

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR TECHNOLOGY

2023–2026



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2023–2026

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Strategic Plan Update Workstream

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With 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, and the California Appellate Court Clerks Association.

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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. During that time, California experienced some of its largest and most destructive wildfires in its entire history. In March 2020, 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kyle Brodie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kyle S. Brodie

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

Introduction

This 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 a thousand to almost 10 million. 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 judicial branch’s

- *Technology Governance and Funding Model*;
- *Strategic Plan for Technology*; and
- *Tactical Plan for Technology*.

This four-year technology strategic plan is the third iteration of the technology governance model¹ adopted by the Judicial Council of California in 2014. It aligns with the strategic plan goals and policy directions of the California judicial system.² The technology strategic plan guides the two-year tactical plan,³ which determines the individual initiatives that will be pursued to support the judicial branch’s higher-level technology goals. It also aligns with California’s statewide strategic plan for technology.⁴

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 digital court services.

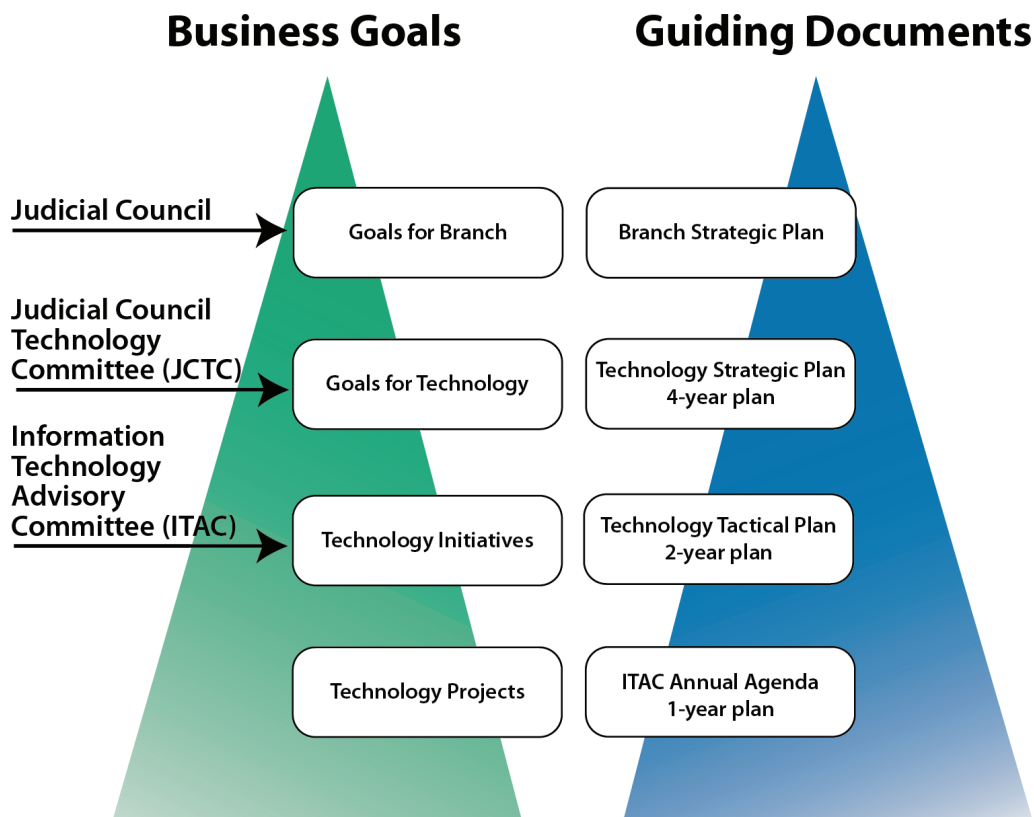
¹ See Judicial Council of Cal., *Technology Governance and Funding Model* (Oct. 2, 2014), www.courts.ca.gov/documents/jctc-Court-Technology-Governance-Funding-Model.pdf.

² See California Courts, “The Strategic Plan for California’s Judicial Branch” (July 2019), www.courts.ca.gov/3045.htm.


³ See Judicial Council of Cal., *Tactical Plan for Technology 2021–2022* (Dec. 2020), www.courts.ca.gov/documents/jctc-Court-Technology-Tactical-Plan.pdf.

⁴ See California Department of Technology, *Vision 2023: California Technology Strategic Plan* (Jan. 15, 2021), <https://vision2023.cdt.ca.gov/>.

