

# 2024 - 2028 Strategic Agenda

*Pause, Reset, Design Our Path Forward*



**King County Superior Court  
&  
Department of Judicial Administration**



**King County  
Superior Court**





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## Table of Contents

Letter from the Presiding Judge and Chief Administrative Officer .....	ii
2023 Strategic Planning Committee.....	ii
2024 – 2028 Strategic Agenda .....	1
Overview .....	1
Mission, Vision, and Values.....	4
Strategic Focus Areas, Long-Range Goals, and Strategies .....	5
Strategic Focus Area 1: Enhance the Court User Experience.....	6
Strategic Focus Area 2: Enrich the Employee Experience .....	9
Strategic Focus Area 3: Improve Court Facilities, Safety, and Security.....	12
Strategic Focus Area 4: Be an Adaptive, Innovative, and Responsive Court .....	14
Attachment 1: Trends Analysis and Scenarios .....	16
Attachment 2: Organizational Assessment.....	22
Appendices*:	
A. <a href="#">Understanding the External Landscape: External Trends</a>	
B. <a href="#">2024-2028 KCSC Strategic Planning: Internal Trends Review</a>	
C. <a href="#">Strategic Planning Survey Report: Overview and Findings</a>	

\*Please e-mail [SCweb@kingcounty.gov](mailto:SCweb@kingcounty.gov) to request linked appendices.

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## Letter from the Presiding Judge and Chief Administrative Officer

We are pleased to present the 2024-2028 Strategic Agenda for King County Superior Court.

To prepare this 5-year strategic plan, the Court has spent the last year examining our current challenges and opportunities. We reviewed new and exciting ways in which our service delivery model was altered as a result of the pandemic; considered trends impacting courts locally and across the country; and gathered input from court users and justice system partners to determine what we're doing well and how we might improve. This information has been invaluable in assisting the Court to chart our strategic course for the next five years, beginning in 2024. The attachments appended to this document contain more information, including trends analyses and survey results.

In the following pages you will see our updated mission statement, vision for the future, and core values that serve as the foundation for all we do. Through goal statements and objectives, we detail specific areas requiring focus and work towards improvement. As a companion to this document, an operational plan will be developed annually to accompany this report and will chart a 12-month plan of action to guide work in areas we've prioritized as being most important and impactful.

During this development period the Court renewed our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and endeavored to infuse these core values and principles throughout this document as they do in our daily work, whether from the bench, at the front desk, or when supporting our core functions.

We are greatly appreciative of our Executive Committee and Sr. Leadership Team, both instrumental in taking on this work and developing the final plan that has been approved by the full bench. This team of judicial officers and staff came together to discuss at length the needed course of action for our court organization. We thank them for their teamwork, conscientious attention, and dedication to this effort in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Special thanks to our consultant, Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey of Praxis, Inc., who has led this effort in an inclusive, informed way, serving as our able coach to assist in developing the document that will serve as our guidepost in the years ahead.

King County Superior Court is a national leader and an exemplary court of general jurisdiction, and it is only through the tireless efforts of our bench and staff that have made it so. As a collective, we are committed to remaining at the forefront of excellence in providing justice and court services accessible to all who enter the courthouse doors, whether by entering the courthouse building or engaging by way of virtual connection.



Patrick Oishi  
Presiding Judge  
King County Superior Court



Linda K. Ridge  
Chief Administrative Officer  
King County Superior Court

*The mission of King County Superior Court is to equitably serve the diverse public by administering justice through accessible, inclusive, and unbiased forums for the fair, understandable, and timely resolution of legal matters.*

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## 2023 Strategic Planning Committee

Hon. Patrick Oishi  
Presiding Judge

Hon. Janet Helson  
Superior Court Judge

Hon. Ketu Shah  
Assistant Presiding Judge & Chief Criminal Judge

Hon. Nelson K. H. Lee  
Superior Court Judge

Hon. Johanna Bender  
Chief Maleng Regional Justice Center Judge

Hon. Maureen McKee  
Superior Court Judge

Hon. Sean P. O'Donnell  
Chief Unified Family Court Judge

Hon. Nicole Gaines Phelps  
Superior Court Judge

Hon. Tanya L. Thorp  
Chief Civil Judge

Hon. Andrea Robertson  
Superior Court Judge

Hon. Melinda Young  
Chief Clark Children & Family Justice Center Judge

Hon. Michael Scott  
Superior Court Judge

Ms. Linda Ridge  
Chief Administrative Officer

Hon. Josephine Wiggs  
Superior Court Judge

Ms. Jorene Reiber  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Ms. Rachael DeVillar  
Director, Court Operations

Mr. Paul Daniels  
Director, Juvenile Court

Mr. Andy Hill  
Director, Information Technology

Mr. Steve Davis  
Director, Business & Finance

Ms. Judith Hullett  
Director, Human Resources

Ms. Catherine Cornwall  
Director, Department of Judicial Administration  
County Clerk

Ms. Melinda Johnson Taylor  
Director, Family Court Operations

Ms. Beth Freeman  
Deputy Director, Department of Judicial  
Administration

Mr. Matthew Hodgman  
Project/Program Manager,  
Bailiff Representative

Ms. Amy Roe  
Communications Manager

Ms. Beth Taylor  
Project/Program Manager

Dr. Brenda J. Wagenknecht-Ivey  
CEO, PRAXIS Consulting, Inc. (Consultant)



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## 2024 – 2028 Strategic Agenda

October 26, 2023

### Overview

King County Superior Court (KCSC, the Court) and the Department of Judicial Administration (DJA) are pleased to present an updated 2024 - 2028 Strategic Agenda. The Strategic Agenda prioritizes building the public’s trust and confidence in the Court and ensuring racial and social equity and procedural due process for all people. The Strategic Agenda represents the Court and DJA’s commitment to providing legally sound and culturally responsive court interactions, programs, and customer services in support of King County’s diverse population, the Court’s stakeholders and workforce. It includes refreshed mission, vision, and core values statements and updated goals and strategies in four key areas:



The Court and DJA have a long history of thinking and planning strategically. Since the mid-1990s and nearly every five years thereafter, the Court and DJA have developed and used a Strategic Agenda as a compass for setting priorities and making improvements.

The implementation process has evolved and improved with each five-year Strategic Agenda. Initially, the Strategic Agenda was used primarily by judges’ committees to identify priorities and make improvements.

Improvements to how the Court implemented the Strategic Agenda were in direct response to a realization and concerns that only the Court’s leaders (i.e., Presiding Judge, Assistant Presiding Judge, Chief Judges, Executive Committee, CAO/DCAO, and Directors) were aware of and involved in working on strategic priorities. Judicial officers and staff throughout the Court were less, or not at all, involved in its execution and therefore, were unaware of and disconnected from the Court’s strategic priorities and improvement efforts. In recent years, however, the implementation process has been expanded to form Strategic Action Teams (SATs) comprised of managers and staff with judicial oversight and

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involvement. The SATs have worked on and completed initiatives related to court operations, delivery of court services, and other workforce-related matters.

There are many benefits to including judicial officers and employees in implementation efforts. For example, involving more people in implementation spreads the work beyond the Executive Committee, Judge Committees, and Directors, enabling the Court and DJA to accomplish more. It also engages more judicial officers and employees in making court-wide improvements, which builds connections and relationships among judicial officers and coworkers in other areas of the Court, helps people learn about other areas of the organization, and increases support for and commitment to major change and improvement initiatives. Additionally, it is a way to shine a spotlight on the Strategic Agenda and implementation thereof, and maintain momentum on important priorities, ensuring the Strategic Agenda remains a relevant tool for making decisions and targeting improvements.

Over the years, the Court and DJA have made many improvements based on priorities in the Strategic Agenda. Below are examples of recent accomplishments, thanks to the hard work of many judicial officers, administrators, managers, and employees.

