
Cochise County Superior and Justice Courts

2013-2016 Strategic Plan

“Our Way Forward: Committed to Serving the People of Cochise County”

Adopted July 9, 2013



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Letter from Presiding Judge and Court Administrator

We are very pleased to present the court's first strategic plan. This plan will help guide the court on a path of improvement for the next few years. This plan could not have been produced without the collaboration and contributions of many people. Hundreds of people participated in the plan's development in many ways. Some participated by completing surveys, some attended a one day workshop to help identify focus areas and potential projects, and others crafted the plan based upon this input and a thoughtful assessment of the resources and challenges facing the court. A special thanks to all of you.

This far reaching plan identifies five broad strategic focus areas for attention:

1. Access and Services
2. Court Programs
3. Case Processing and Timely Resolution
4. Workforce and Work Environment
5. External Relations and Public Education

No strategic planning process can truly be called a success unless it leads to court improvement. In order to produce results, the court's planning team considered many projects that would lead to improvement in each focus area. Some of these projects are current initiatives and others are new ones that have arisen through the process. When the list of projects is finalized within the next few weeks, it will feature those priority projects with a strong likelihood of completion within a year. These projects will engage the energies and attention of the court in the coming year.

At the end of the year, a formal review of these projects will be conducted to determine which projects are complete, which projects need more time or a new direction, and which projects should be discontinued. This dynamic process will culminate in the creation of a second project development cycle and a new project list. This annual project cycle will continue until the plan is substantially complete. We look forward to the next year as these projects begin to flower and bear fruit to make the court the best it can be for all who come before it.

Honorable James L. Conlogue, Superior Court Presiding Judge

Eric Silverberg, Superior Court Administrator

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2013-2016 Strategic Plan

Section 1: Introduction

The Courts of Cochise County embarked on a court-community strategic planning process in the fall of 2012. With funding from the State Justice Institute, the planning process included a survey of attorneys, justice system partners, stakeholders, and all judges and staff. It also included a Court-Community Planning Workshop in February 2013, where 50 justice system leaders convened to discuss the future of the Cochise Courts. This Strategic Plan, developed by the Court's Planning Team in the spring of 2013, is based on information gathered from both the survey and the planning workshop.

This Strategic Plan sets forth the future direction and key focus areas of the Cochise County Courts. Included are:

1. The mission, vision, and values of the Cochise County Courts; and
2. The Courts' strategic focus areas, long-range goals, and objectives.

Summaries of the trends analysis and organizational assessment are included in the Appendices.

A companion document – The Annual Priorities of the Courts – presents each year's strategic projects. It will be updated annually whereas the Strategic Plan will be updated every 3 years (or as needed).

Section 2: Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Below are: (1) the mission – or purpose – of the Cochise County Courts; (2) the vision of the future; and (3) core values – or the basic convictions that guide decisions and actions – of the Courts.

Mission of the Cochise Courts:

(May 2013)

We provide fair, impartial, and timely justice in all matters brought before the Courts.

Vision:

Our vision is to enhance the public's trust and confidence in the Court by being accessible and understandable and providing the highest quality of services.

Core Values – We are:

*Honest
Innovative
Collaborative
Efficient and effective
Courteous and service-oriented*

Section 3: Strategic Focus Areas, Goals, and Objectives

Identifying strategic focus areas, and developing comprehensive, institutional responses to those areas, are the heart of the strategic planning process. *Strategic focus areas* are large, encompassing issues (that comprise what appear to be numerous unrelated or loosely related problems) that are fundamental to the organization over the long term. They are the large, strategic areas that must be addressed in the future for the organization to fulfill its purpose and move toward its vision of the future.

Organizations develop comprehensive *strategies* in response to the strategic focus areas. Strategies include (1) long-range *goals*, which are broad statements that define the desired end, targets that the organization will work to achieve; and (2) several objectives for each of the goals. *Objectives* are general statements that describe the manner in which the end result – or goal – will be achieved. *Priority projects or strategic initiatives* are the shorter-term (1 year) operational priorities of the organization. As they are completed, the organization will be making progress on accomplishing the long-range goals and responding effectively to the strategic focus areas.

Below are the five strategic focus areas of the Cochise Courts.