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, socioeconomic status, language, physical ability, and technology access or experience. In light of that lived experience, we have expressly included a new 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 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 technology strategic plan was being written, Governor Newsom and the California Legislature invested significant funds in the judicial branch, specifically including court technology—an investment reflecting their confidence that we can meet that expectation. 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, whatever 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

ACCESS

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

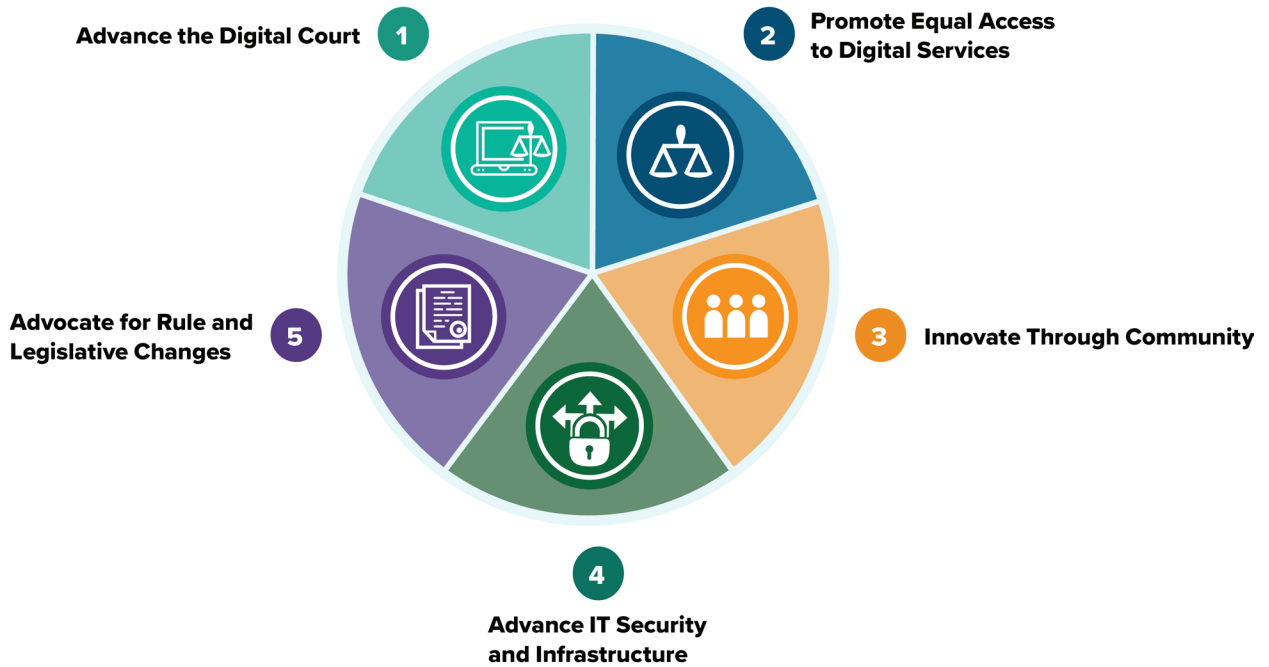
RELIABILITY

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

INNOVATION

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

Goals



- 1 Advance the Digital Court**
Gain operational efficiencies and provide consistent and reliable digital services to all.
- 2 Promote Equal Access to Digital Services**
Promote digital services that are accessible to all, regardless of location, socioeconomic status, language, physical ability, or technological access or experience.
- 3 Innovate Through Community**
Maximize the ability to innovate through collaboration, education, and investment in the skills and talents needed to propel technological advancement.
- 4 Advance IT Security and Infrastructure**
Invest in a high-performing technology infrastructure that secures and protects data, privacy, and confidentiality.
- 5 Advocate for Rule and Legislative Changes**
Identify, promote, and support legislation, rules, and procedures that improve court operations and the delivery of services using technology.

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

Provided 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 status, 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.

