



# DELIVERING

OUR MESSAGE

## COURT COMMUNICATION PLAN for the Judicial Branch of Florida January 2016

### **MISSION:**

To protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

### **VISION:**

Justice in Florida will be accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable.

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## PREFACE

Some commonly used terms that appear in this document may be subject to different interpretations. The definitions for court personnel and court employees may vary depending on the jurisdiction. The Long Range Strategic Plan for the Judicial Branch (2016-2022)<sup>1</sup> defines the following terms as:

- **State Courts** refers to the courts created by Article V of the Constitution of the State of Florida, specifically the supreme court, district courts of appeal, circuit courts, and county courts.
- **State Courts System** refers solely to the officers, employees, and divisions of the supreme court, district courts of appeal, circuit courts, and county courts. The State Courts System does not include entities such as circuit clerks of court, state attorneys, public defenders, or The Florida Bar.
- **Judicial Branch** refers to the state courts and the framework of court rules, regulatory oversight, and leadership of the legal profession provided within the domain of the Florida Supreme Court and the Chief Justice. The judicial branch includes the circuit clerks of court when performing court-related functions.
- **Justice System or Justice System Partners** refers to the network of entities that routinely work in conjunction with the state courts. Justice system partners include The Florida Bar and providers of legal services, law enforcement agencies, governmental and private service agencies such as the Department of Children and Families, the Florida's Office of Guardian ad Litem, treatment providers, and community-based agencies.
- **Court Employees** refers to non-judge personnel of the State Courts System as well as personnel in county-funded positions managed by court administration.
- **Judges** refers to judges of the county, circuit, and district courts of appeal as well as the justices of the supreme court. Magistrates, hearing officers, and special masters are not judges.
- **Court Personnel** refers to court employees as well as other personnel who are not court employees but who work in or provide services to the courts. These may include, but are not limited to (depending on the jurisdiction), bailiffs, clerk staff, contracted court reporters, and contracted foreign language interpreters.
- **Court Administrators** refers to the non-judge executive management of the state courts, including marshals of the appellate courts, trial court administrators, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator.
- **Local PIO** means a court employee, appointed by the chief justice, the chief judge or circuit court administrator, who will serve as the single point of contact with the media.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Long-Range Strategic Plan for the Florida Judicial Branch 2016-2022

<sup>2</sup> ["Keep the Courts Open" Final Report](#), March 28, 2002

## **OVERVIEW: DELIVERING OUR MESSAGE**

The overarching objective of court communications is to create, strengthen, and preserve support for the Florida court system by demonstrating the branch's commitment to its mission and vision. This support is achieved through meaningful communication between the courts and its audiences, as long as all communications adhere to the Canons of Judicial Ethics and the Rules of Judicial Administration. The Florida Supreme Court's Judicial Management Council created the Court Communication Plan to advance the communication-related goals identified in the judicial branch's long-range strategic plan.

## **INTRODUCTION: THE CHANGING WORLD OF COMMUNICATION**

The goal of any communication plan is to make information accessible and understandable to everyone. Court audiences include the public, court users, the media, judicial branch stakeholders, funding sources, as well as judges, court employees and court personnel. With the current media landscape ever evolving, so too should the strategies to provide effective court communication. The key to effective court communication is to identify and understand each target audience and surround them with effective messages. Delivering effective communication includes understanding each target audience's interests, providing expertise and information to assist them, increasing their awareness of the courts and court processes, involving them by seeking their feedback, and investing in a variety of communications channels to communicate a consistent set of messages.

How people receive information and communicate with each other changes continuously and rapidly. New media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are transforming the way people seek out information and understand the world. These communication tools provide opportunities for courts to promote openness and accountability, and can encourage conversation between the courts, journalists, and citizens. Most importantly, they present opportunities for courts to listen to public concerns. Courts have a responsibility to citizens and should endeavor to meet the changing expectations of each audience to educate them, provide transparency in operations, and instill public trust and confidence in Florida's judicial branch.

## **HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIC ISSUES**

This Plan provides the framework to coordinate and organize communication activities. Strategic issues are high priority strategic areas that must be addressed over the long term to establish meaningful communication between the courts and key audiences. These are:

**ISSUE 1** – [Enhancing Public Trust and Confidence](#)

**ISSUE 2** – [Speaking with One Voice – Key Messages](#)

**ISSUE 3** – [Improving Communication Methods](#)

**ISSUE 4** – [Strengthening Internal Communication](#)

## IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

This Plan includes a set of goals for each high priority strategic issue that, if accomplished, will lead to more effective court communication with all audiences. Also included is a set of strategies that identify what needs to be accomplished to achieve the goals. This Plan suggests a four-year time frame for implementation to allow sufficient time for the achievement of its goals.

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***NOTE: All goals and strategies, once implemented, will be sustained indefinitely by all judges and court employees.***

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**IF NOT ALREADY IMPLEMENTED**, (some goals and strategies may already be implemented in various jurisdictions)

**Year 1: 2016** – Begin January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016;

**Year 2: 2017** – Implementation anticipated between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2017;

**Year 3: 2018** – Implementation anticipated between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2018;

**Year 4: 2019** – Implementation anticipated after January 1, 2019.

The Court Communication Plan [Implementation Guide and Checklist](#) outlines the issues, goals, and strategies and indicates the suggested time frame for implementation (Year 1 – Year 4). Those identified in Year 1 are either activities already implemented in many courts or are important enough to begin planning and executing first. Some strategies overlap years due to the nature of the activity. **The Chief Judge in each local jurisdiction has the discretion to prioritize implementation as necessary and will have the opportunity to present their accomplishments at the chief judges’ meeting or at other times designated by the chief justice.**

## GETTING STARTED

Using The Court Communication Plan [Implementation Guide and Checklist](#), each local court or designated responsibility should begin following the steps outlined below:

1. Review the communication plan.
2. Identify goals and strategies tasked to your court, committee, unit, or area of responsibility.
3. Determine which goals and strategies are currently in place (Executing) and which need to be implemented (Planning or To Do), or improved upon.
4. Determine current year responsibilities and designate personnel.
5. Coordinate activities with other identified groups, if necessary.
6. Monitor and summarize yearly progress.
7. Review yearly until all goals and strategies are implemented.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The Court Communication Plan [Implementation Guide and Checklist](#) includes a “Suggested Responsibility” column that identifies individuals, units, groups, or committees responsible for goal and strategy development and implementation. These recommendations are a place to start. For local responsibilities, **the Chief Judge in each jurisdiction has the discretion to designate responsibilities to appropriate staff based on resources and staff availability.** Each identified group is encouraged to work together when more than one handles goal development and implementation. These recommendations can change over time.

Impacted groups include:

- Chief Justice (or designee)
- Chief Judge (or designee)
- All judges and court personnel
- Local Court Administration (or designee)
- Local (or designated) PIO
- Local web administrators
- Local technology staff
- Local (or designated) education staff
- Local general counsel
- Local personnel or human resources
- Supreme Court Public Information Office
- Office of Community and Governmental Relations – OSCA
- Judicial Branch Education staff – OSCA
- Branch-wide education leaders
- Leadership of Conference of County Court Judges
- Leadership of Conference of Circuit Court Judges
- Trial Court Administrators’ Annual Education Conference
- Trial Court Administrator’s Conference Planning Committee
- Committee on Communication and Public Information

**Acronyms** that appear in the Plan:

JMC = Judicial Management Council

Workgroup = Education & Outreach Workgroup of the Judicial Management Council

Plan = Court Communication Plan

LRSP = Long Range Strategic Plan

FLSC PIO = Florida Supreme Court Public Information Office

PIO = Public Information Officer or Public Information Office

FCPIO = Florida Courts Public Information Officers

OSCA = Office of the State Courts Administrator

OCIR = Office of Community and Intergovernmental Relations

JBE = Judicial Branch Education

## **MONITORING, ASSESSMENT, AND FEEDBACK**

This Plan shall be implemented and sustained through the meetings of the chief justice with the chief judges of the district courts and the chief judges of the circuit courts pursuant to the Rule of Judicial Administration 2.205(a)(2)(E) at a time designated by the chief justice. The conversation is intended as a yearly round-table discussion to foster dialogue among the chief judges regarding successes or failures of goals and strategies in each local jurisdiction.

