



2020 – 2023
STRATEGIC PLAN

Superior Court of California
County of Monterey



May 22, 2020

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SUPPORTING DATA/INFORMATION – AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

A: Trends Information – Internal and External

B: 2020 Strategic Planning Surveys – Summary Report



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF MONTEREY

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JULIE R. CULVER
Presiding Judge

2020 - 2022

PAMELA L. BUTLER
Asst. Presiding Judge

CHRIS RUHL
Court Executive Officer

May 22, 2020

RE: Monterey County Superior Court 2020-2023 Strategic Plan

We are pleased to present the Monterey County Superior Court 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan represents the Court's continued commitment to serving Monterey County in a manner that promotes trust and confidence in the legal system by providing fair, equal, and open access to justice.

This Strategic Plan was developed over a span of many months and includes information from surveys solicited from our community partners, staff, and the public. It also incorporates national, state and local trends. All judges and commissioners from the Monterey County Superior Court met over several days to review relevant information and to provide input and feedback. The result of these efforts is a plan that will serve as the foundation for providing enhanced services to our community.

The Strategic Plan aligns with statewide goals as outlined by the Judicial Council of California, including:

- Access, Fairness and Diversity;
- Independence and Accountability;
- Modernization and Management of Administration;
- Quality of Justice and Service to the Public;
- Education for Branchwide Professional Excellence; and
- Branchwide Infrastructure for Service Excellence.

In the coming months, the Monterey County Superior Court will be developing an Operational Plan to move forward within these focus areas as we emerge from the COVID-19 emergency. The Court will update the plan regularly and will review it annually to ensure that objectives are achieved, and emerging opportunities are identified.

Sincerely,



Julie R. Culver
Presiding Judge



Pamela L. Butler
Assistant Presiding Judge

Participants in the Strategic Planning Process

Hon. Julie R. Culver, Presiding Judge

Hon. Pamela L. Butler, Assistant Presiding Judge

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Hon. Larry E. Hayes

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Hon. Stephanie E. Hulse

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Chris Ruhl, Court Executive Officer

2020 – 2023 Strategic Plan

May 22, 2020

Section 1: Overview

The Superior Court of Monterey County embarked on a strategic planning process in the spring of 2020 pursuant to California Rules of Court 10.603(c)(9), which requires California Courts to prepare a long-range strategic plan with input from the community and consistent with the plan and policies of the Judicial Council of California. The process included surveying external partners and the community as well as judicial officers and court employees. The survey results were used to help guide and shape the future direction and priorities of the Court.

The Court's bench and Court Executive Officer developed this Strategic Plan in April 2020 with consulting and facilitation assistance from Dr. Brenda J. Wagenknecht-Ivey, CEO of PRAXIS Consulting, Inc. The process, conducted with the assistance of video remote technology in two planning sessions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, included:

1. Re-affirming the Court's mission, vision, and values;
2. Analyzing external and internal trends data and identifying likely future implications;
3. Completing an organizational assessment per the 2020 strategic planning survey results; and
4. Developing long-range goals and strategies (i.e., objectives) for making improvements in the coming years.

The process also included identifying strategic initiatives the Court will work on in the first year of implementation. The Court's annual strategic projects will be/are listed in an Operational Plan, which is a companion document to the Strategic Plan. Please contact the Court for more information.

Section 2: Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Below are the Court's mission, vision, and core values.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

March 10, 2018

It is the mission of the Monterey County Superior Court to serve the public in a respectful, courteous and efficient manner, promoting trust and confidence in the legal system by providing fair, equal and open access to justice.

Vision of the Monterey County Superior Court

Through our collective efforts, the Monterey County Superior Court will become a model and recognized leader among California Courts dedicated to providing improved access to justice through the development, growth, participation and productivity of our workforce and by utilizing innovative technologies to enhance court services to the public.

VALUES of the Monterey County Superior Court

We agree that the decisions we make and the directions we take will be consistent with the following values.

1. Promote and Inspire Public Confidence
2. Improve Public Access to Justice
3. Improve Quality of Service
4. Make Decisions Based on Data
5. Improve Efficiency and Accountability to Drive to Resolution
6. Reflect Independence and Fairness in All Proceedings

Section 3: Trends Analysis

The trends analysis encompassed reviewing external trends – including social, demographic, economic, policy/political, technological, and justice system trends. Internal trends included case filings, program, fiscal, and human resource trends. Below are possible long-term implications for the Court.

