

Los Angeles County Superior Court

Consulting Services for Statewide Electronic Filing Managers Master Contract

Technical Architecture and Standards

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Document Purpose

This is the Technical Architecture and Standards document for the Los Angeles County Superior Court/Electronic Filing Managers acquisition project. This document defines all the architecture of the e-filing system, including the use of standards.

Version	Date	Description/Changes
1.0	9/5/16	Initial draft.
1.1	9/29/16	First complete version.
1.2	1/30/17	Minor revision (usage of EFSP, EFM, etc.)
1.3	6/21/17	Amended to be permissive of the EFM provider as funds transfer agent between the EFSP and the Court.

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I. Introduction

I. Introduction

California has many large and small courts, and a variety of innovative Electronic Filing Service Providers (EFSPs) based or operating in the state. While some of the courts in California have realized a degree of success and innovation in electronic filing (e-filing), progress has been limited. This has been influenced by the actions of e-filing vendors who have created a difficult economic environment by:

- Focusing on high volume courts almost to the exclusion of the smaller courts.
- Creating monopolies through the use of proprietary designs.
- Constraining options for services and payments.
- Creating barriers to entry and operation for innovative e-filing service- providers.
- Extracting higher fees for filing and payment processing.

Under the guidance of the Judicial Council of California (JCC), a group of courts have come together to execute a work stream to establish master contracts with multiple e-filing manager (EFM) application providers that can be employed by the courts to expand the adoption of e-filing across the state while supporting innovation and minimizing costs. Specifically, each EFM provider should accomplish the following:

- Support e-filing statewide for all litigation types.
- Integrate with “core” Case Management Systems (CMSs) – the two statewide CMS vendor products and Journal Technology’s eCourt.
- Integrate with Judicial Council-approved financial gateway vendors.
- Support electronic payment types beyond credit card.
- Provide a zero-cost e-filing option for indigent and government filers.

The specific objectives of the EFM provider work stream are to:

- Create a Concept of Operation (ConOps), standards, and architecture sufficient to scope the master agreement.
- Draft an RFP.
- Solicit EFM vendor proposals.
- Collect and evaluate EFM provider proposals.
- Negotiate contracts with the selected solution providers.

A. Project Scope and Approach

The scope of this project is to establish a statewide e-filing environment that employs more than one statewide EFM service to ensure a competitive marketplace that leaves the court in greater control. Specifically, the project scope includes establishment of the following:

1. An architecture that considers the full e-filing component model.
2. Defined procedures for qualifying, certifying, and onboarding:
 - 2.1. EFMs.
 - 2.2. EFSPs.
 - 2.3. Payment Gateways.
 - 2.4. Accounting System Gateways.
3. Specifications for pruning data submissions.
4. Standards development and maintenance under Electronic Court Filing 4.0 and future releases.
5. Models of ongoing operations for participating entities, electronic and human services.
6. E-filing and interfaces to a limited list of CMS systems (currently four).

The project scope does not currently include writing RFPs and facilitating acquisitions for EFSPs and payment gateways.

B. Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to recommend an architecture and non-functional requirements for a statewide e-filing system. This document defines the e-filing vision, architecture, and standards of the proposed system. The scope of this document includes the primarily technical aspects of the statewide e-filing system. The business and operational aspects are detailed in the separate EFM ConOps document.

II. E-Filing Technical Vision

II. E-Filing Technical Vision

A. Principles

The architecture outlined below seeks to support fundamental objectives that the California courts and the JCC are seeking to accomplish. These objectives, detailed in the ConOps, are summarized as follows:

- No financial obligations or interest for the courts.
- A no-charge filing assembly and submission service for select filers.
- Little or no involvement of the JCC.
- Conformance managed through administrative processes.
- Credit card transaction costs no greater than the branch contract rates.
- Master contracts for select common services.

