

SUPREME COURT



**FY2022-2026
5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**



**Supreme Court of Mississippi
Five Year Strategic Plan
FY 2022 – 2026
8/3/2020**

Business Area 1051

1. MISSION STATEMENT:

The judicial power of the State shall be vested in the Supreme Court and such other courts as are provided for in our Constitution. Miss. Const. of 1890, Art. VI, § 144. The mission of every court in the judiciary is to administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich, and faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon the Court to the best of each judge’s ability and understanding, agreeably to the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution and laws of the state of Mississippi. Miss. Const. of 1890, Article VI, § 155.

2. PHILOSOPHY:

Administration of Justice requires an open courthouse door to all, the hearing of cases and rendering of justice pursuant to the Law, and the management of cases and litigants involved in the court system.

The judges of the several courts of this state take the Oath as recited in the above Mission Statement. Judges, court staff, and those involved in the court system are at the center of many of the challenges our society faces - crime, mental health issues, addiction, poverty, breakdown of the family, criminal justice reform.

We provide an impartial forum for all litigants, civil and criminal alike, to resolve disputes. In order to accomplish justice and be true problem solvers, judges and those serving the justice system are committed to improving the court system and providing the resources and tools available to help resolve problems and ensure justice for all.

3. RELEVANT STATEWIDE GOALS AND BENCHMARKS:

Statewide Goal 1 - Economic Development

To develop a robust state economy that provides the opportunity for productive employment for all Mississippians.

Relevant Benchmark #1

Providing job training and job search training to all intervention court participants in order to secure jobs and contribute to the economic growth of the State of Mississippi.

- Job Growth
- Employment and Income
- Coordination of the State Workforce Training Program and Intervention Courts to train participants in a trade and employ graduates to ensure productive members of society

Statewide Goal 2 – Public Safety and Order:

To protect the public’s safety, including providing timely and appropriate responses to emergencies and disasters and to operate a fair and effective system of justice.

Relevant Benchmarks:

- Maintaining case clearance rates
- Reduction of time to case disposition
- Reduction of age of active pending caseload
- Elimination of overcrowded dockets

Statewide Goal 3 – Government and Citizens:

To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that help to address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government, and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism.

Relevant Benchmarks:

- Reduction of wait time for state government services
- Regulatory efficiency: average length of time to resolution of documented complaints to professional licensing agencies.
- Identification of persons who are mentally ill who could benefit from the Intervention Courts
- Creation of a structure to ensure the mentally ill maintain medications and treatment protocol to aid in becoming a productive citizen
- Identification of veterans and their specific problems who could benefit from the Intervention Courts
- Coordination between Department of Veterans’ Affairs and Intervention Courts to guarantee veterans are receiving treatment from the most qualified program available to ensure their return as a productive member of society

4. OVERVIEW OF THE FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:

The mission of the Judicial branch, to include but not limited to, “to administer justice without respect to persons” remains unchanged since our Constitution was adopted. The Mississippi judicial system is controlled by the Supreme Court of Mississippi. The Judiciary is comprised of 564 judges and numerous personnel statewide, as follows:

Judges (564 total statewide that are overseen by the Supreme Court)

- 82 Circuit courts with 57 judges
- 82 Chancery courts with 52 chancellors

- 22 County courts with 32 judges
- 241 Municipal courts with 207 judges
- 82 Justice courts with 197 judges
- Supreme Court
 - Chief Justice
 - Presiding Justices - 2
 - Justices - 6
- Court of Appeals
 - Chief Judge
 - Presiding Judges - 2
 - Judges - 7

Staff/Personnel

- Trial court administrators - 91
- Trial court reporters - 124
- Legal staff - paralegals, staff attorneys, and law clerks - 77
- Supreme Court
 - Court Administrator
 - Central Legal - 8
 - Judicial Assistants - 9
 - Law Clerks - 18
- Court of Appeals
 - Court Administrator
 - Judicial Assistants - 10
 - Law Clerks - 20
- Public Information Officer for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals - 1 employee
- Information Technology for the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and Administrative Office of Courts - 14 employees
- Finance for the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and Administrative Office of Courts - 4 employees
- Administrative Office of Courts
 - Administration - 5 employees
 - Intervention Courts - 4 employees serving 44 courts
 - Mississippi Electronic Courts - 11 employees

