



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

STRATEGIC PLANNING & PROJECTS OFFICE

MJB In-Person, Hybrid, and Remote Work Framework

FY21



This document is written and published by the
Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office.

Project Charter

MJB Remote Work Framework

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Executive Summary

Strategic Focus

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, employees and judges were required to work remotely and determine how to keep the work of the Branch continuing. A wide range of issues were quickly addressed to be able to support this new way of working. Some policies and practices were adapted,

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and additional training and resource materials created, but these may benefit from further strategic and comprehensive review. With an uncertain future with the pandemic, and amidst ongoing (even pre-pandemic) interest within and outside of the Branch with remote working opportunities, it is now an appropriate time to assess what types of Branch work can and/or should be done remotely, and what support is needed to support remote working arrangements. Any consideration should focus not only on employees and judges, but also on court customers and how their needs are met.

Strategic Narrative

The Minnesota Judicial Branch should provide a consistent and equitable approach to supporting remote work that considers the nature of work for particular positions and its ability to be completed remotely successfully, and the ability to establish a cohesive, productive work culture, while also taking advantage of fiscal savings, serving the needs of court customers, safety and security concerns, recruitment and retention benefits, and work-life balance for employees.

Assumptions:

- All court facilities must be open and staffed as necessary for court operations.
- The nature of physical work arrangements has shifted from a presumption of in-person work.
- A new framework for determining employee physical work arrangements will probably be implemented incrementally across the Branch.
- Partial application of a framework for determining employee physical work arrangements will be closely monitored to prevent biased applications.
- The Branch will continue and expand remote working as a structured feature in some jobs and/or work.
 - There is additional work in the Branch that can be done remotely
 - MJB history of demonstrated success with remote work (through the I WIN process and in CPC, in DAT teams (EX 10th, etc. and recently with Covid-19 social distancing response; 4th District Juvenile Division, 4th District Contact Center; CARP and CAP Teams fully remote, as well as various pilots statewide)
- Work productivity and focus on results cannot be compromised
- Remote work could be cost effective
 - Remote meetings can save on travel and other expenses
 - Fewer rental and equipment costs if no physical office is provided

Guiding Principles for the work:

- The framework should be applicable across all positions.
- Decisions made from applying the framework to a position are independent of the current performance of an individual employee.
- Employee performance should be managed in the context of the assigned work framework.

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- Employees will be treated equitably in the provision of work materials and tools, regardless of their physical work arrangement.
- Opportunities for employee professional and career development should be equitable, regardless of their physical work arrangement.
- Business needs that align with achieving the mission of the Branch must drive decision-making.

Opportunity Statement

With so many employees and judges working remotely during the pandemic, there has been an increased interest by existing employees and judges to conduct some or all of their work remotely.

It is critical to gather information from employees and judges working remotely during the pandemic to inform a strategic approach to supporting remote work in the Branch. It is also important to equitably approach the analysis and implementation of policy, practices, or programs related to work.

Feedback from the July 2020 Pandemic Strategic Strategy Survey showed that over one in three respondents of the made specific comments about working remotely on the other side of the pandemic. Comments also include the importance of having the tools, resources, and support for remote work. Comments included:

- “I appreciate how quickly the branch has adapted to remote working...”
- “Working from home should continue to be supported, for those who wish to work from home.”
- “I’ve been a full-time telecommuter since July of 2019, so my practices have not changed, but I will say that my life is MUCH easier now that everyone dials in for meetings. I don’t hear cross-talk happening in the conference room, and we ALL get to be in on the humorous moments. It makes me feel more a part of the team now that my co-workers are sharing the experience!”
- “Staff need to be able to answer phones from home, be able to print and mail their own paperwork from home.”

In addition, responses from staff solicited by our Change Agent Networks through discussions and surveys reported that as they considered future work at MJB, they recommended that we:

- Find ways to allow more court administration staff to work remotely in a long-term capacity.
- Encourage consistent Division return to work actions.
- Monitor the “people” response to return to work.
- Support staff with the tools and equipment they need to work productively.
- Address ways we continue to sustain personal relationships and connections.

Comments included,

- “There is an underlying assumption that we will eventually go back to full in-person operations at all levels of the organization. Perhaps in light of our recent success in working remotely full-time, we could be exploring how remote work can be incorporated into day-to-day operations going forward.”
- “Continue to define where and how to best do the work. Look at cross-county balance, sharing and specialization of work. Continue to think about the work differently - how we do it, how we can do it, and how we should do it.”

