

Montana Judicial Branch

Information Technology Strategic Plan
2021



Commission on Technology

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The Commission on Technology

In 2002, the Supreme Court established the Commission on Technology (COT) to address the many challenges facing the Montana Judicial Branch related to technology. The COT approves the information technology strategic roadmap, crafted by the Information Technology Division Director, for the Judicial Branch. The effort is aided by several committees that provide input and guidance to improve the court technology program. These committees include the Automation Committees of the Montana Association of District Court Clerks and the Commission on Courts of Limited Jurisdiction.

Commission on Technology Strategic Planning

The Montana Judicial Branch advances information technology resources in an organized, deliberative, inclusive and cost-effective manner consistent with the Judicial Branch's mission to provide an independent, accessible, responsive, impartial, and timely forum to resolve disputes; to preserve the rule of law; and to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Montana.

- Pursuant to the Supreme Court's January 29, 2002 order, the Commission on Technology will meet at least twice per year to review, recommend, and adopt information technology policies, standards, procedures, and guidelines applicable to all Montana courts and judicial branch offices.
- The Commission on Technology will draft the Judicial Branch's Strategic Plan for Information Technology, refresh the plan as needed in conjunction with budget development, and monitor performance of the plan.

Contact Information

This report is available on-line at the Montana Judicial Branch Web site at www.courts.mt.gov. If you have questions regarding the Montana Judicial Branch Information Technology Strategic Plan, please contact:

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The Judicial Branch Information Technology Strategic Plan was prepared by the Information Technology Division Director in collaboration with the Commission on Technology. The members, appointed by the Court, serve a three-year staggered term. The current members are as follows:

Hon. Jim Shea, Supreme Court Justice, Commission Chair
Hon. Randal Spaulding, District Court Judge, 14th Judicial District
Hon. Stacey Nerison, Justice of the Peace, Dawson County
Hon. Audrey Barger, Justice of the Peace, Hill County
Representative Kenneth Holmlund
Bowen Greenwood, Clerk of the Supreme Court
Peg Allison, Clerk of the District Court, Flathead County
Beth McLaughlin, Supreme Court Administrator
Sarah McClain, State Law Librarian
John Mudd, Executive Director, State Bar of Montana
P. Mars Scott, Public Member

Profile: Offices of the Judicial Branch

The Montana Judiciary is supported by the Office of the Clerk of the Supreme Court, the Office of Court Administrator, the State Law Library, and the Clerks of the District Courts.

Office of the Clerk of the Supreme Court -- The Clerk of the Supreme Court is a statewide official elected on a partisan ballot to a six-year term. The Clerk conducts the business of the Court and serves as the liaison between the public, attorneys, and the Supreme Court. By statutory authority, the Clerk's office controls the docket and filings, manages the appellate process, and is the custodian of all legal records for the public and the Court. Additionally, the Clerk's office administers appellate mediation, maintains the official roll of Montana attorneys, and is responsible for licensing Montana's 4,700 attorneys.

Office of Court Administrator is the administrative office of the Supreme Court and is responsible for providing administrative services to the Judicial Branch. Services are provided to the Branch through three primary divisions: Court Services, Budget and Finance, and Information Technology.

State Law Library is the primary information provider for the citizens of Montana in need of legal information. The staff responds quickly and appropriately by delivering requested information, either in print or digital format. No legal advice is given, but explanation of processes, procedures, and the history of law is readily provided. The Library's collection of over 200,000 hard copy items is supplemented by electronic licenses on various legal topics. The State Law Library also maintains a self-help center, staffed in partnership with Court Help – Montana Legal Services AmeriCorp Program.

Clerks of the District Courts are independently elected county officials who serve as the custodian of the district court record and jury commissioner for the county in which they reside. There are 56 Clerks of the District Courts.

Profile: Judicial Branch Information Technology

The Information Technology Division of the Office of Court Administrator is responsible for the tactical activities necessary to implement the plan. These activities include the development, acquisition and training of court case management systems, the acquisition and deployment of computer hardware, maintenance of the Judicial Branch website, and coordinating network connectivity to facilitate remote support, research, and electronic information exchange. Additionally, the Division provides support for courtroom technologies such as interactive video, courtroom audio, court reporting, and bench applications.

