



CourtTools

Giving
Appellate
Courts the
Tools to
Measure
Success

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CourTools



Appellate courts have long sought a set of balanced and realistic administrative performance measures that can be readily implemented and used by the courts' leaders and managers. The six Appellate CourTools performance measures were designed by the National Center for State Courts to meet the unfulfilled need for a well-targeted set of indicators on how well appellate courts handle cases, treat participants in the legal process, and engage employees.

Measuring court performance can be a challenge. Understanding the steps involved in performance measurement can make the task easier and more likely to succeed. The Appellate CourTools support the effort to improve court performance by:

- *Clarifying performance goals*
- *Outlining a measurement plan*
- *Documenting success*

Effective measurement is essential for managing court resources efficiently, informing court constituents and the public about a court's achievements, and identifying the benefits of improved court performance.

*The Appellate CourTools integrate standards and norms set forth in the **Standards Relating to Appellate Courts** and the **Appellate Court Performance Standards** with relevant concepts from successful public and private sector performance measurement systems including the companion **CourTools** for trial courts. This refined set of appellate court performance measures provides the judiciary with the tools to demonstrate effective stewardship of public resources, which is critical to maintaining the institutional independence necessary to deliver fair and impartial justice.*

Each of the six Appellate CourTools measures follows a similar sequence of steps including a clear definition and statement of purpose, a measurement plan supported by data collection instruments and methods, and strategies for reporting results. Appellate CourTools uses illustrations, examples, and jargon-free language to make the measures clear and comprehensible.

MEASURE

Constituent Survey 1

DEFINITION The percentage of appellate lawyers and trial court judges who believe an appellate court is delivering quality services in its judicial, regulatory and administrative functions.

PURPOSE An appellate court should adequately consider each case and resolve it in accordance with the law. This involves balancing the expeditious resolution of a case with thoughtful review of its unique facts and legal complexities in the context of the parties' assignments of error, arguments and existing precedent. This balance should be characterized by fairness, equity, clarity, transparency and integrity. At the same time, the appellate court should also manage its administrative functions and meet its regulatory responsibilities at a high level of quality.

MEASURE

Time to Disposition 2

DEFINITION The percentage of cases disposed or otherwise resolved within established time guidelines.

PURPOSE When used in conjunction with Measure 3 (Clearance Rate) and Measure 4 (Age of Active Pending Caseload), this measure is a fundamental management tool to assess the length of time it takes a court to process cases. Timeliness is an essential aspect of resolving cases and providing the finality for which the appellate process is designed. This measure can be used to compare a court's performance to its own benchmarks and to state or national guidelines for timely case processing.

MEASURE

Clearance Rates 3

DEFINITION The number of outgoing cases as a percentage of the number of incoming cases.

PURPOSE This measure gauges whether a court is keeping up with its incoming caseload. If a court is resolving fewer cases than are filed with the court, a growing inventory of pending cases is inevitable. Knowledge of clearance rates for various case types over a period of time can help the court identify emerging problems and target improvements.

MEASURE

Age of Active Pending Caseload 4

DEFINITION The age of active cases pending before the court, measured as the number of days from filing until the time of measurement.

PURPOSE Cases filed but not yet disposed make up an appellate court's active pending caseload. A complete and differentiated inventory of active pending cases provides the information needed for the court to focus its attention on cases near to or about to exceed the court's time standards that warrant attention to minimize court delay.

MEASURE

Employee Satisfaction

5

DEFINITION Appellate court staff ratings of the quality of the work environment and their relations between staff and management.

PURPOSE Committed and loyal employees have a direct effect on a court's performance. This measure is a powerful tool for surveying employee opinion on whether staff have the materials, motivation, direction, sense of purpose, and commitment to do quality work. Knowing how employees perceive the court as a workplace is essential to facilitate organizational development and change, assess teamwork and management style, enhance job satisfaction and engagement, and thus improve service to the court's constituents.

MEASURE

Reliability and Integrity of Case Files

6

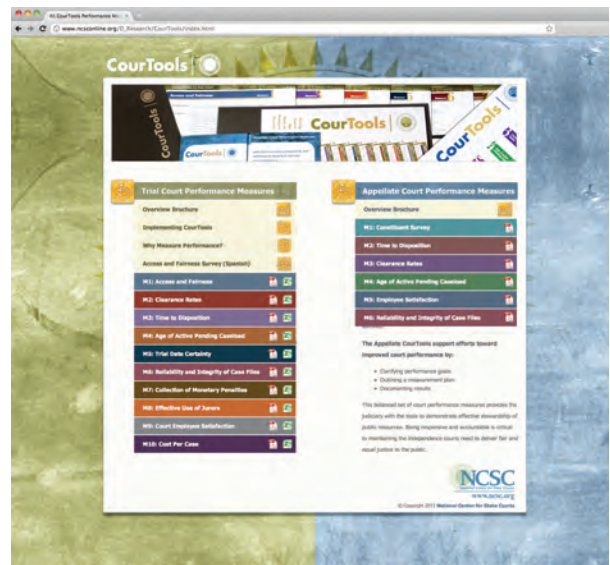
DEFINITION The percentage of case files that meet established standards of completeness and accuracy and can also be retrieved within established time guidelines.

PURPOSE Complete, accurate, and readily available case files and records are fundamental to the effectiveness and efficiency of daily appellate court operations and the fairness of judicial decisions. The integrity of case files and records affects not only the decision-making process but also the organizational effectiveness of an appellate court. This measure provides information regarding (a) how long it takes to locate a file or record, (b) the correspondence between the physical file and the case summary information in the court's case management system, and (c) the organization and completeness of the file.

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