Cochise County Superior and Justice Courts
Strategic Focus Areas
(May 2013)

1. Access and Services
2. Court Programs
3. Case Processing and Timely Resolution
4. Workforce and Work Environment
5. External Relations and Public Education

Descriptions of the strategic focus areas as well as the long-range goals and objectives follow. The specific, annual strategic projects the Courts will undertake to achieve these goals and objectives are included in the Courts' Annual Priority Projects, a companion document to this Strategic Plan.

Strategic Focus Area #1: Access and Services

Description: The Cochise County Courts are committed to being more accessible and providing the highest quality of services to all court users. People who need to use the courts should have easy access. Once court users access the courts, they deserve the highest quality of services. Consequently, enhancing access and services to meet the changing and increasing needs of court users is a high priority for the Courts in the years ahead.

There are numerous ways to make the Courts more accessible. They include: (1) improving physical access (e.g., enhance parking, expand court locations and services throughout the county, make facilities more accessible for the disabled and elderly); (2) improving access to court and case information both in person and via digital media (e.g., in the Library, at the Clerk's office, via the Website); and (3) enhancing remote and electronic access (e.g., ability to file and pay fines and fees electronically, ability to complete and submit forms electronically and via the Website).

Currently the Courts lack the technology needed to enhance access and services to court users. They also lack the internal capacity to address the growing expectations of the public and needs of court staff. The Courts receive and are dependent on technology and technology services from two, primary providers: The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the County of Cochise. Clarifying roles, responsibilities, expectations, and needs as well as developing a plan of action among the Courts and technology providers for enhancing the Courts' technology and providing needed technology services will greatly assist the Courts. Doing so will result in stronger partnerships and better products and services in the future.

Finally, in addition to continuing to treat all court users courteously, fairly, and with respect, the Courts must work to improve, expand, and add new services in response to changing court customer needs and demographics. Examples of ways to enhance and augment services include expanding services to self-represented litigants and non-English speaking users, providing user-friendly information and forms, and conducting informational workshops.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: The Courts will be accessible to all.

Obj. 1: Upgrade and expand technology and the Website to increase electronic access and enable court users to do business with the courts remotely.

Obj. 2: Expand the services provided and cases heard at court locations.

Obj.3: Enhance physical access to court facilities.

Goal 2: The Court's services will meet the current and future needs of court users.

Obj. 1: Provide court users with understandable information and user-friendly resources.

Obj. 2: Expand services and assistance to self-represented litigants.

Obj. 3: Use technology/automation to improve and expand services.

Goal 3: The Courts, in partnership with the AOC and County IT, will have and use available and emerging technology to enhance access and services to court users, the public, and staff.

Obj. 1: Strengthen partnerships with the AOC and County IT and develop short and long-term plans with the AOC and County IT to sustain and enhance the Courts' technology applications.

Obj. 2: Implement available and emerging technologies to meet the growing expectations and needs of court users, public, and court staff.

Strategic Focus Area #2: Court Programs

Description: The Courts currently provide a variety of court programs to assist and serve court users. Examples include alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services, language assistance, teen and adult drug courts, adult and juvenile probation programs and services, treatment programs, and family and juvenile programs and services (e.g., counseling, education). Overall, survey respondents rated the Courts' existing programs highly.

Nonetheless, expanding court programs was mentioned frequently as a needed change and improvement, and an important issue facing the Courts, in the coming years. Specifically, survey respondents requested that the Courts expand court programs to meet the growing and changing needs of court users, youth, and families. Adding and/or expanding specialty/problem solving courts (e.g., mental health court), pretrial services, ADR services, and adult, family, and juvenile services were among examples provided. Additionally, survey respondents suggested enhancements to several programs provided by other court-related organizations such as the prosecutor's office and/or treatment provides. They included programs for victims as well as diversion, sex-offender, and mentoring programs. While these programs are outside of the Courts, the Courts fully support other organizations making improvements in these areas.

Continuing to enhance the Courts' programs to achieve positive results (e.g., provide services and keep the community safe) and meet the needs of court users are high priorities for the Cochise Courts.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: The Courts' programs will meet the current and future needs of court users and the community.

Obj. 1: Expand and enhance ADR services.

