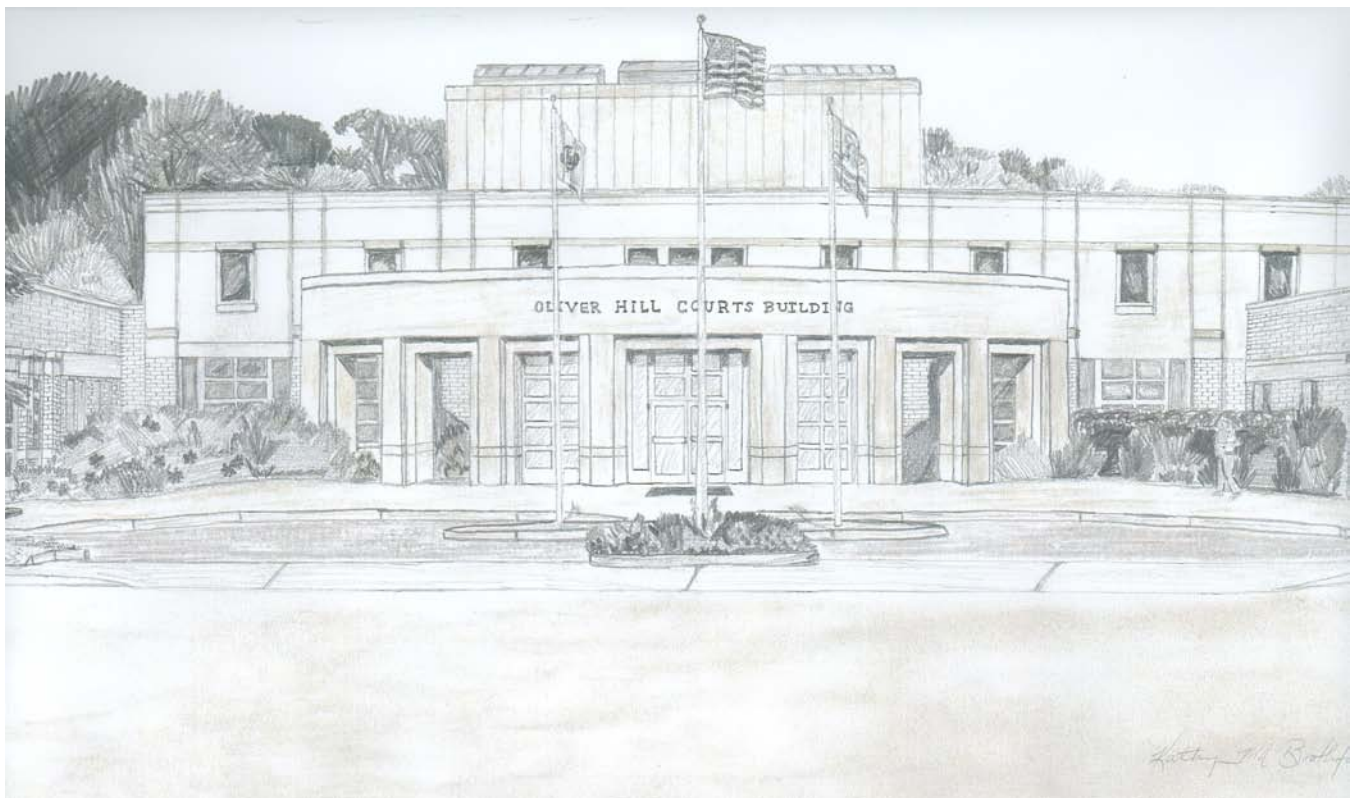

2011-2012 Strategic Projects: Moving the Court Forward

Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
City of Richmond



Companion Document to the Court's Strategic Plan 2008-2012

June 1, 2011

Richmond J&DR Court Strategic Planning Committee

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Mission & Vision | 4 |
| Strategic Issues, Goals, Objectives & Projects | 5 |
| • Efficient and effective court administration and operations | |
| • Accessibility to the Court, timeliness, fairness, and customer service | |
| • Achievement of effective outcomes | |
| • Collaboration with partners | |
| Status Report on the Court’s <i>Strategic Plan 2008-2012</i> | 10 |
| (Reprinted from “ <i>Overview of Judicial Administration in 2010</i> ”) | |

