

Strategic Plan

Leading Justice Into the Future

Judicial Council of California
Strategic Plan
March 2000

LEADING JUSTICE INTO THE FUTURE

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Dear Friend of the Courts:

We are pleased to present *Leading Justice Into the Future*, the Strategic Plan for the California judicial branch. The Strategic Plan describes a long-range vision for the state court system.

Since its inception in 1992, the Strategic Plan has provided a vision and direction for the California court system. The state's courts have recently navigated some of the most significant initiatives and reforms in our history. Among the most profound are the transition from local to state funding of the trial courts, the unification of trial courts, the implementation of jury system improvements, a comprehensive program to increase the number and quality of court interpreters, and ongoing advances in the use of technology to improve court efficiency and access.

The judicial branch is committed to making courts fair and accessible for all residents of the state and providing services that are responsive to the needs of the public. This Strategic Plan will continue to guide us toward our goal of excellence in the administration of justice.

Sincerely,



Ronald M. George



William C. Vickrey

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald M. George".

Ronald M. George
Chief Justice of California and
Chair of the Judicial Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William C. Vickrey".

William C. Vickrey
Administrative Director of the Courts and
Secretary of the Judicial Council

**1999–2000
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Mr. William C. Vickrey
*Administrative Director of the Courts and
Secretary of the Judicial Council*

The Judicial Council of California is the policymaking body for the state's judicial system, as provided in article VI, section 6 of the California Constitution. In fulfilling its responsibilities to the people of California, the Judicial Council sets the direction and provides leadership for improving the quality and advancing the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice.

Strategic planning in the judicial branch has the following components:

- The Judicial Council of California develops its Strategic Plan, which outlines the council's long-range vision for the state's judicial system and the strategic goals that will help manifest that vision. To achieve the council's strategic goals, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)—the council's staff agency—and council-appointed committees, task forces, and other workgroups develop plans that are carried out in the design and implementation of programs, services, and other activities.
- Trial and appellate courts develop local plans, which address the local implementation of statewide strategic goals and focus on issues related to the unique local environments of these courts.

This volume contains the Judicial Council Strategic Plan and related appendixes. The Judicial Council is grateful for the contributions made by staff members at the AOC to the development of the judicial branch vision. The council acknowledges especially those in the AOC's Research and Planning Unit, whose efforts have supported state and local strategic planning efforts.



Photo: Jason Doiy

The Judicial Council Strategic Plan states the goals and policy directions of the California judicial system. These goals and objectives are based on values that are important to the effective administration of justice in the state. The plan allows the judicial system to focus the use of efforts and resources toward both perpetuating the values of the court system and continuing to improve the system. The council's plan guides the priorities and work of the Judicial Council; its advisory committees; the trial and appellate courts; and the council's staff agency, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

Appendix A is a historical timeline of the council's strategic planning efforts; Appendix B is an overview of the new trial court strategic planning component of judicial branch planning; and Appendix C describes and illustrates the overall judicial branch strategic planning cycle.

FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES FACING THE CALIFORNIA COURT SYSTEM

The Judicial Council of California developed its first Strategic Plan in 1992 in response to the significant and fundamental challenges that face the state's courts. Since then, the council has regularly reviewed state and national trends, essential court system values, external mandates, stakeholder expectations, and other forces that shape the environment of the courts.

The council has described the fundamental issues currently facing the California courts as follows:

The Role of the Courts in Society. Because of changes in societal structures, the courts are now expected to provide much more than the services that have been traditionally and strictly associated with the dispute resolution function. Many



people—including members of the general public, court users, and government officials—are encouraging the courts’ use of therapeutic or preventive justice. Courts are working more collaboratively than ever before with other local service providers, such as schools, social and health service agencies, and other justice system partners. Through collaboration, courts are finding ways to coordinate social services and dispute resolution services in cases that affect the very cores of people’s lives. Examples of the changing role of the courts include drug and other specialty courts and the courts’ coordination of social services with justice system proceedings in cases involving families and children of all ages.

Governance. As the constitutionally created policy-setting body for the courts in California, the Judicial Council has the challenge of balancing the need for statewide direction and accountability with the highly valued decentralized management structure of the state’s court system. These governance issues challenge the council to speak effectively on behalf of the courts and to make difficult decisions to ensure that justice is fair and accessible throughout the state. Public expectations of accountability in

all branches of government challenge the courts to speak with one voice through the council.