Meaningful conversation can include:

- Methods courts use to foster relationships with business partners, justice system partners, and intergovernmental agencies to educate and build support for the judicial branch.
- Strategies courts have developed to handle high profile cases or crisis situations.
- Successful ways courts are promoting the KEY Court Messages to all audiences.
- Methods developed for improving internal communication.
- Strategies courts use to enhance organizational culture and create a motivating, satisfying, and purposeful work environment.

Additionally, in January each year, an online, prepared form will be distributed to each responsible entity to provide assessment and feedback of implemented communication strategies. The chief justice, chief judge, court administrator, or appropriate leadership for each responsible entity will designate appropriate staff to complete the form. Feedback will detail goals and strategies accomplished locally and note additional strategies planned for the upcoming year.

The yearly summary should contribute to the chief judges' round-table discussion conducted each year. After the chief judges' meeting, the yearly summary may be circulated to interested parties including trial court administrators, marshals, public information officers, and the FCPIO.



**THE PLAN: ISSUES, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES**

**COURT COMMUNICATION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE AND CHECKLIST**

**Suggested Time Frames (If not already implemented)**

**Year 1 = 2016; Year 2 = 2017; Year 3 = 2018; Year 4 = 2019**

For more detailed information regarding each issue, goal, and strategy listed below, use the link provided for each strategy to navigate to the specific area in the Plan. Use this checklist as a template for customizing and tracking local progress on specific steps taken to implement this Plan.

**EXAMPLES OF SOME STRATEGIES ARE FOUND IN [APPENDIX C](#).**

STRATEGIC ISSUE I: ENHANCING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE					
GOAL I.1: To build support for the judicial branch by developing meaningful relationships with <a href="#">KEY audiences</a> .					
<a href="#">Strategy I.1.A</a> Promote and improve intergovernmental relations with the Legislature and governmental agencies to ensure the accuracy and adequacy of their understanding and perception of the judicial branch.					
	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
Activity (1) Develop mechanisms to inform policy makers about accomplishments of the judicial branch, the judicial branch strategic plan, and the judicial branch’s budget priorities and proposed substantive law changes approved by the Florida Supreme Court. <b>(YEAR 1)</b>	Chief Judge or designee; local court administration or designee; OSCA OCIR				
Activity (2) Coordinate with county governments to address local requirements and options in support of the trial courts. <b>(YEAR 1)</b>	Chief Judge or designee; local court administration or designee; OSCA OCIR				
Activity (3) Continue year-round educational programs for public officials. <b>(YEAR 1)</b>	Chief Justice or designee; Chief Judge or designee; FLSC PIO; OSCA OCIR				
<a href="#">Strategy I.1.B</a> Promote and improve relations with the media to ensure the accuracy and adequacy of public understanding and perception of the judicial branch.					
Activity (1) Maintain media distribution (e.g. email blasts) and contact lists. <b>(YEAR 1)</b>	Local PIO				
Activity (2) Develop media guidelines to provide guidance and statewide consistency for court PIOs. <b>(YEAR 2)</b>	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination				

	<b>Suggested Responsibility</b>	<b>Executing</b>	<b>Planning</b>	<b>To Do</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Activity (3) Train or provide materials to local reporters (local reporter’s workshop or outreach) about the local court system, rules, and policies. <b>(YEAR 2)</b>	Chief Judge or designee; Local PIO				
Activity (4) Inventory, compile and/or develop educational “about the court system” resources for the media to promote understanding of the court system for fair and accurate reporting. <b>(YEAR 3)</b>	FLSC PIO Office coordination				
Activity (5) Develop speaking points and templates incorporating KEY Court Messages (as appropriate) for a variety of situations to be used as necessary by the Chief Judge and PIO for internal and external audiences. (e.g. high profile cases - criminal and civil, JQC files complaint, judge is arrested) <b>(YEAR 1)</b>	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination - to be used by Chief Judge, local court administration, PIO or designee				
Activity (6) Create informative media-specific videos answering often-asked questions explaining the judicial branch. (e.g. high profile cases, why judges can’t talk about cases, how the system works, how state courts differ from federal courts, etc.) <b>(YEAR 4)</b>	FLSC PIO Office coordination				
<b>Strategy I.1.C Establish productive working relationships with justice system partners to foster cooperation and understanding about court administration and operations.</b>					
Activity (1) Develop regular contact with local system partners to encourage dialogue and feedback, open lines of communication, establish trust, respect, and support, and promote the exchange of information in both routine and crisis situations. <b>(YEAR 2)</b>	Chief Judge, local court administration or designee				
<b>Strategy I.1.D Foster business partner relations to develop and improve understanding of the judicial branch.</b>					
Activity (1) Establish regular meetings or feedback mechanisms to encourage dialogue, open lines of communication, and establish trust, respect, and support. <b>(YEAR 2)</b>	Chief Judge, local court administration or designee				

	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
<b>Strategy I.1.E</b> Encourage and expand relationships, when presented and as needed, with all levels of educational institutions to improve understanding of, and involvement with, the judicial branch. (Outreach can include: elementary/secondary schools; vocational/technical schools; colleges/universities; law schools.)					
(YEAR 2)	Local court administration, education staff or designee				
<b>Strategy I.1.F</b> Encourage and expand relationships, when presented and as needed, with community organizations and civic groups to improve understanding of, and involvement with, the judicial branch. (Outreach can include: The Florida Bar Foundation; leadership groups and chambers of commerce; civic groups; and others.)					
(YEAR 2)	Chief Judge or designee, local court administration, education staff or designee				
<b>GOAL I.2: To increase public awareness about court programs, services, and performance.</b>					
<b>Strategy I.2.A</b> Promote court programs and services using a variety of communication methods including the web, video, new media communications, publications, education programs, public forums, and other available mediums.					
Activity (1) Create a local team to coordinate public awareness efforts and promote local court services. (e.g. eFiling procedures, new court programs, new chief judge). (YEARS 2 - 3)	Chief Judge or designee, local court administration, PIO, technology, web administrator or other designee				
Activity (2) Develop mechanisms to publicize information about court performance. (YEARS 2 - 3)	Chief Judge or designee, local court administration, PIO, technology, web administrator or other designee				
Activity (3) Develop initiatives to educate editorial boards, local leaders, and the news media about complex issues facing the court system. (YEARS 2 - 3)	Local court administration and/or PIO; with guidance from FLSC PIO Office or designee				
<b>GOAL I.3: To provide information to the public and court users to ensure understanding of court processes and procedures, services available, and methods for accessing them.</b>					
<b>Strategy I.3.A</b> Continuously assess the needs of court users to develop improved methods of communication and information delivery to facilitate participation in court proceedings and provide access to available resources.					
(YEAR 2)	Chief Judge, judges, local court administration or designee				

	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
<b>Goal 1.3.B</b> Educate judges, court employees, and court personnel about court processes and areas of concern identified locally in Strategies 1.3.A and 1.4.A to better assist and serve the public about using court resources and the judicial system.					
(YEAR 3)	Local court administration or designee, education staff				
<b>Goal 1.3.C</b> Leverage technology, as appropriate and when available, to provide access to and information about court processes and services. (e.g. mobile apps, video, web content)					
(YEAR 2)	Local court administration and/or technology staff; FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination				
<b>GOAL 1.4: To involve the public to improve court processes.</b>					
<b>Strategy 1.4.A</b> Provide a mechanism for the public to offer feedback or pose questions about court policies, procedures, and services thereby enabling the Chief Judge and court administration to identify and address systemic issues.					
(YEAR 2)	Chief Judge, judges, local court administration or designee				
<b>Strategy 1.4.B</b> Include interested members of the public (when/where appropriate) on court committees, workgroups, and other appropriate policy advisory bodies of the judicial branch used to seek improvement or develop initiatives to improve court policies, procedures, and areas of concern.					
(YEAR 2)	Chief Judge, judges, local court administration or designee				
<b>GOAL 1.5: To educate the public about the purposes, roles, responsibilities, and decisions of the judicial branch by improving outreach efforts.</b>					
<b>Strategy 1.5.A</b> Develop coordinated educational materials and programs to be used statewide by all courts to spearhead and energize court-community relationships.					
Activity (1) Develop literature, citizen's guides, videos, multi-media presentations, and other materials to be used by all courts. (YEARS 2 - 3)	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination				
Activity (2) Develop programs for statewide use suitable for modification by local court education programs. (YEARS 2 - 3)	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination				
<b>Strategy 1.5.B</b> Develop local community-focused initiatives and outreach programs, in concert with Strategy 1.5.A, to increase understanding of the judicial branch.					

