



2014-2018 STRATEGIC AGENDA

King County Superior Court
Department of Judicial Administration

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2014-2018 Strategic Agenda and Plan

Overview

In 2014, the King County Superior Court embarked on a planning process to update the Court's Strategic Agenda. This Strategic Agenda applies to the entire Court, including the Clerk's Office, as well as to all judicial officers and personnel (e.g., judge's staff, Superior Court staff, and Clerk's Office staff). The process, which was facilitated by PRAXIS Consulting, Inc., included:

1. Gathering information from key internal and external partners and stakeholders as well as judicial officers and staff to inform the planning process;
2. Discussing an ideal future for the Court;
3. Reviewing and analyzing external and internal trends;
4. Identifying future opportunities and threats; and
5. Updating the Court's strategic focus areas, long-range goals, and objectives.

In addition to updating the Strategic Agenda, the planning process included strengthening implementation and follow-through efforts. This included enhancing communication, forming court-wide and divisional action teams to complete strategic projects each year, involving more judicial officers and staff in strategic activities, and applying best practices for maintaining focus and momentum.

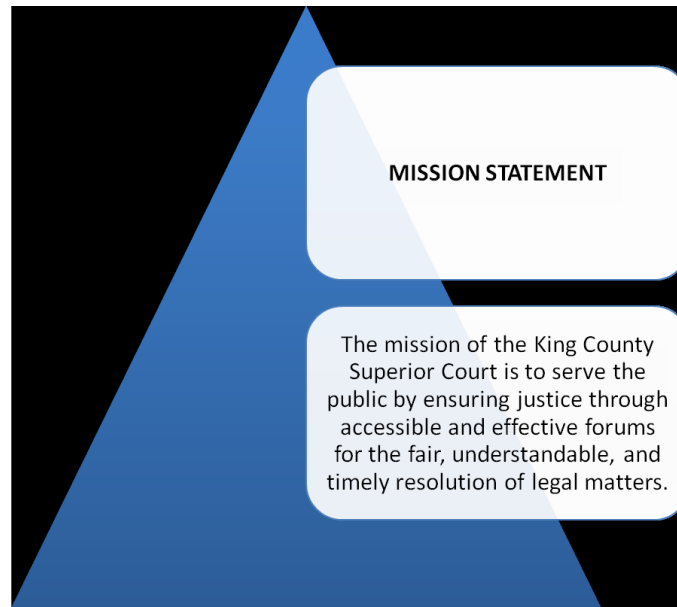
The Court's Strategic Agenda is presented below. It includes the mission, vision, and core values along with updated strategic focus areas, goals, and objectives for improving the quality of justice and services. Additional information used by the Strategic Planning Committee to update the Strategic Agenda is available from Court Administration. Appendices A and B – Trends information and Summary of the Survey Results – are available upon request.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

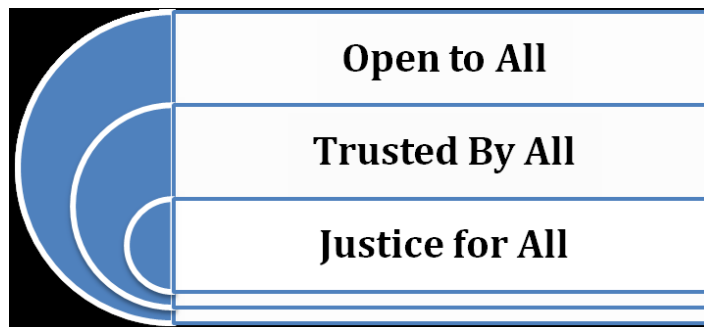
An organization's mission statement conveys why it exists – its primary purpose. A vision of the future communicates what the organization will look like or will be doing when performing at its best. Finally, the core values convey the attitudes and behaviors an organization wants to promote and reward in the future.

The Court's mission, vision, and core values, which were developed in 2009, are below.

MISSION STATEMENT



VISION STATEMENT



To obtain this vision, the entire Court will:

- Provide the highest quality of justice – fair, timely, accessible, understandable, user-friendly, and bias free – to court users;
- Increase public understanding and be recognized as a “center of excellence” for its services and innovative practices;
- Be proactive and nimble;
- Create an ideal – satisfying and engaging – place to work;
- Expand services in response to the changing needs of court users and the community;
- Optimize the use of existing and emerging technologies to enhance access and efficiency;
- Collaborate and form new partnerships with justice system and community partners and stakeholders; and
- Govern and lead effectively.

CORE VALUES

The entire Court, including the Clerk's Office, and all judicial officers and staff, are committed to the following values as we provide justice and court services to the people of King County.

