



# Massachusetts Trial Court

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2025

September 1, 2022



**MASSACHUSETTS  
TRIAL COURT  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**Jeffrey A. Locke**

*Chief Justice of the Trial Court*

**John A. Bello**

*Court Administrator*



## MESSAGE FROM THE TRIAL COURT CHIEF JUSTICE AND COURT ADMINISTRATOR SEPTEMBER 2022

---

Judges, Clerks, Registers, Probation, Security, Staff and Friends of the Court:

We have kicked off the next cycle of our strategic plan implementation, which covers the period through June 2025. In the last plan cycle, we faced an unprecedented challenge with the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring us to respond quickly and effectively to modify court operations due to substantial public health concerns. We are proud of the Trial Court's demonstrated resilience under such exhausting conditions. That response showed just how much is possible through innovation and perseverance.

The Trial Court is a complex organization where we all strive for One Mission: Justice with Dignity and Speed. In this cycle of planning, we particularly focused on better alignment across the organization. We have gone through a collaborative process that engaged court leaders, court staff, and our partners in the justice system. The attached plan reflects our priorities for the next three years. Specifically, we have identified five strategic priorities and developed milestones to make deliberate progress on these priorities. While the day-to-day work of the Trial Court must of course go on, the plan speaks to how we envision improving our services to court users, advancing our workforce, and updating our infrastructure, including a big leap forward with our technology.

We thank Chief Justices, Deputy Court Administrators, Judges, Clerks, and so many others who drove the effort at the court department level with a view of system-wide alignment. The Massachusetts Probation Service, the Office of Jury Commissioner, the Office of Court Management, and JISD also took leadership roles in developing plans and aligning them with the rest of the court system. We are grateful to the court leaders, staff, and our justice partners who supported this effort over the last six months. With the resilience and strength you all demonstrated in the last three years and with clarity in our direction, we are well on our way to create our future!

We are honored to be at the helm of an organization that is fully committed to its mission and puts its heart and soul into that work. The perseverance and dedication we see every day across the court system give us tremendous hope for our future. We shall face new challenges, no doubt. We shall very likely need to adjust plans over the years – the strategic plan is meant to be a living document, evolving and adapting to new circumstances over time. Regardless of the hurdles ahead, however, we are confident that with your commitment and dedication the Trial Court will, in fact, maintain its focus and continue to make the progress as outlined in this plan.



Jeffrey A. Locke  
Chief Justice of the Trial Court



John A. Bello  
Court Administrator

# Table of Contents

---

Strategic Planning Process .....1

Strategic Planning Leadership Team. ....2

Acknowledgements.....4

Strategic Plan 2023-2025 ..... 5

Trial Court Mission.....5

Trial Court Vision.....5

Strategic Priorities for 2023-2025.....6

Milestones for 2023-2025 .....8

Court Facilities Capital Master Plan and IT Capital Plan .....9

Success Measures & Governance .....9

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

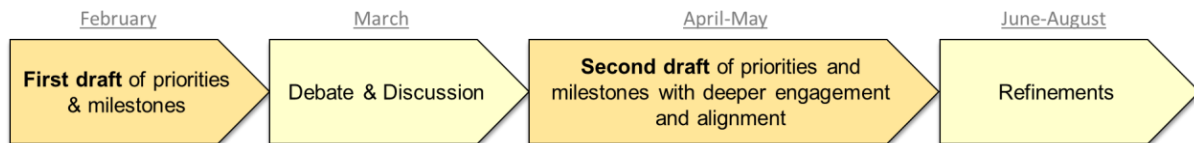
---

In 2013, the Trial Court introduced strategic planning as a formal management process. Every three years we re-think our priorities along with our partners in the justice system and adjust our plans accordingly. This is the fourth round of our planning, covering fiscal years 2023-25. The strategic plan aims to clarify the organization’s focus for the next three years to achieve deliberate and meaningful progress in the targeted areas.

This fourth round of strategic planning fell at a time of leadership transition. The planning process for Strategic Plan 23-25 launched as a new Trial Court Chief Justice was appointed. Here we enhanced our methodology by refining the approach used in the last cycle with far more emphasis on cross-organizational alignment. An over-arching goal was simplification: to make it easier to develop plans and to monitor progress.