Independence and Accountability. Independence and accountability are factors that apply both to the judicial branch as a system and to individual judicial officers. To ensure the independence and accountability of the judicial system as a separate and co-equal branch of government, the branch must (1) have an adequate and stable funding source, (2) control and be collectively accountable for its resources, and (3) recognize that it is both separate from and legitimately interdependent on the other two branches of government. The independence of judicial decision making in cases that come before the courts is the cornerstone of our democratic form of government, and its protection is critical for maintaining the independence of the branch.

Interactions With the Public. Court systems all across the country are trying to address the erosion of the public’s trust in the ability of the courts to dispense fair and accessible justice. The dilemma facing the courts in interactions with the public can be described as follows: “The courts do not understand what the public expects, and the public does not

understand what courts do.” Since 1998 the California courts have invested significant efforts in improving their relationships with the local communities they serve. Those efforts include (1) involving the public in court planning, (2) increasing access for all court users, and (3) expanding community outreach efforts to help educate the courts about the public’s concerns and educate the public about the role of the courts.

MAJOR THEMES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Some major themes have appeared consistently through the evolutionary stages of the Judicial Council Strategic Plan:

- Broad access to the justice system;
- Fairness in all aspects of the administration of justice;
- Improvements in the use of judicial and administrative court resources for effective and efficient court operations;
- Coordinated planning for and use of technology throughout the justice system;
- Effective public service and community outreach efforts; and
- Adequate funding for the judicial system.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Judicial Council Strategic Plan presents a series of goals for the judicial branch. Each goal is followed by a list of policy directions, which are or will be pursued to make progress toward that goal. The Strategic Plan has been refined since its first development in 1992 with the use of input from a variety of internal and external sources. In March 2000 the council adopted a conceptual framework and guidelines for the nature and timing of judicial branch strategic planning activities. These guidelines delineate the types of state and local judicial branch planning, the roles and responsibilities of the participants, and the time frames for conducting judicial branch planning activities. Strategic plans developed by trial courts, along with the long-range plans of the appellate courts, council advisory committees, and AOC, will serve as a major source of input for the council's strategic planning efforts.

The Judicial Council's first Operational Plan was developed in 2000 as a new component of judicial branch planning efforts. It is a multiyear plan outlining operational objectives that will enable further progress toward achieving

the council's strategic goals. The new planning cycle provides for a review and revision of the Strategic Plan every six years and a review and revision of the council's Operational Plan every three years.

An overview of the judicial branch's strategic planning process appears in Appendix C. For further information about the Judicial Council Strategic Plan or related planning efforts, contact:

Judicial Council of California
Administrative Office of the Courts
Research and Planning Unit
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California 94102-3660

More information regarding the California court system is available on the California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov.

MISSION OF THE JUDICIARY

The judiciary shall, in a fair, accessible, effective, and efficient manner, resolve disputes arising under the law and shall interpret and apply the law consistently, impartially, and independently to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitutions of California and the United States.

MISSION OF THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the law, and the mission of the judiciary, the Judicial Council shall be responsible for setting the direction and providing the leadership for improving the quality and advancing the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Consistent with its mission statement, the Judicial Council shall be guided by the following principles:

- To make decisions in the best interests of the public and the court system as a whole.
- To conduct the council's business based on an underlying commitment to equal and timely justice and public access to an independent forum for the resolution of disputes.
- To provide leadership in the administration of justice by planning and advocating for policies and resources that are necessary for courts to fulfill their mission.
- To ensure the continued development of an accessible, independent court system through planning, research, and evaluation programs, and through the use of modern management approaches and technological developments.
- To provide leadership in the administration of justice by establishing broad and consistent policies for the operation of the courts and appropriate uniform statewide rules and forms.
- To promote a competent, responsive, and ethical judiciary and staff through a comprehensive program of judicial education and training for court employees.
- To contribute to the public's understanding of the judicial process through a continuing program of public education.
- To provide assistance to the courts in developing action plans that are consistent with the council's Strategic Plan and that address local needs and priorities.

Goal I
ACCESS, FAIRNESS, AND DIVERSITY

All Californians will have equal access to the courts and equal ability to participate in court proceedings, and will be treated in a fair and just manner. Members of the judicial branch community will reflect the rich diversity of the state's residents.