Beginning in 2005, the Mississippi Supreme Court began a measured and comprehensive move to evaluate, test, and implement electronic filing and case management in Mississippi courts. Beginning with the Madison County Chancery Clerk's office in May 2008, local courts have been testing a version of the federal Case Management/Electronic Case Filing (CM/ECF) system, now referred to as the Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC) system. The MEC system is a comprehensive, internet-based document filing and case management system that allows courts to maintain electronic case files and offer electronic filing. Courts can make all case information immediately available electronically through the Internet. The design of CM/ECF provides for low-cost user access to the system. Any modern PC with Internet access and Web browser software can access MEC.
 - Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery Service System (MYCIDS) - 2 employees

MYCIDS is an online system for the real time management of activities of the Mississippi Youth Court System. It is a web-based application that provides support for the intake of youths into the court system, scheduling of youth cases, management of court dockets, tracking of custody situations, necessary document generation and also provides a base dataset for statistical reporting purposes. MYCIDS closely monitors the

scheduling activities to make sure the youth are treated according to the law. The system is designed to support the Youth Court staff in the decision-making process by providing rapid access and visibility to information shared in a common information repository.

- State Library - 4 employees
- Board of Bar Admissions - 3 employees
- Board of Certified Court Reporters
- Commission on Continuing Legal Education - 2 employees
- Court Interpreter Credentialing Program

The Judiciary seeks to uphold its mission while seeking to perform all duties within its constitutional authority that will assist the State and its citizens with conserving precious assets, both monetary and humanitarian. In order to accomplish these goals, we address specific areas that are under the auspices of the Judiciary in the pages that follow.

It's important to note as the third branch of government, the FY20 general funds allocation for the Judiciary represents less than 1% of the State's total budget in FY20 (approximately .8 of 1%).

FIVE YEAR FOCUS

Throughout the next five years the Judiciary will continue its focus and achievement of these interrelated priorities:

Economic Development

- Intervention Courts
 - Graduates of Intervention Courts have resulted in adding more than 4,000 people into the workforce of our State in the last seven years alone.
 - Employment of participants during and after program completion
 - Increased collection of fines, fees, and victim restitution on county level from intervention court participants
- Realized cost and time savings using video conferencing as opposed to in-person court proceedings

Continuous Focus on Serving the Individual

- Reduce backlog due to COVID-19
- Increase *Access to Justice* voluntary legal services to all Mississippians
 - Increase access to civil courts and volunteer legal clinics for low income individuals
 - Promote and increase volunteerism by court personnel and Bar members
 - Increase pro-bono services offered, such as providing guardianships, adoptions, etc., without legal fees
- Language Access via court interpreters
- Evolving infrastructure of the Judiciary to satisfy legislative requirements
- Secure maximum federal funding to aid in the establishment of judicial programs such as veterans and mental health intervention courts
- Continuous process improvement of court rules, procedures and service delivery

Ongoing Commitment to Accountability Programs

- Intervention Courts - Drug, Veterans and Mental Health
 - Continue to realize savings to the State as an alternative to incarceration - Estimated \$300,000,000 in incarceration cost savings for FY22 - FY26

Expansion of Technology and Utilization Statewide - “Deliver Services to all Mississippians”

- Digital recordings of trial court proceedings
- Digital transcription of trial court proceedings
- Explore “TeleCourt” concept
- Interface with state agencies including, but not limited to, Department of Corrections and Department of Vital Records and Statistics to streamline submission process and seamless transmission of data between entities
- Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC) - complete implementation in all chancery, county and circuit courts
- Intervention Courts Case Management platform for financial system integration with county accounting systems
- Ongoing pursuit of federal and state grant opportunities for technology

Mitigate Turnover and Achieve Greater Retention of Judges and Court Personnel

- Increase appropriation for trial judge salaries - FY2019 saw a loss of 47 experienced judges, and FY2020 saw a loss of 7 experienced judges.
- Increase appropriation for court personnel salaries at all levels of the Judiciary
- Review of organizational structure to align the right person (skill set and experience) in the right position/role and compensate accordingly

6. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

External Factors

- COVID-19 - expected three year recovery
- Recession - staff reduction / unemployment
- Presidential election outcomes in 2020 and 2024 - Possible reductions in federal program appropriations and federal grant funding for states
- Annual Legislative Budget Appropriations - Flat or reduced budget appropriations impacting salaries, PINs and programs
- Future State Legislation
 - Impact on compliance of mandated legislative programs such as drug intervention, veterans and mental health intervention courts, and any future programs mandated by the Legislature, including unfunded mandates
 - Influence by national organizations pushing their agenda for state adoption
- Cyber security - compliance to ensure Personal Identifying Information (PII) security
- Grant funding - reduction or loss of funding of Casey Foundation, Kellogg, SAMSHA, Bureau of Justice Assistance, veterans and mental health grant programs

Internal Factors

- Compensation challenges
 - Retention of trial judges and key talent
 - Attracting top talent, especially specialized professionals in Information Technology
 - Securing PINs for right size staffing of key talent
- Reduced Annual Appropriations
 - Under staffing due to budget cuts
 - Limitations on expansion of services to counties and individuals
- Greater Efficiencies and Savings
 - Continue to identify ways to achieve greater efficiencies and savings while continuing to be **good stewards of the State’s appropriations**
 - Re-engineer existing processes to identify and minimize / eliminate waste to achieve

greater savings in the areas of time management, human resources and purchasing

7. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

PROGRAM 1: TRIAL JUDGES

Goal A: To operate a fair and effective system of justice.

Objective A-1: To handle the disposition of civil and criminal cases in a timely manner

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of civil case disposals

Output: Number of criminal case disposals

Efficiency: Number of chancery/circuit judges

Efficiency: Average number of court reporters paid monthly

Efficiency: Average number of trial judge support staff paid monthly

PROGRAM 2: ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF COURTS

Goal A: To operate a fair and effective system of justice.

Objective A-1: Collect filings and case dispositions for the trial courts

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of statistical documents processed

Output: Number of criminal dispositions in justice courts and municipal courts

Objective A-2: To provide administrative support to chancery, circuit and county judges.

A.2.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of chancery/circuit judges served

Output: Number of county judges served

Output: Average number of court reporters paid monthly

Output: Average number of trial judge support staff paid monthly

Efficiency: Percentage of trial judge office allowance paid

Efficiency: Percentage of trial judge rent allowance paid

Efficiency: Percentage of trial judge support staff allowance paid

Efficiency: Total dollar amount of trial judge support staff payroll

Efficiency: Total net payroll processed for county court administrators

Objective A-3: To provide administrative support to youth courts.

A.3.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of youth court jurisdictions served

Output: Number of youth court events (hearings)

Output: Number of county courts serving as youth courts

Efficiency: Percentage of youth court jurisdictions served

Output: Number of youth court training sessions

Efficiency: Percentage of compliant delinquency cases

Efficiency: Percentage of compliant protection cases

Objective A-4: To provide oversight and support of all intervention courts operating in the Mississippi

A.4.1. Strategy:

- Output:* Number of drug court programs operating
- Output:* Number of adult clients served by drug court programs
- Output:* Number of juvenile clients served by drug court programs
- Output:* Number of counties served by drug court programs
- Output:* Number of Family Clients Served
- Output:* Number of Mental Health Courts Operating
- Output:* Number of Adult Mental Health Clients Served
- Output:* Number of Veterans Treatment Courts Operating
- Output:* Number of Adult Veteran Clients Served
- Efficiency:* Average cost per felony adult drug court program
- Efficiency:* Average cost per misdemeanor adult drug court program
- Efficiency:* Average cost per juvenile drug court program
- Efficiency:* Savings to the State by not incarcerating drug court clients
- Efficiency:* Average cost per Family Intervention Court
- Efficiency:* Amount of fines collected from Intervention Court participants
- Efficiency:* Amount of fees collected from Intervention Court participants

A.4.2 Strategy: To accurately and effectively oversee the courts' fiscal and operational reporting

- Output:* Number of fiscal reports reviewed and processed monthly
- Efficiency:* Average number of days to process each court's fiscal report each month
- Output:* Number of programmatic reports reviewed and processed monthly
- Efficiency:* Average number of days to process each court's programmatic report each month

Objective A-5: To certify court interpreters to provide interpretation and translation services in the trial and appellate courts.

A.5.1. Strategy:

- Output:* Number of prospective interpreters tested
- Efficiency:* Number of certified court interpreters
- Efficiency:* Number of registered court interpreters

Objective A-6: Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC): To provide a uniform case management system and electronic filing.