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- “Continue providing the technology and support for working remotely. Not only do I feel much safer doing so, my productivity has improved.”
- “Continue to allow teleworking while looking for new & better ways to ensure the best public services as well as fine-tuning courtroom activity.”
- “Explore more use of working remotely as part of the work week once the recovery has completed. There is productivity benefit for work days that don't require face-to-face interactions but can focus on heads-down work without needing the time or energy to travel onsite.”

Other specific opportunities presented by a strategic and comprehensive framework for remote work in the Branch include:

- More employees would like to retain some remote work
- Reimagine the “look” of employment at the Branch
- Use existing skillset within MJB to develop a program that establishes the structure and baseline accountability standards for different types of remote work
- Data used more commonly for assessing results
- Identify the “best” positions to work remotely and be able to measure the outcomes of work performance.
- Flexibility in the amount of time work occurs remotely
- Provide a fiscal benefit to the organization, taxpayers (e.g. review areas of high expense to assess cost reductions if the work was made remote, some physical plant operations costs could be re-directed into programming or services)
- Provide a non-fiscal benefit to employees
- Increase in MJB agility, responsiveness, staff utilization
- Expanded cross-boundary work
- Realize-or reallocate funds from remote work saving to other expenses such as mandated services
- Increase consistency in work process across work functions
- Hours of operation could be more easily expanded or flexed to deliver results to support customer or employee needs
- Expand strategies and skills for relationship building internally and externally
- New opportunities to support partners in different ways and build stronger relationships
- Increase in potential remote work technology not currently in use
- Opportunity to employ / deploy employees with specific skillsets without geographic restriction

Benefits

Benefits of pursuing a strategic and comprehensive framework for remote work in the Branch include:

- MJB has a history of demonstrated success with remote work (through the I WIN process and in CPC, in DAT teams, etc. and COVID-19 response)

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- Recruitment asset to candidates (demonstrating employment flexibility common among an “employer of choice”)
- Remote work arrangement widens recruitment pool (geographically)
- Supports employee work-life balance
- Increases professional employee satisfaction
- Incentivizes employee retention in a competitive employment climate (and when other employers will offer remote arrangements)
- Reduced need for space to house employees (space & cost)
- Decreased expenditures for related office infrastructure, supplies, and travel (to accommodate employee lunch and rest breaks, mileage)
- Easy access to virtual technologies enabling remote work
- Break down jurisdictional barriers to work assignments
- Benefits employee and customer health and safety
- Poises the organization for work continuity, and to mobilize and adapt work during physical emergencies (health, environmental, civil etc.)
- Establishes a sustainable framework for how work is accomplished at the MN Judicial Branch.

Project Definition

Scope

The scope of the effort comes from FY21 Operational Plan Task 2B.ii.4. Identify the types of jobs/work that can be conducted remotely and identify best practices for determining whether new hires should be remote, in-person, or hybrid. This project will create a framework and implementation plan for promoting, as deemed appropriate, remote work in the Minnesota Judicial Branch. This includes developing an implementation plan that includes changes or development of any practices, policies, training, change management resources, or other changes needed to support the agreed-upon framework.

Included

- All individuals at MJB classified as employees are included.
- Addresses remote, fully in-person, and hybrid work options as part of this effort.
- Define remote, fully in-person, and hybrid work.
- Identify the types of jobs/work that can be conducted remotely
- Identify framework for determining whether new hires should be remote, in-person, or hybrid
- Developing an analysis framework that addresses all areas needed for consideration (e.g. legal/labor, supervisor discretion/authority, etc.)