Goal II
INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The judiciary will be an institutionally independent, separate branch of government that responsibly seeks, uses, and accounts for public resources necessary for its support. The independence of judicial decision making will be protected.

Goal III
**MODERNIZATION OF MANAGEMENT
AND ADMINISTRATION**

Justice will be administered in a timely, efficient, and effective manner that utilizes contemporary management practices; innovative ideas; highly competent judges, other judicial officers, and staff; and adequate facilities.

Goal IV
**QUALITY OF JUSTICE AND
SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC**

Judicial branch services will be responsive to the needs of the public and will enhance the public's understanding and use of and its confidence in the judiciary.

Goal V
EDUCATION

The effectiveness of judges, court personnel, and other judicial branch staff will be enhanced through high-quality continuing education and professional development.

Goal VI
TECHNOLOGY

Technology will enhance the quality of justice by improving the ability of the judicial branch to collect, process, analyze, and share information and by increasing the public's access to information about the judicial branch.

Issue Description
California's courts are challenged with serving a growing population that is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse in the nation. Individuals of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds will soon compose the majority of the state's population. California residents speak 224 different languages and innumerable dialects. Literacy levels of both English-speaking and limited- or non-English-speaking residents also vary. In addition to the access issues created by the state's diversity, past and present societal biases against characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, and physical disability create barriers that make it more difficult for some individuals to fully access court services or fully participate in court business. Factors such as geography, socioeconomic status, and procedural practices may also create barriers to court services for some segments of the state's population.

Goal I

ACCESS, FAIRNESS, AND DIVERSITY

All Californians will have equal access to the courts and equal ability to participate in court proceedings, and will be treated in a fair and just manner. Members of the judicial branch community will reflect the rich diversity of the state's residents.

Policy Directions:

1. Identify and eliminate bias in the courts.
2. Broaden and facilitate access to and understanding of the court process for all persons served by the courts, including unrepresented, low- or middle-income, disabled, and non-English-speaking individuals.
3. Develop and maintain training and appropriate certification programs for court employees and court-related personnel whose services help broaden access to the courts.
4. Encourage diversity among applicants seeking to become and individuals serving as judges, other judicial officers, court personnel, and members of court-sponsored committees and programs to ensure the richness of diverse perspectives and an inclusive environment.

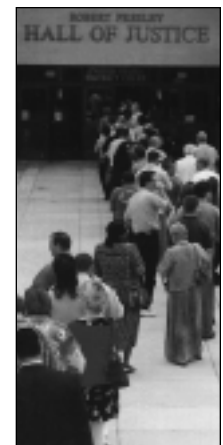


Photo: Jason Doiy

Issue Description

The judiciary is one of the three distinct and separate branches of state government. As such, the judiciary must exercise its inherent and statutory authority and responsibility to plan for, direct, monitor, and control the business of the judicial branch and must account to the public for the branch's performance. The judicial branch is responsible for managing its affairs, which includes securing, allocating, and accounting for public resources. In exercising these responsibilities, the judicial branch needs to work cooperatively with the state's executive and legislative branches. The judiciary also must maintain the ability to make case-related decisions free from external pressures of a personal, economic, or political nature, including any fear of reprisal, to retain the trust and confidence of the public as an independent, fair, and impartial arbiter of disputes.



Goal II

INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The judiciary will be an institutionally independent, separate branch of government that responsibly seeks, uses, and accounts for public resources necessary for its support. The independence of judicial decision making will be protected.

Policy Directions:

A. Branch Independence

1. Obtain adequate funding and resources for the support and operation of the courts.
2. Allocate resources in a judicious manner that serves to further the goals of the judicial branch.
3. Exercise the inherent and statutory authority of the judiciary to plan for and manage its funding, personnel, resources, and records, and to practice independent rule making concerning court operations and procedures.
4. Provide, support, and encourage leadership within the judicial branch.
5. Enhance methods for early, direct, and clear communications that serve to inform legislators, the executive branch, the legal community, local government, the public, and others about issues of concern to the Judicial Council.
6. Inform judges and court staff about the statewide needs of the judiciary, the role of the Judicial Council, and ways to participate in the process of establishing broad statewide policies.
7. Exercise leadership in efforts designed to resolve matters of statewide concern.