Court Communication Plan: Delivering Our Message

	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
Activity (2) Utilize a variety of user-friendly platforms such as, but not limited to, interactive workshops, court house visits, speaking engagements, mentoring programs, town hall meetings, and community partnerships. <b>(YEAR 4)</b>	Local PIO, education staff, and/or court administration				
Activity (3) Communicate and share information about local education and outreach programs to inspire judges to become involved in outreach efforts. <b>(YEAR 4)</b>	Conference of County Court Judges; Conference of Circuit Court Judges; Trial Court Administrators' Annual Education Conference; other opportunities, as appropriate				
<b>Strategy I.5.C Develop and coordinate statewide strategic educational campaigns that spotlight the judicial branch, the law, and civics. (e.g. Law Day, Constitution Day, back-to-school, elections/civics)</b>					
Activity (1) Promote campaigns at designated times of the year utilizing all forms of communication technology and tools (social media, websites, and other platforms), including video messages and multi-media. <b>(YEARS 2 - 3)</b>	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination				
<b>Strategy I.5.D Provide information on court websites about local court educational programs, visiting the courthouse, watching court proceedings, and touring the courthouse.</b>					
<b>(YEAR 1)</b>	Local web administrator, education staff, and/or court administration				
<b>Strategy I.5.E Provide educational resource links on court websites about the Florida court system, the judicial branch, and legal resources.</b>					
<b>(YEAR 2)</b>	Local web administrator, education staff, and/or court administration				
<b>Strategy I.5.F Provide oral argument press summaries or case descriptions in high profile or cases of interest to improve reporting accuracy and public understanding.</b>					
<b>(YEAR 1)</b>	FLSC PIO				

	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
<b>Strategy I.5.G</b> Incorporate the judicial branch mission and vision when and where possible in all communication efforts, including but not limited to: educational and public outreach materials, websites, brochures, speeches, presentations, quotes, blogs, op-eds, talking points, social media messages, and other official court communication.					
(YEAR 1)	All judges and court personnel				
<b>GOAL I.6: To provide training and guidance on media relations and public speaking to judges and court employees who interact with the media and the public on behalf of the courts.</b>					
<b>Strategy I.6.A</b> Develop an informational guide and provide training on media relations and public speaking.					
(YEAR 3)	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination; Local PIO; Judicial Branch Education staff				
<b>Strategy I.6.B</b> Develop materials for court employees who regularly interact with the public on best practices for communicating with and assisting court users and the public.					
(YEAR 4)	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination; Local court PIOs				
<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE II: SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE – KEY MESSAGES</b>					
<b>GOAL II.1: To promote a unified message by using KEY Court Messages.</b>					
<b>Strategy II.1.A</b> Actions or communication that emanate from the Branch should use KEY Court Messages to ensure consistency of thought and tone and promote a unified statewide message.					
(YEAR 1)	All judges and court personnel; Local court PIOs				
<b>Strategy II.1.B</b> Messages should be used where appropriate and whenever possible across all locations and levels of court system including the Supreme Court, the appellate courts, the trial courts, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator.					
(YEAR 1)	All judges and court personnel; Local court PIOs				
<b>Strategy II.1.C</b> Messages should be used by judges and court system personnel when engaging the legislature and other funding stakeholders, the press, the public, justice system, and business partners.					
(YEAR 1)	All judges and court personnel; Local court PIOs				

	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
<b>GOAL II: To ensure communication, both internally and externally, is consistent, purposeful, and deliberate.</b>					
<b>Strategy II.2.A</b> All official court communication should incorporate KEY Court Messages, as appropriate. KEY Court Messages should be used when writing press releases, media advisories, responses to the public, comments to the media, talking points, speeches, presentations, brochures, quotes, blogs, op-eds, educational and public outreach materials, social media messages, web content, and other official court communication.					
(YEAR 1)	All judges and court personnel; Local court PIOs				
<b>Strategy II.2.B</b> All official court communication should have a goal and purpose defined with key audiences identified, adapting messages accordingly.					
(YEAR 1)	All judges and court personnel; Local court PIOs				
<b>Strategy II.2.C</b> All official court communication should be informative, accurate, consistent, and positive.					
(YEAR 1)	All judges and court personnel; Local court PIOs				
<b>Strategy II.2.D</b> Court system professionals in each appellate or trial court with expertise in or tasked with the public information function should handle ensuring consistency of information and for suggesting improvements to the communication process.					
(YEAR 1)	Local court PIOs				
<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE III: IMPROVING COMMUNICATION METHODS</b>					
<b>GOAL III.1: To maximize the use of technology to advance court communication efforts.</b>					
<b>Strategy III.1.A</b> Identify opportunities to utilize communication technologies, social media (where appropriate/as approved), websites, and other resources to promote new and existing court programs and services, educational programs, and judicial branch success stories.					
(YEARS 2 - 3)	Local court PIO, technology staff and/or web administrator				
<b>Strategy III.1.B</b> Monitor patterns of usage of court websites, new media accounts, and other communication technologies by using analytics or business intelligence tools to assess and understand public behavior and habits, adjusting delivery methods when technology trends change, as necessary.					
(YEAR 3)	Local technology staff, web administrator and/or court PIO				

	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
<b>Strategy III.1.C</b> Educate judges and court employees on social media (as approved) and new technologies, their impact on the court system and proper use as court communication tools.					
(YEAR 3)	Local technology staff, court administration and/or PIO; JBE staff				
<b>GOAL III.2: To create consistency in delivery of website information.</b>					
<b>Strategy III.2.A</b> Develop minimum website content guidelines for trial and appellate court websites.					
(YEARS 1 - 2)	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination				
<b>Strategy III.2.B</b> Determine minimum educational content and resource listings for educational web pages for trial and appellate court websites.					
(YEARS 1 - 2)	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination				
<b>Strategy III.2.C</b> Maintain consistency of website content and functionality on trial and appellate court websites.					
(YEAR 3)	Local web administrator as determined in III.2.A and III.2.B above				
<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE IV: STRENGTHENING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION</b>					
<b>GOAL IV.1: To improve internal communication.</b>					
<b>Strategy IV.1.A</b> The state courts system - including the Supreme Court, the appellate courts, the trial courts, and the OSCA - will engage in regular and consistent information sharing.					
(YEARS 1 - 2)	All judges and court personnel; Circuit/County conference leadership				
<b>Strategy IV.1.B</b> Explore ways to develop or improve internal communication methods to ensure regular and consistent information sharing to provide judges and court employees with timely information, resources, tools, and technology.					
Activity (1) Develop and maintain an up-to-date repository for local information; including information shared in Strategy IV.1.A(1) and Strategy IV.1.A(2). <b>(YEARS 2 - 3)</b>	Chief Judge, judges, local court administration, technology staff, and/or other designees				
Activity (2) Develop mechanisms to timely share information. <b>(YEARS 2 - 3)</b>	Chief Judge, judges, local court administration, technology staff, and/or other designees				



