

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

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INVITATION TO COMMENT SP22-07

Title

Strategic Plan for Technology 2023-2026

Action Requested

Review and submit comments by August 1, 2022

Proposed Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes

N/A

Proposed Effective Date

November 18, 2022

Proposed by

Judicial Council Technology Committee and
Strategic Plan Workstream
Hon. Kyle S. Brodie, Chair

Contact

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Executive Summary and Origin

The Judicial Council Technology Committee (JCTC) is responsible for judicial branch technology strategic planning. In 2021, the JCTC initiated a workstream to update the [Strategic Plan for Technology 2019-2022](#). After analyzing and reviewing the existing goals, branch business drivers, objectives, as well as evaluating the benefits and outcomes and looking at what changed, the workstream now requests your input on the initial draft of the updated *Strategic Plan for Technology 2023-2026*.

Please review and respond with your comments by **Monday, August 1, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.** You may submit your comments by email to jctc@jud.ca.gov.

The proposal has not been approved by the Judicial Council and is circulated for comment purposes only.

Background

The [*Court Technology Governance and Funding Model 2014-2016*](#) directs that the Judicial Council adopt a *Strategic Plan for Technology* every four years. The Plan establishes goals and priorities, as well as a framework for the roadmap for the adoption of technology solutions that further the administration of justice and meet the needs of the people of California. It assigns the Judicial Council Technology Committee (JCTC) the responsibility of developing, seeking input on, and publishing the *Strategic Plan for Technology*. This document represents the second update to the *Strategic Plan for Technology* since the governance model was adopted.

Summary of Updates

There were many key updates to the *Strategic Plan for Technology*. The updated plan features a new Goal 5, Promote Equal Access to the Digital Court. The focus of the update was to refine the goals and content. Additionally, in order to ensure the document was properly leveled, the workstream looked at other models, it was determined that the measures for success should be handed off to the Tactical Plan Workstream.

Request to Review and Provide Input

At this time, the Strategic Plan Workstream requests your review and input on the draft *Strategic Plan for Technology 2023-2026* by August 1, 2022. We value your input and believe that it is critical to incorporate feedback from throughout the branch. The future is being built upon the success of local and branchwide innovation and leadership. You may contact Heather Pettit, Jessica Craven Goldstein, or me directly if you have specific questions that you wish to discuss.

CALIFORNIA JUDICIAL BRANCH

Strategic Plan for Technology

2023-2026

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Message from the Chair

Dear Friends of the Courts:

Four years ago, the Judicial Council Technology Committee issued its second *Strategic Plan for Technology*. In her letter introducing that strategic plan, Justice Marsha Slough wrote, “Over the past four years we have witnessed the true evolution of an information technology (IT) community.” She looked forward to seeing “what can be accomplished over the next four as we continue to work together to implement the strategic plan for the benefit of all Californians.”

The last four years have presented challenges none of us imagined when Justice Slough wrote those words. In March 2020, as a global pandemic forced courts to find new ways to serve the public, we rose to those challenges. Our years of careful, thoughtful planning gave us the tools we needed to maintain access to justice when traditional means of access were impossible.

The successes of the last four years are too numerous to list here, but they include every California court moving to a modern case management system, expanding remote proceedings and electronic records access, and using technology to assist self-represented litigants. We have used technology not merely as a tool to solve old problems, but as a way to restructure our operations for the better.

Our work has been guided by the input of our judicial branch IT community, gathered in a rigorous governance model that keeps projects on track and within their appropriate scope and budget. We succeed because we listen to each other and collaborate with diverse groups of stakeholders to ensure that our technology reflects our values and our commitment to the public we serve.

The work is not done, and never will be. New needs will emerge. New challenges will arise. But there will also be new visions and opportunities from new community members. Justice Slough closed her introduction by expressing her gratitude and amazement for the collaborative work of her colleagues. Four years later, I am proud to express that same gratitude and amazement. And, as she did four years ago, I look forward to the next four years of accomplishments. I hope you will join us as we continue our journey to modernize our courts to serve all Californians.

