



September 13, 2022

2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan

Charting the Course for the Superior, Justice, and Municipal Courts,
Yavapai County

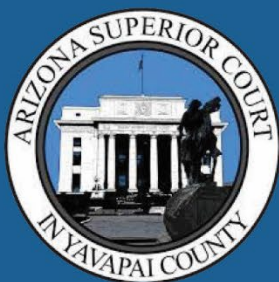


Table of Contents

Letter from Associate Presiding Judge

Strategic Planning Committee

Section 1: Introduction and Overview 1

Section 2: Mission, Vision, and Core Values 3

Section 3: Strategic Focus Areas, Goals, and Strategies 4

 Strategic Focus Area 1: Access, Programs, and Services..... 5

 Strategic Focus Area 2: Fair, Timely, and Efficient Courts 7

 Strategic Focus Area 3: Public Trust and Confidence..... 9

 Strategic Focus Area 4: Employee Engagement and Satisfaction 11

 Strategic Focus Area 5: Court Infrastructure 14

APPENDICES 17

 A: Trends Analysis

 B: Survey Results and Organizational Assessment

Copies of the complete Trends Internal and External PowerPoint Slides and the Survey Results are available upon request.



This document was developed under grant number SJI-22-T-008. The points of view expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State Justice Institute.



The Yavapai County Courts are proud to present our first strategic plan. The vision of the Yavapai County Courts is to ensure the public's trust and confidence through an impartial, efficient and responsive court system. A vision cannot be accomplished without a plan. Developing this strategic plan provided an opportunity for our courts to celebrate our past successes, consider areas of needed improvement, set goals and provide a path to accomplish those goals. This plan ensures that all Yavapai County Courts will push forward into the future with excellence and purpose. It also ensures that the Yavapai County Courts are working toward the goals for the judicial branch as described in the strategic plan of the Arizona Supreme Court.

Yavapai County is rich in history and natural beauty. The historic superior courthouse is the crown jewel of the county. Even more amazing, however, are the judicial officers and court employees who strive daily to serve our citizens. Yavapai County has been successfully administering justice for over 130 years. Our courts are occupied by strong leaders and exceptional employees. The judges, staff, volunteers, and community partners work daily to provide fair, timely and efficient justice. This plan affirms the commitment of our courts to provide access to justice, uphold the law, and resolve legal matters in a fair and timely manner.

The Yavapai County Courts wish to thank the State Justice Institute for providing grant funds that supported the development of this plan.

We are thankful for the participation of our external partners and internal staff members for participating in the strategic planning survey. Your valuable input led to the development of our strategic focus areas and related goals.

We also express our sincere gratitude to those who served on the Strategic Planning Committee for your commitment and willingness to 'roll up your sleeves' for the betterment of our community. We are grateful to Dr. Brenda J. Wagenknecht-Ivey, President and CEO of Praxis Consulting for her expertise in developing this plan.

Thank you to each of you for your commitment to carrying out this plan. We are excited to pursue the future with direction and purpose!

Hon. Krista M. Carman
Associate Presiding Judge

Strategic Planning Team

Hon. John Napper Presiding Judge, Superior Court	Hon. Krista M. Carman Associate Presiding Judge, Superior Court
Hon. Michael P. McGill Superior Court Judge, Division 1	Hon. Anna Young Presiding Juv. Superior Court Judge, Division 6
Hon. Donna McQuality Clerk of Superior Court	Hon. Dominick Sarno Justice of the Peace, Seligman Justice Court
Rolf Eckel Court Administrator, Superior Court	Julie Malinowski Deputy Court Administrator, Superior Court
John Morris Chief of Adult Probation	Jay Reeder Court Security Captain
Britney Cain Field Trainer	Lisa Chaney Lead Court Reporter
Rosie Flores Judicial Assistant/Caseflow	Kam Manswell Project Manager, Court Liaison
Jeremy Kuns Lead Bailiff/Courtroom Security	Daniel Peña Detention Manager, Juvenile Probation
Shannon Muñoz Family Law Navigator	Carlos Reyes Lead Court Interpreter
Veronica Pineda Court Administrator, Camp Verde Municipal Court	Jackie Williams Technology Project Manager
Kathy Ryder Supervisor, Adult Probation	Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey Consultant, PRAXIS Consulting, Inc.

2022 - 2026 Strategic Plan

September 13, 2022



Section 1: Introduction and Overview

The superior, justice, and municipal courts in Yavapai County, the fourth largest county in Arizona, embarked on a strategic planning process in January 2022 with grant funding from the State Justice Institute. The purpose of the planning process was to develop a multi-year, strategic roadmap for the courts including creating a mission, vision, and core values, and developing long-range goals, strategies, and annual initiatives for making improvements. The improvements that the courts will pursue from this strategic plan over the next few years and beyond will help the courts enhance the delivery of justice and court services to the people of Yavapai County.

A representative, 22-person strategic planning committee was formed and worked together to develop the Yavapai County Courts' inaugural strategic plan. Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey, CEO of PRAXIS Consulting, Inc. (Denver, Colorado) facilitated the planning process and assisted the committee in an analysis of internal and external trends and administered and summarized the results of a strategic planning survey. The committee met regularly between March and September 2022 to develop this Strategic Plan.

The courts are excited to present and begin working on this newly created Strategic Plan, which focuses on improving service to communities throughout Yavapai County and enhancing overall court performance. In addition to laying out a future direction and priorities, the plan provides a baseline from which to measure progress and accomplishments.

The courts will begin implementing this Strategic Plan in late 2022. Refer to the Courts' Operational Plan for specific initiatives the courts are working on each year.