Informed by an analysis of the California courts, alternative approaches and architectures for electronic filing, and best practices in other states, MTG Management Consultants, LLC, proposes a vision for a statewide e-filing system in California. Specifically, MTG recommends that the California courts:

- Move to comprehensive e-filing and e-service for all participating courts in California, allowing courts and filers to reap the benefits of e-filing. Key characteristics of this future state are:
 - » E-filing and e-service is available for all participating courts statewide.
 - » E-filing is mandatory in all participating courts.
 - » E-filing includes the submission of document images and the metadata needed to record the filing in the court's CMS and document management system (DMS).
- Provide a progression path and the tools to support this progression for courts to transition to the long-term operating model. This progression path should support:
 - » Courts without existing e-filing technology.
 - » Courts with existing e-filing capabilities, factoring in system lifecycle plans and contractual obligations with solution providers.
- Provide choice and comprehensive, statewide e-filing/e-service to filers, that features:
 - » A choice of EFSPs for all filers, offered from commercial and California court offerings.
 - » The ability to e-file in all participating courts, statewide, with a single EFSP solution.
 - » The ability to efficiently integrate legal CMSs with the e-filing system.

- » Unified identity management allowing filers to register once to obtain credentials that can be used statewide.
- Build the technical framework for statewide e-filing/e-service, including the following components:
 - » Multiple EFMs integrated with all the CMSs and DMSs in the participating courts at full buildout.
 - » Multiple EFSPs integrated with the EFM.
 - » Open e-filing technical standards for interoperability.
- Provide a California e-filing program to support the construction, adoption, and operation of e-filing/e-service across all courts. To do so, the California courts should:
 - » Adopt enabling legislation to provide funding and organizational resources.
 - » Create a funding stream.
 - » Adopt the OASIS LegalXML Electronic Court Filing (ECF) 4.01 standard or later as the basis for a California e-filing standard. While it will not completely eliminate design, construction, configuration, and testing required to implement e-filing for a court, the use of this standard will greatly reduce the effort required.
 - » Establish a program office to support implementation of statewide and local court facilities; provide integration assistance to courts, providers and filers; and provide ongoing contract and service-level management.

These objectives should shape the e-filing architecture and implementation approach employed by the California courts. The implications of this approach on the statewide architecture, including specific standards and requirements, are addressed in the remainder of this document. The implications of this approach on the implementation approach, including the transition of existing e-filing systems to align with the proposed statewide system in phases, are addressed in the separate ConOps document.

B. Technology Objectives

The technical objectives of the statewide e-filing system architecture include the following:

- The statewide e-filing system will consist of multiple, separate but interoperable components that conform to technical standards, detailed below, and shared statewide and court-specific policies (configuration information). The components will be designed to allow multiple solution providers to provide mostly interchangeable solutions for the same component. This will allow filers and courts to select the solutions that best align with their business and technical requirements and limitations.
- In addition to the production e-filing environment, the architecture will include development and testing environments, to allow for the certification of new solutions, testing of new releases by previously certified providers, and minor or major updates to the standards and statewide and court-specific policies.

- The production e-filing system will be highly reliable and fault-tolerant. System-wide downtimes should be limited in duration and scheduled to minimize the impact on court operations.
- The e-filing system will limit access to information in accordance with court rules.

C. Technical Standards

Interoperability among the components that make up the statewide e-filing system will be enabled by defining and enforcing technical standards for e-filing, e-signatures, and identity and access management. Technical requirements for payment processing will be defined by the payment processor organizations.

1. E-Filing Standards

Integrating an e-filing system requires common functional and technical standards for data and document interoperability. Specifically, two technical standards are critical to interoperability in the e-filing system:

- Portable Document Format (PDF), which provides document interoperability.
- OASIS LegalXML ECF 4.01, which provides data interoperability.

PDF

PDF is universally accepted as the document standard for e-filing, and the IEFS will require the use of searchable PDF. To ensure that e-filed documents will still be viewable in the future, the use of the Portable Document Format/Archive (PDF/A) format, a version specialized for the digital preservation of electronic documents, is also acceptable to the participating courts.

