

ACTIVITIES & EXERCISES

A Guide to Building Future Ready Courts

NOVEMBER 2025

NCSC


State Justice Institute

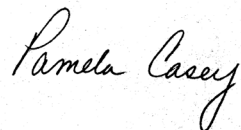
Acknowledgments

The development of *A Guide to Building Future Ready Courts* was made possible through the valuable contributions and support of many individuals. The National Center for State Courts and I extend our sincere gratitude to Advisory Committee members: Tracy “T.J.” BeMent, District Court Administrator of the 10th Judicial Administrative District in Georgia; Thomas P. Boyd, State Court Administrator of Michigan; Hon. Mondonna L. Ghasedi, Associate Circuit Judge of the 21st Judicial Circuit Court in St. Louis County, Missouri; Hon. Morris Silberman, Judge of the Florida Second District Court of Appeal; Jessica Gurley, former Court Administrator/Deputy Clerk of Las Vegas Justice Court, Nevada; and Dr. Brenda J. Wagenknecht-Ivey, CEO of PRAXIS Consulting, Inc. Their expertise and guidance were instrumental in shaping the content and direction of this *Guide*. We also wish to thank Anna Rinick, former Senior Program Analyst with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, who provided thoughtful comments and suggestions in the development of the project.

The project also benefitted from the talents and expertise of several NCSC staff. Former Court Consulting Services Managing Director Kristen Trebil-Halbersma and Principal Court Management Consultant Abby Kuschel contributed invaluable perspectives drawn from their extensive strategic planning work with courts nationwide to inform the development of the *Guide’s* framework. Research & Design Data Scientist Sarah Gibson and Senior Court Research Analyst Miriam Hamilton played key roles in developing the framework’s approach, content, and its application to an online platform. Program Specialist Keeley Daye offered thoughtful comments and provided vital administrative assistance during the *Guide’s* development. We are also grateful to Director of Communications & Marketing Molly Justice and Graphic Design and Brand Manager Breanne Harris for creating the report’s unique design elements for both the online and print versions.

Finally, we acknowledge the generous support of the State Justice Institute and Jonathan Mattiello, whose commitment made this project possible.

Thank you all for your dedication to advancing the future readiness of courts across the country.



Pamela Casey, Ph.D.

Vice President, Research & Design and Project Director

This Guide was developed under grant number SJI-23-P-042 from the State Justice Institute. The points of view expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State Justice Institute.

Copyright © 2025 National Center for State Courts. The Guide is available to the public for free, for non-monetary gain only.

Contents

4 OVERVIEW & FRAMEWORK

Why Become Future Ready? 5

Future Ready Courts (FRC) Framework 9

Resource: Tips for Creating a FRC Team 13

15 STRATEGIC FORESIGHT ACTIVITIES

SF Activity 1: Discover Key Drivers of Change for Courts 16

Exercise: Horizon Scan of Drivers of Change 19

SF Activity 2: Imagine Alternative Scenarios of the Future 33

Exercise: Your Court's Experience in Each Scenario 44

SF Activity 3: Analyze Implications of the Scenarios 46

Exercise: Analyze Implications of the Scenarios for Courts 49

55 STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITIES

SP Activity 1: Define/Refine Vision, Mission, & Values 56

Exercise: Define/Refine Vision, Mission, & Values 59

SP Activity 2: Set Strategic Priorities 71

Exercise: Set Strategic Priorities 73

SP Activity 3: Craft Goals and Strategies 78

Exercise: Craft Goals and Strategies 81

SP Activity 4: Develop Action Plan 91

Exercise: Develop Action Plan 92

97 EXECUTING & ADAPTING

E&A Activity 1: Implement Plan 98

Exercise: Implement Plan 100

E&A Activity 2: Monitor Trends & Signals 107

Exercise: Monitor Trends & Signals 109

E&A Activity 3: Evaluate & Adjust Plan 118

We'd love to hear from you!

Fill out this short [feedback form](#) to let us know how useful you found this Guide in expanding your thinking about strategic planning, what you found helpful, and what improvements we can make to future versions of the Guide.

Overview & Framework

CHAPTER 1

Why Become Future Ready?

“If courts are to fully embrace the need for transformative change in their administrative and procedural functions, they need to build and sustain the capacity to better anticipate potential changes in the future and identify options for innovation, adaptation, and modernization.”

Just Horizons, 2022¹

What does it mean for our courts to be future ready, and why should we be concerned if they are? Future ready courts anticipate and adjust to changes in the environment — whether those changes present risks or opportunities. Over 30 years ago, the U.S. Army War College used the acronym VUCA to describe the turbulent environment facing leaders at that time: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.² More recently, the exponential increase in the pace of change has prompted a new description by scholars and innovators Ann Pendleton-Jullian and John Seely Brown: a white-water world in which acceleration, instability, and disturbance are the new normal.³ In this new world of profound and constant change, our reliance on what worked in the past is less certain to be successful in the future.

Securing the long-term viability of courts in this rapidly changing and hyperconnected environment demands we broaden our strategic planning efforts to include a range of plausible futures — not just the probable future that looks most likely based on our current lens of today. How many courts anticipated a world-wide pandemic that would threaten their continual operation when writing their 2020 strategic plan? A pandemic certainly was plausible given

1 National Center for State Courts. (2022). *Just Horizons: Charting the Future of the Courts*. Available at <https://issuu.com/statecourts/docs/justhorizons>

2 Barber, H. F. (1992). Developing strategic leadership: The US Army War College experience. *Journal of Management Development*, 11(6), 4–12. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621719210018208>

3 Pendleton-Jullian, A. & Brown, J. S. (2018). *Design unbound. Designing for emergence in a white water world*. MIT Press.

earlier scares with coronaviruses and the ebolavirus, but it did not seem as likely as some of the other more pressing issues facing courts at the time.⁴ Fortunately, national court leaders heeded the early public health warning signs, creating a Pandemic and Emergency Response Task Force in 2014 and issuing a benchbook *Preparing for a Pandemic* in 2016.⁵ In 2019, a National Pandemic Summit for court leaders was convened in Nebraska just several months prior to the first recorded case of covid.⁶ While these efforts did not prepare courts for the full specter of the pandemic, they did offer guidance on a range of issues confronting courts in a rapidly evolving environment. Because court leaders had anticipated and prepared for the possibility of a pandemic, they were in a better place to respond, setting up a Rapid Response Team to help state courts across the country deal with challenges presented by the pandemic in real time.⁷

The pandemic is but one example of a disruptive factor that can impact what courts do and how they do it. For example, how prepared is your court to address a significant economic upturn or downturn, attract and retain staff needed in an emerging AI work environment, collaborate with multi-branch and multi-state officials to weather regional storms or fires, respond to potential large-scale social unrest, or adjust operations due to changes in the composition of your jurisdiction's population (e.g., more or fewer families, elderly individuals, limited-English proficient individuals)? To what extent have you considered what driving forces of change might impact your court in the next 5 to 10 years?

Although many courts include short-term strategic planning as part of their governance activities, few explicitly engage in a robust, forward-looking exploration of emerging societal and technological trends that could impact courts and the delivery of justice in the future. In addition, there is less focus on monitoring changes in the environment throughout the planning and implementation processes to ensure plans remain relevant. Without such anticipatory

4 Wong, G., Liu, W., Liu, Y., Zhou, B., Bi, Y., & Gao, G. F. (2015). MERS, SARS, and Ebola: The role of super-spreaders in infectious disease. *Cell Host & Microbe*, 18(4), 398-401. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chom.2015.09.013>

5 Conference of Chief Justices & Conference of State Court Administrators Pandemic and Emergency Response Task Force. (2016). *Preparing for a pandemic: An emergency response benchbook and operational guidebook for state court judges and administrators*. National Center for State Courts. <https://cdm16501.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/facilities/id/194>

6 State of Nebraska Judicial Branch. (2018, December 19). *Media release: Judicial Branch hosts national summit on pandemic preparedness*. <https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/administration/media-releases/judicial-branch-hosts-national-summit-pandemic-preparedness>

7 National Center for State Courts. (n.d.). *Pandemic resources for courts*. Retrieved July 20, 2024, from <https://www.ncsc.org/pandemic>

governance, courts are vulnerable to unforeseen disruptive changes and consequently unprepared to adapt or innovate to address the changes. In this context, our default tendency is to stick with the comfortable and familiar even if it no longer meets the demands of a rapidly changing societal landscape.

For many of us, thinking about the future is hard. We tend to be grounded in our everyday experience, focusing on what we do know rather than asking what we might be missing. We know from social scientists that we discount new information that does not confirm what we already know and believe.⁸ Thinking about the future takes time and mental energy because we cannot just rely on what we already know. And uncertainty can be discomfoting and threatening.⁹

But thinking about the future can also be liberating — an opportunity to zoom out and see possibilities — as well as supporting our long-term safety and well-being. Thinking about the future is also a skill, and the more we practice, the better we become. The Future Ready Courts (FRC) Framework is intended to help. It is based on the process we used for the NCSC *Just Horizons* initiative that explored the future of courts and includes three components: strategic foresight activities; strategic planning activities; and executing and adapting activities. Taken together, the three components expand current strategic planning to include a deliberate examination of potential futures — to help us see the bigger picture. By so doing, the FRC Framework gives us agency to be proactive in a time of white water, rapid change.

8 Barth, F. D. (2017, December 31). How confirmation bias affects you every single day: Research shows how confirmation bias silently impacts us all. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-couch/201712/how-confirmation-bias-affects-you-every-single-day>.

9 Rock, D. (2009, October 25). *A hunger for certainty: Your brain craves certainty and avoids uncertainty like it's pain*. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-brain-work/200910/hunger-certainty>.

GRAPHIC 1.1

FRC Framework Components



The next chapter provides a more detailed overview of the Framework.¹⁰ Subsequent chapters focus on specific activities related to each of the components, and include resources and exercises to help you build a plan for your court's future readiness. The chapters are color-coded by the three components for easy reference. The exercises offered in this guide provide you and your colleagues with an opportunity to explore what the future might bring for your court system and the people it serves, and how best to meet that future from a position of strength and resiliency. They also help you ensure your strategic plan remains relevant as new challenges and opportunities present themselves.

¹⁰ There are many frameworks and tools for thinking about the future. See, for example, *The Futures Toolkit* by the UK Government Office for Science at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c4493f057d859c0e8fa778/futures-toolkit-edition-2.pdf>. We offer the FRC Framework as one option and encourage you to use it in combination with any other future tools you may already use or find interesting to explore. The best framework and tools are the ones that work for your purposes.

CHAPTER 2

Future Ready Courts (FRC) Framework

“Future-ready organizations actively prepare to face systemic shocks and, through the process of adapting, develop resiliency to withstand them. Likewise, they organize to make sense of the changing landscape to pursue emerging and unexpected opportunities.”

Institute for the Future, 2020¹¹

Becoming future ready requires us to think differently — it requires strategic thinking as well as strategic planning. Strategic thinking involves examining the bigger picture. What potential future challenges and opportunities might a court face? This focus on the future allows a court to proactively prepare for, rather than just reactively respond to, disruptive social and technological changes. Strategic thinking lays the groundwork for developing effective strategies by encouraging broad, creative, and innovative thinking about what the future might hold.

Strategic thinking, however, can be challenging. We’re good at planning for today; we are less well-equipped for thinking about the unknown.¹² Consequently, we tend to focus our planning efforts based on what is happening today rather than questioning our fundamental assumptions about our work in the future. That’s why Professor and former CEO John Hillen claims that

11 Institute for the Future. (2020). *Toward future readiness*, Chapter 1, p.1. <https://www.iftf.org/projects/a-playbook-for-building-foresight-capacity/>

12 Ian Wilson wrote that “we may not fully realize the extent to which we are rooted in the present tense, giving little time and short shrift to the future. Certainly, in most organizations, managers and even planners are more comfortable controlling and measuring “what is” than in grappling with “what may be.” Wilson, I. (1997). Focusing our organizations on the future: Turning intelligence into action. *On the Horizon*, 5(3), 3-6. <http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/seminars/futurizing/focusing.html>

strategic plans tend “to bake in the known and bias the present.”¹³

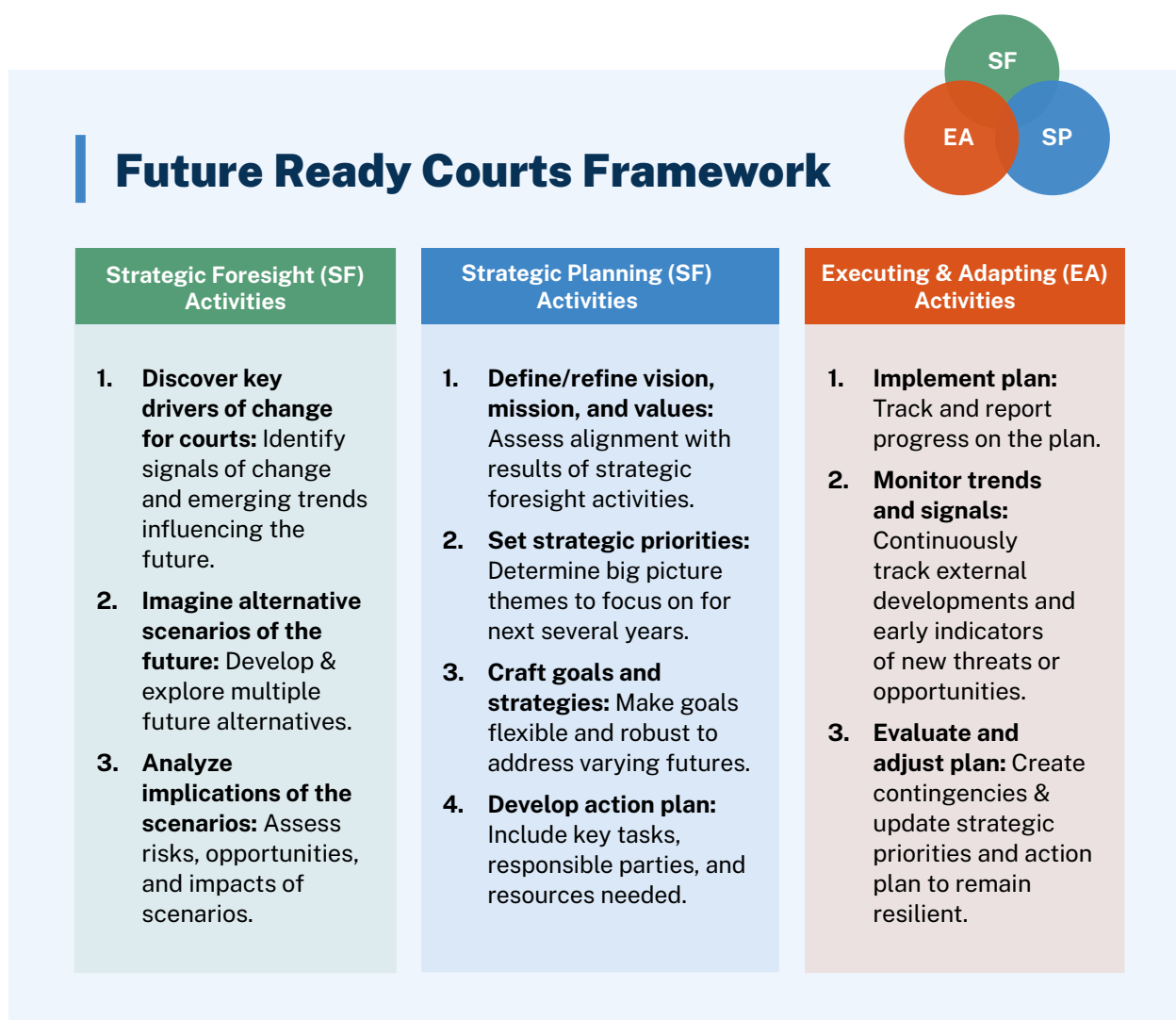
The FRC Framework helps build our strategic thinking muscles by relying on strategic foresight to help us rise above our tendency to be grounded in our everyday experiences and assumptions. Strategic foresight is a planning discipline that helps us think rigorously and systematically about the future. Rather than trying to predict the future, it considers many plausible futures. One possibility, for instance, is that the future might be very similar to what we have today with only a few changes. However, strategic foresight also asks us to consider futures where current trends have substantially changed compared to today. The importance of this approach “is to understand the possibilities ahead in order to make more informed decisions in the present.”¹⁴

The FRC Framework expands traditional court strategic planning by incorporating a rigorous focus on the future.¹⁵ It includes three sets of activities as presented in the following chart.