1. Streamlined/improved process for petitioners seeking protection orders
2. Improved trial assignment process and procedures and reduced interpreter costs
3. Improved wayfinding and assistance to pro se litigants.
4. Instituted legislative outreach – invited state and local leaders to visit the Court and see the judiciary in action
5. Redesigned SharePoint
6. Conducted trauma awareness training
7. Hired a Public Information Officer
8. Implemented an Onboarding and Leadership/Career Development Program
9. Completed a Classification and Compensation Study

While the Court and DJA have experienced many changes and disruptions during the five years since the 2019-2023 Strategic Agenda was implemented including the historic global pandemic, the dedication of judicial officers and staff to the core mission, vision, and values of the organizations has remained constant and unwavering.

In the process of updating the Strategic Agenda through 2028, the Committee looked at a variety of metrics to help shape the priorities moving forward. This included reviewing internal case and departmental trends over the past 10-20 years, reviewing external trends across state courts nationwide, as well as the changing demographics of King County. Additionally, we administered three surveys: court staff and judicial officers; community partners, stakeholders, and members of the bar; and a court user survey which allowed survey respondents to provide feedback about their experience



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with the Court and DJA at the time of service. All of these efforts helped shape the direction of the Strategic Agenda and the Strategic Focus Areas described herein.

The 2024-2028 Strategic Agenda reflects adjustments made, lessons learned, and the new environment in which the Court operates, remaining steadfast in our commitment to the Court’s mission, vision, and values. It defines and provides the direction the Court and DJA will take over the next five years and is supported by the Court’s DEI Guiding Principles, Court Administration’s DEI Strategic Plan and Implementation Roadmap, and DJA’s DEI/ESJ initiatives. In combination, these efforts present a cohesive plan forward and a Court that is genuinely diverse, equitable, accessible, and inclusive.

## Mission, Vision, and Values

### MISSION

The mission of King County Superior Court is to equitably serve the diverse public by administering justice through accessible, inclusive, and unbiased forums for the fair, understandable, and timely resolution of legal matters.



### VISION

Be open to  
Be trusted by  
Provide justice for **ALL**

### CORE VALUES

#### FAIRNESS AND TIMELINESS

Act fairly, timely, and without bias, and ensure decisions are clear and equitable.

#### LEADERSHIP

Model leadership, excellence, civility, and high ethical standards at all levels and in all areas of the Court.

#### RESPECT

Be respectful and inclusive of all backgrounds and cultures.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

Ensure court proceedings and information are understandable to all, courthouses are barrier-free, and court services are accessible to all.

#### SAFETY

Provide a safe and secure courthouse for everyone, ensuring the right to witness and participate in the delivery of justice.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE

Assist court users in navigating the court system efficiently and effectively.

#### INNOVATION

Implement best practices and innovative programs / solutions to advance the Court and meet future needs.

#### COLLABORATION

Work with regional partners and stakeholders to achieve results that benefit all members of the community.



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## Strategic Focus Areas, Long-Range Goals, and Strategies

Strategic focus areas (SFAs) are significant issues or topics that are vitally important to the Court’s future success. They are areas of strategic importance. SFAs typically present as either challenges that must be addressed and/or overcome, and opportunities that should be seized.

Long range goals are the end targets the Court is striving to achieve in each of the strategic focus areas. Strategies are what the ways in which the Court/DJA will achieve the goals.

See the Court’s Annual Operational Plan for the specific strategic initiatives or projects the Court/DJA are working on to make progress in each are.

As the Court and DJA work on the following four strategic focus areas, all efforts will be aimed at ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion, and building the public’s trust and confidence in the Court and DJA.

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- 2024 - 2028 Strategic Focus Areas
  - 1 Enhance the Court User Experience
  - 2 Enrich the Employee Experience
  - 3 Improve Court Facilities, Safety, and Security
  - 4 Be an Adaptive, Innovative, and Responsive Court

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## Strategic Focus Area 1: Enhance the Court User Experience

The Court and DJA are committed to enhancing the court user experience by removing barriers to access for all our court users. Viewing services through a user-centric lens by coming to understand their experience with the Court and DJA from beginning to end will lead to ensuring equitable and linguistically responsive practices throughout all departments, courtrooms, and other points of service.

Specifically, the Court and DJA have identified needed improvements in the following areas, pursuant to the results of the 2023 Strategic Planning Survey, which was completed by nearly 250 court and DJA employees.

1. **Access and Services** – Areas for improvement include: (a) improving and expanding self-help, language assistance, and hybrid access and services (virtual and in-person); (b) increasing the availability and clarity of in-person and virtual wayfinding/ navigators through signage, digital information, in-person assistance and chat/text interfaces; and (c) increasing access points in communities for court users; and reducing the digital divide.
2. **Court and Community Programs and Services** – Areas for improvement include: (a) strengthening and expanding programs and services that address the current and evolving needs of court users such as diversion, treatment, restoration services for adults and youth, pre-trial services, juvenile probation, treatment courts, family law facilitators, Early Resolution Case Managers; and (b) achieving effective case outcomes (focus on disadvantaged customers).
3. **Timely and Fair Resolution** – Areas for improvement include: (a) improving scheduling and case management practices; (b) reducing backlogs; (c) ensuring procedural justice/fairness and equitable outcomes; and (d) developing and implementing consistent procedures for virtual and hybrid proceedings and services.
4. **Technology** – Areas for improvement include: using existing and emerging technologies to improve access, services, and court operations.
5. **Quality Data** – Areas for improvement include: (a) collecting and using reliable data to evaluate programs, services, and the experiences of court customers; and (b) using quality data to inform leadership, management, and operational decisions.

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## Goals and Strategies

### **Goal 1: The Court and DJA will be easily accessible and understandable to court users from all communities.**

#### Strategies:

- a. Evaluate court accessibility using a racial and social justice tool.
- b. Continue to assess and improve language access at all points of contact and make use of evolving technology consistent with our language access plan.
- c. Develop and improve resources and online processes and services that explain procedures and practices and assist court users, particularly for pro se litigants.
- d. Improve access to online information and forms.
- e. Provide in-person customer services engagement for court users at all courthouse locations.
- f. Improve access to those of all abilities (ADA, neurodiverse, individuals with visual and hearing impairments, etc.).

### **Goal 2: The Court and DJA will maintain and enhance virtual and online access to information and services.**

#### Strategies:

- a. Maintain and invest in technology infrastructure (e.g., DJA access terminals, improve website, etc.).
- b. Expand the use of existing and evolving technologies to enhance access and services (e.g., AI, live chat, hearing and appointment text reminders, etc.), and advocate for legislative support to fund their use.

### **Goal 3: All cases will be resolved in a timely and fair manner, in accordance with current time standards.**

#### Strategies:

- a. Educate judicial officers and staff on techniques and practices for effectively managing cases, reducing delay, and resolving legal matters in a timely manner.
- b. Use effective case management practices across the Court.
- c. Use data to identify sources of delay and avenues for improvement.
- d. Explore technologies to support scheduling/reminders of hearings and appointments.
- e. Increase juror diversity and participation rates.

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**Goal 4: The Court, in collaboration with community and justice system partners, will achieve positive outcomes in cases involving criminal charges, family safety, and/or behavioral health disorders.**

Strategies:

- a. Create a bridge to existing support services.
- b. Partner with relevant stakeholders and partners to expand behavioral health and treatment services (e.g., assisted outpatient treatment court, mental health sentencing alternative program, pre-trial diversion programs).
- c. Incorporate evidence based, restorative justice models in court operations.

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### Strategic Focus Area 2: Enrich the Employee Experience

Enriching the employee experience is a high priority for KCSC and DJA. The coronavirus pandemic disrupted and ultimately transformed the workplace, including how and where employees work. The expectations and needs of employees have changed, as have the expectations and needs of court users. The Court and DJA are adapting to the new normal. Both recognize the need to prepare now for the new future of work. This may include developing optimal human resource and management practices that ensure the highest quality of services to the public while also achieving high productivity, high retention rates, employee wellbeing and satisfaction, and a diverse, inclusive, and healthy work culture/environment.