Overview of Courts in Yavapai County

Superior Court

Yavapai County is the fourth largest county in Arizona and has three superior court locations; two in Prescott and the other in Camp Verde which serves the people of its 27 cities/towns. The Superior Court is the trial court of general jurisdiction for the State of Arizona. The judges hear cases involving civil disputes, contract, real property rights (regarding amounts over \$10,000), probate, mental health, misdemeanor, miscellaneous criminal, exclusive felony, lower court appeals, and juvenile cases.

The Judicial Branch of Arizona in Yavapai County is part of the Arizona State Judiciary. It is comprised of Superior Court, Adult Probation, and Juvenile Probation, which includes juvenile detention. The Superior Court in Yavapai County is innovative and progressive. It has programs that serve the community including specialty programs like Treatment Court, Mental Health Court, and Veterans' Court.

The Yavapai County Superior Court has ten judges including seven elected divisions, two full-time judge pro-tem divisions, and one family law commissioner. The seven superior court judges in Yavapai County are elected every four years.

In addition to the ten judges mentioned above, there are six part-time, pro-tem judges who are hired by the court to serve as judicial officers. The judicial officers are supported by more than 300 professional staff members serving across the branch, in all areas from courtroom assistants to juvenile detention officers and probation officers.

Justice Courts

Yavapai County has five justice courts located throughout the county. The largest is the Prescott Justice Court co-located in the main historic courthouse in downtown Prescott. The second largest is the Verde Valley Justice Court located in Cottonwood. Mayer Justice Court is the most centrally located, the Seligman Justice Court is at the far northern part of the county, and the Yarnell and Bagdad Justice Courts are on the far southern and western parts of the county. These courts handle all misdemeanor, criminal and civil traffic, small claims, civil, and forcible detainer cases in their respective precincts. Each court has an elected justice of the peace with a four-year term. Also, each court has a court manager who leads a staff of dedicated court clerks that varies in number, based on court size, from four to more than a dozen.

Municipal Courts

Yavapai County also has nine municipal/magistrate courts located throughout the county. They include Prescott, Prescott Valley, Dewey-Humboldt, Jerome, Clarkdale, Cottonwood, Chino Valley, Camp Verde and Sedona. Municipal and magistrate courts handle matters in their jurisdiction including misdemeanor, criminal and civil traffic, and local ordinance violations. These courts have presiding judges who are typically appointed by the city/town council for two-year terms. Also, each court has a court administrator. In some of the smallest courts, the administrator is the only staff. In the larger courts, there are up to ten or so dedicated court clerks providing service in the courtroom, at the front counter, and on back-office tasks.



Section 2: Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Below are the mission, vision, and core values of the Courts in Yavapai County.

Superior, Justice, and Municipal Courts in Yavapai County

Mission: The Courts in Yavapai County provide access to justice, uphold the law, and resolve legal matters in a fair and timely manner.

Vision: Our vision is to ensure the public's trust and confidence through an impartial, efficient, and responsive court system.

Core Values:

- Equitable – we are fair, unbiased, and impartial.
- Respectful – we are courteous, helpful, and professional.
- Innovative – we are creative and explore new ways of providing services.
- Customer-Focused – we provide excellent service to all who use the courts.



Section 3: Strategic Focus Areas, Long Range Goals, and Strategies

Strategic focus areas (SFAs) are internal or external issues that are fundamentally important to the courts in Yavapai County. They are significant issues that must be addressed in the coming years for the courts to fulfill the mission, work toward the vision, and live the core values.



Strategic Focus Area 1: Access, Programs, and Services

Description: Enhancing access for all people and providing responsive and effective programs and services are high priorities for the courts in Yavapai County.

The demographics of Yavapai County are changing and needs across the county are diverse and vary widely (e.g., wide range of ages and educational levels, varying levels of access to technology/Wi-Fi, rural vs. more populated areas, etc.). Additionally, there are a multitude of access barriers such as the lack of public transportation, cost of legal representation, difficulty navigating the courts including understanding English and the rules of procedure, lack of technology, locations of court facilities, and difficulties accessing information, to name a few. Finally, programs and services need to be expanded, continuously evaluated and enhanced, and respond to the changing needs of court users and the public.

Survey Results: The results of the strategic planning surveys of external partners, judicial officers, and court employees affirm needed improvements in these areas. Findings included:

1. Access to the courts was the lowest rated court performance category and included questions such as: how easy it is to get information from the courts about cases/matters; providing assistance to self-represented litigants and people who are not fluent in English; determining/finding the correct court location; and the distance court users/partners have to travel to get to court locations. External partners rated many of these questions significantly lower than judicial officers and court employees.
2. Technology, which included investing in and using existing and evolving technologies to enhance access and services, was rated the highest priority for improvements in the next three to five years.
3. Enhancing personal and legal assistance, which included expanding personal and virtual assistance provided to court participants to help access and navigate the courts, were also identified as areas for needed improvements.
4. Additional suggestions included: improve customer service; increase consistency within and across courts; extend court hours; treat all people respectfully; help people understand what they need to do to complete their court business; and provide access to helpful resources/videos.

Long Range Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: The courts in Yavapai County will be accessible and understandable to all.

Strategies:

- a. Improve and expand assistance (in-person and virtual) provided to court users (e.g., self-represented, limited English proficiency, elderly, pro bono legal assistance, navigation services/wayfinding, etc.).
- b. Expand virtual and online access to the courts.
- c. Make resources / information to assist court users more accessible and understandable.
- d. Educate the public / court users about available resources and services.
- e. Standardize software / interface for all courts to provide court users with seamless ability to do court business.

