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2014-15 Biennial Budget - Supreme Court

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Mission:

The mission of the judicial branch is to provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair, competent, and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

Statewide Outcome(s):

Supreme Court supports the following statewide outcome(s).

Strong and stable families and communities.

People in Minnesota are safe.

Efficient and accountable government services.

Context:

Minnesota's Supreme Court is the state's court of last resort, serving as the final guardian of the Minnesota Constitution and interpreting/applying the United States Constitution. The Court, made up of seven justices, reviews nearly 800 cases a year. Sitting en banc (before the entire bench), it hears appeals from the Minnesota Court of Appeals, the Workers Compensation Court of Appeals, and the Tax Court. The Court also hears and decides attorney and judicial discipline matters, election contest disputes, and all first-degree murder conviction appeals from the district courts. The Supreme Court's supervisory jurisdiction includes the authority to prescribe, amend, and modify the rules of practice in all courts; the rules governing the examination and admission of attorneys to the state bar; and, the rules governing judicial and attorney professional misconduct.

The adjudicative and supervisory functions of the Supreme Court have an impact on all Minnesota citizens.

For FY 2012-13, the funding for the Supreme Court is 83.4 percent from General Fund direct appropriations. Federal grants represent 11.6 percent of funding for the court. The balance of funding, 5.0 percent is from special revenue funds, most of which are disbursed as grants to non-profit agencies that provide civil legal services for those in need of assistance. The Supreme Court's Legal Services Advisory Committee (LSAC) administers these funds.

Strategies:

The Supreme Court conducts its adjudicative and administrative functions in support of three strategic goals to deliver its mission and to support the statewide outcomes:

Access to Justice – Ensuring the justice system is open, affordable, effective, and accountable to the people it serves.

Administering Justice for Effective Results – Working across branches of government and with other stakeholders to improve outcomes for and the delivery of services for children, families, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) addicted offenders who come into the courts.

Public Trust, Accountability and Impartiality – Through education, outreach to diverse communities and a commitment to system-wide customer service and accountability, improving citizens' understanding of and confidence in the Third Branch of government.

To further these three strategic goals, the branch's strategic plan outlines future priorities. Each of the specific priorities addresses challenges facing the court system by targeting judicial branch resources in a focused manner on achievable and measurable strategies. Implementation of these priorities will take place over the life of the strategic plan with specific performance measures to evaluate their success. The FY 2012-2013 Judicial Branch Strategic Plan can be found on the branch's website http://www.mncourts.gov.

Measuring Success:

It is the policy of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to establish core performance goals and to monitor key results that measure progress toward meeting these goals in order to ensure accountability of the branch, improve overall operations of the court, and enhance the public's trust and confidence in the judiciary. The six core performance goals of the Judicial Branch are as follows: Access to Justice; Timeliness; Integrity and Accountability; Excellence; Fairness and Equity; Quality Court Work Environment. Each of the goals is accompanied by corresponding performance measures. Regular review of these measures enables the Branch to identify what is doing well and what it needs to improve.

The full report entitled, "Judicial Branch 2012 Performance Measures –Key Results and Measures Report" can be found on the branch's website http://www.mncourts.gov.

Supreme Court
Supreme Court Operations
http://www.mncourts.gov

Statewide Outcome(s):

Supreme Court Operations supports the following statewide outcome(s).

Strong and stable families and communities.

People in Minnesota are safe.

Efficient and accountable government services.

Context:

The Minnesota Supreme Court considers appeals from decisions of the Court of Appeals, the Workers Compensation Court of Appeals, and the Tax Court. It hears special term matters, motions, and petitions for extraordinary relief. The Supreme Court also hears mandatory cases, including first-degree murder conviction appeals from the district courts, attorney and judicial discipline matters, and election contests.

The Chief Justice serves as the chair of the Minnesota Judicial Council (the branch's governing body) and is responsible for supervising the administrative operations of the state court system. She is assisted by the State Court Administrator's Office, which provides the administrative infrastructure for the judicial branch.

Working at the direction of the Judicial Council, the state court administrator is responsible for providing judicial branch finance, human resources, technology, training, communications, legal counsel and court management services.

The adjudicative and supervisory functions of Supreme Court Operations have an impact on all Minnesota citizens.

