



Courts of Mississippi

Five Year Strategic Plan – Revised – 7.21.21

FY 2023 – 2027

Business Area 1051

It is important to note that for the entire state judiciary, the third, co-equal branch of government, the FY22 general funds allocation for the Judiciary represents less than 1% of the State's total budget in FY22 (approximately .84 of 1%).

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 – 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:

- Average wait time for state government services¹
- Time to case disposition
- Age of active pending caseload
- Develop infrastructure of the Judiciary to include mental health courts and veterans courts to satisfy legislative requirements

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 419 court personnel statewide.

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. To accomplish these goals, we address specific areas that are under the auspices of the Judiciary in the pages that follow.

FIVE YEAR FOCUS

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

Economic Impact

- 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
- Court Reporter School
 - Designed to respond to an urgent need for well-trained professional, certified court reporters to record, transcribe, and create official court records of court proceedings

¹ The average wait time is calculated at the Appellate Court level.

Continuous Focus on Serving the Individual

- Increase *Access to Justice*² voluntary legal services to all Mississippians
 - Provide optimum access to civil courts and volunteer legal clinics for low-income individuals
 - Promote volunteerism by court personnel and Bar members
 - Increase pro-bono services offered, such as providing guardianships, adoptions, etc., without legal fees
- Language Access to LEP (limited English proficient) individuals via court interpreters and translators
- Develop infrastructure of the Judiciary to include mental health courts and veterans' courts to satisfy legislative requirements
- Secure maximum federal funding to aid in the establishment of judicial programs
- Continuous process improvement of court rules, procedure, and service delivery
- Ongoing pursuit of federal and state grant opportunities

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 FY23 - FY27.³

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

- Digital recordings of trial court proceedings in courts of record
- Digital transcription of trial court proceedings in courts of record
- Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC) - complete implementation in all chancery, circuit, and county courts. MEC will 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.
- Ongoing pursuit of federal and state grant opportunities for technology

Mitigate Turnover and Achieve Greater Retention of Court Personnel

- 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

5. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

External Factors

- COVID-19 - expected three-year recovery
- Recession - staff reduction / unemployment
- Fluctuations in federal program appropriations and federal grant funding for states
- Annual Legislative Budget Appropriations - Flat or reduced budget appropriations impacting salaries, PINs, and programs

² The Mississippi Supreme Court created the Access to Justice Commission in 2006 to develop a unified strategy to improve access to the civil courts for the poor. Due to the efforts of the Access to Justice Commission, the American Bar Association honored the Mississippi Bar with the Harrison Tweed Award in 2019 and the E. Smythe Gambrell Professionalism Award in 2020.

³ According to PEER Publication 650 dated January 4, 2021, the average cost per day to house an inmate in the Mississippi Department of Corrections is \$50.63 (\$18,479.95 per year). Mississippi intervention courts average 3,186 felony participants per year. Per fiscal year the cost is \$18,479.95 x 3,186 participants for a total savings of \$58,877,120.70. For FY2023 through FY2027 the total savings to the Mississippi Department of Corrections is \$294,385,603.50.

- 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
 - Influence by national organizations advocating for adoption of their respective agendas
- Cyber security - compliance to ensure Personal Identifying Information (PII) security
- Grant funding - fluctuations of funding from public and private sources

Internal Factors

- Compensation challenges
 - Retention of court personnel
 - Attracting qualified personnel, 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

6. 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

Outcome: Achieve and maintain a case clearance rate of not less than 101% for all civil cases in circuit, chancery, and county courts for the period of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023⁴

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of chancery/circuit judges

Output: Number of filed civil cases in circuit, chancery, and county courts filed for the period of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023

Output: Number of civil cases disposed of in circuit, chancery, and county courts for the period of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023

Efficiency: Average number of court reporters paid monthly

Efficiency: Average number of trial judge support staff paid monthly

⁴ A case clearance rate is the number of outgoing cases as a percentage of the number of incoming cases. Courts should aspire to dispose of at least as many cases as have been filed in a period by having a clearance rate of 100% or higher.

PROGRAM 2: ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF COURTS

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

Objective A-1: To provide administrative support to chancery, circuit, and county judges.

Outcome: Percentage of trial judge office allowance paid

Outcome: Percentage of trial judge rent allowance paid

Outcome: Percentage of trial judge support staff allowance paid

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of chancery/circuit judges served

Output: Number of county judges served

Output: Total dollar amount of trial judge support staff payroll

Output: Total net payroll processed for county court administrators

Efficiency: Average number of court reporters paid monthly

Efficiency: Average number of trial judge support staff paid monthly

Objective A-2: To provide administrative support to youth courts.