Goal 2: The courts will provide effective and innovative programs and services that meet the needs of court users.

Strategies:

- a. Identify the needs of court users and fill gaps.
- b. Educate the public and others (e.g., funders, stakeholders) about the needs of the court users.
- c. Solicit feedback from court users and evaluate existing court programs to determine effectiveness and implement improvements as warranted.
- d. Enhance and expand programs and services to meet changing and evolving needs (e.g., pre-trial services, probation, specialty/treatment programs, etc.).
- e. Use evidence-based and promising practices, tools, and resources to achieve effective results.
- f. Collaborate with justice system and community partners to provide needed services and programs (that are beyond the role and mission of the courts).
- g. Demonstrate the need for programs and services, and where needed, seek additional funding.

Strategic Focus Area 2: Fair, Timely, and Efficient Courts

Description: The courts in Yavapai County are committed to fair and timely resolution of cases/legal matters and operating efficiently and effectively.

Processes and procedures need to be streamlined, more consistent, and understandable. Additionally, effective and consistent case management practices, including case scheduling, need to be implemented to expedite case processing and reduce delay (e.g., set and hold firm on trial dates, reduce continuances, triage cases, increase use of settlement conference/other alternative dispute resolution methods such as online dispute resolution, mediation, etc.). Technological improvements are needed to speed up the system and process. Finally, the courts need to focus on implementing best practices for ensuring both procedural and outcome fairness.

Survey Results: Improvements needed related to this strategic focus area, according to survey respondents, are as follows. Findings included:

1. The timely resolution of legal matters, which included reduce the backlog and unnecessary delay, was rated as a most needed improvement in the next 3-5 years.
2. Also rated as a most needed improvement was developing best and consistent procedures and practices for conducting virtual proceedings and providing virtual court services.
3. Timeliness was rated the second lowest court performance category. This question included items such as court employees provide information in a timely manner; court hearings (in-person and virtual) start on time; and court cases are resolved in a reasonable amount of time.
4. External partners gave significantly higher ratings on the virtual proceedings and services category than judicial officers and court employees. Questions included: virtual proceedings were an effective way to move cases toward resolution during the pandemic; virtual proceedings are an acceptable method for conducting routine legal matters; and feeling competent to participate in and/or host video court proceedings.
5. While the courts were rated highly on the fairness performance category, the lowest rated individual questions in this category were: treating all court users equally and court users understand what they need to do when they leave the courtroom/courthouse (important components of procedural fairness).
6. Additional suggestions included: schedule more effectively; reduce wait times; reduce the time to docket cases; reduce the backlog; complete trials in a timely manner; reduce the number of continuances; hold attorneys accountable for being ready to go to trial on the trial date; judges should set a good example for being on time, etc.

Long Range Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: The Yavapai County Courts will resolve all cases/legal matters in a fair and timely manner.

Strategies:

- a. Treat all people equitably and respectfully.
- b. Implement effective case management practices to reduce unnecessary delay and case backlogs (e.g., scheduling, case triage, case settlement tracks, reduce continuances, etc.).
- c. Expand the use of alternative dispute resolution.
- d. Collaborate with justice system and legal partners to improve case processing and time to disposition.
- e. Implement best practices for achieving procedural and outcome fairness.
- f. Educate judicial officers and employees on innovative and best practices for timely resolution and procedural fairness.
- g. Measure and provide feedback on case processing times and performance on time standards.
- h. Use technology to enhance access to case information.

Goal 2: Court processes and procedures will be consistent, understandable, efficient, and effective.

Strategies:

- a. Simplify, standardize, and streamline court procedures and processes.
- b. Provide and enhance information and resources available to assist court users.
- c. Increase availability of in-person and virtual assistance provided to court users.
- d. Educate on court procedures and process.
- e. Increase efficiencies through uniform and integrated technologies (e.g., case management systems, e-filing, etc.).

Strategic Focus Area 3: Public Trust and Confidence

Description: Trust and confidence in the third branch of government generally, and courts specifically, is at the heart of maintaining a civil society and preserving our democracy. The courts in Yavapai County are committed to maintaining the rule of law and building the public's trust and confidence.

Building trust and confidence requires an increase of public awareness and understanding, enhancing communication and transparency, strengthening connections and relationships with the public as well as diverse communities, and increasing community engagement. Courts, and specifically judicial officers, need to be, in reality and perception, neutral, impartial, and free of bias, and not influenced by politics. Finally, courts need to be proactive and innovative in sharing information, advocating for the needs of the courts, and promoting the work and accomplishments of the courts (e.g., successes, positive news stories, etc.).

Survey Results. Respondents to the strategic planning surveys affirmed this area as important for the future. Survey findings included:

1. External partners, judicial officers, and court employees indicated that building the public's trust and confidence should be a high priority in the next three to five years.
2. Public education and external relationships were also rated as a high priority by some respondents.

Long Range Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Stakeholders, partners, and the public will be informed about the courts' independence, purpose, priorities, needs, and accomplishments

Strategies:

- a. Educate the public and stakeholders about the purpose, role, and mission of the courts as an independent branch of government.
- b. Communicate information about the courts' needs, priorities, and accomplishments.
- c. Use multiple methods for educating and sharing information about the courts (e.g., in-person, virtual, online, video, social media, print, etc.).
- d. Work with justice system partners and the legal community to advocate and build support for the courts.

Goal 2: The courts will develop and maintain positive and collaborative relationships with stakeholders and partners.

Strategies:

- a. Improve communication with stakeholders and partners.
- b. Collaborate with stakeholders and partners to make court system improvements.
- c. Encourage and recommend court employees to be involved in state and local commissions, associations, and work groups.