	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
<b>Strategy IV.1.C</b> Encourage judges, administrators, and managers to hold regular staff meetings to ensure timely and consistent multi-directional communication of information with staff.					
(YEARS 1 - 2)	Chief Judge, judges, administrators, managers, and/or other designees				
<b>Strategy IV.1.D</b> Ensure Intranet or document sharing site(s) at the state and local levels are maintained to provide current information for judges and court employees. (intranet.flcourts.org).					
(YEARS 1 - 2)	Appropriate web administrator				
<b>Strategy IV.1.E</b> Develop speaking points and templates incorporating KEY Court Messages (as appropriate) for a variety of situations to be used when necessary by the Chief Judge and PIO for internal audiences. (Similar to, Strategy I.1.B(5))					
(YEAR 1)	FLSC PIO Office statewide coordination - to be used by Chief Judge, local court administration, PIO or designee				
<b>Strategy IV.1.F</b> Develop procedures to solicit feedback from judges and court personnel to express concerns about court policies and procedures or share ideas to improve court processes and performance. Feedback mechanisms could include surveys, comment forms, and discussion forums.					
(YEARS 1 - 2)	Chief Judge, local court administration or designee				
<b>Strategy IV.1.G</b> Provide internal opportunities for judges, administrators, and court employees to share information about programs and services in their local jurisdiction.					
(YEARS 2 - 3)	Leadership of judicial conferences; Trial Court Administrator’s Education Committee; other opportunities, as appropriate				
<b>GOAL IV.2: To create a motivating, satisfying, and purposeful work environment and organizational culture that values and engages judges and court employees.</b>					
<b>Strategy IV.2.A</b> At the direction of the Chief Judge, each jurisdiction will use internal communication channels and methods to support organizational development.					
Activity (1) Promote the mission and vision of the judicial branch to ensure employee understanding. (YEAR 3)	Chief Judge, judges, local court administration and/or designees				

	Suggested Responsibility	Executing	Planning	To Do	N/A
Activity (2) Continuously develop ways to strengthen high-quality communication among employees to foster employee engagement. <b>(YEAR 3)</b>	Chief Judge, judges, local court administration and/or designees				
Activity (3) Develop strategies that recognize employee excellence and achievements. <b>(YEAR 3)</b>	Chief Judge, judges, local court administration and/or designees				
<b>GOAL IV.3: To ensure all judges and court employees understand their roles and responsibilities.</b>					
<b>Strategy IV.3.A</b> Judicial and court employee education programs will include content that addresses the roles, responsibilities and relationships among judicial officers, Supreme Court committees and commissions, and court employees.					
<b>(YEAR 3)</b>	Branch-wide educational leaders; OSCA JBE staff				
<b>Strategy IV.3.B</b> Provide educational content about the judicial branch mission and vision in judicial education, court employee education, or staff development programs.					
<b>(Year 3)</b>	Judicial mentors; Court personnel education programs; Local personnel or human resources				

EXAMPLES OF SOME STRATEGIES ARE FOUND IN [APPENDIX C](#).

Court Communication Plan *for the Judicial Branch of Florida:*  
**DELIVERING OUR MESSAGE**  
Issues, Goals, and Strategies

**STRATEGIC ISSUE I:  
ENHANCING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE**

It is important that communication by all courts in Florida strengthens the public’s trust and confidence in our court system. Courts rely on public trust and confidence as the source of their effectiveness. Public confidence in the judicial branch is directly related to the courts’ ability to fulfill their mission. However, people don’t trust what they don’t understand. Therefore, educating the public about the judicial branch is one important component of increasing support of court-related initiatives which allow the courts to operate more effectively. The judicial branch will fulfill its mission most effectively when members of the public are able to use its services. Finally, the Florida Judicial Branch must engage the public in order to identify and meet public needs. Building relationships with all audiences increases trust and confidence in our system.

Goals and Strategies will:

- Establish relationships and improve perceptions
- Assist, involve, and respond to the public
- Educate and inform all audiences

**Goal I.1: To build support for the judicial branch by developing meaningful relationships with key audiences.**

**Strategy I.1.A** Promote and improve intergovernmental relations with the Legislature and governmental agencies to ensure the accuracy and adequacy of their understanding and perception of the judicial branch.

*Activities:*

- (1) Develop mechanisms to inform policy makers about accomplishments of the branch judicial, the judicial branch strategic plan, and the judicial branch’s budget priorities and proposed substantive law changes approved by the Supreme Court.
  - (a) The Florida Rules of Judicial Administration 2.205(a)(1)(B) prohibit any judge or supreme court created body, or any conference of judges from recommending to the legislative or executive branch state budget priorities that have not been approved by the Court. This does not apply to judges expressing their personal views who affirmatively make it explicitly clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the judicial branch.

- (b) It is the State Courts Administrator’s duty to inform the judiciary of the state courts system’s final budget request and any proposed substantive law changes approved by the Florida Supreme Court. Fla.R.Jud.Admin. 2.205(e)(2)
- (c) To be most effective, communication with the Legislature and legislative committees about the judicial branch’s budget priorities and position on proposed substantive law changes should be coordinated through the [judicial branch’s legislative team](#).
- (2) Coordinate with county governments to address local requirements and options in support of the trial courts.
- (3) Continue year-round educational programs for public officials.

**Messengers Policymakers**

**TRUST the most<sup>3</sup>:**

- *Supreme court justices*
- *Lawyers within the legislature*
- *Judges from lawmakers district*
- *Other “users” of the court (businesses, veterans, etc.)*
- *Business leaders*
- *Court officials and administrators with performance data*

<b>TRY THIS: ENGAGING POLICY MAKERS YEAR-ROUND</b> (Strategy I.1.A.3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Local courthouse visits or educational program</li> <li>b) Orientation program for new legislative members</li> <li>c) Social dinner</li> </ul>
<p><b>TALKING POINTS:</b> Talking points for broadly applicable branch agenda issues are updated and posted on the “Resources on Substantive and Fiscal Issues” page found on the <a href="#">State Courts System Intranet</a>. For assistance crafting specific talking points regarding topics not listed, contact OSCA’S OCIR at (850) 922-5692.</p>

**NOTE:** If possible, please communicate any local outreach efforts by judges with lawmakers to the state courts administrator or the director of OSCA’s OCIR prior to the meeting or as soon as possible once outreach occurs. (email: [osca@flcourts.org](mailto:osca@flcourts.org))

**Strategy I.1.B** Promote and improve relations with the media to ensure the accuracy and adequacy of public understanding and perception of the judicial branch.

*Activities:*

- (1) Maintain media distribution (e.g. email blasts) and contact lists.
- (2) Develop media guidelines to provide guidance and statewide consistency for court PIOs.
- (3) Train or provide materials to local reporters (local reporter’s workshop or outreach) about the local court system, rules, and policies.

<b>TRY THIS: OUTREACH TO LOCAL REPORTERS</b> (Strategy I.1.B.5)
Local Workshop / Courthouse tour / Lunch ‘n Learn / Q & A Session

<sup>3</sup> Funding Justice: Strategies and Messages for Restoring Court Funding, 2012

- (4) Inventory, compile and/or develop educational “about the court system” resources for the media to promote understanding of the court system for fair and accurate reporting.
- (5) Develop speaking points and templates incorporating KEY Court Messages (as appropriate) for a variety of situations to be used (and approved) by the Chief Judge and PIO. (e.g. high profile cases - criminal and civil, JQC files complaint, judge is arrested)
- (6) Create informative media-specific videos answering often-asked questions explaining the judicial branch. (e.g. high profile cases, why judges can’t talk about cases, how the system works, how state courts differ from federal courts, etc.)

**Strategy I.1.C** Establish productive working relationships with justice system partners to foster cooperation and understanding about court administration and operations.