Kyle S. Brodie

*Judge, Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino
Chair, Judicial Council Technology Committee and Executive
Sponsor, Strategic Plan Update Workstream*

INTRODUCTION

The judicial branch Strategic Plan for Technology sets forth the goals driving our implementation of court technology. It reflects our commitment to use technology not just to solve old problems, but to create new opportunities to serve every Californian.

California’s judicial branch draws strength from its size and diversity. Our 58 superior courts serve anywhere from a population of just over 1,000 to almost 10,000,000. Some courts serve mostly rural communities, while others are entirely urban. Many courts serve large numbers of people with limited English proficiency, unstable housing, or limited economic means. That diversity is woven into the very fabric of California, and although it makes some of our work more challenging, technology helps us meet those challenges. And we determine the most effective technologies to pursue by being innovative, flexible, and collaborative.

Our work is guided by three documents:

- [*The Governance and Funding Model*](#);
- [*The Strategic Plan for Technology*](#); and
- [*The Tactical Plan for Technology*](#).

The 2023–2026 *Strategic Plan for Technology* is the third iteration of the technology governance model adopted by the Judicial Council of California in 2014. It aligns with the goals from the judicial branch’s strategic plan¹ and guides the two-year technology tactical plan,² which determines the individual initiatives that will be pursued to support our higher-level technology goals.

Four of the goals in the current strategic plan are largely carried over from the 2019–2022 plan, as they reflect our unceasing work to improve every Californian’s access to justice. But our current plan adds a new goal: promoting equal access to the digital court.

To be sure, equal access has long motivated everything we do. And yet, the pandemic that descended upon us in 2020 made plain what we already intuitively knew: an individual’s ability to effectively use court technology is often deeply influenced by geography, socioeconomics, language, physical ability, and technology access or experience. In light of that lived experience, we have expressly included a new freestanding goal to reaffirm our dedication to use technology to provide truly equal access.

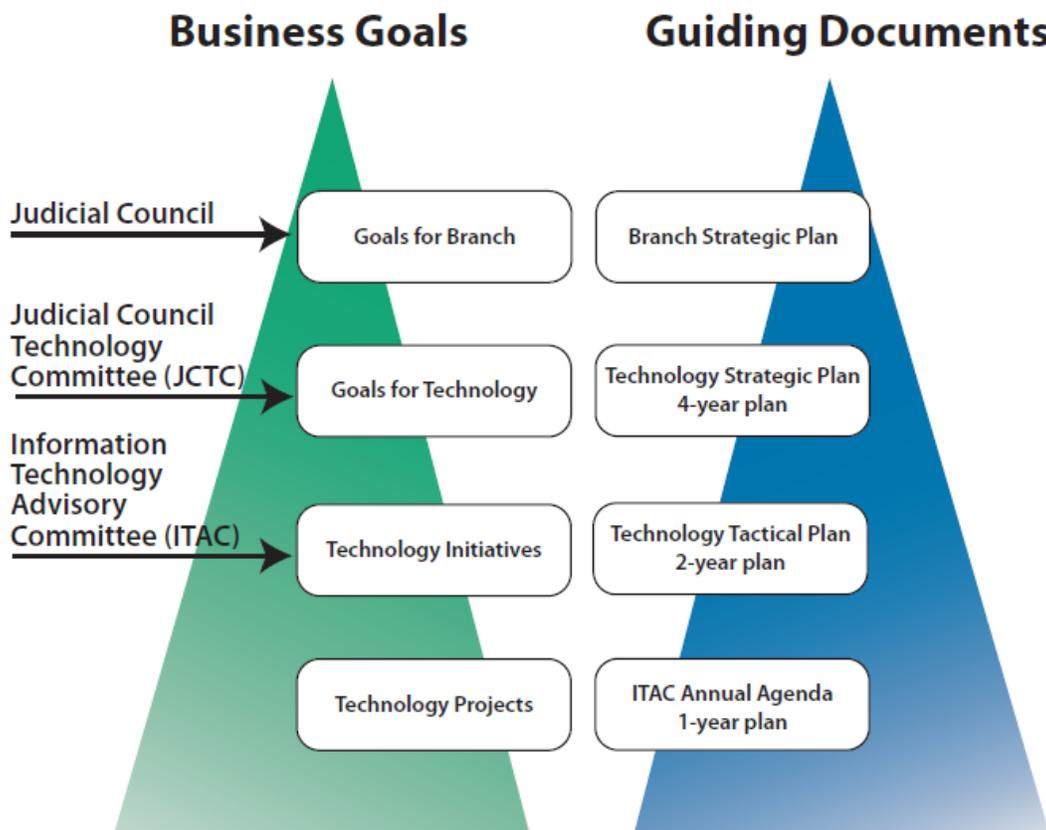
The judicial branch has accomplished much in the last four years. It has risen to the challenges of the pandemic, and maintained access to justice in the face of our greatest public health crisis in a century. But none of that success would be possible without the animating spirit of collaboration. The judicial branch information technology community

