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MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION on JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE



2027-2031

STRATEGIC PLAN

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Purpose of the Strategic Plan:

Developed under the direction of the Commission Members and the Executive Director, this strategic plan outlines the primary goals and policy direction of the Mississippi Commission on Judicial Performance for 2027–2031. Its overarching aim is to ensure that all judges in Mississippi uphold the standards mandated by the Mississippi Code of Judicial Conduct and the State Constitution.

This plan guides the agency in sustaining current successes while fostering meaningful improvements. Although not exhaustive of every project or initiative, it emphasizes strategic priorities and emerging issues affecting the judiciary.

Mission:

The Mississippi Commission on Judicial Performance is an independent state agency that enforces judicial conduct standards, investigates allegations of misconduct or disability, and protects the judiciary from unfounded complaints. The Commission also supports judges and court staff, contributing to the impartial and accessible administration of justice.

Core Values:

- Rule of Law: Decisions must be reasoned, transparent, and grounded in law.
- Equal Justice: Fair, impartial proceedings with accessible, respectful treatment for all.
- Judicial Independence: Unbiased justice free from external influence.
- Accountability: Adherence to stringent ethical and professional standards.
- Service: Faithful, timely execution of duties aligned with state laws and public needs.

Statewide Goals and Benchmarks:

- Protect judicial integrity.
- Promote transparency and accountability in the court system.
- Maximize agency efficiency and service delivery.
- Educate the public and professionals on the Commission’s mission.
- Safeguard Mississippians from judicial misconduct or incapacity.
- Provide ethics guidance and training to legal and judicial professionals.

Fundamental Challenges:

In shaping this plan, the Commission assessed state and national trends, stakeholder expectations, court system values, and fiscal limitations.

Overview of Agency’s 5-Year Strategic Plan:

The Commission has considered funding and activity levels and has conducted a review of its deficiencies and strengths in order to establish the following work plan for 2027-2031.

Agency Direction:

Online Complaints:

The Commission continues to update its technology and website allowing for all complaints to be filed electronically on the Commission's website. The move to electronic filing allows the agency to be completely paperless saving, money, and agency resources, as well as providing public access.

Technology Modernization and Innovation

The Mississippi Commission on Judicial Performance is committed to embracing technology to improve access, security, transparency, and efficiency across all operations. Over the 2027–2031 strategic period, the Commission will prioritize the following advancements:

Key Objectives:

- Enhance digital access to services for public.
- Ensure cybersecurity and data protection to meet evolving threats.
- Improve internal workflow automation to streamline complaint management.
- Increase transparency and public engagement through technology-enabled outreach.

Planned Initiatives:

1. **Launch a Modernized Public Portal**
By 2027, launch a mobile- and accessibility-friendly website for complaint filing, FAQs, and real-time tracking of public resources.
2. **Implement Workflow Automation Tools**
Adopt task management and case automation systems to reduce manual steps, minimize delays, and ensure accountability in complaint handling.
3. **Adopt Secure Cloud-Based Data Storage**
Transition to encrypted, cloud-based infrastructure for complaint records and internal documents, ensuring disaster recovery and confidentiality.
4. **Upgrade Cybersecurity Measures**
Perform regular penetration testing and implement multi-factor authentication and user access audits.
5. **Leverage Data Analytics**
Use analytics dashboards to monitor complaint trends, identify high-risk patterns, and inform proactive judicial outreach.

Performance Metrics:

- Percentage of internal operations digitized or automated
- Uptime and performance benchmarks for the public-facing website
- Number of cybersecurity incidents (target: 0 annually)
- Time saved through automation (measured quarterly)

- User satisfaction score for new digital services (target $\geq 90\%$)

Complaint Tracking and Maintenance of Complaint Files:

In an effort to maintain a completely paperless office, the Commission will continue to upgrade and maintain its complaint tracking program that allows all complaints to be scanned and filed electronically. Although completely electronic, the Commission maintains a wholly separate server to protect the confidentiality of complaints.

Canons and Rules Review:

The Commission will begin conducting a comprehensive review of the Code of Judicial Conduct and Rules of the Mississippi Commission on Judicial Performance to ensure relevancy and eliminate any deficits redundancies or impediments.