Introduction

The Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations (J&DR) District Court's *Strategic Plan 2008-2012* presents four over-arching issue areas the Court seeks to address over the long-term. In order to proactively take steps to meet the needs of the Court today and into the future, the plan lays out goals and objectives – the strategies – for meeting the challenges within each of the four issue areas. To realize these strategies, this companion document to the strategic plan, *Moving the Court Forward*, presents specific projects the Court will work on in the upcoming years. These projects were selected to ensure the Court makes progress in its key areas of focus. Work on these specific projects ultimately results in moving the Court toward achieving its long-term goals and objectives so as to provide the highest quality of justice services to the people of Richmond. This is the second companion document published under the umbrella of the Court's *Strategic Plan 2008-2012*; this document presents the second set of priorities selected to undertake through 2012. Please contact the Court for documentation of the Court's efforts since 2005 to strategically address judicial administration.

Mission & Vision

Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Mission

The purpose of the Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court is to provide an independent forum to: (1) resolve juvenile and domestic relations disputes and other legal matters in a fair, efficient, and effective manner and (2) protect the rights of all parties before the Court pursuant to the laws of Virginia and the Constitutions of Virginia and the United States. The Court will advance the best interests of youth and families and serve and protect the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia by holding individuals accountable for their actions.

Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Vision

Quality court services, stronger youth and families, and a safer community.

Strategic Issues, Goals, Objectives & Projects

Following are brief descriptions of each of the Court's four over-arching strategic issue areas, as well as the accompanying long-range goals and objectives that support addressing each issue area. The Court's specific shorter-term, strategic projects that will be undertaken in the upcoming years to ensure these goals and objectives are achieved also are included within each area.

Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Strategic Issue Areas

1. Efficient and Effective Court Administration and Operations
2. Accessibility to the Court, Timeliness, Fairness, and Customer Service
3. Achievement of Effective Outcomes
4. Collaboration with Partners

Strategic Issue 1: Efficient and Effective Court Administration and Operations

The Court is committed to managing its business responsibly. To do so, it must continually incorporate effective and innovative approaches in all facets of court administration. The Court sees both an opportunity and a need to enhance its internal governance, improve case management practices and case processing, and take proactive steps to ensure that judges and staff are skilled, well-trained, and fulfilling the Court's mission and working toward the vision of the future.

| Goal 1: The Court's leadership will be strong, effective, and prepared. | |
|---|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually enhance the judicial and administrative governance structure of the Court. • Establish, communicate, and secure buy-in to the Court's well-defined strategic and operational (day-to-day) priorities. • Continually enhance security and emergency preparedness of the Court. • Enhance the Court's integration and collaboration with CSU leadership. |
| Goal 2: The Court's case management practices and work processes will be effective, efficient, and consistent. | |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline and simplify case processing and work processes. • Increase procedural and process uniformity and consistency among Clerk's Office staff, among judges, and CSU. • Increase the accuracy of judicial orders and paperwork and the completeness of case files. • Enhance caseflow management practices. |
| Goal 3: Judges, substitute judges, and staff will be knowledgeable, committed, and professional. | |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit and retain high quality, motivated staff. • Provide training and professional development opportunities for all court personnel. • Maintain a positive and motivating work environment. • Implement innovative human resource programs and practices. |

The Court will undertake the following projects in the next two years to help achieve these long-range goals and objectives:

| 2011-2012 Projects | |
|--|---|
| Projects | Primary Responsibility / Lead |
| 1. Develop and communicate a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for the Court. | Clerk of Court and Chief Operating Officer |
| 2. Implement JCMS (JAVA version of the Court's Case Management System (CMS)). | Clerk of Court and Chief Deputy Clerk |
| 3. Evaluate and enhance the juvenile arraignment process. | Clerk and Court Service Unit Intake Supervisor |
| 4. Enhance local court forms and orders and implement "best practice" suggestions. | Chief Deputy Clerk and Clerk's Office Supervisors |
| 5. Utilize applicable components of the National Center for State Courts' "CourTools" performance measurement system for assessing court operations. | Clerk of Court and Chief Operating Officer |
| 6. Develop and deliver a substitute judge training. | Judge and Clerk of Court |