Again, a Core Team led by the Chief Justice of the Trial Court, the Court Administrator, and the Probation Commissioner supported the planning process with guidance from management consultants at the Ripples Group. The strategy process already is embedded in the overall governance and leadership accountability of the court system. Accordingly, court leaders assumed responsibility for identifying and agreeing on key priorities and planning their organization’s contributions towards those priorities.

The main strategic planning process was handled in two iterations as depicted below.



Court leaders, with their teams, identified their priorities and milestones for the next three years and documented them on a simplified one-page form for the first iteration of the plan. Court Departments, Probation, Jury Commission, and Office of Court Management departments worked on their own priorities. The Core Team integrated all the input from this iteration and developed an initial set of strategic priorities for the entire Trial Court. About 65 court leaders attended an in-person meeting in mid-March at the Massachusetts Probation Service Technology & Operations Center in Clinton to review and refine this strawman plan. A clear set of priorities that resonated with everyone emerged from that meeting.

For the second iteration, court leaders worked with the agreed upon court-wide priorities and developed milestones towards them. An additional focus in the second iteration was to improve alignment and engagement across the organization. Accordingly, numerous alignment and engagement discussions took place in this phase of the project, especially focusing on IT, diversity, equity and inclusion, and HR aspects of the plans. Additionally, meetings with various committees ensured that their agendas are also integrated into the strategic plan. Further, the Core Team reached out to the Supreme Judicial Court, Court Management Advisory Board, and external justice partners to share

emerging plans and receive feedback, which was used to refine plans. A second court leadership meeting was held in late June, reviewing the entire plan together and making further edits.

Cross-organizational alignment and collaboration is an on-going journey; yet the planning process accelerated it by enabling conversations that clarified roles and responsibilities, as well as mutual expectations and commitments. For example, court department Chief Justices and DCAs had in-person meetings with the Chief Information Officer, making sure that the IT resources and plans are aligned with the technology needs of the court departments.

The strategic plan that emerged and is presented here will serve as a living document. Unanticipated developments may necessitate modifications over time, as the pandemic did for the last planning cycle. The document presents a compelling vision and a clear direction with key commitments and success measures. Progress towards the milestones and success metrics will be monitored, and adjustments will be made through quarterly strategic reviews and supporting management processes.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING LEADERSHIP TEAM**

### **Executive Office of the Trial Court**

Chief Justice Jeffrey Locke \*

Court Administrator John Bello \*

Associate Court Administrator  
Matthew Cocciardi \*

Chief Experience & Diversity Officer  
John Laing \*

Deputy Director of Diversity, Equity,  
Inclusion & Experience Christina Maryland

Senior Assistant for Judicial Policy  
James Morton \*

Senior Assistant for Administration and  
Communication Mary Rafferty \*

Director of Research & Planning  
Lee Kavanagh

Senior Program Manager for Strategic  
Planning Cynthia Robinson \*

Specialty Courts Administrator Sheila Casey

Access to Justice Administrator  
Elizabeth Cerda

### **Boston Municipal Court**

Chief Justice Roberto Ronquillo

Deputy Court Administrator Cheryl Sibley

Clerk Magistrate Sean Murphy

Clerk Magistrate Michael Neighbors

### **District Court**

Chief Justice Paul Dawley

Chief Justice Stacey Fortes

Deputy Court Administrator Joseph Jackson

Deputy Court Administrator Philip McCue

Clerk Magistrate Michelle Kelley

Clerk Magistrate Keith McDonough

### **Housing Court**

Chief Justice Timothy Sullivan

Deputy Court Administrator  
Benjamin Adeyinka

Deputy Legal Counsel Jorge Ghazal-Akhras

Clerk Magistrate Mark Jeffries

Clerk Magistrate Nickolas Moudios

**Juvenile Court**

Chief Justice Amy Nechem  
Deputy Court Administrator Thomas Capasso  
Clerk Magistrate Roger Oliveira  
Clerk Magistrate Robert Ryan