¹ See Judicial Council of Cal., *Justice in Focus: The Strategic Plan for California’s Judicial Branch 2006–2016* (Dec. 2014).

² See Judicial Council of Cal., *Tactical Plan for Technology 2017–2018* (Jan. 2017).

is made up of extraordinary public servants, each bringing different perspectives, based on their own experiences, needs, and resources. It includes judicial, administrative, operational, and technical expertise at all levels of the courts, and foundational expertise and support provided by Judicial Council staff. Like any family, we sometimes disagree on the best path forward; but that is as it should be. By capturing the community’s input in a well-structured, rigorous governance model, we use our resources efficiently to achieve shared goals and objectives.

The people of California expect their courts to continue modernizing. As this *Strategic Plan for Technology* was being written, Governor Newsom and the Legislature have invested significant funds in the judicial branch, specifically including court technology—an investment reflecting their confidence that we can meet that expectation. Their confidence is well placed. Although the last four years have seen remarkable transformations in the role of court technology, the next four years promise to be equally remarkable. We are ready to meet the challenges ahead, large or small, wherever they might be. And we are ready to meet them together.

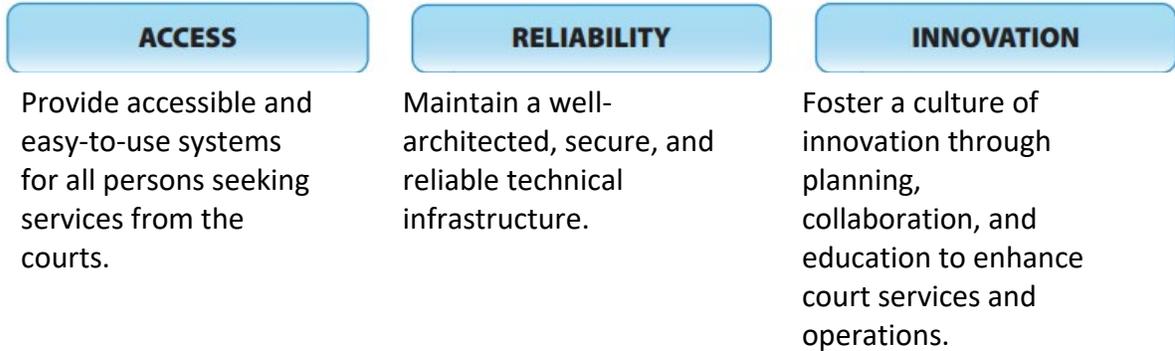


Executive Summary

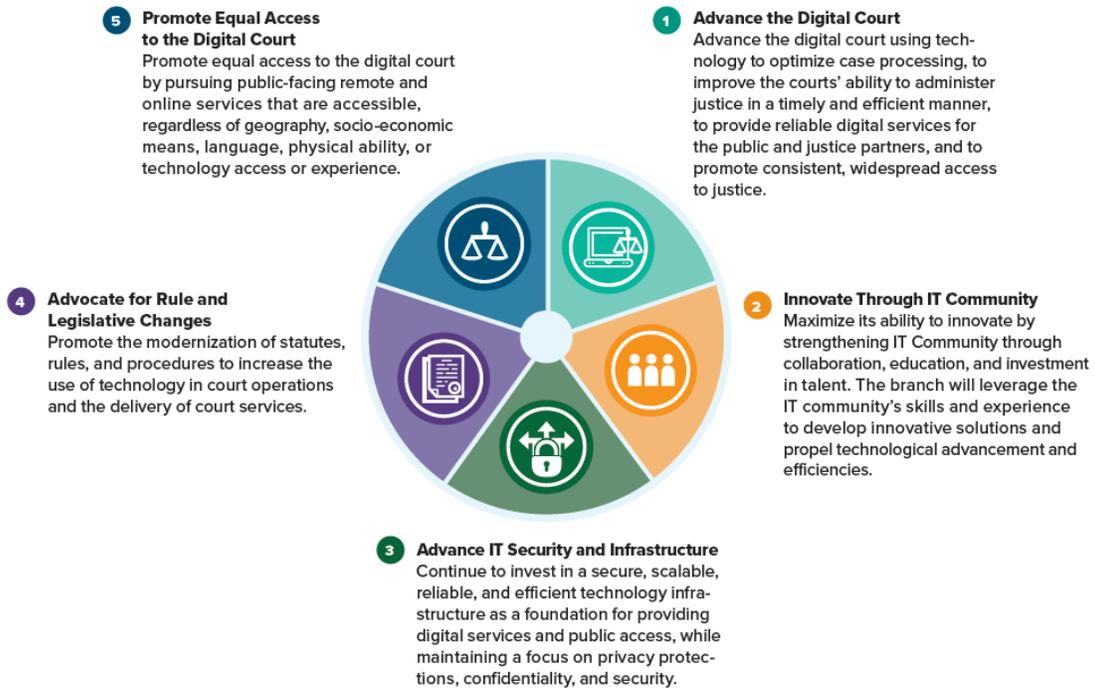
Vision

Through collaboration, innovation, and initiative at a branchwide and local level, the judicial branch adopts and uses technology to improve access to justice and provide a broader range and higher quality of services to litigants, attorneys, justice partners, and the public.

Principles



Goals



Technology Principles

The guiding principles—access, reliability, and innovation—anchor a set of considerations for technology project decision makers that articulate fundamental values and provide overall direction to technology programs within courts and throughout the justice community.