A.6.1. Strategy:

- Output:* Number of electronic documents produced
- Output:* Number of courts using MEC
- Efficiency:* Percent of chancery courts using MEC
- Efficiency:* Percent of circuit courts using MEC
- Efficiency:* Percent of county courts using MEC
- Efficiency:* Percent of Mississippi population served by the chancery courts utilizing MEC
- Efficiency:* Percent of Mississippi population served by the circuit courts utilizing MEC
- Efficiency:* Percent served by county court using MEC

Efficiency: Percent of active Mississippi attorneys registered

PROGRAM 3: BOARD OF CERTIFIED COURT REPORTERS

Goal A: To create an efficient government.

Objective A-1: Ensure applicants are in compliance with the rules governing certified court reporters.

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of court reporters certified annually

Efficiency: Cost of certificate to applicant

Efficiency: Cost of recertification to applicant

PROGRAM 4: SUPREME COURT SERVICES

Goal A: To operate a fair and effective system of justice.

Objective A-1: To dispose of cases and motions in a timely manner

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of case decisions issued by the Supreme Court

Output: Number of motion decisions issued by the Supreme Court

Efficiency: Average of cases decided that meet the 270-day rule after filing of final briefs

Efficiency: Average number of days to decide cases after filing of final brief

Efficiency: Average number of days to decide motions

Efficiency: Number of cases dismissed

Efficiency: Number of motions decided/disposed of

PROGRAM 5: SUPREME COURT CLERK

Goal A: To operate a fair and effective system of justice.

Objective A-1: To track record preparation and briefing in a timely manner.

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of Notices of Appeals filed for the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals

Output: Number of records filed

Output: Number of briefs filed

Efficiency: Total amount collected from Clerk Fees generated

Objective A-2: To disseminate court decisions and mandates in a timely manner.

A.2.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of dispositions disseminated

PROGRAM 6: STATE LIBRARY

Goal A: To operate a fair and effective system of justice.

Objective A-1: To provide current legal research and reference services for the legal community and

general public in a complete and timely manner.

A.1.1. Strategy:

- Output:* Number of materials circulated
- Output:* Number of bound volumes processed
- Output:* Number of new titles added to collection
- Output:* Number of government documents processed
- Output:* Number of books in inventory
- Efficiency:* Average response time for reference questions

PROGRAM 7: COURT OF APPEALS

Goal A: To operate a fair and effective system of justice.

Objective A-1: To dispose of cases and motions in a timely manner.

A.1.1. Strategy:

- Output:* Number of case decisions issued for the Court of Appeals
- Output:* Number of motion decisions issued for the Court of Appeals
- Efficiency:* Average of cases decided that meet the 270-day rule after filing of final briefs
- Efficiency:* Average number of days to decide cases after filing of final brief
- Efficiency:* Average number of days to decide motions
- Efficiency:* Number of cases dismissed
- Efficiency:* Number of motions decided/disposed of

PROGRAM 8: BOARD OF BAR ADMISSIONS

Goal A: To create an efficient government.

Objective A-1: Ensure applicants are in compliance with the rules governing admissions for the MS Bar and administer and evaluate the Bar Examination semi-annually.

A.1.1. Strategy:

- Output:* Number of bar exam applicants
- Output:* Number of law student applicants
- Output:* Bar exam passage rate (percentage)
- Output:* Character\Fitness hearings held
- Output:* Character and Fitness Committee - informal conferences held
- Output:* Appeals hearings held
- Output:* Number of Admissions on Motion applicants
- Efficiency:* Cost per out-of-state character investigations for law students
- Efficiency:* Cost per out-of-state character investigations for attorneys
- Efficiency:* Minimum court reporter costs for hearings
- Efficiency:* Committee member cost for one-day hearings
- Efficiency:* Number of weeks to complete investigation

PROGRAM 9: COMMISSION OF CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION (CLE)

Goal A: To create an efficient government.

Objective A-1: Ensure each member of the Bar is in compliance with the rules and regulations established by the Commission and meets the mandatory CLE requirements in a timely and efficient manner.

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of Bar members reported

Output: Number of program requests received

Output: Number of CLE seminars requested

Efficiency: Number of months to compile reports

Efficiency: Percentage of delinquent attorneys

Efficiency: Percentage of program requests answered

Efficiency: Percentage of CLE seminars entered