Professional

- Demonstrate competence, expertise, and civility toward those we serve to ensure justice for all (both in appearance and in fact). We will communicate clearly and respectfully to all we serve and with whom we work, fostering an environment of service and collegiality.

Culturally Competent

- Respect and understand diverse backgrounds and cultures to ensure justice for all people.

Accessible

- Ensure the Court's facilities are physically accessible, our processes and procedures understandable, and all people have equal access to the Court regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or legal representation.

Service-Oriented

- Provide the highest quality of services to the public and all court users, and complete the work of the Court in the most efficient and effective manner. To do so, we will be nimble and innovative.

Solution Oriented

- Work to resolve disputes and legal matters; solve problems for those who come to court; and improve justice-related outcomes through the use of therapeutic jurisprudence. We also will use data to assess performance and results, and continuously improve.

Fair, Understandable, and Timely

- Act fairly, which includes being free from bias and eliminating inequities; communicate clearly; and be responsive and timely in all that we do.

Safe and Secure

- Provide a safe and secure environment, and through our work and actions, make communities safer.

Leadership

- Model vision and leadership in all areas of the Court.

Strategic Focus Areas, Goals, and Objectives

Below are the strategic focus areas, long-range goals, and objectives of the King County Superior Court. Together they present important areas the Court, including the Clerk's Office, will focus on in the years ahead as well as strategies for making continued improvements.

Strategic focus areas are large, encompassing issues that are fundamentally important to the entire Court in the short and long-term. They are internal or external issues that are critically important to overall success; they affect the Court's ability to fulfill its purpose and work toward its vision of the future.

Goals are broad statements that define desired end targets. They are ultimately what the Court is trying to achieve in the end – the end results.

Strategies/Objectives are general statements that describe the manner in which the end result – or goal – will be achieved. Together they represent the comprehensive strategies the Court will complete to achieve the goals.

Strategic Focus Areas

2014

1. Access, Services, and Programs that Promote Justice
2. Case Management and Caseflow
3. Public Understanding and Intergovernmental Relations
4. Operational Infrastructure
5. Work Environment and Workforce Development

Finally, there are several important strategic focus guiding principles that permeate the five Strategic Focus Areas. The Court is committed to and fully embraces:

- Equity and social justice.
- Therapeutic justice.
- Evaluation and continuous improvement.
- Cooperation and collaboration.

Strategic Focus Area 1: Access, Services, and Programs that Promote Justice

Description: The population of King County is growing; it also is increasingly diverse. The needs and expectations of the public and court users are growing and changing. Additionally, the Court recognizes that inequities, injustice, and institutional racism exist across multiple systems. Thus, the King County Superior Court will promote equity and social justice and must anticipate, adapt, and continuously enhance access and improve services and programs. Doing so will ensure the Court, including the Clerk's Office, is providing the highest quality of justice to the public.

We are committed to promoting equity and social justice and serving the County's diverse community and all court users. Additionally, as supported by respondents that completed the 2014 Strategic Planning Survey, we will: (1) ensure equal access to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or other factors; (2) provide fair, timely, and quality customer service; and (3) continue to implement effective and innovative programs and practices that improve justice-related outcomes. Finally, we are committed to continuous improvement and using data to measure and evaluate progress and results.

The Court's priorities for assuring the highest quality of justice are to:

- Reduce racial disparities and inequities, and promote fairness by addressing racial disproportionality, implicit bias, and institutional racism across systems;
- Enhance access for all people, but especially self-represented, non-English-speaking, and culturally diverse court users;
- Use existing and emerging technologies to improve access and services;
- Ensure the entire Court is user-friendly and understandable, incorporating the principles of procedural fairness;
- Treat all court users respectfully and fairly;
- Enhance programs and services for families, children, and juveniles;
- Enhance the capacity of therapeutic and problem-solving courts and expand the use of evidence-based and other innovative programs and practices to improve outcomes for juveniles, families, persons with mental illness and/or addictions, to name a few; and
- Use data to measure and continuously evaluate and improve access, services, and programs.

Long Range Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court is fair and bias-free; it promotes equity and social justice.

Obj. 1: Promote fairness and opportunity, and eliminate inequities.

Obj. 2: Increase awareness of racial disproportionality and implicit bias.

Obj. 3: Research and implement innovative practices to eliminate inequities, racial disproportionality, and bias.

Goal 2: The Court will be equally accessible to all people.

Obj.1: Expand electronic access to the Court including court and appropriate case information, and provide more convenient ways for court users to complete court business.

Obj. 2: Eliminate physical barriers to, and better accommodate all disabilities when, accessing and using the Courts.