ACCESS

Provide accessible and easy-to-use systems for all persons seeking services from the courts.

- **Ensure access and fairness.** Use technologies that allow all court users to have equal and effective access to justice.
- **Include self-represented litigants.** Provide services to those representing themselves as well as those represented by attorneys.
- **Preserve traditional access.** Promote innovative approaches for public access to the courts while accommodating persons needing access through conventional means.
- **Design for ease of use.** Build services that are user-friendly and use technology that is widely available.
- **Promote equal access.** Pursue public-facing remote and online services that can be used by anyone irrespective of geography, socioeconomic means, language, physical ability, or technology access or experience.

RELIABILITY

Maintain a well-architected, secure, and reliable technical infrastructure.

- **Secure private information.** Design services to comply with privacy laws and to assure users that personal information is properly protected.
- **Provide reliable information.** Ensure the accuracy and timeliness of information provided to judges, parties, and others.
- **Protect from technology failure.** Define contingencies and remedies to guarantee that users do not forfeit legal rights when technologies fail and users are unable to operate systems successfully.
- **Plan ahead.** Create technology solutions that are forward-thinking and that enable courts to favorably adapt to expanding expectations of the public and court users.
- **Improve branchwide compatibility through technology standards.** Provide branchwide technology standards or guidelines related to access to information or submission of documents that support the branch’s goal of greater compatibility for the public and state justice partners.

INNOVATION

Foster a culture of innovation through planning, collaboration, and education to enhance court services and operations.

