

Nebraska Supreme Court Technology Committee Strategic Plan FY 2019 – 2020

1 CONTENTS

2	Introduction	3
2.1	Technology Committee	3
2.2	Judicial Branch Structure	3
2.2.1	Supreme Court	3
2.2.2	Court of Appeals	3
2.2.3	Workers’ Compensation Court	3
2.2.4	District Courts	4
2.2.5	Separate Juvenile Courts.....	4
2.2.6	Problem Solving Courts.....	4
2.2.7	County Courts	4
2.2.8	Probation.....	4
2.2.9	Administrative Offices.....	4
3	Current Environment	6
3.1	Software Applications	6
3.1.1	Off-the-shelf applications	6
3.1.2	Video conferencing	6
3.1.3	Software as a Service (SaaS)	6
3.1.4	Custom applications.....	7
3.2	Data.....	7
3.2.1	Databases.....	7
3.2.2	Data exchange.....	8
3.3	Imaging.....	8
3.4	Online Services.....	8
3.4.1	Administrative Divisions.....	9
3.4.2	Trial Courts.....	9
3.4.3	Appellate Courts	10
3.4.4	Probation.....	10

3.5	Hardware	10
3.5.1	Administrative offices	10
3.5.2	Appellate courts	10
3.5.3	Trial courts	10
3.5.4	Probation.....	10
3.6	Networking.....	11
3.6.1	Administrative offices	11
3.6.2	Appellate courts	11
3.6.3	Trial courts	11
3.6.4	Probation.....	11
3.7	Staff.....	11
3.7.1	IT Support.....	11
3.7.2	Contractors	11
3.7.3	Business/Technical Analysts	11
3.7.4	Data Analysts.....	12
3.7.5	Webmaster.....	12
4	Mission Statement	12
5	Vision.....	12
6	Strategic objectives for next biennium	13
6.1	Identify and integrate where possible, information management systems for data and document storage, in order to facilitate data sharing, statistics and analysis, managerial decision making, quality assurance, data life cycle administration, and open records compliance.	13
6.2	Increase the ability of the public and the bar to access court services through technology which fulfills the individualized requirements and expectations of stakeholders’	13
6.3	Enhance court and probation staff’s ability to operate professionally, efficiently and effectively by increasing access to, and competency with, appropriate technology.....	13
7	Projects	13
7.1	Case Management Modernization	13
7.1.1	Justification	13
7.1.2	Initiatives.....	14
7.2	Data and Document Sharing/Centralization	15
7.2.1	Justification	15
7.2.2	Initiatives.....	16
7.3	Integrated Business Systems	17

7.3.1 Justification 17
 7.3.2 Initiatives..... 17

2 INTRODUCTION

Providing access to swift, fair, justice is a primary goal in the Nebraska Judicial Branch strategic agenda. The judicial branch recognizes that “implementing and maintaining modern technology to support the internal work of the courts” and “enhancing technological access for external court users” are key components of realizing that goal.

2.1 TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

The Technology Committee was created by the Supreme Court in January 2006, to guide the implementation of information technology in the judicial branch. Committee make-up has been specifically designed to be representative of various interest groups and branch divisions. Members include judges, clerks, and administrators, from all parts of the branch. Additionally, probation, administrative offices, attorneys, and educators in the legal community have voting membership. As of January 1, 2016 ‘resource associates’ representing other components of the judicial branch were added to the committee, which can be called upon to add to the discussion of IT initiatives and their impacts.

2.2 JUDICIAL BRANCH STRUCTURE

2.2.1 Supreme Court

The Nebraska Supreme Court is the state’s court of last resort. Its decisions are binding on all trial courts, as well as the Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court is composed of a Chief Justice and six Associate Justices representing the six Judicial Districts of the State. The Chief Justice represents the State at large and serves as the executive head of the Nebraska Judicial Branch.

2.2.2 Court of Appeals

The Nebraska Court of Appeals is the state’s intermediate appellate court. There are currently six judges, who sit in panels or divisions of three judges each. The Court of Appeals is generally the first court to hear appeals of judgments and orders in criminal, juvenile, civil, domestic relations and probate matters. In addition, the Court of Appeals has appellate jurisdiction over decisions originating in a number of state administrative boards and agencies. Its determination of an appeal is final unless the Nebraska Supreme Court agrees to hear the matter.

2.2.3 Workers’ Compensation Court

The Nebraska Workers' Compensation Court is the state's court with exclusive authority to administer and enforce all provisions of the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act. The Court is composed of seven judges who travel to any county in the state where an accident occurred to hear a disputed case. Appeals from the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Court are directly to the Nebraska Court of Appeals, in accordance with the procedures regulating appeals from the state district courts.