B. Independence of Judicial Decision Making

1. Evaluate and address judicial recruitment and retention issues, especially with respect to factors that motivate individuals to enter or remain in service.
2. Address the effect of executive and legislative branch actions on the independence of the courts.

II

III

Issue Description

Expanding workloads resulting from greater numbers of cases, increased case complexity, and the courts' need to respond to the information requirements of many entities are putting pressure on the California court system's ability to fulfill its responsibilities. Workload increases and backlogs have been experienced in recent years at all levels of the state court system. Due to the courts' historical bifurcated funding structure, planning and implementation of judicial administration policies, practices, and systems have been fragmented. As a result, administrative practices and systems used by the courts are dated and vary across the state. Yet the public is entitled to the efficient and convenient delivery of court services and to the resolution of disputes in a just and timely manner. The effective administration of justice requires deliberate attention to ensuring that the core processes and essential activities of the judicial branch are contemporary and to promoting excellence and continuous improvement in these areas.

Goal III

MODERNIZATION OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Justice will be administered in a timely, efficient, and effective manner that utilizes contemporary management practices; innovative ideas; highly competent judges, other judicial officers, and staff; and adequate facilities.

Policy Directions:

A. Trial and Appellate Court Management

1. Support the efforts of courts to employ sound management practices that foster the efficient use of public resources and enhance the effective delivery of court services.
2. Develop policies to implement and promote trial court unification, coordination, and other efficiencies and innovations.
3. Support the efforts of courts to employ highly qualified individuals who are selected through a competitive process, and promote expectations for court personnel to demonstrate high standards of professionalism, ethics, and personal behavior.
4. Encourage courts to foster a work environment that recognizes employees' value and promotes professional growth, development, and employee well-being.
5. Encourage courts to develop and implement best management practices in judicial administration.
6. Support efforts to develop and promote adequate security through a variety of methods, such as security personnel, equipment, and security-oriented procedures, to provide a safe environment for all persons who occupy or visit court facilities.
7. Plan for the development and financing of new court facilities and improve existing court facilities to provide adequate, suitable space for the conduct of court business, including appropriately equipped and furnished waiting areas for individuals such as children, jurors, victims, witnesses, and others who visit court facilities.



B. Trial and Appellate Case Management

1. Encourage courts to establish innovative practices to reduce delays and make other improvements in case processing.
2. Assist courts in developing systems that actively manage workload, including case calendar and trial management.
3. Support the efforts of courts to establish and implement comprehensive programs to improve compliance with court orders, including the collection of fines, fees, and forfeitures.
4. Review and, if needed, revise uniform statewide policies, rules, standards, and forms.

III



Photo: Russ Curtis

IV

Issue Description

The judicial branch serves an ever-changing society. Social and legal trends such as changing family structure, increasing awareness of domestic violence, and developing changes in dispute resolution practices are a few examples of the dynamic nature of society. The judicial branch serves multiple constituencies that have differing levels of knowledge about and contact with the judiciary. The quality and timeliness of dispute resolution affect both the quality of life for residents and the quality of the state's business environment. To be a relevant, stabilizing force in society, the judicial branch must be responsive to emerging issues and changes and must foster and retain the respect, trust, and confidence of its diverse constituencies. Community outreach and education are essential to these efforts.

Goal IV

QUALITY OF JUSTICE AND SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

Judicial branch services will be responsive to the needs of the public and will enhance the public's understanding and use of and its confidence in the judiciary.

Policy Directions:

1. Emphasize assisting the court user as a priority for all court personnel.
2. Increase public trust and understanding by including, in appropriate court programs, community participation and community outreach and education about the court system.
3. Reduce the expense of litigation through simplification and standardization of court practices and procedures at all levels, where appropriate.
4. Conduct a comprehensive program at all court levels to improve proceedings affecting children and families.
5. Support the appropriate development, maintenance, and expansion of successful alternative dispute resolution programs administered either by the courts alone or in conjunction with professional or community-based organizations.
6. Support efforts, including implementation of one-day/one-trial programs, to improve the quality of jury service and other approaches that heighten awareness of civic responsibility for jury service.



