



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

MUNICIPAL COURT

Strategic Technology Plan

2011 – 2015

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OVERVIEW

The Milwaukee Municipal Court (“the Court”) is keenly aware of the close relationship between its mission and information technology. The Court is an information-intensive agency – the accomplishment of almost every strategic objective is dependent to some extent on its computer, voice and other information systems.

Over the years, the Court has quite acutely felt the pressures of the increased demands being placed on all public institutions for more responsiveness, effectiveness and accountability. These demands -- from the public, other City departments and law enforcement agencies -- take many forms, ranging from requests for more direct access to court information, the ability to send or receive data in electronic form or the public’s desire to conduct business with the Court via the internet. In all cases, the technological capabilities of the Court must continually be enhanced in order to meet these legitimate needs.

While it is evident that the Court’s caseload directly affects the level of demand for services and resources, it may not be as evident that various court initiatives designed to more effectively adjudicate cases also affects this demand. For instance, the Court has continued its court outreach sessions for juveniles and homeless defendants and its agreements with various community agencies for out-of-court assistance to defendants in fulfilling their obligations to the court. In addition, the Court has also implemented programs such as the Driver’s License Workforce Redevelopment Program to assist defendants who had lost their driving privileges while simultaneously reaching a final disposition on cases that may otherwise have gone unsatisfied for many years. As can be expected, these innovations require changes in technological resources and support.

The Court continues to make significant achievements towards its strategic objectives. At the same time, the Court achieves these goals with an operating budget that decreases each year. This has been accomplished through strategic investment in technology, innovations in policies and procedures and continual planning for future enhancements that serve to streamline the way the Court conducts business.

In the last five years, the Court has accomplished several major technology initiatives, including:

- the upgrade and enhancement of its Municipal Court Management Information System (MCMIS), now known as the Case Automated Tracking System (CATS) (2006)
- the use of electronic file and funds transfers for the payments received by the Court’s collection agency (2007)
- the establishment of a regularly-scheduled review of the Court’s computer hardware and software to anticipate the need for upgrade / replacement in advance of the Court’s technological needs and manufacturer end-of-support and end-of-life deadlines (2009)
- the installation and configuration of a disaster recovery environment that provides nearly real-time backup to an offsite location of the Court’s servers, application and databases (2009)

- the use of electronic file transfers to submit vehicle registration denials to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (2010)
- the implementation of a document imaging system to replace the use of paper case jackets (2010)
- the addition of workflow processes within the court's case management information system to allow judges, staff and other users to view documents electronically and incorporate them into case processing without the need to handle physical papers or files (2010)
- the transition from outsourced programming services to the use of City staff to provide daily, ongoing support of the system and IT project initiatives (2010)

This document defines the Court's five-year strategic technology plan for 2011 – 2015 and is intended to leverage the use of technology in order to support the Court's strategic objectives even more efficiently and effectively. While large projects have great impact on improved operations, the cumulative impact of several small projects can also be significant. As a result, the plan includes initiatives which involve both major projects that require capital budget improvements as well as enhancements to be achieved using the Court's annual operating budget funds earmarked for information technology support.

TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES

Mission Statement

The mission of the municipal court is to impartially adjudicate ordinance violation cases such that legal rights of individuals are safeguarded and public interest is protected.

The Milwaukee Municipal Court's mission represents several key strategic objectives.

Key Strategic Objectives

*Fair and reliable adjudication of cases
 Court accessibility to the public
 Effective enforcement of court judgments
 Accountability for public resources
 Enhance public safety*

Each of the major technology initiatives of the Court is intended to help achieve multiple strategic objectives; therefore, each technology initiative included in this plan will designate which specific strategic objective it is meant to address.