Obj. 3: Ensure court processes and procedures are consistent and understandable to all court users and staff.

Obj. 4: Ensure court costs/user fees are appropriate, reasonable, and understood, and waivers are available as appropriate.

Obj.5: Understand and work effectively with racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse populations.

Obj. 6: Enhance services/assistance to self-represented, non-English-speaking, disabled, and culturally diverse court users.

Obj. 7: Help people successfully navigate the Court.

Goal 3: The Court will provide the highest quality of customer service – timely, respectful, and bias-free – to all court users.

Obj. 1: Ensure all court users are treated respectfully and fairly (including free of bias and elimination of inequities).

Obj. 2: Provide timely services to all court users; reduce wait times.

Obj. 3: Ensure the Court has sufficient staff and resources to provide the highest quality of services.

Obj. 4: Continuously solicit feedback and input from, and assess the service needs of, the Court's many diverse communities.

Obj. 5: Communicate service expectations to staff and provide needed training.

Goal 4: The Court will implement and maintain effective and innovative programs, services, and approaches that meet the needs of court users and improve justice-related outcomes.

Obj. 1: Research, track, and implement therapeutic justice, national best practices, evidence-based programs, and other innovative services.

Obj. 2: Enhance programs and services in response to the expressed needs of court users.

Obj. 3: Evaluate and continuously improve the effectiveness of programs and services.

Obj. 4: Assess the impact on race and equity when prioritizing and evaluating programs and services.

Obj. 5: Report on the successes/effectiveness of the Court's programs and services including the impacts on diverse people and communities.

Strategic Focus Area 2: Case Management and Caseflow

Description: Justice is served when legal matters are heard and resolved in a fair and timely manner. Resolving legal matters in a timely, efficient, and effective manner and ensuring decisions are made through fair court processes, are high priorities for the King County Superior Court. Thus, the entire Court, including the Clerk's Office, is committed to continuing to effectively manage cases and improve caseflow and court processes in the future.

Specifically, we will continue to make changes and improvements that enhance timely resolution of legal matters. Enhancing and strengthening case management practices and caseflow such as scheduling, calendaring, controlling the pace of litigation, ensuring firm trial dates, and starting hearings on time are among the improvements the Court will focus on in the future. Additionally, we will streamline and simplify court procedures and work processes to ensure efficient and effective case processing. This includes reducing redundancies and using technology to improve caseflow, work processes, and case management practices.

Finally, we will take actions to ensure both outcome and procedural fairness. Procedural fairness is achieved through fair and effective court processes and by providing quality treatment to court users. Quality treatment includes treating people respectfully throughout the court process, providing an opportunity to be heard and understood, explaining the rationale for judicial decisions, and being trustworthy.

Continued improvements in the aforementioned areas will ensure the entire Court is fulfilling its mission and achieving its vision of the future. Improvements also will help increase the public's trust and confidence in the Court. Perceptions of procedural fairness result in (1) greater compliance with court orders and (2) greater public satisfaction and approval, irrespective of why people are at court, whether they won or lost their case, and their ethnicity, race, and economic or social status, according to a growing body of national research.¹

Long Range Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court will resolve legal matters in a timely manner, in accordance with the Court's locally adopted time standards.

- Obj. 1: Adopt, build commitment to, and implement case processing and dispositional time standards.
- Obj. 2: Reduce unnecessary delay and implement other effective case management and delay reduction principles and practices.
- Obj. 3: Involve stakeholders in improving and modifying case management practices.
- Obj. 4: Enhance programs and services that assist in effectively and expeditiously resolving legal matters.
- Obj. 5: Enhance the Court's technologies to best support expeditious case processing and timely case resolution.

¹ Dr. Tom Tyler, NYU, Dr. David Rottman, National Center for State Courts, and Dr. Brenda J. Wagenknecht-Ivey, PRAXIS Consulting, Inc.

Obj. 6: Evaluate, continuously improve, and report on the Court's timeliness (e.g., time to disposition, age of pending caseload, clearance rates, etc.).

Goal 2: The Court's processes and procedures will be fair, understandable, efficient, and effective.

Obj. 1: Streamline and simplify court processes and procedures in collaboration with partners, the public, diverse communities, and staff.

Obj. 2: Implement principles and practices that promote procedural fairness.

Obj. 3: Consistently implement and follow the Court's processes and procedures.

Obj. 4: Inform and train judicial officers and staff on the Court's processes, procedures, and practices.

Obj. 5: Continually evaluate and improve court processes and procedures.