Photo: Russ Curtis

Issue Description

The quality of justice administered by the state's courts is directly related to the quality and competence of the people who work in the judicial branch. California's judicial system employs thousands of individuals, including judges, other judicial officers, court support staff, court managers, and various administrative personnel. With the increasing complexity of the law and court procedures, delivery of justice to the people of California requires judges and court personnel to be equipped with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to administer the justice system in a fair, effective manner that fosters public confidence.



Goal V

EDUCATION

The effectiveness of judges, court personnel, and other judicial branch staff will be enhanced through high-quality continuing education and professional development.

Policy Directions:

1. Provide for comprehensive education and training programs for appellate and trial judges, other judicial officers, and court personnel that address essential needs and requirements including access, fairness, diversity, and ethics training.
2. Develop education standards for appellate and trial judges, other judicial officers, and court personnel that promote professional development and continuing education programs.
3. Enhance the use of alternative approaches to delivering judicial branch education services.
4. Establish incentives and offer recognition for participation in judicial branch education.



VI

Issue Description

Technology can facilitate the timely flow of information within the judicial branch and to other public agencies that are partners in the justice system. However, due to the historically bifurcated funding of the state's courts, technology planning has been fragmented and resource levels have varied among the courts. As a result, technological resources used by courts are often incompatible and vary dramatically across jurisdictions. Rapidly evolving technological advances offer the judicial branch tremendous opportunities to develop coordinated solutions to statewide problems of data integrity, information distribution, and service delivery and to thereby eliminate redundant expenditures.

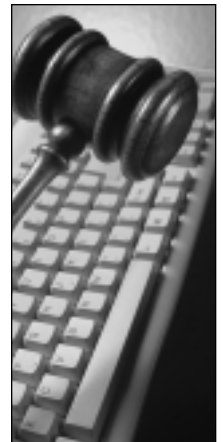
Goal VI

TECHNOLOGY

Technology will enhance the quality of justice by improving the ability of the judicial branch to collect, process, analyze, and share information and by increasing the public's access to information about the judicial branch.

Policy Directions:

1. Develop and maintain a strategic plan for the effective application of technology to the needs of the judicial branch and the justice system.
2. Design and put into place an infrastructure that will provide the staff, hardware, software, and technology management necessary to support the computing services and telecommunications required to meet the information technology needs of the judicial branch.
3. Assist courts in the development, acquisition, implementation, and use of technology to improve their management of court operations and resources.
4. Use technology to collect, process, and share information that courts require to process cases, manage their resources, and meet the needs of the public, justice system partners, and others; encourage and fund innovative, cost-effective, technology-related pilot projects that have potential for branchwide application.
5. Establish communication links that meet the needs of the judicial branch, its partners in the justice system, the public, and others with legitimate needs, through implementation of technology outreach programs.



Year Milestone

- 1992** The Judicial Council adopted the 1992 Strategic Plan and reorganization plan. The Strategic Plan outlined the first mission statement, guiding principles, goals, objectives, and strategies. The reorganization plan created a Judicial Council committee structure to promote broad-based participation in the governance of the state’s judicial system.
- 1993** The Commission on the Future of the California Courts issued its final report, *Justice in the Balance—2020*.
- 1994** The Judicial Council solicited comments on *Justice in the Balance—2020* statewide; this feedback resulted in many revisions to the council’s Strategic Plan.
- 1995** The Judicial Council focused on its role as an effective governing body and conducted its first review of advisory committee activities.
- 1996** The Judicial Council identified four fundamental issues driving the need for change in the court system: (1) the role of courts in society, (2) independence and accountability, (3) governance, and (4) interactions with the public.

Year Milestone

- 1997** The Judicial Council set priorities for Strategic Plan implementation, utilizing information from a national survey that assessed trends affecting courts. The survey was administered to the nation’s state court administrators and to California’s trial and appellate court administrators. *Leading Justice Into the Future* was published for the first time.
- 1998** The Judicial Council sponsored the statewide conference “Courts and Their Communities: Local Planning and the Renewal of Public Trust and Confidence.” This conference began California’s Community-Focused Court Planning Initiative.
- 1999** The Judicial Council updated *Leading Justice Into the Future* to reflect the changing responsibilities resulting from major legislative initiatives, such as state funding for trial courts and trial court unification.
- 2000** The Judicial Council adopted the first conceptual framework and guidelines to institutionalize and integrate state and local planning activities. The council also adopted its first multiyear Operational Plan.