Strategic Issue 2: Accessibility to the Court, Timeliness, Fairness, and Customer Service

Easy access to courts, expeditious resolution of disputes, fair processes, and quality treatment are consistently cited by court users as integral to them feeling as though they were treated fairly and ultimately “had their day in court.” In the years ahead, the Court wishes to continue to facilitate access, improve the timeliness of resolving disputes and providing services, and enhance procedural fairness including ensuring court processes are fair and court users receive quality treatment during every interaction with the Court. This includes: (1) having adequate and accessible facilities; (2) providing easy access to accurate, understandable court information and services; (3) offering easier access for conducting court business; (4) improving services to non-English-speaking and self-represented litigants; (5) ensuring court processes are fair; and (6) providing timely, respectful, helpful, and courteous services to all court users.

| Goal 1: The Court’s facilities will be adequate, safe, and easily accessible. | |
|--|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve physical space. • Enhance courthouse safety and security. • Enhance emergency preparedness and plan for business continuity. • Ensure the facility complies with ADA requirements and other needs of all its users. |
| Goal 2: The Court’s information and services will be easily accessible to and understandable for all court users. | |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use technology to enhance access to court information and increase the convenience of doing court business. • Provide court users with understandable information and resources that will help them conduct court business. • Modify court services, resources, and hours to meet the changing needs of the public. |
| Goal 3: The Court will resolve legal matters and serve all court users in a timely manner. | |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce case backlogs and the amount of time it takes to resolve disputes. • Reduce wait times for all court users in the courtrooms, at the Clerk’s Office, and in Intake. • Improve the case management system. |
| Goal 4: All court users will receive respectful, helpful, and high quality services. | |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat all court users respectfully, courteously, and consistently. • Assist court users in understanding court processes, judicial decisions, and court orders. • Eliminate real and perceived barriers to assisting court users. • Ensure people are given a “voice” – an opportunity to tell their side of the story, to explain their situation and views to an authority who listens carefully. |

The Court will undertake the following projects in the next two years to help achieve these long-range goals and objectives:

| 2011-2012 Projects | |
|---|--|
| Projects | Primary Responsibility / Lead |
| 7. Continue to undertake all possible enhancements to courthouse safety and security. | Chief Operating Officer and Sheriff’s Office |
| 8. Pursuant to <i>Code of Virginia</i> § 16.1-278.8:01, construct a private restroom in the courthouse to conduct confidential drug testing of juveniles. | Chief Operating Officer and Court Service Unit Deputy Director |

Strategic Issue 3: Achievement of Effective Outcomes

Nowhere are the stakes higher, both for individuals and the community at large, than in the court with jurisdiction over juvenile and family cases. And, such cases continue to grow increasingly complex. The Court is committed to positively impacting youth, families, and the community. This is accomplished through the decisions and actions of judges and the wide-range of services provided by government and community agencies. Also incorporated in this commitment is a philosophy shared with the City to provide effective community-based services that are child-centered, family-focused, and strengths- and evidence-based. This involves local collaboration across multiple agencies and services sectors, promotes partnerships, and incorporates ongoing evaluation and accountability.

Goal 1: Judicial decisions / actions and court-related services will have a positive effect on youth, families, and the community.

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| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use innovative, evidence-based solutions and approaches. • Use qualitative and quantitative data to measure results and make systemic improvements. • Collaborate with partners to evaluate and to demonstrate outcomes. • Utilize programs and resources that are demonstrably effective. • Hold agencies and providers accountable for providing effective services and achieving results. |
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Goal 2: The public will understand and support the role and priorities of the Court.

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| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate the public about the Court’s role, procedures, accomplishments, needs, and priorities. • Develop and expand partnerships with community leaders. • Obtain the public’s support for securing resources needed to fulfill the Court’s mission, vision, and long-range goals. |
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Goal 3: Youth and families will be held accountable for their actions / inactions.