Strategic Focus Area #3: Public Understanding and Intergovernmental Relations

Description: The King County Superior Court is dedicated to increasing the public's understanding of the Court, including its role in society. It also is committed to fostering positive relations with partners, stakeholders, and communities. Both will improve trust and confidence in the Court and enhance future success.

The Court, through strong leadership and planned and proactive efforts, has an opportunity to inform, educate, and communicate with the public to increase understanding and support of the judicial branch of government generally and the Court specifically (e.g., the role of courts in society and the purpose of the judicial branch pursuant to the constitutions of the US and State of Washington). Increasing understanding of the judicial branch generally and the Court specifically will help increase public trust and confidence in the judicial branch of government. Through these activities, the public may better understand, support, and value the branch as a whole and the services provided by the Court.

Additionally, the Court is an integral component of a larger and complex legal and justice system. In the future, the Court will enhance and maintain positive relations with other courts, state and local legislative and executive branches of government, the legal community, treatment providers, and other community partners. It will build trusting relationships, enhance communications, share more information about needs and successes, and be more transparent and accountable. Finally, the Court is committed to forming new partnerships as needed to ensure existing and future needs are met.

Long Range Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court will be more understandable to the public and will gain public support.

- Obj. 1: Educate and inform the public about the Court using multiple methods and media.
- Obj. 2: Educate and participate in diverse community and civic groups.
- Obj. 3: Reach out, listen, and be responsive to the concerns, views, and needs of diverse communities.
- Obj. 4: Strengthen the Court's internal capacity to improve and influence public education and relations.
- Obj. 5: Enhance and promote mentoring and volunteerism in the community.
- Obj. 6: Reach out to and strengthen press and media relations.
- Obj. 7: Enhance volunteer opportunities at the Court.

Goal 2: The Court will be more understandable to, and work collaboratively with, the legislative and executive branches of government and other justice system partners, and will gain their support.

Obj. 1: Reach out to and personally connect with state and local legislators and judicial branch members.

Obj. 2: Inform state and local legislative and executive branches of government about the role and needs of the Court.

Obj. 3: Collaborate with legislative, executive, and judicial branch leaders as well as justice system partners on projects of mutual interest and benefit, including promoting equity and social justice and addressing institutional racism and bias.

Obj. 4: Use feedback and/or personal experiences from constituents/others to build support for the work of the Court.

Obj. 5: Increase transparency and accountability.

Strategic Focus Area 4: Operational Infrastructure

Description: The King County Superior Court must maintain an effective infrastructure to deliver the highest quality of services to the public and court users. The infrastructure must promote trust and confidence in the court as well as adequately support the business of the Court including the work of judicial officers and staff. Failure to invest in and enhance the Court's infrastructure in response to changing needs will greatly impede the Court's ability to deliver justice in the future.

Specifically, the Court must have adequate, stable, and flexible funding and resources to respond to changing external needs and internal demands. It also needs adequate, safe, and pleasant facilities and sufficient space to meet the needs of litigants, partners, judges, and staff. An adequate technology infrastructure (e.g., case management system) and technological enhancements also are necessary to enhance access and provide timely, fair, and efficient justice. (hard infrastructure)

The Court also must establish an effective and nimble "soft" infrastructure that adequately supports the work of the court and is capable of responding quickly to changing circumstances and needs. For example, in the future, the Court wants to strengthen its governance and policy making structure. It also is committed to developing current and future judicial and administrative leaders in the years ahead. Creating a more responsive, innovative, and agile organizational culture also is essential given the dynamic external and internal environments. Staffing levels must be sufficient to provide quality justice. And, the Court must be able to attract, hire, and retain a diverse and competent workforce. Finally, the Court must ensure it has the right complement of staff to adequately support the Court's work and future priorities (e.g., data collection/statistics, performance and workload measures/ measurement, program evaluation, quality assurance, and public information and relations).

Long Range Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Court will have adequate and stable funding and the requisite resources to provide the highest quality of justice.

- Obj. 1: Implement cost saving, cost reduction, and greater efficiency measures both internally and in collaboration with justice system partners.
- Obj. 2: Demonstrate the prudent and responsible use of funding/resources.
- Obj. 3: Advocate for the resources needed to provide quality justice (e.g., adequate staffing levels, staff with specialized skills, court security, equipment, hardware, software, etc.)
- Obj. 4: Build understanding and support for the Court's fiscal and other resource needs.
- Obj. 5: Communicate and work collaboratively with executive and legislative branches at the state and local levels to ensure funding and resources needs are met.
- Obj. 6: Evaluate, shift, and reallocate resources and workloads (of judicial officers and staff) in response to changing needs, demands, and circumstances.

Goal 2: The Court's infrastructure supports and is aligned with strategic and operational priorities.