The Judicial Council launched the Community-Focused Court Planning Initiative in 1997. The purpose of the initiative was twofold: (1) to help renew public trust and confidence in the judicial system and (2) to strengthen the independence of the judicial system by improving courts' ability to shape their future directions. The council appointed the Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee to provide statewide leadership for the planning initiative.

Each trial court system established a broad-based planning team to lead its planning process. The memberships of the local planning teams included judges, court executives, and representatives from local government, the bar, and the public. The teams received training in strategic planning at the statewide kickoff conference in May 1998. A variety of other resources was provided to assist the local teams, including technical assistance grants, a periodic newsletter, and video-based training materials.

Ninety percent of California's 58 trial court systems submitted inaugural strategic plans to the Judicial Council in December 1999. The trial court strategic plans address local implementation of statewide strategic goals set by the Judicial Council as well as strategic issues related to each trial court's unique local service environment. The Judicial Council has commended the state's trial courts for the great success they have achieved to date. The planning engaged in by trial courts and their respective planning teams required a significant investment of time and effort. This investment is expected to have a positive long-term impact on the courts and on the communities they serve.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN PLANNING EFFORTS

The local planning teams were encouraged to actively engage their communities in strategic planning. Most trial courts found community participation to be one of the most valuable aspects of the planning process. Public input helped courts to gain a broader perspective and build strong partnerships with their local communities.

The local planning efforts used a variety of approaches to obtaining input:

Surveys. Numerous local planning efforts used written surveys to solicit community input. Some trial courts collaborated on the development of surveys, others tailored their surveys to address their unique local communities, and still others used predesigned instruments. Some courts targeted specific segments of the community, while others surveyed the public at large.

Community Forums. Some trial courts used community forums, or open meetings for members of the public, to solicit community input. Courts took a variety of approaches to structuring these forums. They ranged from single events, such as “Meet Your Judges Night” and educational sessions for local elected officials, to a series of open

public meetings conducted in multiple locations throughout a county.

Focus Groups. A few courts used focus groups in their planning. The members of each focus group were selected on the basis of a common characteristic, such as an area of interest or expertise or some other attribute (for example, a group might consist of educators, senior adults, or frequent court users). Many focus groups were coordinated in collaboration with established community groups.

Other Outreach Efforts. In addition to disseminating surveys or conducting focus groups, many planning teams circulated draft plans to community groups and organizations.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRIAL COURT STRATEGIC PLANS

Each trial court’s strategic plan is unique in that it addresses statewide and local issues from that court’s unique perspective and within the context of that court’s local environment. The contents of the plans vary broadly: Some courts’ plans encompass the full scope of court operations, while other plans focus almost exclusively on community-related issues. The plans also take different perspectives: Some plans assume

that current resource limitations will continue, while other plans are more about aspirations.

Despite these differences, the plans together identify a variety of trends and issues affecting the state’s court system. The trends and issues identified in trial plans generally mirror those identified at the state and national levels, which are articulated in *Leading Justice Into the Future*. They include:

- The increasing number of residents and growth-related concerns;
- Changing social demographics, including cultural and linguistic diversity and growing proportions of senior adults;
- Changing family structures;
- The growing number of self-represented parties;
- Rapidly emerging new industries;
- The increasing globalization of business; and
- The impact of technology on the conduct of business.

BENEFITS OF TRIAL COURT STRATEGIC PLANNING

The planning process is viewed as having had a positive impact on the courts that

actively embraced it. The development of a strategic plan gave many courts a unique opportunity to review and reflect on their mission and services from a broader perspective than typically occurs in the course of daily operations.

Trial courts have suggested that their local strategic planning processes provided benefits such as the following:

- The public outreach efforts strengthened ties with the community;
- The strategic planning process led to more formal planning in court administration;
- Community input strengthened the assessment of court services;
- Positive working relationships with other agencies were established or renewed;
- Trends likely to affect the court in the future were identified; and
- The planning process created a conceptual road map that connects the past, present, and future.

NEXT STEPS IN TRIAL COURT STRATEGIC PLANNING

The trial court strategic plans will serve as a primary vehicle to facilitate “bottom-up” planning by the Judicial Council. In

addition to its direct benefits to local court management, trial court planning will help to inform the Judicial Council of local priorities, concerns, and opportunities. The input from these plans, along with information from other sources, will be used to guide state-level strategic planning.