**Land Court**

Chief Justice Gordon Piper  
Deputy Court Administrator Jill Ziter  
Assistant Deputy Court Administrator &  
Legal Counsel Lauren Reznick

Recorder Deborah Patterson

**Probate and Family Court**

Chief Justice John Casey  
Deputy Court Administrator  
Domenic DiCenso  
Register Matthew McDonough  
Register Rosemary Saccomani  
Register Anastasia Welsh Perrino

**Superior Court**

Chief Justice Heidi Brieger  
Deputy Court Administrator Elaina Quinn  
First Assistant Clerk Magistrate  
Patrick Creedon  
Clerk of Courts Michael Sullivan

**Massachusetts Probation Services**

Probation Commissioner Edward Dolan\*  
First Deputy Probation Commissioner  
Dianne Fasano \*  
Deputy Commissioner for Programs  
Michael Coelho  
Deputy Commissioner for Pretrial Services  
Pamerson Ifill

Deputy Commissioner for Field Services  
Brian Mirasolo

Deputy Commissioner - Legal  
Nina Pomponio Chipman

Deputy Commissioner for Administrative  
Services Yvonne Roland

**Office of Jury Commissioner**

Jury Commissioner Pamela Wood  
Deputy Jury Commissioner John Cavanaugh

**Office of Court Management**

Chief Human Resources Officer Paul Dietl  
Judicial Institute Senior Program Manager  
Donna Grieco

Court Services Senior Manager  
Carolin Hetzner

Deputy Chief HR Officer Lana Jones

eCourts Program Director Sam Kurle

Director of Language Access & Record  
Management Sybil Martin

Director of Security Michael McPherson

Emergency Preparedness Manager  
Timothy Morin

Director of Facilities Management & Capital  
Planning Charles O'Brien

Director of Judicial Education Ellen O'Connor

Director of Court Services & Law Libraries  
Sheriece Perry

Director of Workplace Rights & Compliance  
Margaret Peterson Pinkham

Chief Financial Officer Thomas Simard

**Judicial Information Services Department**

Chief Information Officer Steven Duncan

*\*Core Team Members*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

---

We thank our partners in the Justice System for their review and ongoing support of the Trial Court's Strategic Planning Process:

**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE**

**LEGISLATIVE LEADERS**

**MASSACHUSETTS DISTRICT ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION**

**COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC COUNSEL SERVICES**

**STATE & LOCAL BAR LEADERS**

**AFFINITY BAR ASSOCIATIONS**

**SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION**

**COURT MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD**

**DIVISION OF CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE**

**CLERKS & REGISTERS ASSOCIATION LEADERS**

**UNIONS - NAGE AND OPEIU-LOCAL 6**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION**



# Strategic Plan 2023-2025

The Strategic Plan for the fiscal years 2023 through 2025 adopts and refines the Mission and Vision developed previously and extends those with five strategic priorities, related success measures as well as concrete milestones with owners across the organization. This document contains the entire plan, with the milestones for the next three years by the owning organization included as an Appendix.

## TRIAL COURT MISSION

---

*We have simplified and condensed our Mission Statement:*

The Trial Court is committed to:

- Fair, impartial, and timely administration of justice;
- Protection of constitutional and statutory rights and liberties;
- Equal access to justice for all in a safe and dignified environment strengthened by diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Excellence in the adjudication of cases and resolution of disputes;
- Courteous service to the public by dedicated professionals who inspire public trust and confidence.

## TRIAL COURT VISION

---

*We have also reviewed and refined the Trial Court's Vision, which describes the future we want to create:*

Massachusetts is a national leader in delivering quality justice to all. We excel at the fair and timely adjudication of cases and resolution of disputes. All employees, including elected and appointed court officials, and all users of the court system are unfailingly treated with dignity, respecting cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, class, disability, and language differences. The Massachusetts Trial Court is dedicated to embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion, addressing bias, and eradicating discrimination and racism.

We enhance public safety, support victims and survivors, and assist individuals, families and communities in achieving long term positive change through evidence-based probation practices and effective interventions.