The Court and DJA have identified needed improvements in the following areas:

1. **Strength of the Workplace** – Areas for improvement include: (a) talking with employees regularly about their progress; (b) providing praise and recognition for doing good work; (c) encouraging employee development; and (d) expanding opportunities for employee input.
2. **Court Culture, Communication, and Connection** – Areas for improvement include: (a) making employee wellbeing a high priority at the Court and DJA; (b) improving communication so employees feel informed about what is going on at their workplace; and (c) increasing opportunities for locationally separated team members to connect with each other (e.g., bailiffs, JPCs).
3. **Making the Court a Better Place to Work** – Areas for improvement include: (a) improving recruitment and hiring practices, with the intent to create a more diverse and talented workforce; (b) exhibiting strong leadership skills (e.g., connect with staff, improve communication, improve diversity); (c) building community and strengthen employee relationships; (d) providing training and growth and development opportunities; (e) providing mentoring opportunities; (f) improving pay, parking, and other benefits; (g) refining and expanding flexible and /or hybrid work arrangements; (h) improving the work environment; (i) improving safety in and around the courthouse; and (j) balancing workloads.

The Court and DJA will benefit greatly by enriching the employee experience. Doing so will demonstrate responsiveness to the feedback and suggestions of employees and will help the Court and DJA prepare for a workforce of the future.

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## Goals and Strategies

### **Goal 1: The KCSC and DJA’s workforces, at all levels of the organizations, will be diverse and representative of the community.**

#### Strategies:

- a. Apply a DEI lens to recruiting, hiring, and advancement opportunities ensuring diversity and equity throughout the organizations.
- b. Conduct targeted recruiting.
- c. Review and modify position qualifications highlighting positions that do not require advanced degrees.
- d. Measure, assess, and continually improve recruitment, hiring, and advancement results.
- e. Measure and report on progress toward diversity goals and metrics.
- f. Support development of front-line staff so they can be competitive for promotional opportunities.

### **Goal 2: SC and DJA employees are highly skilled and perform at the highest/peak levels.**

#### Strategies:

- a. Clarify job and role responsibilities.
- b. Strengthen onboarding of new employees – welcome and integrate into the mission, vision, values, and Court/DJA culture.
- c. Prioritize, including provide time for, training for all judicial officers and employees.
- d. Provide employees with regular feedback to improve work performance and job satisfaction.
- e. Ensure staff are cross-trained and have back-up support to always provide consistent levels of service.
- f. Develop and encourage employees to pursue growth and development opportunities (e.g., work in other divisions, stretch assignments, upskilling and reskilling, etc.).
- g. Provide mentorship opportunities to staff.
- h. Provide staff with resources and tools (e.g., develop training guides, procedures manuals) to perform well.

### **Goal 3: SC and DJA employees feel valued, supported, and connected to the mission of the organization and to one another (supporting a work culture of belonging).**

#### Strategies:

- a. Recognize and reward employee accomplishments.
- b. Create space and time for building community and connections including but not limited to affinity and ally groups.
- c. Communicate the work of the Court to everyone in the court to increase communication and information both within departments and across departments.
- d. Embrace and provide health and wellness support and training.



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- e. Evaluate and equitably distribute workloads according to staffing levels.
  - f. Provide employees with opportunities to be involved in improvement activities, have a voice, and work with leadership to implement change (e.g., strategic action teams).
  - g. Provide employees with opportunities to participate on projects outside their regular work, which will help build connections, increase engagement and satisfaction, and align work throughout the organization with the Court’s mission, vision, and core values.

**Goal 4: SC and DJA will advocate for and establish practices that achieve equity and parity for all employees.**

Strategies:

- a. Advocate for pay parity with other comparable county employee classifications.
- b. Advocate for parking parity at all locations.
- c. Communicate / keep employees informed about what leadership is doing to achieve equity and parity.
- d. Assess, identify, and eliminate practices that disadvantage BIPOC and historically marginalized groups (e.g., pay practices, educational and experience requirements, promotional opportunities, training/development opportunities, etc.).

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## Strategic Focus Area 3: Improve Court Facilities, Safety, and Security

The Court and DJA are committed to accessible, professional, and safe facilities that serve King County's diverse public. Our community's needs are complex, and we must strive to ensure that all court experiences are equitable for those accessing our services. Our facilities must be ADA compliant, and they must be safe and secure. All persons must feel comfortable conducting in-person court business. Being able to access a safe building is paramount to ensuring the public's trust and confidence in the court system.

Specifically, the Court and DJA have identified needed improvements in the following areas:

1. **Safety and Security** - Improvements to safety and security were among the highest rated priorities for the Court in the next 3-5 years, according to the 2023 Strategic Planning Survey results. Respondents suggested the Court improve access to all courthouse locations and public safety around them, and the functionality and suitability of the facilities.
2. **Access and Maintenance** - Areas for improvement include: (a) Ensuring affordable parking; (b) making facilities ADA accessible; (c) repurposing and modernizing spaces; (d) better cleaning and maintenance of facilities; (e) enhancing emergency preparedness, and (f) reviewing continuity of operations procedures.

### Goals and Strategies

**Goal 1: The Court will advocate for improved safety, in facilities and surrounding area, for judicial officers, employees, and court users.**

Strategies:

- a. Work with community partners and law enforcement to enhance public safety making the external / surrounding area of all courthouses safer.
- b. Continue training on personal safety, active shooter, and other emergency situations.

**Goal 2: Courthouses will be physically accessible and inclusive to all.**

Strategies:

- a. Enhance ADA compliance within all courthouses.
- b. Advocate for ADA accessibility for routes to and from the courthouses, as well as navigation throughout the courthouses.
- c. Increase resources for accommodating persons with disabilities.
- d. Improve maintenance and cleanliness of court facilities.

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- e. Evaluate current space for best uses.
  - f. Be involved in the facilities master planning including any plans to relocate or renovate the King County Courthouse.

**Goal 3: The Court and DJA are prepared for emergencies and/or crises.**

Strategies:

- a. Continually assess and update emergency and continuity of operations plans.
- b. Improve internal/external communications and coordinate response with other county agencies (e.g., FMD and Sheriff's Office).
- c. Continually assess and strengthen security of the networking environment, safeguarding confidential cases and employee information.
- d. Continue training on personal safety, active shooter, and other emergency situations.

## Strategic Focus Area 4: Be an Adaptive, Innovative, and Responsive Court

The Court and DJA strive to be an adaptive, innovative, and responsive court. As our community changes, we must be aware and change with it by collaborating with our community partners to ensure that our services and infrastructure are flexible and dynamic to support our diverse community and meet its specific needs. An adaptive, innovative, and responsive organization is one: (1) where leaders anticipate and prepare now for future challenges and opportunities; (2) that is prepared to respond and adapt quickly to changing circumstances; (3) that has a nimble and effective organizational and committee structure that promotes effective and swift decision-making; (4) that can shift and redeploy resources quickly as needed to meet demands; and (5) that tests and implements innovative practices and solutions.

Specifically, the Court and DJA have identified needed improvements in the following areas:

1. **Sustainable Funding** - Areas for improvement include: (a) projecting future funding needs; (b) advocating for stable and sustainable funding; and (c) prioritizing funding opportunities.
2. **Investment** – Areas for improvement include: (a) identifying and investing in new technologies that enhance access and services, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and streamline operations (e.g., apps, AI); and (b) empowering our current workforce and developing their skills as future leaders.
3. **Research and Improvement** – Areas for improvement include: (a) evaluating and rebalancing judicial and staff resources to meet changing workloads; and (b) implementing innovative and evidence-based programs and services that meet the needs of court users.
4. **Forward Thinking** - Participating in county master facilities planning efforts to the downtown civic campus to ensure that the Court, DJA, and our diverse communities’ needs are represented in the new space.