It is anticipated that trial courts’ strategic plans will become more refined as courts further develop and institu-

tionalize their local planning processes. Appendix C presents a conceptual overview of the judicial branch planning process and the multiyear planning cycle adopted by the Judicial Council in March 2000. Future revisions of trial court strategic plans and related progress reports will be provided to the Judicial Council at periodic intervals, as outlined in the planning cycle.

<p>Judicial Council of California Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee 1999–2000</p>	
<p>Hon. Veronica McBeth, Co-chair <i>Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles</i></p> <p>Hon. Judith McConnell, Co-chair <i>Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of San Diego</i></p> <p>Mr. Ernest C. Ayala <i>Chair, State Legislative Committee American Association of Retired Persons</i></p> <p>Mr. Kenneth W. Babcock <i>Director of Litigation and Advocacy Public Counsel</i></p> <p>Ms. Mary Jane Burke <i>Marin County Superintendent of Schools Marin County Office of Education</i></p> <p>Mr. Jose O. Guillen <i>Executive Officer Superior Court of California, County of Napa</i></p>	<p>Ms. Mary Hernandez <i>San Francisco Board of Education Past President, National Hispanic Bar Association</i></p> <p>Hon. Thomas E. Hollenhorst <i>Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal Fourth Appellate District, Division Two</i></p> <p>Hon. Douglas P. Miller <i>Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Riverside</i></p> <p>Hon. Kathleen E. O’Leary <i>Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal Fourth Appellate District, Division Three</i></p> <p>Ms. Peggy Thompson <i>Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo</i></p>

In March 2000 the Judicial Council adopted guidelines for judicial branch planning. These guidelines define the types of state and local judicial branch planning, the roles and responsibilities of the participants, and the time frames for planning activities.

The judicial branch strategic planning process synthesizes information from numerous sources (*inputs*) to formulate long-range strategic goals and policy directions, which are articulated in the Judicial Council Strategic Plan. In turn, the council's strategic goals and policy directions guide a variety of policymaking activities (*outputs*).

JUDICIAL COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING INPUTS

Inputs to the Judicial Council's strategic planning efforts identify both the trends and issues affecting the judicial system and the system's consequent needs. The sources of input into the council's strategic planning are as follows:

Trends and Outcomes Analysis. Staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) conduct analyses of external and internal trends and outcomes. Trend analysis includes the study of economic, social, political, and technological trends that are likely to affect the administration of justice. This analysis includes data related to internal and external trends, gathered formally and informally. Outcome analysis is used to evaluate the advances made from past planning efforts and initiatives.

Advisory Committee Plans. These plans consist of compilations of recommendations from the individual Judicial Council advisory committees. These recommendations are delivered through a variety of vehicles, including committee work plans, Judicial Council business meeting reports, and committee and staff advocacy. More formalized methods for gathering advisory committee input are



Photo: Jason Doiv

likely to be developed as the judicial branch strategic planning processes are further refined and institutionalized.

Appellate Court Plans. This input source is represented by compilations of recommendations related to the state’s appellate courts. These recommendations are provided through multiple vehicles, including Judicial Council business meeting reports, advisory committees, and court and staff advocacy. As with advisory committee plans, more formalized methods for gathering appellate court plans are likely to be developed as the judicial branch strategic planning processes are further refined and institutionalized.

Trial Court Plans. Trial court strategic planning is a formal method of soliciting “bottom-up” input to the Judicial Council’s state-level strategic

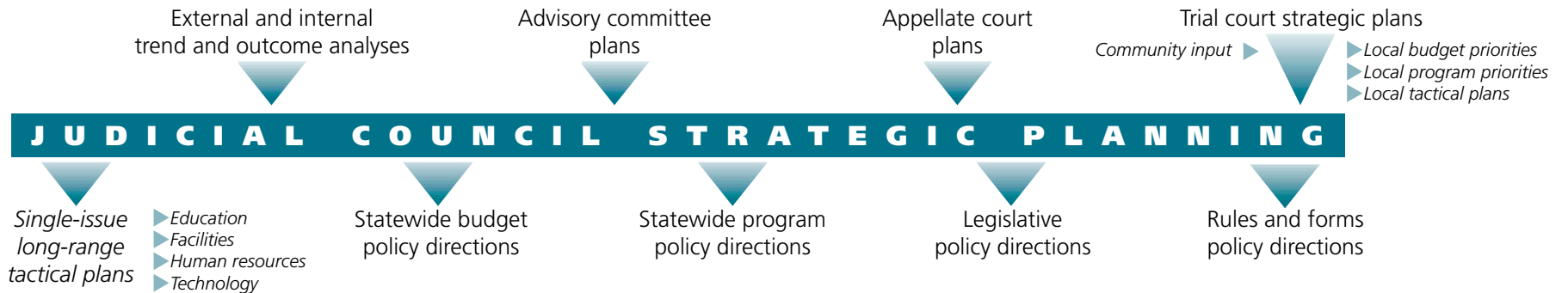
planning. The trial courts’ strategic plans, which incorporate the input of individual communities, contribute information about local issues, concerns, and opportunities to the council’s strategic planning.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING OUTPUTS