Commission Services:

- Receive complaints of judicial misconduct and disability.
- Analyze complaints of judicial misconduct and disability.
- Assign complaints tracking information.
- Assign complaints of judicial misconduct and disability to a review panel.
- Present complaints of judicial misconduct and disability to the full Commission.
- Hold regular Commission meetings in order to conduct Commission business.
- Investigate all complaints as directed by the Commission.
- Litigate and adjudicate disciplinary cases.
- Present the Commission's mission to the public at various speaking engagements.
- Educate incoming law enforcement officers on the Commission and encourage their participation in the complaint process.
- Participate in national seminars devoted to judicial ethics.
- Mentor legal externs from the Mississippi College School of Law and the University of Mississippi School of Law.
- Teach Continuing Judicial Education courses.
- Teach Continuing Legal Education courses.
- Provide education and guidance to judges requesting assistance.
- Coordinate with the Judicial College in maintaining judicial educational excellence.
- Evaluate the inner workings of the agency and dedicate time and resources to ensure the agency operates with optimal efficiency and fiscal responsibility.
- Review the Code of Judicial Conduct and the Rules of the Mississippi Commission on Judicial Performance, and seek revisions as needed.

Agency Direction in Years 2027 to 2031:

Maintain and Continue Full Slate of Services:

- Receive complaints of judicial misconduct and disability.
- Analyze complaints of judicial misconduct and disability.
- Assign complaints tracking information.
- Assign complaints of judicial misconduct and disability to a review panel.
- Present complaints of judicial misconduct and disability to the full Commission.
- Conduct regular Commission meetings to advance agency business.
- Investigate all complaints, as directed by the Commission.
- Litigate and adjudicate disciplinary cases.
- Present the Commission's mission to the public at various speaking engagements.
- Educate incoming law enforcement officers on the Commission and encourage their participation in the complaint process.
- Participate in national seminars devoted to judicial ethics.
- Mentor legal externs from the Mississippi College School of Law and the University of Mississippi School of Law.
- Teach Continuing Judicial Education courses.
- Teach Continuing Legal Education courses.
- Provide education and guidance to judges requesting assistance.
- Coordinate with the Judicial College in maintaining judicial educational excellence.
- Evaluate the inner workings of the agency and dedicate time and resources to ensure the agency runs as smoothly and economically as possible.
- Review the Code of Judicial Conduct and the Rules of the Mississippi Commission on Judicial Performance and seek revisions as needed.

Agency's External/Internal Assessment and Internal Management Systems:

External/Internal Assessment:

The Commission's mission is narrowly focused and requires advanced skills in its undertaking. As such, personnel/payroll are the largest expenditures for the Commission, and its total budget is controlled exclusively by the legislature.

Internally, the Commission has the capability to exact fines against offending judges; however, those fine amounts must be approved by the Mississippi Supreme Court and are typically nominal in amount. Further, the final imposition of any fine by the Mississippi Supreme Court is, on average, one year from the time the Commission initially recommends one.

Externally, the Commission has no ability to influence its budget other than traditional lobbying methods.

Internal Management Systems:

The Commission meets bi-monthly, although due to the increase in the volume of complaints, the frequency may have to be increased. The Commission provides training to the public, legal professionals, and other stakeholders to recognize possible misconduct. We educate Judges to minimize the incidence rate of accidental violations; however, we cannot control certain aspects of the process. For example, anyone may file a complaint which, whether legitimate or not, must then be reviewed by staff and Commission.

Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Measures:

The Commission's objectives and the strategies are paramount to meeting our mission of enforcing a high standard of conduct for all state court judges, as mandated by the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Goal 1: Ensure Timely, Fair, and Transparent Resolution of Judicial Misconduct Complaints

Objective:

Receive, investigate, and adjudicate all complaints of judicial misconduct or disability in a timely, impartial, and consistent manner, while protecting both the judiciary and public interest.

Outcomes:

- Maintain public trust in the judiciary by demonstrating responsiveness and transparency.
- Strengthen judicial accountability through consistent enforcement of ethical standards.
- Minimize the duration and recurrence of unresolved complaints.

Strategies:

1. Maintain a fully electronic complaint intake and tracking system by 2026.
2. Train all staff on the revised complaint handling procedures by Q2 2026.
3. Implement a case triage system to prioritize urgent or high-impact complaints.
4. Conduct quarterly internal audits of complaint resolution timelines.

Outputs:

- Number of complaints received and resolved per year.
- Number of procedural updates implemented to streamline the adjudication process.
- Number of outreach efforts to inform the public and judiciary about the complaint process.

Efficiency Metrics:

- $\geq 90\%$ of complaints resolved within 90 days.
- $\geq 95\%$ of complaints filed electronically.
- $\geq 80\%$ of Commission meetings conducted via secure virtual or hybrid formats.

Explanatory Metrics:

- Average time from complaint submission to resolution.
- Number of complaints escalated to full hearings.
- Number of repeat complaints involving the same judge.

Goal 2: Strengthen Judicial Competency Through Targeted Education and Support:**Objective:**

Ensure all judges across Mississippi maintain and enhance their knowledge of judicial ethics, procedural law, and evolving legal standards through structured training and mentorship opportunities.