4

Staff Engagement and Satisfaction

Strategic Focus Area 4: Staff Engagement and Satisfaction

Description: The courts must be able to hire and retain competent staff to serve the public and court users. And having a skilled, engaged, and satisfied workforce is necessary for the courts to deliver the highest quality of services to the people of Yavapai County.

The courts are experiencing high turnover; it is difficult and costly to recruit and retain staff. Additionally, the cost of living is high. Compensation and benefits must keep pace with the rising costs and market values. Additionally, human resource practices need to be modernized for today's times (e.g., financial and non-financial incentives, make wellbeing a priority, provide for flexible/hybrid work arrangements, provide more feedback and recognition, etc.). Also, more training and professional development opportunities, cross training, and succession planning are needed to meet the demands of today's workforce and to respond to how work is changing. Finally, the courts need to embrace and improve diversity at all levels and across all courts (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, experiences, thinking/opinions, etc.).

Survey Results: The findings from the strategic planning surveys affirm improvements are needed in this area. Findings included:

1. External partners, judicial officers, and court employees identified the modernization of workplace practices as a most needed area for improvement in the next three to five years. This topic included: improving recruitment/hiring practices; prioritizing employee wellbeing; implementing hybrid/flexible work arrangements; providing professional development opportunities; and providing competitive pay and benefits. Judicial officers and court employees rated this area significantly higher than external partners.
2. While both the strength of the workplace and culture/satisfaction survey categories were rated highly by court employees, the lowest rated questions were:
 - In the last month I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
 - In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
 - At work, my opinions seem to count.
 - I feel informed about what is going on in the court.
 - Employee wellbeing is a high priority at the court.
3. Other suggestions for improvement included: provide competitive pay/provide a living wage; expand learning/development opportunities; improve wellbeing/make self-care a priority; increase hybrid/flexible work options; balance workloads of staff; continue to increase diversity and welcome/include all; improve communication among all departments; show appreciation; provide feedback; and clean and modernize equipment/technology.

Long Range Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: The courts are able to maintain optimal staffing levels to serve the public and operate effectively.

Strategies:

- a. Improve and expand where and how the courts recruit new employees ensuring diversity is a component of the recruitment process.
- b. Optimize existing staffing levels by allocating, or reallocating, staff as needed to better serve the public.
- c. Continually review and revise job descriptions ensuring they accurately reflect the duties, qualifications, and requirements for positions (e.g., education level, years of experience, etc.).
- d. Enhance training/cross training to increase back-up support.
- e. Communicate the need for additional funding to appropriately staff the courts, when needed.

Goal 2: The work environment is welcoming, engaging, and satisfying.

Strategies:

- a. Promote an inclusive environment where all are welcome, have a voice, and feel heard.
- b. Improve communication, information sharing, and transparency.
- c. Seek input from and involve employees in making changes and improvements.
- d. Provide competitive pay and benefits.
- e. Make employee wellbeing a high priority.
- f. Provide career path and advancement opportunities for all.
- g. Implement workplace practices that make the courts an engaging and satisfying place to work (e.g., flexible/hybrid work arrangements, tangible and non-tangible incentives, recognition program, career paths, coaching culture providing regular feedback, etc.).

Goal 3: Judicial officers and employees have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform at the highest levels.

Strategies:

- a. Strengthen orientation, training, and mentoring for new employees.
- b. Continually provide training and educational opportunities based on the demands of the work and jobs.
- c. Develop the next generation of managers and leaders.

Strategic Focus Area 5: Court Infrastructure (Facilities, Technology, Safety/Security)

Description: The future of the courts depends in part on improving and investing in the infrastructure. Specifically, the courts' facilities must be accessible, safe, secure, and suitable to promote respect for the institution. The space also must meet the current and evolving needs of court users, external partners, judicial officers, and staff. Additionally, technology is evolving rapidly. The courts must continue to invest in and use technology that will improve access, timely resolution, communication, data, and court operations.

The courts' facilities, including locations, space, parking, disabled access, etc., need continual assessment and improvement. Some buildings do not accommodate modern security standards and are not easily accessible. It also is essential to continually assess and improve court security and emergency preparedness.

Additionally, the courts' technology and equipment is antiquated; they need to be replaced, updated, and improved. In some instances, the bandwidth is insufficient to do court business (e.g., wifi is not available in all court facilities). New and uniform technologies are needed in all courts (e.g., video conferencing and texting capabilities, e-filing, etc.). Lastly, the courts must continually strengthen cyber security to prevent a cyber-attack and/or a data breach.

Survey Results: The results of the strategic planning surveys suggest this is an important area to focus on in the coming years. Findings included:

1. Judicial officers and employees rated safety/security as a high priority, and external partners rated it as a moderate priority, in the future.
2. External partners, judicial officers, and court employees gave lower ratings on the adequacy of the courts' facilities, which included adequacy of space and whether facilities were modern and clean.
3. Additional suggestions provided to improve facilities included: need better cleaning, buildings need to be modernized, security needs to be enhanced, and courtrooms need to be ADA accessible.
4. Additional suggestions provided to improve technology included: go paperless, all courts should use the same e-filing system, all courts need updated equipment/technology in the courtrooms, and free and dependable wi-fi is needed in all buildings.

Long Range Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: All court facilities will meet the current and future needs of the public, judicial officers, and employees.