*Activities:*

- (1) Develop regular contact with local system partners to encourage dialogue and feedback, open lines of communication, establish trust, respect, and support, and promote the exchange of information in both routine and crisis situations. (e.g. monthly/quarterly meetings)

<b>TRY THIS: JUSTICE PARTNERS</b> (Strategy I.1.C)
<p>One circuit held a Lunch ‘n Learn with judges and pre-trial release staff to discuss intervention and detention procedures and goals.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>“What a great exchange of ideas. We need to do this more often.” – Court administration staff</p>

**Strategy I.1.D** Foster business partner relations to develop and improve understanding of the judicial branch.

*Activity:*

- (1) Establish regular meetings or feedback mechanisms to encourage dialogue, open lines of communication, and establish trust, respect, and support. (e.g. yearly meetings)

<b>TRY THIS: BUSINESS PARTNERS</b> (Strategy I.1.D)
<p>Coordinate a regular courthouse tour and presentation as part of the "curriculum" of your local Leadership organization (e.g., Leadership Broward, Leadership Miami).</p>

**Strategy I.1.E** Encourage and expand relationships, when presented and as needed, with all levels of educational institutions to improve understanding of, and involvement with, the judicial branch. (Outreach can include: elementary/secondary schools; vocational/technical schools; colleges/universities; law schools.)

**Strategy I.1.F** Encourage and expand relationships, when presented and as needed, with community organizations and civic groups to improve understanding of, and involvement with, the judicial branch. (Outreach can include: The Florida Bar Foundation; leadership groups and chambers of commerce; civic groups; and others.)

**Goal I.2: To increase public awareness about court programs, services, and performance.**

**Strategy I.2.A** Promote court programs and services using a variety of communication methods including the web, video, new media communications, publications, education programs, public forums, and other available mediums.

*Activities:*

- (1) Create a local team to coordinate public awareness efforts and promote local court services. (e.g. eFiling procedures, new court programs, new chief judge.)
- (2) Develop mechanisms to publicize information about court performance.
- (3) Develop initiatives to educate editorial boards, local leaders, and the news media about complex issues facing the court system.

**Goal I.3: To provide information to the public and court users to ensure understanding of court processes and procedures, services available, and methods for accessing them.**

**Strategy I.3.A** Continuously assess the needs of court users to develop improved methods of communication and information delivery to facilitate participation in court proceedings and provide access to available resources.

**Strategy I.3.B** Educate judges, court employees, and court personnel about court processes and areas of concern identified locally in Strategies 1.3.A and I.4.A to better assist and serve the public about using court resources and the judicial system.

<b>MESSENGERS THE PUBLIC TRUSTS THE MOST<sup>4</sup></b>
Retired judges / Small-business owners / Sitting judges / Bipartisan groups of retired elected officials

**Strategy I.3.C** Leverage technology, as appropriate and when available, to provide access to and information about court processes and services. (e.g. mobile apps, video, web content)

<b>TRY THIS: NEEDS ASSESSMENT</b> (Strategy 1.3.A)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Understand local audiences: what do court users and the public want and need?</li> <li>2) What do we need them to know?</li> <li>3) Create tools for court users and the public to use: handouts, messaging, visuals, video, interactive.</li> <li>4) Engage court users and the public through outreach efforts.</li> <li>5) Focus on success: goals &amp; objectives.</li> <li>6) Measure your success: How are we doing? (opinion/survey/analytics)</li> </ol> <p>(See, <a href="#">Strategy 1.4.A</a>)</p>

<sup>4</sup> Funding Justice: Strategies and Messages for Restoring Court Funding, 2012

<b>EXAMPLE NEEDS ASSESMENT RESULT: Develop A List of Local Service Providers (non-profits) For Court Users</b>
Mental Health / Veterans / Domestic Violence / Food / Housing / LGBT / Others

**Goal I.4: To involve the public to improve court processes.**

**Strategy I.4.A** Provide a mechanism for the public to offer feedback or pose questions about court policies, procedures, and services thereby enabling the Chief Judge and court administration to identify and address systemic issues. Feedback mechanisms could include surveys, comment forms, and discussion forums.

**“We survey the public as they leave the courts during the month of June and tell [budget policymakers] what they are saying about the services. They have a good feeling for what we are doing and how well we’re performing.”<sup>5</sup> – Court Administrator**

**Strategy I.4.B** Include interested members of the public (when/where appropriate) on court committees, workgroups, and other appropriate policy advisory bodies of the judicial branch used to seek improvement or develop initiatives to improve court policies, procedures, and areas of concern.

**Goal I.5: To educate the public about the purposes, roles, responsibilities, and decisions of the judicial branch by improving outreach efforts.**

**Strategy I.5.A** Develop coordinated educational materials and programs to be used statewide by all courts to spearhead and energize court-community relationships.

*Activities:*

- (1) Develop literature, citizen’s guides, videos, multi-media presentations, and other materials to be used by all courts.
- (2) Develop programs for statewide use suitable for modification by local court education programs.

<b>LOCAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAM EXAMPLES (Strategy I.5.A &amp; B)</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Circuit: <a href="#">Classroom to Courtroom</a>
9 <sup>th</sup> Circuit: <a href="#">Inside the Courts</a>
11 <sup>th</sup> Circuit: <a href="#">Local Justice Teaching Institute</a>

**Strategy I.5.B** Develop local community-focused initiatives and outreach programs, in concert with Strategy I.5.A above, to increase understanding of the judicial branch.

*Activities:*

<sup>5</sup> Funding Justice: Strategies and Messages for Restoring Court Funding, 2012

- (1) Determine local educational needs to design programs for specific audiences.
- (2) Utilize a variety of user-friendly platforms such as, but not limited to, interactive workshops, courthouse visits, speaking engagements, mentoring programs, town hall meetings, and community partnerships.
- (3) Communicate and share information about local education and outreach programs to inspire judges to become involved in outreach efforts.

**Strategy I.5.C** Develop and coordinate statewide strategic educational campaigns that spotlight the judicial branch, the law, and civics. (e.g. Law Day, Constitution Day, back-to-school, elections/civics)

*Activity:*

- (1) Promote campaigns at designated times of the year utilizing all forms of communication technology and tools (social media, websites, and other platforms), including video messages and multi-media.

**Strategy I.5.D** Provide information on court websites about local court educational programs, visiting the courthouse, watching court proceedings, and touring the courthouse.

**Strategy I.5.E** Provide educational resource links on court websites about the Florida court system, the judicial branch, and legal resources. (See also, [Strategy III.2.B](#))

**Strategy I.5.F** Provide oral argument press summaries or case descriptions in high profile or cases of interest to improve reporting accuracy and public understanding.

**Strategy I.5.G** Incorporate the judicial branch mission and vision when and where possible in all communication efforts. Including but not limited to: educational and public outreach materials, websites, brochures, speeches, presentations, quotes, blogs, op-eds, talking points, social media messages, and other official court communication.

**Goal I.6: To provide training and guidance on media relations and public speaking to judges and court employees who interact with the media and the public on behalf of the courts.**

**Strategy I.6.A** Develop an informational guide and provide training on media relations and public speaking.

**Strategy I.6.B** Develop materials for court employees who regularly interact with the public on best practices for communicating with and assisting court users and the public.



**STRATEGIC ISSUE II:  
SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE – KEY COURT MESSAGES**

The goal for communications should focus on promoting the public’s understanding of the role of the court to preserve the rule of law and its critical role in safeguarding the fundamental constitutional and legal rights of all individuals. Whether these communications are addressing routine court matters or special crises, it is important that courts speak with one voice delivering the same message.

Goals and Strategies will align with the following messages.

KEY Court Messages
<b>Message 1:</b> Courts administer justice so that we can live in a civil and peaceful manner. Courts help us live as a free and orderly community. Courts ensure that we continue as a democracy.
<b>Message 2:</b> The court system is strongly committed to ensuring fairness and access to all people in a timely and responsive manner.
<b>Message 3:</b> One of the foundations of a democracy is a judicial system that operates in an environment where judges remain objective, unbiased and impartial.
<b>Message 4:</b> The Florida judicial branch is strongly committed to accountability; courts are working to ensure that they are good stewards of public resources.
<b>Message 5:</b> Judges and court employees are committed to the branch’s mission and vision.

**Goal II.1: To promote a unified message by using KEY Court Messages.**

**Strategy II.1.A** Actions or communications that emanate from the Branch should use KEY Court Messages to ensure consistency of thought and tone and promote a unified statewide message.

**Strategy II.1.B** Messages should be used where appropriate and whenever possible across all locations and levels of court system, including the Supreme Court, the appellate courts, the trial courts, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator.