Obj. 2: Enhance language assistance throughout the County to ensure compliance with Title VI requirements.

Obj. 3: Develop and sustain specialty courts to meet community needs.

Obj. 4: Provide pre-trial services consistent and in collaboration with the County's Strategic Plan and priorities.

Obj. 5: Enhance juvenile and family services.

Obj. 6: Use evidence-based and promising practices to achieve the best results in criminal and juvenile matters.

Obj. 7: Strengthen programs for court participants.

Obj. 8: Pursue fiscal and other resources needed to add and strengthen the Courts' programs.

Obj. 9: Collaborate with other criminal justice and treatment organizations as they strengthen court-related programs.

Strategic Focus Area #3: Case Processing and Timely Resolution

Description: An important issue facing the Cochise Courts in the upcoming years is managing cases effectively and resolving cases in a timely manner, according to justice system partners and stakeholders attending the February Planning Workshop. Additionally, attorneys, partners, and stakeholders on the survey identified timeliness, scheduling, and procedures as an area they most wanted changes and improvements in the next 3-4 years. Centralizing/coordinating scheduling, staggering hearing times, starting hearings on time, setting the next hearing sooner, providing copies of orders, pleadings, etc. in a timely manner, reducing the number of continuances, and processing paperwork more timely were among the suggestions provided by survey respondents.

Effective case processing and timely resolution of legal matters are characteristics of high performing courts. The Courts are committed to managing and processing cases effectively and efficiently, reducing unnecessary delay, and expeditiously resolving legal matters.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: The Cochise Courts will manage and process cases effectively and resolve legal matters in a timely manner.

Obj. 1: Streamline case processing and workflow.

Obj. 2: Process paperwork in a timely manner.

Obj. 3: Use technology/case management system to more efficiently and effectively manage and process cases.

Obj.4: Collaborate with the AOC to troubleshoot and enhance the AJACS case management system.

Obj. 5: Improve scheduling/calendaring practices.

Obj. 6: Increase timely appearances of all parties.

Obj. 7: Reduce unnecessary delay (e.g., too many continuances, etc.)

Obj. 8: Start court hearings on time.

Strategic Focus Area #4: Workforce and Work Environment

Description: The Courts need a competent and motivated workforce to provide the highest quality of services. A positive work environment, among other things, also is essential to recruiting, attracting, and retaining staff that have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform highly in a changing and challenging environment.

Attendees at the Planning Workshop in February 2013 identified this issue as one of the important issues facing the Courts in the next 3-4 years. Additionally, court staff, per the survey, identified several areas for improvement in the next 3-4 years including increasing pay, increasing staffing levels, and enhancing training and development opportunities. Additional ideas for making the Court a better – more satisfying – place to work included:

- Strengthening leadership and management practices;
- Conducting performance evaluations and providing performance feedback;
- Praising and recognizing staff for good work;
- Enhancing teamwork throughout the Courts;
- Improving internal communication;
- Improving facilities and parking; and
- Providing updated equipment and technology.

Cochise County also identified workforce as a priority area in its strategic plan. The County's priorities include: recruiting, training, and developing a talented workforce and using employees in the most efficient, effective, and productive manner. The Courts will seek opportunities to collaborate with the County on areas of common concern.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: The Courts will recruit and retain a qualified and motivated workforce.

- Obj. 1: Use innovative recruitment practices to attract a diverse and skilled workforce.
- Obj. 2: Work with the County and others to provide competitive and market-based salaries, benefits, and other perks.
- Obj. 3: Educate, train, cross-train, and develop staff including the next generation of court leaders.
- Obj. 4: Reward and recognize staff for excellent performance.
- Obj. 5: Reinforce the mission of the Courts and the significance of employees' work/jobs.

Goal 2: The Courts will maintain a quality – positive and engaging – work environment.

- Obj. 1: Educate, train, and develop supervisors and managers.
- Obj. 2: Strengthen the Courts' performance management and feedback system.
- Obj. 3: Foster a respectful and healthy work environment.
- Obj. 4: Strengthen teamwork and collaboration within and across the courts.
- Obj. 5: Improve communication throughout the courts.
- Obj. 6: Provide employees with the resources (e.g., equipment, space, technology, etc.) to do their jobs well.

