Development. Maintain an effective community-focused court planning process, manage the court's budget to support the implementation of the court's plans, actively seek grants and other sources of funding, and allocate and account for the use of court resources.

Ongoing Performance Measurement. Continue to develop meaningful system performance standards, measure performance against the standards, analyze data on these measures and support changes to increase efficiency and effectiveness consistent with the objectives and values of the court. When developing new court programs, establish goals and performance objectives to ensure the achievement of effective programming.

GOAL – Continued Development of Best Practices in Management and Administration

Issue Statement: The Court will endeavor to operate efficiently and effectively while promoting employment practices that foster positive employee development and positive employee morale. In addition, to resolve employment disputes in a just and timely manner.

Personnel System. Maintain a personnel system that recruits and retains a highly qualified and diverse workforce and treats all employees fairly, consistently, and with respect. Ensure transparency and fairness in hiring practices that include more open communication.

- Engage HR director for input and guidance.
- Review current practices and develop plan for improvement with input from staff.
- Explore ways to incorporate staff development into the personnel system.

Management Structure. Maintain a management team that supports and is responsive to the staff, including ensuring that staff have resources to perform their work and that management understands the functioning of the court in each division. Ensure that management are proactive in developing operations that are consistent of best practices, evolving policies and laws. Provide opportunities for all court personnel to participate in court policy setting.

- Invite comments and input from staff for improvement to court operations and programs through a standardized process.
- Develop critical thinking and project management training for line staff to help them better articulate feedback, comments, and input.

Case and Calendar Management Practices. Develop and promote innovative practices to foster a fair, timely and efficient adjudication of cases. Organize and assign court personnel to courtrooms efficiently and with minimal disruption that ensures effectiveness and efficiency in case processing that allows for a well operating courtroom.

Operations. Improve operations through innovation, technology, and the sharing of effective practices.

Disaster Preparedness. Develop continuity plans with other governmental agencies to ensure the Court's ability to continue to provide services in the event of a disaster.

Security. Work with the Sheriff's Office, Police Department, and other local agencies to develop best practices and employ effective responses to ensure that adequate security and protection is provided to all who use and work in court facilities.

GOAL – Technology and Professional Infrastructure for Service Excellence

Issue Statement: Continue to develop technological and professional infrastructure to ensure access for litigants and the general public and to ensure productivity and performance of court personnel.

Technology. Encourage and sustain innovation in information-sharing technology for the public and court personnel. Enhance access to the Court's IT infrastructure. Develop and implement annual technology plans.

- Include strategies that serve a new generation of court users who use new technologies (live chat, texting, self-service, etc.).
- Prioritize modernization of courtrooms and using technology to support remote appearances that is of adequate technology and, to the extent possible, free for court users.
- Update service delivery models with commonly used technology.
- Continue the expansion of E-filing to other case types.
- Digitizing court records.

Effective Case Management System. Develop, implement, and maintain C-Track, a single coordinated and effective case management system that can serve the whole court and all court users.

Administration and Management. Maintain and enhance HR and Finance systems and services. Further develop infrastructure to improve court records management, implement succession planning, and coordinate dissemination of new legislation information.

- Bolster internal communications infrastructure to ensure all internal stakeholders are engaged.

GOAL – Education and Professional Development

Issue Statement: The Court emphasizes and provides education and training to ensure high quality and quantity of service.

Employee and Judicial Orientation. Ensure that all new judicial officers and employees are oriented to the work of the Court and their role in accomplishing the court’s mission.

Cross-Training. Continue to emphasize cross-training of bench officers and court personnel in different divisions and skills to be able to flexibly assign and move personnel as needed to respond to changes in workloads while ensuring the delivery of high-quality services.

Comprehensive Education Program. Maintain both in-person and distance learning educational opportunities for all court personnel with an emphasis on customer service, new technologies, diversity, elimination of bias and emerging legal and ethical issues training.

Professional Development Program. Continue to offer a professional development program that clearly identifies educational expectations and opportunities that are tied to career and promotional opportunities. Ensure that professional development is a priority to identify and prepare future leaders of the court.

- Work with HR to develop clear career paths tied to Performance Review and Plan.
- Use Performance and Review Plan to map project opportunities, acting assignments and other career path objectives for individual staff.
- Provide more training for staff preparing PRP’s so they are more meaningful and interactive.
- Develop cross training across the different divisions of the court to ensure successful delivery of services.

Continuing Judicial Education. Encourage judicial participation in continuing education programs to promote excellence in general and specialized areas of the law, high standards of ethics and professionalism, and the fair administration of justice.

GOAL – Local Priorities

Issue Statement: The court will increase its engagement with the public through outreach, education and communication and seek to sustain and improve access to justice for the community.

Community Engagement. Build on public and community engagement efforts to increase visibility and knowledge of the court.

- Analyze the current state of community outreach and communication, explore best practices in other jurisdictions.
- Design and implement a plan to improve communication and outreach with the public, including education on court processes and programs (e.g. Day in Court, Color of Justice, Judges in the Classroom) and obtaining feedback from the public on court operations.
- Increase internal communication between the Communications Director, bench officers and staff regarding court operations to ensure the public understands court processes and programs.

Adequate, Stable, and Predictable Funding. The court will work with other branch entities and interested members of the public to ensure a fair and reliable funding base that will sustain operations on a continuous basis and access to justice for all.

- Work with the Judicial Council and other entities on reliable and stable funding sources.
- Identify and development of alternative funding sources (local government, federal grants, etc.).
- Budget appropriately, prioritize services and programs.
- Identify comprehensive solutions for managing scarce resources.