### Goals and Strategies

**Goal 1: The Court/DJA will have sustainable funding to fulfill its mission of serving the public by providing equitable and timely justice.**

Strategies:

- a. Advocate for essential funding for the Court and DJA in order to serve the community.
- b. Collect and use data to inform the analysis of funding needs.
- c. Investigate opportunities for expanded State, county, and grant funding for the Court and DJA.
- d. Maintain relationships and outreach to state, county, and city legislators and leaders.
- e. Build a coalition among partners to help advocate for adequate and stable funding (e.g., LCMR 6 Legislative Committee).

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**Goal 2: The Court and DJA will enhance overall performance and improve the delivery of services to a changing community.**

Strategies:

- a. Explore, assess, and invest in new innovative programs and services.
- b. Continually learn about and apply emerging best practices in the delivery of justice.
- c. Investigate and invest in new and evolving technologies, including AI and OCR.
- d. Build relationships with key partners to expand opportunities for services.
- e. Use demographic and other data to shape our services.

**Goal 3: Judicial and staff resources will be deployed effectively to meet the needs of the Court and to balance caseloads and workloads.**

Strategies:

- a. Routinely assess and balance caseloads/workloads as needed.
- b. Use existing data to make evidence-based decisions about resource distribution.
- c. Assign/reassign judicial officers to balance caseloads and meet needs.
- d. Increase inter-departmental communication to efficiently allocate staff resources.
- e. Train / cross-train judges and staff for reassignment and urgent coverage needs.
- f. Improve data collection, metrics, and infrastructure to better inform decisions on caseload allocation.

**Goal 4: The Court and DJA will prepare the next generation of judges, leaders, and staff to assume leadership roles.**

Strategies:

- a. Develop career paths / growth experiences for employees through training, mentoring and coaching opportunities.
- b. Be intentional about knowledge transfer.
- c. Welcome and learn from the lived experience and expertise of new judicial officers and staff.
- d. Train, support, and educate new judicial officers and staff.

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## Attachment 1: Trends Analysis and Scenarios

### Trends Analysis

External and internal trends were reviewed as part of the planning process. An analysis of external trends including social and demographic, economic, policy/political, technological, justice system, and pandemic-induced trends, helped to understand the external environment and helped the Court and DJA anticipate and prepare for likely future implications. An analysis of internal trends including filings, caseloads, time to disposition, court operations (e.g., interpreter and jury services), family court operations, juvenile court services, budget and fiscal, and human resource trends, fostered a common understanding of the internal environment and helped identify opportunities for the future.

Below is a list of possible long-term implications based on the analysis of external trends. Also included below are observations from the internal trends analysis.

#### External Trends – Likely Future Implications for the Court and DJA

1. There is an influx of people moving to South County. The population growth will increase demand and impact / stretch resources – space, staff, etc.
2. Many of the trends will increase/exacerbate disproportionality. Additionally, the diversity of jury pools / juries will likely be adversely impacted by the shrinking middle class.
3. The Court is impacted by politics. The polarization in the country impacts the Court/DJA. We must demonstrate impartiality, neutrality, etc. and avoid politicizing the work of the Court.
4. There is increasing distrust in the Court as an institution due in part to political factions around controversial topics. Additionally, there is a lack of social connections and collaboration now; distrust is present. Building relationships and connections, and working to build trust in the Court as an institution, will be important in the future.
5. The types and levels of crime may be changing (e.g., increasing gun violence). The Court/DJA needs to prepare to handle controversial matters – guns, vaccinations, etc. These types of matters before the Court expose us to more scrutiny and risk.
6. Expectations of the Court/DJA are changing/evolving. Court users and partners expect easier access, 24 x 7 service/greater conveniences, and faster results. Many also expect to participate in court hearings and receive services virtually.
7. There is increased need/demand for more and different services – e.g., behavioral health (mental health and substance use), self-help, language assistance, trauma-informed/evidence-based, hybrid (in-person and virtual) everything, youth and family counseling/services, treatment options, pre- and post-trial services (pre-trial services, probation, alternatives to incarceration). While demand and needs are increasing, resources, options, and providers are lacking.

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8. The economic challenges – cost of housing/rent, food, utilities, gas – are polarizing. People who have resources get better and different services than people without resources. There is an increasing gap between indigent litigants and those with resources. There are many low/lower income people involved in civil legal matters that do not have access to legal assistance/services.
  9. Hybrid courts are here to stay. Two service levels are now needed, and the nature of the Court/DJA's work has also changed/is evolving. What we do and how we do it has changed dramatically over the years, and especially since the pandemic. We are in a transition. The Court will need to find the right mix/balance of in-person and remote/virtual services. The Court/DJA must settle in to new and sustainable ways of doing business ensuring access to all, fairness, timeliness, efficiency, effectiveness, etc. This will require further refinement of practices and evaluating current resources and allocating / re-allocating as needed.
  10. A hybrid environment has benefits, and it also has drawbacks. Some of the drawbacks include: there is less formality in a hybrid environment; we must preserve the integrity and respect for / decorum of the Court. Non-verbal communications are lost in a hybrid environment; there is no grace for others. The hybrid environment has affected the plea-bargaining process, and more.
  11. The Court/DJA has become less of a place and more of a service. This is a paradigm shift when we think about and plan for a Court of the future.
  12. Many legal matters/cases today are complex and multifaceted. Judicial officers and staff need adequate training to handle these cases effectively.
  13. Technological advancements will continue to evolve. The Court/DJA needs to stay abreast of and prepare to use new and evolving technologies. Having the funding to maintain and further advance technology in the Court will be a challenge.
  14. The Court/DJA needs an updated infrastructure that can support increased usage – electricity, wi-fi, remote proceedings, etc.
  15. The legislature continues to pass new laws that impact the work of the Court/DJA (e.g., increase workload - number of protection orders, resentencing requirements, unfunded mandates). The Court/DJA must be able to anticipate, where possible, and respond effectively to these changes.
  16. Education of, and communication with, the public will be important in the future. The Court needs to demonstrate what it does and the positive impact on youth, families, etc.
  17. Collaborating and communicating with justice system and community partners also will be important and necessary in the future.
  18. The use of social media is increasing. It is necessary for the Court/DJA to use different forms of media in today's times.

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19. The many trends will greatly impact the workforce. Stagnant salaries are a problem with the current cost of living. Remote work opens up the candidate pool for some jobs; we can hire people who live further away. The Court/DJA needs to critically evaluate and update/reimagine workforce policies and practices that will aid in hiring and retaining employees. The Court/DJA needs to prepare now for upcoming retirements as well as understand why people are leaving for other jobs. Making employee satisfaction and wellbeing priorities along with strengthening the work culture where all employees feel they belong (are welcomed and accepted), etc. are imperatives for the future.
  20. Funding will likely be an issue going forward. Some funding will likely be reallocated to “upstream” areas (front end of the system). Securing sufficient resources to meet the needs and demands of the public/court users and to operate the Court/DJA will be challenging.

### Internal Trends – Summary and Observations

1. Filings on many case types are down substantially (e.g., juvenile, certain civil, criminal). The number of pending cases has remained about the same.
2. Filings have increased in a few areas, namely probate/guardianships, ITA/mental health/civil commitment cases, etc.
3. The number of jury trials has declined due to the pandemic and has not fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Non-jury trials have stabilized to their pre-pandemic frequency after a dip and spike during the pandemic.
4. Juvenile, dependency, and UFC cases have become more complex. There is considerable post judgement work on UFC cases; the workload is not reflected adequately in filings numbers. Family cases also have large numbers of pro se litigants, which slows down and complicates these proceedings.
5. Changes in the law have resulted in some anomalies in the data (e.g., unlawful detainers).
6. Changes in internal practices pre and post COVID also have resulted in variations in the data (e.g., jury summoned and yield rates, interpreters).
7. The top languages used have remained constant over time with Spanish being requested most frequently.
8. Family law facilitators and ERCMs are heavily used regardless of the number of filings.
9. The number of juveniles charged as adults has declined.