Strategic Focus Area #5: External Relations and Public Education

Description: Having positive external relations is critically important for credibility and trust in the courts. Additionally, it is important for the public to understand and enhance trust and confidence in the third, independent branch of government.

Thus, in response to the survey results, the Courts are committed to building and strengthening relationships with their many state and local justice system partners and stakeholders. This includes improving communication, enhancing collaborative efforts to improve the court system, and the Cochise Courts speaking with one voice. It also includes continuing and augmenting public education, community outreach, and other local educational events.

Strengthened partnerships and an educated and informed public will enhance the overall performance of the Courts and help to maintain the public’s trust and confidence.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: The Courts will have and maintain positive relations with justice system partners and stakeholders.

Obj. 1: Work to enhance relationships with justice system partners and stakeholders (local and state).

Obj. 2: Improve communication with partners and stakeholders.

Obj. 3: Facilitate improved cooperation and collaboration among partners and stakeholders.

Obj. 4: Develop and speak with a unified voice among all Cochise Courts.

Goal 2: The public will better understand and have trust and confidence in the Cochise Court System.

Obj. 1: Inform and educate the public about the court system and judicial branch of government using multiple media.

Obj. 2: Conduct public outreach with civic groups, schools, community groups, etc.

Obj. 3: Enhance the Courts’ reputation for providing quality services and effective court programs.

Obj. 4: Consistently demonstrate transparency and accountability.

Section 6: Conclusion

The Courts are committed to following-through on this Strategic Plan. To be successful, they will involve many judges and court staff. Additionally, they will need the assistance of the Courts’ partners and stakeholders.

A relatively small Implementation Team will be formed to lead the implementation efforts. Led by the Presiding Judge and Court Administrator, members of this team will be responsible for various projects, each of which will include other project team members instrumental to completing the project. The Implementation Team will meet frequently (e.g., monthly or quarterly) to review and report on progress. Additionally, the Implementation Team will meet annually to review progress on the Strategic Plan and all priority projects, refine as needed, and identify new priority projects for the next year.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Trends and Implication on the Courts

There are many trends affecting the courts. They include a wide range of social, demographic, economic, policy/political, technological, and justice system trends. Additionally, caseload, workload, and staffing trends show the changing and shifting nature of the Courts' work.¹

All of the trends will have significant implications on the Courts in the years ahead. Below is a summary of the likely and anticipated effects of the many trends on the Courts.

External Trends

Social and Community Demographics:

1. Cochise County's population increased 21% from 1990 – 2000, from 97,624 to 117,743. During the same time, Arizona's population increased by 40%. From 2000-2010, Cochise County's population increased 11%, from 117,743 to 131,346. During the same time, Arizona and the US population increased 25% and 10% respectively.
2. In 2011, persons of Hispanic/Latino origin made up 33% of Cochise County's population, up 2% from 2000. In 2011, 30% of Arizona's population, and 16% of the US population, was of Hispanic/Latino origin.
3. The median age of the population of Cochise County in 2010 was 39.7, up from 36.9 in 2000. The median age of the US and Arizona in 2010 was 37.2 and 35.9 respectively. The percent of persons 65 and older living in Cochise County in 2011 was 18%, up from 15% in 2000 as compared to 13% for the US and 14% for Arizona.
4. Bisbee's population declined nearly 10% from 2000 – 2011. During the same time, Sierra Vista's population increased 22%, the non-city county population (which includes Wilcox) increased 12%, Benson increased 9%, and Douglas increased 6%.
5. 30% of Cochise County's population has a college degree or more in 2011 compared to 34% of Arizona's population and 36% of the US population.
6. Explosion in the use of social media/social networking.

Economic Trends:

7. The unemployment rate in Cochise County was 8.3% at the end of 2012, the same as the unemployment rate for the US. Arizona's unemployment rate was slightly higher at 8.8%.
8. The average weekly wages of people in Cochise County in 2011 was \$831, less than Arizona as a whole and the US, which were \$842 and \$891 respectively.
9. The median household income of people in Cochise County increased 33% from 2000 to 2009, from \$32,903 to \$43,786. The US median household income increased only 22% during the same time period (from \$42,000 to \$51,400) and Pima County increased only 25% (from \$36,800 to \$45,900).
10. 16% of Arizona and Cochise County's population was living below the poverty level in 2010 compared to 14% of the US population.
11. Increasing stratification between higher and lower incomes.
12. Greater demands to do business 24/7.
13. People are working longer; they are delaying retirement.
14. Declining state and local budgets; depleted reserves.