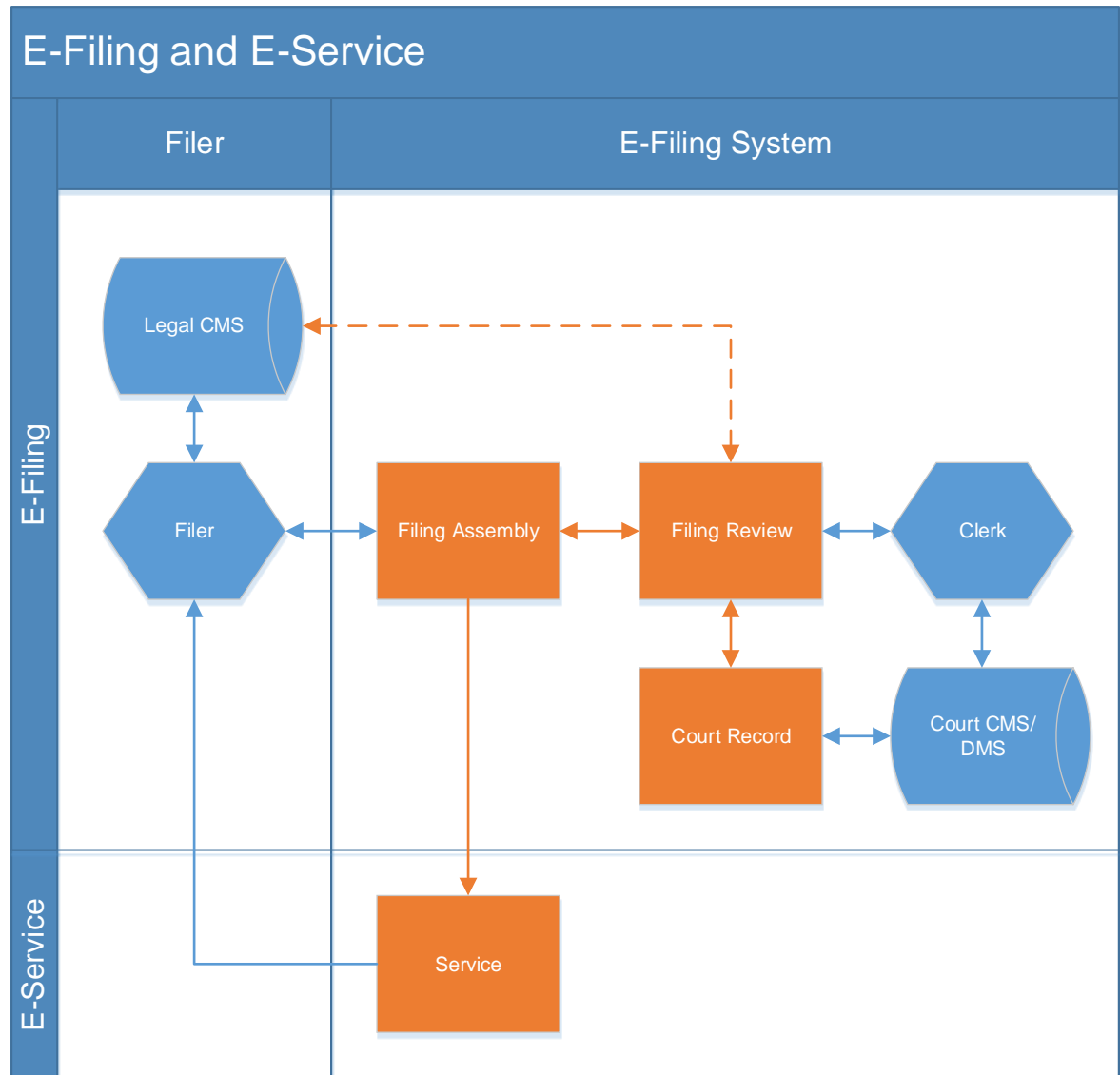
OASIS LegalXML ECF 4.01

The OASIS LegalXML ECF 4.01 standard was developed based on the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) and the functional standards for e-filing approved by the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) and National Association for Court Management (NACM). ECF defines four major design elements (MDEs), or logical groupings of functions, that support a particular part of the e-filing process. They are:

- *Filing Assembly MDE* – Enables a filer to create a filing message for submission to a court and returns filing confirmation to the filer.
- *Filing Review MDE* – Enables a court to receive and review a filing message and prepare the contents for recording in the CMS and DMS.
- *Court Record MDE* – Enables a court to record electronic documents and docket entries, describing them in its CMS and DMS.