1. Population Diversity. The County’s population is increasingly diverse. The Court must be able to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population and to provide culturally responsive and appropriate services.
2. Accessibility. The Court must strive to enhance geographic, technological, and physical access to the Court. Additionally, the Court will need to reduce access barriers such as cost and language. The Court will likely experience increasing numbers of self-represented and non English speaking litigants. Providing procedural and language assistance will be necessary. It will be important for the Court to be more user-friendly and understandable in the future.
3. Court Services and Programs. The needs of court users are ever-changing and increasing. The Court will need to continue to offer programs and services to meet those changing needs. To avoid mission creep, this also will require enhanced collaboration with justice system and community partners/providers. Community treatment alternatives (e.g., mental health, substance abuse) need to be enhanced.
4. Flexibility and Nimbleness. The Court’s caseload fluctuates. Some filings are increasing while others are decreasing. To respond effectively to high workloads and caseloads, the Court may need to re-allocate resources – including judicial officers and staff – to avoid backlogs and delays. Agility and the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances will be increasingly important in the years ahead.
5. Court Technology. Technological innovations and advances are commonplace; they are emerging and evolving at a rapid pace. The Court must continue to invest in its technological infrastructure and use advanced technologies to enhance access, allow court users to conduct business remotely, improve communication, and conduct virtual conferences and hearings. The Court also must guard against cyber threats and attacks.
6. Court Facilities. Monterey County is the 17th largest county (land mass) in California. Significant improvements are needed to the Court’s facilities throughout the county. Some facilities need to be better maintained and the space optimized. Other facilities need to be vacated; the Court is moving towards developing new facilities. Additionally, new facilities are being opened in other parts of the county to enhance access. All facilities must have adequate security, fostering a safe and secure environment for all. Finally, court facilities must be environmentally friendly and sensitive (e.g., energy efficient, recycling, water efficient, etc.)
7. Competent and Diverse Workforce. Recruiting and retaining a diverse and qualified workforce will continue to be a high priority for the Court. The Court must modernize its human resource practices and promote an engaging and satisfying work environment.

Training and education, professional development, career advancement opportunities, and succession planning will be vitally important in the future.

8. Funding. Although funding has stabilized in recent years, fiscal challenges persist. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and likely economic fallout (the severity of which is yet to be determined and felt), new funding challenges are expected in the future. The Court must prepare now for possible cutbacks; contingency plans are needed. Finally, less revenue will be collected from fines and fees.

Section 4: Organizational Assessment – Summary of Strategic Planning Surveys

The strategic planning surveys were administered in February and March 2020. The external partner/community surveys were administered by the Court. The survey of judicial officers and employees was administered by Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey. The Court’s Strategic Planning Committee – judicial officers and the court executive officer – reviewed the results. A summary of findings is provided below.

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Committed, hard-working, dedicated judicial officers and staff 2. Diversity of bench 3. Work well together/support for each other 4. Commitment to providing access to justice and timely services 5. Customer service – staff are helpful, courteous, friendly, responsive, professional 6. Commitment to be fair and impartial 7. Self-help center/services 8. Open to alternative/innovative programs; open to new ideas; willing to change 9. Collaborative relationships with justice partners 10. Making improvements to facilities 11. Embrace expanded use of technology 12. Forward thinking - preparing for the future/ developing contingencies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make the Court more accessible to underserved populations 2. Enhance services/flexibility to litigants in underserved populations 3. Expand services to South County 4. Reduce cost to litigants; make it easier and less expensive to access court process 5. Expand remote access/continue to enhance use of technology 6. Improve timely and efficient case processing (e.g., faster turnaround on Minute Orders, other decisions) 7. Improve judicial assignment process and timely resolution of cases 8. Enhance/strengthen partnerships 9. Enhance teamwork among staff and job satisfaction 10. Provide regular feedback; show staff they are appreciated 11. Invest in staff training and development; need succession planning 12. Work to reduce staff turnover

Section 5: Judicial Council Key Areas and Court Goals and Strategies

The Judicial Council of California’s Strategic Plan provides seven long-range goals and policy directions for California’s court system. This section provides the Monterey County Superior Court’s long-range goals and strategies in each of the Branch’s seven priority areas.

Seven Goals of the Judicial Council of California

1. Access, Fairness and Diversity
2. Independence and Accountability
3. Modernization and Management of Administration
4. Quality of Justice and Service to the Public
5. Education for Branchwide Professional Excellence
6. Branchwide Infrastructure for Service Excellence
7. Adequate, Stable, and Predictable Funding for a Fully Functioning Branch

Strategic Goal 1: Access, Fairness and Diversity

Description: This strategic goal in the Judicial Council of California’s Strategic Plan encourages courts to be accessible, fair, and to embrace, respect, and promote diversity. Specific areas of importance include:

- Enhance access to and serve diverse populations.
- Remove access barriers in all case types.
- Meet the needs of self-represented litigants.
- Provide language assistance to non English speaking court users.
- Ensure court procedures are understandable.