- ❖ The Montana Judicial Branch consists of roughly 1150 individuals: 475 state employees and 675 local government employees, ***an increase of 45 state and 105 local over the 2018 numbers.***
- ❖ 22 permanent positions provide information technology services to the Branch.
- ❖ Court locations exist in all 56 Montana counties.
- ❖ 4 systems are supported: C-Track Case Management (Supreme Court); Juvenile Case Assessment and Tracking System (Youth Courts), FullCourt Case Management (Courts of Limited Jurisdiction and District Courts), and Montana Courts E-Filing.
- ❖ The Judicial Branch's operating budget for FY20 was \$53,910,755. The IT budget as a percent of the total was 8.7%.
- ❖ In FY20, court generated fines, fees, and forfeitures deposited into the state general fund amounted to \$8.7 million with \$1.23 being generated from the Court IT surcharge.¹

¹ The FY20 operating budget consists of all HB2 appropriations and the FY20 fines, fees, and forfeiture amounts were provided by the Department of Revenue.

Information Technology Mission Statement

The Mission of the Information Technology Division is to provide the highest level of professional and technical services, in the most cost-effective and efficient manner and to provide these services to all end-users with integrity, equality and respect in a concerted effort to streamline the courts, to protect rights and liberties, to ensure access to justice for all citizens and to be effective, efficient and responsive to the general public and agencies that rely on court information.

Technology Principles

Through innovation and collaboration at a branch wide and local level, the Judicial Branch IT Division develops and deploys technology to improve access to justice and provide a broad range of high quality services to litigants, attorneys, justice partners, and the public.

ACCESS

Ensure impartial and effective access to justice for all citizens while providing essential data protections.

RELIABILITY

Provide professional, efficient, readily available IT services, including reliable infrastructure and disaster-recovery tools.

INNOVATION

Innovation through planning, collaboration, and education to enhance court services and operations.

GOALS

Goal 1: Security & Business Continuity

The Montana Judicial Branch shall provide the infrastructure and disaster-recovery tools to ensure the security, reliability, continuity, availability, and integrity of data, information, and systems.

Goal 2: Appropriate Access

The Montana Judicial Branch shall provide user-friendly electronic access to and exchange of information for stakeholders, consistent with the public's right to know and right to individual privacy.

Goal 3: Appropriate Technology

The Montana Judicial Branch shall employ appropriate technology to ensure efficient, effective, quality service to both Judicial Branch users and the public.

Goal 4: Innovation and Collaboration

The Montana Judicial Branch shall maximize the ability to innovate by strengthening community collaboration and employing standardization to leverage solutions and drive technology changes.

2020 Information Technology Survey

The Judicial Branch Information Technology Survey is a tool used to evaluate the importance of emerging technologies and to evaluate, at a statewide level, the quality of services provided by the Court Technology Program. The survey is sent to all Supreme Court Justices, the Clerk of the Supreme Court, District Court Judges, Chief Water Judge, Court of Limited Jurisdiction Judges, Courts of Limited Jurisdiction Clerks, Chief Probation Officers, Clerks of the District Court, and managers of the Law Library and Office of Court Administrator.

In September 2020, the Court Technology Survey was sent to 1,096 recipients, we received 493 replies, a 45% response rate.

Satisfaction and Performance

Table 1 shows Judicial Branch satisfaction ratings of the Court Technology Program. The depiction demonstrates that courts and judicial offices are typically “Very Satisfied” and “Satisfied” with IT support and performance, yet also indicates small percentages of displeased users. ***Dissatisfaction themes center around dislike of the Help Desk Ticketing System, specifically lack of personal response and delayed response times when support needs are time sensitive. In addition, there are some concerns with audio/video system issues causing court delays.***

**Table 1
2020 Satisfaction and Performance Responses**

	# of Responses	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
OVERALL RATING		48.47%	45.59%	5.10%	0.84%
IT Support	423	50%	46%	3%	1%
IT Support Promptness	420	45%	50%	5%	0%
IT Support Professionalism	418	74%	25%	0%	0%
Courtroom Technology Upgrades	128	23%	55%	19%	2%
Courtroom Technology Training	117	30%	56%	11%	3%
COURTS ELECTRONIC FILING	171	32%	57%	9%	2%
CASE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT					
FullCourt/Jury Support	197	40%	51%	7%	2%
JCATS	69	55%	45%	0%	0%
Back-On-Track Support	61	38%	61%	2%	0%
C-Track Support	16	38%	56%	6%	0%

Effective Court Technologies

Table 2 depicts branch wide response ratings of the effectiveness of technologies offered by the Judicial Branch, sorted from most effective to least effective. While survey results indicate the user base ranked each technology, on average, effective, **it is important to note, per survey comments, that certain technologies could use some improvement, most notably Courtroom Technology, Video Conferencing and Courtroom Audio.**

**Table 2
2020 Technology Effectiveness Responses**

Technology or Service	Average Effectiveness
Montana Courts Website (courts.mt.gov)?	3.13
Courts Electronic Filing?	3.11
Courtroom Audio Systems?	3.00
Video Conferencing Systems/Software?	2.92
Court Reporting Systems (FTR, Steno, etc.)?	2.78
Online Fees/Fines Payments?	2.70

4 = Very Effective 3 = Effective 2 = Needs Improvement 1 = Inefficient

Emerging Technology Priorities

The survey asked each user group to rank the importance of key technologies, identified by the Office of the Court Administrator, as emerging court technologies. Table 3 provides branch wide results of important technologies to Montana courts today.