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| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter realistic and understandable orders. • Enforce the Court’s orders. • Refer youth, adults, and families to resources / services that will help them succeed. |
|-------------------|---|

The Court will undertake the following projects in the next two years to help achieve these long-range goals and objectives:

| 2011-2012 Projects | |
|---|--|
| Projects | Primary Responsibility / Lead |
| 9. Implement evidence-based cognitive-behavioral programming within primary programs for youth and into Court Service Unit staff training. | Court Service Unit Director |
| 10. Review best practices and effective options for establishing a docket dedicated to the collection of outstanding fines and costs and/or other monies owed due to the Commonwealth of Virginia and/or City of Richmond and propose a detailed conceptual plan to the Court for approval. If approved, implement, monitor, and review the impact of the docket, including its effectiveness and impact on court resources, to determine long-term institutionalization. | Clerk of Court and Chief Operating Officer |

Strategic Issue 4: Collaboration with Partners

The Court is a critical link in an integrated justice and social services system. That is, while the Court has a distinct and clear mission, it is dependent on the work and services of many justice, social service, and other community agencies to serve children and families in the City of Richmond. In short, the Court is dependent on its many partners to achieve effective outcomes for children, families, and other court users.

| | |
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| Goal 1: The Court and its partners will regularly and effectively cooperate, communicate, coordinate and collaborate. | |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new and strengthen existing relationships with partners. Improve information sharing among partners. Expand the involvement of partners and stakeholders in improving the Court's services, achieving positive outcomes for youth and families, and setting strategic priorities. |
| Goal 2: The Court's partners will have an appropriate and mutual understanding of the Court, relative to their role with the Court. | |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess, identify, and conduct on-going joint training. Develop and distribute resource / reference materials in collaboration with partners. Develop new and/or enhance the use of existing collaborative groups or forums to share information. |

While the Court did not elect to undertake specific new projects in the next two years aimed exclusively at achieving these long-range goals and objectives, the majority of the nine new projects that were selected include collaboration, coordination, and communication with numerous stakeholder agencies. Further, this theme is prevalent among most judicial administration efforts the Court is sustaining since the inception of its strategic planning process in 2005.

Status Report on the Court's Strategic Plan 2008-2012

(Reprinted from "Overview of Judicial Administration in 2010")

The delivery of justice is an essential government function, and courts must carry out their core constitutional and statutory functions according to the rule of law, a mandate that cannot be suspended.¹ Periods of economic stress underscore the essential role of courts in our society. In fiscal times like those experienced over the last several years, people increasingly rely upon courts to address issues with their homes, property, businesses, and families. Even as courts at every level take steps to do their part to cut costs and balance budgets, simply requiring courts to do more with less is not a viable option; people have a constitutional right to have their cases heard and heard promptly, whether criminal or civil in nature. Providing leadership and taking initiative to improve the administration of justice and public trust and confidence in the court system remains as important today as ever.²

To help the Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court efficiently manage all facets of its work, since 2005, the Court has maintained an ongoing strategic planning process that serves as the foundation for undertaking judicial administration activities. The Court's plan articulates a long-range strategy for court administration, framing over-arching issues to address over the years through implementation of a series of supporting goals, objectives, and projects. **Available resources are dedicated to focusing on four key issue areas: (1) efficient and effective court administration and operations; (2) accessibility to the court, timeliness, fairness, and customer service; (3) achievement of effective outcomes for those before the court; and (4) appropriate, effective collaboration with community partners.** Approximately every two years, priority projects are agreed upon to ensure the Court continues to make progress on addressing these four fundamental strategic issue areas.

The Court's strategic plan guides the organization's administrative efforts. This process provides for continuity in leadership and helps to ensure the Court's long-term priorities get addressed. In serving as a blue print for judicial administration, the Court's strategic plan guides judges and staff in prioritizing work and ensures the efficient expenditure of limited fiscal, human, and other resources. Taken together, all these efforts constitute essential work geared toward improving the foundation upon which justice is administered here each day.