13 Hillen, J. (2016, August 16). Are you a strategic thinker or just a planner? *LinkedIn*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/you-strategic-thinker-just-planner-john-hillen>

14 Hines, A., & Bishop, P. (2015). *Thinking about the future: Guidelines for strategic foresight* (2nd ed.). Hinesight. See p. 46.

15 The Framework is based on the strategic foresight process we used for the *Just Horizons* initiative. See, National Center for State Courts. (2022). *Just Horizons: Charting the Future of the Courts*. Available at <https://issuu.com/statecourts/docs/justhorizons>. There are many frameworks and tools for thinking about the future. See, for example, UK Government Office for Science. (2024). *The futures toolkit*. (2nd ed.). <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c4493f057d859c0e8fa778/futures-toolkit-edition-2.pdf>. We offer the FRC Framework as one option and encourage you to use it in combination with any other future tools you may already use or find interesting to explore. The best framework and tools are the ones that work for your purposes.



The three Strategic Foresight (SF) activities offer a comprehensive and forward-looking approach for courts to develop a deep understanding of the environment in which they operate, explore potential future scenarios, and gain an understanding of the dynamics that could impact their trajectory. They help ensure that courts remain relevant and flourish in the present and as the future unfolds.¹⁶

¹⁶ See, for example, Lustig, P. (2017). *Strategic foresight: Learning from the future* (2nd ed.). Triarchy Press. The reason you develop a strategy is to make sure your business remains relevant in the future. “If everything remained the same, you could just extrapolate the past into the future; however that is clearly not how things work today.” (p. 28)

The SF activities begin with broadly scanning the environment for potential drivers of change in the political, economic, sociological, technological, and legal sectors. Your court's FRC planning team (see [Tips for Creating a FRC Team](#) that follow this chapter) then reviews and discusses the list of drivers of change and identifies those that could potentially have the greatest impact on the court in the future.

The next SF activity involves creating alternative scenarios of futures based on the key drivers of change. The purpose of the scenarios is to help the FRC Team imagine future possibilities. Following creation of the scenarios, the third SF activity considers a) how courts might be affected – positively or negatively – in each scenario, and b) what key areas of vulnerability emerge for courts from across all the scenarios that should be addressed to best prepare your court for the future.

The results of the SF activities inform the strategic planning process. The four Strategic Planning (SP) activities include defining or revising your court's vision, mission, and values statements; setting strategic priorities, goals, and strategies; and developing an action plan describing who is responsible for overseeing and conducting key tasks, and the timeline, resources required, and key performance indicators associated with the tasks.

The three Executing & Adapting (E&A) activities involve tracking progress on the plan's implementation while continuously monitoring the external environment for signals of change that might suggest modifying strategic priorities and strategies to ensure the strategic plan's ongoing relevancy. This component reinforces the importance of engaging in strategic thinking both pre- and post-development of the strategic plan.

We recognize that courts have different levels of experience in planning. Some may regularly engage in planning exercises, some may be in the process of updating their plans, and others may be relatively new to the planning process. Some courts may find it helpful to start with the three SF activities and then move forward sequentially to each activity in the SP and E&A components. Others may want to engage in SF activities to expand their thinking and then review their current strategic priorities based on the results of those exercises. Still others may want to develop plans first and then return later to review their plans based on a systematic examination of emerging trends and future scenarios. These are all valid approaches for using the Framework and will help build a long-term perspective into a court's planning efforts.

The remaining chapters in this guide describe the activities in each of the three components and include resources and exercises to help guide your court's planning efforts.

RESOURCE

Tips for Creating a FRC Team

Applying the FRC Framework cannot be done alone; it is a team sport. You should establish a core team with individuals willing to commit time to the process; sporadic participation will not work. The core team can be supplemented with other individuals on a temporary basis as needed throughout the process. Some considerations for establishing your FRC Team follow.

- **Size.** Given the range of sizes and resources of both local and state court systems, there is no single recommendation for the number of core members your FRC Team should include. The goal is to balance a diversity of perspectives with the ability to make decisions effectively and efficiently. In smaller to medium courts, you may be able to do this with less than ten members; in larger courts you may need 15 or more members in your core team and supplement with sub-committees or working groups focused on specific topics.
- **Multiple roles.** It will be helpful to have members who are in leadership positions as well as individuals with various skill sets and expertise. If your court has a strategic planning committee, it is helpful to have one or more members overlap with the FRC Team to ensure insights from FRC Framework activities are explicitly considered in the court's strategic planning process.
- **Multiple perspectives.** It is also important to include individuals with diverse thinking styles. The Three Horizons model identifies three different mindsets for thinking about the future:
 - » **Managerial** – ensuring the court's daily work gets done and that the court is safe and secure,
 - » **Entrepreneurial** – experimenting with applying innovative ideas that involve risks, and
 - » **Visionary** – focusing on the big picture and the potential of what could be.¹⁷

It is likely that team members will have a combination of these various mindsets and use them in different situations. However, most people have a more dominant way in which

17 Institute for the Future. (2020). *Toward future readiness*, chap. 1, p.15. <https://www.iftf.org/projects/a-playbook-for-building-foresight-capacity/>.

RESOURCE

they approach their work, and it will be helpful for the team to have members who represent each mindset.

- **Open-minded.** Becoming future ready is a process that involves learning how to think differently. Our knowledge of the future is limited at best. Talking about the future will require team members to exercise their imaginations and give up reliance solely on data and evidence. This can be challenging for those of us who turn to facts and information first to problem-solve and make decisions. Thus, it also is important that team members be willing to challenge their own assumptions based on today and constructively challenge those of others. These types of open conversations will help the court develop an anticipatory capacity over time.
- **Facilitator.** If your court is new to using strategic foresight, it would be helpful to involve a facilitator to lead your discussions. A facilitator with knowledge of strategic foresight would be ideal. However, a judicial educator or faculty member from a local university or college's organizational psychology or business school may also be options.

SECTION 1

Strategic Foresight Activities

The background of the page is a solid green color. In the lower half, there are several thin, white, curved lines that sweep across the page, creating a sense of movement and design. One line starts from the bottom left and curves towards the center. Another line starts from the bottom right and curves towards the center. A third line starts from the right edge and curves upwards and to the left.

CHAPTER 3

SF Activity 1: Discover Key Drivers of Change for Courts

“There are barriers that we are so used to seeing that we no longer see them.”

Just Horizons Council Member, 2021

In 2013, Dr. Trafton Drew and his colleagues conducted a study on inattention blindness, demonstrating how we can become so engrossed in the task before us that we fail to take in other information right in front of our eyes.¹⁸ In the study, they embedded the picture of a gorilla in a CT scan of a lung. They then asked 24 radiologists to review a set of CT scans for lung nodules. When asked if they had seen the gorilla in the final set of scans, 83% said they had not, despite the gorilla picture being 48 times larger than a nearby nodule. All the radiologists reported seeing the gorilla when shown the scan after the detection test. Even experts can fail to see the forest for the trees.

It’s easy to become focused on what is right in front of us and overlook the bigger picture which could significantly impact our future readiness. Making time to intentionally explore the bigger picture is the purpose of the FRC Framework’s strategic foresight activities. This activity asks us to consider the emerging trends that might impact what courts do and how they do it. We may have the perfect continuity of operations plan in place to weather a major hurricane, but will that plan work if several hurricanes hit a broad region of the country at the same time? How will the court cope if the resources expected from neighboring states are not available?

¹⁸ Drew, T., Vö, M. L. H., & Wolfe, J. M. (2013). The invisible gorilla strikes again: Sustained inattention blindness in expert observers. *Psychological Science*, 24(9), 1848-1853. doi:10.1177/0956797613479386

GRAPHIC 3.1 Impact of Driving Forces of Change



This activity involves exploring what might be happening more broadly that could impact the court's community and ultimately affect court operations and performance in serving that community (see Graphic 3.1 above). How can we prepare for disruptions like that of the CrowdStrike outage which took down IT systems across the world if we do not consider the possibility?¹⁹ On the flip side, what opportunities might present themselves to provide more effective training options through virtual reality simulations and other emerging technologies for those who work in our court systems, develop predictive analytics to improve case processing and inform decision making, increase security through biometric verification or other advancements, enhance transparency by providing real time access to publicly available court data, and create user-friendly resources and compelling stories to inform the public about the role of courts in our democracy?

¹⁹ 2024 CrowdStrike incident. (2024, July). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_CrowdStrike_incident#cite_note-Wilkins-156

Professors and organizational consultants Andy Hines and Peter Bishop argue that “the purpose of looking to the future is to understand the possibilities ahead in order to make more informed decisions in the present.”²⁰ A common method to begin exploring the future is referred to as horizon scanning. This process involves a systematic exploration of the external environment to detect emerging trends and early signs of change across a broad spectrum of areas, e.g., social, technological, economic, environmental, political, and legal sectors.

*The Florida Judicial Branch is an example of a court system that regularly conducts an [environmental scan](#) when developing its strategic plan.*²¹

The FRC Framework uses the environmental scan produced for the *Just Horizons* report as a starting point for thinking about how the driving forces of change identified at the national level might play out in your local or state jurisdiction.²² The drivers of change listed in the *Just Horizons* report were derived from 1) information obtained from the court community, e.g., *Just Horizons* Council discussions, a survey of National Center for State Courts staff experts in numerous areas, and a survey of court professionals’ ratings of top trends to watch, and 2) information from outside the court community, e.g., a consulting group delivering insights from a global network of experts with diverse backgrounds and environmental scans undertaken by organizations in other fields such as energy, transportation, and human resources. Based on these various sources of information, we identified a long list of possible forces that the *Just Horizons* Council eventually narrowed down to the 13 they thought were potentially the most impactful for courts in the future.

[Exercise 1](#) provides instructions and worksheets to review these drivers of change and adapt them for your own jurisdiction. It also provides a certainty impact analysis of each driver to inform the development of future scenarios in the next SF activity.

20 Hines, A., & Bishop, P. (2015). *Thinking about the future: Guidelines for strategic foresight*, at p. 46. Hinesight.

21 Judicial Management Council. (2020, December). *Environmental scan*. <https://www.flcourts.gov/content/download/811793/file/environmental-scan-2020.pdf>

22 If interested in conducting your own environmental scan, see:

- UK Government Office for Science. (2024). *The futures toolkit*, pp. 34-41. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c4493f057d859c0e8fa778/futures-toolkit-edition-2.pdf>
- UN Global Pulse. (2022, November). *Horizon scan user manual: A step-by-step guide*. https://www.unglobalpulse.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/HorisonScanManual_ENG-1.pdf

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 1

Horizon Scan of Drivers of Change

Purpose: This exercise has three components: 1) consider the possible influence of the drivers of change identified in the *Just Horizons* report for your local or state jurisdiction, 2) add additional drivers your team considers relevant, and 3) rate the certainty and importance of each driver influencing court operations and performance. A description and worksheets for this exercise follows.

STEP 1

Consider each of the drivers of change presented in the first two columns of [Worksheet 1.1](#). What do you know about them now? What is happening in your jurisdiction related to this driver? Record this information in column 3 of the Worksheet. We provided some examples to get your thinking started in [Worksheet 1.1 example](#). The intent is not to do a full-scale review of each, but for team members to consider what they know about each driver. Because the drivers were developed at a national level, some may be much more relevant for your jurisdiction than others. If your court allows it, one way to get a quick sense of each driver is to ask a generative AI chatbot (e.g., ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot) to provide a summary for your local jurisdiction or state. Of course, results should be checked for accuracy, but the summaries can provide a starting place for team discussions about each driver. Using the first driver as an example, prompts such as the following may help get you started:

- Is racial justice and equality a driver of change in [city/state]?
- What are current trends related to racial justice and equality in [city/state]?
- How is racial justice and equality changing in [city/state]?
- How will trends related to racial justice and equality affect courts positively or negatively in the future in [city/state]?

In the fourth column on [Worksheet 1.1](#), provide notes about your reviews and discussions: 1) what's happening now, 2) what looks positive for the future, and 3) what looks challenging. It is important to remember that there are no facts about the future, so there are no right or wrong answers. Once you move past how the drivers are operating today, you move out of a data gathering process and into an intuitive process. What do you imagine might happen? Through discussion, you may decide to rephrase the title or description of a driver to better reflect the teams' discussion. The worksheet also provides an opportunity to add one or more drivers of change your team is seeing for your jurisdiction that are not included in the *Just Horizons* list of drivers. Again, a generative AI chatbot might be helpful here. A prompt such as "What novel indicators of change are emerging for [city/state] may help you think more broadly about potential signals of change for your court.