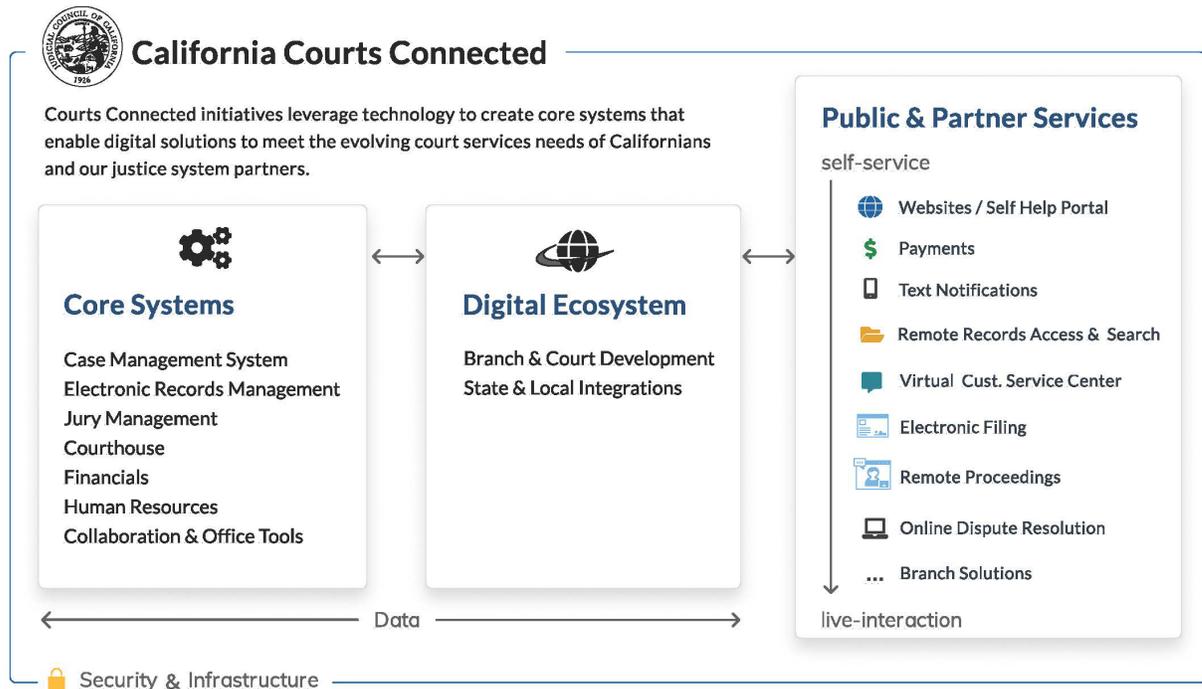
- **Improve court operations.** Advance court operational practices to make full use of technology and, in turn, provide better service to court users.
- **Provide education and support.** Develop and provide training and support for all technology solutions, particularly those intended for use by the public.
- **Consider branchwide collaboration and economies of scale.** Identify opportunities to collaborate on technologies to reduce costs, leverage expertise and training, and improve consistency.
- **Foster local decision-making.** Develop, fund, and implement technologies to improve local business processes that may provide a model for wider implementation.
- **Encourage local innovation.** When developing branchwide technologies, allow for adaptation to address local needs, foster innovation, and provide, where appropriate, a model for wider implementation.

Planning Tools

The California Courts Connected framework and the Court Technology Inventory serve as the road map for how the judicial branch achieves its goals. These tools provide valuable information that is shared with the Judicial Council, the Legislature, and other partners to track the branch’s success toward achieving its technology strategic goals.

California Courts Connected

The California Courts Connected framework is a conceptual representation (shown below) of the initiatives of the digital court that advance the Chief Justice’s vision for “[Access 3D](#)”—physical, remote, and equal access by the public to court services. Advancing the digital court is a key goal for the judicial branch.