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10. The number of accommodation requests received has declined, possibly due to the increase in the use of remote hearings.
  11. Public records requests have increased.
  12. The use of social media has increased; the Court must be available on social media using a dependable platform and with messaging guidelines and oversight.
  13. The need for effective communication and messaging with the public, partners, stakeholders, etc. is ongoing.
  14. CLFR funding has been used for TLT positions (32 in Sup. Ct., 23 in DJA); additional and replacement funding will be needed when this funding ends for staffing and to maintain licenses, FTR recordings, remote hearings, etc.
  15. The workforce is aging; the Court and DJA need to prepare for future/impending retirements.
  16. The workforce is fairly diverse. However, the Court must continue to mirror the diversity in its communities and become more diverse in all positions and levels throughout the Court.
  17. Turnover rates are high; the Court and DJA need to improve employee retention.

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## Scenarios

### Positive, Future Scenario

March 9, 2023

The Strategic Planning Committee described the following positive, future scenario – what a positive future will look like if the Court develops a targeted and proactive response to the emerging external trends. The scenario below describes what the Court wants to be doing and achieve and how the Court wants to be perceived in the future.

1. The Court and DJA are meeting the needs of court users. The Court and DJA have the infrastructure and resources to provide hybrid services (both in-person and virtual/remote). The Court / staff are meeting people where they are. The Court and DJA are excelling at providing hybrid services, advocating for services, and having the right people where needed.
2. The Court and DJA are providing the highest quality of customer service to the public/court users; we are providing innovative services.
3. The backlog of cases has been eliminated and wait times have been reduced significantly. The Court is scheduling and resolving cases in a timely, efficient, and fair manner.
4. Integrity and decorum have been preserved in both in-person and virtual environments. Professional etiquette helps to promote civility, connections, and grace.
5. The Court is, and is perceived as, fair and equitable by the public and court users. All people have equitable access to the Court and are treated respectfully and equitably. The Court's commitment to external and internal DEI efforts have resulted in equitable treatment for all people, especially BIPOC and other marginalized groups.
6. The public understands the Court's role and purpose. The Court has re-gained the trust and confidence of the people it serves.
7. KCSC is leading in service provision and innovation. Policy makers recognize the efforts the Court has taken to improve performance and service. Employees are proud to work for KCSC/DJA.
8. The Court and DJA have excellent relationships with justice system, community, and governmental partners/stakeholders. Mutual respect exists among all leaders. All are working collaboratively to make system improvements.
9. The Court and DJA are embracing and leveraging new and evolving technologies, which are improving access, services, and court operations. New technologies are enabling the Court/DJA to transcend brick and mortar, which improves access and the ability to do business with the Court/DJA (e.g., for LEP participants, people who live far away, other court users, and employees).
10. The Court and DJA are using data to examine efficiencies and inefficiencies. The data are informing and resulting in better decisions.
11. The Court and DJA are succeeding at recruiting and retaining talented and dedicated staff. Solving staff challenges and using innovative/non-traditional approaches have proven effective.
12. The downtown Courthouse has been remodeled or replaced with a new facility. The external environment – areas outside the courthouse – is safe for judicial officers, staff, and all who use the Court. Court safety and security remains a high priority.

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### Positive, Future Scenario

March 9, 2023

13. The Court and DJA are properly resourced. Funding concerns also are being addressed by increased coordination with upstream service providers and by using other effective dispute resolution methods – e.g., mediation, etc.

### Status Quo Scenario

June 2, 2023

The Strategic Planning Committee described a status quo scenario at the June meeting – what the future might look like if the Court continues without intervening and/ or without addressing issues and seizing new opportunities presented by internal and external trends.

1. The lack of funding will challenge the Court to provide services and programs other than those mandated by law. Family law services, self-represented services, early resolution managers, and more will be severely impacted without adequate funding for all, not just mandated, services.
2. The Court will be unable to maintain the current staffing levels and maintain new technologies when COVID/other funding disappears.
3. The downtown KCSC courthouse is aging and non-compliant with code, ADA requirements, and the like. It will only worsen and become uninhabitable if the County does not invest in remodeling, maintenance, infrastructure, or building a new courthouse/provide new space.
4. Safety issues and concerns outside (and inside) the downtown courthouse will persist if efforts aren't taken by the County/law enforcement to address homelessness, behavioral health issues, poverty, and more.
5. It's difficult to determine if the downward trend in filings will continue, or if it will bounce back or surpass pre-COVID numbers. The Court's resources will not be deployed effectively without monitoring and anticipating the Court's evolving caseloads and workloads.
6. If the Court is not proactive and creative in developing effective and responsive programs/services and strengthening partnerships, people of color will continue to be incarcerated disproportionately. Disproportionate outcomes also will occur in the civil and juvenile areas. For example, more youth will be incarcerated and Adult Drug Court will be underutilized. Additionally, the Court will be unsuccessful dealing with the behavioral health (substance use and mental health) crisis. More people with behavioral health issues will languish in jail, stuck in the criminal process and unable to get the services they need to move to restoration.
7. The Court / DJA will continue to experience a high number of staff vacancies, difficulty hiring, and high turnover rates unless it makes the workforce a priority and changes with the times. Staff churning will continue unless the Court modernizes its management and human resources policies and practices, and better meets the current and evolving needs of the workforce (e.g., provides training and development opportunities, hybrid/flexible work, makes DEI/B (diversity, equity, inclusion, & belonging) and wellbeing a priority, etc.).

## Attachment 2: Organizational Assessment

Three strategic planning surveys were conducted in June and July 2023: (1) external partners; (2) judicial officers and Court and DJA staff; and (3) court users (a majority of whom were attorneys, paralegals, and law firm staff). A summary of the results follows.

### Findings

#### 1. Highest Priorities: Most Needed Changes and Improvements in the Next 3-5 Years

**Q1: Most Needed Improvements/Changes (Highest Priorities) in the Next 3-5 Years**  
**Top 6 – Comparison of External Partners & Judges/Employees** (in mean scores<sup>1</sup>)



- Five of the six highest rated priorities were the same for external partners and judicial officers/staff (only in different order). The five areas that were the same, are presented below in rank order by external partners:
  - *Timely Resolution*: ensure the timely resolution of legal matters; reduce backlogs, unnecessary delay, and wait times; improve scheduling and case management practices; normalize procedures and practices for conducting in-person and virtual proceedings and services
  - *Safety and Security*: ensure the personal safety (health, physical) of all who work in/use the courthouses; improve building, technology, and data security
  - *Funding/Resources*: pursue adequate funding/resources to meet existing and evolving needs of the public and to operate efficiently and effectively; realign/reallocate existing resources

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- *Technology*: invest in/use existing and future technologies that will enhance access, services, and court operations (e.g., artificial intelligence, electronic document access, online dispute resolution, data management/data analytics), and prioritize resources to ensure the Court has the capacity to continue/support virtual proceedings and services
  - *Court Programs/Services*: enhance or expand court services and programs available to youth, families, and other court users
  - The other highest rated priority for external partners (that was different from judicial officers/staff) was:
    - *Community-Based Programs and Services*: collaborate with partners to enhance or expand community/social service programs and services
  - The other highest rated priority for judicial officers/staff (that was different from external partners) was:
    - *Workplace/Workforce Practices*: update workplace, human resource, and management policies and practices (e.g., transform recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; redesign jobs; prioritize employee wellbeing; refine/expand hybrid or flexible work; provide training, development, and career growth/advancement opportunities; provide competitive pay/benefits; implement workplace-focused DEI initiatives; cultivate an inclusive, welcoming, and engaging culture
  - The 3 highest rated areas for improvement – or priorities – for judicial officers/staff were: (1) Safety and Security; (2) Funding/Resources; and (3) Workplace/Workforce Practices.