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 1.1 *EXAMPLE*

Relevancy of Drivers of Change for Court/Court System

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY	The 2020 global protests about systemic racism, sparked by a succession of high-profile police brutality cases suffered by Black Americans, has heightened the visibility of differential treatment of individuals by race and ethnicity and renewed calls to address continued inequality.	<i>Example 1: In jurisdiction x, recent public school test scores revealed decreased racial disparities in education outcomes.</i> <i>Example 2...</i>	
INCOME INEQUALITY	Income inequality in the U.S. continues to rise and has profound effects on the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.	<i>Example 1. Recent statistics for jurisdiction x revealed, ...</i>	
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES	Public institutions face a growing demand for easily accessible services on digital platforms, designed from a user's perspective, though challenged by limited budgets, outdated technology, and concerns over data security.	<i>Example 1: After the local government modernized its property tax system to implement an online portal, reports increased about phishing scams impersonating tax notifications, specifically targeting elderly residents.</i>	

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS	The fracturing of public trust in institutions continues apace with increasingly deep divides among Americans related to confidence in the transparency and accuracy of government data and policies, media reports, and political parties. These divisions vary substantially by identity (e.g., age, gender, race), disposable income, and education.	<i>Example 1: Campaign contributions in the most recent judicial elections in Jurisdiction X led to controversial news about the donors...</i>	
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES	Substance use and mental health disorders, already prevalent across society, have increased with the chronic nature of stress associated with the 2020 covid-19 pandemic, uncertain economy, and racial and social inequities.		
CYBERTHREATS & DISINFORMATION	Cyberthreats and disinformation campaigns continue to expand and evolve, accelerated by the rapid transformation of many private and public sector businesses to remote operations during the covid-19 pandemic.		
DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION	Significant shifts in population demographics such as age, gender, race, birth and death rates, education levels, income levels, and family size pose challenges for government, business, and society.	<i>Example: Recent statistics revealed that more and more young people move away from jurisdiction x.</i>	

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
PROFESSIONAL REGULATION	Current models of professional regulation and licensing, impacting who can develop, provide, and access goods and services, are increasingly facing criticism for stifling innovation and flexibility in responding to consumer needs and restricting consumer choices. This phenomenon is forcing professions and government entities to re-think their business models to remain relevant.		
IMPACT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS	Civic activation, supported by social media and philanthropic agents, is rising sharply and spurring change on a variety of social issues with potentially significant effects on the current roles, responsibilities, and operations of various public institutions.	<i>Example 1: The local university, in partnership with social service agencies, set up a pilot program to break the cycle of opioid use and incarceration prevalent in the community. However, funding is still lacking.</i>	
DATA-DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONS	The public sector relies increasingly on data and advanced data analytics to inform decision making and optimize performance. Tools for capturing and using data grow more sophisticated and broadly available, eliminating the need for specialized expertise and resulting in real-time use of information for management and decision making.	<i>Example 1: Attorneys in a recent case attempted to use VR to reconstruct an accident to allow jurors to become “virtual eyewitnesses of the accident.”</i>	

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
CLIMATE CHANGE	Despite mitigation efforts, global warming continues, affecting areas such as human health (including potential pandemics), the quantity and quality of water, energy, transportation, agriculture, forests, and ecosystems.		
CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF WORK	The fundamental meaning and nature of work is evolving rapidly as a result of digital and augmented intelligence, shifts from physical to virtual spaces, multi-generational expectations of the work environment and job satisfaction, and the need for new and different skill sets to accommodate new and reconceptualized jobs.		
ECONOMY	The Congressional Budget Office projects a slow but steady improvement in economic growth over the next several years, with an associated decline in the unemployment rate to pre-pandemic levels. While the national debt remains high, federal revenues are projected to increase as a result of the expiration of temporary pandemic-related expenses, scheduled increases in taxes, and other factors.	<i>Example 1: The local auto industry is struggling, and a collapse may lead to high unemployment rates, foreclosures, and abandoned properties, weakening community cohesion.</i>	

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 1.1

Relevancy of Drivers of Change for Court/Court System

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY	The 2020 global protests about systemic racism, sparked by a succession of high-profile police brutality cases suffered by Black Americans, has heightened the visibility of differential treatment of individuals by race and ethnicity and renewed calls to address continued inequality.		
INCOME INEQUALITY	Income inequality in the U.S. continues to rise and has profound effects on the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES	Public institutions face a growing demand for easily accessible services on digital platforms, designed from a user's perspective, though challenged by limited budgets, outdated technology, and concerns over data security.		
TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS	The fracturing of public trust in institutions continues apace with increasingly deep divides among Americans related to confidence in the transparency and accuracy of government data and policies, media reports, and political parties. These divisions vary substantially by identity (e.g., age, gender, race), disposable income, and education.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES	Substance use and mental health disorders, already prevalent across society, have increased with the chronic nature of stress associated with the 2020 covid-19 pandemic, uncertain economy, and racial and social inequities.		
CYBERTHREATS & DISINFORMATION	Cyberthreats and disinformation campaigns continue to expand and evolve, accelerated by the rapid transformation of many private and public sector businesses to remote operations during the covid-19 pandemic.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION	Significant shifts in population demographics such as age, gender, race, birth and death rates, education levels, income levels, and family size pose challenges for government, business, and society.		
PROFESSIONAL REGULATION	Current models of professional regulation and licensing, impacting who can develop, provide, and access goods and services, are increasingly facing criticism for stifling innovation and flexibility in responding to consumer needs and restricting consumer choices. This phenomenon is forcing professions and government entities to re-think their business models to remain relevant.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
IMPACT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS	Civic activation, supported by social media and philanthropic agents, is rising sharply and spurring change on a variety of social issues with potentially significant effects on the current roles, responsibilities, and operations of various public institutions.		
DATA-DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONS	The public sector relies increasingly on data and advanced data analytics to inform decision making and optimize performance. Tools for capturing and using data grow more sophisticated and broadly available, eliminating the need for specialized expertise and resulting in real-time use of information for management and decision making.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
CLIMATE CHANGE	Despite mitigation efforts, global warming continues, affecting areas such as human health (including potential pandemics), the quantity and quality of water, energy, transportation, agriculture, forests, and ecosystems.		
CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF WORK	The fundamental meaning and nature of work is evolving rapidly as a result of digital and augmented intelligence, shifts from physical to virtual spaces, multi-generational expectations of the work environment and job satisfaction, and the need for new and different skill sets to accommodate new and reconceptualized jobs.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Local Signals/Examples	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System
ECONOMY	The Congressional Budget Office projects a slow but steady improvement in economic growth over the next several years, with an associated decline in the unemployment rate to pre-pandemic levels. While the national debt remains high, federal revenues are projected to increase as a result of the expiration of temporary pandemic-related expenses, scheduled increases in taxes, and other factors.		
ADDITIONAL DRIVER OF CHANGE FOR JURISDICTION			

EXERCISE

STEP 2.

Ask Team members to complete [Worksheet 1.2](#) individually by placing (using the tab key) each of the drivers of change from [Worksheet 1.1](#) into one of the quadrants based on 1) the uncertainty that the driver's current trajectory (e.g., increasing or decreasing) will continue in the next five to ten years and 2) its potential impact on your court/court system in the same time frame. After each team member completes the exercise, the team should discuss the extent of agreement on the placement of each driver of change. Do not rush to agreement; it is important to surface why someone has a minority opinion and to challenge the team's assumptions. If doing the exercise in person, it may be helpful to write each driver of change on a post-it note and adhere four flip chart pages in a 2x2 matrix on the wall. Team members can then discuss each driver in sequence; showing where each team member placed a driver on the matrix. After discussion of each driver, the team should agree where to place it on a team's version of [Worksheet 1.2](#) and then move to the next driver. At the conclusion of the session, you should have one team version of [Worksheet 1.2](#) showing all the drivers of change you included on [Worksheet 1.1](#).

The information from the team version of [Worksheet 1.2](#) will inform discussions of the next activity of the [FRC Framework: Imagine Alternative Scenarios of the Future](#).

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 1.2

Certainty and Impact of Each Driver for Court/Court System

	Low impact	High impact
High uncertainty of trajectory		
Low uncertainty of trajectory		

CHAPTER 4

SF Activity 2: Imagine Alternative Scenarios of the Future

“However good our futures research may be, we shall never be able to escape from the ultimate dilemma that all our knowledge is about the past, and all our decisions are about the future.”

Ian Wilson, Futurist, 1975²³

Professor Boje argued in 1991 that stories are the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships. He likened them to precedent cases in the judicial system, highlighting how shared narratives serve as guiding frameworks for understanding.²⁴ Since there are no data about the future, we struggle to envision something other than a slightly tweaked version of today. Plausible stories, however, can be a powerful tool for understanding abstract ideas and making them more relatable. Our brains are wired to respond to stories, anchoring our thoughts through vivid sensory details, a cohesive context, and a shared (mental) experience.²⁵ Thus, when the future is presented in narrative and visual forms, it helps us engage with uncertain concepts by turning them into something much more tangible.

23 Wilson, I. (2000). *From Scenario Thinking to Strategic Action*. Horizon Site. <http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/seminars/futurizing/action.asp>

24 Boje, D. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 106–126. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393432>

25 Westover, J. (2024, January 11). The power of storytelling: How our brains are wired for narratives. *Human Capital Leadership Review*. <https://www.innovativehumancapital.com/article/the-power-of-storytelling-how-our-brains-are-wired-for-narratives#:~:text=Stories%20allow%20us%20to%20simulate,helps%20create%20empathy%20and%20understanding>

Scenario development based on drivers of change assists us in developing shared, plausible, and coherent visions of the future.²⁶ Scholar and entrepreneur Paul Schoemaker praises scenarios as the stand-out tool challenging the prevailing mindset and compensating for the usual errors in our attempts to think strategically – tunnel vision in the range of changes we believe are possible or overconfidence about future trends.²⁷

Good scenarios are both creative and challenging, identify blind spots, and expose readers to information and new ways of thinking about issues.²⁸ Additionally, a scenario should describe the future in a way that readers understand what it is like to live in this world and what events might have led to its development.²⁹ Although no specific scenario will come true, aspects of different futures are plausible.³⁰ This strategic foresight activity involves envisioning ourselves in alternative scenarios and contemplating how our core business functions and operations could change in the near and far future and how the various drivers of change might interact to impact the courts.

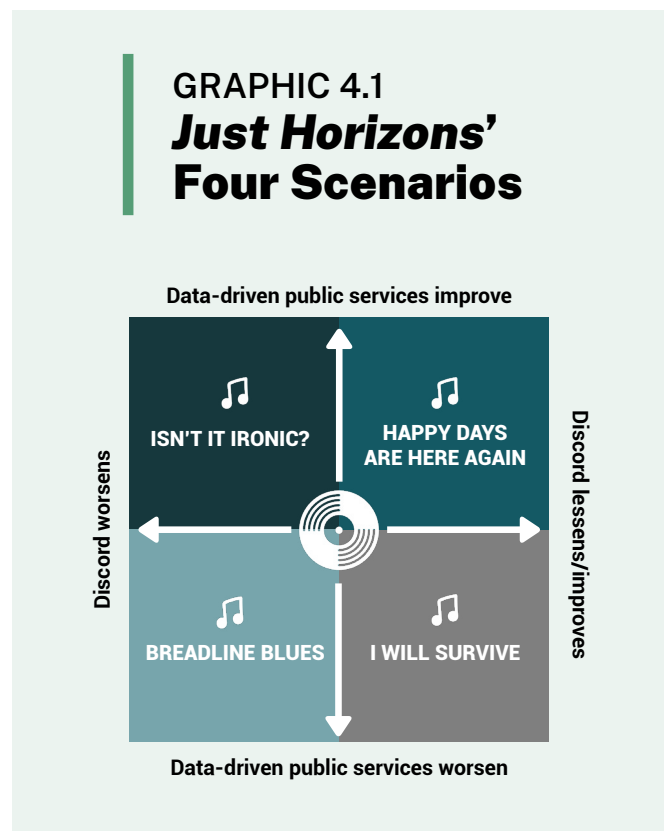
To create scenarios for the *Just Horizons* report, the *Just Horizons* Council selected two clusters of drivers of change (see list of drivers in [Worksheet 1.1](#)) to frame the scenarios: 1) data-driven public services which combined the drivers of digital transformation of public services and data-driven organizations, and 2) socio-political discord which combined the drivers of racial justice and equality and trust in public institutions. The Council considered these cluster drivers critical uncertainties for courts in the future. That is, their disruptive impact on courts is potentially large and the certainty of their current trajectory is unknown.

-
- 26 Del Castillo, A., & Lustig, P. (2023). *Strategic foresight. Using the 'ETUI future scenarios for 2050' to respond more effectively to multiple crises*. European Trade Union Institute. https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Strategic%20foresight-Using%20the%20ETUI%20future%20scenarios%20for%202050%20to%20respond%20more%20effectively%20to%20multiple%20crises_2023.pdf
- 27 Schoemaker, P. J. H. (1995). Scenario planning: A tool for strategic thinking. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 36(2), 25-40. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220042263_Scenario_Planning_A_Tool_for_Strategic_Thinking
- 28 Conway, M. (2015). Foresight: an introduction. A Thinking Futures reference guide. *Thinking Futures*. <https://www.yccd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Foresight-An-Introduction-Futures-Thinking-Reference-Guide-Conway.pdf>
- 29 Lustig, P. (2017). *Strategic foresight: Learning from the future* (2nd ed.) at p. 102. Triarchy Press.
- 30 *Ibid*, 101.

These cluster drivers became the axes of a 2x2 matrix to frame four potential future worlds:

- **Scenario 1:** Happy Days Are Here Again: *Smart Courts & Trusted Government*,
- **Scenario 2:** Isn't It Ironic? *Smart Courts & Public Discord*,
- **Scenario 3:** Breadline Blues: *Outmoded Courts & Public Discord*, and
- **Scenario 4:** I Will Survive: *Outmoded Courts & Trust in Local Self-Governance*.

Scenario 1 envisioned a future where the two main cluster drivers had developed positively, Scenario 3 offered a future where they had worsened, and Scenarios 2 and 4 represented mixed outcomes, as illustrated in Graphic 4.1. Each scenario's "story" was fleshed out with variations in outcomes for other drivers, presented as fictional but plausible narratives. The short description of each future world is available [here](#), and an accompanying short video of each is available [here](#).



The four scenarios described in the *Just Horizons* report provide a useful starting point for imagining how your local court might navigate each of the envisioned futures. However, we developed the scenarios with a national perspective in mind. Your drivers from [Exercise 1](#), [Worksheet 1.2](#) may differ somewhat from those in *Just Horizons*, making it beneficial to adjust the scenarios based on your own set of most critical drivers. By applying a local lens, consider which aspects could be modified or added to each narrative to make the scenarios more relevant to your court. Reflecting on the drivers of change identified in [Worksheet 1.2](#) that are particularly significant in your local context, how might these unfold in each scenario? [Exercise 2](#) provides discussion questions and instructions to help you review the *Just Horizons* scenarios, build upon them, or customize them to fit your jurisdiction.³¹

³¹ Alternatively, you may create your own scenarios. This might be especially useful if your trends differ significantly from those described in *Just Horizons*. Additionally, engaging in the creative process of scenario building can be a beneficial exercise in itself as it trains the future-focused mindset essential for strategic thinking.