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE COURT ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

Status of 2008-2010 Priorities

Update docketing practices. The Court reviews its docketing practices monthly via analysis of caseload statistics and the public's waiting time by case type. Instead of requiring a "team approach" or special meetings to make docket enhancements, changes routinely are proposed by the Clerk. As a result, clerk's office scheduling task types are streamlined and changes made that reflect the distribution of cases filed in the Court. In 2010, the amount of Child in Need of Services/ Supervision (CHINS) and delinquency docket time were reduced, while civil custody, visitation, and support time were increased. Additionally, the Court implemented best-practice docket enhancements in adult criminal (domestic violence) cases, institutionalizing a 60-day review for most defendants placed on supervised probation with the Division of Adult Probation in the Richmond Department of Justice Services.

Train, cross-train, and educate court and court-related agency staff on processes/procedures. All court and court service unit staff participated in week-long cross-training seminars. The sessions included presentations by

all court-related agencies. Additional sessions will be scheduled as new staff are hired and as new topics for training are identified.

Implement recommendations of the “Consistency in the Courtroom” project team. A project to enhance procedural consistency and uniformity across courtrooms was completed prior to 2008, but there remained a need to develop an all-inclusive, user-friendly reference manual for use by judges, retired/substitute judges, court staff, attorneys, and others. The City of Richmond’s Department of Information Technology (DIT) provided the solution by creating an online site for the Court via Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services.TM This essentially is a limited access website containing information organized by topic area. The site is maintained by court staff and already is in use by judges and clerks. DIT now is in the process of working on a mechanism for the Court to authorize secure access over the Internet for approved users.

Complete and keep up to date the expungement process (Code of Virginia § 16.1-306). The Clerk’s Office is current on all expungements. During 2010, staff expunged 5,367 adult papers and 10,741 juvenile papers pursuant to statutory guidelines. The number of adult case files expunged was less than during the previous year due to changes in the law regarding retention. The records for certain adult offenses, such as domestic assault, now must be held by district courts for 20 years instead of ten.

Develop and communicate a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for the Court. Courts develop COOP plans to ensure judges, staff, and all court users will know what to do when faced with an emergency that threatens normal operations. COOP plans are developed and implemented for situations in which a courthouse or court-related facilities are threatened or inaccessible. COOP plans establish effective, tested processes and procedures to quickly deploy personnel, equipment, other resources (like files or supplies), and other items necessary to sustain operations at some pre-determined level. COOP plans also cover the resumption of normal operations after the emergency has subsided. The crucial need for courts to develop and to maintain COOP plans cannot be underestimated. Staff are researching the components of effective court COOP plans and will be requesting broad participation to help determine how best to continue the J&DR Court’s essential functions in the event of a crisis. Thus, this project continues as a priority to do in the upcoming years.

Priorities Selected for 2011-2012

- Develop and communicate a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for the Court.
- Implement JCMS (JAVA version of the Court’s Case Management System (CMS)).
- Evaluate and enhance the juvenile arraignment process.
- Enhance local court forms and orders and implement “best practice” suggestions.
- Utilize applicable components of the National Center for State Courts’ “CourTools” performance measurement system for assessing court operations.
- Develop and deliver training for substitute judges.

ACCESSIBILITY TO THE COURT, TIMELINESS, FAIRNESS, AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Status of 2008-2010 Priorities

Improve customer service provided by the Clerk’s Office. In 2010, all computers utilized to serve the front counter were updated with the necessary hardware and software for individual receipting at each window. In addition to serving customers more quickly, this adds to accountability and ensures compliance with state auditor recommendations. A rope line was set up to more effectively guide customers who do have to wait and also allows those being served to have slightly more privacy, in terms of proximity, from those waiting to be served. Unfortunately, facility limitations impede significant progress on this issue, and this has been identified as an item to address when a facility space study can be undertaken. Mirrors were placed in the upper corners of the Clerk’s Office interior lobby so each customer service representative can more easily see any waiting customers. Staff

regularly update a bulletin board with frequently-requested information and court forms. Clerk's Office staff are in the process of cross-training within their own units, as well as between the pre- and post-court units.