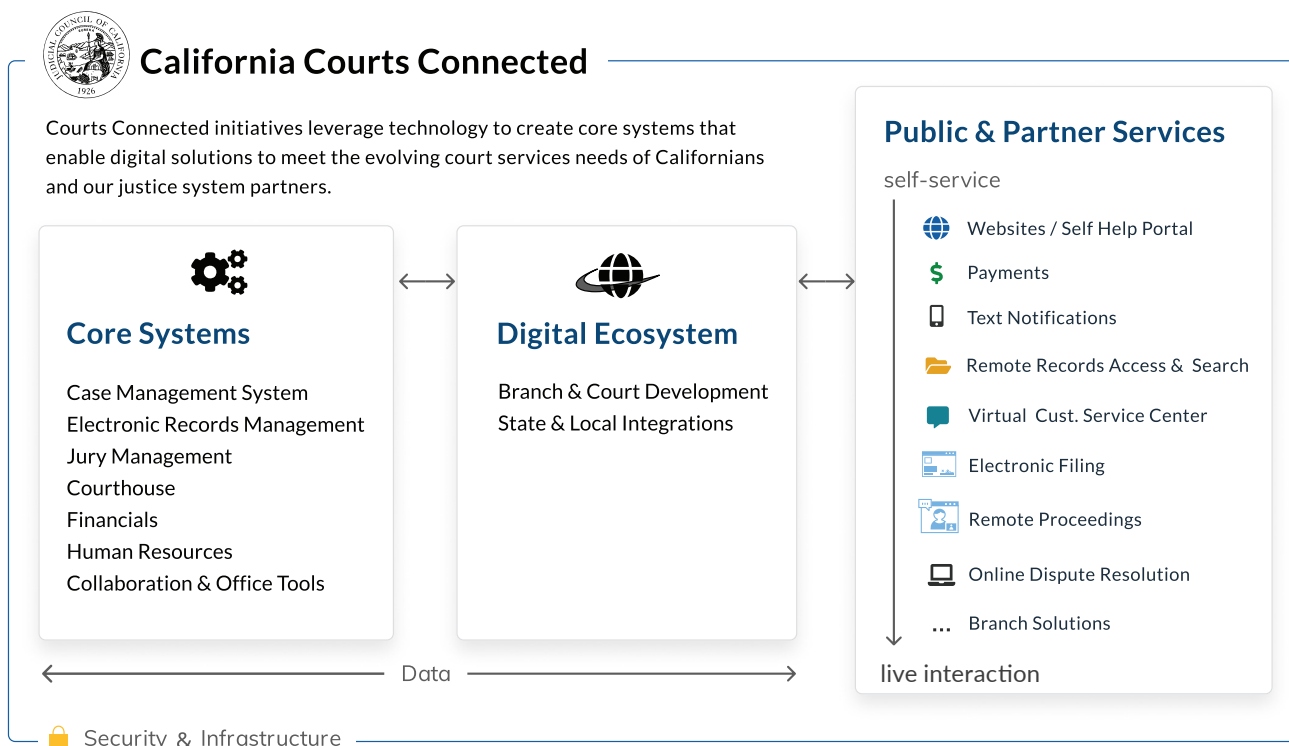
- **Improve court operations.** Advance court operational practices to make full use of technology and, in turn, provide better service to court users.
- **Provide education and support.** Develop and provide training and support for all technology solutions, particularly those intended for use by the 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 below illustrates the initiatives of the digital court that support the Chief Justice’s vision for “Access 3D”—physical, remote, and equal access by the public to court services.⁵ Advancing the digital court is a key goal for the judicial branch.



⁵ California Courts Newsroom, “Chief Justice Introduces ‘Access 3D,’” news release, August 17, 2013, www.courts.ca.gov/25417.htm.



Court Technology Inventory

The Court Technology Inventory is a tool that provides courts with the ability to assess their local technology capabilities within the individual categories that make up the California Courts Connected framework. Using the inventory, courts and the judicial branch are able to better assess gaps, identify opportunities, and assist with local and branchwide investment decisions and planning efforts.

Strategic Plan for Technology

Technology Goals 2023–2026



Goal 1: Advance the Digital Court

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will gain operational efficiencies and provide consistent and reliable digital services to all.

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 emergency protocols of the COVID-19 pandemic drove courts and court users to rely on various remote technologies to interact with 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 between individual courts and between the superior and appellate courts in the availability of resources, technology, remote and online services, and offerings. 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 use available technology effectively 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 the 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

- Full-time, consistent remote access to court information and services is provided throughout the branch to facilitate effective and efficient access to justice.
- Accurate and timely information is shared.
- Data-driven decision-making is facilitated through improved data analytic solutions.
- Flexible and remote work alternatives consistent with legislative and legal authority are enabled.
- Cost savings, operational efficiencies, and enhanced case processing are achieved with modern, standards-based document/content management systems.



Goal 2: Promote Equal Access to Digital Services

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will promote digital services that are accessible to all, regardless of location, socioeconomic status, language, physical ability, or technological access or experience.

Business Driver/Need

Californians 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 2.1** Pursue public-facing technologies that are accessible to court users regardless of geography, socioeconomic status, language, physical ability, or technology access or experience.
- Objective 2.2** Assist the public in using digital court technology.
- Objective 2.3** Assess the obstacles inhibiting public access to court technologies.
- Objective 2.4** Collaborate to reduce barriers to public access and promote a consistent user experience.

Benefits and Outcomes

- Court users attain increased access to the digital court regardless of means, language, or ability.
- Public confidence in court technology is increased.
- The provision of increased access to the courts affirms the judicial branch's commitment to equity and inclusion.



Goal 3: Innovate Through Community

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will maximize the ability to innovate through collaboration, education, and investment in the skills and talents needed to propel technological advancement.

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 a technology 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 community allows courts to further leverage technological 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 its technology community while increasing access to justice through the use of innovative solutions.