Outputs of the Judicial Council’s strategic planning efforts focus the use of resources toward continuous improvement of the administration of justice. The council’s Strategic Plan guides the priorities and work of the Judicial Council, its advisory committees, the trial and appellate courts, and the Administrative Office of the Courts. Judicial Council strategic planning informs:

- Statewide budget policy direction by guiding budgetary priorities;
- Statewide program policy directions by providing strategic direction for the development of program policy decisions;
- Legislative policy directions by providing a framework for establishing and setting legislative priorities;
- Rule and form policy directions that flow from programmatic policy decisions; and
- Single-issue, long-range tactical plans by providing strategic direction for statewide planning in areas such as technology, facilities, and human resources.

The chart below provides a conceptual illustration of the inputs and outputs of the judicial branch strategic



planning process. The judicial branch planning process includes the development, review, and revision of the Judicial Council Strategic and Operational Plans.

COORDINATED MULTIYEAR STRATEGIC PLANNING

As the Judicial Council expanded its planning process to include its own operational plan, the trial court plans, and a series of technical plans, the need to coordinate these planning efforts became apparent. The coordinated multiyear strategic planning cycle adopted by the Judicial Council is a template for all judicial branch planning activity. Coordinated planning generates reciprocity of information and guidance: State-level strategic planning benefits from local input, and the court system benefits from a statewide strategic direction.

OVERVIEW OF MULTIYEAR CYCLE

In March 2000 the Judicial Council adopted a coordinated multiyear cycle for judicial branch planning. This cycle assumes a review and revision of both state and local strategic plans every six years and a review and revision of state

and local operational plans every three years. The timelines for the Judicial Council and trial courts are staggered to maximize the relational aspect of the judicial branch planning process.

The key components of the multiyear planning cycle are as follows:

Six-Year Strategic Plan. The drafting of the Judicial Council Strategic Plan initiates the coordinated multiyear planning cycle. The Strategic Plan defines the long-term vision and mission of the judicial branch, identifies and describes long-range issues, and identifies goals and strategies for addressing those issues over the next six years. Following the inaugural multiyear cycle, each six-year cycle will begin with the submission of trial court strategic plans in the prior year. The trial court strategic plans will be used, along with input from other sources, to inform the development of the Judicial Council Strategic Plan.

Three-Year Operational Plan. An operational plan is a “big picture” agenda whose purpose is to link strategic goals to day-to-day operations. Building upon the Strategic Plan, it includes the identification of:

- Short-term, high-priority operational objectives and

- The desired outcomes of accomplishing those objectives.

The planning cycle includes the development of an operational plan every three years at the state and local levels.

Annual Reports. The intervening years of the six-year cycle will give the Judicial Council an opportunity to review the progress of its Operational Plan and to revise the plan as appropriate. It is anticipated that annual reports from trial courts will provide the council with an update on courts’ efforts to implement their own operational plans.

The graphic image that follows provides a conceptual overview of the multiyear planning cycle.

COORDINATION OF MULTIYEAR STRATEGIC PLANNING CYCLE: JUDICIAL COUNCIL AND TRIAL COURTS

This image is a conceptual illustration of the coordination of the multiyear strategic planning cycle discussed on the preceding page. The initial implementation of the six-year cycle is illustrated. The core of the image identifies the fiscal year during which an event culminates. The outermost circles represent trial court planning, and the inner circles represent Judicial Council planning. The planning activities of the trial courts and the Judicial Council will be synchronized.

