

ARIZONA JUDICIAL BRANCH

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIC PLAN: 2017 - 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Arizona Judicial Branch is using technology to reach its goals of connecting with and protecting the community. Having built the basic infrastructure to support information gathering and sharing, the judiciary is now working to provide the public, the media, law enforcement, and the legal community convenient access to appropriate court information, especially on such sensitive topics as criminal case dispositions and domestic violence matters as well as general case information.

Chief Justice Scott Bales provides direction for both the courts' business and technology efforts. His vision for the Arizona Judicial Branch is embodied in the publication *Advancing Justice Together: Courts & Communities 2014-2019*.

Having built a robust infrastructure and key “back-office” functions, Arizona court automation continues making major improvements through implementation of “second

generation” automated systems, continuing the journey to exploit process efficiencies and economies of scale to better serve citizens.

- At the state level, the supporting infrastructure includes the Arizona Judicial Information Network (AJIN), various database and application servers, and the attached PCs with desktop software.
- Back-office functions at the state level include the limited and general jurisdiction case, cash, jury, juvenile and adult probation and other record management systems statewide, email, Internet/Intranet access, and the central data repositories that support public access, statistical reporting, and analysis.
- For larger courts, especially those jurisdictions having their own self-contained tracking systems, back-office functions include continued maintenance, enhancement, and development of local systems, networks, and desktop environments.

Maintaining, operating, and enhancing this infrastructure and back-office functionality remains a priority to allow courts to keep better records, perform case management functions more efficiently and effectively, and promote greater accountability. Some of these back-office applications have reached the end of their useful life and require replacement. A continued focus in this plan is to replace those systems and expand from back office to front office automation while increasing public access to justice-related information.

Arizona courts will continue to improve their business practices, especially ones to better serve the participants in the judicial process, including law enforcement, the legal community, jury members, victims, self-represented litigants, the media, and the public at large. To that end, the *Arizona Judicial Branch Information Technology Strategic Plan: 2017-2019* aligns with the judiciary’s business goals found in the Arizona Judicial publication *Advancing Justice Together: Courts & Communities 2014-2019*, which defines its vision for connecting with and protecting the community.

SERVING THE PUBLIC

Public safety remains a key governing principle that directs automation. Where more complete and timely information is available about criminals, the public is better served. Integration of justice information, especially among criminal justice agencies, supports this goal. The courts continue working for better, closer, and more automated interaction with law enforcement, the Department of Corrections, prosecution and defense agencies, as well as social services agencies, integrating with those systems to the extent possible. Criminal justice agencies are able to respond in the best interests of the public when they have ready access to probation information, orders of protection, arrest information, and pending DUI cases. The courts have been building their processes and infrastructure to record this information electronically and are now focusing, in cooperation with other criminal justice agencies, on sharing information in real-time, especially warrant information and relevant data for instant background checks associated with firearms purchases.

Being responsive to the public is a key initiative. With enhanced public safety and public service as goals, initiatives include providing for public information access; enhanced “self-service” support for the self-represented, including interactive and Spanish language forms accepted statewide; improved interaction with potential jurors; technological improvements in courtrooms; and an improved ability to provide court functions and interact with the courts remotely. This complements the State of Arizona’s initiative for e-government. The Judicial Branch will continue to use technology to improve its ability to offer service in the e-government arena.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Improving the efficiency of Judicial Branch processes is an important goal. Several technologies are being implemented to support it. Electronic document management, electronic filing, and judge automation can help the courts manage records more efficiently. The use of audio and video to record court proceedings is another technology solution that is proving both cost-efficient and effective. Use of video conferencing for remote hearings and appearances saves time and transportation costs, and contributes to public safety. Several rural superior courts are continuing to expand its use to address chronic court reporter and court interpreter shortages.

Efforts to address the records management challenges of the court system are maturing. The acquisition of electronic document management systems (EDMS) that include abilities for imaging, electronic filing, document storage, and document archiving for long-term preservation is complete at the superior court and appellate court levels. Several of the largest limited jurisdiction courts have also selected and implemented electronic document management systems. The focus on providing a centralized EDMS along with procedures and processes for more than 100 smaller limited jurisdiction courts that lack the local resources to manage a standalone system continues with more than 60 courts already using the facility. EDMS forms the vital foundation for accepting electronic documents from the public and legal community (e-filing) as well as for providing remote access to case documents. Automated systems and processes have matured to the point where a paper “safety net” may not be as vital as it once appeared to be. Since no paper exists for e-filed documents, technical requirements have been communicated to courts desiring to substitute an electronic record for paper “originals.” Business continuity solutions are being examined to ensure that multiple copies of electronic court records are stored in geographically diverse locations to ensure they remain available when needed.