The general fund primarily funds the Supreme Court Operations budget. Federal funds are received and directed towards children's initiatives. A small amount of support from the special revenue fund is received for the State Law Library, the Court Interpreter Program and the Attorney Registration Program.

Strategies:

Supreme Court Operations conducts its adjudicative and administrative functions in support of three strategic goals to deliver its mission and to support the statewide outcomes:

Access to Justice – Ensuring the justice system is open, affordable, effective, and accountable to the people it serves.

Administering Justice for Effective Results – Working across branches of government and with other stakeholders to improve outcomes for and the delivery of services for children, families, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) addicted offenders who come into the courts.

Public Trust, Accountability and Impartiality – Through education, outreach to diverse communities and a commitment to system-wide customer service and accountability, improving citizens' understanding of and confidence in the Third Branch of government.

Results:

It is the policy of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to establish core performance goals and to monitor key results that measure progress toward meeting these goals in order to ensure accountability of the branch, improve overall operations of the court, and enhance the public's trust and confidence in the judiciary.

Throughout the year, the Supreme Court reviews performance measures results on certain timing objectives, based on defined reporting periods. This review of results is shared with the Judicial Council twice a year.

The performance objectives measure timeliness as an indication of whether the Supreme Court is achieving efficient, productive, and quality case flow management. The Supreme Court measures timeliness by reviewing the number of days to accomplish certain tasks, at the 50th percentile and the 90th percentile. The event categories measured are as follows:

- Filing of Petition for Review (PFR) to Disposition of PFR Standard
- Submission (oral argument) to Circulation of Majority Standard
- Submission to Disposition with or without Dissent Standard

The event categories are taken from the American Bar Association (ABA) recommended standards, and the points of measurement conform to the ABA recommended timing objectives at the 50th percentile and the 90th percentile for state supreme courts. The Supreme Court reviews its performance on these timing objectives for cases within its mandatory (Murder 1, Professional Regulation) and discretionary jurisdiction (Review Granted/Denied, Child Protection, Criminal Pre-Trial).

The Supreme Court is generally meeting its timing objectives at the 50th percentile for the three event categories. For several years, the Supreme Court has consistently met or exceeded the timing objective for Filing of PFR to Disposition of PFR, at both the 50th and 90th percentile. At the 90th percentile the performance goal for this event category is 60 days. In the both previous and current periods, the Court took 56 days and is maintaining performance within the timing objective.

The Supreme Court continues to look at ways to improve services to lawyers and litigants and improve the timeliness of case processing. The Supreme Court convened the Civil Justice Reform Task Force in January 2011. The task force was charged with examining case processing of both complex and simple civil litigation to determine if and how these cases can be handled more effectively, more efficiently and at less expense through changes in court rules and court processes. The task force submitted its report in December 2011, and representatives presented the report to the Supreme Court in January 2012. The Supreme Court has the report under advisement. Follow-up tasks are underway. These efforts will have benefits that reach beyond the Judicial Branch from our justice partners to civil litigants.

Performance Measures	Previous	Current	Trend
Number of Days Elapsed at 90% of Supreme Court Cases – Filing of PFR to Disposition of PFR	56	56	Maintaining performance within timing objectives

Performance Measures Notes:

Data are from the Judicial Branch 2012 Performance Measures – Key Results and Measures Annual Report. The data range used 2010 for the previous period and 2011 for the current period. The report can be found at http://www.mncourts.gov.

Supreme Court
Civil and Family Legal Services

http://www.mnlegalservices.org

Statewide Outcome(s):

Civil and Family Legal Services supports the following statewide outcome(s).

Strong and stable families and communities.

People in Minnesota are safe.

Efficient and accountable government services.

Context:

The statewide civil legal services network (CLS) is a core function of the justice system. It ensures access to justice for vulnerable Minnesotans and efficiency in the justice system. CLS focuses on resolving civil legal matters that directly affect basic human needs for safety, shelter and household sustenance. All CLS clients have low incomes, disabilities or are elderly. Network reforms over the past decade include improved and expanded public access to services through technology, and controlled cost through shared service coordination. Capacity to deliver core services has been significantly reduced since the beginning of the recession, even though the number of vulnerable Minnesotans eligible for and needing CLS services has increased.