Strategies:

- a. Improve physical access to facilities (e.g., elevators, access for people who are disabled, parking, restrooms, locations in communities).
- b. Ensure space is adequate, modern, clean, and suitable for court users, judicial officers, and employees.
- c. Assess, identify, and communicate short and long-term facility needs to funding authorities.
- d. Evaluate and repurpose space to meet current and future needs.
- e. Advocate and build support for funding needed to improve the courts' facilities (e.g., new and/or remodeled court facilities, etc.).

Goal 2: The courts' technology and equipment will be uniform, integrated, and up to date.

Strategies:

- a. Assess, identify, and communicate short and long-term technology needs.
- b. Regularly refresh/update existing technology and equipment.
- c. Evaluate and invest in new and emerging technologies to improve access, services, and court operations.
- d. Work with state partners to improve bandwidth/wi-fi capacity in the courts' facilities.
- e. Provide training and support for all technology (hardware and software) used by the courts.
- f. Implement and expand new and emerging technologies to the rural courts.
- g. Educate about, and secure support for, funding to meet the courts' short and long-term technology needs.
- h. Integrate systems, or improve data sharing and communication, among courts.
- i. Maintain the highest standards of cyber security ensuring the courts' systems are secure and protected.

Goal 3: The public, judges, and employees will be/feel safe and secure at all court locations.

Strategies:

- a. Provide and strengthen courthouse security in accordance with court security standards and best practices (including perimeter security such as parking lots).
- b. Enhance safety protocols and emergency preparedness in all court locations.
- c. Attract, hire, and train security personnel.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Trends Analysis: Implications and Future Scenarios

Long term implications of external and internal trends:

1. Cost of living including housing is increasing. Housing in Yavapai County is becoming unaffordable, especially for young people and families (including staff). The high cost of living, lack of affordable housing, and low wages are making it difficult to attract, recruit, and retain court employees.
2. The reduction in benefits and retirement opportunities are also making employment at the courts less desirable. They make it difficult to attract, recruit, and retain court employees.
3. Yavapai County's population is older overall than Arizona and the US. However, some parts of Yavapai County have an older population (e.g., Prescott) and other parts have a younger population (e.g., Prescott Valley, Camp Verde). The courts will need to be responsive to the needs of, and adapt how services are provided to, a diverse community (e.g., increase access for elderly and disabled, e-filing may be a barrier for an aging community, etc.).
4. Population is increasing; populated areas in Yavapai County are becoming more urban-like. Demand/need for services is increasing. Also, there is a growing expectation to provide a wide range of services to all areas of the county and state.
5. The growing service demands on the courts lend to added workloads and pressures on employees. Many employees have a multitude of responsibilities; they cover many areas. High turnover and staffing shortages exacerbate the overload and overwhelm that staff are feeling. The courts are struggling to fill position. Staff are becoming burned out. Staff are leaving for less stressful work and increased pay.
6. There is an increasing need for services including behavioral health (mental health and substance use disorders) services within the courts and from service and community providers. Expanded services are needed in the courts and with community partners.
7. The trends in the community may yield an increase (or decrease) in the types of cases filed in the courts. The courts must continue to monitor caseloads and workloads, so they are able to respond to changing flows and re-allocate resources to meet changing demands.
8. New methods / approaches for educating the public about the courts are needed. The public needs to better understand the purposes of courts and what they can and cannot do. The courts must be proactive in telling their respective stories and rely less on the media. Innovative methods and messaging are needed to build and maintain trust and confidence in the judicial branch of government.
9. Educating the public about court processes and services is also necessary. Microlearning – or short snippets of content such as short YouTube videos – is an effective way to educate the public about court processes. It also is an effective way to train/educate judicial officers and employees.
10. There is a growing need for accurate and reliable data. This includes making data more accessible, data integration, and data sharing.

-
11. The courts must continue to embrace innovation (e.g., new, evidence-based services, resources, technology, ways of working, etc.).
 12. Public transportation in Yavapai County is inadequate. The lack of public transportation makes getting to the courts for hearings and appointments difficult. It is also difficult for litigants and families to attend programs and access other resources.

Scenario #1: Challenging/Undesirable Future – The courts struggle to adapt, respond, and perform in an ever-changing and challenging environment.

- a. Access barriers persist – language, cost, distance/transportation, understandability/complexity of the court system and court processes, digital divide, etc.
- b. Court users no longer receive the excellent customer service they once did, due to staffing shortages, staff burnout, fatigue, and the like.
- c. Filings increase and the backlogs worsen. Clearance rates in all courts decline. It takes longer to resolve legal matters/disputes. Justice is no longer provided in a timely manner.
- d. Many individuals and families are struggling with unmet mental health and substance use issues. Homelessness is also on the rise.
- e. Crime in the community is increasing; some communities are not safe. There is a lack of staffing in the jails and/or probation. There are fewer court and community services available to assist individuals and families involved in the justice system. Recidivism is on the rise.
- f. The courts are underfunded and understaffed.
- g. The courts' technology becomes antiquated because they are unable to invest in and replace outdated systems, equipment, software, etc.
- h. The public is losing trust and confidence in the courts.

Scenario #2: Positive, hopeful, optimistic future – The courts respond and adapt; they thrive in the ever-changing yet challenging environment.

- i. The economy in Yavapai County remains vibrant. The County Board of Supervisors sees the need for, and wisdom of, investing in the courts and justice system. This includes competitive pay and benefits for staff, adequate staffing levels, infrastructure improvements (e.g., facilities, cyber and physical security, technology), services and programs, and other resources.
- j. Crime is declining. Programs and services are in place (within the courts and community partners) that meet the needs of individuals and families involved in the justice system. All are collaborating effectively to expand programs and services and improve outcomes. Recidivism rates are declining.