- *Service MDE* – Enables a filer or a court to transmit filings to other parties that are participating in the case electronically and are entitled to copies of the filing.

These MDEs work together to provide e-filing capabilities to filers. The most common configuration of these MDEs is shown below. Integrations within the scope of the ECF 4 standard are shown in orange. The remaining integrations are left to the filer, court, or EFSP to define.



Out of scope of technical standards.

Scope of ECF 4 technical standards.

The ECF standard defines most of the interface requirements for an e-filing system, including e-service and e-payments. However, due to the diversity of rules, processes, and systems used in courts across the country, the ECF standard does not define all required operations and code lists for a complete e-filing system. To support statewide interoperability, the California courts must define state-specific technical standards that incorporate and extend

the ECF standard to handle the variety of rules, processes, and codes used in California courts.

2. E-Signature Standards

In each of the California courts that currently support e-filing, local rules of court define the acceptable forms and processes for verifying signatures on electronic documents. Generally, the courts allow attorneys and pro se parties to use either a facsimile (image) or a typographic signature (/s/) on electronic documents. Each filing the document submitted using a filer's unique credentials is considered to be signed by that filer.

Signatures by judicial officers on court actions may require more robust authentication. Judicial officers will have limited access to the e-filing system, so robust authentication of these users is out of scope of the e-filing system. To ensure document integrity, a secure hash function (e.g. SHA-256) should be applied to all filings accepted by the clerk prior to recording.

3. Identity and Access Management Standards

The JCC will provide a common identity and access management (IAM) solution based on open standards, including OAuth 2 and OpenID Connect. The IAM solution will provide a common registry of e-filing users and EFSPs. All components (MDEs) in the e-filing system will depend on the IAM solution to validate the identity and privileges of users, including filers, clerks, and system administrators. The IAM solution is detailed in the next section.