2.2.4 District Courts

The District Courts are the state's general jurisdiction trial courts. Twelve district court judicial districts serve the state's ninety-three counties and fifty-six district court judges serve within these judicial districts. Judges are required to preside at trials before the court and sit as the judge and fact finder in bench trials. Judges must hear and rule on pre-trial discovery motions, pre-trial and trial evidentiary matters, pretrial and trial matters relating to rules on pleadings, practice and procedure before the courts. In matters tried before a jury, a judge must supervise and make rulings on jury selection issues, prepare and deliver proper jury instructions and decide matters that arise during jury deliberations.

2.2.5 Separate Juvenile Courts

There are currently twelve separate juvenile judges sitting in Nebraska's three largest counties: Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy. In the remaining counties, juvenile matters are heard in the county courts. Separate Juvenile Courts have the same jurisdiction and employ the same procedures as the county courts acting as juvenile courts, and handle matters involving neglected, dependent, and delinquent children. The Separate Juvenile Courts also have jurisdiction in certain domestic relations cases where the care, support, or custody of minor children is an issue.

2.2.6 Problem Solving Courts

There are 24 specialized courts in Nebraska operating in all 12 judicial districts including 13 Adult Drug Courts, 1 Young Adult Drug Court, 2 Juvenile Drug Courts, 1 Adult DUI Court, and 3 Family Drug Courts. The goals of problem-solving courts in Nebraska are to redirect participants out of the court system, while still holding them accountable, helping them to reduce the incidence of the problems that brought them into the court system and ultimately reduce re-entry into the court system.

2.2.7 County Courts

The County Courts are the state's limited jurisdiction trial courts. There are 58 county judges in 12 county court districts. Jurisdiction of these courts is established by state law, which provides that county courts have exclusive original jurisdiction in estate cases, probate matters, guardianship, and conservatorship cases, actions based on a violation of a city or village ordinance, juvenile court matters in counties without a separate juvenile court, adoptions, and eminent domain proceedings. County courts also have concurrent jurisdiction with district courts in certain civil and criminal cases.

2.2.8 Probation

The Probation System is composed of 14 probation districts commensurate with the District Court Judicial Districts. There are 12 Probation Adult District and 2 Juvenile Districts. Each probation district has a principal office, and there are 32 satellite offices that augment the principal offices. Probation personnel consist of line staff probation officers, specialized probation officers, techs, intake officers, support staff, supervisors, coordinators, chief deputies, and a chief probation officer who is responsible for the overall district management.

2.2.9 Administrative Offices

The Nebraska Constitution gives general administrative authority over all courts to the Supreme Court and to the Chief Justice as executive head of the judicial branch. The Administrative Offices of the Courts and Probation provide most services to the court and probation systems including developing plans for improvement of the judicial system, serving as a central source of information, and developing

coordination within the branch and with other state agencies. The Administrative Offices also help to support and oversee various specialized divisions within the branch.

2.2.9.1 Judicial Branch Education

The Office of Judicial Branch Education is designed to provide in-house programming for court staff, probation, and judges with guidance from the Judicial Branch Education Advisory Committee and project leadership from each employee group within the Judicial Branch. Judicial Branch Education is also tasked with providing education for attorneys in specific areas of the law and for certain individuals who serve the courts in a volunteer capacity or through appointment by the court.

2.2.9.2 Attorney Services

The Attorney Services Division oversees attorney licensure in the state of Nebraska. This division of the Court provides services that allow candidates for admission to the Bar to apply for licenses to practice law. This office is also responsible for overseeing compliance by licensed attorneys with requirements for practice, including annual license renewals, filing of mandatory continuing legal education reports and specialized education requirements for some work in the courts. The Attorney Services Division houses the Office of Counsel for Discipline, which investigates complaints against attorneys, and the Commission on Unauthorized Practice of Law that protects the public against persons practicing law without a license.

2.2.9.3 Trial Court Services

Operational support for the county and district courts is provided through the Trial Court Services Division of the Administrative Office of the Courts. This division is responsible for communicating Supreme Court administrative policy and standards for court operations, which is accomplished through providing publications and procedural manuals, as well as standard court forms for use in court operations. Trial court services include offices for language access, dispute resolution, and public information.

2.2.9.4 Office of Public Guardian

The Office of Public Guardian is designed to serve as the guardian or conservator for an individual when no other alternative is available. In addition to providing the means of last resort as guardians or conservators for those situations where no family member or suitable individual is available, the Office of Public Guardian provides education, training, and support for volunteer and family guardians and conservators, and recruits individuals to serve as guardians and conservators for Nebraska's vulnerable individuals.

2.2.9.5 Court Improvement Project

The Nebraska Court Improvement Project is tasked with insuring that the court system is as responsive as possible for children who interact with, or are directly affected by, the courts. This division oversees the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative, a multidisciplinary network of local teams that work to improve system processes.