¹ Detailed external and internal trends data/information is available upon request. If interested, please contact Court Administration (Cochise County Superior Court).

Policy/Political Trends:

15. Increasing scrutiny on how public tax dollars are spent.
16. Increasing fragmentation, position polarization, and gridlock among political parties
17. Increasing tension between preserving individual rights and rolling back civil liberties.
18. Ongoing tension between increasing expectations for government solutions and the call for less government involvement in personal lives.
19. More tension between local control and need for regionalization of services.

Technological/Scientific Trends:

20. Rapidly developing information, telecommunications, and networking technologies.
21. Wireless revolution and use of the Internet.
22. Rapid advances in mobile communications and information technology (an app for everything).
23. Cost effective technologies for distance learning and virtual meetings.

National/Regional Justice System Trends:

24. Perpetual federal, state, and local funding challenges.
25. Aging court infrastructure, especially facilities, security, technology, and equipment.
26. Changing demographics and characteristics of court users.
27. Increasing and changing caseloads/workloads (an increase in some types of cases, complex legal matters, more fee waivers, inability to pay/defaults).
28. Demand for justice system transparency and performance accountability.
29. Increasing local and state involvement in the enforcement and adjudication of federal policy.
30. Demand for access to information and ability to do business with courts from remote locations.
31. Increase in legislation for specific crimes and unfunded mandates.

Internal Trends:

Superior Court Caseload/Workload:

1. Total case filings increased 23% from 2000 – 2007, but decreased 9% from 2007 – 2012.
2. Criminal filings increased 19% from 2000 – 2007. From 2007 – 2012, criminal case filings increased 8%.
3. Civil filings increased 63% from 2000 – 2007, but from 2007-2012, civil filings declined 4%.
4. Domestic Relations filings increased 15% from 2000 – 2007, but declined 2% from 2007 – 2012.
5. Juvenile filings increased 13% from 2000 – 2007, but declined 56% from 2007 – 2012.
6. The number of Superior Court criminal trials has declined since 2009, likely due to the implementation of the Early Resolution Court (from 41 in 2009 to 13 in 2012).
7. The number of Superior Court civil trials has declined since 2010, but the Court experienced a rather large increase in FY 2012.
8. The number of Title IV-D hearings has declined 58% since 2008.
9. The number of Orders of Protection declined steadily from 2006 to 2011 (from 231 to 136), however, increased significantly in 2012 (to 248).

Justice Courts Caseload/Workload:

10. Total case filings increased 7% from 2000 – 2003, but decreased 23% from 2003 – 2012.
11. Criminal traffic filings increased 28% from 2000 – 2003, but decreased 37% from 2003 – 2012.
12. Civil traffic filings decreased 2% from 2000 – 2003, and decreased 25% from 2003 – 2012.
13. Misdemeanor filings (FTA and FTA Traffic) increased 35% from 2000 – 2003, but declined 7% from 2003 – 2012.

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14. Civil filings decreased 4% from 2000 – 2003. From 2003 – 2012, civil filings increased 32%.
 15. Felony filings increased 55% from 2000 – 2003, but declined 49% from 2003 – 2012.
 16. The number of Orders of Protection has declined since 2010.
 17. The number of Justice Court Injunctions against Harassment declined 57% from 2006 – 2012.

ADR Program:

18. The number of ADR referrals by Justice Court increased 10% from 2005 – 2012, with larger spikes in 2009 and 2011. The largest proportion of the referrals is from Sierra Vista followed by Douglas. The majority of referrals are being disposed of through arbitration.
19. The number of Superior Court referrals to ADR declined 55% from 2004 – 2011 (from 236 to 107), but increased significantly in 2012 (to 266) due to transferring arbitration cases to the ADR office.

Family Conciliation Court:

20. Total referrals to FCC declined 17% from 2006 – 2009, but increased 13% from 2009 – 2012.
21. Mediation services have remained flat from 2006 – 2012 (declined slightly – 3%).
22. Facilitating parenting plans increased 22% from 2006 – 2012.
23. The number of parent education classes has increased 33% from 2007 – 2012.

Adult Probation Office (APO):

24. The average monthly APO caseload increased 33% from 2000 – 2012 (from 540 to 718).
25. The number of APO restitution hours worked declined 22% from 2000 – 2012.
26. The average monthly number of drug court clients has ranged from 17-19 over the past 4 years.

Juvenile Court Services (JCS) – Delinquency and Dependency:

27. Juvenile court referrals declined 41% from 2000 – 2012.
28. Delinquency petitions declined 25% from 2000 2012.
29. Most referred juveniles are diverted with no court action. They complete their conditional adjusted consequences and have no further contact with JCS.
30. Dependency filings increased 46% from 2000 – 2004, but have declined 34% from 2004 – 2012.

Judicial Human Resources/Staffing:

31. In 2013, it is estimated that 19 (9%) of court staff are eligible for retirement. By 2018, another 38 (18%) court staff will be eligible. By 2023, an additional 29 (14%) will be eligible.
32. Of 213 employees including judicial officers, 96 (45%) are aged 50 and above.
33. Since 2008, approved/budgeted positions have ranged from a low of 248 FTEs to a high of 265 FTEs in 2010.
34. The number of involuntary separations has remained low from 2008 – 2012 (range of 2 – 6 per year). The number of retirements each year is increasing (4 in 2008 to 9 in 2012). The number of voluntary separations has declined from 2008 to 2010 (from 53 to 29) but has risen slightly in 2011 and 2012 (33 and 32 respectively).

Consequences (Source: per the Arizona Supreme Court's Strategic Planning Process – January 2013):

1. There is a widening gap between society's expectations and courts' capacity to meet those expectations.
2. Court users are increasingly more diverse and have a wide range of evolving needs.
3. Case composition will change, and the complexity of some types of cases will continue.

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4. Pressure will continue to mount to achieve better case outcomes and appropriately supervise and monitor offenders.
 5. There is an increasing demand for culturally appropriate and therapeutic approaches to court and justice services.
 6. The Judicial Branch will have difficulty keeping pace with emerging technologies.
 7. It will become increasingly difficult to recruit, hire, and retain highly skilled executives, managers, and staff.
 8. Court facilities and infrastructure will continue to decline.
 9. Ideology-driven politics will continue to threaten judicial independence, influence perceptions of fairness, and affect the public's trust and confidence in courts.
 10. Challenging times could create the right conditions for implementing innovations and revolutionizing how courts do business.

Consequences (Source: per the February 2013 Cochise Courts-Community Planning Workshop):

11. The Courts likely will face increasing demands in the future due to a growing population, an aging population, more pro se/self represented litigants, more non-English speaking litigants, and complex legal issues (e.g., criminal behavior mixes with mental health and/or substance abuse issues).
12. The Courts likely will have difficulty meeting the increasing and changing needs of court users (e.g., non-English speaking, self-represented, preventative programs, alternative dispute resolution, mental health and substance abuse, specialty court programs) with declining and/or unstable funding.
13. Case types of the Courts may change in the future due to changing demographics and societal circumstances (e.g., probate, elder abuse, mental health, drug, orders of protection).
14. Service levels of the Courts may decline in the future due to less funding, fewer staff, etc. (e.g., decline in customer service).
15. The Courts will likely continue to lag behind in technology due to funding constraints despite the increased need to better use technology to increase access and provide services (e.g., put more information online, use integrated technology systems). Additionally, some groups may have difficulties accessing or using new technologies (e.g., older population, lower socio-economic groups).
16. Delays in resolving cases may occur due to increasing demands and fewer resources.
17. Costs to litigants (e.g., fees and court costs) are likely to increase; there will likely be more deferrals and requests for waivers.
18. Limited/restricted resources will adversely affect the courts in the future including facilities, court security, technology, etc. Court security will continually need to be strengthened.
19. There is a growing need for coordinated efforts among all agencies, partners, and stakeholders (e.g., County, law enforcement, legal community, courts, etc.).
20. The public and providers may become increasingly frustrated with the court system. Public trust and confidence in the Courts may be eroded if service levels decline, if delays increase, etc.
21. The public needs to be educated about the judicial branch and the Cochise Courts.
22. The Courts need to build and maintain a strong workforce. They must prepare for succession and find innovative ways to recruit, motivate, and retain highly skilled employees.

Appendix B: Organizational Assessment

All organizations have strengths and areas for improvement. A summary of the strategic planning survey results is provided next. A summary of the Courts' strengths, areas for improvement, and threat is provided at the end of this section, according to the Courts' Planning Team.

Strengths

Of five key, court performance areas, the Cochise Courts were rated the highest on "Fairness" and "Quality/Effectiveness." In addition, the most frequently mentioned strengths of the Courts were:

1. Court employees;
2. Judicial officers;
3. Customer service; and
4. Court programs.

A couple of specific areas that received the highest ratings from attorneys were:

1. Court security is adequate (attorneys);
2. Court users/attorneys are given an opportunity to be heard (attorneys);
3. Judicial officers and staff treat court users with respect (attorneys);
4. The Courts do a good job of providing language assistance to litigants not fluent in English

Areas for Improvement

Of the five key, court performance areas, the Courts were rated the lowest on "External Communication/Public Education" and "Accessibility." "Timeliness" was ranked in the middle.

The Courts were rated the **lowest** on the following questions.

1. The Courts do a good job of educating the public about the Courts.
2. The Courts communicate effectively with external partners, stakeholders, and the legal community.
3. The Courts collaborate effectively with the legal community to enhance services or to achieve more effective case outcomes.
4. Court procedures seem understandable to most court users.
5. It is easy to find information about the courts from the Courts' website.

The most frequently mentioned areas for improvement were:

1. Improve the use of technology/automation;
2. Improve timeliness, scheduling, and court procedures;
3. Improve customer service and self-help services;
4. Expand and improve court programs;
5. Improve external communication and public education; and
6. Improve facilities.

The most frequently mentioned barriers to accessing the Courts were:

1. Difficulty understanding procedures, processes, legal terms, or how to get answers to questions upon arriving at court;
2. The cost of hiring an attorney;
3. The distance people have to travel to get to court;
4. The time it takes to get decisions/legal matters resolved; and
5. An overall lack of trust and confidence in the court system.

Future Priorities – New Program and Services

If new programs and services are possible in the future, the most frequently mentioned – most desired – future priorities were:

1. Increase the ability to do business with the courts remotely/electronically;
2. Expand specialty/problem solving courts;
3. Enhance self-help/pro se assistance;
4. Establish a pre-trial release program;
5. Expand alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and other court programs (e.g., family and juvenile services, etc.); and
6. Do more public education/community outreach.

Summary of the Courts’ Strengths and Weaknesses

The Courts’ Planning Team summarized the Courts’ strengths and weaknesses as follows.

Strengths	Weaknesses/Areas for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judicial Officers – knowledgeable, fair decisions, apply rules/procedures fairly, give a chance to be heard, explain decisions, respectful • Court employees – knowledgeable, helpful, courteous, respectful, dedicated • Fairness – outcome and procedural fairness • Customer service • Providing language assistance • Court programs • Specialty/problem solving courts • Safety and security • Some facilities are good • Multiple court locations (access) • Integrity • Commitment and willingness to improve/ change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty understanding procedures • Self-help services/assistance – availability of resources, forms, etc. • Timely services and timely resolution • Website • Public education and communicating externally • Accessibility to the courts – physical access, electronic access • Use of technology/automation • Lack of information sharing among some internal and external departments • Lack of funding for enhancements – for technology, facilities, pay and benefits, additional staff, etc. • Some facilities are in need of improvement • Lack of training/development opportunities for staff • Inertia/fear of change by some

Biggest Threats Facing the Cochise Courts in the Upcoming Years

1. Lack of funding/reduced resources
2. Unfunded mandates
3. Political interference
4. Growing and changing population
5. Declining facilities and infrastructure
6. Increase in self-representative court users
7. Changing societal attitudes/values (e.g., less respect for authority)