-
- k. The courts are more accessible to the public overall and especially people of color and marginalized groups, low income, self-represented, non-English speaking, technologically challenged, disabled, etc.
 - l. The courts are effectively using technology to increase access and improve operations. Data is integrated and reliable. All have been trained. Proficiency in the use of the courts' technology is high.
 - m. Filings continue to be on the rise due to population growth. However, the Courts are responding effectively to the rising caseload. Cases are being resolved swiftly and fairly. Backlogs are declining across all courts/divisions.
 - n. The courts are modernizing human resource practices. Employee wellbeing is a priority. Staff are feeling valued and appreciated. Workload stress, burnout, and fatigue are on the decline. Staff are motivated and engaged.
 - o. The courts and system partners are collaborating effectively to improve the justice system. Stakeholders are publicly supporting the courts and partners as they make improvements.
 - p. The courts have earned the trust of the public. Trust and confidence in the system are increasing.

APPENDIX B

Organizational Assessment

External partners including private and public attorneys, law enforcement (i.e., sheriff's department, jail, police), treatment providers, community agencies, county leadership, clerk's office, etc. along with judicial officers and staff were surveyed in April 2022. The purpose of the surveys was to gather feedback and suggestions from frequent users of the courts and all judges and employees to help inform the future strategic direction and improvement priorities of the courts in Yavapai County.

The courts received an excellent response to the surveys as shown in the table below. Two-hundred and forty-eight (248) external partners and one-hundred and ninety-nine (199) judges and employees responded.

Surveys	Total Surveyed (N=)	Number Responded (n=)	Response Rate
Judges/ Employees	276	199	72%
External Partners	494	248	50%

A summary of the survey findings is provided below. The complete Survey Report is available upon request.

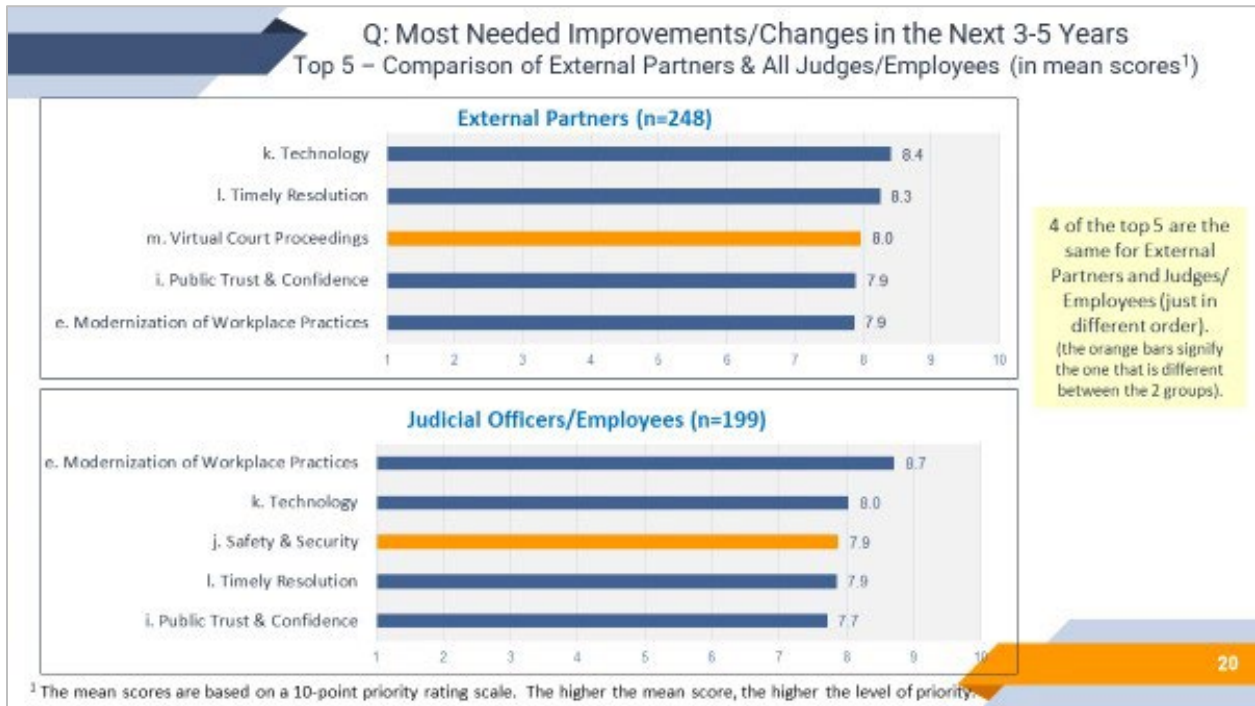
Survey Results – Summary

Most Needed Improvements/Changes

1. External partners rated the following as the most needed areas for improvement in the next 3-5 years:
 - a. *Technology* – invest in/use existing and future technologies that will enhance access, services, and court operations.
 - b. *Timely Resolution* – ensure the timely resolution of all legal matters; reduce backlog; reduce unnecessary delay.
 - c. *Virtual Court Proceedings* – develop best and consistent procedures/practices for conducting virtual court proceedings (where appropriate) and providing virtual court services.
 - d. *Public Trust and Confidence* – build the public's trust/confidence in the court/judicial system.
 - e. *Modernization of Workplace Practices* – improve recruiting/hiring practices; prioritize employee wellbeing; implement hybrid/flexible work arrangements; provide professional development opportunities; provide competitive pay/benefits; etc.

In addition to the above, judicial officers and employees identified *Safety/Security* as an area for improvement in the next 3 – 5 years. *Safety/Security* was defined as: ensure the personal safety (health and physical) of all who work in/use the courthouses; improve buildings and technology/data security.