**Table 3
2020 Emerging Technology Priority Responses**

2020 Priority	2020 Importance	2018 Priority	Emerging Technologies
1	2.37	↑ Not Surveyed	Electronic/Automated Information Exchange (DOR, DOJ, DOC, DPHHS, DNRC, Local Law Enforcement/Prosecutors)?
2	2.26	↓ #1	Web-Based Public Access to Court Records?
3	2.16	↑ #4	Online Electronic Jury Questionnaires?
4	2.08	↓ #2	Courtroom e-Evidence Presentation Equipment?
5	1.98	↓ #3	Web-Based Court Calendars for the Public?
6	1.84	↓ #5	Text Reminder Technologies (Automated Notification System)?

3 = Very Important 2 = Important 1 = Not Important

Individual User Group Priorities

While it is important to see the branch wide identification of key technologies, it is equally essential to recognize technologies vital to the varied user groups.

Technology Themes

- Electronic/Automated Information Exchange *(7 of 7 groups)*
 - Online Electronic Jury Questionnaire *(3 of 7 groups)*
 - Web-Based Public Access to Court Records *(2 of 7 groups)*
 - Courtroom e-Evidence Presentation Equipment *(2 of 7 groups)*
 - Text Reminder Technologies *(1 of 7 groups)*
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- **Supreme Court Justices/Clerk's Office**
 1. Web-Based Public Access to Court Records
 2. Electronic/Automated Information Exchange
 - **District Court Judges**
 1. Courtroom e-Evidence Presentation Equipment
 2. (Tied) Online Electronic Jury Questionnaire – Electronic/Automated Information Exchange
 - **Water Court**
 1. Web-Based Public Access to Court Records
 2. Electronic/Automated Information Exchange
 - **District Court Clerks**
 1. Electronic/Automated Information Exchange
 2. Online Electronic Jury Questionnaire
 - **COLJ Judges**
 1. Electronic/Automated Information Exchange
 2. Text Reminder Technologies (Automated Notification System)
 - **COLJ Clerks**
 1. Electronic/Automated Information Exchange
 2. Online Electronic Jury Questionnaire
 - **Juvenile Probation**
 1. Electronic/Automated Information Exchange
 2. Courtroom e-Evidence Presentation Equipment

Information Technology Goals & Objectives

GOAL 1	Security and Business Continuity. The Montana Judicial Branch shall provide the infrastructure and disaster-recovery tools to ensure the security, reliability, continuity, availability, and integrity of data, information, and systems.
<i>Objective</i>	<p>1. The Judicial Branch will develop security policies consistent with state policies, including procedures for authenticating electronic documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Upon the adoption of the currently suspended Public Access and Privacy Rules, develop and maintain information security policies consistent with the access rules adopted by the Supreme Court and consider adopting appropriate enterprise security policies advanced by the State of Montana.</i> <i>b. Continue to ensure that any electronic filing system follows the best practices for authentication of electronic documents as recommended by the Electronic Filing and Access Task Force.</i> <i>c. Review and develop retention policies and procedures for electronic work products based on best practices.</i>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>2. The Commission on Technology will review and approve security policies and measures, consistent with state policies and measures for the Judicial Branch. The COT will provide governance support to the Information Technology Division when implementing such policies and measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Review, approve and recommend to the Court, security policies presented to the Commission on Technology by IT Division Security.</i> <i>b. Provide direction and backing to IT Division Security in execution of COT approved and Court ordered security policies.</i>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>3. The Judicial Branch will assess risk, relative to security, availability, reliability, integrity, and continuity and develop a disaster recovery plan for all court information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Develop a detailed disaster recovery and business continuity plan for all court information and systems.</i> <i>b. Provide enhanced training to Judicial Branch employees on computer and network security, cyber security risk recognition, and the importance of backup procedures/responsibilities.</i> <i>c. Collaborate with the Department of Administration’s Information Technology Services Division to complete a comprehensive inventory of Judicial Branch applications and identify systems that may be vulnerable to cyber security risks. Develop a plan to implement protection appliances and measures consistent with the state’s initiatives and policies.</i> <i>d. Implement real-time incident response/threat detection.</i>