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 2

Imagine Alternative Scenarios of the Future for Your Court

PURPOSE:

In this exercise, you customize *Just Horizons* scenarios to your local context to deepen your understanding of how different scenarios may impact your court's operations, services, and culture. By tailoring the scenarios to your court's context, you will make them more practical and concrete, laying a stronger foundation for a future mindset and enabling your team members to envision each future. While a certain element of creativity is needed, these additions do not need to be extensive. Occasionally, simply inserting your jurisdiction's name will have the desired effect. By personalizing the narratives, you will create a clearer vision of your court's possible futures, making it easier to prepare for additional activities in the FRC Framework.

This exercise includes two parts. Step 1 involves refining each scenario to better reflect your jurisdiction and the trends you identified in [Exercise 1](#). Step 2 asks FRC Team members to envision themselves in each of the refined alternative *Just Horizons* scenarios and consider how their role, the court's business functions and operations, and the greater local community could change in the future.

PREPARATION:

If you have not done so yet, read each of the [four Just Horizons scenarios](#) of the future. Next, if your jurisdiction's relevant drivers identified in [Worksheet 1.1 in Exercise 1](#) generally matched those presented in the *Just Horizons* report, follow the process in Step 1a below to edit each scenario to include local illustrations of driver outcomes. If you identified new drivers not sufficiently covered by the *Just Horizons* scenarios, follow the process in Step 1b below to build on and modify the existing scenarios to fit your context.

EXERCISE

STEP 1A.

Each *Just Horizons* scenario incorporates a mix of drivers with certain imagined trend outcomes, but some drivers may not be as prominently featured for your jurisdiction, based on your discussions in Exercise 1. To adjust the scenarios to better fit your jurisdiction, use the following process.

- Reflect on the trends you identified in [Worksheet 1.2](#), especially those the team considered as highly important and uncertain.
 - » Are these trends featured prominently in any of the existing scenarios?
 - » If certain trends are underrepresented, consider how they might unfold in your court's future.
 - » For new trends identified in [Worksheet 1.2](#), consider which scenario best fits the outcome of each trend.

EXERCISE

- Brainstorm local outcomes and impacts for each relevant trend:
 - » How might each trend develop in your local context over the next decade?

 - » Are there local trends or issues that differentiate your court's experience from national trends? What aspects of your local community or region could shape how each scenario and the included drivers unfold for your court?

- Edit the scenarios:
 - » Assign team members to customize each scenario based on the ideas compiled during the group discussion. This could involve adjusting narrative details or adding specific examples that illustrate how trends might manifest locally.

 - » Incorporate imagined local events, challenges, or success stories to bring the scenarios to life. Create a document with each of the four edited scenarios.

EXERCISE

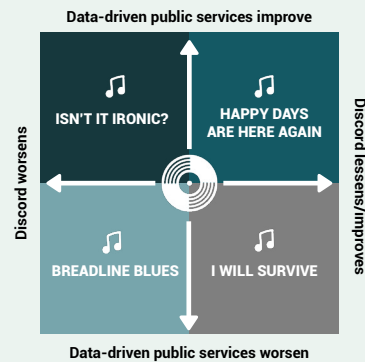
STEP 1B.

If your team identified new critical drivers in [Exercise 1](#), use this step to incorporate them into one or more of the existing scenarios. This process involves imagining how the drivers might develop and exploring their potential impacts on your court and community.

- Explore potential trend developments:
 - » Begin with brainstorming how each new driver identified in [Exercise 1](#) might evolve. Consider both positive trends (e.g., growth or improvement) and negative trends (e.g., decline or disruption).
 - » Develop a few possible outcomes for each driver, considering a range of developments to account for uncertainty.
- Describe local futures for each new driver:
 - » For each outcome, describe in just a few sentences a hypothetical future situation that illustrates the driver's impact. Make the description specific and vivid to help bring the situation to life.

EXERCISE

Four Scenarios



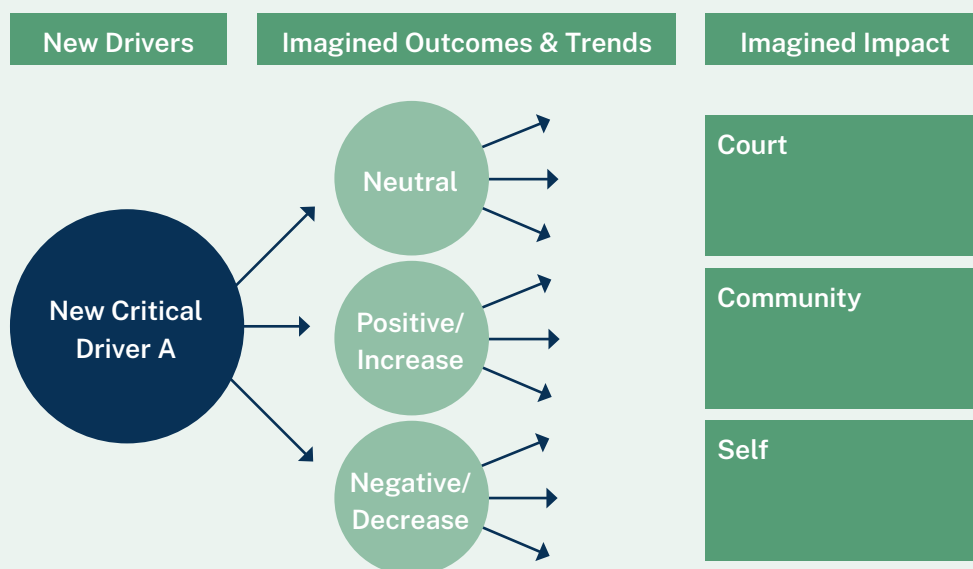
- » If the trend for your driver develops positively or intensifies, in which scenario(s) would it fit most naturally? How about the opposite outcome (negative or declining trend)?
- » What chain of events might lead to the envisioned future for this driver? Consider both local and national developments.

EXERCISE

- » Tie these local narratives back to one or more of the existing scenarios, adjusting the scenario's context or tone as needed to maintain narrative cohesion. You might find it helpful to compile ideas in a visual trend mapping tool such as the example shown below in Figure E2.1.

FIGURE E2.1

Mapping driver-specific outcomes in your community (Example)



EXERCISE

- Edit the scenarios(s) to reflect your court's context and makes each “story” believable:
 - » What local “story” can you create to illustrate the impact of the new drivers within the chosen scenario(s)?
 - » Assign a few team members to refine the chosen scenario(s) by integrating these drivers and their imagined outcomes.
 - » Include story elements and specific examples that illustrate the imagined impacts on local events, challenges, or success stories to bring the new additions to life.
 - » Include the additional information on the new critical drivers in the revised scenarios created in [Step 1A](#).

EXERCISE

STEP 2.

After customizing the four scenarios, consider one modified scenario at a time and imagine living in the world described by this scenario. Use this part of the exercise to step away from the specific impacts of the individual drivers and consider each scenario in its entirety.

What does your day-to-day experience look like in this future world? What challenges and opportunities do court staff, judges, and stakeholders in your jurisdiction face? How do court users in your jurisdiction experience the justice system in this scenario? Refer to the prompts provided in [Worksheet 2.1](#) to facilitate your exploration of each scenario. Record your thoughts and observations for each scenario one at a time and discuss them as a group. Alternatively, assign a different scenario to four breakout groups to ensure a thorough examination of all scenarios.³²

The information gathered during this step will provide the basis for identifying vulnerabilities and opportunities that are relevant to your jurisdiction across futures (see [strategic foresight activity 3](#) in the FRC Framework).

³² If you prefer, you could create a mind map to record and summarize your group's feedback for each scenario. See [Figure E2.2](#) for an example of this approach.

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 2.1

Your Court's Experience in Each Scenario

Scenario Name:

1. How might this scenario impact you personally and professionally?

Factors to consider could include your day-to-day activities in this future, your role in the court, how you interact with colleagues and court users, the skills and knowledge you now rely on, or new challenges you might face.

2. How might the developments in this scenario impact courts and what they do?

You might want to think about how court spaces have evolved to meet the demands in this future, what technologies and systems might be utilized, or what role digital infrastructure might play. Factors to consider might also include the court's mission in this world, funding sources, changes to business processes and core operations, and partnerships and collaborations with other entities. Other relevant areas include the likely changes in staff training, recruitment and retention in this world, or the court's leadership functions and decision-making processes.

EXERCISE

3. How have court participants or the nature of disputes changed in this scenario?

Are there certain groups that would be overrepresented or underrepresented in court? What types of issues would they need to resolve in court? Also, consider how representation and access to justice and resources might have changed.

4. How do court users in your jurisdiction experience the justice system in this scenario?

How would you imagine a typical “day in court” for a user in this scenario? Consider new or remaining barriers, what the court might be doing to address these, what the public’s view of your court might be like, and what the court’s outreach and role in the community might be.

5. What are the biggest threats and opportunities for your court in this scenario?

How might your court have adapted to this future? Do you imagine risks to the core values of the court? What would your biggest concerns be? What opportunities or innovations do you envision for your court in this world? What are the biggest takeaways for your court in this scenario?

CHAPTER 5

SF Activity 3: Analyze Implications of the Scenarios

“We make our decisions about the future based on our own mental maps about how the world works. And we are very much prisoners of those mental maps. Part of the function of scenario planning is figuring out how to break out of the constraints. How do we challenge those mental maps that we see about how people behave, how organizations work and how institutions evolve?”

Peter Schwartz, 2020³³

In the previous SF activity, you and your team immersed yourselves in each of the scenarios, trying to think about what it would be like to live and work in each of these future worlds. This next activity explores patterns or themes that emerge across the scenarios, even though the specifics of each scenario differ. Identifying common elements across scenarios allows us to see the broader implications of various futures for courts.

There are several approaches for synthesizing information across scenarios.³⁴ For example, you could undertake an analysis of the various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats each scenario presents and compare them across scenarios to identify common themes. Are there common strengths and weaknesses across the scenarios? Do recurring opportunities and universal threats manifest across scenarios? Do the same driving forces that create a threat in one scenario also present an opportunity in another? It is important to examine these questions

33 The Long Now Foundation. (2019, June 27). Scenario planning for the long-term — Peter Schwartz at The Interval [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXwS9cGF9Bk>

34 For example, you could use a mind map, a Delphi method, conduct facilitated workshops and brainstorming sessions, create impact/uncertainty grids, and/or conduct a thematic content analysis using qualitative research methods. The suggestion in this paper is to start with the work done by the *Just Horizons* Council and customize it for your jurisdiction.

with people who have a variety of perspectives to uncover emerging themes not immediately evident at the beginning of your conversations.

For the *Just Horizons* initiative, we shared the scenarios with participants at various conferences and meetings and asked them to consider 1) how courts might be affected – positively or negatively – in each scenario, and 2) what actions courts should take now to enhance or influence positive outcomes and prepare for possible negative events we cannot control. We collected all the responses and through an iterative approach that involved identifying patterns within the responses, discussing those patterns, generating themes, discussing those themes, revising those themes, and sharing the themes with the *Just Horizons* Council for feedback and further refinement; we identified six themes, which we referred to as key areas of vulnerability for courts. We defined a vulnerability as a recognizable fault line that runs through the court system and threatens to weaken it severely if it is not rectified or addressed. To the extent that courts work on these areas of vulnerability, they will meet the challenges delivering justice now and into the future from a position of strength and resiliency. Table 5.1 lists the key areas of vulnerability we identified with a brief description for each.³⁵

Table 5.1. Summary of *Just Horizons*’ Key Areas of Vulnerability

Vulnerability	Summary Description
1. Build a Forward-Looking, Anticipatory Capacity into Court Governance	Courts should adopt strategic foresight practices to anticipate future societal and technological changes, enabling them to innovate, adapt, and modernize. This requires building a future-literate court community equipped with the skills to make policies future-ready and responsive to emerging challenges. Demonstrating adaptability enhances public trust and confidence.
2: Focus on User-Centered Experience & Inclusive Design	Courts need to prioritize user-centered and inclusive design to address the needs of all individuals, including marginalized groups and those with behavioral health or disabilities. This focus ensures courts remain relevant and accessible to all demographic and economic groups seeking legal remedies.
3: Embrace a Data-Driven Mindset	Courts must improve their use of data to evaluate policies, practices, and decisions effectively. Increasing data literacy among judges and staff ensures meaningful insights that optimize processes, demonstrate court effectiveness, and bolster public trust by sharing evidence-based narratives.

35 A full description of each vulnerability is available here: <https://nationalcenterforstatecourts.box.com/v/JH-report-Vulnerabilities>

Vulnerability	Summary Description
4: Understanding & Managing the Role of Private Entities in Court Work	Courts must prepare for increased engagement with private entities, such as technology firms and philanthropies, while safeguarding public values. Establishing data governance agreements and ensuring courts remain the primary drivers of data analysis protects court integrity and improves outcomes.
5: Preparing for Emergencies	Courts need comprehensive strategies to address a wide range of emergencies, including pandemics, cyberattacks, riots at the courthouse, and natural disasters. Expanding continuity of operations plans (COOPs) and collaborating with government emergency planners ensures adaptable and resilient procedures during crises.
6: Cultivating a Future-Fit Court Workforce & Workplace	Courts must embrace technological advancements and the shift to virtual environments to modernize workflows and facilities. This includes redefining the workforce, creating new positions, and offering incentives to recruit and retain motivated, innovative individuals in a competitive marketplace.

The *Just Horizons* key areas of vulnerability offer you a starting point for analyzing the implications of the scenarios for your court. [Exercise 3](#) provides instructions for determining whether the vulnerabilities are applicable to your court, whether they need to be modified, and whether there are other vulnerabilities, based on your review of the scenarios in [Exercise 2](#), that should be added for consideration in selecting strategic areas of focus for your court's strategic plan.

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 3

Analyze Implications of the Scenarios for Courts

PURPOSE:

This exercise considers the relevance of the *Just Horizons*' key areas of vulnerability for your jurisdiction and identifies new areas of vulnerability that may have emerged from your review of the scenarios in [Exercise 2](#).

This exercise has four components: 1) review each of the key areas of vulnerability described in the *Just Horizons* report, 2) consider how your responses to questions about the scenarios in [Worksheet 2.1](#), especially question 5, relate to each vulnerability, 3) customize the areas of vulnerability for your jurisdiction, and 4) identify new areas of vulnerability that emerge from your analysis of [Worksheet 2.1](#). A description and worksheet for this exercise follows.

STEP 1.

Read the description of each key area of vulnerability in the Appendix to the *Just Horizons* report, available here: <https://nationalcenterforstatecourts.box.com/v/JH-report-Vulnerabilities>. The key areas of vulnerability are:

- Including a forward-looking, anticipatory capacity in court governance,
- Focusing on user-centered experience and inclusive design,
- Embracing a data-driven mindset,
- Understanding and managing the role of private entities in court work,
- Preparing for emergencies, and
- Cultivating a future-fit court workforce and workplace.

STEP 2.