The Supreme Court administers CLS funding. There are three sources of state-administered funding: general fund, Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) and attorney registration fees. These funds are administered through the Supreme Court's Legal Services Advisory Committee (LSAC). By statute, 85 percent of general fund support is distributed on a poverty population basis to the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition, six regional CLS organizations that provide a full range of legal help in all 87 counties. The remaining 15 percent of general fund support is awarded on a competitive basis to organizations addressing special populations or specific legal needs. A limitation imposed in 2011 prioritizes the state appropriation to be used for addressing legal issues within state jurisdiction. CLS is also supported by federal and local government grants, foundations, the United Way, corporations, law firms, and individual private donors. The Judicial Branch has shown continued support for CLS through the attorney registration fee increase, but all other sources of funding have declined over the past five years.

Strategies:

CLS opens the doors of the justice system to the most vulnerable in our community. In 2011, CLS provided direct legal representation and advice services to 49,079 families and individuals. Additionally, CLS provided education and self-help services to more than 220,000 Minnesotans. CLS attorneys and advocates work from offices throughout the state, providing services in all 87 Minnesota counties. CLS creates strong and stable families and communities by helping families and individuals find solutions to civil legal disputes. Priorities are helping victims of domestic violence escape from abuse and find safety, preventing homelessness due to improper eviction or foreclosure, protecting vulnerable Minnesotans from financial exploitation, and maximizing the ability of people who are elderly or have disabilities to live safely and independently in the community.

An essential part of the state's domestic violence intervention system, CLS delivers legal services to women and children served by the state's network of domestic violence shelters and support programs. CLS has a similar relationship with social service systems that address homelessness or independent living for seniors or people with disabilities. CLS's partnership with the justice system is two-fold. CLS creates efficiencies in the court system by redirecting cases that are without merit or can be resolved in another manner and by ensuring efficient use of the court's time and resources when low-income clients come before a judge. CLS also creates efficiency in the justice system by providing statewide training and web-based resources on legal issues affecting basic human needs. The web service http://www.ProJusticeMN.org, along with training for private attorneys, provides essential infrastructure to leverage and support volunteer attorney services. The court system, public libraries, and social service agencies rely on CLS' http://www.LawHelpMN.org web service to provide the public with self-help resources and easy-to-use legal forms.

Results:

CLS partners with the Supreme Court, Minnesota State Bar Association (MSBA), and its federal and private funders to monitor, evaluate and improve services. CLS services reduce domestic violence, prevent homelessness, and ensure access to health care and independent living resources for seniors and people with disabilities. According to a recent MSBA assessment, Minnesota judges cite CLS legal representation as a critical service allowing the courts to perform the core function of administering justice and assuring fairness.

However, Minnesota faces a widening "justice gap". From 2008 to 2010, the number of Minnesotans eligible for CLS services increased by 20.6 percent, to 1.4 million. During the same period, CLS financial resources decreased by 16 percent. In 2009, the already strained CLS network met the legal need for only one of every two eligible clients seeking services. In 2012, CLS is meeting the need for only one of every three eligible clients seeking help.

CLS seeks to narrow the expanding "justice gap" by increasing service capacity to respond to the growing needs. CLS will also continue creating efficiencies through coordination within the CLS network, recruiting and training volunteer attorneys, and launching technological innovations which provide Minnesotans greater access to legal representation, advice, and legal self-help tools.

Performance Measures	Previous	Current	Trend
Number of eligible clients seeking services who are served	1 out of every 2	1 out of every 3	declining
Percentage of families and individuals served who successfully resolved critical legal problems.	89% of 52,852 households	89% of 49,079 households	stable
Number of children and women who are victims of domestic violence who achieved safety.	1,942 households	1,879 households	declining
Number of families and individuals faced with foreclosure or eviction who remained housed.	2,925 households	3,112 households	improving
Number of seniors and people with disabilities who continue to live safely and independently in the community.	3,433 people	3,235 people	declining
Number of people obtaining education and self-help resources about legal rights and responsibilities through technological innovation.	187,164 people	258,837 people	improving

Performance Measures Notes:

Performance measure "Number of eligible clients seeking services who are served" uses calendar year 2009 data for the previous period and calendar year 2012 data for the current period. All other measures use data that compares calendar year 2009 for the previous period to calendar year 2011 for the current period. Performance measure "Percentage of families and individuals served who successfully resolved critical legal problems" is stable in that the success rate has remained stable, however the number of households served has declined by 3,773.