Continue development and implementation of safety / security plan. According to the National Center for State Courts' "Guidelines for Implementing Best Practices in Court Building Security," by its nature, courthouse security is not a one-time achievement. It is a serious and continuous goal requiring constant attention. The risks involved in court building operations are numerous and never can be totally eliminated; however, they can be minimized. The Court's Chief Operating Officer and the J&DR Sheriff's Office meet every two weeks with the City of Richmond's Department of Public Works (DPW) regarding building repairs and enhancements, particularly those addressing facility-related security. Numerous local agencies and the Court worked together beginning in 2008 to pursue federal grant funding to address these needs, and the City was awarded \$400,000 in November 2009 to install ballistic resistant material in the courthouse. That project, and numerous supporting efforts to address facility-security, will continue as funding permits in the upcoming years.

Conduct facility space study and submit annual capital budget requests. The Court works in conjunction with DPW and the Sheriff's Office to submit meaningful capital budget requests each year that aim to support the needs of the courthouse facility and its occupant state and local agencies. However, conducting the facility space study is on indefinite hold pending appropriation by the City of sufficient funding for both design/ engineering and construction.

Priorities Selected for 2011-2012

- Continue to undertake all possible enhancements to courthouse safety and security.
- Pursuant to *Code of Virginia* § 16.1-278.8:01, construct a private restroom in the courthouse to conduct confidential drug testing of juveniles.

ACHIEVEMENT OF EFFECTIVE OUTCOMES

Status of 2008-2010 Priorities

Promote parental accountability. Under the direction of the Juvenile Justice Collaborative, the general intent of this project was to compile information on parental rights and responsibilities as they relate to court-involved youth. Beginning its work in February 2009, the project team fine-tuned written terms of parental participation to help inform those parents who may have a child facing legal charges or under probation supervision. Parents will be presented with a list of parental participation requirements by the juvenile probation officer at the same time as the rules of juvenile probation are reviewed with the family. Failure to comply with terms of signed parental participation agreements may result in requests by probation officers for motions to show cause.

Conduct a court user survey. After outlining various issues, options, and resource limitations of this project during 2009, the Court met with the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia. In 2010, representatives of both organizations committed to Richmond J&DR serving in the future as a pilot in some capacity for the development of a consumer survey instrument or research effort, to be conducted under the auspices of the state's judicial system.

Priorities Selected for 2011-2012

- Implement evidence-based cognitive-behavioral programming within primary programs for youth and into Court Service Unit staff training.
- Review best practices and effective options for establishing a docket dedicated to the collection of outstanding fines and costs and/or other monies owed due to the Commonwealth of Virginia and/or City of Richmond and propose a detailed conceptual plan to the Court for approval. If approved, implement, monitor, and review the

impact of the docket, including its effectiveness and impact on court resources, to determine long-term institutionalization.

COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

Status of 2008-2010 Priorities

Present / communicate the Court's Strategic Plan, progress, and accomplishments to partners, stakeholders, elected officials, and the community on an ongoing and regular basis. Judges and court administrators utilize every available and appropriate opportunity to present the Court's strategic plan and related efforts to those in the community interested in or affected by this work.

Priorities Selected for 2011-2012

Arguably equally challenging to weathering budgetary downturns is achieving seamless coordination, cooperation, and effective communication among courts and court-related agencies. While the Court did not elect to undertake specific new projects in the next two years aimed exclusively at addressing the issue area of collaboration with community partners, most of the Court's projects inherently include extensive collaboration, coordination, and communication with numerous stakeholder agencies. Further, this theme is prevalent among most judicial administration efforts the Court has been sustaining since the inception of its strategic planning process in 2005.

References

¹Carl Baar, Ernest Friesen, Daniel Hall, Marcus Reinkensmeyer, and Caroline Cooper, FINANCING THE THIRD BRANCH IN LEAN TIMES: PLACING THE PRESENT FISCAL CRISIS IN PERSPECTIVE, January 2010.

²Margaret H. Marshall, Chief Justice, Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts and Chair, National Center for State Courts Board of Directors and Mary Campbell McQueen, President, National Center for State Courts, NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS 2008 ANNUAL REPORT.