Review your answers to [Worksheet 2.1](#) regarding each of the scenarios. Identify words and phrases from your responses about each scenario that relate to one or more of the key areas of vulnerability and record them in the table in [Worksheet 3.1](#), following these directions. Pay particular attention to your responses to question 5: What are the biggest threats and opportunities for your court in this scenario? If there are no related words or phrases for a particular vulnerability and scenario, leave the respective table cells in [Worksheet 3.1](#) blank. If there are critical words/phrases from a scenario that are not covered by one of the 6 vulnerabilities, add those in the last row of the table in [Worksheet 3.1](#).

EXERCISE

STEP 3.

Review the words and phrases associated with a vulnerability across all four scenarios. Are the words and phrases captured in the current *Just Horizons*' description of the vulnerability? For example, words and phrases associated with Vulnerability 4: Understanding & Managing the Role of Private Entities in Court Work in the table might focus on the ongoing role of state and local governments in supporting courts as well as the role of private entities. If so, you may want to rework the description of Vulnerability 4 to highlight, for example, the implications of changing government support for courts. How does the court handle different streams of funding, what are the expectations of each funder, and how does the court ensure its independence and accountability? In this case, Vulnerability 4 might be re-labeled as: Understanding & Managing the Expectations of Entities that Fund Court Work.

If one or more of the vulnerability areas do not have any associated words or phrases across the scenarios in the table (i.e. the row for that vulnerability is blank), consider whether the vulnerability is applicable to your court at this time.

STEP 4.

Review the words and phrases in row 7 of the table in [Worksheet 3.1](#). Do any broader themes emerge from these words and phrases that warrant a separate, additional vulnerability? Alternatively, are there themes that could be incorporated in the previous six vulnerabilities if the descriptions are revised? For example, several of the words and phrases may be related to building public trust and confidence or strengthening community engagement. Could these themes be incorporated in one of the other areas of vulnerability, or do they warrant a separate area? Take some time to discuss the words and phrases with your FRC Team to ensure a diversity of perspectives is provided. At the end of the discussion, the team may opt to incorporate additional ideas into the first six vulnerabilities, add a new vulnerability and brief description, and/or eliminate one or more areas of vulnerability as not relevant for your court at this time.

STEP 5.

Complete the table in [Worksheet 3.2](#) by listing the key areas of vulnerability your team has agreed on in the first column of the table and a brief description/bullet points of each in the second column. An [example](#) is provided. Use additional rows if necessary to accommodate the results of the team's discussions. The completed table should look similar to [Table 5.1](#) in Chapter 5 and will be used to inform the FRC Framework's strategic planning activities.

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 3.1

Implications of Scenarios for Your Jurisdiction

Vulnerability	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Including a Forward-Looking, Anticipatory Capacity in Court Governance				
Focusing on User-Centered Experience & Inclusive Design				
Embracing a Data-Driven Mindset				

EXERCISE

Vulnerability	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Understanding & Managing the Role of Private Entities in Court Work				
Preparing for Emergencies				
Cultivating a Future-Fit Court Workforce & Workplace				
Phrases/themes not captured by the areas of Vulnerability				

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 3.2 *EXAMPLE*

Key Vulnerability Areas for Your Jurisdiction

Vulnerability Area	Summary Description
1. Including a Forward-Looking, Anticipatory Capacity in Court Governance	<i>Example. We need to build a future-literate court workforce with a capacity to anticipate change, focus on the future-readiness of existing policies and practices, and develop new policies and court operations that take advantage of scientific insights and technological innovations.</i>
2: Focusing on User-Centered Experience & Inclusive Design	<i>Example. We need to fully adopt a user-centered and inclusive design for all court operations to address the needs and experiences of all who seek legal remedies, including those from all demographic and economic groups and those with behavioral health and disability issues.</i>
3:	<i>Use additional rows to accommodate the results of the Team's discussions.</i>
4:	<i>Use additional rows accommodate the results of the Team's discussions.</i>
5:	<i>Use additional rows accommodate the results of the Team's discussions.</i>
6: Example Additional Vulnerability: Foster Public Education	<i>Example. We need to engage our community in a nuanced, multi-format approach, accounting for today's technologies and our culturally diverse community, to help individuals understand our court, principles, and procedures, and to actively promote awareness of our court's innovations and commitment to effective, accessible, and fair justice.</i>

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 3.2

Key Vulnerability Areas for Your Jurisdiction

Vulnerability Area	Summary Description

SECTION 2

Strategic Planning Activities

The background of the page is a solid blue color. In the lower half, there are several thin, white, curved lines that sweep across the page, creating a sense of movement and design. One line starts from the bottom left and curves towards the center. Another line starts from the bottom right and curves towards the center. A third line starts from the right edge and curves upwards and to the left.

CHAPTER 6

SP Activity 1: Define/Refine Vision, Mission, & Values

“Foresight empowers decision makers and policy planners to use new ways of thinking about, talking about, and implementing strategic plans that are compatible with the unfolding future.”

UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, 2018³⁶

The SF activities discussed in the previous chapters help us think rigorously and systematically about potential risks and opportunities for courts in the future. The next set of activities uses the results of these exercises to inform the court’s strategic planning (SP) process.³⁷

This first SP activity focuses on the court’s vision, mission, and values. Together, these provide clarity, direction, and a shared sense of purpose for the court’s operations and its role within the justice system and society. Strategic foresight plays a vital role in shaping an organization’s vision, mission, and values statements by ensuring these foundational elements are future-oriented, relevant, and aligned with emerging realities.

VISION, MISSION, & VALUES



Strategic Priorities



Goals & Strategies



Action Plan

36 UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence. (2018). *Foresight manual: Empowered futures for the 2030 agenda*. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/UNDP_ForesightManual_2018.pdf

37 There are many approaches to the strategic planning process involving different techniques and nomenclature. Please adapt the process we suggest here to accommodate techniques and nomenclature you already use. Our approach is based on NCSC’s Certified Court Executive course *Visioning and Strategic Planning* (see <https://ncsc.courtllms.org/catalog/info/id:256>). Another strategic planning how-to resource for courts is available from the National Association for Court Management at <https://nacmnet.org/curriculum/strategic-plan/>. The important aspect of any strategic planning process for the FRC Framework is that it incorporates strategic thinking about the future as well as operational and tactical planning for the present.

It is important to understand the different purposes for each of the statements. The vision statement defines the court's long-term aspirations and the future it seeks to help create. The mission statement describes the court's core purpose and how it intends to achieve its vision. The values statement identifies the core principles and beliefs that guide the court's actions and decision making.

These statements should be short, concise, and inspirational. For example, the Minnesota Judicial Branch statements are:³⁸

- **Vision:** The general public and those who use the court system will refer to it as accessible, fair, consistent, responsive, free of discrimination, independent, and well-managed.
- **Mission:** To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.
- **Values:** Collaboration, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Equal Justice for All, Innovation, Public Service, Public Trust and Confidence.

The following is an example from the Michigan Judicial System:³⁹

- **Vision:** Michigan's Judicial System is accessible to all and trusted by all.
- **Mission:** Michigan's One Court of Justice delivers justice for all by providing access, protecting rights, resolving disputes, and applying the law under the Constitution.
- **Core Values:**
 - » **Independent:** remain free from external influences, pressures, and control.
 - » **Timely:** resolve legal matters and disputes in an efficient and effective manner.
 - » **Fair:** be impartial and free of bias in our actions, procedures, decisions, and treatment of all.
 - » **Responsive:** implement innovations and improvements to meet the diverse and evolving needs of court users.

38 Minnesota Judicial Branch. (2024, February 23). *News item: Minnesota Judicial Branch wants your feedback to inform its strategic plan.* <https://www.mncourts.gov/About-The-Courts/NewsAndAnnouncements/ItemDetail.aspx?id=2334>

39 Michigan Judicial Council. (2022, April 13). *Planning for the future of the Michigan Judicial System: 2022-2025 strategic agenda*, (p.15). https://www.courts.michigan.gov/4a37ab/siteassets/reports/special-initiatives/mjc-strategic-agenda-flipbook/michiganjc_strategicagendaproof_final-8-1-22.pdf.

- » **Consistent:** provide court users with similar experiences and the highest quality of services across courts in Michigan.
- » **Compassionate:** be caring, understanding, and professional in all we do.
- » **Collaborative:** provide leadership in engaging with court users, justice system partners, and courts.
- » **Accountable:** be responsible and answerable for our conduct and performance, and be transparent in the use of public resources.

And here is an example from the Superior Court of Delaware:⁴⁰

*“Our vision is to be the Superior Court with the most Superior Service in the nation. Our mission is to provide Superior Service to the public in pursuit of justice. Our core values are—**Unity, Neutrality, Integrity, Timeliness, Equality, and Dedication.**”*

Exercise 4 offers tips for developing or refining your court’s vision, mission, and values and ensuring they reflect a forward-thinking approach to the court’s work and an emphasis on resilience and evolving stakeholder expectations.

40 Jurden, J. (2025). *About us: Our mission, vision, and values*. Superior Court, State of Delaware. <https://courts.delaware.gov/superior/aboutus/mission.aspx>

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 4

Define/Refine Vision, Mission, & Values

PURPOSE:

This exercise assists the FRC Team with drafting new or reviewing existing vision, mission, and values statements to ensure they reflect a forward-thinking approach to the court's work and an emphasis on resilience and evolving stakeholder expectations.

The process for developing each of the statements is similar and includes the following steps.

STEP 1.

Gather input from the court's stakeholders through interviews, surveys, focus groups, or workshops/meetings regarding their thoughts on the court's future aspirations, purposes, priorities, and values. Depending on the size of your jurisdiction, a small meeting of judges, court professionals, policymakers and members of the public may be sufficient. Courts in larger jurisdictions may find it easier to conduct several focus groups with various constituents and/or a survey to obtain the information. It is important that a diverse set of voices are heard to reflect the entire community the court serves. If your court already has a vision, mission, and values statement, the question should be whether those statements continue to reflect the long-range aspiration and the purposes of the court.

STEP 2.

Analyze the strengths and challenges, particularly considering larger social, legal and technological changes the court faces going forward. Your answers in [Worksheet 2.1](#) regarding the threats and opportunities the court might face in each scenario (see Question 5) and [Worksheet 3.2](#) regarding key vulnerabilities for the court in the future will help with this step.

STEP 3.

Craft the three statements through an iterative approach of brainstorming, identifying themes, drafting and refining the statements. You can use Worksheets [4.1](#), [4.2](#), and [4.3](#) to record your ideas, those from other FRC Team members, and common themes that emerge. These common themes can be the basis for drafting several iterations of each statement before finalizing each. The statements should be concise, clear, and inspirational. If your court allows, you could use an AI chatbot to provide examples of vision, mission, and values statements based on the common themes, concepts, and phrases that emerge from your discussions of each.

EXERCISE

Key questions to guide the discussion for each statement follow. If your court already has a vision, mission, and values statement, ensure they each remain relevant given the themes from the input gathered in steps 1 and 2 and that they address the questions below and meet the criteria of concise, clear, and inspirational.

VISION STATEMENT:

This statement is intended to paint a clear, inspiring picture of the court's desired future. It should be ambitious yet achievable. Future-oriented questions to guide the discussion of defining/revising this statement are 1) what is the ideal future we want to create — what impact do we want to have on the justice system and the community it serves, 2) What specific outcomes or changes do we want to see in the community or world, and 3) what does success look like 10-20 years from now.

Examples of vision statements from the private sector are:

- **Habitat for Humanity:** A world where everyone has a decent place to live.⁴¹
- **Ikea:** To create a better everyday life for the many people.⁴²
- **LinkedIn:** Create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce.⁴³
- **Lego:** A global force for Learning-through-Play.⁴⁴

Examples of court vision statements are:

- **Colorado:** The Colorado Judicial Department is a trusted and transparent leader in the pursuit of justice across the state, serving our communities with integrity, and providing

41 Habitat for Humanity. (2025). *Our mission, vision and principles*. About Habitat for Humanity. <https://www.habitat.org/about/mission-and-vision>

42 IKEA's description of its vision statement is "This vision goes beyond home furnishing. We want to have a positive impact on the world – from the communities where we source our raw materials to the way our products help our customers live a more sustainable life at home. IKEA. (2025). *The IKEA vision and values*. This is IKEA, about us. <https://www.ikea.com/us/en/this-is-ikea/about-us/the-ikea-vision-and-values-pub9aa779d0/>

43 LinkedIn. (2025). *About LinkedIn*. LinkedIn. <https://about.linkedin.com/>

44 Lego. (2025). *Who we are*. Lego. <https://www.lego.com/en-us/careers/who-we-are>

EXERCISE

fair and equitable access to the judicial process.⁴⁵

- **Florida:** Justice in Florida will be accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable.⁴⁶
- **Jamaica:** A world-class judiciary utilizing innovation and technology for efficient service delivery.⁴⁷
- **Maryland:** The Maryland Judiciary advances justice for all who come to Maryland's courts. We are an efficient, innovative and accessible court system that works collaboratively with justice partners to serve the people with integrity and transparency.⁴⁸
- **Singapore:** A trusted judiciary; ready for tomorrow. The Singapore Judiciary strives constantly to innovate and evolve to be ready for the challenges they will face in an increasingly complex world.⁴⁹

MISSION STATEMENT:

This statement describes the court's core purpose and how it intends to achieve its vision now and in the future. Questions to guide the discussion of defining/revising this statement are 1) why we exist as an institution; what is our primary role in the justice system, 2) who we serve, and what needs are we addressing, and 3) what services or functions we provide to fulfill our purpose.

Examples of mission statements from the private sector are:

- **American Red Cross:** The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.⁵⁰

45 Colorado Courts. (2025). *Mission, vision and values*. Colorado courts workplace culture initiative. <https://judicialwci.colorado.gov/mission-vision-and-values>

46 Florida Courts. (2025). *Mission & vision*. Florida Courts. <https://www.flcourts.gov/Florida-Courts/Mission-Vision>

47 The Supreme Court Jamaica. (2025). *Vision, mission*. Home/about the court. <https://www.supremecourt.gov.jm/content/mission-statement>

48 Maryland Courts. (2025). *Mission & vision*. Maryland Courts. <https://www.courts.state.md.us/about/mission>

49 Singapore Judiciary. (2025). *Vision, mission and values of the Singapore courts*. Who we are. <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/who-we-are/vision-mission-values>

50 American Red Cross. (2025). *Mission & values*. About us. <https://www.redcross.org/about-us/who-we-are/mission-and-values.html?srsId=AfmBOoopjs0yRyFuxQFoMA4Q34EN1u94u914SV0Bw003McIEG4HNm4Cu>

EXERCISE

- **Google:** To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.⁵¹
- **Mayo Clinic:** Inspiring hope and promoting health through integrated clinical practice, education and research.⁵²

Examples of court mission statements are:

- **Colorado:** The Judicial Department works to provide equal access to Justice, contribute to public safety, and strengthen the rule of law across Colorado. Together our courts and probation departments are committed to impartial and timely dispute resolution; support for families, litigants, and victims; client rehabilitation; and meaningful community engagement.⁵³
- **Florida:** The mission of the judicial branch is to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes.⁵⁴
- **Jamaica:** To provide sound, timely judgements and efficient court services in an environment where all stakeholders are valued.⁵⁵
- **Maryland:** The Maryland Judiciary provides fair, efficient and effective justice for all.⁵⁶
- **Michigan:** Michigan's One Court of Justice delivers justice for all by providing access,

51 Google. (n.d.). *Our approach to search*. Google Search. https://www.google.com/intl/en_us/search/howsearchworks/our-approach/#:~:text=Google's%20mission%20is%20to%20organize,a%20wide%20variety%20of%20sources.