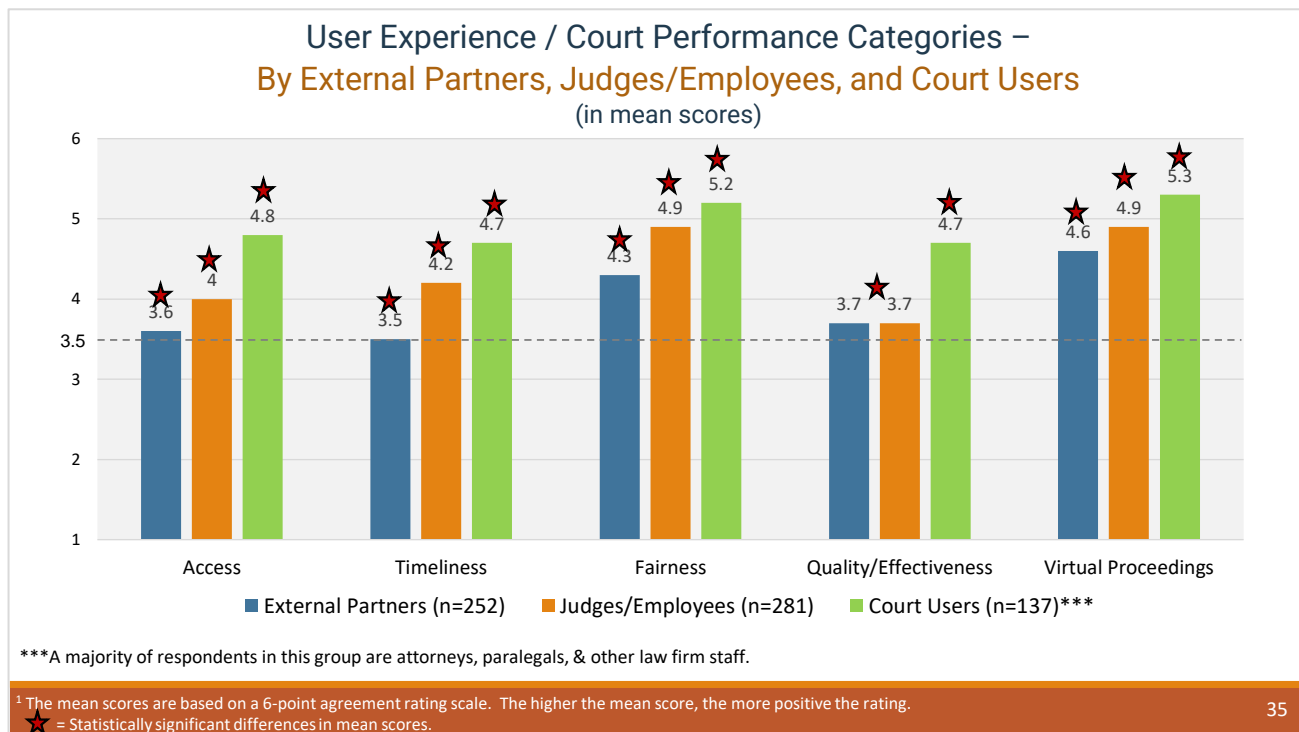
## **2. Court User Experience / Court Performance Categories**

This set of survey questions asked respondents to rate their experience or the Court's performance on five common court performance categories: (1) *Accessibility*; (2) *Timeliness*; (3) *Fairness*; (4) *Quality/Effectiveness*; and (5) *Virtual Proceedings/Services*. Each court performance category included multiple questions.

- Court user survey respondents (a majority of whom were attorneys, paralegals, and law firm staff) rated all 5 performance categories significantly higher than external partners and judicial officers/staff.
- Court user survey respondents rated the *Virtual Proceedings/Service* performance category the highest and the *Quality/Effectiveness and Timeliness* performance categories the lowest.
- Overall, external partner survey respondents rated all five categories significantly lower than judicial officers/staff and court users, with one exception. The differences in mean scores between external partners and judicial officers/staff on the *Quality/Effectiveness* category were not statistically significant.

- External partners gave the Court/DJA the highest ratings on the *Virtual Proceedings/Services* category of questions and the lowest rating on *Timeliness*.
- Judicial officers/staff rated the Court/DJA the highest on *Virtual Proceedings/Services* and the lowest on *Timeliness*. With the exception of the *Quality/Effectiveness* category, judicial officers/staff rated each court performance category significantly lower than court users and significantly higher than external partners.

**3. Court Performance Categories: Accessibility, Timeliness, Fairness, Quality/Effectiveness, Virtual Proceedings/Services**



**Access**

- Court users (a majority of whom were attorneys, paralegals, and law firm staff) rated the three questions in the Accessibility court performance category significantly higher than external partners and judicial officers/staff.
- Court Users: the highest rated question by court users was: “*Court users understand what they need to do to attend/participate in court proceedings or complete their Court/DJA business.*” The lowest rated question from court users was: “*The Court does a good job helping court users who need assistance.*”
- External Partners rated the Accessibility performance category second lowest (of the five categories – just slightly above the midpoint of the rating scale).

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- The highest rated question by partners (but still relatively low) was: *“The Court does a good job of helping court users who need assistance.”*
  - The lowest rated question was: *“It is easy for court users (litigants, jurors, partners) to get information from the Court about cases/matters in which they are involved.”*
  - Judicial officers/staff gave the highest rating on how well the Court helps court users who need assistance and the lowest rating on court users understanding what they need to do to attend/participate in a court proceeding or complete their Court/DJA business.

### **Timeliness**

- Court users (a majority of whom were attorneys, paralegals, and law firm staff) rated the four questions in this performance category significantly higher than partners and judicial officers/staff.
- External partners rated the *Timeliness* performance category the lowest of the five categories.
  - In this category, partners gave the highest rating to: *“Court/DJA employees provide information/services in a timely manner.”*
  - Two questions in this category were rated very low by partners. They were: *“The wait times for scheduling and/or conducting hearings/trials, or for appointments with the Court for other services, are reasonable;”* and *“Overall, cases/legal matters, or other court business, are resolved or handled in a reasonable amount of time.”*
- Judicial officers/staff rated the Court/DJA the highest on employees providing information/services in a timely manner and the lowest on the reasonableness of the wait times for scheduling and/or conducting hearings/trials, or for appointments with the Court for other services.

### **Fairness**

- This category was one of the higher rated categories by all survey respondents.
- Court users (a majority of whom were attorneys, paralegals, and law firm staff) gave exceptional ratings on all questions. Their ratings were significantly higher than the other rater groups: external partners and judicial officers/staff.

The highest rated question by this group was: *“Court users (or their attorneys) are given an opportunity to be heard/present their case.”* This group did not give low or lower ratings on any of the fairness questions.

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- External partners also gave fairly high ratings on the questions in the *Fairness* category.
    - The highest rated question was the same as court users: *court users or attorneys are given opportunity to be heard/present their case.*
    - The lowest rated questions in this category were: *“Judicial officers apply court rules/procedures fairly;” “Judicial officers are impartial in their rulings/decisions;” “Court users understand what they need to do when they leave the courtroom, courthouse, or virtual hearing/meeting;” and “Judicial officers are fair (and perceived as fair) in deciding cases/legal matters.*
  - Judicial officers/staff gave the highest rating to the question about court users or their attorneys having an opportunity to be heard/present their case. Judicial officers/staff gave the lowest rating on the question about court users understanding what they need to do when they leave the courtroom, courthouse, or virtual hearing/meeting.