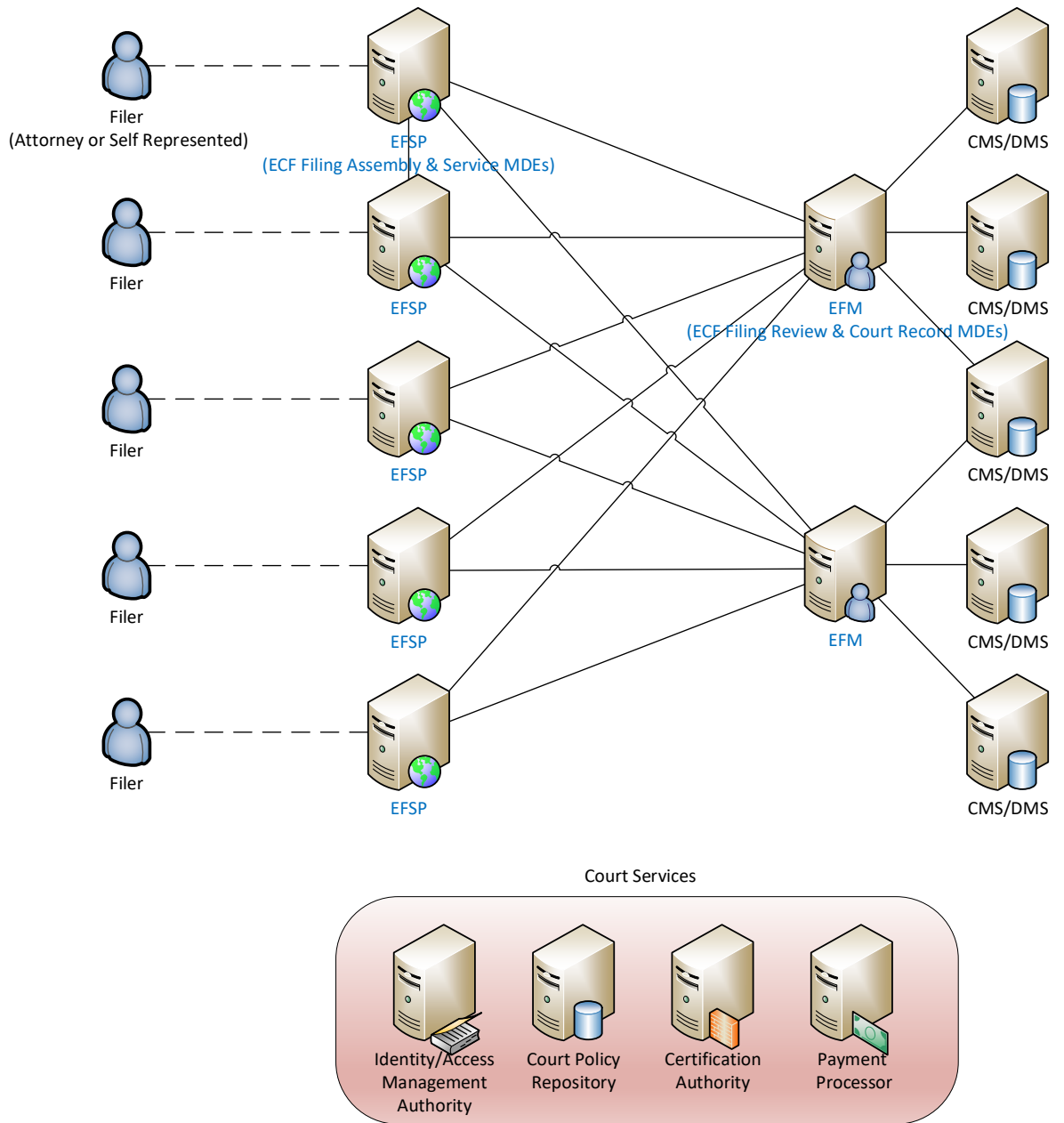
III. E-Filing Architecture

III. E-Filing Architecture

This section proposes a target, long-term technical architecture for the California statewide e-filing system, including the components of the system and the standards that govern the integration of the components. This architecture is intended to guide new implementations of e-filing and provide a target for migration of existing implementations over time.

A. Application Component Model

The proposed statewide e-filing system is shown in the following diagram. Filers are represented as attorneys but will also include parties filing pro se. The components of the system are described in the remainder of this section.



B. E-Filing Components and Interfaces

1. E-Filing Service Providers

The e-filing system will support multiple EFSPs between the filer and the court that provide the ECF 4.01 Filing Assembly and Service components of the e-filing transaction.

Relative to single EFSP, the benefits of this “multi-vendor” business model include:

- Enabling integration with multiple legal and court case management systems.
- Allowing filers to choose and switch solution providers based on their business needs and preferences.

Scope

Each EFSP will enable litigants to:

- Query case and filing information from multiple courts through multiple EFM.
- Prepare and submit e-filing and e-service in multiple courts through multiple EFM.
- Process payments. The EFSP may choose to use either the JCC-provided Payment Gateway or another service. Payment processing will be a multi-step process. A hold for e-filing and court fees will be placed prior to filing acceptance. Upon acceptance, the e-filing fees will be collected.
- Receive e-service and deliver the received documents to the intended parties.

Each EFSP solution will be approved for use in the e-filing system and may also provide value-added services (e.g., organization of cases, alerts, document conversion, document management, fee advances, form completion).

Interfaces

- EFM – ECF 4.01.
- IAM – OAuth 2/OpenID.
- Court Policy Repository – ECF 4.01.
- Payment Processing – application programming interface (API) defined by the payment processor.
- Legal case management system – (outside the scope of these specifications).

2. Electronic Filing Manager [REVISED]

Multiple EFM components will provide the Filing Review and Court Record modules in the e-filing system.

Scope

Each EFM provider will implement ECF 4.01 Filing Review and Court Record MDEs and enable a clerk to:

- Accept and validate each filing received from an EFSP solution.
- Accept and validate each proposed order, including PDF and source document (e.g., MS Word), received from an EFSP solution and lodge the proposed order PDF in the CMS.
- Accept and validate each filing received from the Court (e.g., signed orders) and notice filers.
- Create a detailed accounting record/audit trail of submission date and time, fees paid and applied by the court, and date and time of filing in the court CMS/DMS.
- Review, edit and accept/reject the filing or pass-through to allow review in the CMS.
- Apply electronic file stamp(s) to the filing or pass through to allow stamping in the CMS/DMS.
- Record the filing in the appropriate case and document management systems.
- Report all filings and service throughout the system.