**Strategy II.1.C** Messages should be used by judges and court system personnel when engaging the legislature and other funding stakeholders, the press, the public, justice system, and business partners.

**Goal II.2: To ensure communication, both internally and externally, is consistent, purposeful, and deliberate.**

**Strategy II.2.A** All official court communication should incorporate KEY Court Messages as appropriate. KEY Court Messages will be used when writing press releases, media advisories, responses to the public, comments to the media, talking points, speeches, presentations, brochures, quotes, blogs, op-eds, educational and public outreach materials, social media messages, web content, and all other official court communication.

**Strategic Communication:**  
The right message  
Through the right media  
To the right audience  
At the right time  
With the right effect.

**Strategy II.2.B** All official court communication should have a goal and purpose defined with key audiences identified, adapting messages accordingly. ([See, Key Audiences.](#))

**Strategy II.2.C** All official court communication should be informative, accurate, consistent, and positive.

**Strategy II.2.D** Court system professionals in each appellate or trial court with expertise in or tasked with the public information function should handle ensuring consistency of information and for suggesting improvements to the communication process.

**STRATEGIC ISSUE III:  
IMPROVING COMMUNICATION METHODS**

It is important that communication by all courts in Florida be consistent not only with its message but with the manner information is communicated. Ensuring that all courts are using the same methods, following the same guidelines, and providing the same information is imperative. Improving communication methods through the use of new and proper technology allows the courts to reach targeted audiences in their environment. Improving communication methods can provide understanding into court operations; reducing misperceptions about the judicial system that often stems from a lack of necessary information. Being consistent supports transparency, reduces confusion and frustration, and builds public support for the judicial branch.

Goals and Strategies will:

- Maximize technology to support transparency
- Provide consistent delivery of information

**Goal III.1: To maximize the use of technology to advance court communication efforts.**

**Strategy III.1.A** Identify opportunities to utilize communication technologies, social media (where appropriate/as approved), websites, and other resources to promote new and existing court programs and services, educational programs, and judicial branch success stories.

Number of High Courts & AOCs Using New Media	
Twitter	31
YouTube	20
Facebook	16
Flickr	5
Source: <a href="#">National Center for State Courts</a> (09/2015)	

**Strategy III.1.B** Monitor patterns of usage of court websites, new media accounts, and other communication technologies by using analytics or business intelligence tools to assess and understand public behavior and habits, adjusting information delivery methods when technology trends change, as necessary.

**Strategy III.1.C** Educate judges and court employees on social media (as approved) and new technologies, their impact on the court system and proper use as communication tools. (e.g. social media such as Twitter, blogs)

**Goal III.2: To create consistency in delivery of website information.**

**Strategy III.2.A** Develop minimum website content guidelines for trial and appellate court websites. (As examples but are not limited to: mission and vision, directory of judges, court docket, listing of services, forms, legal aid resources, physical address/map/directions, FAQs, JQC link, etc.)

**Strategy III.2.B** Determine minimum educational content and resource listings for educational web pages for trial and appellate court websites. (As examples but not limited to: Florida court system structure, educator resources, legal links, etc.)

**Strategy III.2.C** Maintain consistency of website content and functionality on trial and appellate court websites. (As identified in Strategy III.2.A and Strategy III.2.B above)

**ON-LINE INFORMATION & SERVICES**

Citizens should be able to:

- Find with ease relevant, accurate, and up-to-date information.
- Understand information the first time they read it.
- Complete common tasks efficiently.
- Obtain the same answer from all service channel (Web, phone, email, print, in person).
- Provide feedback and ideas and hear what the government will do with them.
- Access critical information if they have a disability or aren't proficient in English.

Source: [Rachel Flagg, Federal Web Managers Council](#)

## STRATEGIC ISSUE IV: STRENGTHENING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Strengthening internal communication will foster employee engagement, promote the value and worth of each employee, and improve the quality of the work environment. The judicial branch must be just as intentional about its internal communication as it is with its external communication. High-quality communication can actively reinforce court values; while low-quality communication can undermine them. Encouraging multi-directional communication helps ensure all members of the court system are well-informed. Improving internal communication can increase employee engagement and productivity and foster a spirit of unity, commitment, and cooperation among co-workers. Courts must find practical solutions to strengthen the internal communication process to create a work environment that enables every individual to contribute their best, and inspires employees to keep learning to produce valued results.

Goals and strategies will:

- Enhance employee productivity and performance
- Contribute to employee efficiency and effectiveness
- Recognize the value of employees

### Goal IV.1: To improve internal communication.

**Strategy IV.1.A** The state courts system - including the Supreme Court, the appellate courts, the trial courts, and the OSCA - will engage in regular and consistent information sharing<sup>6</sup>.

*Activities:*

- (1) Information sharing should occur statewide among the following groups.

As examples, but not necessarily limited to:

- (a) Chief Judges' meetings with the chief justice;
- (b) Chief judges/trial court administrator meetings;
- (c) Conference of District Court of Appeal Judges;
- (d) Communication with and among circuit and county court conferences and their chairs;
- (e) Annual Judicial Leadership meeting;
- (f) Court committees, councils;
- (g) Communication from presiding judicial officer in each jurisdiction to judges, court employees; and all other relevant sharing opportunities.

“Communication is essential to understand where we are going and how we get there together.”  
– Court system employee.

- (2) To include such information, as examples but are not limited to:

- (a) Judicial Branch, district, and circuit budgets;
- (b) Judicial Branch, district, and circuit policies;

<sup>6</sup> Judicial Branch Internal Communication Survey Findings from the 2010 Governance Study

- (c) Judicial Branch, district, and circuit statistics and performance-related information;
- (d) OSCA services;
- (e) State and local court rules under consideration; and
- (f) Recommendations of branch committees, commissions, workgroups, and conferences.

**Strategy IV.1.B** Explore ways to develop or improve internal communication methods to ensure regular and consistent information sharing to provide judges and court employees with timely information, resources, tools, and technology.

*Activities:*

- (1) Develop and maintain an up-to-date repository for local information; including information shared in Strategy IV.1.A(1) and Strategy IV.1.A(2) above.  
(e.g. meeting agendas, meeting summaries, conference information with resources received, local policies, procedures, and other necessary resource information.)
- (2) Develop mechanisms to timely share information.  
(e.g. changes to local policies and procedures, new services offered, additions to court calendars, new judges, judicial retirements, and other court administration or pertinent courthouse information.)

<b>Informed and Valued Employees can:</b>
Provide the best public relations by providing quality service
Be ambassadors of the court system by promoting key messages
Should be the first audience for court messages
Source: <a href="#">Institute for Public Relations</a>

**Strategy IV.1.C** Encourage judges, administrators, and managers to hold regular staff meetings to ensure timely and consistent multi-directional communication of information with staff.

**Strategy IV.1.D** Ensure Intranet or document sharing site(s) at the state and local levels are maintained to provide current information for judges and court employees.  
(intranet.flcourts.org)

**Strategy IV.1.E** Develop speaking points and templates incorporating KEY Court Messages (as appropriate) for a variety of situations to be used when necessary by the Chief Judge and PIO for internal audiences. (Similar to, [Strategy I.1.B\(5\)](#)) (e.g. high profile cases - criminal and civil, JQC files complaint, judge is arrested)

<b>Internal Communications: Return on Employee Investment (ROEI)</b>
Increase in employee performance
Decrease in employee turnover
Increase in customer satisfaction
Source: <a href="#">Sage Human Resource Management</a>

*Activities:*

- (1) Ensure internal communication messages for court personnel comply with the Code of Judicial Conduct.
- (2) Develop internal messages with public records request concerns in mind.

**Strategy IV.1.F** Develop procedures to solicit feedback from judges and court personnel to express concerns about court policies and procedures or share ideas to improve court processes and performance. Feedback mechanisms could include surveys, comment forms, and discussion forums.

**Strategy IV.1.G** Provide internal opportunities for judges, administrators, and court employees to share information about programs and services in their local jurisdiction.