With e-government, integration, electronic documents, and other remote electronic access services comes the need for security and authentication. The Judicial Branch continues stepping up its emphasis on the availability of electronic records as paper becomes less prevalent. As mentioned above, the business continuity critical to preserving the electronic supply chain of justice is being put in place. A statewide approach for electronic authorizations and electronic signatures using a systemic, “simplify and unify” approach is still needed. The interactions with state and local

agencies, their needs, and technological capabilities are being reviewed along with internal branch needs to ensure the appropriate controls are in place for different types of filings.

Maintaining a systemic view continues to be a philosophical foundation that requires adoption of a broader perspective, looking at ways not just to meet an immediate need but also examining and revising business processes for global improvements and solutions. The approach encourages questioning structures, terminology, processes, and procedures, as they exist. It promotes solutions that simplify and bring standardization and uniformity to court interactions statewide. It also complements a heightened awareness of our interdependence – among courts and with other government agencies or justice partners.

ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE AND STANDARDS

For more than a decade, the direction of technology in the courts has been towards shared resources, standards, and elimination of duplicate efforts and systems. The 2017-2019 Information Technology Strategic Plan continues projects that foster cooperation and leveraging. Leveraging has become institutionalized as a process, yielding a standards-based technology environment. At the recommendation of the Commission on Technology (COT), a statewide committee providing technology oversight, and its subcommittee, the Technical Advisory Council (TAC), the Arizona Judiciary has adopted technical standards for automation statewide so that development can be shared, training leveraged, and cooperative projects undertaken. The enterprise architecture includes technical industry standards, protocols, and methodologies, and, where business value can be identified, even products and detailed specifications. Arizona Code of Judicial Administration § 1-505 adopted the architecture. See <http://www.azcourts.gov/cot/EnterpriseArchitectureStandards.aspx> for the details. These detailed standards and specifications provide needed direction to projects conducted at all levels of courts and between courts and justice partners. New procurements of vendor-developed software are also being aligned with the architecture targets.

STANDARDIZING CODES AND PROCESSES

Automation table code standardization supports statewide uniformity of information recorded in case management systems (CMSs). It is difficult to transfer data to other local and state entities, write standardized reports, and aggregate statewide statistics when every court uses different words, abbreviations, or codes for the same thing. This currently presents a problem in the remaining AZTEC courts. Mapping local codes to statewide codes has proven to be very labor intensive with mixed results. Differences from court to court and bench to bench are being resolved as part of the rollout of the AJACS statewide case management system. Superior Court Clerks and limited jurisdiction court representatives are well into this standardization effort and have delivered both standard codes and associated terms for use with the statewide case

management system. The COT maintains and governs these standardized codes and terms for all levels of courts through a code standardization subcommittee.

Creation of standardized processing workflows that take into account the size and level of a court is also a COT recommendation. The approach enables more standardized training and less complex automation since fewer unique practices have to be addressed. “Best practices” for courts’ workflow processes are contained within the second-generation case management systems, a direction approved by the Arizona Judicial Council (AJC) several years ago.

NEW SYSTEMS BECOMING REALITY

The drivers for projects to develop and implement second-generation automated systems include:

- Outdated technologies
- Business process inefficiencies
- High maintenance costs and complexities

In the fast-paced world of technology, it is an extraordinary accomplishment to sustain and support an automation system for 10 to 15 years. Many of the courts’ systems are this old or older and now well beyond the end of their life cycles, making technical support very expensive or even impossible. They must be replaced. The project to replace the over-20-year-old JOLTS system using state-of-the-art technology will complete deployment to all remaining counties in FY17.

AZTEC, a statewide case management system (CMS) developed in the late 1980’s and implemented in Arizona courts beginning in the early 1990’s, is currently in the process of being replaced. One final set of changes for continued supportability of its ageing infrastructure was completed in FY16. Other enhancement requests are being carefully weighed against the estimated return on investment over the remaining life of the program while the multi-year roll out of AJACS to over 100 limited jurisdiction courts completes.

Development of a limited-jurisdiction-focused version of AJACS to replace AZTEC is now complete and the project is transitioning into implementation/enhancement/maintenance mode. AJACS implementation in the 13 rural general jurisdiction courts completed in 2010 and enhancements to the software continue, including consolidation of both levels of court into the very same AJACS codeset.

Several of the larger municipal courts and consolidated justice courts in the state not using AZTEC also find themselves with end-of-life CMSs and the need to undertake expensive, complex development projects to replace them. Adoption of a statewide limited jurisdiction case management system provides the most economical solution to their technology dilemma. Those courts were represented in the governance, gap analysis, development, and testing efforts, and are now monitoring the health and remaining functional life of the legacy systems.

Appellamaton, the appellate court CMS developed in the 1990's, is also at the end of its design life. A study of possible alternatives is underway, taking into account the lowest risk and overall lowest cost replacement solution available today.