### **Quality/Effectiveness**

- Court users (a majority of whom were attorneys, paralegals, and law firm staff) rated this category significantly higher than partners and judicial officers/staff.
- Partners and judicial officers/staff rated this category quite low, just slightly above the midpoint of the rating scale.
- All three survey groups gave the highest rating to this question: *“Court/DJA employees are helpful.”*
- All three groups gave the lowest rating to this question: *“The Court’s facilities are accessible and accommodating.”* External partners and judicial officers/staff rated this question below the midpoint of the rating scale.
- External partners and judicial officers/staff also gave a low/lower rating to the following question: *“I feel safe at the courthouse; the safety and security protocols are adequate.”*

### **Virtual Proceedings/Services**

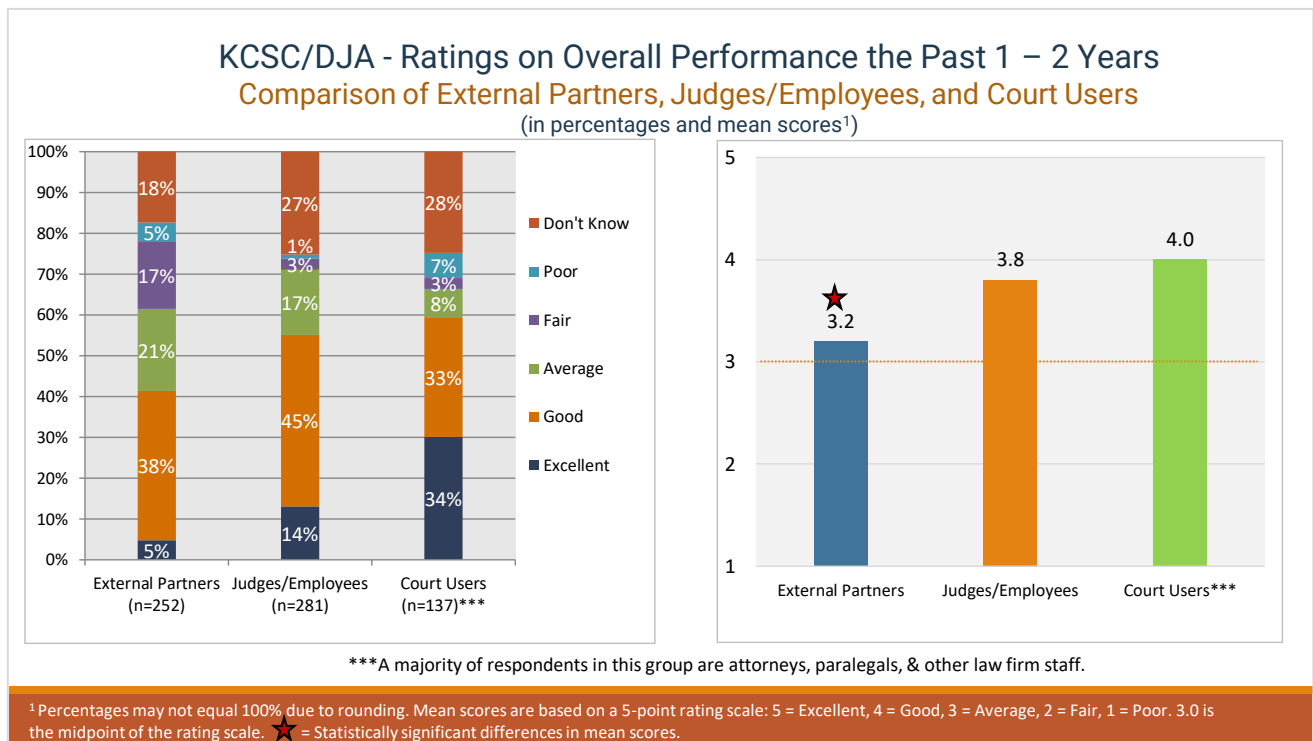
- As noted above, this category was rated the highest of all five categories by court users (a majority of whom were lawyers, paralegals, and law firm staff) and external partners.
- In this set of questions, there was only one question where the mean scores were NOT significantly different. The one question where all survey respondents for all intents and purpose agree on the Court’s performance and users’ experiences. That one question was: *“Given my overall experience with virtual court proceedings or virtual court services, I recommend the Court/DJA continue and/or expand these services.”*



- External partners and judicial officers/staff rated the following question a little lower, acknowledging room for improvement: “Court users understand, or are provided with the assistance they need, to participate in virtual court proceedings and virtual meetings.”

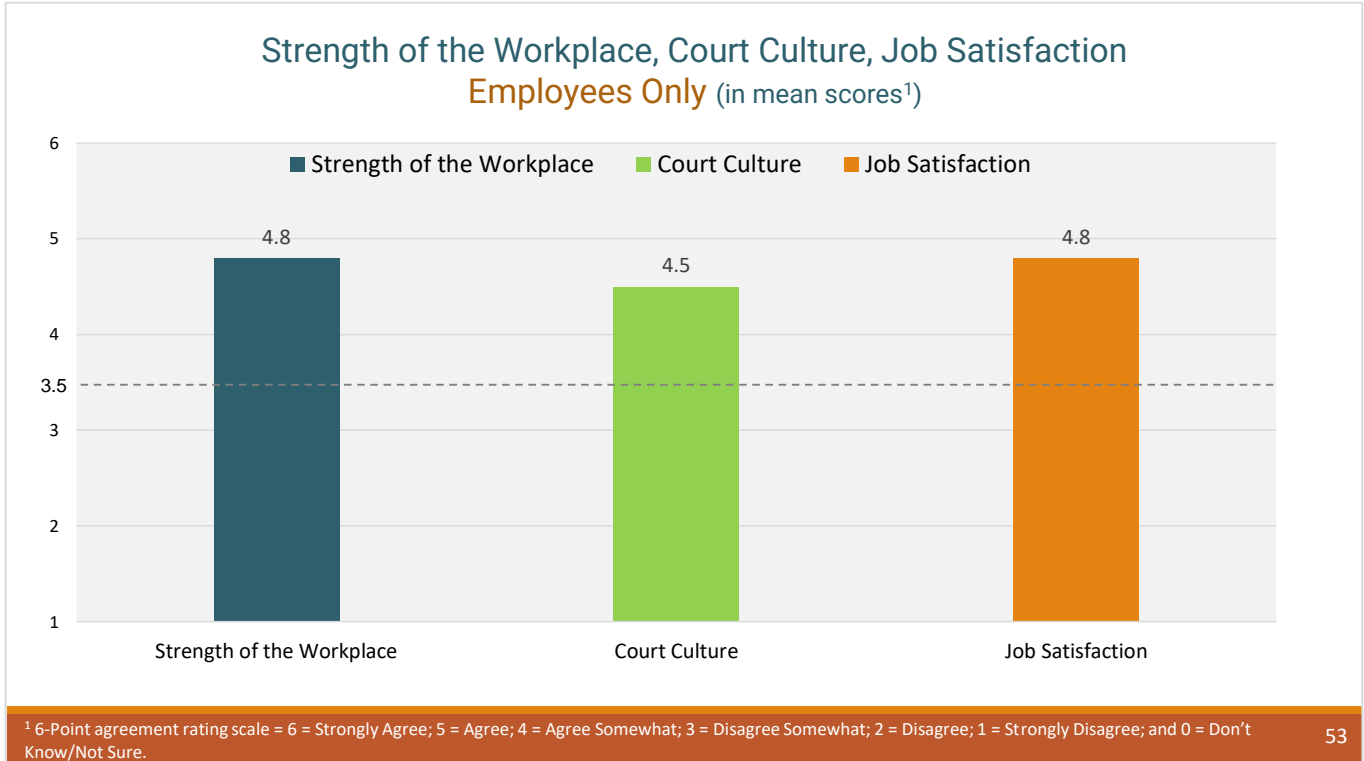
#### 4. Overall Court Performance

- Court users (a majority of whom were lawyers, paralegals, and law firm staff) gave the Court/DJA a “good” rating on overall performance the past 1-2 years. 67% of court user respondents gave an “excellent” or “good” rating.
- External partners gave a significantly lower rating on overall court performance than judicial officers/ staff and court users. External partners gave an overall rating of “average.” 43% of external partners gave the Court an “excellent” or “good” rating.