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- Determine practice, policy, training, and change management resources that need to be created or updated to align with the framework
- Establish feedback loop processes to incorporate data and feedback from court employees and judges on remote work
- Communication plan (to include change management, training, and timeline recommendations)
- Leadership support and approval for framework
- Reviewing asset management practices and policies (for judges and/or employees)

Excluded

- Elected Officials
- This task will not duplicate, but rather collaborate and provide input on task 2B.ii.3 to have a comprehensive remote/hybrid working toolkit for employees and managers
- Ongoing evaluation (operational work)
 - Performance management and tracking resource options to assess and manage productivity.
- This is not a Classification Assessment and the analysis will not be as detailed as those efforts

Goals and Performance Indicators

Goals	Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognized leadership support for framework for remote work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judicial Council or JAD approval
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy/standards for employees approved for remote and hybrid work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved policies or other documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear direction on authority/decision-making for who works remotely, in-person or hybrid (best practices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judicial Council or JAD approval
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a list of the types of jobs/work that can be <i>done remotely compared to hybrid or in-person</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved policies or other documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working in concert with 2B.ii.3 to have a comprehensive remote working toolkit for employees and managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toolkit and training resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish business best practices/processes for working with a combination of in-person,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved policies or other documents

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hybrid, and remote workers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recommended outcome measures to assess key elements of the In-Person, Remote, Hybrid Workplace (productivity; social cohesion; employee satisfaction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluation Plan and measurement tools

Project Resources

See the [Team Governance document](#) for more information on team roles and responsibilities.

Budget

Internal staff time needs to be allocated. If positions are needed to back-fill, a budget may be needed. There may also be costs in implementation (e.g. equipment), but those costs should be assessed with benefits.

Note: The budget will be refined as the project completes the planning- and requirements-gathering phases of the project.

High-Level Project Schedule

Estimated Start Date: 7/2020

Estimated Completion Date: 12/2021

Note: The project schedule will be refined as the project completes the planning- and requirements-gathering phases of the project.

Phases of Work

Phases	Estimated Start Date	Estimated End Date
1. Clarifying scope and key definitions	July 2020	September 2020
2. Determine guiding principles for approaching this project	August 2020	September 2020
3. Develop business case	July 2020	October 2020
4. Develop analysis framework	October 2020	November 2020
5. Leadership check-in – buy-in?	October 2020	November 2020
6. Develop and implement a feedback	November 2020	November 2021

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gathering/loop process		
7. Development of draft deliverables (leveraging feedback loops)	November 2020	April 2021
8. Leadership check-in – endorse	February 2021	March 2021
9. Refine, re-develop, and roll out (potentially in phases)	April 2021	December 2021
10. Evaluate, monitor, and tweak	October 2020	December 2021 (and after project completion)

Risks

1. Equitable application of remote work structure (access to opportunities across the Branch – oneCourtMN vision application.)
2. Some deliverables in this project will be needed sooner than others.
3. Skillset to supervise remote and hybrid workers varies by existing managers.
4. Concurrently, changes are being reviewed for customer service interaction models.
5. Need for broad-based leadership support.
6. Public and partner perceptions of reduced Branch employee accountability and customer service.
7. Inappropriate uses and oversight of remote work will be ineffective.
8. Accountability and workflow processes not yet in place to ensure work is being accomplished.
9. Different amount of “work” to conduct work remotely; perception and trade off analysis.
10. Potential need for additional staff to support the performance of remote work (retired judges working remotely.)
11. Determination of value – staff vs customer.
12. Perception of employee value and organizational fairness is tied to who has the ability to engage in remote work.
13. Reduced informal connections that promote teamwork and creativity.
14. Utilization of informal networks reduces inclusion and opportunity for those with smaller, newer networks.
15. Loss of employee MJB cultural affiliation and identity, team cohesion.
16. Hybrid remote meeting practices affect “equal playing field” participation by meeting participants.
17. Will need intentional focus on developing organizational knowledge for new employees.
18. Resources to identify and implement the most effective tools to support working remotely.

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Questions

1. Will work that can be done remote be expected to be done remotely? Or is there discretion by the employee/hiring manager? Or do we have a criteria for how and when to approve remote/hybrid work?
2. Do we need clear standards for hybrid working? In-person working?
3. How will future operational decisions, currently under review, effect the team's deliverables?

Revision History

Revision History			
Revision	Description	Date	Name
1	Initial Document	9/16/2020	Partial Executive Team
2	Executive Team Revisions	9/30/2020	Executive Team
3	Executive Team Revisions	11.06.2020	Project Owner on behalf of the Executive Team

Approval Information

By signing this document, you agree to this as the formal charter statement to begin work on the project and understand the commitment of the necessary resources (budget, personnel, etc.) to complete the project.

Approval Signatures

Role	Name	Signature /s/	Date
Project Sponsor	Dawn Torgerson		
Project Sponsor	Paul Patterson		