Court Technology Inventory

The Court Technology Inventory is provided to courts to use as a self-assessment of their local technology implementation, as well as assist with branchwide investment decisions and planning efforts. The inventory maps to the categories identified in the framework.

Strategic Plan for Technology

Technology Goals 2023–2026

Goal 1: Advance the Digital Court

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will advance the digital court using technology to optimize case processing, to improve the courts' ability to administer justice in a timely and efficient manner, to provide reliable digital services for the public and justice partners, and to promote consistent, widespread access to justice.

Business Driver/Need

Over time, the judicial branch has developed a foundational set of technologies intended to serve the public effectively. These include modern case and document management systems that facilitate the electronic filing and accessing of court documents by the public, fiscal and human resources systems that improve budget tracking and employee utilization, and analytical tools and technologies that assist judicial and administrative decision makers in administering justice.

Although each new technological implementation has brought significant improvement in court administration and access, the branch recognizes that technologies continue to change, as do the expectations of those who use them or who work within the courts.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a powerful example of courts and court users being driven to rely on varied remote technologies to interact with businesses and each other. Although the courts cobbled together effective responses to meet the immediate need for remote services, they recognize that continued improvements are essential to sustain and advance the delivery of court services. Courts need to be effective, efficient, and responsive to meet users' expectations; users want an accessible, user-focused experience that is intuitive and nonintrusive.

But there is a gap in the availability of resources, technology, remote and online services, and offerings between individual courts and between the superior and appellate courts. This can be inconvenient and confusing for the public and for court partners.

To improve services, courts must continue to explore new digital models, methods, and collaborations; look to new opportunities to partner at the state and local levels; and effectively use available technology to provide a consistent level of services throughout the branch. Employing innovative digital solutions will enable the branch to continue to meet the demands of internal and external stakeholders and serve the public.

Objectives (Prioritized)

Objective 1.1. Assess the current state of the digital court to identify what technology resources courts have, need, and want.

- Objective 1.2** Improve and implement modern and supportable digital services branchwide to promote access and the efficient and effective delivery of court services, irrespective of digital device or platform.
- Objective 1.3** Improve shared technology infrastructure for courts that wish to expand collaborative efforts or leverage technological opportunities.
- Objective 1.4** Provide consistent, convenient, and secure digital access to court information and services throughout the branch regardless of geographic or jurisdictional limitations or local resource constraints.
- Objective 1.5** Implement analytical tools to advance data-driven decision-making, regardless of court size or resources.
- Objective 1.6** Develop and improve standardized, automated, timely, and secure data exchanges with court partners to facilitate their digital access to authorized court information and promote the effectiveness and efficiency of the California justice system.

Benefits and Outcomes

- Provide full-time, consistent remote access to court information and services throughout the branch to facilitate effective and efficient access to justice.
- Ensure accurate and timely sharing of information.
- Facilitate data-driven decision-making through improved data analytic solutions.
- Enable flexible and remote work alternatives consistent with legislative and legal authority.
- Achieve cost savings, operational efficiencies, and enhanced case processing with modern, standards-based document/content management systems.

Goal 2: Innovate Through IT Community

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will maximize its ability to innovate by strengthening IT Community through collaboration, education, and investment in talent. The branch will leverage the IT community's skills and experience to develop innovative solutions and propel technological advancement and efficiencies.

Business Driver/Need

Innovative solutions will help automate the courts' manual processes, provide tools for judicial officers and staff, and expand digital services to the public. Creative approaches are required to deliver these solutions in an efficient and cost-effective manner across 58 counties with varying degrees of technological maturity, staffing levels, and financial resources.

Working together as an IT community has proven to accomplish more than any one court can do alone. The extent to which the judicial branch can maximize the use of its existing technical and staff resources is dependent on a purposeful effort by court leaders and technology professionals to collaborate. This enables the sharing of information, skills, experience, and resources across the branch. Having an inclusive IT community allows courts to further leverage innovations and educational opportunities throughout the branch and develop effective strategies and solutions.