In addition, the EFM provider may choose to facilitate the transfer of funds from the EFSPs filing through the EFM to the court served by the EFM. In such a case, the EFM would receive a single, nightly ACH transaction from each EFSP for the consolidated filing fees to be paid to courts for the transactions processed by the EFM. The EFM would then transmit a single, nightly ACH transaction to each court for the consolidated filing fees to be paid to that court for the transactions processed by the EFM.

Interfaces

- EFSP Solution – ECF 4.01.
- CMS/DMS – ECF 4.01.
- Court Policy Repository – ECF 4.01.
- IAM – OAuth 2/OpenID.

3. Case and Document Management Systems [REVISED]

The EFM will integrate with all the CMS/DMSs used in the California trial courts participating in the e-filing work stream. Participating California trial courts currently use the following case and document management systems:

- Journal Technologies eCourt.
- Thomson Reuters C-Track.
- Tyler Odyssey.

While many commercially available EFM solutions include existing integrations for certain CMS/DMSs, ECF 4.01 Court Record components will need to be developed to integrate with some of the CMS/DMSs used in the participating California courts. However, the effort to implement an ECF 4.01 Court Record component to integrate each CMS/DMS with the EFM can be shared across all courts using those systems.

Scope

Each CMS/DMS will enable the clerk to:

- Create/update cases.
- Serve notices (e.g. signed orders).
- Store and index documents.
- Register documents into a case.
- If the EFM is a pass-through, edit and accept/reject the filing and apply electronic file stamp(s) to the filing.

In addition, the court will receive daily fund transfers for statutory court fees collected from filers either: as nightly ACH transactions from each of the EFSPs filing into the court; or as a single nightly ACH transaction from each EFM for the aggregated fees on filings processed through that EFM.

Interfaces

- EFM – ECF 4.01.
- EFSP Solution – ECF 4.01.
- Court Policy Repository – ECF 4.01.
- IAM – OAuth 2/OpenID.

4. Court Policy Repository

A single court policy repository will publish the statewide and court-specific policies, (configuration information and code lists) for consumption and implementation by the other components of the e-filing system.

Scope

The court policy repository will:

- Serve as a repository and publisher of statewide and court-specific e-filing Court Policy Files.

Interfaces

- EFSP Solution – ECF 4.01.
- EFM – ECF 4.01.
- CMS/DMS – ECF 4.01.

5. Identity and Access Management

IAM provides a statewide registry of e-filing users and approved EFSPs that enables consistent authentication and authorization across the e-filing systems. The architectures for public access to court records and a portal for self-represented litigants are in development but will presumably support the same technical standards for identity. The IAM solution should also support federated identity through third-party, consumer-grade identity providers such as Facebook and Google.

Scope

The IAM solution will enable filers to:

- Register with the e-filing system, including:
 - » Name.
 - » Email address.
 - » Bar number (attorneys only).
 - » JP ORI.
- Authenticate users using the central registry or federated identity providers (e.g. Microsoft Azure, Google, Facebook).

Interfaces

- EFSP Solution – OAuth 2/OpenID.
- Public Access – OAuth 2/OpenID.
- Self-Represented Litigant (SRL) Portal - OAuth 2/OpenID.
- Third-party identity providers (Facebook, Google) – OAuth 2/OpenID.

6. Payment Processing

A payment processing service to collect fees from the filer and disburse the fees to the courts and/or EFSP and EFM providers will be provided by JCC. The JCC payment gateway will

offer a preferred rate for processing credit card transactions. EFSPs may choose to use the JCC payment gateway or another provider. If the EFSP chooses to use another payment processor, they will be prevented from charging a higher fee than the JCC payment gateway.

The payment processors will define the APIs for connecting to their services. EFSPs will use those APIs to connect to the payment processor to place a hold on the payment account prior to filing acceptance. Once the filing is accepted, the EFSP solution will connect to the payment processor to complete the payment transaction.

Scope

The payment processing service will be enable filers to:

- Pay filing and service fees.

The payment processing service will be enable courts and solution providers to:

- Report fees collected and disbursed.

