

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Strategic Plan

2023-2026



Executive Summary

Over the past 86 years, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) has been successful in enhancing the effectiveness of the nation's juvenile courts. Throughout its history, the NCJFCJ has created a legacy of fulfilling its mission to provide all judges, courts, and related agencies involved with juvenile, family, and domestic and family violence cases with the knowledge and skills to improve the lives of the families and children who seek justice.

As we look to the future, the NCJFCJ board and team members have been challenged to think about where the organization will be when it turns 100 years old. Everyone agreed that the mission, vision and values should remain the same as they serve as the north star of the organization. The strategic plan provides the roadmap to reach new heights. In the past, the strategic plan spanned a five-year period. However, with the rapidly changing world, the board of directors agreed a three-year plan was more fitting as it would allow for the organization to adapt quickly if needed. This adaptability was demonstrated during the pandemic as the NCJFCJ thrived and modernized to meet the needs of the court professionals it serves.

At the strategic planning board retreat, the members came together to start the planning process. It was determined that this plan would be a continuum of all six strategic initiatives. Much progress had been made, but the board felt strongly that there was still work to be done on each of the initiatives. In the previous plan, the six strategic initiatives were ranked by priority. This year, however, the board determined that each initiative held equal weight and that rankings would not be assigned.

In addition to these initiatives, one emerging topic continued to come to the forefront during the strategic planning session—technology. The board felt passionate about making sure the NCJFCJ was focused on incorporating technology into the strategic plan as it impacts the organization's and the court system's ability to assist members and those the system serves. Since the current court system often relies on dated technologies and procedures, the NCJFCJ recognizes the opportunity to drive value by presenting ways to use technology for the good of the court system and to develop programming to better understand the ever-changing technology and smart devices used by children and families.

The six strategic initiatives continue to intertwine as each one supports the overall plan, and some initiatives depend on others to achieve success. It is important for the board to continue determining and communicating with team members about what success means for each initiative. Come 2026, the board and team members should be able to identify which initiatives have been accomplished and which ones may need additional work.

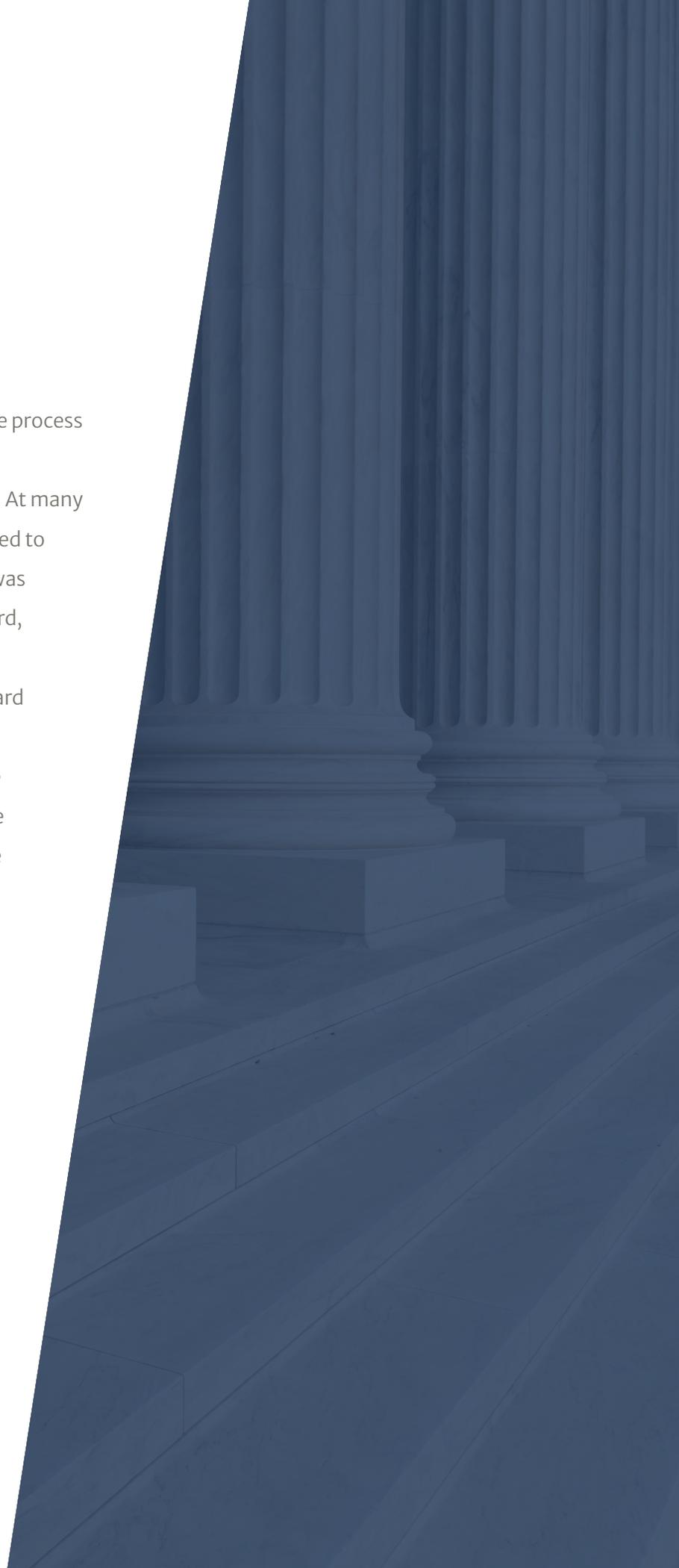
It is clear that as one of the largest and oldest judicial membership organizations in the nation, the NCJFCJ continues to provide value for its members and professionals in juvenile and family courts. The strategic plan ensures the NCJFCJ remains a key stakeholder and trusted resource for members and the courts. There is a significant amount of momentum, and the NCJFCJ is poised to strengthen its position and reach its ambitious goals with this strategic plan.