Outcomes:

- 100% of judges meet or exceed the required Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) hours annually.
- Increased self-reported confidence in handling complex judicial ethics issues.
- Enhanced decision quality and consistency in courtroom conduct.

Strategies:

1. Expand the frequency and variety of CJE seminars, including ethics, accessibility, and technological literacy.
2. Launch a formal peer-guidance program for new or struggling judges.
3. Implement anonymous feedback and satisfaction surveys after each training session.
4. Collaborate with the Judicial College and law schools to ensure topical alignment with emerging issues.

Outputs:

- Number of CJE seminars held per year.
- Number of judges participating in voluntary training programs.
- Number of mentorship pairings annually.

Efficiency Measures:

- Percent of judges completing training on or ahead of schedule.
- Average participant rating of seminar effectiveness (target $\geq 90\%$ satisfaction).
- Reduction in complaints linked to knowledge gaps or procedural errors.

Explanatory Measures:

- Types of training most frequently requested.
- Topics most associated with ethical complaints or clarifications.

Goal 3: Enhance Public and Professional Awareness of the Commission Through Strategic Communication and Community Engagement:

Objective:

Increase transparency and accessibility by proactively educating the public, legal professionals, and court personnel about the Commission's mission, processes, and available services.

Outcomes:

- Improved public trust and understanding of judicial accountability mechanisms.
- Increased engagement with the legal community, law enforcement, and court staff.
- Expanded visibility of the Commission's work and role in judicial integrity.

Strategies:

1. Develop and implement an annual outreach and education calendar by 2026, including CLE/CJE sessions, town halls, and digital content.
2. Launch a redesigned, user-friendly Commission website by mid-2027 with educational materials and complaint submission guidance.
3. Partner with legal associations and law schools to host awareness events statewide.
4. Introduce a feedback loop (e.g., surveys, comment forms) after speaking engagements to measure impact.

Outputs:

- Number of public and professional outreach events conducted annually.
- Number of website visits and resources downloaded per quarter.
- Number of external organizations partnered with for educational initiatives.

Efficiency Metrics:

- $\geq 85\%$ of event participants report increased understanding of the Commission's role.
- $\geq 80\%$ of inquiries responded to within 3 business days.
- Percent of budget allocated to outreach and communication initiatives executed as planned.

Explanatory Metrics:

- Common themes and concerns raised during public forums or inquiries.
- Most frequently requested topics for Commission presentations.
- Volume and origin of inquiries (e.g., public, judiciary, legal professionals).

Goal 4: Promote Equitable Access to Justice and Eliminate Barriers to Fair and Inclusive Judicial Oversight:

Objective:

Ensure that all Mississippians can access, understand, and trust the judicial accountability system by identifying and removing systemic and structural barriers within the Commission's reach.

Outcomes:

- Greater public confidence in the impartiality and fairness of judicial oversight.
- Improved outreach, education, and staffing practices.

Strategies:

1. Conduct a baseline access audit across Commission operations by the end of 2026.
2. Introduce multilingual complaint guides and FAQs on the Commission's website by 2027.
3. Partner with law schools, bar associations, and community groups to increase awareness and participation.

Outputs:

- Number of outreach initiatives conducted annually.
- Number of educational resources produced in multiple languages or accessible formats.
- Number of Commission staff or members receiving multilingual training.

Efficiency Metrics:

- Percentage of new educational materials that address access.
- Percentage increase in complaint submissions from community-based groups.
- Percentage of event attendees who report feeling the Commission is accessible.

Explanatory Metrics:

- Analysis of complaint filers and event participants.
- Types of access barriers most commonly cited in public feedback.

Recommended Best Practices:

- Identify and work to eliminate all barriers to access to our agency.
- Broaden and facilitate access to, understanding of, and trust and confidence in the judicial system for all persons served by the judicial branch.
- Work to prevent bias, and the appearance of bias, in the judicial branch.
- Work to achieve procedural fairness in all cases.

- Collaborate with law schools, the State Bar, local bar associations and specialty bars to achieve higher educational training within our judicial system.
- Continue to promote academic and professional excellence among the membership of the Commission and staff.

Safety and Security of Members and Staff:

The Commission will implement enhanced security protocols to protect members and staff, including:

- Emergency preparedness procedures.
- Facility security evaluations.
- Mental health support initiatives.

Institutional Independence:

The Commission must operate independently to preserve rule of law and impartiality. In an environment with increasing political and public scrutiny, the Commission will continue to make decisions free from external influence while protecting constitutional rights.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Commission will adopt a performance dashboard by 2026 to track and publish key performance indicators annually. KPIs will include:

- Complaint resolution times
- Outreach engagement metrics
- Budget execution and efficiency
- CJE participation rates