Simplifying and making more uniform the financial rules and fund allocation procedures remain an important priority. The complexity of the distribution of funds collected by courts increases the challenge of implementing any off-the-shelf vendor software package and makes the maintenance of existing financial systems costly and resource consuming. The judiciary continues to examine financial procedures and statutory requirements to identify ways in which the financial business of courts could be handled more easily. Realistically, courts will not be able to effect change of all the complexity at once. This will be a long-term effort to reduce complexity while resisting efforts or legislation that might introduce additional complexity into the system.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The automation portion of the Penalty Enforcement Program is the Fines, Fees and Restitution Enforcement Project (FARE). One hundred seventy-four courts in all fifteen counties have now implemented the unified FARE process whereby all citations and payments entered into their AZTEC case management system are automatically passed to a collections agency that will:

- Send a reminder notice before the court date (Phoenix only)
- Set up a Web and interactive phone payment service
- Send out delinquency notices
- Perform skip tracing
- Interact with MVD to suspend drivers licenses and vehicle registration renewals (TTEAP)
- Automate the TIP interface
- Set up, bill, and track payment contracts
- Provide outbound calling for further collections effort after noticing has completed.

FARE has collected over \$567 million to date on outstanding local debts, disbursed to statutory funds at the local, county, and state levels. Of that amount, over \$118 million has been collected via electronic media, the Web, and telephone IVR. Over 818,000 TTEAP holds have been placed with just over 502,000 releases, thus far, a release rate of 61 percent.

CONTINUED FUNDING CHALLENGES

The judiciary faces many challenges in pursuit of these strategic initiatives. Perennially among the greatest challenges, appropriate funding looms even larger in light of multi-

year statewide deployments underway for a new case management system in limited jurisdiction courts, the next-generation juvenile probation tracking system, electronic case filing statewide with ancillary projects for electronic access to case-related data and documents, as well as deployment of judge automation tools necessary to enable decision making in an all-electronic environment. In addition, ever increasing technology debt necessitates changes in the acquisition and licensing model for servers, client access device (PC) operating systems, and software used to support courts. New centralized solutions continue to come online, increasing the vital importance of providing necessary business continuity. Achieving justice integration and statewide electronic access to critical court information requires coordination of efforts, detailed standards, and funding. This is difficult when funding is so limited and dispersed among so many different entities statewide. Worse, planned funding for various initiatives has been interrupted by a dramatic decrease in JCEF (a state-level automation funding source) revenues of over 23 percent since FY11, removing over \$13 million in funding from statewide automation initiatives. Courts continue working to enhance both local and centralized pools of automation funding to leverage the success of what has already been built and carry the judiciary forward in a consistent way to support its goals of improving public safety and public service. Although funding streams currently in place are projected to be sufficient for development, testing, and implementation of currently committed projects, no funding exists for any additional statewide automation system. [Without an increase in revenue over time, courts are limited to only maintaining the current automation systems on their current platforms within the current environment.](#)

TECHNOLOGY PRIORITIES

The Arizona Judicial Branch's information technology initiatives support its strategic agenda outlined in *Advancing Justice Together: Courts & Communities 2014-2019*. At its June 2016 strategic planning session, the Commission on Technology continued its previous approach of establishing overarching strategic priorities that transcend any specific project. The priorities were affirmed in the order indicated below:

1. Production Support
2. Manage & Improve Security
3. Deploy New Core Systems
4. Mitigate Aging Technology Risk
5. Enhance Core Systems with Needed Functionality
6. Increase Public Facing Services (eFiling, eAccess, eNotification)
7. Increase Revenue Flow (FARE, eAccess, eFiling)
8. Integrate Systems to Improve Productivity and Capability

COT members also reaffirmed the importance of existing strategic projects while removing a couple of completed projects from the mix. Projects were reviewed and placed in the priority set indicated below:

- Deploy Multi-Vendor eFiling
- Deploy Judge Automation
- Launch eAccess
- Provide Automated Notification Capability
- JOLTSaz Deployment
- AJACS - AZTEC Replacement
- Criminal eFiling
- Justice Court eFiling
- FARE - Infrastructure Port
- Time Standards Reporting
- eWarrant Expansion
- eDocument Hyperlinking
- Appellate CMS
- 2FID Deployment
- Scottsdale CMS Integration
- FARE Implementations for Non-Standard Courts

The *Advancing Justice Together: Courts & Communities 2014-2019* reflects technology planning for all Arizona courts. Typically, State Appellate Courts and the Superior Court in each county, on behalf of their general and limited jurisdiction courts, prepare or update their information technology strategic plans as the foundation for the statewide planning process. Due to the continuing economic challenges government is facing at all levels, the Commission on Technology voted to require formal plan input from rural courts only every other year. Those accomplishments and directions received in the current planning cycle have been incorporated into the statewide technology activities coordinated by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The most recent individual plans or updates received by county appear in Appendix D.