The chart below provides a graphic display of these results.



External partners provided additional suggestions for improvement in their narrative comments. A summary follows.

- a. Scheduling – too many cases are scheduled at the same time – people have to wait a long time for their case to be called; need better scheduling of trials; need better communication from JAs when scheduling mandatory hearings; need advance notice – short sets are problematic; there are too many changes (e.g., divisions) – problematic for all including witnesses and victims; it takes too long to docket cases.
- b. Timeliness/Backlog of Cases – the backlog continues to be a problem; need to complete trials in a timely manner; there are too many continuances especially in Superior Court; judges do not hold attorneys accountable for being ready for trial when cases are scheduled; judges should also set an example for being on time.
- c. Technology – use the AOC’s system and go paperless; need to all use the same e-filing system; all courts need updated equipment/technology in the courtrooms; Justice Court lacks video technology; need free wi-fi in all buildings.

-
- d. Consistency – consistency is needed; stop using your own forms; use the same paperwork for all courts.
 - e. Obtaining information – it is difficult to access/find information about hearings (OnBase); helpful resources/videos should be available and accessible (e.g., on the website).
 - f. Increase access & services – extend hours; expand services for self-represented and non-English speaking litigants; improve customer service at counters; treat everyone respectfully; be more empathetic/patient; help people understand what they need to do.

Judicial officers and employees provided the following suggestions/areas for improvement in their narrative comments:

- g. Facilities – e.g., need better cleaning; buildings need to be modernized; enhance security; courtrooms need to be ADA accessible; temperature in the lobby of Juvenile Justice Center is unacceptable – AC is controlled by another building, and they refuse to turn on AC.
- h. Technology – problems with video/telephonic equipment cause delays in hearings and continuances; SC technology/Teams does not always work well; computers freeze; technology is antiquated/needs updated.
- i. Staffing levels and turnover – turnover is high in some areas; lack staff to support hearings and provide services in some areas; increase pay/wages.
- j. Access – need easier access to all courts' proceedings; need consistent COVID rules; all courts should now be open and providing access to justice.

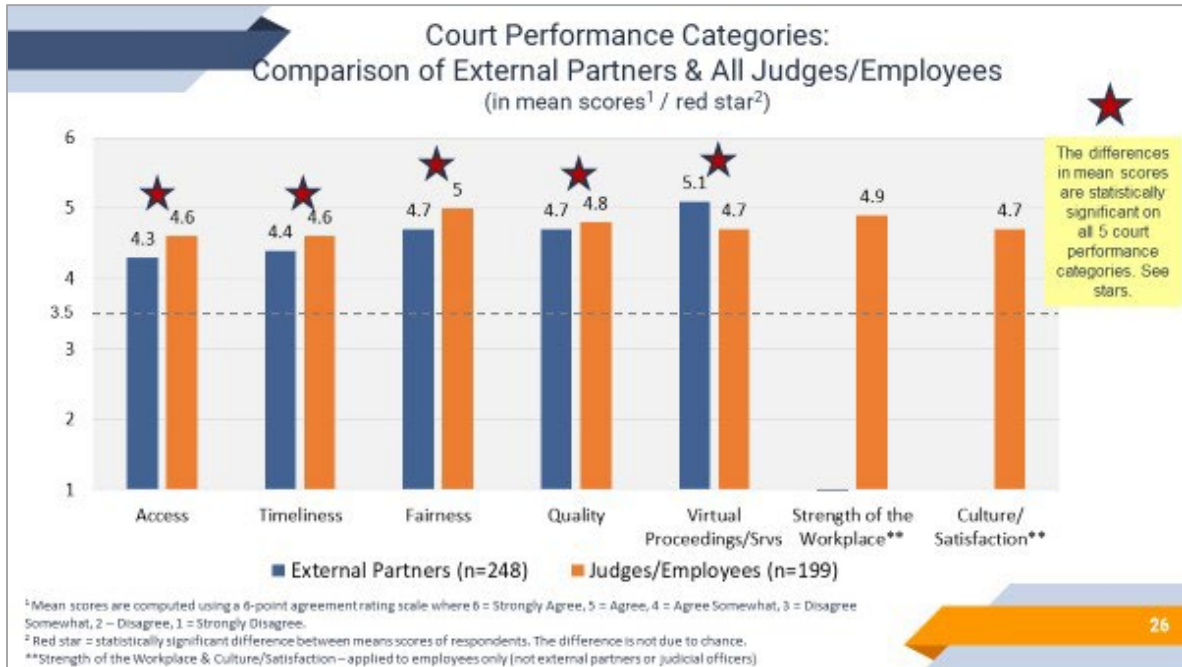
Court Performance – 5 Key Categories

- 2. External partners rated the courts favorably on all court performance categories; all average ratings were above 3.5, the midpoint of the rating scale. (see chart below)

The 5 court performance categories were:

- (1) Access,
- (2) Timeliness,
- (3) Fairness,
- (4) Quality/Effectiveness, and
- (5) Virtual Proceedings/Services.

The chart below shows the comparison ratings of external partners and judges/employees on the court performance categories.



Highest rated court performance category: External partners gave the highest rating to the courts' handling of Virtual Court Proceedings and Services.

Virtual Court Proceedings/Services

Questions in this category included:

- Virtual/video court proceedings used during the pandemic were an effective way to move cases/legal matters toward resolution.
- In my opinion, virtual court proceedings are an acceptable method for conducting routine legal matters (e.g., motions, status conferences, brief hearings).
- I feel competent to participate in video court proceedings.

