

Ohio Judicial Conference Strategic Plan 2020-2023

(the ★ symbol beside a paragraph number denotes that strategy as a high priority strategy)

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Ohio Judicial Conference is to:

- (1) Preserve the co-equal status of the judiciary as the third branch of government by:
 - promoting understanding and cooperation among the branches of government,
 - providing information and services to the other branches of government.
- (2) Provide leadership to the judiciary by:
 - advocating on behalf of the judicial branch
 - providing information and services to judges and judicial associations, and by
 - coordinating positions and initiatives of the judicial associations.
- (3) Promote public confidence in the judiciary by:
 - encouraging uniformity in the application of the law, rules, and practice
 - enhancing the public's understanding of the judicial system.

Vision Statement

The Ohio Judicial Conference is dedicated to serving all Ohio judges. The Judicial Conference is the voice of the judiciary and a primary resource to ensure the fair, open and effective administration of justice in Ohio.

Values Statement

The Ohio Judicial Conference is committed to the continual promotion of professional excellence in the administration of justice through stewardship, service, ethics, communication, initiative, education, and responsiveness, diversity and inclusion.

- Stewardship—Maintaining quality, non-partisan guidance for the judicial system.
- Service—Providing services to judges, courts, and the public with courtesy and competence.
- Ethics—Promoting ethical behavior.
- Communication—Serving as a clearinghouse of information.
- Initiative—Taking a pro-active role in the development of legislation and rules.
- Responsiveness—Responding quickly and comprehensively to inquiries and challenges.

Issue Statements

Issue One. Coordination. To ensure that Ohio's judges speak with one voice, it is imperative that the Ohio Judicial Conference coordinate the perspectives and recommendations of individual judges, the judicial associations, and others. The Conference is best suited to initiate and monitor both legislation and rules that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the judiciary. The Ohio Judicial Conference recognizes the judiciary's role and responsibility in maintaining and promoting balance among the three branches of government. This balance is achieved and maintained through early and frequent participation of the judiciary in the process of creating and reviewing proposed laws and rules; and by serving as a resource to the executive and legislative branches.

Goals: The Ohio Judicial Conference is the voice of Ohio judges, offering information to and serving as a resource for the Supreme Court of Ohio, the legislative and executive branches, and the public. The Ohio Judicial Conference initiates and responds to legislative initiatives and rules to promote the rule of law thereby enhancing the quality of justice for all the citizens of Ohio.

Strategies.

1. Provide high-quality, timely information on the judicial impact of proposed and pending legislation and rule changes.

a. Current Practices:

- i. Website
- ii. FYI
- iii. Focused Emails
- iv. Judicial Impact Statements
- v. Legislative Letters
- vi. Legislative Review
- vii. Initiate legislative newsletter

★ 2. Establish and maintain relationships with justice system stakeholders, including the public.

a. Current Practices:

- i. Legislative Committee meetings
- ii. Bench-Bar Conferences

b. Proposed Practice:

- i. Sponsor issue specific round-tables and symposiums

3. Inventory the relationship of individual judges with justice system partners.

a. Current Practices:

- i. Match Supreme Court of Ohio Committee/Commission/Task Force members with appropriate OJC Committees
- ii. Survey OJC members regarding other committee affiliations

4. Maintain relationship with the Supreme Court of Ohio and Offices

a. Current Practices:

- i. Ongoing communication with SCO Director of Judicial Services
- ii. Regular communication with SCO Admin. Dir. And Chief Justice
- iii. OJC Leadership meetings with SCO

iv. Monitor and provide support to judges who serve on SCO commissions, advisory committees, and task forces

b. Proposed Practices:

i. Cross reference calendars and projects with SCO



5. Educate judges and other agencies about the Ohio Judicial Conference.

a. Current Practices:

- i. Presentations at New Judges Training
- ii. New Judges Reception
- iii. New Judges Packet
- iv. FYI
- v. OJC presence at Judicial Association Meetings
- vi. Maintain communication between judicial association legislative counsel and OJC legislative staff
- vii. Expand new judges packet with OJC branded item

b. Proposed Practices:

- i. Educate judges about legislative process and how the Judicial Conference engages in that process.
- ii. Initiate Regional Outreach efforts to actively engage members and increase membership in the Ohio Judicial Conference.
- iii. Appoint a committee to develop a marketing strategy to engage Judicial Conference members with the work of the Judicial Conference and educate the members on the resources available to them as Judicial Conference members.
- iv. Expand Judicial Conference Role in New Judges Training
- v. Develop OJC video introducing new judges to the OJC and the practical aspects of their new position

6. Inform judges about new legislative enactments and rules.

a. Current Practices:

- i. Enactment News
- ii. Emails
- iii. Website

7. Develop policy statements on matters impacting the administration of justice.

8. Analyze and comment upon recommendations impacting justice issued by task forces and other entities.

9. Initiate (study and formulate) legislative, rule, and constitutional changes that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the judiciary.

10. Coordinate regular data collection of Judicial Conference members and interested parties.

Issue Two. Accessibility. The citizens of Ohio are entitled to equal access to justice, equal protection of the laws and due process through the uniform administration of justice in all courts within the state. Courts must continually strive to identify and eliminate barriers to access, give personnel the tools to serve persons with different needs, and provide appropriate information, processes and services.

Goals. The Ohio Judicial Conference will facilitate equal access to justice by promoting model local rules, forms, and best practices throughout all courts within the state.

Strategies.

- ★ 1. Develop and encourage model forms, rules, and court practices.
 - a. Current Practices:
 - i. Proposed Sentencing Forms
 - ii. Model Local Rule on CQEs
 - iii. Model Local Rule on Receivership
 - iv. Collaborate with Ohio State Bar Association on Rules changes (e.g. Civil Rules Reform)
 - b. Proposed Practices:
 - i. Showcase courtroom innovation and promote uniform implementation of innovative court practices.
 - ii. Collaborate with Ohio State Bar Foundation
 - iii. Develop additional model local rules in collaboration with the Ohio State Bar Association
- 2. Expand the use of technology to assist the courts and the public.
 - a. Current Practices:
 - i. Court Technology Conference
 - ii. Court Technology Resource
- 3. Promote access for self-represented litigants through effective court practices.
 - a. Current Practices:
 - i. Devoted an Annual Meeting to the challenge of pro se litigants
 - ii. Developed a policy statement on court costs
 - iii. Collaborated with OSBA and OLAF on a proposal to waive court costs for indigent litigants
 - b. Proposed Practice:
 - i. Survey courts to form a library of best-practices regarding self-represented litigants
- 4. Increase awareness of strategies that eliminate obstacles to justice arising from race, gender, language, culture, disability, economic status and other matters.

★ 5. Promote public confidence in and public knowledge about the courts.

a. Proposed Practices:

- i. Implement “Least Understood Branch”
- ii. Update “Outreach that Works” Library
- iii. Anticipate issues and coordinate media efforts with SCO Public Information Office
- iv. Director’s Column

Issue Three. Professional Effectiveness. In order to achieve justice for all the citizens of Ohio, judges require educational, professional, and administrative support.

Goals. The Ohio Judicial Conference will enhance the professional effectiveness of Ohio judges.

Strategies.

★ 1. Promote all aspects of judicial performance and professionalism through the use of educational seminars, collaborative meetings, informational publications, bench aids, bench-books, videos, webinars and technology.

a. Current Practices:

- i. Library of Reasoned Orders
- ii. Institutionalize Judges Resource Manual with new judges
- iii. Expand Education Committee by creating an appointment for each judicial association

b. Proposed Practices:

- i. Institutionalize Judges Resource Manual with new judges
- ii. Expand Education Committee by creating an appointment for each judicial association
- iii. Encourage members and Judicial Conference staff to attend national events and monitor trends and perspectives.
- iv. Provide funds for contractual assistance in bench-book management

★ 2. Encourage increased communications among judges and courts.

a. Current Practices:

- i. Roundtables on ORAS, transitional control, oil & gas
- ii. OJC/ODRC Think Tank
- iii. Use of Social Media

b. Proposed Practice:

- i. Blogs

3. Assist judges with the personal, social, and institutional challenges of their profession.

a. Current Practices:

- i. Judicial Advisory Group
- ii. PERS Reform Legislation

4. Promote the institutional and financial commitment to judicial service.

a. Current Practices:

i. Budget Resource Manual

5. Educate the judiciary on national trends and perspectives by encouraging regular participation of judges at nationally recognized judicial associations.

Issue Four. Collaboration. Public trust and confidence in the courts is essential to maintaining an orderly democratic society. The Ohio Judicial Conference must work closely with judges, courts, and other entities within the Ohio justice system to ensure the fair, effective, and efficient administration of justice. The Ohio Judicial Conference must also encourage and facilitate initiatives at the state and local level to enhance public knowledge about the justice system and the role of courts.

Goal 1. The Ohio Judicial Conference will establish activities and partnerships to educate the public about the courts, the judiciary, and the justice system.

Strategies.

1. Survey and catalogue the best practices in Ohio and other states and develop a “Best Practices” tool available to Ohio Judicial Conference members as a resource.
2. Collaborate with the Ohio State Bar Association and others regarding law-related education.
3. Assist judges in their individual outreach in their local communities.

Goal 2. The Ohio Judicial Conference will develop and maintain collaborative relationships with justice system partners to enhance the administration of justice and garner ideas in developing the legislative platform.

Strategies.

1. Identify justice system partners who impact the administration of justice and establish relationships of respect and cooperation.
2. Identify ongoing issues amenable to long-term collaborative solutions;

a. Current Practices:

i. Development of Legislative Platform

3. Share Judicial Conference legislative perspectives with justice system partners in a timely manner.

★ 4. Lead legislative implementation efforts to attain uniformity of application of new laws (e.g. CQE, record sealing, elimination of mandatory PSI, Annie’s Law.)

Issue Five. Relationships

The effective administration of justice in Ohio requires clear role definitions among the various justice system partners to minimize ambiguity and to effectively utilize resources. The relationship between the Ohio Judicial Conference, the judicial associations, the Supreme Court of Ohio, and individual judges should be well defined so that there is a clear voice for determining the direction and policies of the Ohio judiciary.

Goal. The Ohio Judicial Conference will enhance the relationship between all parties interested in Ohio's judicial system, including the Supreme Court of Ohio, in order to facilitate the Ohio Judicial Conference serving as the voice of Ohio's judges.

Strategies.

1. Maintain a dialogue with the Supreme Court regarding the independent and complementary role of the Ohio Judicial Conference consistent with the following principles:
 - The Ohio Judicial Conference is well positioned to provide the local trial court perspective on issues affecting Ohio's courts.
 - The Ohio Judicial Conference is able to make public comments on issues that could potentially come before the Supreme Court in individual cases.
 - The Ohio Judicial Conference has access to the best available information on local court practices.
 - The Ohio Judicial Conference can provide non-political, non-partisan perspectives on issues affecting Ohio's courts.
2. Establish and Maintain OJC committees to respond to the needs of the judiciary.
 - a. Current Practices:
 - i. Assist each committee in defining projects and priorities on a biennial basis.
 - ii. Consider staff expertise and support ability for substantive committee matters.
3. Maintain relationships with the judicial associations. (see brochure of services)
4. Initiate and maintain relationships with legislators.
 - a. Current Practices:
 - i. Expand legislative network beyond justice related committees.
 - ii. Legislative Exchange/Legislative Reception

Issue Six. Executive

The Ohio Judicial Conference requires executive leadership, fiscal responsibility, and effective administrative support.

Goal. The Officers, Executive Committee, Director, Coordinators and fiscal officer will provide leadership and management to successfully accomplish the mission of the Ohio Judicial Conference.

Strategies

1. Assist Conference staff to establish priorities and execute administrative policies through the Conference officers.
2. Encourage and support activities that implement the strategic plan and promote the mission of the Conference.
3. Perform all administrative and fiscal functions in a professional manner and in conformity with the law.
4. Provide staff with sufficient resources and supplies necessary to perform their duties.
 - a. Current Practices:
 - i. Maintain information technology and technical support
 - ii. Develop a website enhancement package as needed
5. Provide staff with professional development training opportunities.