Interfaces

- EFSP Solution - Payment Processing – API defined by the payment processor.

Appendix A

E-Filing Checklist

Appendix A – E-Filing Checklist

E-Filing Area	E-Filing Issue	JCC Decision
Alternatives Analysis		
Data/Document Collection	✓ Determine whether you will use an EFSP solution or build your own e-filing portal.	EFSP solution.
	✓ If choosing the EFSP model, determine how many EFSPs you will use.	Multiple EFSPs.
	✓ Determine your criteria for selecting an EFSP.	EFSPs will be certified for conformance with the ECF standards and the EFMs.
Local, Regional, and Statewide Considerations	✓ Determine whether regional EFSP opportunities exist with neighboring counties.	No, this will be a statewide system.
	✓ Determine whether statewide EFSP opportunities exist.	Yes, this will be a statewide system.
Requirements		
CMS	✓ Verify that your CMS is compatible with e-filing.	All CMSs in the participating courts will support e-filing.
	✓ Acquire or build the necessary integration components such as a DMS and applications.	Each CMS will provide a DMS and the appropriate integration.
	✓ Begin identifying CMS data that would aid the e-filing process.	TBD.
DMS	✓ If you do not have a DMS, get one.	Each CMS will provide a DMS and the appropriate integration.
	✓ Verify your DMS is consistent with e-filing standards and best practices.	TBD.
	✓ Establish your document retention policies.	TBD.
	✓ Establish your security policies.	TBD.
	✓ Ensure immutability of the documents.	TBD.
	✓ Establish “paper on demand” protocol if desired.	TBD.

E-Filing Area	E-Filing Issue	JCC Decision
E-Filing Standards	✓ Pick your technology standards.	OASIS LegalXML Electronic Court Filing (ECF) 4.01.
	✓ Determine your commitment to those standards.	Require the EFMs and EFSPs to conform with ECF.
	✓ If using an EFSP solution, ensure that the EFSP solution is compliant with those standards.	JCC will provide a process to certify compliance with ECF 4.01.
	✓ Build/buy/implement adapters to your CMS and DMS as necessary.	Each EFM solution will provider adapters with the appropriate CMS and DMS.
	✓ Look for regional, statewide, or national synergies.	Building a statewide solution.
	✓ Incorporate those standards into future CMS and DMS RFPs.	TBD.
Solution Selection and Acquisition		
EFSP Contract	✓ Evaluate contracts from other states and counties.	JCC has collected and reviewed contracts from Indiana and Texas.
	✓ Develop a model contract.	TBD.
Court Rules		
The Court "Policy" File	✓ Determine the business rules for e-filing.	TBD.
	✓ Determine which technology standard will be leveraged.	TBD.
	✓ Examine existing court policy files.	TBD.
	✓ Create a standards-based court policy file.	TBD.
The "Official Record"	✓ Determine whether the "e" record will be the official record.	TBD.
	✓ Ensure ability to maintain an immutable copy of the document(s).	TBD.
	✓ Update record retention policies.	TBD.
	✓ Develop electronic case file tools.	TBD.
	✓ Develop procedures to move the court to a "paper on demand" culture.	TBD.

E-Filing Area	E-Filing Issue	JCC Decision
Which Case Types	✓ Assess the feasibility of e-filing for given case types.	TBD.
	✓ Understand the benefit potential.	TBD.
	✓ Understand the costs.	TBD.
	✓ Prioritize case types.	TBD.
	✓ Determine an implementation strategy for expansion.	TBD.
Mandatory or Voluntary	✓ Determine whether the court will mandate e-filing for any subset of cases.	TBD.
	✓ Determine what exceptions will be allowed.	TBD.
	✓ Develop a process for exception handling.	TBD.
	✓ Determine use of e-filing versus e-services versus receipt of e-service.	TBD.
SRLs	✓ Explore partnership opportunities with legal services agencies.	TBD.
	✓ Consider recommendation of “Principles and Best Practices For Access-Friendly Court Electronic Filing” (LSC, 2012).	TBD.
	✓ Determine what exceptions will be made for SRLs.	TBD.
	✓ Document and communicate exceptions to SRLs.	TBD.
	✓ Train operations staff on the procedure.	TBD.
Government Agencies	✓ Determine government agencies impacted by e-filing effort.	TBD.
	✓ Determine whether government agencies will be required/encouraged to e-file.	TBD.
	✓ Determine whether preferential pricing for government agencies will be explored with EFSPs.	TBD.
Local Rules	✓ Determine the local rule changes required to support your implementation.	TBD.
	✓ Post rules for public comment.	TBD.