The results from the 2020 Strategic Planning Surveys show the Monterey County Superior Court has many strengths in this key goal area. Self-help services, language assistance programs, use of technology to enhance access, collaboration with partners, diversity of the bench, and fair and impartial treatment are among the strengths mentioned in the survey result.

Challenges to accessing the Court, areas for improvement, and most wanted changes/improvements in the next few years pursuant to the 2020 Strategic Planning Survey findings, include:

- Improve access for under-served populations.
- Expand self-help services, assistance, and information.
- Enhance language assistance/services.
- Expand services to all areas of Monterey County (e.g., South County).
- Continue expanding the use of technology to enhance access to the Court.
- Mitigate cost barriers.
- Help litigants understand what they need to do to complete court business.

Long-Range Goals and Strategies (Objectives)

Goal 1: The Monterey County Superior Court will be accessible, understandable, and user-friendly.

Obj. 1: Improve the court user/court customer experience.

Obj. 2: Use innovative approaches to broaden access and eliminate access barriers for all county residents.

Obj. 3: Expand access to court services for residents who are remote or reside at a distance from courthouses.

Obj. 4: Enhance services and assistance to self-represented litigants.

Obj. 5: Expand language assistance for non English or limited English speaking court users.

Obj. 6: Help court users navigate the court process and understand what they need to do to complete their court business.

Obj. 7: Use technology to expand remote access and services.

Obj. 8: Expand partnerships with justice system and community providers.

Strategic Goal 2: Independence and Accountability

Description: The California Judicial Branch is committed to maintaining branch independence and enhancing accountability. California courts are encouraged to focus on the following:

- Preserve the rule of law.
- Uphold constitutional rights.
- Ensure fair and impartial courts.
- Maintain independence.
- Develop meaningful performance measures, measure performance against the standards, and report on results.

Strengths of the Monterey County Superior Court relative to this area, according to the 2020 Strategic Planning Survey results, include: (a) judges are fair and impartial; and (b) the Court is a co-equal, independent, judicial branch of government.

Opportunities for improvement include:

- Be more transparent – report on the Court’s performance.
- Demonstrate the responsible use of resources.
- Strengthen relationships with state and local legislative and executive branch leaders.

Long-Range Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: The Court will remain independent and accountable as a separate and co-equal branch of government.

Obj. 1: Advocate for sufficient funding while maintaining permissible reserves.

Obj. 2: Manage fiscal and other resources responsibly.

Obj. 3: Report on/share information about the Court’s performance; increase transparency.

Obj. 4: Strengthen relationships with legislative and executive branch state and local leaders.

Obj. 5: Educate stakeholders and partners about the third, co-equal and independent judicial branch of government.

Strategic Goal 3: Modernization and Management of Administration

Description: This Judicial Council Strategic goal focuses on the fair and timely resolution of disputes, and operational efficiencies and effectiveness. California courts are encouraged to:

- Resolve disputes in a just and timely manner.
- Operate efficiently and effectively.
- Ensure fairness and prevent/remain free from bias and the appearance of bias.
- Unify/consolidate judicial administration policies, practices, and systems.
- Develop/implement accountability and compliance measures.
- Implement and sustain innovative practices.
- Recruit, develop, and retain high quality staff.

According to the 2020 Strategic Planning Survey results, the strengths of the Monterey Superior Court in this goal area are: (a) efficient case processing; (b) fair decisions; and (c) collaborative relationships with the bar, justice system partners, and treatment/service providers.

Areas for improvement, pursuant to the survey results, include:

- Reduce wait times for court visits and hearings.
- Resolve cases in a timely manner.
- Continue to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- Ensure court processes are understandable.
- Expand use of alternative dispute resolution methods.
- Continue to strengthen relationships and collaboration with justice system partners.
- Invest in and engage the workforce and address workforce challenges.

Long-Range Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: The Court will resolve legal matters and disputes in a timely manner.

Obj. 1: Simplify and ensure consistency in procedures.

Obj. 2: Streamline court operations, including work processes.

Obj. 3: Establish, measure, and work to achieve or exceed court performance standards (i.e., standards for excellence).

Obj. 4: Implement innovative case scheduling and case management practices to reduce unnecessary delays (e.g., reduce number of appearances required; limit continuances; enhance scheduling practices; triage cases/implement differentiated case management; etc.).

Obj. 5: Support and expand the use of alternatives to litigation (e.g., alternative dispute resolution methods/programs, mediation, online dispute resolution, etc.).

Obj. 6: Collaborate and communicate with partners in making and implementing improvements.

Goal 2: The Court will be fair and free from bias.

Obj. 1: Implement innovative practices regarding bail, fines, and fees.

Obj. 2: Ensure court procedures and processes are fair, understandable, and consistent (includes procedural fairness principles).

Obj. 3: Promote/create a culture of judicial integrity, fairness, and objectivity.

Obj. 4: Implement consistent procedures that ensure both fairness and the appearance of fairness and impartiality.

Goal 3: The Court will recruit and retain an excellent, qualified, engaged, and satisfied workforce.

Obj. 1: Use innovative practices/approaches to recruit diverse and qualified job candidates.

Obj. 2: Enhance pay, benefits, and employment arrangements.

Obj. 3: Improve communication/information sharing.

Obj. 4: Involve and engage staff in making improvements.

Obj. 5: Communicate job and performance expectations and provide ongoing feedback and coaching.

Obj. 6: Hold all staff accountable for doing their jobs/work well.

Obj. 7: Recognize employees who exceed job/performance expectations (perform highly).

Obj. 8: Foster an engaging and satisfying work environment.

Obj. 9: Pursue adequate staffing levels to cover the workload.

Strategic Goal 4: Quality of Justice and Service to the Public

Description: California’s judicial branch is committed to providing quality justice including excellent services to an increasingly diverse society. This strategic goal includes:

- Remain responsive to the diverse and changing needs of court users.
- Foster excellence in public service.
- Offer programs and services that help resolve underlying problems.
- Provide services in a way that maintains the public’s trust and confidence.
- Employ community outreach and other methods to increase understanding of California courts.

Strengths of the Monterey County Superior Court in this goal area, according to the survey results, are: (a) excellent customer service (e.g., staff are knowledgeable, helpful, responsive, and friendly); (b) commitment to expand services to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population; (c) use of alternative and innovative programs; (d) collaborative court programs; and (e) community outreach.

Areas for improvement include:

1. Continue improving customer service for the court user/customer experience.
2. Expand programs/services for youth, families, and litigants.
3. Continue to educate the public about the court system/Court.

Long-Range Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Judicial officers and court employees will provide excellent service to customers.

Obj. 1: Communicate and model excellent customer service standards.

Obj. 2: Help court users effectively navigate court processes and court facilities.

Obj. 3: Treat all court users and customers respectfully and professionally.

Obj. 4: Hold all court personnel accountable for meeting or exceeding the excellent customer service standards.

Goal 2: The Court will provide access to culturally appropriate programs for youth, families, and defendants.

Obj. 1: Explore and implement evidence-based tools and culturally responsive/appropriate programs/services.

Obj. 2: Expand collaborative courts.

Obj. 3: Expand partnerships with community/treatment providers.

Obj. 4: Advocate for needed treatment and other services in the community in collaboration with justice system and community partners.

Obj. 5: Pursue adequate funding for needed court and community programs and services (including grant funding).

Goal 3: The Court will educate the public about the third, co-equal judicial branch of government.

Obj. 1: Use multiple media methods to educate and inform the public about the court system/Court.

Obj. 2: Enhance community outreach efforts.

Obj. 3: Build community support for the Court.

Strategic Goal 5: Education for Branchwide Professional Excellence

Description: Professional excellence is the standard and expectation for all judicial officers and court personnel throughout California’s judicial branch. Maintaining branchwide excellence will promote public trust and confidence in the branch. Specific areas of emphasis in this strategic goal are:

- Provide ongoing professional development, education, and training.
- Pursue partnerships and other innovative ways and means to provide professional development, education, and training opportunities for all.
- Educate/train judicial officers and court personnel on ethical issues, new and emerging practices for treating behavioral disorders and addictions, new technologies, and key topics such as implicit bias, procedural fairness, etc.

The Monterey County Superior Court is committed to professional excellence. It will continue to promote and foster a culture of learning, growth, and development. Opportunities for improvement include:

- Provide educational opportunities for judicial officers and court personnel.
- Cross-training judicial officers and court personnel.
- Enhance career development and advancement opportunities for court personnel.

Long-Range Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Judicial Officers will be knowledgeable and competent in the law and procedures across all case types.

Obj. 1: Enhance education opportunities for judicial officers.

Obj. 2: Expand cross-training for judicial officers.

Obj. 3: Expand/implement a mentor program.

Obj. 4: Support consistent case processing procedures for similar case types.

Obj. 5: Encourage qualified attorneys to apply for judicial positions.

Goal 2: Court personnel will be knowledgeable and competent to perform their best.