**Goal IV.2: To create a motivating, satisfying, and purposeful work environment and organizational culture that values and engages judges and court employees.**

**Strategy IV.2.A** At the direction of the Chief Judge, each jurisdiction will use internal communication channels and methods to support organizational development.

*Activities:*

- (1) Promote the mission and vision of the judicial branch to ensure employee understanding.
- (2) Continuously develop ways to strengthen high-quality communication among employees to foster employee engagement.
- (3) Develop strategies that recognize employee excellence and achievements.

**TRY THIS: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION**  
(Strategy IV.2.A)

**Monthly / Quarterly Newsletter:**  
Develop a Template (in Word or Online)  
Restructure template once a year  
Use an intern (distribute the work)

**Goal IV.3: To ensure all judges and court employees understand their roles and responsibilities.**

**Strategy IV.3.A** Judicial and court employee education programs will include content that addresses the roles, responsibilities and relationships among judicial officers, Supreme Court committees and commissions, and court employees.

**Strategy IV.3.B** Provide educational content about the judicial branch mission and vision in judicial education, court employee education, or staff development programs.

**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL GUIDING THE PLAN**

**COURT COMMUNICATION PLAN KEY AUDIENCES**

Meaningful communication begins by identifying key audiences. Once identified, courts should use a variety of communication methods tailored to the nature of the message being conveyed and the audience being targeted.

Audience	Our Message:	Desired Response from Audience:
Judges and court personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Everyone is valuable.</li> <li>✓ Everyone works to achieve the mission and vision of the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Everyone’s unique role impacts the court system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Speak enthusiastically and with pride about the quality and impact of their work, and court initiatives.</li> <li>✓ Understand the mission and vision of the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Support, protect and defend the judicial branch.</li> </ul>
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The judicial branch is transparent, responsible and accountable.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is fair and impartial.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is committed to our mission and vision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Speak knowledgeably and favorably about the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Respect for the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Understand the role of the judicial branch as a co-equal branch of government.</li> <li>✓ Understand the citizens’ role in electing and retaining judges.</li> <li>✓ Understand the important function the judicial branch provides the citizens of Florida.</li> </ul>
Court Users (non-attorney), i.e. litigants/ parties to a lawsuit, defendants, victims, witnesses, jurors, pro se filers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The judicial branch is fair and impartial.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is committed to ensuring court procedures are understandable.</li> <li>✓ Everyone is treated with dignity and respect.</li> <li>✓ Everyone has an opportunity to be heard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Speak favorably about the judicial process and treatment received by judges and court personnel regardless of case outcome.</li> <li>✓ Respect the decisions of the judiciary.</li> <li>✓ Understand decisions and their future responsibilities.</li> <li>✓ Comply with court orders.</li> <li>✓ Engage in future law-abiding behavior.</li> </ul>
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The judicial branch is transparent, responsible and accountable.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is fair and impartial.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is committed to our mission and vision.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is a co-equal branch of government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide fair coverage.</li> <li>✓ Be responsive to positive story ideas about the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Present the courts in a fair light; emphasize the valuable work of judges and court personnel and the services provided by the court system.</li> </ul>

Audience	Our Message:	Desired Response from Audience:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Turn to the judicial branch for expertise and guidance before jumping to conclusions or reporting negatively.</li> </ul>
Governmental funding providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The judicial branch is a co-equal branch of government.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch serves the citizens of Florida.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is committed to excellence, accountability, and transparency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Enact legislation and/or allocate resources for programs and services.</li> <li>✓ Support the judicial branch and its mission and vision.</li> <li>✓ Speak enthusiastically and respectfully about the judicial branch.</li> </ul>
Judicial branch partners and stakeholders, i.e. The Florida Bar, state attorney, public defender, AG, GAL, DCF, law enforcement, and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The judicial branch supports the work of all partners for the success of the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is transparent, responsible and accountable.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is fair and impartial.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is committed to our mission and vision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Support the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Speak enthusiastically about the court system.</li> <li>✓ Work together to further the mission and vision of the judicial branch.</li> </ul>
Teachers, education, business and civic organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The judicial branch is fair and impartial.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is a co-equal branch of government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understand the role of the judicial branch as a co-equal branch of government and how courts operate and make decisions.</li> <li>✓ Understand the citizens' role in electing and retaining judges.</li> <li>✓ Educate others about the valuable work of judges and the services provided by the court system.</li> <li>✓ Turn to the judicial branch for educational materials.</li> <li>✓ Speak knowledgeably and favorably about the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Respect for the judicial branch.</li> </ul>
Government Entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The judicial branch is transparent, responsible and accountable.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is fair and impartial.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is committed to our mission and vision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Speak knowledgeably and favorably about the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Respect for the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Understand the role of the judicial branch as a co-equal branch of government.</li> </ul>



Audience	Our Message:	Desired Response from Audience:
<p>Other Influences: bloggers, writers, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The judicial branch is transparent, responsible and accountable.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is fair and impartial.</li> <li>✓ The judicial branch is committed to our mission and vision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understand the mission and vision of the Branch.</li> <li>✓ Speak enthusiastically about the quality and impact of judicial branch initiatives.</li> <li>✓ Provide fair coverage and assessment of the judicial branch.</li> <li>✓ Turn to the judicial branch for expertise and guidance before jumping to conclusions or reporting negatively.</li> </ul>

## **CHANGES IN SOCIETY: IMPACTING COURTS, IMPACTING COMMUNICATIONS**

Changes in society that impact courts may likely impact the effectiveness of court communication efforts as well. It is important to identify potential changes and adjust communication efforts accordingly. Trends in society guide many goals and strategies in the Plan. Below are some examples of trends that could potentially affect court communication activities in the judicial branch.<sup>7</sup>

**Changing Demographics:** Florida recently surpassed New York to become the third largest state in the nation. As our population grows, so does its impact on Florida’s court system. As more users come in contact with Florida’s courts, the necessity to educate and provide information about court processes and services increases. By 2030, over 24 percent of Florida’s population will be over the age of 65<sup>8</sup>. Based on this aging population, Florida’s courts may face increased case filings in the areas of probate and guardianship, identity theft and fraud, elder abuse, and traffic cases.

**High Profile Decisions:** Florida has seen its share of high profile cases. Strategically managing communication efforts with the public and media during difficult or controversial times can be beneficial to the courts if used as a teaching opportunity to improve perceptions of the judicial branch. Providing case summaries of controversial or high profile decisions may improve reporting accuracy and public understanding.

**Court Performance:** Performance measures provide a structured means for courts to communicate their message. As data analysis techniques and technologies mature, the pressure for courts to meaningfully measure and communicate performance outcomes intensifies as courts look for ways to improve transparency in court operations.

**Court Websites and Mobile Devices:** Courts maintain web presences that provide a multitude of benefits to users. In many instances, courts use their websites to provide information and services to the public as a primary “go-to” source. Today, website access to court dockets, case filings and streaming courtroom videos are available to the public, illustrating the reach of technology to expand courts to everyone. Mobile devices can be used to access court websites, complete online web applications, watch court-related videos, and conduct case-related research. According to the Pew Research Center, mobile device usage has increased sharply. In 2015, nearly two-thirds of Americans, 64 percent, own a smartphone, up from 35 percent in 2011<sup>9</sup>. For many, these devices are the key entry point to the online world. As the use of mobile devices continues to grow, so too will the public’s expectations for immediate access to court information and services.

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<sup>7</sup> Environment Scan, Strategic Planning Unit, Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator, August 2014

<sup>8</sup> [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Pew Research Center – U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015](#)

**Multigenerational Workplace:** As a new generation of energized and technology-friendly workers enters the courts, court administration can expect rapid changes and innovative improvements. A multigenerational workforce will affect all facets of court operation from recruitment and retention to education methodologies, to court processes, to a cooperative work climate. There are several strategies courts may employ to adapt to and effectively manage a multigenerational workforce. Improving internal communication and pursuing innovative and creative ways to leverage technology improves the workplace for all generations.