▶ Prior to the board retreat, board members and team members were asked to select three words they felt represented the NCJFCJ. The word cloud above is a compilation of the words the group selected.

The Process

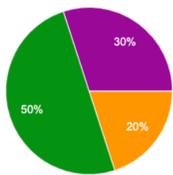
Developing the strategic plan was a collaborative process between the NCJFCJ team members, committee members, past presidents, and board members. At many points in the process, key stakeholders were asked to share their feedback and insights. Information was collected in three ways: surveys (sent to the board, team members, committee members and past presidents), discovery calls with the CEO and board chair and a full board retreat. The findings from the survey and discovery call revealed that there was a need to connect with each other, celebrate the accomplishments of the NCJFCJ, educate the board about the progress and areas of challenge for the past strategic initiatives, and deliberate about where to go from here.



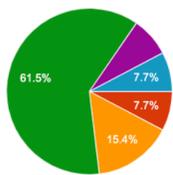
Survey Results

Looking at the survey results, the committees' responses indicated relatively higher ratings for progress made by their own committees when compared to the board members' responses. However, three of the four committees surveyed did not rate their committee's progress on their strategy as highly as the other strategies—they landed more in the middle in terms of progress rating. Below are key highlights from the survey displaying the sentiment of how much progress was made within each initiative in the past five years.

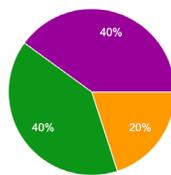
Strategy #1 – Increase Diversity



Leadership



Board



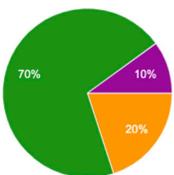
Committees Members

Legend

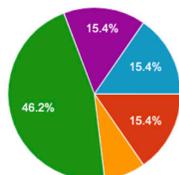
- Poor
- Fair
- Okay
- Good
- Outstanding
- Do Not Know

69% answered good or outstanding

Strategy #2 – Amplify Messaging and Marketing



Leadership



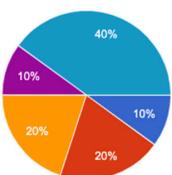
Board

Legend

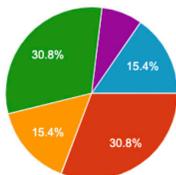
- Poor
- Fair
- Okay
- Good
- Outstanding
- Do Not Know