Lowest rated court performance categories: External partners (and judicial officers and employees) gave the lowest ratings to *Access* and *Timeliness*.

Access questions included:

- It is easy for court users (litigants and justice system partners) to get information from the Court about cases/matters in which they are involved.
- The Court does a good job of providing assistance to people who are self-represented.
- The Court does a good job of providing language assistance to people who are not fluent in English.
- It is easy to determine/find the correct courthouse location when doing court business or attending a court hearing.
- The distance court users/partners have to travel to get to court locations is reasonable.

Timeliness questions included:

- Court employees provide information/services in a timely manner.
- In-person court hearings usually start at the time they are scheduled to begin.
- Virtual/remote court hearings usually start at the time they are scheduled to begin.
- In general, I believe court cases are resolved in a reasonable amount of time.

Overall Court Performance in the Last 1-2 Years

3. The overall court performance ratings for the courts were as follows:
 - a. 90 percent of external partners gave the Superior Court an excellent or good rating for overall performance over the past 1 – 2 years and 73 and 68 percent gave excellent or good ratings for the overall performance of Justice Courts and Municipal Courts respectively.

Strength of the Workplace and Court Culture/Job Satisfaction – Employees Only

4. Strength of the Workplace: Court employees were asked a series of questions that measure the strength of the workplace and levels of engagement and satisfaction: what is needed to attract, focus, and retain the most talented employees.



Highest rated areas. Employees rated the following questions the highest:

- a. I know what is expected of me at work.
- b. I have what I need to do my work right or well.
- c. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
- d. The mission/purpose of the Court makes me feel my work is important.
- e. My coworkers are committed to doing quality work.

Lowest rated areas. Employees rated the following questions the lowest, signifying areas for improvement:

- f. In the last month, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
- g. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.

5. Court Culture/Satisfaction

Court culture and job satisfaction also were rated highly by employees. Overall job satisfaction, valuing diversity, and a welcoming court culture were rated the highest. The lowest rated areas were feeling informed about what is going on in the Court and employee wellbeing is a priority.



Finally, employees provided the following suggestions for making the courts a more diverse, inclusive, satisfying, and engaging place to work:

- a. Provide higher, competitive pay
- b. Provide more training and development opportunities
- c. Improve wellbeing and flexible work arrangements
- d. Balance workloads
- e. Continue to increase diversity and welcome/include all
- f. Improve communication
- g. Recognize employees and provide feedback
- h. Improve – clean and modernize – facilities and update technology/equipment

Strengths	Areas for Improvement/Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Virtual proceedings – they increase access, flexibility, efficiency; partners feel competent participating in virtual proceedings 2. Safety/security - partners feel safe/secure 3. Positive relations between external partners & the courts 4. Provide quality justice – uphold the rule of law; Courts are respected; Yavapai Courts are more nimble than larger courts. 5. Customer service – helpful, personalized service. 6. Staff - well trained; dedicated; longevity of some staff. 7. Provide access/services to those with limited means. 8. Innovative/creative/open to new/different ideas – willing to try to methods for carrying out court responsibilities. 9. Courts use best/evidence-based practices. 10. Employee satisfaction is high. 11. Diversity is valued at the court. 12. The court culture is welcoming. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access – improve physical and virtual access; make information more accessible and understandable; lack of transportation - is a barrier to access; information needs to be more accessible; allow check-ins through kiosks. 2. Assistance - enhance personal & virtual assistance to self-represented litigants & other court users; improve language assistance; help court consumers navigate the courts; simplify forms/procedures. 3. Timeliness – start hearings on time and improve timely resolution; improve calendaring/scheduling & case management practices (stop cattle call scheduling); need to expedite case processing/ case resolution. 4. Virtual proceedings - resolve technology issues – connection, video equipment, bandwidth; implement consistent procedures/ standards. 5. Need to improve consistency across Superior Court divisions – forms, procedures, practices. 6. Public Education - expand public education; improve resources available to court users. 7. Facilities/Infrastructure– clean, improve space, modernize; infrastructures need improvement 8. Technology – improvements and upgrades are needed: provide free access to wifi at the court; need to expand bandwidth in rural courts; need a better CMS; need to invest in future technologies to enhance services and operations; need more IT support/staff to

Strengths	Areas for Improvement/Weaknesses
	<p>assist with virtual proceedings; eliminate tech/system barriers.</p> <p>9. Staffing levels – inadequate for demand; difficult to recruit/retain.</p> <p>10. Competitive Pay/Benefits – cost of living is high/ pay is too low.</p> <p>11. Communication – improve internal communication.</p> <p>12. Training – enhance training for judges/staff; need more cross-training so staff have back-ups/are interchangeable.</p> <p>13. Employee Recognition – show employees are valued/appreciated</p> <p>14. Wellbeing – enhance/prioritize employee wellbeing.</p>

Threats/Challenges: Below are potential threats and/or possible challenges facing the courts in the future.

1. Lack of funding/budget concerns – lack of resources; lack of support from funding unit.
2. Technology – not using or investing in current and emerging technologies; lacking the skills to use new technologies.
3. Attracting and Retaining Staff – inability to attract/recruit new employees, high turnover.
4. Resistance to change – want to return to old ways; unwillingness to change/modernize with the times; lack of buy in for changes
5. New Mandates – new rules, laws, mandates imposed by the state
6. Population growth
7. Behavioral Health – ineffective responses to and/or lack of treatment services/options for those youth and adults with mental health and substance use disorders
8. Politization of the Judiciary – if this occurs, it will further erode trust and confidence in the judicial branch/courts; politics must not influence the judiciary