Information Technology Goals & Objectives

GOAL 2	Appropriate Access. The Montana Judicial Branch shall provide user-friendly electronic access to and exchange of information for stakeholders, consistent with the public’s right to know and rights of individual privacy.
<i>Objective</i>	<p>1. The Judicial Branch will develop and implement consistent rules for access to court records.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. The Commission on Technology will continue re-evaluating the suspended Public Access and Privacy Rules.</i> <i>b. The Commission on Technology will consider the ramifications of applying Public Access and Privacy Rules to Montana trial court records and court documents.</i>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>2. The Judicial Branch will maintain a central repository of court information that ensures reliable and appropriate access to court records.</p>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>3. The Judicial Branch will enhance the use and functionality of all court applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Statewide Implementation of FullCourt Enterprise – District and Limited Courts</i> <i>b. Evaluate potential FullCourt Jury system enhancements (including SMS Text Messaging and Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR)).</i> <i>c. Consider/evaluate the use of automated SMS Text Messaging functionality within the FullCourt Enterprise system.</i> <i>d. Expand Implementation of Montana Courts E-Filing.</i> <i>e. Develop educational and marketing strategies to encourage widespread use of the Montana Courts E-Filing System.</i> <i>f. Begin preliminary research into pro se filing strategies and portal development.</i>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>4. The Judicial Branch will encourage appropriate electronic information exchange with authorized entities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Continue work with the Department of Transportation’s Traffic Records Coordinating Committee to improve traffic record information exchanges.</i> <i>b. Work with state and local government agencies to convert information exchanges currently performed in paper format into an electronic exchange.</i> <i>c. Expand Department of Motor Vehicle data exchanges to District Courts.</i> <i>d. Redesign the Computerized Criminal History data exchanges with the Department of Justice.</i> <i>e. Implement the Computerized Criminal History data exchanges in both the District Courts and Courts of Limited Jurisdiction.</i>

Information Technology Goals & Objectives

GOAL 3	Appropriate Technology. The Montana Judicial Branch shall employ appropriate technology to ensure efficient, effective, quality service to both Judicial Branch users and the public.
<i>Objective</i>	<p>1. The Judicial Branch will use technology to enhance courtroom efficiency, effectiveness, and access (e.g., network access, evidence presentation and display systems, court reporting and recording use to capture and preserve the court record).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. The Judicial Branch will seek adequate funding for future installations, upgrades and enhancements of Courtroom Technology including sound systems, audio systems and evidence displays.</i> <i>b. The Judicial Branch will consider future legislative proposals to provide regular replacement cycle funding for courtroom audio and video technology.</i> <i>c. The Judicial Branch will promote the appropriate use of interactive video and provide an interactive video capability in Montana courts as funding and resources permit.</i> <i>d. Explore additional uses of interactive video including live streaming, webinars, use of video equipment for evidence display and desktop video conferencing.</i> <i>e. Develop a branch video conferencing usage policy.</i>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>2. The Judicial Branch will employ an inventory management system to enhance the branch’s accountability of equipment and IT resources, as well as maintain a regular replacement cycle for all supported technologies.</p>
	<p>3. The Judicial Branch will, where possible, centralize the administration, management, support, and inventory of systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Implement virtualization technologies; seek consolidation opportunities with state/local governments; share common IT infrastructure and services; reduced duplicative equipment and improve security, disaster recovery and continuity of operations by utilizing enterprise data centers.</i>

Information Technology Goals & Objectives

GOAL 4	Innovation and Collaboration. The Montana Judicial Branch shall maximize the ability to innovate by strengthening community collaboration and employing standardization to leverage solutions and drive technology changes.
<i>Objective</i>	<p>1. The Montana Judicial Branch shall adopt standards that facilitate a familiar presentation when accessing judicial information and encourages seamless integration of governmental systems in the state.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>a. The Judicial Branch will adopt data standards that facilitate information sharing and allow enhanced reporting through the court systems.</i></p>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>2. The Judicial Branch will seek input from stakeholders and other communities of interest regarding changing court technologies.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>a. The Commission on Technology will continue to convene multi-disciplinary task forces as appropriate to research and recommend improvements to the court technology program.</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>b. The Commission on Technology will continue to survey Judicial Branch users and other communities of interest to evaluate customer satisfaction of services provided through the court technology program.</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>c. Evaluate opportunities to collaborate with other state agencies for the use of the JCATS technology which provides an easily customizable platform to meet needs. These relationships/opportunities have the potential of creating significant financial efficiencies for the state, as well as significantly improved data collection strategies.</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>d. Identify partnerships and opportunities for collaboration when pursuing innovative ideas and best practice strategies to improve the implementation and delivery of court programs.</i></p>
GOAL 5	Water Court Case Management Technology. Collaboratively develop and utilize integrated IT services between DNRC (Water Rights Bureau, Water Adjudication Bureau) and the Judicial Branch to provide better services to citizens, courts, and department programs.
<i>Objective</i>	<p>1. Identify and promote the acquisition and deployment of appropriate technologies to improve efficiencies and access to water right records including an up-to-date supportable central water right record system and a modern court case management system for the Montana Water Court.</p>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>2. Create and implement a standards-based design for electronic information exchange between entities (DNRC, courts, citizens, other water right holders, and interfacing systems) to ensure water right records are timely, accurate and complete and easily accessible.</p>