62% answered good or outstanding

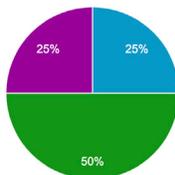
Strategy #3 – Increase Membership



Leadership



Board



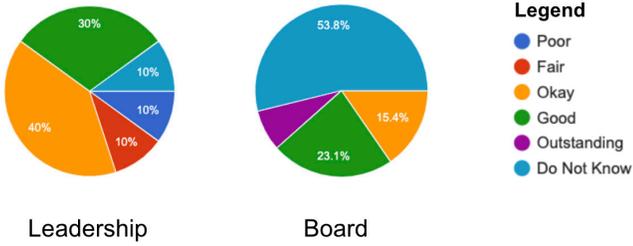
Committees Members

Legend

- Poor
- Fair
- Okay
- Good
- Outstanding
- Do Not Know

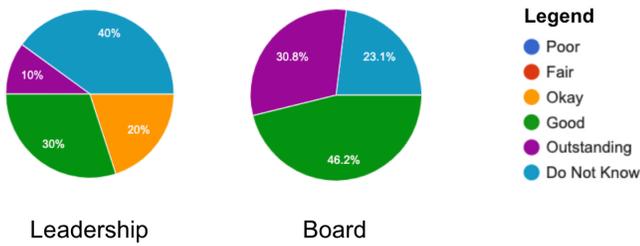
38.5% answered good or outstanding

Strategy #4 – Pursue Fee-For-Service Opportunities



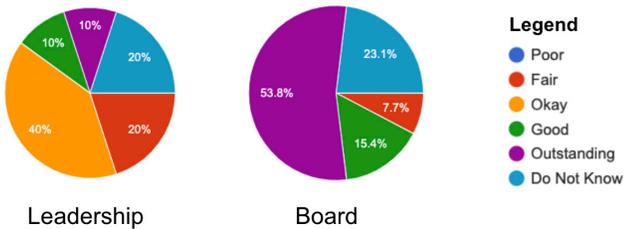
53.5% did not know

Strategy #5 – Engage Decision Makers



77% answered good or outstanding

Strategy #6 – Align Internal Structure and Processes



69% answered good or outstanding

SUMMARY

Overall, throughout the strategic planning discovery sessions, it was clear that the key stakeholders felt none of the previous strategic priorities were finished and that more work on them needed to be done. The board and team members are excited and energized to continue working the plan and taking the NCJFCJ to new heights in the coming years.



We actually completed a lot of work. Normally, strategic plans don't make any progress. It took a lot of effort and a lot of hard decisions that were made.

- Judge Aurora Martinez Jones, Texas



The board and team members can dream a little bit now since the NCJFCJ is so well set up. We can use this progress as a springboard as we have opportunities to go places now.

- Judge David B. Katz, New Jersey



I'm blown away by the stellar quality of the team members and impressed by the intellectual content that the NCJFCJ delivers through its educational offerings.

- Judge John W. Parker, Montana



Working with children and families is the most important thing we can do. The NCJFCJ can work to heal the present and build into the future.

- Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo, District of Columbia



Strategic Plan Foundation

Our Mission

To provide all judges, courts and related agencies involved with juvenile, family, and domestic violence cases with the knowledge and skills to improve the lives of the families and children who seek justice.

Our Vision

For a society in which every family and child has access to fair, equal, effective, and timely justice.

