

COURT OPERATIONAL REVIEW EVALUATIONS (CORE)

Welcome to the court operational review process! Courts are selected for operational reviews for several reasons. Selection may be the result of a request by the judge, a reported issue, or because several years have passed since the court's last operational review. The selection of a court for an operational review is not necessarily indicative of any problems in the court. Both limited and general jurisdiction courts are subject to review.

AUTHORITY

Article 6, Section 3, of the Arizona Constitution gives the Supreme Court administrative supervision over all courts in the state. By directive of the chief justice, the AOC's Court Operations Unit (COU) within the Court Services Division conducts court operational review evaluations of Arizona's courts.

PURPOSE

The purpose of court operational reviews is to ensure courts comply with rules, statutes, administrative orders, ordinances, and standards as applicable for their jurisdiction. Valuable information is provided to the judge and administrator in an effort to improve court operations and to foster public trust and confidence in the courts.

PROCESS

The phases of the operational review process are: Pre-Review, Fieldwork, Analysis, Report, and Follow-Up (if needed). A brief description of each phase is detailed below.

Pre-Review:

- ❖ Court notified of the operational review;
- ❖ Court completes a case management and financial Request for Information (RFI) and returns the information to the COU (more information provided usually results in less time on site);
- ❖ Entrance conference conducted by phone or video conference with the court;
- ❖ COU staff generates reports to determine the case sample for AJACS courts; Non-AJACS courts will be asked to provide reports so a case sample can be obtained;
- ❖ COU staff review the RFI responses, AOC statistics, and other reports;
- ❖ One to two weeks prior to on-site arrival, a list of cases is sent to the court.
- ❖ The cases should be pulled and placed in a secure room that COU staff can use upon their arrival at the court.
- ❖ COU staff may also review courtroom proceedings via electronic means; i.e., FTR and Liberty.

Fieldwork:

- ❖ Introductory orientation held on-site with staff;
- ❖ COU staff will review case files, observe financial processes, conduct courtroom observations, and interview staff. Staff interviews may be conducted in-person or through an on-line application;
- ❖ Exit conference conducted with the judge and administrator to discuss preliminary areas of compliance or findings as well as the next steps in the process.

Analysis & Draft Report:

- ❖ Involves the comprehensive review of collected data, which is then summarized in a draft report;
- ❖ Draft report contains areas of compliance and findings with subsequent recommendations;
- ❖ Draft report is disseminated to other COU staff for review and discussion;
- ❖ Draft report and court response template form are sent to the judge and administrator. The draft report is not a public document at this point and is considered confidential and not intended for distribution to anyone other than the recipients on the distribution email. The recipients include only the judge and administrator (or chief clerk) of the court and select AOC staff.

Exit Conference:

- ❖ Court prepares and submits a court response to COU staff approximately four weeks from receipt of draft report;
- ❖ COU staff conduct an exit conference via telephone conference with the judge and administrator (or chief clerk) to discuss the findings and court responses. The court may provide further information to COU staff for clarification at this time (if necessary);
- ❖ Findings may be modified, removed, or kept intact, with edits incorporated into the draft report per discussion, as applicable;
- ❖ If edits are needed, the draft report and court response form are returned to court for one last review;
- ❖ Final court response is signed by the judge and returned to COU staff, which is incorporated into a final report.

Final Report:

- ❖ Operational review completion letter and final report, including court responses, is emailed to the judge and administrator (or chief clerk) of the court, presiding judge of the county, and AOC directors;
- ❖ Report is now a public document.

Follow-Up (If Needed):

- ❖ Court must address and correct outstanding findings;
- ❖ Compliance report form provided to court for court completion;
- ❖ Completed compliance report due to COU staff within 30 days. It is recognized that some findings may not be resolved within the 30-day time frame;
- ❖ COU staff reviews compliance report to determine if further on-site follow-up needed;
- ❖ On-site follow-up scheduled, if applicable; or review closed.