The judicial branch leverages a diverse community of external stakeholders such as justice partners, government agencies, vendors, and experts from private industry. Developing partnerships as well as opportunities for collaboration will enable the branch to strengthen IT Community while increasing access to justice through the use of innovative solutions.

Objectives (Prioritized)

- Objective 2.1** Promote continuous improvement, innovative solutions, and best practices for use throughout the IT community.
- Objective 2.2** Convene groups and consortia with broad participation to support knowledge sharing to improve results and reduce overall costs and effort.
- Objective 2.3** Create an online knowledge bank of information and resources, including project profiles, procurement materials, and purchase agreements, to be utilized and shared throughout the IT community.
- Objective 2.4** Recruit, develop, and maintain a workforce with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to deliver the full potential of information technology.
- Objective 2.5** Promote technology adoption and effectiveness by providing educational resources and professional development programs.

Benefits and Outcomes

- The judicial branch promotes a culture of innovation in which judicial officers and executive leaders champion the cause for technology adoption.
- Judicial officers, executive leaders, and staff are empowered in technology and create an environment in which innovation is encouraged and rewarded.
- IT leaders skillfully manage technology programs and staff while contributing their perspectives and talents to foster new ideas within the larger IT community.
- Overall branch maturity is enhanced when innovative ideas are aligned with the California Courts Connected framework to meet the evolving court services needs of the public and justice system partners.
- Overall branch IT maturity is enhanced when courts adopt common solutions to provide a broader set of efficiencies and services to the public.
- Information and resources are publicized and easily accessible so that IT best practices can be leveraged throughout the judicial branch.
- Enhanced working relationships with external stakeholders will allow the judicial branch to share information regarding its technology solutions, solicit feedback, and improve decision-making.

Goal 3: Advance IT Security and Infrastructure

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will continue to invest in a secure, scalable, reliable, and efficient technology infrastructure as a foundation for providing digital services and public access, while maintaining a focus on privacy protections, confidentiality, and security.

Business Driver/Need

The judicial branch is addressing the increased expectations and reliance of court users on digital access to court information by increasingly transitioning to digitally driven processes and enabling automated data and other information sharing among the courts, the public, and state and local justice partners. A focus on advancing IT security and infrastructure is needed to establish a digital foundation that allows parties, the public, justice partners, and the courts to leverage existing and emerging technologies. This focus includes strengthening information security by verifying user identities when appropriate and ensuring that comprehensive audit trails and logs are provided. Additionally, a modern, well-maintained IT infrastructure is needed to enable courts to improve access to and deliver data and services to the courts, the public, and state and local justice partners. Finally, to ensure reliability and resiliency, the branch must strengthen disaster recovery measures for all business-critical systems, services, and data.

Objectives (Prioritized)

- Objective 3.1** Ensure secure, reliable, and scalable network infrastructure and connectivity throughout the branch.
- Objective 3.2** Provide a consistent level of technology infrastructure across the branch to empower continuous innovation and growth, accommodate fluctuating demands, and mitigate the risk of data loss or service interruption.
- Objective 3.3** Ensure that critical systems, infrastructure hardware, and data can be recovered and utilized in a timely manner after a disaster.
- Objective 3.4** Allow for appropriate and validated access to court information through improved identity management protocols.
- Objective 3.5** Enhance cybersecurity through ongoing access control improvements and ongoing training and awareness.
- Objective 3.6** Provide training resources and mentoring opportunities to the courts to ensure an appropriate and actionable level of knowledge and competency in the areas noted in objectives 3.1 through 3.5.

Benefits and Outcomes

- Ensure the continued availability of technology infrastructure systems and services throughout the judicial branch that are essential for the support and delivery of public services provided by courts today.

- Equip the judicial branch with a modern, scalable, efficient, reliable, and secure technology infrastructure that will enable new operational efficiencies, support the development of new services and capabilities, and improve access to justice.
- Ensure the branch has an effective, reliable, efficient, and highly trained staff.