All employees, including elected and appointed court officials, are committed, professional, culturally competent, well-trained, and recognized for their achievements. We work in an environment where morale is high, and employees are respected by their colleagues. We have a culture of collaboration and high performance. Continuous improvement and innovation are a way of life.

We are highly efficient and benefit from advanced technologies. Cases move expeditiously through the system and wait times are minimal. Processes and standards are consistent within each department and appropriately consistent across departments. Technology has allowed us to standardize and simplify our processes and connect more effectively with our users and each other. Our operations are transparent, and we are fully accountable for our results.

Our courthouses stand out for their safety, dignity, flexibility, convenience, and efficiency. Our facilities are up-to-date, accessible for all, and secure. They are maintained to the highest standards with sustainable practices.

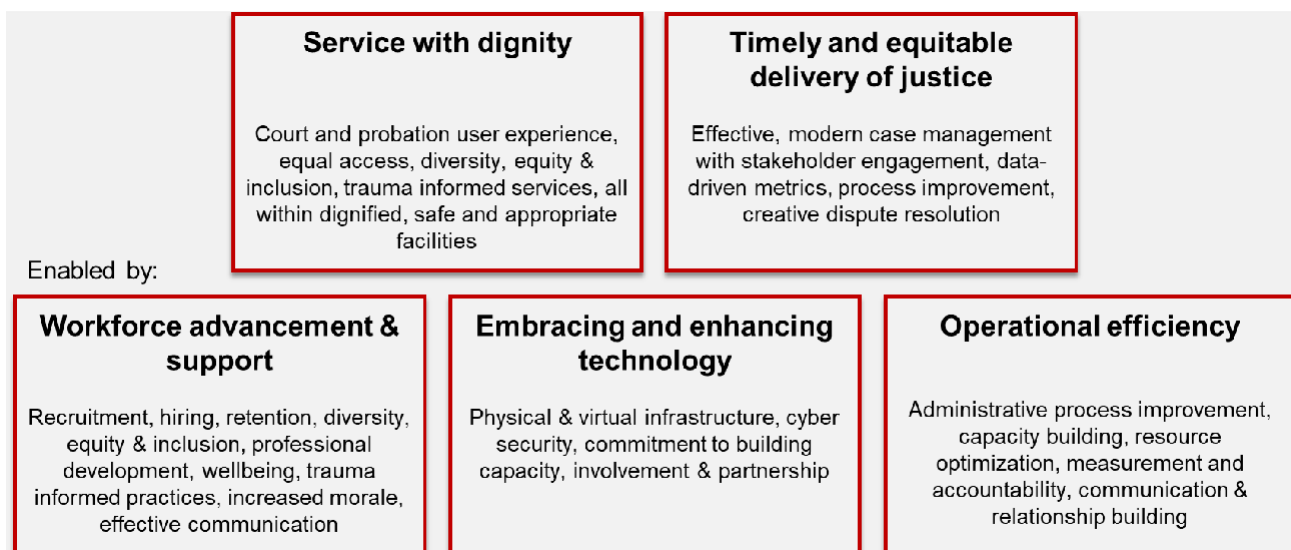
The Trial Court is a place where people want to work. We have a merit-based hiring and promotion system with clear opportunities for advancement. There is substantial mobility through the organization along with cross-training and career paths that allow for it. There are many qualified and diverse applicants for every opening at the Trial Court, and our hiring reflects as much.

We have excellent relationships with the Legislative and Executive branches. Our budgets are appropriate to our needs. We address critical issues arising from societal needs effectively and collaboratively.

The public understands and respects the court system. Employees are appropriately engaged with the community. The Trial Court earns and enjoys the public’s trust.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2023-2025

We have defined five strategic priorities for fiscal years 2023 through 2025 as described below. The two top priorities directly relate to our slogan, *One Mission: Justice with Dignity and Speed*, as they aim to deliver timely and equitable justice with dignity. The next three priorities enable the top two by ensuring that our workforce, our use of technology, and our operational efficiencies continue to advance.



**Service with Dignity.** The Trial Court recognizes the expectation of elevated experiences for all users in courthouses, online or elsewhere when interacting with court staff and processes. Equitable, universal access to justice comprises our strategic core. A key focus is the elimination of systemic racism that is persistent within our courts, addressing the findings in the Harvard study commissioned by the late Chief Justice Gants and similar findings that people of color experience the court system differently. Enhancing how all court and probation users experience the court system drives this priority, from community/court user engagement, conversations, and feedback to online portals and information centers, from staff competence in dealing with cultural differences to recognizing and addressing trauma. In addition, our courthouses themselves need major renovations and upkeep to ensure a dignified experience.

**Timely and Equitable Delivery of Justice.** Timely case processing and improved clearance rates are at the heart of this strategic priority. Getting the basics right and measuring progress with data-driven metrics remain essential. Our goal in the next three years is to make substantial progress with e-filing and digital case flow (eCourts). This is as much about improving and, where appropriate standardizing, our business processes and forms, as it is about technology. We aim to become a truly digital court system, building on the advances made during the pandemic. We must also keep innovating our practices. Online dispute resolution, restorative justice practices, and the next generation of specialty courts all fall under this priority.

*The following three priorities enable the two above:*

**Workforce Advancement & Support.** With high attrition rates and the challenging recruitment environment, retention and hiring will be key focus areas for the foreseeable future. Increasing the diversity of our staff at all levels remains a high priority. Open, two-way communications is a must. Also crucial is listening and responding to what our staff tells us – via the latest employee pulse check, listening sessions or other means – that equity and inclusion are still lacking for many. We aim to get better at developing and advancing our staff and providing professional development opportunities. Dealing with the pandemic has been exhausting and it is time to recover. We need to improve morale across the court system and everyone should feel supported.

**Embracing and Enhancing Technology.** We are looking to substantially modernize our technology in the coming years. The entire organization must embrace technology and adapt our ways where necessary to enable painless and effective implementation of new technologies. Our software, hardware, Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure and cyber security need to advance quickly. We must improve service and training around technology. All departments and functions must be involved and act as partners fully committed to building the necessary capacity. With the approval of capital funds supporting our technology push under the leadership of a new CIO, we are ready to tackle this major challenge.

**Operational Efficiency.** Our administrative processes – e.g., procurement, order tracking, interpreter assignment, payment processing – need to get more streamlined and better support local court operations. We need to invest our resources wisely towards our mission. Accountability through data-based measurement of service levels should become the norm. Relationship building and

communication among all functions of the Office of Court Management, Probation, Jury Commission, and Court Departments need to improve to enable timely delivery of justice with dignity. We will relentlessly strive to ensure alignment and coordination across the organization and make our processes more efficient.

## **MILESTONES FOR 2023-2025**

---

Virtually every part of our organization has developed concrete, stretching but realistic milestones under the strategic priorities outlined above. Appendix A contains these three-year plans for the following entities.

- Court Departments:
  - Boston Municipal Court
  - District Court
  - Housing Court
  - Juvenile Court
  - Land Court
  - Probate and Family Court
  - Superior Court
  
- Massachusetts Probation Service
  
- Office of Jury Commissioner
  
- Office of Court Management:
  - Access to Justice
  - Court Services & Law Libraries
  - Department of Research & Planning
  - e-Courts
  - Facilities Management & Capital Planning
  - Fiscal
  - Human Resources
  - Judicial Institute
  - Office of Language Access and Court Records
  - Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Experience
  - Office of Workplace Rights & Compliance
  - Security
  - Specialty Courts
  
- Judicial Information Services Department

This planning cycle paid increased attention to organizational alignment. Every effort was made to ensure coordination across organizational entities that have interdependencies, while planning the

specific milestones. However, this is not an end in itself. We are launching Strategic Plan 23-25 with a clear understanding that the court system must get better at alignment and coordination and sustain that on an ongoing basis. We are committed to take the necessary measures and we have instituted a quarterly strategic review process to ensure that we keep improving in this direction.

## COURT FACILITIES CAPITAL MASTER PLAN AND IT CAPITAL PLAN

The Strategic Plan does not operate in isolation. Specifically, it is supported by two parallel plans:

- The Court Facilities Master Capital Plan, developed and executed in collaboration with the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAMM), specifies the current and future capital projects to improve or replace our courthouses, so that we offer a dignified experience to court users and staff. These projects are connected to the Strategic Plan via the milestones for Trial Court’s Facilities Management & Capital Planning Department (see Appendix A).
- Similarly, the IT Capital Plan approved in August 2022 by the legislature and the associated JISD Strategic Plan are fundamental to achieve the Trial Court’s technology advances.

Without these initiatives, many of the priorities of the Strategic Plan 23-25 cannot be accomplished.

## SUCCESS MEASURES & GOVERNANCE

How do we monitor progress and adjust plans when needed? The governance process for strategy execution includes quarterly strategic reviews with all organizational entities, monthly updates in key areas where there are interdependencies, and a dashboard of key metrics reported out periodically.

Quarterly strategic reviews are led by the Chief Justice of the Trial Court and the Court Administrator. The reviews conducted with all the departments aim to ensure that we are making progress towards our milestones, to resolve any bottlenecks or alignment issues, and as necessary adjust the plans. In certain areas – e.g., technology, hiring, diversity, equity and inclusion – we need closer governance and coordination due to the urgency we face. To ensure that roadblocks are removed in a timely fashion in these areas, we will also leverage existing monthly management meetings and reviews.

A dashboard with key metrics will facilitate tracking progress. A revised and simplified list of metrics was agreed upon, since the success measures in the last planning cycle proved too cumbersome. These are used to monitor progress toward our five strategic priorities as follows.

Service with dignity	Timely and equitable delivery of justice	Workforce advancement & support	Embracing and enhancing technology	Operational efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juror utilization &amp; juror surveys</li> <li>• Employee pulse check (facilities/safety)</li> <li>• A&amp;F in-person survey</li> <li>• Online A&amp;F (multi-language) survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court metrics</li> <li>• eCourts metrics</li> <li>• Interpreter fulfillment rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiring &amp; attrition</li> <li>• Employee diversity by level, promotions</li> <li>• Employee pulse check</li> <li>• Diversity survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JISD metrics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget vs. actuals</li> <li>• OCM satisfaction survey</li> </ul>

The employee pulse check and the diversity survey will continue to be implemented annually. The online Access and Fairness survey is a new approach that will be piloted in the fall of 2022. Depending on results, it subsequently will be refined and implemented court wide. The OCM satisfaction survey will be fielded annually, starting in 2022. The in-person access and fairness survey is cumbersome, as it requires tremendous staff involvement. However, it is also highly informative, so it will be executed once in each planning cycle. Court metrics focusing on timeliness (e.g., clearance rates) will continue to be top-of-mind. Similarly, eCourts and JISD metrics (e.g., eFiling and Wi-Fi coverage numbers) will support our technology transformation. As retention, hiring and diversity remain crucial challenges, we will closely monitor those metrics.

The table below specifies the frequency and ownership of the success measures.

### **MONTHLY**

- Court Metrics – Department of Research & Planning (DRAP)
- Juror Utilization and Juror Survey Results – Office of Jury Commissioner
- Financials vs. Budget – Fiscal
- Hiring & Attrition Report by Department and Level – Human Resources (HR)
- Employee Diversity Report by Department and Level, Promotions – HR
- Online Access & Fairness Survey (multi-language) with DE&I Lens – DRAP
- Interpreter Fulfillment Rate – Language Access & Court Records Department
- e-Courts Metrics – DRAP
- JISD Metrics - JISD

### **ANNUAL**

- Employee Pulse Check – DRAP
- OCM Satisfaction Survey – DRAP
- Diversity Survey – DRAP/Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Experience (ODEIE)

### **2025**

- In-person Access & Fairness Survey – DRAP

These measures will help us identify problem areas, find solutions and, just as importantly, enable us to mark progress and celebrate successes.

The overall governance process aims to facilitate the successful execution of the strategic plan and to secure our deliberate progress towards creating our future.

Massachusetts Trial Court  
[www.Mass.Gov/Courts](http://www.Mass.Gov/Courts)