Objectives (Prioritized)

- Objective 3.1** Promote continuous improvement, innovative solutions, and best practices for use of technology throughout the California courts.
- Objective 3.2** Convene groups and consortia with broad participation to support knowledge sharing to improve results and reduce overall costs and effort.
- Objective 3.3** Continue to expand online access to information and resources for key technology initiatives to be utilized and shared throughout the branch.
- Objective 3.4** Recruit, develop, and maintain a workforce with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to deliver the full potential of information technology.
- Objective 3.5** 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.
- Court 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 and courts adopt common solutions that create operational efficiencies and meet the evolving needs of the public and justice partners.
- 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 allow the judicial branch to share information regarding its technology solutions, solicit feedback, and improve decision-making.



Goal 4: Advance IT Security and Infrastructure

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will invest in a high-performing technology infrastructure that secures and protects data, privacy, and confidentiality.

Business Driver/Need

The judicial branch is addressing court users' increased expectations for and reliance on digital access to court information by increasingly transitioning to digitally driven processes. These processes enable automated data and other information sharing among the courts, the public, and state and local justice partners. The judicial branch will focus on advancing technology security and infrastructure to establish a digital foundation that allows 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. To ensure reliability and resiliency, the branch will strengthen disaster recovery measures for all business-critical systems, services, and data. A modern, well-maintained technology infrastructure will enable courts to improve access and reliably deliver data and services to the public and state and local justice partners.

Objectives (Prioritized)

- Objective 4.1** Ensure secure, reliable, and scalable network infrastructure and connectivity throughout the branch.
- Objective 4.2** 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 4.3** Ensure that critical systems, infrastructure hardware, and data can be recovered and utilized in a timely manner after a disaster.
- Objective 4.4** Allow for appropriate and validated access to court information through improved identity management protocols.
- Objective 4.5** Enhance cybersecurity through ongoing access control improvements and ongoing training and awareness.
- Objective 4.6** 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

- The continued availability of technology infrastructure systems and services that are essential for the support and delivery of public services provided by courts today is ensured throughout the judicial branch.
- The judicial branch is equipped with a modern, scalable, efficient, reliable, and secure technology infrastructure that enables new operational efficiencies, supports the development of new services and capabilities, and improves access to justice.
- The judicial branch has effective, highly trained staff who are always focused on ensuring and maintaining the integrity of IT systems.



Goal 5: Advocate for Rule and Legislative Changes

Statement of Goal

The judicial branch will identify, promote, and support legislation, rules, and procedures that improve court operations and the delivery of services using technology.

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 implement rule and legislative changes to promote technology solutions and provide guidance for their use by the courts, justice partners, 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 5.1** Proactively determine whether future technology solutions will require the addition or modification of rules or legislation.
- Objective 5.2** Ensure current rules and legislation do not inhibit the use of technology solutions.
- Objective 5.3** Ensure that rule and legislative changes supporting technology initiatives promote equal access to justice.
- Objective 5.4** Ensure that rules and legislation are consistent with, and support, the judicial branch's four-year strategic plan and two-year tactical plan.
- Objective 5.5** Adopt timely rule and legislative changes that contain technology components.



Benefits and Outcomes

- Rules, legislation, and procedures that support, encourage, and appropriately govern electronic information and services provide transparency, promote efficiencies, protect privacy, ensure data security, and foster innovation.
- Rules, legislation, and procedures that facilitate increased access to court services and improved service levels assist litigants, justice partners, and the public who interact with the courts.
- Timely implementation of rules and legislation that incorporate technology initiatives increases access to court services in a more consistent manner.

Alignment of Technology Goals

The judicial branch’s technology goals are strongly aligned with the branch’s strategic goals as well as the goals of the California Department of Technology. The chart below illustrates the alignment of these three sets of initiatives and the cascading objectives that support common desired outcomes.

Goals		Judicial Branch Technology Goals				
		Advance the Digital Court	Promote Equal Access to Digital Services	Innovate Through Community	Advance IT Security and Infrastructure	Advocate for Rule and Legislative Changes
Judicial Branch Strategic Goals	Access, Fairness, and Diversity	●	●	●	●	●
	Independence and Accountability	●	●	●		●
	Modernization of Management and Administration	●	●	●	●	●
	Quality of Justice and Service to the Public	●	●	●	●	●
	Education for Branchwide Professional Excellence			●		
	Branchwide Infrastructure for Service Excellence	●	●		●	
	Adequate, Stable, and Predictable Funding for a Fully Functioning Branch					●
California Department of Technology Strategic Plan Goals	Deliver easy-to-use, fast, dependable and secure public services	●	●	●	●	●
	Ensure public services are equitable and inclusive	●	●	●		●
	Make common technology easy to access, use, share and reuse across government	●	●	●	●	
	Build digital government more quickly and more effectively	●	●		●	
	Build confident, empowered multi-disciplinary teams			●		