- Judicial officers/staff gave the Court nearly a “good” rating on overall performance the past 1-2 years. 59% of judicial officers/staff gave the Court an “excellent” or “good” rating.

## 5. Strength of the Workplace, Court Culture, and Job Satisfaction – Employees Only



- The Strength of the Workplace category and overall Job Satisfaction question were rated the highest by Court and DJA employees. The Court Culture, Communication, and Connection category was rated slightly lower.
- Strength of the Workplace: Ten questions were included in this category.
  - The three highest rated questions were: “I know what is expected of me at work;” “My supervisor (or someone at work) seems to care about me as a person;” and “My coworkers are committed to doing quality work.”
  - The lowest rated question was: “In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.”
  - Additional areas for improvement included: “In the last month, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work;” This is someone at work who encourages my development;” and “At work, my opinions seem to count.”
  - Bailiffs rated one question significantly lower than other Court and DJA employees: “In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.”
- Court Culture, Communication, and Connection: Five questions were included in this category.

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- The highest rated question in this category was: “Diversity (of race, ethnicity, age, opinions, experiences, etc.) is valued at the Court/DJA.
  - The lowest rated question was: “Employee wellbeing is a high priority at the Court/DJA.”
  - Bailiffs rated one question in this category significantly lower than other Court and DJA employees: “I feel connected to my team members despite the disruptions of the past few years.”
  - Job Satisfaction: This question asked employees about their overall level of job satisfaction. All employee groups rated this question quite highly. There were no significant differences among the groups.
  - Employees were also asked to provide suggestions for making the Court/DJA a better place to work. The comments provided by employees fell into the following themes:
    - Improve recruitment and hiring.
    - Strengthen leadership and improve communication/information sharing.
    - Focus on relationship building, team building, and encouraging community and connections.
    - Enhance training and growth and development opportunities.
    - Provide mentoring opportunities.
    - Provide competitive pay, parking, and other benefits.
    - Refine and expand hybrid work arrangements and/or flexible work opportunities.
    - Strengthen the work environment.
    - Improve safety in and around the courthouse.
    - Equitably distribute workloads.

## **6. Court of the Future**

- External Partners suggested the Court should pursue goals in the following areas:
  - a. Expand access and services
  - b. Expand court and community programs
  - c. Improve timely resolutions and reduce the backlog
  - d. Improve facilities, the downtown courthouse, and safety and security (i.e., outside the downtown courthouse)
  - e. Invest in and harness the use of existing and evolving technologies
  - f. Strengthen partnerships, and more
- Judicial officers/staff suggested the Court should pursue goals in the following areas:
  - Service Suggestions:
    - a. Improve access and services
    - b. Expand partnerships to enhance programs, services, and case outcomes

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- c. Resolve matters in a timely manner
  - d. Expand treatment courts
  - e. Improve the use of technology
  - f. Improve facilities, especially the downtown courthouse (including external and internal safety and security), and more
- Court Operations:
    - g. Reimagine programs and operations, and streamline procedures
    - h. Rebalance caseloads and workload levels
    - i. Improve cross-department communications/collaborations, and more
  - Workplace/Workforce:
    - j. Redesign hiring and retention practices
    - k. Improve training and development, and career advancement opportunities
    - l. Improve engagement and the work environment, and more

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## Organizational Assessment Additional Areas for Improvement

### Additional Areas for Improvement

1. Do a better job accessing & using data to assess court performance / program effectiveness (e.g., time to resolution, pending cases/backlogs, juvenile diversion stats, resource center data, etc.); Need to be able to tell a better story using data. Use data to support our stories/promote our narratives.
2. Look at resource allocations & balance caseloads & workloads; evaluate & maximize resources / assignments (e.g., develop new ways to handle difficult caseloads/assignments; evaluate / make adjustments of workloads at UFC; evaluate & balance workloads of bailiffs & other courtroom staff).
3. Improve relationships and teamwork among all areas of the Court; reconfigure work/job responsibilities to match changes that have occurred as a result of COVID.
4. Develop more robust criminal pre-trial tools (e.g., pre-trial services).
5. Provide education and training to judicial officers and staff (e.g., caseflow management principles/ practices; specialty courts, dependency cases).
6. Implement consistent procedures and practices among courts/divisions to improve the court user experience.
7. Improve wayfinding and other assistance provided to court users – signage, instructions/signs in multiple languages, ADA access – conduct an audit, improve options for self-help, use AI opportunities to translate forms.
8. Develop media, communications, and outreach plans; need to be intentional and creative with messaging, outreach, and engagement. Determine the role of the Court in shaping coverage/positive narrative about the Court/DJA.
9. Develop a strategic and proactive approach for establishing/strengthening relationships with communities across King County.
10. Strengthen safety and security for all (inside and outside the courthouse).
11. Streamline operations and look for/realize other cost savings (especially if federal funding goes away).
12. Be proactive in changing / improving processes and create contingency plans.
13. Need to plan for impending retirements – succession planning, leadership development.
14. Improve recruitment, hiring, and retention practices.
15. Need to do a better job advocating for the Court’s needs with the legislature and advising the legislature of the impact of laws they are considering.

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## Potential Threats & Vulnerabilities

Below is a summary of the most significant threats facing, and/or possible vulnerabilities of, the Court/DJA (in the next 3-5 years).

### Potential Threats/Vulnerabilities

1. New Legislation / Additional Work Mandates. New legislation that requires new and more work will further cripple the Court/DJA. Unfunded mandates will compound the strain departments across the Court/DJA are currently facing. Departments are having a difficult time completing the work and balancing multiple demands with current staffing levels and other resources.
2. Attacks on the Judicial System/Judiciary. The environment has changed from past planning efforts. The court/justice system are being demonized now; some people/groups are referring to it as the criminal legal system; there is no justice. It is an assault on the institution and judiciary.
3. Politization of the Judiciary. The Judicial Branch's reputation will suffer if leaders/others are not willing to address systemic racism. The Court must be proactive and creative in stopping and/or countering mis/dis-information about the Judicial Branch/Judiciary. Developing positive media relations and increasing engagement and outreach are within the Court's control and will help address this threat.
4. Budget. A budget cut is likely looming when federal funding is eliminated and if the County does not find a solution to budget shortfalls.
5. Staffing/Workforce. To deliver the highest quality of services to the people of King County, the Court/DJA must be able to recruit/fill vacancies and retain qualified staff. Rebranding and reinventing HR policies and management practices may be needed to attract and retain a diverse, dedicated, and engaged workforce. Additionally, the Court and DJA are facing a wave of retirements in the next few years. They will experience a loss of institutional knowledge and must prepare for the next generation of employees to succeed those retiring. Many staff are feeling overwhelmed by the high workloads and high demands. Jobs may need to be redesigned, workloads rebalanced, and expectations recalibrated to accommodate changes that have occurred during and post-pandemic.
6. Judges. The KCSC has a relatively new bench; 61% of judges have been on the bench for less than 5 years. To provide the highest quality of justice to communities, it is essential to onboard, train, and make an assignment that allows them to be successful.
7. Technology. The Court/DJA will have a difficult time keeping pace with and implementing new and emerging technologies. The disruption caused by implementing new technologies is also significant. Slowing down is not an option.
8. External Partners. Like the Court/DJA, partner organizations also are experiencing a high number of vacancies, staffing shortages, and high turnover. This slows down the work of the Court and adds work to staff and judicial officers (because work is not processed as quickly, new staff need to be trained, etc.).
9. Rulings/Public Policy. Supreme Court rulings, legislation, and other policies have the potential to impact – dictate and/or disrupt – the daily operations of the Court/DJA.