52 Mayo Clinic. (2025). *Mission & values*. About Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/about-mayo-clinic/mission-values>

53 Colorado Courts. (2025). *Mission, vision and values*. Colorado courts workplace culture initiative. <https://judicialwci.colorado.gov/mission-vision-and-values>

54 Florida Courts. (2025). *Mission & Vision*. Florida Courts. <https://www.flcourts.gov/Florida-Courts/Mission-Vision>

55 The Supreme Court Jamaica. (2025). *Vision, mission*. Home/about the court. <https://www.supremecourt.gov.jm/content/mission-statement>

56 Maryland Courts. (2025). *Mission & vision*. Maryland Courts. <https://www.courts.state.md.us/about/mission>

EXERCISE

protecting rights, resolving disputes, and applying the law under the Constitution.⁵⁷

- **New York:** The mission of the Unified Court System (UCS) is to deliver equal justice under the law and to achieve the just, fair and timely resolution of all matters that come before our courts.⁵⁸

VALUES STATEMENT:

This statement describes the court's core principles and beliefs that guide the court's actions and decision making. Questions to guide the discussion of defining/revising this statement are 1) what principles guide our decisions and behavior, 2) what values are most important to our stakeholders and those we serve, and 3) how we ensure fairness, integrity, and accountability in our work.

Although there is no set number of values an organization should have, a few clear and concise value statements are likely to be more easily conveyed, remembered and reinforced. Marketing professional Nicole Dorskind recommends four to five values, "as this requires a business to home in on authentic expressions of what they stand for and refrain from overlap or repetition."⁵⁹ She also recommends avoiding implicit or generic values such as honesty that would/should be a given for all organizations.

Examples of values statements from the private sector are:

- **Pandora:** We dream, we dare, we care, we deliver.⁶⁰
- **Spotify:** Innovative, sincere, passionate, collaborative, playful.⁶¹
- **Patagonia:** Quality, integrity, environmentalism, justice, not bound by convention.⁶²

57 Michigan Judicial Council. (2022, April 13). *Planning for the future of the Michigan Judicial System: 2022-2025 strategic agenda*, (p.15). https://www.courts.michigan.gov/4a37ab/siteassets/reports/special-initiatives/mjc-strategic-agenda-flipbook/michiganjc_strategicagendaproof_final-8-1-22.pdf

58 New York State Unified Court System. (2021). *Mission statement*. NYCOURTS.GOV. <https://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/mission.shtml>

59 Dorskind, N. (2019). *Defining your corporate values? Keep these things in mind*. Forbes Agency Council, Council Post. <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesagencycouncil/2019/06/18/defining-your-corporate-values-keep-these-things-in-mind/>

60 Pandora. (2025). *Our values*. Working at Pandora. <https://pandoragroup.com/careers/working-at-pandora/our-values>

61 Spotify. (2025). *The Spotify band*. Life at Spotify. <https://www.lifeatspotify.com/being-here/the-band-manifesto>

62 Patagonia. (2025). *Our core values*. Patagonia. <https://www.patagonia.com/core-values/>

EXERCISE

Examples of court value statements are:

- **Colorado:** To act with integrity, fairness, transparency; to be inclusive, collaborative, innovative.⁶³
- **Delaware Superior Court:** Unity, neutrality, integrity, timeliness, equality, and dedication.⁶⁴
- **District of Columbia Courts:** Accountability, excellence, fairness, integrity, respect, and transparency.⁶⁵
- **New Jersey Courts:** Independence, integrity, fairness, quality service.⁶⁶
- **Singapore:** Fairness, accessibility, integrity, respect.⁶⁷

STEP 4.

Once the three statements have been drafted, ensure they align with each other, are easily understood, and resonate with court staff and stakeholders. Once finalized, they should be incorporated into the court's strategic planning and decision-making processes. They should also be periodically reviewed to ensure their continued relevance as circumstances, opportunities, or challenges change.

63 Colorado Courts. (2025). *Mission, vision and values*. Colorado courts workplace culture initiative. <https://judicialwci.colorado.gov/mission-vision-and-values>

64 Delaware Superior Court. (2025). *Our mission, vision & values*. Delaware Courts Judicial Branch: About us. <https://courts.delaware.gov/superior/aboutus/mission.aspx>

65 District of Columbia Courts. (2024). *Culture of the DC Courts*. District of Columbia Courts. <https://www.dccourts.gov/about/culture-of-dccourts>

66 New Jersey Courts. (n.d.). *Fair treatment*. New Jersey Courts. <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/who-we-are/vision-mission-values>

67 SG Courts. (2025). *Vision, mission, and values of the Singapore courts*. SG Courts: Who we are. <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/who-we-are/vision-mission-values>

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 4.1

Drafting a Vision Statement

Vision Questions	My Responses	Others' Key Words, Concepts, & Phrases	Themes from Discussions
What is the ideal future we want to create — what impact do we want to have on the justice system and the community it serves?			
What specific outcomes or changes do we want to see in the community or world?			

EXERCISE

Vision Questions	My Responses	Others' Key Words, Concepts, & Phrases	Themes from Discussions
What does success look like 10-20 years from now?			
Draft vision statements based on themes			
Final vision statement			

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 4.2

Drafting a Mission Statement

Mission Questions	My Responses	Others' Key Words, Concepts, & Phrases	Themes from Discussions
Why do we exist as an institution; what is our primary role in the justice system?			
Who do we serve), and what needs are we addressing?			

EXERCISE

Mission Questions	My Responses	Others' Key Words, Concepts, & Phrases	Themes from Discussions
What services or functions do we provide to fulfill our purpose?			
Draft mission statements based on themes			
Final mission statement			

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 4.3

Drafting a Values Statement

Values Questions	My Responses	Others' Key Words, Concepts, & Phrases	Themes from Discussions
What principles guide our decisions and behavior?			
What values are most important to our stakeholders and those we serve?			

EXERCISE

Values Questions	My Responses	Others' Key Words, Concepts, & Phrases	Themes from Discussions
How do we ensure fairness, integrity, and accountability in our work?			
Draft values statements based on themes			
Final values statement			

CHAPTER 7

SP Activity 2: Set Strategic Priorities

“A Vision Without a Strategy Remains an Illusion.”

Leo Bolman, 2021⁶⁸

The next step in the strategic planning process is to identify a set of strategic priority areas. These are broad areas of focus considered critical to achieving the court’s vision and mission. Strategic priority areas help an organization determine where to focus its attention, resources, and efforts. They provide the big picture themes the court will concentrate on over the next several years and guide the development of strategic goals and action plans.



Strategic priority areas are selected based on their alignment with the court’s vision, mission, and values; their focus on the most critical challenges and opportunities facing the court; and the feasibility to effectively address each area. This activity relies on the work you did in [SF Activity 3: Analyze Implications of the Scenarios](#). That activity resulted in defining a set of key areas of vulnerability for the court in the future. These are areas that, if addressed, help to ensure the court’s long-term viability. By addressing these areas, the court enhances opportunities to identify effective strategies for building a more robust and resilient court system fit for the future.

⁶⁸ Bolman L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2021). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (6th ed.). John Wiley.

Exercise 5 helps your FRC Team identify which areas of vulnerability you deem most critical to focus on for the next several years. If you have not worked on **SF Activity 3**, you can also use a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) exercise to determine areas of focus.⁶⁹ By defining strategic priority areas, organizations ensure that they focus on what matters most and align their efforts to achieve their long-term goals effectively.

⁶⁹ See, for example, the description of the SWOT tool in UK Government Office for Science. (2024). *The Futures Toolkit*. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c4493f057d859c0e8fa778/futures-toolkit-edition-2.pdf>.

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 5

Set Strategic Priorities

PURPOSE:

This exercise identifies strategic areas of focus as the basis for your court's strategic plan.

STEP 1.

Populate the first two columns in the table in [Worksheet 5.1](#) with the vulnerability areas and summary descriptions from [Worksheet 3.2](#).

STEP 2.

Review the description of each vulnerability area listed in the table. Indicate in the third column of each row the extent to which you think each vulnerability should be a priority for inclusion in your court's strategic plan. Please use the following rating scale:

- Not a priority at this time
- Low priority
- Medium priority
- High priority
- Essential

STEP 3.

Combine the results of the ratings exercise across all team members to determine the average priority rating for each vulnerability area.

STEP 4.

Discuss the results of ratings exercise. Are team members generally consistent regarding their ratings of top priority areas? Do some members see an area as essential and others see it as less a priority? If all the areas are considered essential, does the court have the capacity to work on all of them? If not, which areas might be less critical for inclusion in the strategic plan at this time?

STEP 5.

Revise the table in [Worksheet 3.2](#) with only the top priority areas resulting from the FRC Team's ratings and discussion. Record the revisions in [Worksheet 5.2](#) (See illustration in [Worksheet 3.2 example](#)).

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 5.1

Priority Rating for Vulnerability Areas for Inclusion in Strategic Plan

Vulnerability Area	Summary Description	Rating

EXERCISE

Vulnerability Area	Summary Description	Rating

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 5.2 EXAMPLE

Priority Areas for Inclusion in Strategic Plan

Record the priority areas that emerge as the most important in the table below. The entries in the table are illustrative only and should be replaced with the results of the FRC Teams's discussions in step 4.

Vulnerability Area	Summary Description
1: Including a Forward-Looking, Anticipatory Capacity in Court Governance	<i>Example: We need to build a future-literate court workforce with a capacity to anticipate change, focus on the future-readiness of existing policies and practices, and develop new policies and court operations that take advantage of scientific insights and technological innovations.</i>
2: Focusing on User-Centered Experience & Inclusive Design	<i>Example: We need to fully adopt a user-centered and inclusive design for all court operations to address the needs and experiences of all who seek legal remedies, including those from all demographic and economic groups and those with behavioral health and disability issues.</i>
3:	<i>Use as many rows as needed to accommodate the results of team discussions.</i>
4:	<i>Use as many rows as needed to accommodate the results of team discussions.</i>
5:	<i>Use as many rows as needed to accommodate the results of team discussions.</i>

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 5.2

Priority Areas for Inclusion in Strategic Plan

Record the priority areas that emerge as the most important in the table below. The entries in the table are illustrative only and should be replaced with the results of the FRC Teams's discussions in step 4.

Vulnerability Area	Summary Description

CHAPTER 8

SP Activity 3: Craft Goals and Strategies

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”

Joel A. Barker, 1992⁷⁰

Once you have identified your long-range priority areas, the next step is to define goals you want to accomplish within each area and strategies for achieving each goal. The priority areas are broad, and this step identifies a few goals, among many possible goals in each priority area, that the court will work on for the next several years. The strategies provide more specific approaches for achieving each goal. Together, the goals and strategies create a roadmap for success, serving as a guide when making decisions, ensuring that actions and policies align with the organization’s overarching vision and mission, and that resources are allocated effectively—thus enhancing the court’s future-readiness. They also provide a basis for measuring progress, evaluating performance, and holding leaders and staff accountable for achieving results.



When crafting goals, it is important to include key stakeholders such as staff, leadership, and community members in the process to ensure buy-in and diverse perspectives. If you have input from external stakeholders from the exercise on setting priorities (i.e., [Exercise 5](#)), this information can also be helpful in ensuring a diversity of perspectives is represented.

The purpose of the goal-setting process is to identify a limited number of high-impact goals to avoid overextension and ensure sufficient resources are allocated to achieve success. If your court is just beginning to address the area focusing on user-centered experience and inclusive

⁷⁰ Barker, J. A. (1992). *Future edge* (1st ed.). William Morrow.

design, for example, you may want to identify goals that provide information on what the general needs of court consumers are, what barriers they encounter in addressing their needs, and what suggestions they have for improving their interactions with the court. On the other hand, if your court has already instituted regular data collection efforts regarding user experiences, you may want to focus on specific responses (e.g., simplifying forms, streamlining processes) and specific consumers (e.g., those with limited access to digital technologies, those from rural areas with fewer services available, those with language barriers, those without legal representation). You may also want a goal that requires the court to explore how the community it serves is changing over time (e.g., more elderly individuals, more young families, more digital natives, more agricultural or technological businesses) and the implications of the changes on caseloads and potential new court services needed that do not already exist. This type of goal helps ensure that work related to this priority area remains future-focused as well as addressing current challenges.

Once you determine the goals for each area, the next step is to identify a set of strategies to achieve the goals. Essentially, this requires you to break down the goals into more specific and actionable components. Wyoming's strategic plan offers one example of the interrelationship between strategic priority area, goals, and strategies. Its first strategic priority area is access to justice. The plan identifies 3 goals and 11 strategies to advance access to justice:⁷¹

Access to justice: Advance the just and efficient resolution of people's disputes by:

1. Providing resources for self-represented litigants to assist in accessing and navigating the court system.

- Establish a court navigator program for the judicial branch.
- Create and maintain standardized forms that are fillable or take the litigant through a guided interview process.
- Make Access to Justice Commission a standing committee of the Wyoming Judicial Council.
- Ensure that indigent litigants have access to the courts through fee waiver or reduction for qualified applicants.

⁷¹ Judicial Branch of the State of Wyoming. (2023). *Wyoming Judicial Branch strategic plan, FY2023-2024*. <https://www.wyocourts.gov/app/uploads/2025/02/Wyoming-Judicial-Branch-Strategic-Plan-Amended-by-WJC-06.12.2023.pdf>

2. Ensuring that the members of the bar are well trained and accessible.

- Explore incentives to promote practice in rural areas of Wyoming.
- Facilitate a mentoring program for attorneys.
- Explore opportunities for collaboration with the University of Wyoming and the Wyoming State Bar to enhance the skills of lawyers.

3. Providing resources for the courts to efficiently move cases to resolution.

- Investigate the possibility of expanding the role commissioners and magistrates play in the courts.
- Evaluate alternative approaches to resolving domestic relations cases and cases that involve families by:
 - » Exploring family courts.
 - » Investigating the shift of child support cases to the Office of Administrative Hearings.
 - » Exploring a position to screen and triage domestic relations cases.
- Improve the reports Judges can use to manage their dockets.
- Investigate positions for circuit courts – circuit court judicial assistant and circuit court law clerk.