Goal 4: Advocate for Rule and Legislative Changes

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will promote the modernization of statutes, rules, and procedures to increase the use of technology in court operations and the delivery of court services.

Business Driver/Need

Many statutes, rules, and procedures governing court operations were written to address a physical, in-person, paper-driven environment. However, advances in technology have allowed the branch to improve service and increase access to justice through virtual, remote, digital, and electronic solutions. These changes create an ongoing need to review existing laws and, when necessary, revise them to support and facilitate technological advances. The judicial branch must continue to actively pursue and accomplish rule and legislative changes to promote technology solutions and provide guidance for their use by the courts and members of the public.

Because amending and adopting rules and proposing legislation involves following established procedures and scheduling requirements, the judicial branch must proactively consider the need for such changes when potential technology solutions are first investigated in order to allow adequate time for the review, development, public circulation, and enactment of proposed legal changes.

Finally, when proposing to add new rules and legislation or to modify existing laws to address technology issues, the judicial branch must always be mindful of preserving equal access to justice. Although there are many benefits to incorporating technology solutions into the justice process, court users and members of the public who do not have access to those solutions should not be placed at a disadvantage.

Objectives (Prioritized)

Objective 4.1 Proactively determine whether future technology solutions will require the addition or modification of rules or legislation.

Objective 4.2 Ensure current rules and legislation do not inhibit the use of technology solutions.

Objective 4.3 Ensure that rule and legislative changes supporting technology initiatives promote equal access to justice.

Objective 4.4 Ensure that rules and legislation are consistent with, and support, the judicial branch's four-year strategic plan and two-year tactical plan.

Benefits and Outcomes

- Rules, legislation, and procedures that support, encourage, and appropriately govern electronic information and services; these will provide transparency, promote efficiencies, protect privacy, ensure data security, and foster innovation.

- Rules, legislation, and procedures that facilitate and enable increased access to court services and improved service levels; these will assist litigants, justice partners, and the public who interact with the courts.

Goal 5: Promote Equal Access to the Digital Court

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will promote equal access to the digital court by pursuing public-facing remote and online services that are accessible, regardless of geography, socioeconomic means, language, physical ability, or technology access or experience.

Business Driver/Need

Californians rightfully expect to use technology to access a wide range of court services, and courts continue to work to meet those expectations. The judicial branch has significantly expanded its use of technology and will continue to do so in innovative, collaborative, and creative ways. However, that expansion should be guided by court users' varying degrees of technology access, ability, and experience.

The transition from an exclusively in-person, paper-based process to one that includes remote, digital services holds great promise. But that promise will not be fully realized if some users cannot access those new processes. Everyone should be able to use the digital court. It is not enough to say a remote or online service is open to all—it should be usable by all to be truly accessible. As new technologies are implemented, they should be usable by those who may be indigent, non-English speaking, or differently abled. Courts should ensure that the “digital divide” does not become a barrier to access.

By focusing on the diversity of court users when implementing technology solutions, the judicial branch will increase confidence in the courts, respect the needs of all Californians, and honor the values of equity and inclusion.

Objectives (Prioritized)

Objective 5.1 Pursue public-facing technologies that are accessible to court users, regardless of geography, socioeconomic status, language, physical ability, or technology access or experience.

Objective 5.2 Assist the public in using digital court technology.

Objective 5.3 Assess the obstacles inhibiting public access to court technologies.

Objective 5.4 Collaborate to reduce barriers to public access and promote a consistent user experience.

Benefits and Outcomes

- Promote access to the digital court to all public users, regardless of means, language, or ability.
- Increase public confidence in court technology.
- Demonstrate the judicial branch's commitment to equity and inclusion.

APPENDIX: Strategic Plan Update Workstream Members

Hon. Kyle S. Brodie, Executive Sponsor
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Special thanks to our stakeholders who have provided reviews and valuable feedback for the update to this strategic plan, including members of the Information Technology Advisory Committee, the Court Information Technology Management Forum, the Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee, the Court Executives Advisory Committee, the California Appellate Court Clerks Association, and the California Department of Technology.