Our Values

Compassion

Leadership

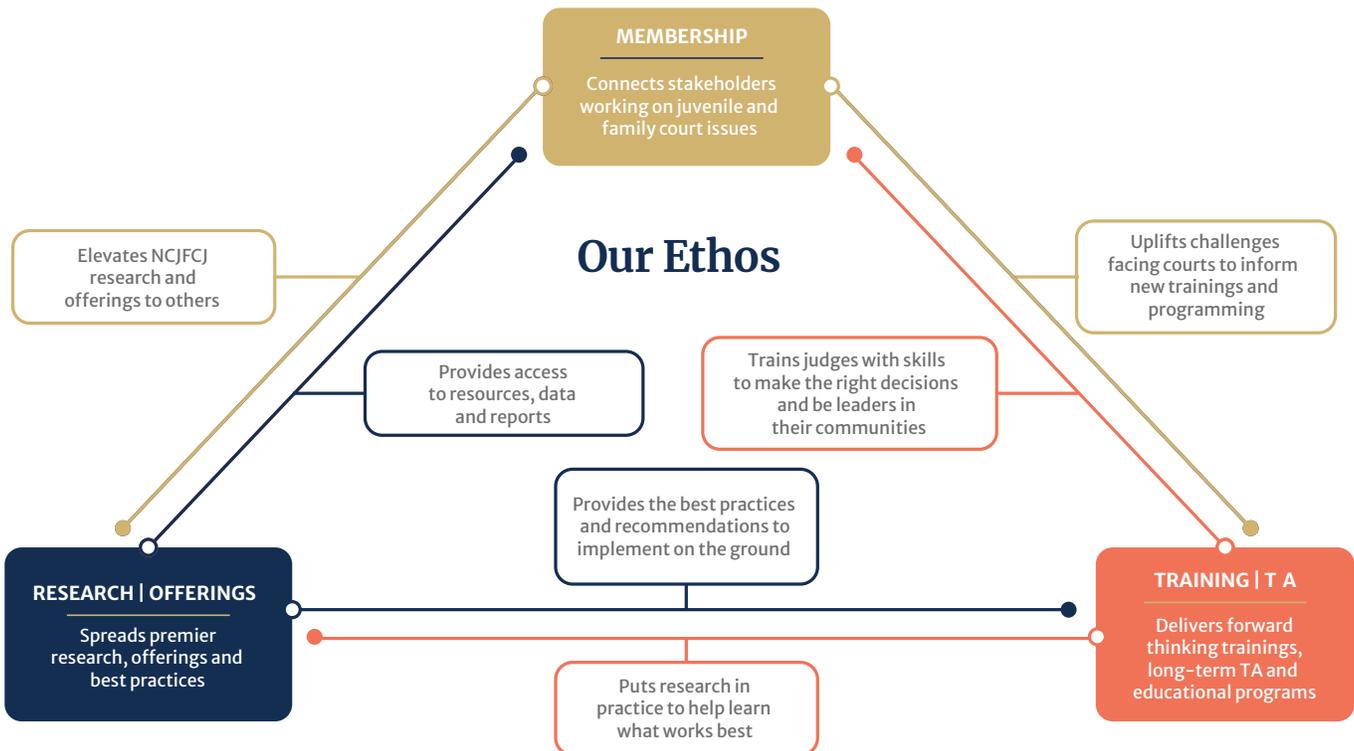
Education

Community

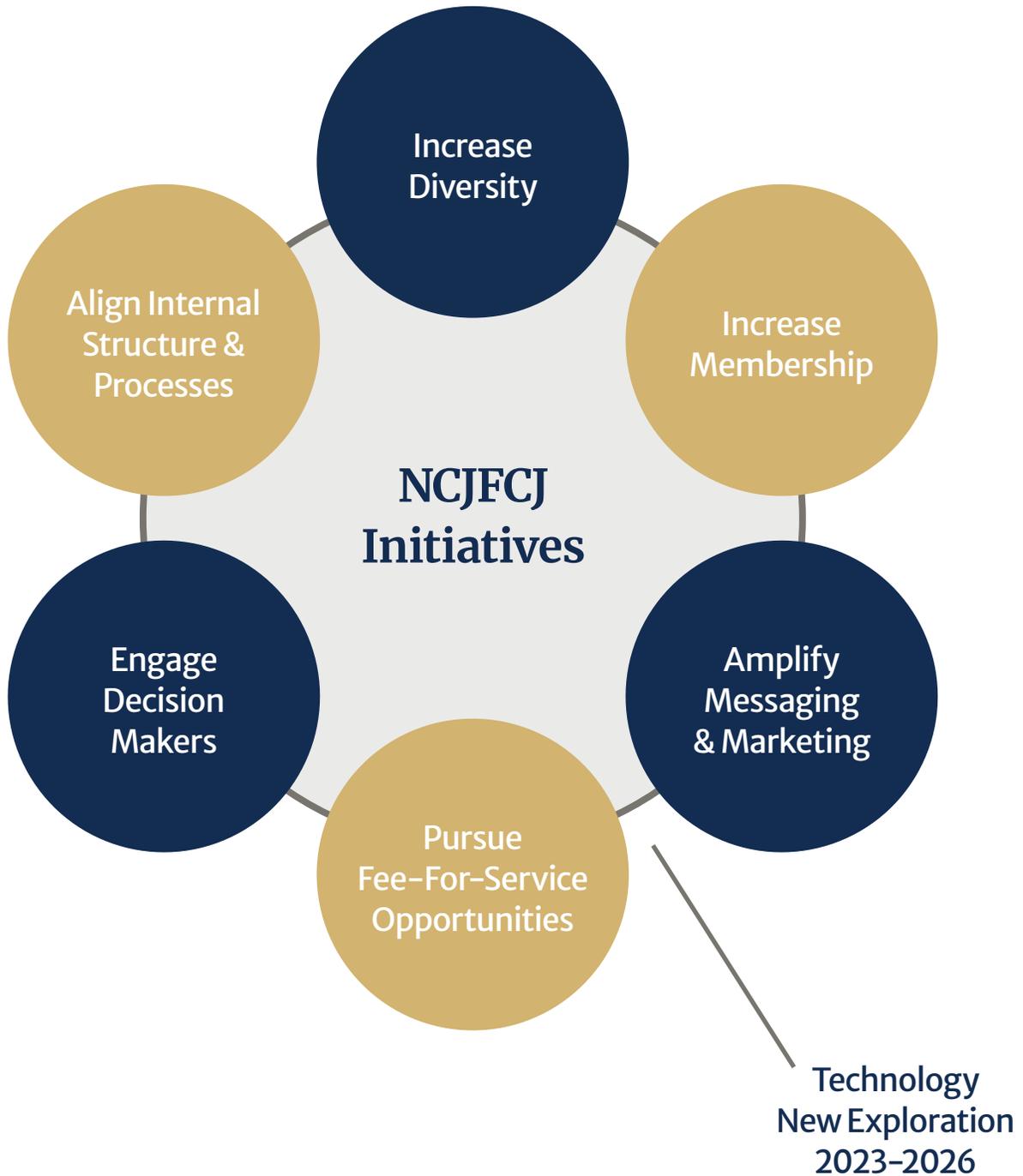
Pathways to Success

In the 2016 strategic plan, there were three elements of the NCJFCJ that came to the forefront: (1) research/offerings, (2) training/technical assistance and (3) membership. Those elements of the NCJFCJ remain true today as well. However, for the 2023–2026 plan, it is important to reorganize the approach to the organization’s ethos. As outlined below, membership is critical to the organization’s continued success. It is NCJFCJ members and court professionals who use the research and trainings created by the organization.

Additionally, NCJFCJ offerings, research, education, and trainings are the foundation of the work the NCJFCJ carries out for its members and court professionals. The work must be member–centric as that will help the NCJFCJ grow in the coming years and remain on the cutting edge of changing court and community needs.



Strategic Initiatives





Initiative Details

Align Internal Structure and Processes

A strong internal structure is the engine that drives programmatic success. To enable successful program delivery, the NCJFCJ will prioritize aligning structure and processes to create a more cohesive and robust internal organization. Yet, work takes time. To empower all team members to shape the organization they seek to live in, the NCJFCJ will ensure that the team takes the time needed to make the right decisions that set the NCJFCJ up to be a strong, unified “Council First” organization in the years to come.

- **Priority Activities:**

- » The CEO will continue to work with the team to determine how they can improve the structure and process. Progress will be reported back to the board.
- » Over the past several years, the NCJFCJ has restructured and added new positions to respond to growth and future needs. This growth continues and has resulted in new divisions and strategies.
- » Engage the NCJFCJ’s internal and external diversity committees in review of internal policies and procedures.

- **We will know we are finished when:**

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Amplify Messaging and Marketing

The NCJFCJ is doing incredible work to provide knowledge and skills to improve the lives of the families and children who seek justice. This work is important and should be shared with its members, state decision-makers, key stakeholders and the public. By increasing awareness about the organization, the NCJFCJ will further its mission and provide support to retain and recruit both members and team members. This initiative also has the ability to support all other initiatives, most notably increasing membership and fee-for-service opportunities.

- **Priority Activities:**

- » Determine if there is a desire to expand the target audience to the at-large juvenile and family court system.
- » Create a marketing plan rooted in strategy and focus on efforts to recruit members, raise awareness, share information about the NCJFCJ and market the fee-for-service offerings.
- » Determine the NCJFCJ’s value proposition and develop an elevator pitch to help board members, team members and members explain the value of the NCJFCJ.
- » Whether the NCJFCJ would like to leverage strategic marketing partners to further support this initiative.