3 CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

Outline of the technologies that the different parts of the branch are using.

3.1 SOFTWARE APPLICATIONS

3.1.1 Off-the-shelf applications

- 3.1.1.1 Time Matters – The Counsel for Discipline case management system is hosted by the OCIO with application support provided by third party vendor, David Michael.
- 3.1.1.2 Adobe Connect – The Judicial Branch Education Division holds licenses for functionality to host, broadcast and record distance learning sessions.
- 3.1.1.3 Articulate – The Judicial Branch Education Division holds licenses for functionality to create web-based training modules.
- 3.1.1.4 SharePoint – The Court of Appeals and Supreme Court have created sites for internal document sharing and communication.
- 3.1.1.5 Liberty Court Recorder – The county courts and the appellate courts holds licenses to make the audio record of proceedings in the courtroom.

3.1.2 Video conferencing

- 3.1.2.1 Spark/WebEx – The branch is using the state’s enterprise version to host virtual meetings, facilitate remote appearances, and provide IT support.
- 3.1.2.2 Vidyo – Probation is collaborating with UNMC to facilitate multi-site conferences/consultations.

3.1.3 Software as a Service (SaaS)

- 3.1.3.1 EMS – Estate Management Software (EMS) used by the Office of Public Guardian for case management is hosted and supported by third party vendor SEM Applications.
- 3.1.3.2 Maestro Learning Management System – Judicial Branch Education uses this software for tracking credits and managing educational offerings. Hosted and supported by third party vendor SumTotal.

3.1.4 Custom applications

- 3.1.4.1 JUSTICE Case Management System - Judicial User System To Improve Court Efficiency (JUSTICE) is the integrated case and financial management system for trial courts in Nebraska. JUSTICE is currently in operation in 93 county courts, 93 district courts and the 3 separate juvenile courts. JUSTICE is a COBOL program supported by contracted programmers, with the infrastructure hosted and maintained by the OCIO.
- 3.1.4.2 SCCALES Case Management System - Supreme Court and Court of Appeals Legal Entries System (SCCALES) is the appellate courts' case and financial management system. SCCALES is a COBOL program supported by contracted programmers, with the infrastructure hosted and maintained by the OCIO.
- 3.1.4.3 NPACS Case Management System - Nebraska Probation Application for Community Safety (NPACS). NPACS is a universal case management system used by problem-solving courts, Probation administrative and field staff to increase effective supervision of probationers. NPACS is a Java-based program supported by contracted programmers, with the infrastructure hosted and maintained by the OCIO.
- 3.1.4.4 MCLE and Attorney Licensure – The Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) reporting and annual licensure system was developed for the branch Attorney Services Division. This is a Java-based program hosted in an AWS cloud environment, and maintained using contracted programmers and database administrators.
- 3.1.4.5 Attorney Bar Admissions – The Attorney Services Division bar admissions system facilitates electronic submission and review of applications to the practice of law in Nebraska. This is a Java-based program hosted in an AWS cloud environment, and maintained using contracted programmers and database administrators.

3.2 DATA

3.2.1 Databases

Application databases are housed and maintained as described above in 3.1.2 Custom applications.

In addition, the judicial branch has created a separate data management system (DMS). This system is hosted by the OCIO and consists of a centralized DB2 BLU database and a framework of IBM InfoSphere and Cognos Business Intelligence servers and software. The JUSTICE case management system as well as the NPACS case management system contribute to this shared database. The DMS gives the judicial branch the ability to bring together disparate data that can then be analyzed and collated into reports. The DMS also acts as a supplement for the case management systems through its capacity to clean data, match records, maintain record update histories, perform calculations, and many other functions necessary for good reporting.

3.2.2 Data exchange

Both the NPACS case management system and the JUSTICE system share data in real-time, or on a scheduled basis with entities external to the judicial branch.

JUSTICE case data is shared with the following:

- Department of Health and Human Services (Bureau of Vital Statistics, NFOCUS, CHARTS)
- Department of Motor Vehicles
- State Patrol
- Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
- State Treasurer
- State Auditor
- NPACS
- DOTComm (Douglas County IT)
- Nebraska.gov (Nebraska Interactive)

NPACS case data is shared with the following:

- Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
- State Patrol
- JUSTICE

3.3 IMAGING

Probation, as well as the trial and appellate courts utilize a central electronic document repository, which allows case related documents to be stored and retrieved electronically with the case file. Because this is a shared repository, it is possible for a single electronic document file to be accessed/viewed across different case management systems within the judicial branch.

Probation staff and officers have the required technology for creating and uploading electronic versions of pre-sentence investigation reports in all local offices statewide. Scanning of paper documents is encouraged in all court offices, for all filings received over-the-counter that become a part of a case file. Any document that is electronically filed by an attorney or a judge is automatically added to the courts' image repository and attached to the case. The JUSTICE and SCCALES case management programs also generate images of documents in PDF format that are added to the electronic case file.

Courts have the ability to generate electronic transcripts of a full or partial case file that can be transmitted to another court as part of the transfer or appeal process.

3.4 ONLINE SERVICES

3.4.1 Administrative Divisions

- 3.4.1.1 Attorney Admissions – Offered by Attorney Services, allows attorneys to apply for admission to the Nebraska Bar.
- 3.4.1.2 Attorney CLE and Annual License Renewals – Offered by Attorney Services, allows attorneys to submit continuing education credit hours, and pay annual mandatory dues.
- 3.4.1.3 Guardian Ad Litem Training – Offered by Attorney Services, allows attorneys to receive web-based training on acting as guardian ad litem.
- 3.4.1.4 Guardian Ad Litem Training Registration – Offered by Office of Public Guardian, allows members of the public to register to attend training sessions on acting as guardian/conservator.
- 3.4.1.5 Parenting Act Mediator Portal – Offered by the Office of Dispute Resolution, allows certified Parenting Act mediators to submit continuing education credit hours, and annual reports.

3.4.2 Trial Courts

- 3.4.2.1 JUSTICE Case Searches – By subscription through Nebraska.gov, or available as a ‘one-time’ credit card payment option, the public can search trial court records and view detailed case history and documents.
- 3.4.2.2 Payments for waivable citations and court judgments – The public may submit electronic check or credit card payments to the trial courts to plead guilty by waiver to a citation, or to fulfill a financial obligation under a case judgment.
- 3.4.2.3 Court Calendar Search – The public can search case hearing time and location information for trial courts, by party name, or by date.
- 3.4.2.4 eFiling – Members of the Nebraska Bar, by subscription through Nebraska.gov, may submit legal documents to the courts in civil, criminal, probate, juvenile, or appellate cases. Filing fees are electronically transferred to the courts where required.

3.4.3 Appellate Courts

- 3.4.3.1 SCCALES Case Searches – With a subscription through Nebraska.gov the public can search appellate court records and view detailed case history and documents.
- 3.4.3.2 Opinions Library - The Nebraska Appellate Courts Online Library is the repository of the official published judicial opinions of the Nebraska Supreme Court and Nebraska Court of Appeals. The public can search and browse through all published opinions from 1871 to present.

3.4.4 Probation

- 3.4.4.1 Service Provider Portal – Contractors who are approved to provide probationer services can send evaluations and reports to probation officers, as well as submit vouchers for payment.

3.5 HARDWARE

3.5.1 Administrative offices

Primary computing equipment used by the administrative offices of courts and probation include laptops, PC's, and some laptop/tablet hybrids. These devices are used to access court and probation case management systems, to run specialized division software (see Section 6.1) and Microsoft Office applications.

3.5.2 Appellate courts

Computing equipment used by the appellate courts includes laptops, PC's, and some laptop/tablet hybrids used in the offices of the court clerk, judges and staff, as well as law clerks to access the SCCALES program and run Microsoft Office applications. Computers in the courtroom are used for digital recording, and a mobile cart system is available for multi-media display.

3.5.3 Trial courts

Computing equipment used by the trial courts includes laptops and PC's used in the offices of the court clerk to access the JUSTICE program, as well as run Microsoft Office applications. Computers in the courtroom are used for digital recording, accessing the JUSTICE program and video conferencing. Some courtrooms have been upgraded to use codec systems, and/or to have full multi-media display capabilities including multiple large format monitors.

Most county court equipment and some district court equipment is supplied by the state Administrative Office through leasing agreements with either the Office of the CIO's Intergovernmental Data Services program, or local county IT departments. All other equipment is supplied by the county.

3.5.4 Probation

Computing equipment used by the probation district offices and reporting centers includes laptops and PC's used to access the NPACS program, as well as run Microsoft Office applications. All equipment is procured and managed at the local level, either privately, or through the county. All probation reporting centers have video conferencing capabilities, either PC based, or through codec systems.

3.6 NETWORKING

3.6.1 Administrative offices

The offices of administration for courts and probation operate on the Supreme Court network, which is maintained by the Supreme Court's Network Administrator. The Supreme Court's domain resides within the state of Nebraska's network on its own separate subnet.

3.6.2 Appellate courts

Offices for judges, staff and clerks of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals operate on the Supreme Court network. Remote office locations are either directly connected to the state network or they utilize a VPN to access state resources.

3.6.3 Trial courts

County court offices operate on the state of Nebraska's network, district courts and separate juvenile courts operate on local county networks. Courtrooms, when used for county court are networked to the state. District courtrooms may connect to local county and/or state networks.

3.6.4 Probation

Networking for probation district offices and reporting centers is provided by local county or contract IT resources. Not all locations use an office network. Internet connectivity is provided via a county government network, or a local internet service provider.

3.7 STAFF

The staff listed below are dedicated resources for the judicial branch. Additional technical systems support is provided by the OCIO for AOC/AOP technology infrastructure hosted at the state data center, as well as help desk services for trial courts on the state network. Local county IT departments offer support for some trial courts and probation offices on county networks.

See also organizational chart structures in Appendix A.

3.7.1 IT Support

The branch employs three Information Systems Support Specialists. The responsibilities of these individuals are to provide day-to-day business equipment and software systems troubleshooting and assistance. The support group is supervised by the Network Administrator, who also is responsible for maintaining the Supreme Court network.

3.7.2 Contractors

The branch contracts for case management system programming and online services for both the courts and probation. Contractors supply skilled professionals in COBOL and Java programming, as well as web application development and project management expertise.

3.7.3 Business/Technical Analysts

The branch employs ten court business analysts; two supervisors, four county court specialists, and four district court specialists. On the probation side, the branch employs four business analysts, and two technical analysts.

The responsibilities of these individuals include assisting users of the court and probation case management systems, working with programmers on system enhancements, as well as other related automation projects.

3.7.4 Data Analysts

The branch employs one data analyst dedicated to the trial and appellate courts, one data analyst with the Court Improvement Project team, and two data analysts for probation, one for adult and one for juvenile. These individuals are responsible for creating statistical and analytic reports examining data from the court and probation case management systems. They also assist with data quality initiatives and training. Probation also utilizes staff members from the district offices as local resources to generate and disseminate reports in the field.

3.7.5 Webmaster

The position of Web Communications and Design Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the planning, development, maintenance, and accessibility of judicial branch website content. This individual is also responsible for graphic design, helping to maintain branding consistency across the branch, and supporting internal working groups/committees utilizing SharePoint websites.

4 MISSION STATEMENT

To proactively represent the computing, communications, and information technology concerns of the judicial branch and legal community in visioning, policy setting and strategic planning.

To provide timely input, advice, and feedback to the Supreme Court on policy, proposals, implementation projects and other information technology related issues.

To be a catalyst within the judicial branch in adapting technology to meet the mission of the judiciary and the needs of the people of the State of Nebraska.

5 VISION

The judicial branch will have an integrated, appropriate, responsive, and well-supported technology structure. Systems and software will be chosen to best facilitate information and work sharing horizontally and vertically across the branch and with other stakeholders; and will meet expectations for current technology while providing relevant and equal access to services and information. Necessary resources will be identified and supplied to ensure successful implementation of technology in both court and probation processes.

6 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR NEXT BIENNIUM

- 6.1 IDENTIFY AND INTEGRATE WHERE POSSIBLE, INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR DATA AND DOCUMENT STORAGE, IN ORDER TO FACILITATE DATA SHARING, STATISTICS AND ANALYSIS, MANAGERIAL DECISION MAKING, QUALITY ASSURANCE, DATA LIFE CYCLE ADMINISTRATION, AND OPEN RECORDS COMPLIANCE.
- 6.2 INCREASE THE ABILITY OF THE PUBLIC AND THE BAR TO ACCESS COURT SERVICES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY WHICH FULFILLS THE INDIVIDUALIZED REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS’.
- 6.3 ENHANCE COURT AND PROBATION STAFF’S ABILITY TO OPERATE PROFESSIONALLY, EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY BY INCREASING ACCESS TO, AND COMPETENCY WITH, APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY.

7 PROJECTS

7.1 CASE MANAGEMENT MODERNIZATION

7.1.1 Justification

It is the responsibility of the AOC and AOP to provide court and probation staff and judges with modern IT tools available to assist them in running a professional office, and managing their caseload. The case management systems in use by the branch contain a valuable set of historical data, and internal business logic. However, the interfaces for users (UI) to input information were developed to be functional, but without the guiding features that are common in most UI’s today. Some of the problems posed by the current court and probation legacy interfaces are:

- **User adoption** – If users do not find any personal advantages to using an automated case management system, such as easy access to necessary information, they will choose to find other ways to accomplish their work.
- **Efficiency** – Automated case management should be highly effective in facilitating users in accomplishing more in less time. If interfaces are hard to navigate, or require a large amount of training to use, the net efficiencies are lower.
- **Accessibility** – To be most useful, systems should be available across a multitude of platforms, and should leverage the universal availability of the Internet. Case management systems that require direct access to a state network should be transitioned to a web-based access where possible to fit the needs of a more mobile workforce.

- **Data reliability** – If users are not frequently and consistently accessing case management systems, or if there is a large amount of room for error due to lack of controls over data entry, or confusion on proper procedure, the data collected will be of little use for analysis. Measurement of outcomes and effectiveness of process have become highly valued commodities, which rely solely upon clean data sets.

The judicial branch recognizes that user interface modernization and 21st century tool sets are important to the long-term sustainability of JUSTICE and NPACS, as well as the advancement of the knowledge, skills and abilities of all those who work for the branch.

Initiatives under case management modernization will help to accomplish both strategic objectives #2 and 3 in the Technology Committee Plan.

7.1.2 Initiatives

7.1.2.1 Judges' Portal to JUSTICE

Implementing judicial case management tools requires a different approach than implementing a clerk's case management system. Providing modern technology tools that address the day-to-day operational needs of judges is critical to allowing them to perform their duties effectively. For judicial tools to be successful, they must address a judge's practical needs, be intuitive to use, mobile, and accessible from a variety of devices.

7.1.2.2 Attorney Filing and Information Portal

One of the best ways to continue to increase the efficiency of court offices is through the increased use of electronic document filing. By expanding the types of available filings and adding features to the attorney filing portal, we will increase the use of the service, thereby allowing the technology to reduce the manual work of the courts. Additionally, attorneys will benefit by increased access to information and services through the eFiling portal.

7.1.2.3 Interpreter Portal

Language access and the coordination of interpreter resources is a significant challenge for courts and probation. Development of a statewide-automated system as a centralized point for requesting and scheduling interpreters could benefit the branch in streamlining these processes. Ideally, a web-based software with interfaces for courts, probation and the interpreter coordinators would also interface with JUSTICE for sharing and updating of case and scheduled event information.

7.1.2.4 NPACS User Portals

Providing guided and intuitive interfaces to make case management entries easier for officers and other users of the probation case management system is a principal goal. Creating efficient methods for users to access and update information on a variety of devices supports efficient workflow and accommodates the needs of officers, service providers and staff to perform their functions effectively.

7.1.2.5 Judicial Branch Citizen and Business Services

Offering new and better ways through technology for the public and businesses to interact with the courts is important to the judicial branch's mission of service. There continue to be opportunities to provide better access to information, new channels to facilitate payments, as well as assisted electronic filing of documents by entities or individuals who are not licensed attorneys.

7.1.2.6 Attorney Admissions and Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) Services

The judicial branch should continue to seek out ways to improve the systems and services it offers attorneys to perform the compliance related functions of the practice of law.

7.2 DATA AND DOCUMENT SHARING/CENTRALIZATION

7.2.1 Justification

Centralizing branch data sets and documents is key to facilitating several components of increasing operational efficiency. These components: access to information, de-duplication of effort, data quality assurance, and statistical analysis all can provide great benefits to court and probation administration and staff.

The more that courts and probation can utilize shared infrastructure for storing information, the more easily this information can be passed back and forth between case management systems where necessary. Using this methodology of recording once, and reusing the same data wherever it is needed is highly effective in streamlining processes. It reduces the need for manual data entry of the same information in multiple systems, and ensures better data quality, as there no opportunity for discrepancies between systems, and everyone is accessing the same record. The same is true for documents. Attorney eFiling has shown the benefits that electronic transmission of pleadings can provide for the courts, in staff hours saved by eliminating the need to handle paper copies. The branch can realize this on another level by developing electronic delivery of documents between the courts and probation.

To know whether we are succeeding in fulfilling the missions of the branch, we need to know the rates of adherence to court and probation standards and practices, as well as their outcomes, which can only be measured if there is business intelligence software in place to gather and provide access to the data. Current manual methods of trying to extract the data are too time-consuming to be effective. The more we can provide real-time data to inform decision-making, the better administration and staff can perform their functions. Additionally, cross-comparisons between siloed data sets is best done using BI tools that facilitate matching, which otherwise would take hundreds of personnel hours. As one example, reporting across court, probation and problem-solving court data sets is key to being able to accurately assess recidivism rates. It is increasingly important that the branch as a whole be proactive rather than reactive when demonstrating accountability and effectiveness. Timely, comprehensive data analysis can allow for this.

Finally, when data and documents are collected in centralized systems, the branch is better able to participate in statewide data sharing initiatives, accomplish appropriate purging of case records in compliance with retention schedules, as well as long-term archiving.

Initiatives under Data and Document Sharing/Centralization will help to accomplish both strategic objectives #1 and 3 in the Technology Committee Plan.

7.2.2 Initiatives

7.2.2.1 InfoSphere Data Store and Cognos Reporting

The branch must continue to make strides in aggregating the different data it manages into a reporting and analysis friendly environment. As this is accomplished, court and probation administration can begin identifying key performance measures and designing reports. Transitioning from a focus on hard coded reports in case management systems to dynamic data analysis should have the added benefit of reducing the need for programming expenditures. Additionally, with the expansion of problem-solving courts and alternative sentencing, the branch will be better able to perform technique and program analysis to measure efficacy, and position itself to be a leader in data-informed policy.

7.2.2.2 NPACS/JUSTICE/SCCALES Data and Document Sharing

Central case elements to court and probation records should be automatically shared between case management systems where current manual processes are being used to share information today. Being able to send data back and forth between systems not only facilitates better information sharing between courts and probation, it will also reduce data entry and make offices more efficient. Electronic files stored in a central repository should be properly indexed, and accessible from the NPACS, SCCALES and JUSTICE systems.

7.2.2.3 Electronic Exhibits Centralized File Storage

Certain core functions and infrastructure will need to be identified and put in place before attorneys and court reporters can begin accessing and sharing electronic exhibit files. Administration will need to identify the best method of centralizing storage for electronic document files, as well as other potential file types such as images and multi-media. These files should then be accessible via the trial or appellate case management system, or other software systems designed to facilitate case information dissemination.

7.2.2.4 Branch Electronic Records Management and Archiving

As the branch migrates toward paperless systems, the need for a detailed plan and policy on handling of electronic records becomes more essential. The AOC and AOP, acting on behalf of the trial courts and probation as the custodian of case records in the electronic case management systems, must come up with standards to fulfill requirements for maintaining and destroying electronic records according to published schedules. This must be balanced with any value in preserving certain data elements beyond the retention period of the record for statistical and analysis purposes. Research and development must occur for the branch to have a comprehensive strategy for maintaining, archiving and purging electronic data and documents according to retention schedules.

7.2.2.5 The Children and Juveniles Data Feasibility Study Advisory Group

Created in 2017 under LB225, the advisory group is overseeing a feasibility study to identify how existing state data systems currently used to account for the use of all services, programs, and facilities by children and juveniles in the State of Nebraska can be used to establish an independent, external data warehouse. The advisory group includes, among others, the State Court Administrator or his or her designee, and the probation administrator of the Office of Probation Administration or his or her designee. The group is tasked with submitting a written report electronically to the Legislature on October 1 of 2017 and 2018, detailing the technical and legal steps necessary to establish the Children and Juveniles Data Warehouse by July 1, 2019.

7.3 INTEGRATED BUSINESS SYSTEMS

7.3.1 Justification

The branch has many needs for technology that do not relate to case management. Ancillary systems and software necessary for day-to-day operations are in use in courthouses, probation offices, and the many divisions of administration. It is necessary for the branch to support the use of these technologies, as well as to look to ways to keep current by upgrading. Enhancement of current processes through technology can be the best way for the branch to be sure it is fulfilling its mission in the most efficient way possible.

At the same time, it is critical to do an analysis of cost/benefit before implementing any new technology in the business environment. Some systems are so costly no amount of office efficiencies realized could ever recoup the amount invested. For this reason, not only will any new software systems need to be evaluated to determine if funding is available for implementation as well as ongoing maintenance; there should be an analysis done of the overall time and resource savings to the branch in personnel, replacement of old systems, etc.

Finally, a key component of ensuring the success of any IT implementation is having a plan in place for education and support of the users. As the branch moves forward further with the use of technology, expectations will rise for staff's ability to understand and effectively use the tools they are given.

Initiatives under Integrated Business Systems will help to accomplish strategic objectives #1, 2 and 3 in the Technology Committee Plan.

7.3.2 Initiatives

7.3.2.1 Video Conferencing

The branch has access a variety of technologies that allow for remote appearance, remote collaboration, or remote education/training. These include Microsoft Lync, or Skype for Business; WebEx; Vidyo; Adobe Connect and ReadyTalk. It is desirable that the branch focus resources on identifying which system, or combination of systems, best meets the need for both administration and court/probation offices around the state. Whatever system is chosen must be robust and stable enough to reliably support court and probation operations.

7.3.2.2 Electronic Timekeeping

The branch is using a paper timekeeping system to receive and track hours worked by employees in order to process payroll. The current process requires multiple persons to hand-enter data into the payroll system, resulting in many worker hours that could be streamlined. Many persons, including probation office managers and clerk magistrates would see the time demands of timesheet approvals and entry, as well as retention and storage, diminish considerably with the transition to an electronic system. In addition, the electronic records would create a history of leave requests and approvals that could easily be retrieved for audit purposes or other inquiries.

7.3.2.3 Courtroom Audio

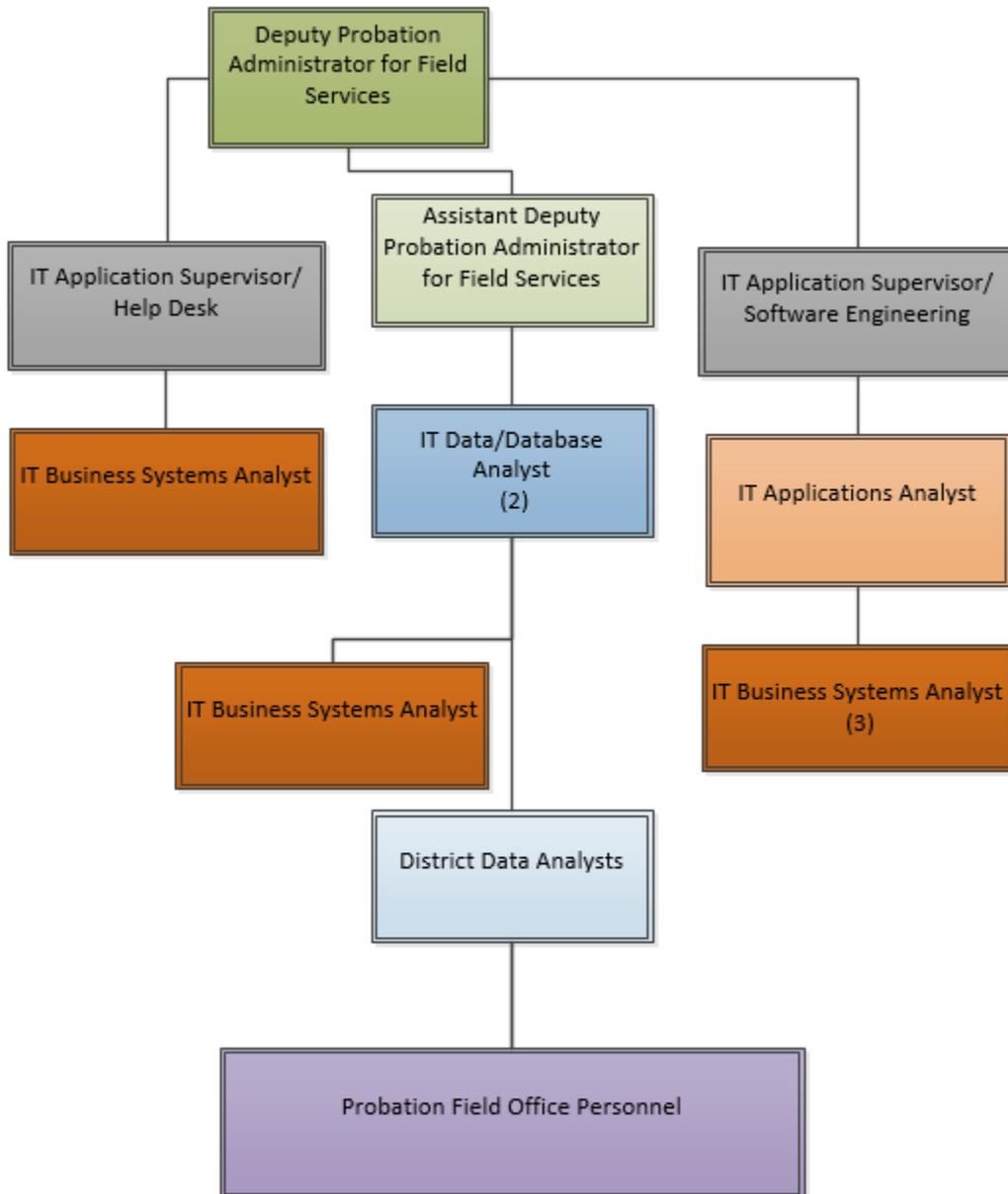
Ensuring a quality audio record in the courtroom is a high priority for the judicial branch. Additionally, long-term retention of the audio record should be facilitated for the courts by providing standardized hardware and software, as well as a centralized storage location for audio files with backups provided and with proper disaster recovery measures in place. Increasing the quality of the record involves proper training of personnel, as well as an examination of the systems in place to make recordings.

7.3.2.4 Judicial Nomination Process

Many steps in the process to nominate qualified attorneys to fill judicial vacancies are codified in Nebraska statute. With the many options that could be available to update this process, it could be highly beneficial to examine current statutory language for modifications to allow a modern standard procedure. By adopting new technology and making it easier for those seeking to nominate, it is likely more candidates could be identified when judicial vacancies occur. Additionally, internal staff resources for processing nominations could be reduced through automation.

8 APPENDIX A – IT ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

Probation IT



Court IT