Obj. 1: Enhance education and training opportunities for court personnel.

Obj. 2: Expand cross-training.

Obj. 3: Provide professional development/growth.

Obj. 4: Provide career development and advancement opportunities for high performers.

Obj. 5: Develop and plan for the next generation of court leaders (e.g., succession planning).

Obj. 6: Expand opportunities for remote and on-demand learning.

Strategic Goal 6: Branchwide Infrastructure for Service Excellence

Description: A sound infrastructure is needed for California courts to ensure business continuity resulting in the highest quality of justice and service to the people of California. This strategic goal includes the following:

- Maintain safe, dignified, and fully functional facilities, ensuring they meet the needs of court users, partners, and judges/staff.
- Robust technological infrastructure including information sharing/communication technologies (hardware, software, telecommunications, etc.).
- Effective case management system(s).
- Adequate systems for sharing appropriate information throughout the branch and with partners.
- Effective administrative infrastructure including legal support, human resource system, and fiscal.

The primary strength in this area for the Monterey County Superior Court pursuant to the survey results is the recent technological improvements/enhancements (e.g., e-filing; website; improved access to online services; can make online payments; electronic boards; virtual meetings).

According to the survey results, the biggest challenges and opportunities for improvement include:

- Parking.
- Location of courthouses/lack of a South County courthouse.
- Improve facilities (e.g., safety, security, space).
- Even greater use of technology to enhance access/remote access to the Court.
- Invest in the workforce.

Long-Range Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: The Court's facilities will meet the current and future needs of the Court and community and promote trust and confidence in the Court.

Obj. 1: Optimize and consolidate court facilities.

Obj. 2: Improve the maintenance and upkeep of current facilities.

Obj. 3: Enhance courthouse safety and security.

Goal 2: The Court’s technological structure supports easy access to the Court and efficient internal court operations.

Obj. 1: Embrace the use of innovative technologies.

Obj. 2: Continue to enhance current technologies (hardware, software, equipment).

Obj. 3: Explore and implement effective, new and emerging technologies (texting notifications, opt-in messaging, artificial intelligence, Chat Bots).

Obj. 4: Enhance cyber-security, protecting the Court from external threats and attacks.

Goal 3: The Court has an administrative infrastructure that is modern, innovative, and effective.

Obj. 1: Enhance the Court’s human resource system and practices.

Obj. 2: Optimize the legal support and counsel available to the Court.

Obj. 3: Enhance the financial/fiscal infrastructure.

Strategic Goal 7: Adequate, Stable, and Predictable Funding for a Fully Functioning Branch

Description: Having adequate, stable and predictable funding is the final strategic goal of the Judicial Council’s Strategic Plan. This goal includes:

- Ensure a reliable funding base to sustain branch operations on a continual, uninterrupted basis.
- Pursue a comprehensive approach and adapt to a shifting state budget environment.
- Continue to advocate for and resolve to define new financial strategies.

NOTE: This strategic goal is primarily related to the Judicial Branch as a whole. The Court does not have specific goals and objectives for this area. Advocating for sufficient resources and using public funds responsibly are included in earlier strategic goals.

Section 6: Implementation and Accountability

This Strategic Plan will provide a roadmap for the future and will serve as a guidepost from which to measure improvements. Regardless of the environment, the Strategic Plan will help Court leadership establish priorities for making short and longer-term improvements while staying true to the Court's mission, vision, and core values. It also will help demonstrate accountability, improvements, and accomplishments in each of the strategic areas.

The Court is committed to following through on the Strategic Plan. To assist in this endeavor, the Court's Operational Plan, a companion document to this Strategic Plan, will lay out specific, strategic projects for completion each year. As appropriate, judicial officers, managers and staff will be involved in completing the strategic projects. Some strategic projects may be most appropriate for judicial officers to complete. Others may be appropriate for a strategic task force, comprised of managers and court personnel, to complete with judicial oversight. Progress on the strategic projects will be monitored throughout the year. Finally, at the end of each year, the Court will assess progress and accomplishments on that year's strategic projects, celebrate successes, and establish new strategic projects for the next year. The Operational Plan will be updated each year with the new strategic projects. Using this approach, over the years, the Court will have many successes to show in each of the key areas.

Implementing this Strategic Plan will require the involvement and dedication of many people. Traction and momentum will be built by involving judicial officers, court managers, court staff, and possibly justice system and community partners in improvement activities (where appropriate). Accomplishing specific, strategic projects each year through project committees or task forces will help the Court achieve its vision of the future and the many goals laid out in this Strategic Plan.

The Court looks forward to sharing its progress and achievements in the months and years ahead.