**New (Social) Media:** In the always-connected information age of the twenty-first century, managing court communications requires extensive knowledge and practical understanding of a wide variety of media, communications principles, judicial canons, and emerging technologies. A type of media that is rapidly evolving is social media. Merriam-Webster defines social media as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and others are tools courts can use to disseminate important information and enhance the public's understanding of the courts. Seizing on the opportunity to meet the needs of the public and promote transparency, the institutional use of social media by courts is gaining acceptance. As of November 2014, the high court and/or administrative office of the court in 35 states use either Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Flickr<sup>10</sup>. In trial courts, 28 states use some form of social media, with Facebook and Twitter the most common<sup>11</sup>. A 2014 Pew Research Center study revealed that nearly half of web-using adults report getting their news about government in the past week on Facebook<sup>12</sup>.

**Civics Education:** In 2010, the Florida Legislature passed the Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act requiring all Florida public schools to teach civics as part of their curriculum. More and more, educators are turning to the court system to provide expertise and assistance in properly instructing their students about the judicial branch. Educating the public about how the courts work and providing opportunities for students and teachers to learn the role of the courts is essential to develop an informed citizenry. To increase public trust and confidence, courts may need to expand educational outreach efforts to the public. Courts may seek to broker new educational partnerships with civic organizations and media outlets and explore additional experiential learning opportunities to promote an educated citizenry which understands the principles of a strong and impartial judiciary. Civics education plays an important role in educating the public about judges and judicial elections.

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<sup>10</sup> [Social Media and the Courts, National Center for State Courts](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Social Media and the Courts, National Center for State Courts](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Pew Research Center – State of the News Media 2015](#)

## **APPENDICES**

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## **APPENDIX A: Yearly Assessment and Feedback Form (Example)**

(To be produced as an online feedback form.)

### **ONLINE FORM SAMPLE QUESTIONS:**

1. Describe any outreach efforts conducted by judges with members of your local legislative delegation.
2. If any public feedback was received, how were suggestions implemented locally?
3. What improvements to your court's website occurred to facilitate improved access to a) the court, b) community resource information, and c) educational resources?
4. What strategies have been implemented to promote understanding of court processes for court users?
5. Explain ways your court ensures local media representatives understand court procedures and processes?
6. How is your court engaging local media to promote positive messages and stories about your court?
7. What improvements to public and community outreach efforts are expected in the next year?
8. What educational programs are in place to assist local schools or organizations to learn more about the court system?

Note: Questions will change over time depending on the year and the focused goals and strategies expected to be accomplished.

## **APPENDIX B: History of the Court Communication Plan**

In 1999, the Communication Committee of the Judicial Management Council was charged with developing a communication plan for the Florida judicial branch and recommending it to the Judicial Management Council and the Supreme Court of Florida. Adopted by the Supreme Court in 2000, the 2000-2006 Communication Plan was created to advance the communication related goals and strategies of the long-range strategic plan (LRSP). The three strategic issues included in the 2000-2006 plan were:

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1. Educate the public about the role and functions of the judicial branch;
  2. Provide information to help the public navigate the judicial system; and,
  3. Establish mechanisms to receive public input regarding court operations.
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However, not long after the plan was released, the judicial branch was faced with several major events that necessitated a change in focus: preparing for the implementation of Revision 7, which changed the origination of funding for state circuit courts; budget cuts that required scaling back of initiatives and activities; and, the 2001 terrorist attacks on the US, requiring focus on development and implementation of emergency preparedness activities. As a result, the branch had to postpone the realization of the 2000-2006 Communication Plan. Further, the Judicial Management Council became dormant from 2002-2006, and was temporarily suspended in 2008 due to the many ramifications of the nationwide recession and the subsequent effects upon Florida's court system.

In 2012, the Florida Supreme Court re-established the Judicial Management Council based upon the recommendations of the Judicial Branch Governance Study Group established by Chief Justice Quince in 2009. Based upon the comments and ideas of the Council members, Chief Justice Polston (JMC chair) created the Education and Outreach workgroup (among others) to focus and facilitate the efforts of the Council to achieve the goals outlined in the administrative order that established the JMC. After initial review and consideration of the judicial branch's needs and capacities, as well as current legal, economic, and technological conditions, the workgroup began working to update the 2000-2006 Communication Plan as its first assignment.

## APPENDIX C: Examples of Strategies

Links below are meant to serve as a resource and provide examples of strategies already implemented in some jurisdictions.

### Goal I.1 – Build Support by developing meaningful relationships

Legislative Resources - [INTRANET](#)

Media Guidelines / Rules – [2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

Videos:

- Public Service Announcements - [2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- Video Library – [6<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

### Goal I.2 – Increase Public Awareness

Via website

- [6<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit: Court News](#)
- [9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit: Announcements](#)
- [17<sup>th</sup> Circuit Announcements](#)

Newsletters:

- [7<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- [20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

Speakers Bureau

- [6<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- [7<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- [20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- National

Town Hall Meetings

- [9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

Court Performance

- 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit: [About the Court: Statistics](#) or [Performance Reports](#)
- [13<sup>th</sup> Circuit Performance Reports](#)
- FLCourts.org: [Trial Court Statistics](#) with [Reference Guide](#) / [Clearance Rate Dashboard](#)

**Goal I.3 Provide information to ensure understanding of court processes, services available, and methods for accessing them.**

Needs Assessment

- [13<sup>th</sup> Circuit Community Resource Guide](#)

**Goal I.5 To educate the public about the role, functions, and decisions of the judicial branch by improving outreach efforts.**

Local Justice Teaching Institutes for Teachers

- [5<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- [11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

Visiting the Courthouse

- [11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

Court Web Guide

- [20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

Mission & Vision

- [20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

Oral Argument Press Summaries / Case Descriptions

- OA summaries – [Florida Supreme Court](#)
- case descriptions – [Florida Supreme Court](#)

**Goal III.1 To maximize technology to advance court communication efforts.**

Social Media:

- [Florida Supreme Court](#)
- [7<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- [8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- [11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- [13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)
- [18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit](#)

**Strategy IV.2 Creating a motivating and satisfying work environment**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Circuit Employee Newsletter



## APPENDIX D: Resources

- 2000-2006 Communication Plan for the Florida Judicial Branch
- [Long Range Strategic Plan for the Judicial Branch \(2009-2015\)](#)
- Environment Scan, Strategic Planning Unit, Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator, August 2014
- Summary of Outreach Efforts and Survey Findings Prepared for the Education & Outreach Workgroup of the JMC, May, 2013
- Communication (Internal & External, Education, and Outreach): Plans, Initiatives, Activities
- [Supreme Court Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity, Compilation of Court-Community Relations Activities](#)
- Judicial Branch Internal Communication Survey Findings from the 2010 Governance Study Public Opinion Surveys – 1996-2008
- [Funding Justice: Strategies and Messages for Restoring Court Funding, 2012](#)
- [“Keep the Courts Open” Final Report](#), March 28, 2002
- [Courts are Conversations: An Argument for Increased Engagement by Court Leaders](#)
- [The Proactive Strategic Communications Plan](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- [International Journal for Court Administration: Social Media and the Courts](#)
- [2014 New Media Survey: A Report of the Conference of Court Public Information Officers](#)
- [Pew Research Center: 8 Takeaways about Social Media and News](#)
- [Pew Research Center: State of the News Media 2015](#)
- [A Responsible Press Office in the Digital Age, United States Department of State, Bureau of Internal Information Programs, 2012](#)
- [Social Media and the Courts, National Center for State Courts](#)
- [Catching the Wave: State Supreme Court Online Outreach Efforts, National Center for State Courts](#)
- [Case Summaries and High Profile Cases, National Center for State Courts](#)
- [A Responsible Press Office, Marguerite Sullivan, The Proactive Strategic Communications Plan](#)
- [Sage Human Resource Management](#)

## SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

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#### **Education and Outreach Workgroup:**

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Elizabeth V. Krier, Judge, Twentieth Judicial Circuit  
Kathleen J. Kroll, Judge, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit  
Olin W. Shinolser, Judge, Tenth Judicial Circuit  
Benjamin B. Garagozlo, Judge, Brevard County  
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