[Exercise 6](#) provides an overview for developing goals and strategies based on the priority areas you defined in [Worksheet 5.2](#).

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 6

Craft Goals and Strategies

PURPOSE:

Identify goals and strategies for each of your court's strategic priority areas. It is important to be conservative in the number of goals and strategies identified for each area. For example, if the FRC Team identifies 4 priority areas, 2 goals for each area, and 3 strategies for each goal, the exercise will result in 24 initiatives to undertake across a 3–5-year period. Each of these may result in several projects and activities. There is no set number of goals and strategies, but the size, resources, and capacity of your court should be taken into consideration as you undertake this exercise. The focus is not on everything you want to do but on those issues that are the most important and urgent to prepare the court for today and the future. At the conclusion of the exercise, the Team should have a completed version of [Worksheet 6.1](#). [Table 6.1](#) below shows an example of a worksheet for two hypothetical priority areas for Court A.

EXERCISE

TABLE 6.1 EXAMPLE

Court A Goals & Strategies for Two Hypothetical Priority Areas

Priority Area	Summary Description	Illustrative Goals & Strategies
1. Include a Forward-Looking, Anticipatory Capacity in Court Governance	<i>Example. We need to build a future-literate court workforce with a capacity to anticipate change, focus on the future-readiness of existing policies and practices, and develop new policies and court operations that take advantage of scientific insights and technological innovations.</i>	GOAL 1: Enhance strategic foresight in court leadership. Develop the capacity of court leaders and staff to anticipate and respond to emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities affecting the judiciary. • Strategy 1: Implement training programs for court leaders and staff focused on scenario planning, trend analysis, and strategic foresight. • Strategy 2: Offer opportunities for judges and court staff to engage in education and training focused on skills to navigate future challenges, such as adaptability, visionary thinking, and emotional intelligence. • Strategy 3: Create a dedicated committee or task force to monitor trends, analyze risks, and propose forward-looking policies and practices. GOAL 2: Engage stakeholders in future-planning. Create mechanisms for collaboration and dialogue with stakeholders (e.g., legal professionals, government agencies, and the public) to identify emerging trends and shape future governance priorities. • Strategy 1: Use surveys, focus groups, and other tools to gather input from court users and the public to understand their expectations and how the court can contribute positively to societal challenges. • Strategy 2: Work with experts in various fields to identify emerging trends that could influence the delivery of justice in our jurisdiction. Other goals?

EXERCISE

Priority Area	Summary Description	Illustrative Goals & Strategies
2: Focus on User-Centered Experience & Inclusive Design	<i>Example. We need to fully adopt a user-centered and inclusive design for all court operations to address the needs and experiences of all who seek legal remedies, including those from all demographic and economic groups and those with behavioral health and disability issues.</i>	GOAL 1: Enhance accessibility for all court users. Ensure that court services, processes, and facilities are accessible to individuals of all abilities, backgrounds, and circumstances. • Strategy 1: Regularly gather input from court users, including litigants, attorneys, and the public, to understand their needs, challenges, and preferences. • Strategy 2: Provide virtual court services, such as online filing, remote hearings, and video conferencing, to reduce geographic and logistical barriers. • Strategy 3: Increase access for individuals with limited resources and access to technology. GOAL 2: Improve the quality of court user experiences. Design court processes and interactions to be user-friendly, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the people the court serves. • Strategy 1: Redesign court forms, instructions, and communications to be simple, clear, and free from legal jargon, ensuring they are understandable to non-lawyers. • Strategy 2: Offer court materials and interpretation services in multiple languages to address the needs of non-English-speaking or limited-English-proficient users. • Strategy 3: Deploy court navigators, self-help kiosks, or online tools to guide users through court processes and reduce confusion. Develop new tools to address user feedback about challenges and preferences. • Strategy 4: Encourage all staff to adopt a user-centered mindset through training, performance measurement, and rewards. Other goals?

STEP 1.

Identify goals. Populate the first two columns in [Worksheet 6.1](#) (following these instructions) with the vulnerability areas and summary descriptions you selected as the top priorities in [Worksheet 5.2](#).

STEP 2.

Review any stakeholder information you gathered in [Step 1 of Exercise 4](#) as background for your work and discussions.

STEP 3.

In a group setting, identify potential goals for each area. One approach is to take a few minutes for each team member to identify potential goals for the priority areas. Following this individual work, a facilitator asks each member to identify one goal on the person's list and records it for all to see. No discussion or evaluation of ideas takes place at this point. The facilitator asks the next person to identify a goal not already listed. This process continues until all goals have been recorded without duplication.⁷² At this point, the group reviews the list of goals, seeks clarification, and adds description as needed without debating or critiquing the individual goals. Once the goals have been clarified, the facilitator asks each team member to individually rank the goals. The facilitator collects and tallies the rankings to determine the group's collective priorities. The results are shared with the team. At this point the team discusses the goals and comes to a consensus regarding which and how many goals to include for each priority area. The agreed upon goals are included in [Worksheet 6.1](#).

STEP 4.

The process for identifying strategies for each goal is similar to that used to identify goals for each priority area. Multiple strategies may address the same goal. FRC Team members should consider strategies that address the goal and are also practical in terms of resources, capacity, and time.

⁷² An alternative approach, provided your court approves of using an AI chat tool, is to ask for suggestions for goals based on the title and summary of the priority area included in the first two columns of [Worksheet 6.1](#). The FRC Team could then review the suggested goals for relevancy and customize to better fit the court's needs.

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 6.1

Goals & Strategies for Each Priority Area in Strategic Plan

Priority Area	Summary Description	Goals & Strategies
Priority Area 1:		GOAL 1: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: GOAL 2: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: Other goals?

EXERCISE

Priority Area	Summary Description	Goals & Strategies
Priority Area 2:		GOAL 1: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: GOAL 2: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: Other goals?

EXERCISE

Priority Area	Summary Description	Goals & Strategies
Priority Area 3:		GOAL 1: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: GOAL 2: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: Other goals?

EXERCISE

Priority Area	Summary Description	Goals & Strategies
Priority Area 4:		GOAL 1: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: GOAL 2: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: Other goals?

EXERCISE

Priority Area	Summary Description	Goals & Strategies
Priority Area 5:		GOAL 1: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: GOAL 2: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: Other goals?

EXERCISE

Priority Area	Summary Description	Goals & Strategies
Priority Area 6:		GOAL 1: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: GOAL 2: • Strategy 1: • Strategy 2: • Strategy 3: Other goals?

CHAPTER 9

SP Activity 4: Develop Action Plan

“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.”

Alan Lakein, 1973⁷³

The last SP activity is to translate the strategic goals and strategies into detailed, actionable activities and tasks. The action plan serves as a bridge between long-term strategic goals and the day-to-day activities necessary to achieve them. The action plan typically covers a shorter time frame, such as a year, and focuses on specific activities/projects, resources, and responsibilities.

Creating the action plan involves representatives from across the organization to ensure efforts build on and do not duplicate current projects and initiatives and to enlist expertise to generate new approaches to address each strategy. It is important to consider the number of new projects the court can effectively implement. Once a list of projects/activities is created for each strategy, the FRC Team and court leadership determine priorities and the overall timeline for implementing them. The timeline provides an indication of which activities need to occur before others.

Another consideration regarding the number of projects and initiatives to include in the plan is the budget needed to implement the strategies. Some strategies (e.g., building capacity to capture more individual case level data) may require more or new resources. Others may be possible to achieve by repurposing current resources, staff, and practices, or by working with community partners. Building in funding considerations and increasing capacity in specific areas of expertise could be added as one of the first activities for implementing a strategy which the court cannot immediately undertake.

[Exercise 7](#) provides an example of an action plan.



73 Lakein, A. (1989). *How to get control of your time and your life*. Signet.

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 7

Develop Action Plan

PURPOSE:

Prepare an action plan for implementing your strategic goals and strategies. In consultation with the FRC Team, court leadership, department heads, and other stakeholders necessary to implement the strategic plan, complete [Worksheet 7.1](#) for each of the goals and strategies identified in [Worksheet 6.1](#) (see hypothetical example for first project/initiative for Strategy 1 in the [example worksheet](#)). Once all the initiatives and projects are defined (duplicate worksheet tables as needed for each goal and strategy), the FRC Team reviews the entire list and suggests which initiatives to begin in Year 1 based on their priority, level of resources needed, and sequencing to ensure related projects follow one another as needed. This list is shared with the larger stakeholder group for review and agreement.

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 7.1 *EXAMPLE*

Action Plan for Each Priority Area in Strategic Plan

Strategic Action Plan							
Priority Area: <i>Improve court user experiences</i>							
Goal 1: <i>Enhance accessibility for all court users</i>							
Strategy	Project/ Initiatives	Timeline	Lead/ Responsible Entity	Other Entities	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)	Effort High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)	Notes
Strategy 1: <i>Regularly gather input from court users regarding their experiences</i>	P/I 1: <i>Implement CourTool Measure 1: Access & Fairness survey or similar tool.</i>	<i>6 mo/Begin YR 1; repeat annually</i>	<i>Jones (IT)</i>	• Court Services • Research	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>CourTool Measure 1: www.ncsc.org/ our-centers- projects/ courtools</i>
	P/I 2:						
	P/I 3:						

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 7.1

Action Plan for Each Priority Area in Strategic Plan

Strategic Action Plan							
Priority Area:							
Goal #:							
Strategy	Project/ Initiatives	Timeline	Lead/ Responsible Entity	Other Entities	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)	Effort High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)	Notes
Strategy 1:	P/I 1:						
	P/I 2:						
	P/I 3:						

EXERCISE

Strategic Action Plan							
Priority Area:							
Goal #:							
Strategy	Project/ Initiatives	Timeline	Lead/ Responsible Entity	Other Entities	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)	Effort High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)	Notes
Strategy 2:	P/I 1:						
	P/I 2:						
	P/I 3:						

EXERCISE

Strategic Action Plan							
Priority Area:							
Goal #:							
Strategy	Project/ Initiatives	Timeline	Lead/ Responsible Entity	Other Entities	Priority High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)	Effort High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)	Notes
Strategy 3:	P/I 1:						
	P/I 2:						
	P/I 3:						

SECTION 3

Executing & Adapting

The background is a solid orange color. In the lower half, there are two thin, white, curved lines that sweep across the page. One line starts from the bottom left and curves towards the right. The other line starts from the bottom right and curves towards the left, intersecting the first line.

CHAPTER 10

E&A Activity 1: Implement Plan

“Without strategy, execution is aimless. Without execution, strategy is useless.”

Morris Chang⁷⁴

Implementing an action plan is the crucial stage in which planning transitions to execution. Effective execution ensures that the strategic action plan translates into measurable results.

At this point, the FRC Team may want to revisit its composition to determine if members should be added or replaced as the plan moves into execution and monitoring. It would be good to keep at least some members of the FRC Team involved in monitoring to ensure continuity with the strategic thinking behind the plan and ensure a future focus as well as an operational focus as the plan moves forward. The size of the FRC Monitoring Team will depend on the size of the jurisdiction and the number of strategic priorities and initiatives included in the plan. A large jurisdiction may want to create separate implementation teams for each priority area with one representative serving on the FRC Monitoring Team which is tasked with overseeing progress on the entire plan.

The Monitoring Team should establish a strategic plan review and governance process that identifies members, roles, and how often the Team will meet. The following are other key considerations for the Monitoring Team as plan implementation gets underway.

- **Monitoring Progress.** How will progress on the action plan be monitored? You can use a basic chart like the one in [Worksheet 8.1](#) or a more sophisticated version from one of the many software programs available for project management. Some of these programs allow for real-time tracking of progress and allow you to create visualization

74 This quote is often attributed to Morris Chang, founder of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company. See, for example, Powell, J. (2024, February 22). *Building the bridge between strategy and execution*. Forbes Business Development Council, Council Post. <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinessdevelopmentcouncil/2024/02/21/building-the-bridge-between-strategy-and-execution/>

charts and dashboards to easily see the progress being made in each priority area. No matter which progress chart you decide to use, it is important to review it at regular intervals to identify areas that are progressing well and those that may need more attention. Conducting brief “stand-up” meetings on a frequent basis is one method for keeping team members updated with each other’s work, making sure everyone is in the loop and aligned with the plan, surfacing potential risks and challenges before they cause significant delays, and reinforcing collaborative problem solving.⁷⁵

- **Monitoring Outcomes.** What key indicators will be used to evaluate whether the strategic plan is meeting its goals? Performance metrics should include both outputs and outcomes (e.g., conducted X number of workshops and increased staff knowledge on topics x, y, and z).⁷⁶ Qualitative approaches like stakeholder interviews, surveys, and focus groups can provide valuable context and feedback to quantitative measures such as case processing times, staff turnover rates, cost reductions, and number of individuals provided with specific services. [Worksheet 8.2](#) provides a table for recording key metrics for each goal.
- **Assigning and Monitoring Plan Resources.** How will financial and staff resources be allocated and monitored across the plan’s initiatives and projects? What is the protocol for asking for additional resources? How will expenditures be monitored to ensure they stay within budget?
- **Communication.** How will information about the plan and its progress be communicated to staff and stakeholders throughout the implementation phase? How often will information about the plan be provided and in what format?
- **Training and Support.** How will those tasked with implementing parts of the plan be supported? How will the need for specific training be assessed and addressed? How will momentum and enthusiasm be maintained?

75 Stand-up meetings are usually associated with software development efforts, but they can be adapted to serve as a check-in regarding progress on each strategic initiative. Often, they are conducted on a daily basis, but the team can determine how frequently to meet (e.g., daily, weekly) to ensure the meetings are productive and effective. The team may determine that daily check-ins are needed while focused on some initiative tasks and weekly meetings make more sense when conducting more long-range tasks. See, for example, Microsoft 365. (2024, February 1). *What are stand-up meetings and how can you make the most of them?* <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365-life-hacks/organization/what-are-stand-up-meetings>

76 See examples of performance measures in Section 1.2.C on p. 12 in the National Association for Court Management (n.d.) *Curriculum design for strategic planning*. <https://nacmnet.org/curriculum/strategic-plan/>.

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 8

Implement Plan

PURPOSE:

Track and report progress on executing the action plan.

STEP 1:

Use a chart like the one in [Worksheet 8.1](#) or with one of the many software programs available for project management. Some of these programs allow for real-time tracking of progress and allow you to create visualization charts and dashboards to easily see the progress being made on each goal. The first row in [Worksheet 8.1](#) provides an example.

STEP 2:

Use [Worksheet 8.2](#) to identify output and outcome measures to evaluate how well each strategy is addressing each strategic goal. The first row in [Worksheet 8.2](#) provides an example from [Worksheet 8.1](#). Continue adding rows to address each goal in each priority area.