Obj. 1: Plan for long-term improvements and expansion of the Court's facilities in collaboration with the County.

Obj. 2: Enhance courthouse facilities and furnishings, and optimize space to meet the needs of court users, partners, judicial officers, and staff.

Obj. 3: Improve courthouse safety and security.

Obj. 4: Optimize and update the technological infrastructure of the Court (e.g., IT systems, hardware, software, equipment) to better serve court users and support judicial officers and all staff.

Obj. 5: Recruit and retain a competent and diverse workforce.

Obj. 6: Provide fair and competitive compensation and benefits.

Obj. 7: Strengthen the performance management and feedback system of the Court.

Obj. 8: Implement innovative human resource/employee relations' programs and practices.

Obj. 9: Strengthen the Court's capacity to educate, train, and develop staff and future leaders.

Obj. 10: Enhance labor/management/union relations.

Goal 3: Continue to effectively govern and lead the Court.

Obj. 1: Strengthen the governance and policy-making structure of the Court.

Obj. 2: Align existing rules and committees with the Court's strategic direction and operational priorities.

Obj. 3: Communicate effectively externally and internally.

Obj. 4: Develop current and future judicial and administrative leaders and enhance succession planning.

Strategic Focus Area 5: Work Environment and Workforce Development

Description: The Court, including the Clerk’s Office, is committed to being a great place to work; we will continue to create an innovative, engaging, and satisfying work environment for judicial officers and all staff. Additionally, for the Court to excel in the future, judicial officers, managers, and staff will need different skills and competencies than they need today. Changing demands and needs will require new and different competencies in the future (e.g., emerging brain science, technology skills, cultural competencies, evidence-based practices). Thus, the entire Court must continue to develop, train, cross-train, and re-train judicial officers and staff, which includes judge’s staff, Superior Court staff, and Clerk’s Office staff, so they are able to perform at the highest level.

Much can be done to enhance the work environment: make it more innovative, satisfying, and engaging. Examples include: involving judicial officers and staff in change and improvement activities, enhancing two-way communication, fostering teamwork within and across divisions, strengthening supervision practices and employee relations, providing professional and career development opportunities, developing leaders and successors, encouraging and valuing suggestions and creative ideas, establishing a mentoring and innovative culture, embracing change and continuous improvement, recognizing individual and team contributions, and celebrating divisional and court-wide successes.

Developing judicial officers and staff also is a high priority in the future. The Court is committed to ensuring all judicial officers and staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to do their work well today and in the future. New areas of law, evidence-based practices, social and equity justice, emerging brain science, procedural fairness, new technologies, reengineering work processes, interpersonal relations, mentoring, social and emotional intelligence, etc. are examples of skills and competencies needed in the future. Developing the next generation of judicial and administrative leaders and managers also will be important in the coming years. New and emerging competencies in leadership include resiliency, ability to remain focused on long-term vision and goals, ability to execute on strategy, ability to implement organizational and system change, and building high performance teams among five generations in the workplace today. Thus, the Court is committed to continuously training, developing, and retraining judicial officers and staff to deliver quality justice.

Long Range Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The work environment across all areas of the Court will be innovative, engaging, and satisfying.

Obj. 1: Promote, recognize, and reward innovation and continuous improvement.

Obj. 2: Enhance teamwork and collegiality within and across divisions/areas of the Court and all levels of judicial officers and staff.

Obj. 3: Provide staff with opportunities to do interesting and meaningful work (i.e., they like their work and do it well, and understand how their work contributes to the Court’s strategic goals and objectives and impacts others/society at large).

Obj. 4: Enhance, encourage, and support staff participation in training, development, mentoring, and career/advancement opportunities.

Obj. 5: Provide fair and competitive compensation and benefits.

Obj. 6: Value the contributions of staff and involve staff in change and improvement activities.

Obj. 7: Learn from the experiences of and implement best practices from others.

Goal 2: Judicial officers and all staff (i.e., judge's staff, Superior Court staff, and Clerk's Office staff) will be skilled and competent in all aspects of their work/jobs, capable of performing at the highest levels.

Obj. 1: Expand and improve education, training, cross-training, and professional development opportunities for judicial officers and staff.

Obj. 2: Increase cultural sensitivity and cultural competence of judicial officers and all staff.

Obj. 3: Foster a mentoring culture; increase mentoring opportunities for and between judicial officers and all staff (within the Court and in the community).

Obj. 4: Provide performance/job feedback and coaching.

Obj. 5: Recognize and celebrate high performance and service excellence.

Obj. 6: Develop current and future judicial and administrative leaders and enhance succession planning.