E-Filing Area	E-Filing Issue	JCC Decision
Convenience Fees	✓ Determine level of court involvement in establishing fees.	TBD.
	✓ Determine what role, if any, the court will play in pricing changes.	TBD.
Cost Recovery	✓ Determine whether the court will attempt to recover costs.	TBD.
	✓ Determine the amount of and duration of cost recovery.	TBD.
Fee Waivers	✓ Determine how to handle fee waivers.	TBD.
	✓ Incorporate appropriate language into the EFSP agreement.	TBD.
Configuration and Test		
Clerk Review	✓ Determine who will provide clerk review responsibilities.	TBD.
	✓ Determine what documents, if any, will bypass clerk review.	TBD.
	✓ Determine filings eligible for priority processing.	TBD.
E-Service and Court Noticing	✓ Determine how the court will maintain and publish the e-service list.	TBD.
	✓ Determine if the court will use e-service for court noticing.	TBD.
Case-Related Web Services	✓ Determine with the EFSP what Web services will be built.	TBD.
	✓ Adhere to standards (national or local) as appropriate.	TBD.
	✓ Design, build, test, and implement your Web services.	TBD.
	✓ Determine your ongoing support processes for Web services.	TBD.
Judicial Decision Support Tools	✓ Obtain judicial commitment to go paperless or paper on demand.	TBD.
	✓ Determine what functions judicial officers need in an on-line decision-support tool.	TBD.
	✓ Determine what, if any, additional hardware (e.g., laptops, dual monitors, high-speed printers) or software (e.g., Adobe Professional) is required to support judicial officers and e-filing clerks.	TBD.

E-Filing Area	E-Filing Issue	JCC Decision
	✓ Borrow, buy, or build a solution.	TBD.
	✓ Determine your ongoing support commitment.	TBD.
Onboarding the EFSPs	✓ Determine the costs associated with EFSP solution setup.	TBD.
	✓ Determine what testing will be required.	TBD.
	✓ Develop testing scripts.	TBD.
	✓ Test, test, and test.	TBD.
Ongoing Support	✓ Determine the ongoing costs of e-filings (hardware, software, and vendor).	TBD.
	✓ Determine the ongoing support approach (labor).	TBD.
	✓ Secure funding through the budget process.	TBD.
Payment Processing	✓ Design your accounting processes.	TBD.
	✓ Determine allowable payment methods and appropriate processes.	TBD.
	✓ Determine who will pay the merchant fees.	TBD.
	✓ Determine payment settlement terms of the EFSP with the court.	TBD.
Accounting	✓ Design the accounting reconciliation report with the EFSPs.	TBD.
Operations	✓ Determine whether the e-filing unit will be centralized or decentralized.	TBD.
	✓ Determine whether specialized processing is possible and/or desired.	TBD.
	✓ Establish the operational turnaround time goal.	TBD.
	✓ Determine whether you will stagger shifts or have staff work on weekends.	TBD.
	✓ Train staff.	TBD.
EFSP Compliance, Coordination, and Management	✓ Determine frequency of meetings with EFSPs – individually and as a group.	TBD.
	✓ Design a common meeting format.	TBD.
	✓ Schedule/conduct the meetings.	TBD.

E-Filing Area	E-Filing Issue	JCC Decision
Training		
Marketing	✓ Determine the marketing strategy – with or without the EFSPs.	TBD.
	✓ Schedule educational and awareness sessions with the legal community.	TBD.
	✓ Work through bar associations and legal secretary associations.	TBD.
	✓ Create awareness at the courthouse.	TBD.
Filer Training	✓ Determine whether the court will offer any training.	TBD.
	✓ Work with EFSPs to ensure that ample training opportunities are provided to law firms that want training.	TBD.