Alignment with SITSD 2020-22 IT Strategic Plan

The following table shows how the Judicial Branch’s Strategic Plan aligns with the State of Montana 2020-22 Information Technology Strategic Plan.

SITSD 2020-22 IT Goals	Judicial Branch 2020 - 22 IT Goals
<p>FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY (Spend Smart) Create, optimize, maintain a balanced budget.</p>	<p>GOAL 2: Appropriate Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Montana Judicial Branch shall employ appropriate technology to ensure efficient, effective, quality service to both Judicial Branch users and the public. ➤ 2.1.a – The Judicial Branch will employ an inventory management system to enhance the branch’s accountability of equipment and IT resources, as well as maintain a regular replacement cycle for all supported technologies. ➤ 2.3 – The Judicial Branch will, where possible, centralize the administration, management, support, and inventory systems. <p>GOAL 4: Innovation and Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4.2.c – Evaluate opportunities to collaborate with other state agencies for the use of the JCATS technology which provides an easily customizable platform to meet needs. These relationships/opportunities have the potential of creating significant financial efficiencies for the state, as well as significantly improved data collection strategies.
<p>OPTIMIZATION OF SHARED SERVICES AND SUPPORT (Collaborate Smart) Optimize systems and infrastructure to deliver responsive solutions in a cost-effective manner.</p>	<p>GOAL 2: Appropriate Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 2.3 – The Judicial Branch will, where possible, centralize the administration, management, support, and inventory systems. <p>GOAL 4: Innovation and Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Montana Judicial Branch shall maximize the ability to innovate by strengthening community collaboration and employing standardization to leverage solutions and drive technology changes. ➤ 4.1.a – The Judicial Branch will adopt data standards that facilitate information sharing and allow enhanced reporting through the court systems.
<p>CYBERSECURITY ENHANCEMENTS AND STRATEGY (Protect Smart) Protect the confidentiality, preserve the integrity, and promote the availability of citizen’s data.</p>	<p>GOAL 1: Security and Business Continuity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Montana Judicial Branch shall provide the infrastructure and disaster-recovery tools to ensure the security, reliability, continuity, availability, and integrity of data, information, and systems. <p>GOAL 2: Appropriate Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Montana Judicial Branch shall employ appropriate technology to ensure efficient, effective, quality service to both Judicial Branch users and the public.
<p>UNIFIED DIGITAL GOVERNMENT (Enterprise Smart) Provide consolidated access to government information and services anywhere, anytime, on any device</p>	<p>GOAL 2: Appropriate Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Montana Judicial Branch shall employ appropriate technology to ensure efficient, effective, quality service to both Judicial Branch users and the public. ➤ 2.4 – The Judicial Branch will encourage appropriate electronic information exchange with authorized entities. <p>GOAL 4: Innovation and Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4.1 – The Montana Judicial Branch shall adopt standards that facilitate a familiar presentation when accessing judicial information and encourages seamless integration of governmental systems in the state.
<p>SERVICE FIRST (Business Smart) Integrate business relationship management, guiding principles, and user feedback to improve communication, promote services, and share information widely.</p>	<p>GOAL 4: Innovation and Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4.2 – The Montana Judicial Branch will seek input from stakeholders and other communities of interest regarding changing court technologies. ➤ 4.2.d – Identify partnerships and opportunities for collaboration when pursuing innovative ideas and best practice strategies to improve the implementation and delivery of court programs

Executive Summary

The Information Technology Strategic Plan is the blueprint for court technology initiatives in the Judicial Branch and the success of the Court Information Technology Program is a direct result of the strategic vision articulated in the plan and supported by Montana Judicial Branch, Executive Branch and Legislative Branch members.

The Commission on Technology adopted the 8th Judicial Branch Technology Strategic Plan on November 5, 2020.

DRAFT