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 8.1 EXAMPLE

Action Plan Progress

Strategic Action Plan							
Priority Area: <i>Improve court user experiences</i>							
Goal #: <i>Enhance accessibility for all court users</i>							
Strategy	Project/ Initiative	Timeline	Lead/ Entity	Other Entities	Status (NS, IP, C) ¹	Budget/Resources Status	Issues/Modifications Needed
Strategy 1: <i>Regularly gather input from court users regarding their experiences</i>	P/I 1: <i>Implement CourTool Measure 1: Access & Fairness survey or similar tool.</i>	6 mo/ Begin YR 1; repeat annually	Jones (IT)	• Court Services • Research		• Budget is on target • Will need researchers to prepare report	<i>Risk: Survey should not be launched during holidays; may need to delay for a month.</i>
	P/I 2:						
	P/I 3:						

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 8.1

Action Plan Progress

Strategic Action Plan							
Priority Area:							
Goal #:							
Strategy	Project/ Initiative	Timeline	Lead/ Entity	Other Entities	Status (NS, IP, C)¹	Budget/Resources Status	Issues/Modifications Needed
Strategy 1:	P/I 1:						
	P/I 2:						
	P/I 3:						

EXERCISE

Strategic Action Plan							
Priority Area:							
Goal #:							
Strategy	Project/ Initiative	Timeline	Lead/ Entity	Other Entities	Status (NS, IP, C) ¹	Budget/Resources Status	Issues/Modifications Needed
Strategy 2:	P/I 1:						
	P/I 2:						
	P/I 3:						

EXERCISE

Strategic Action Plan							
Priority Area:							
Goal #:							
Strategy	Project/ Initiative	Timeline	Lead/ Entity	Other Entities	Status (NS, IP, C)¹	Budget/Resources Status	Issues/Modifications Needed
Strategy 3:	P/I 1:						
	P/I 2:						

¹ NS=not started, IP=in progress, C=Complete

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 8.2

Monitoring Strategic Plan Performance

Priority Area:		
Goal #:		
Strategy	Output Measures	Outcome Measures
Strategy 1:		
Strategy 2:		
Strategy 3:		

EXERCISE

Priority Area:		
Goal #:		
Strategy	Output Measures	Outcome Measures
Strategy 1:		
Strategy 2:		
Strategy 3:		

CHAPTER 11

E&A Activity 2: Monitor Trends & Signals

“Monitoring is the ongoing observation and analysis of information and data to identify current developments, trends, and shifts within a company or organization’s environment.”

Jana Lingrun⁷⁷

Monitoring trends and signals helps ensure that your strategic plan remains effective, relevant, and aligned with the evolving external environment. Being vigilant about changes in the environment allows you to adjust the plan to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate risks unknown or not understood when the plan was initially created.

The first component of the Future Ready Courts Framework includes strategic foresight activities intended to inform the development of the court’s strategic priorities and goals. This Executing and Adapting component of the Framework reinforces the importance of engaging in strategic foresight thinking throughout the implementation phase as well. As was discussed in [Chapter 1](#), the rapidly changing and hyperconnected world within which courts currently operate demands a constant focus on the relevance of the plan as new social and technological disruptions (positive or negative) occur. The strategic plan, once created, should not be seen as a static document but as a living, dynamic document requiring constant attention and updating as needed.

The FRC Monitoring Team should establish a regular monitoring process for gathering information on emerging trends and drivers of change, particularly those with potential impact on the court’s strategic priorities. Key considerations for the Monitoring Team follow.

⁷⁷ Lingrun, J. (2025, August 29). *Monitoring: Real-time Monitoring of Business Processes*. 4strat. <https://www.4strat.com/analysis/monitoring-en/#~:text=WHAT%20ROLE%20DOES%20MONITORING%20PLAY,and%20ensure%20long%2Dterm%20success>

- **Who Will Monitor Trends?** The monitoring process should specify who is responsible for monitoring emerging trends and drivers of change to ensure accountability and continuity for this activity. One or two individuals can be charged with monitoring trends across a variety of social and technological areas, or several people can be designated to focus on specific areas (e.g., the economy, public trust in government, changing demographics). Individuals can be members of the FRC Monitoring Team or other members of the court interested in keeping track of changes in various areas. Whichever approach is taken, designating specific individuals with monitoring emerging trends and potential disruptions will ensure a focus on the future informs the court's strategic thinking and decision making.
- **How Often Will Trends be Reviewed and Updated?** The monitoring process should specify how often a scan of emerging trends should take place. To some extent, this will depend on the court's available resources. Given the pace of change, a quarterly review will help identify issues that could disrupt (positively or negatively) strategic plan priorities, goals, and strategies. Given specific concerns in your jurisdiction (e.g., changes in the economy, behavioral health issues, regulatory changes) and their implications for the court's strategic priorities, the FRC Monitoring Team may opt to review emerging trends in some areas more or less frequently.
- **What Will the Review Entail?** Monitors should review recent environmental scans in specific areas and generally keep an eye out for news articles and other media focused on the drivers of change identified in [Worksheet 1.1](#). Monitors should also review court data (e.g., the number and composition of court cases, number of litigants using digital options to conduct court business) to assess whether trends are essentially staying the same or changing in some way. Other sources of information are members of the FRC Monitoring Team, and judges and staff involved in the strategic planning implementation process. Are they noticing any changes at the ground level that may not yet be noticeable at a broader level?
- **How Will Information Be Shared with the FRC Monitoring Team?** The monitors should prepare a report summarizing any new information on the drivers of change identified in [Worksheet 1.1](#), and any new drivers of change that seem particularly relevant to the court's strategic priority areas. The report should also highlight any potential disruptions the new information presents to the strategic plan priorities, goals, or initiatives. [Worksheet 9.1](#) provides an example of this report. Possible implications for any of the strategic priority areas should be discussed with the FRC Monitoring Team to determine if adjustments to the strategic plan are warranted.

EXERCISE

EXERCISE 9

Monitor Trends & Signals

PURPOSE:

Review and update [Worksheet 1.1](#) (see [Exercise 1](#)) regarding social and technological drivers of change and their potential implications for the court's strategic priorities, goals, and strategies.

STEP 1.

Create [Worksheet 9.1](#) (see example below) by copying the final version of [Worksheet 1.1](#) created for Exercise 1 and making the following changes:⁷⁹

- The third column has been changed to “Updated Local Signals” from “Local Signals/ Examples.”
- The fourth column has been changed to “Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System’s Strategic Priorities” from “Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System.”

STEP 2.

Review the local signals you initially identified in the third column regarding what is happening in your jurisdiction related to each of the drivers of change included in the first column. Based on your review of current and emerging trends (see “What Will the Review Entail?” in [Chapter 11](#)), are the local signals still accurate or should they be updated? Add information to each cell in the third column regarding the review date and whether or not the signals were updated (see example for racial justice and equality in [Worksheet 9.1](#)). Indicate in the fourth column whether the updated information has implications for one or more of the court's strategic priorities. Does the new information indicate potential risks or opportunities that might affect implementation of the strategic plan?

Finally, if the review identifies new drivers of change or emerging trends that were not previously included in the worksheet, they can be added as new rows to monitor in the future.

STEP 3.

Share the updated version of [Worksheet 9.1](#) with the FRC Monitoring Team and discuss whether any changes in the court's strategic plan are warranted based on the new information.

⁷⁹ If you did not complete [Exercise 1](#) earlier, you can start the exercise with completing [Worksheet 9.1](#) based on scanning current and emerging trends relevant to your jurisdiction for each of the drivers of change in the first column.

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 9.1 *EXAMPLE*

Updated Drivers of Change & Implications for Strategic Plan

Date:

Driver	Description	Updated Local Signals	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System's Strategic Priorities
RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY	The 2020 global protests about systemic racism, sparked by a succession of high-profile police brutality cases suffered by Black Americans, has heightened the visibility of differential treatment of individuals by race and ethnicity and renewed calls to address continued inequality.	<i>Date: No changes made.</i> <i>List of signals from Worksheet 1.1.</i>	<i>Date: No additional implications to consider.</i>
INCOME INEQUALITY	Income inequality in the U.S. continues to rise and has profound effects on the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.		

EXERCISE

WORKSHEET 9.1

Updated Drivers of Change & Implications for Strategic Plan

Date:

Driver	Description	Updated Local Signals	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System's Strategic Priorities
RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY	The 2020 global protests about systemic racism, sparked by a succession of high-profile police brutality cases suffered by Black Americans, has heightened the visibility of differential treatment of individuals by race and ethnicity and renewed calls to address continued inequality.		
INCOME INEQUALITY	Income inequality in the U.S. continues to rise and has profound effects on the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Updated Local Signals	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System's Strategic Priorities
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES	Public institutions face a growing demand for easily accessible services on digital platforms, designed from a user's perspective, though challenged by limited budgets, outdated technology, and concerns over data security.		
TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS	The fracturing of public trust in institutions continues apace with increasingly deep divides among Americans related to confidence in the transparency and accuracy of government data and policies, media reports, and political parties. These divisions vary substantially by identity (e.g., age, gender, race), disposable income, and education.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Updated Local Signals	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System's Strategic Priorities
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES	Substance use and mental health disorders, already prevalent across society, have increased with the chronic nature of stress associated with the 2020 covid-19 pandemic, uncertain economy, and racial and social inequities.		
CYBERTHREATS & DISINFORMATION	Cyberthreats and disinformation campaigns continue to expand and evolve, accelerated by the rapid transformation of many private and public sector businesses to remote operations during the covid-19 pandemic.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Updated Local Signals	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System's Strategic Priorities
DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION	Significant shifts in population demographics such as age, gender, race, birth and death rates, education levels, income levels, and family size pose challenges for government, business, and society.		
PROFESSIONAL REGULATION	Current models of professional regulation and licensing, impacting who can develop, provide, and access goods and services, are increasingly facing criticism for stifling innovation and flexibility in responding to consumer needs and restricting consumer choices. This phenomenon is forcing professions and government entities to re-think their business models to remain relevant.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Updated Local Signals	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System's Strategic Priorities
IMPACT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS	Civic activation, supported by social media and philanthropic agents, is rising sharply and spurring change on a variety of social issues with potentially significant effects on the current roles, responsibilities, and operations of various public institutions.		
DATA-DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONS	The public sector relies increasingly on data and advanced data analytics to inform decision making and optimize performance. Tools for capturing and using data grow more sophisticated and broadly available, eliminating the need for specialized expertise and resulting in real-time use of information for management and decision making.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Updated Local Signals	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System's Strategic Priorities
CLIMATE CHANGE	Despite mitigation efforts, global warming continues, affecting areas such as human health (including potential pandemics), the quantity and quality of water, energy, transportation, agriculture, forests, and ecosystems.		
CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF WORK	The fundamental meaning and nature of work is evolving rapidly as a result of digital and augmented intelligence, shifts from physical to virtual spaces, multi-generational expectations of the work environment and job satisfaction, and the need for new and different skill sets to accommodate new and reconceptualized jobs.		

EXERCISE

Driver	Description	Updated Local Signals	Possible Implications for Your Court/Court System's Strategic Priorities
ECONOMY	The Congressional Budget Office projects a slow but steady improvement in economic growth over the next several years, with an associated decline in the unemployment rate to pre-pandemic levels. While the national debt remains high, federal revenues are projected to increase as a result of the expiration of temporary pandemic-related expenses, scheduled increases in taxes, and other factors.		
ADDITIONAL DRIVER OF CHANGE FOR JURISDICTION			

1 NS=not started, IP=in progress, C=Complete

CHAPTER 12

E&A Activity 3: Evaluate & Adjust Plan

“All failure is failure to adapt, all success is successful adaptation.”

Max McKewon⁷⁸

This activity requires the FRC Monitoring Team to determine 1) whether any new information on emerging trends and signals (see [E&A Activity 2](#)) warrants changes to the court’s strategic plan and 2) if implemented actions are achieving the plan’s stated goals. Regular evaluation allows the FRC Monitoring Team to make informed decisions about adjustments to ensure the plan takes into consideration evolving changes in the environment and to ensure effort and resources are being used effectively. Ongoing reviews also demonstrate accountability and can enhance motivation by making improvements as issues arise.

As discussed in [Chapter 11](#), the resiliency of the plan depends on adjustments, as needed, to address potential disruptions as identified by the monitoring process. In addition, responding to emerging trends demonstrates commitment to a proactive and forward-thinking approach, enhancing public trust and confidence in the viability of the court system.

The FRC Monitoring Team should review [Worksheet 9.1: Updated Drivers of Change & Implications for Strategic Plan](#) and determine whether any of the descriptions of the priority areas, goals, and/or strategies in [Worksheet 6.1: Goals & Strategies for Each Priority Area in Strategic Plan](#) should be modified in light of new information on emerging trends. Based on this review, the Monitoring Team should determine whether:

- Updates to [Worksheet 9.1](#) on emerging trends are minimal and, consequently, no updates to [Worksheet 6.1](#) are currently needed;
- Updates to [Worksheet 9.1](#) highlight emerging trends to watch in future reviews but do not indicate a need to modify [Worksheet 6.1](#) at this time; or

78 McKewon, M. (2012). *Adaptability: The art of winning in an age of uncertainty*. Kogan Page.

- Updates to [Worksheet 9.1](#) identify emerging trends that warrant updates to one or more strategic priorities, goals, and/or strategies in [Worksheet 6.1](#). If an emerging trend is potentially disruptive on a large scale (e.g., signals of the pandemic in 2019), it may warrant adding a new strategic priority area to the strategic plan. If less disruptive, it may require more modest modifications to the existing plan.

If modifications to the strategic plan are deemed necessary, the FRC Monitoring Team should revise [Worksheet 8.1: Action Plan Progress](#) to reflect the changes. The Monitoring Team should consider the impact on specific goals and strategies as well as the plan in its entirety. For example, do the modifications indicate a need to increase resources and accelerate the timeline for some projects while delaying others?

Any changes should be clearly documented and communicated to those implementing the plan. If changes to the plan are significant, an updated plan should also be shared with stakeholders.

In addition to updating the plan based on new emerging trends, the FRC Monitoring Team should periodically review the status of output and outcome measures in [Worksheet 8.2: Monitoring Strategic Plan Performance](#). Is information available on the performance measures? If not, is the plan still on target? If performance information is available, what does it suggest? Are adjustments needed (e.g., initial assumptions about the availability of experts did not materialize)? Are new measures warranted given changes in the plan based on emerging trends? Incorporating such routine reviews allows the Monitoring Team to track progress on the plan and measure the success of the plan in addressing the strategic priority areas. It enables adjustments to be made in a timely manner and ensures that resources continue to be deployed where most needed. Regular review of performance measures supports accountability, informed decision making, and a continued focus on the court's strategic priorities.

Your feedback is appreciated!

Please fill out this short [feedback form](#) to let us know how useful you found this Guide in expanding your thinking about strategic planning, what you found helpful, and what improvements we can make to future versions of the Guide.

NCSC

ncsc.org