- **We will know we are finished when:**

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Engage Decision-Makers

The NCJFCJ will seek to engage with more state and local decision-makers and partners so that (1) policies the NCJFCJ supports in resolutions move forward in certain states and (2) more state-based leaders value the NCJFCJ and open funds for more judges to receive its trainings and membership. While pursuing more state-level work, the organization will continue its well-supported and high-impact work at the federal level.

- **Priority Activities:**

- » Define who the decision-makers are, so the board and team members have the clarity needed to move forward.
- » Continue to nurture and develop relationships with key decision-makers and partners, as well as forge new collaborative opportunities.

- **We will know we are finished when:**

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Pursue Fee-For-Service Opportunities

Over the past few years, the NCJFCJ has realized new revenue because of its fee-for-service offering. As a continuation of the previous strategic plan, the NCJFCJ will pursue additional fee-for-service contracts, including providing trainings and services to existing partners and/or in markets where it already has a presence. Further, the NCJFCJ will continue to prepare and add team members with the skills needed to support these opportunities.

- **Priority Activities:**

- » Determine the growth path/investment needed to expand the NCJFCJ fee-for-service.
- » Develop a business funnel for the fee-for-service offering, consulting, conferences, and non-grant initiatives.
- » Provide information to team members about the fee-for-service offering to ensure they channel potential leads to better support those opportunities.

- **We will know we are finished when:**

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Increase Diversity

To better represent the populations the NCJFCJ serves and ensure its programs and services are more inclusive, it will focus on increasing the diversity of its membership, team members, faculty, and partners. It will do so as a standalone effort and through its other strategies—particularly those focused on increasing membership and recruiting and retaining diverse talent. For decades, the NCJFCJ has woven its commitment to DEI through all of its training and education, and remains committed to do more through its programming and internal policies and procedures.

- **Priority Activities:**

- » Refine what diversity means to the NCJFCJ.
- » Add clarity to what success means in “of its membership, team members, faculty, and partners.”
- » Issue a member and team member survey to better assess needs and opportunities to increase DEI and belonging.
- » Continue its leadership role in the national DEI Collaborative initiated by the NCJFCJ in 2019 along with our 12 other national judicial-focused nonprofits.

- **We will know we are finished when:**

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Increase Membership

The NCJFCJ has seen a slight decline in membership since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This decline has impacted the NCJFCJ’s budgets and ability to perform key functions. While the NCJFCJ strives to increase and diversify membership—thus amplifying its value and presence across the country—it is important that we first focus on bringing membership levels back to pre-pandemic numbers. Once this is accomplished, we can aim to open up more state funds for membership through decision-maker engagement, empowering current members to reach out to their peers, pursuing creative membership offerings for individuals and continuing to explore both joint membership and partnership opportunities.

- **Priority Activities:**

- » Each board member actively recruits potential members and invites colleagues and peers alike to join the NCJFCJ as members, faculty, journal authors, and attend the conferences.
- » Explore promotional opportunities to attract new members, law schools, and organizational members.
- » Partner with states to replicate the successful State Council dues payment models and identify alternate funds to cover the NCJFCJ training and membership costs.

- **We will know we are finished when:**

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Technology

Technology has clearly changed the way the world interacts with people, governments and society. The pandemic only further cemented this change and emphasized the huge benefits technology affords when adapted properly. With this, the pandemic also exposed the untapped potential of what the greater use of technology could bring to the court system, most notably to underserved populations. As we move forward, the board recognized the opportunity to become a leader in the use and understanding of technology. They appointed a technology subcommittee to explore the best path forward in how to incorporate technology into this strategic plan.

- **Option 1:** Have technology be its own strategic initiative: *Integrate Technology*.
- **Option 2:** Ensure that each current strategic initiative incorporates technology into its efforts.

The committee is set to meet in 2023 and have a recommendation to the board for how to move forward with the charge for the incorporation of technology in Nov. 2023.





Looking to the Future

The NCJFCJ's board of directors and team members have the passion, tools, knowledge, experience, and dedication to make great strides in the coming years. While it will take focus, dedication, and time to move the needle, the strategic plan outlined within this document will help the NCJFCJ to continue to grow and prosper for the future.



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES