



## Stanislaus County Superior Court

### Strategic Plan 2021 - 2026

Effective October 1, 2021

#### Mission Statement

The Superior Court of the State of California, County of Stanislaus, endeavors to provide equal access to justice; serving the needs of our community and organization with integrity, quality, and fairness.

**Strategic Planning Committee Members**

Hon. Alan K. Cassidy, Chair

Hon. Robert Westbrook, Presiding Judge

Hon. Carrie M. Stephens, Assistant Presiding Judge

Hon. Ricardo Córdova

Hon. John D. Freeland

Hon. Linda A. McFadden

Hon. Dawna F. Reeves

Hon. Sonny S. Sandhu

Hon. Stacy P. Speiller

Hon. Ruben Villalobos

Hugh K. Swift, Court Executive Officer

Ronna Uliana, Asst. Court Executive Officer

**Executive Summary**

The following strategic plan was developed by the Stanislaus County Superior Court (“Court”) over the course of four sessions, held from March 24 through May 6, 2021.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the first session, the committee identified the core issues which most needed their focus. The core issues were condensed into the "Focus Question" set forth below.

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<sup>1</sup> These sessions were facilitated by Becky Foreman  
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During the subsequent four sessions, participants created a five-year vision for the Court, identified potential barriers to progress in achieving their vision, developed three strategic directions that define their planned momentum, and finally committed to completing fourteen specific accomplishments over the next fiscal year.

Throughout the process, participants shared ideas openly with respect for all perspectives. The resulting plan reflects their understanding of their current reality (including dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused roadblocks throughout the Court and community), their shared vision of what is most important to focus on over the next five years, and the specific, innovative actions that will move them forward.

The next step in the process is to put these ideas into action. Included in this documentation is a list of commitments (accomplishments) for the first fiscal year and a timeline for completion of each. The committee will meet again prior to the end of the fiscal year to review their progress and plan their accomplishments for the second year of their five-year plan. It is recommended that the committee continue to meet at the end of each fiscal year to plan for the following year, to keep the five-year plan relevant and on target.

Focus Question:

How can we, as a court, over the next five years provide improved access to justice by: recruiting, developing and retaining well qualified staff; implementing efficiencies throughout the court; building relationships with stakeholders and the community and creating and implementing a forward looking technology plan?

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*Stanislaus Superior Court Strategic Plan - 2021-2026***Strategic Plan - Context**

California Rule of Court § 10.603(c)(9)(A) states - The presiding judge must: Prepare, with the assistance of appropriate court committees and appropriate input from the community, a long-range strategic plan that is consistent with the plan and policies of the Judicial Council, for adoption in accordance with the procedures established by local rules or policies.

**The vision and strategic plan of the Court aligns with the Judicial Council's Strategic Plan:****Judicial Branch Goals**

Goal 1- Access, Fairness, and Diversity

Goal 2- Independence and Accountability

Goal 3- Modernization of Management and Administration

Goal 4- Quality of Justice and Service to the Public

Goal 5- Education for Branch Wide Professional Excellence

Goal 6- Branch Wide Infrastructure for Service Excellence

Goal 7- Adequate, Stable and Predictable Funding for a Fully Functioning Branch

**Stanislaus County Superior Court Vision and Strategic Directions****Vision:**

- a) Judges<sup>2</sup> Involved in High-Level Policy Formulation (the "Big Picture")
- b) Invested in Staff Recruitment and Development
- c) Improved Community Confidence in Courts and Justice
- d) Modernized Court Systems
- e) Timely Access to Court
- f) Improved Work Environment

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<sup>2</sup> Unless other noted, the terms "judge" and "judicial officer" are used interchangeably and include both judges and commissioners.

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*Stanislaus Superior Court Strategic Plan - 2021-2026***Strategic Directions:**

- a) Creating a Community-Engaged Court
- b) Planning for the Future
- c) Developing the Team

**Vision in Detail:****Judges Involved in Big Picture Policy Formulation**

- Increased shared vision—Judicial Officers look beyond their own courtroom or particular division
- Increased "ownership" of issues related to court administration – Judges take more responsibility for making the vision a reality
- Improved communication among judicial officers and throughout the various divisions of the Court

**Invested in Staff Recruitment and Development**

- Opportunities for advancement within the Court (career development)
- Educational and training opportunities for staff
- Competitive pay and benefits
- Desirable working conditions

**Improved Community Confidence in Courts and Justice**

- Improved communication with the public, community leaders, justice partners, private bar, and the media
- Participation in community outreach activities such as mock trial programs and career days
- Improved communications through effective and targeted use of social media
- Improved relationships with external partners and stakeholders, e.g., community leaders, District Attorney, Public Defender, etc.

**Modernized Court Systems**

- Online access to court records
- Real-time, electronic Minute Orders for all case types
- Continuing improvement plan for Court case management system, to include annual reviews
- E-filing and electronic files all case types
- Investment in upgrading technology by making technology a priority

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*Stanislaus Superior Court Strategic Plan - 2021-2026*Timely Access to Court

- Review calendaring procedures and staffing levels to ensure timely resolution of cases. Actions to include:
  - Obtaining additional child custody recommending counselors
  - Conducting Domestic Violence Restraining Order hearing and criminal trials expeditiously
- Expanded use of video platforms to facilitate remote hearings and trials
- Online Dispute Resolution and Mediation

Improved Work Environment

- Physical working conditions, which reflect the value of staff to the administration of justice in our community
- A courtroom and staff for every judicial officer
- Improved Internal communications

**Strategic Directions in Detail:****Creating a Community Engaged Court**Communication

- Create a position for a Public Information Officer
- Engage with Staff Regularly - Solicit input and feedback from our own employees
- Develop a communications committee comprised of judicial officers and court administration to ensure timely and consistent messaging to the community
- Publish external and internal newsletters

Technology

- Create an application to access court website from any device – smartphone, tablet, etc.
- Technology Committee develops a strategic plan for information technology, which prioritizes developing and maintaining modernized court systems

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*Stanislaus Superior Court Strategic Plan - 2021-2026***Community Engagement**

- Identify opportunities for effective and meaningful engagement with the community
- Court representation at important local events
- Volunteer projects for judicial officers and court staff
- Community outreach to schools and other organizations
- Build relationships with local elected and appointed officials

**Preparing for the Future****Planning for the Future**

- Continually update and revise our strategic plan
- Develop an annual update on court long-term goals
- Prepare multi-year budget forecasts
- Prioritize needs

**Developing the Team****Internal Development**

- Use judicial officers to help educate and train other court employees
- Scholarships or other incentives to encourage advanced education
- A proactive approach to soliciting employee training from different sources

**Focus on Wellness**

- Serious commitment to wellness; Incentivize exercise of the mind and body

**Year One Implementation****Creating a Community Engaged Court****Commitments**

- Quarter Two:
  - Activate Courts and Community Committee and schedule quarterly meetings
  - Create system to solicit input from community

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- Quarter Three:
  - Expand the website
  
- Quarter Four:
  - Create and implement a system to track and showcase community involvement by judicial officers and staff
  - Publish newsletter (external)

**Preparing for the Future**Commitments

- Quarter One:
  - Begin to draft two-year budget cycle
  - Evaluate blocks to accessing court services
  
- Quarter Two:
  - Plan for expansion of self-help office
  
- Quarter Four:
  - Plan for year two of strategic plan

**Developing the Team**Commitments

- Quarter One:
  - Establish a baseline retention rate
  
- Quarter Two:
  - Training and development position is filled and making progress
  - Review and expand incentives
  - Develop a staff satisfaction survey
  - Review exit interviews to determine development needs