Outcome: Percent of youth courts in compliance with statutory mandates

Outcome: Percentage of youth court jurisdictions served

Outcome: Percentage of compliant delinquency cases

Outcome: Percentage of compliant protection cases

A.2.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of youth court jurisdictions served

Output: Number of youth court events (hearings)

Output: Number of county courts serving as youth courts

Output: Number of youth court training sessions

Objective A-3: To provide oversight and support of all intervention courts operating in Mississippi

Outcome: Percentage increase or decrease of drug court participants who successfully completed the program

Outcome: Percentage increase or decrease of babies born drug-free who were at risk of being born drug-addicted

Outcome: Percentage increase or decrease of fines collected from drug court participants

A.3.1. 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

Output: Total amount of fines collected from Intervention Court participants
Output: Amount of fees collected from Intervention Court participants
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 clients⁵
Efficiency: Average cost per Family Intervention Court

A.3.2 Strategy: To accurately and effectively oversee the courts' fiscal and operational reporting

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

Objective A-4: To certify court interpreters to provide interpretation and translation services in the trial and appellate courts.

Outcome: Percentage increase in the number of registered or certified court interpreters available to local courts to comply with federal guidelines

A.4.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of prospective interpreters tested
Output: Number of certified court interpreters
Output: Number of registered court interpreters
Efficiency: Average number of registered court interpreters
Efficiency: Average number of certified court interpreters

Objective A-5: Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC): To provide a uniform case management and electronic filing system to all chancery, circuit, and county courts in the state and to provide online public access to court records.

Outcome: Percent of chancery courts using MEC
Outcome: Percent of circuit courts using MEC
Outcome: Percent of county courts using MEC
Outcome: Percent of Mississippi population served by the chancery courts utilizing MEC
Outcome: Percent of Mississippi population served by the circuit courts utilizing MEC
Outcome: Percent of Mississippi population served by county courts using MEC (for counties that have county courts (22)).
Outcome: Percent of active Mississippi attorneys registered
Outcome: Percentage increase in usage fees collected and distributed to clerks
Outcome: Percentage increase in number of courts using MEC
Outcome: Percentage increase in number of electronic filings
Outcome: Percentage increase in number of electronic documents produced and available to public
Outcome: Percentage increase in number of public users

⁵ See Footnote 3, page 3.

A.5.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of chancery, circuit, and county courts using MEC

Output: Number of electronic documents produced/stored

Output: Number of electronic documents viewed online by public

Output: Number of data sharing interfaces with other agencies

Efficiency: Average amount of usage fees collected per court district

Efficiency: Average amount of usage fees returned per court district

PROGRAM 3: BOARD OF CERTIFIED COURT REPORTERS

Goal A: To create an efficient government.

Objective A-1: Ensure applicants comply with the rules governing certified court reporters.

Outcome: Percentage increase in the number of applicants in compliance with the rules governing certified court reporters

Outcome: Percentage increase in the number of applications processed

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of court reporters certified annually

Output: Number of court reporters recertified 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

Outcome: Maintain or exceed the disposition of cases within 270 days after filing of final briefs

Outcome: Maintain or exceed dispositions of writs of certiorari within 180 days after acceptance

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of case decisions issued by the Supreme Court

Output: Number of motion decisions issued by the Supreme Court

Output: Number of cases dismissed

Output: Number of motions decided/disposed of

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

Efficiency: Average number of days to decide motions

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.

Outcome: Percentage of delinquent fees collected

A.1.1. Strategy:

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

Output: Number of records filed

Output: Number of briefs filed

Output: Total amount collected from Clerk Fees generated

Efficiency: Average amount of fees collected per case filed

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

Outcome: Percentage of decisions and mandates disseminated timely

A.2.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of dispositions disseminated

Efficiency: Average 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 the public in a complete and timely manner.

Outcome: Percent increase in new titles added

Outcome: Percent increase in government documents processed

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.

Outcome: Maintain or exceed the disposition of cases within 270 days after filing of final briefs

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

Output: Number of cases dismissed

Output: Number of motions decided/disposed of

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

Efficiency: Average number of days to decide motions

PROGRAM 8: BOARD OF BAR ADMISSIONS

Goal A: To create an efficient government.

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

Outcome: Percent of applications investigated

Outcome: Bar exam passage rate (percentage)

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of bar exam applicants

Output: Number of law student applicants

Output: Character/Fitness hearings held

Output: Character and Fitness Committee - informal conferences held

Output: Appeals hearings held

Output: Number of Admissions on Motion applicants

Output: Number of weeks to complete investigation

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

PROGRAM 9: COMMISSION OF CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION (CLE)

Goal A: To create an efficient government.

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

Outcome: Percentage of delinquent attorneys

Outcome: Percentage of program requests answered

Outcome: Percentage of CLE seminars entered

A.1.1. Strategy:

Output: Number of Bar members reported

Output: Number of program requests received

Output: Number of CLE seminars requested

Output: Number of months to compile reports

Efficiency: Average amount of fees collected yearly per attorney

Efficiency: Average amount of fees collected yearly per sponsor