Initiative 1
Website Improvements
Year(s)
2011
Funding Source
Capital / Operating
Objectives
Court accessibility to the public Effective enforcement of court judgments Accountability for public resources
Details
<p>Before embarking on an initiative to enhance the services available via the internet, the Court will improve its existing website by making it more intuitive and more usable for the public.</p> <p>To do so, the Court will revamp the look and feel of the website, reducing the number of clicks required to obtain information while providing more detailed case information on the screen. Some examples of these improvements will be enhanced search functionality and better integration of the Court's online payment system. Further, the Court intends to employ a web design that can be optimized for use on mobile devices. Then, as part of the implementation process, the Court will focus on increasing the use of both its case information and credit card payment websites by better broadcasting the availability of these online services.</p> <p>Improvements to the Court's website and a more focused effort on directing the public to this resource can result in better response to the Court's judgments and increased collections of outstanding fines and forfeitures. In addition, the improvements will provide better accessibility to Court services without the cost that would be associated with expanding Court hours or hiring additional employees to handle an increase in payment activity.</p>

Initiative 2
Upgrade of Office Application Suite
Year(s)
2011
Funding Source
Special Purpose Account
Objectives
Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
<p>The Court is dedicated to maintaining and upgrading its computer software in order to take advantage of the latest features and technical support. In 2011, the Court will upgrade its office application suite – currently Microsoft Office 2003 – to the most recent version.</p> <p>By upgrading, the Court will ensure file compatibility with other City departments and individuals who send and receive document, spreadsheets and other types of files to and from the Court. In addition, the Court will be assured of technical support, patches and the other benefits of using the current software release, avoiding the need to find other resources or spend funds on conversion tools or other utilities that may be required to compensate for using outdated software.</p>

Initiative 3
Enhanced Web Services and Public Kiosks
Year(s)
2011
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Fair and reliable adjudication of cases Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
<p>With the internet fast becoming one of the most simple and direct ways of conducting business – from email to online shopping to interactive websites – many organizations are looking for ways to provide its services in this fashion.</p> <p>Enhancements to the Court’s website, which currently provides case information as of the previous business day and accepts credit card payments, could significantly improve public access to data while simultaneously reducing the number of people who are coming in person for case-related matters. To accomplish this, the Court would add the following features to its website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-Time Case Status Updates – Access to a case’s current status would reduce the number of individuals contacting the Court in person and by telephone for this information. • Not Guilty Plea Filing – Online not guilty pleas (along with the ability to reschedule various other types of hearings) would allow defendants to immediately receive a new hearing date without the need to come to court or wait for new date by mail. To ensure the Court maintain a manageable and efficient calendar, additional functionality would be built into the website to require that the new court date occur within a certain period of time from the original court date and deny additional online requests if the case had previously been rescheduled. • Request for Extension – Online requests for a first-time extension would allow defendants to receive an additional 30 or 60 days to pay without the need to come to court. Specific functionality would be built into the website to permit just one online extension and only if it was being made before the judgment due date on the case. <p>With these improvements to the website, the Court would then explore the installation of public kiosks – allowing access to its website – in the lobby as well as various other public buildings around the City such as Milwaukee Public Library locations and the City Hall complex. Lobby kiosks, which would also offer self check-in for court, would serve to reduce the number of simple, routine requests being made at the reception window, allowing staff to better and more quickly serve those requiring more in-depth assistance; kiosks in other public buildings would provide access to case information and court services to individuals who are otherwise without their own internet access.</p>

Initiative 4
Remote Court Operations
Year(s)
2011 - 2012
Funding Source
Operating
Objectives
Fair and reliable adjudication of cases Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
<p>As an offshoot of the disaster recovery planning, the Court will focus on establishing the necessary policies and procedures to conduct Court from remote locations. The ability to set up a remote court facility would have obvious benefit in the event of a disaster or other situation during which the Court's main facility was unavailable; however, remote court operations would also provide the opportunity to conduct court sessions from a variety of locations and / or during non-business hours.</p> <p>In order to conduct remote court operations, the Court will work with the Department of Public Works to set up the necessary access to the City's network and test the connectivity from several locations throughout the City, including a predetermined disaster recovery site. In addition, the Court will test and practice its procedures for transitioning from its primary datacenter to the backup environment established by the disaster recovery project in the context of relocation to a remote court facility. Once this has been done, the Court will develop the necessary policies and procedures for conducting remote court sessions and train its staff on their application and use.</p> <p>To complete the project, the Court will schedule a practical test by relocating court operations to a remote facility for a day to confirm that procedures are well-documented and easy to follow and that most – if not all – Court operations can be maintained throughout the event.</p>

Initiative 5
Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System
Year(s)
2013
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
<p>For quite some time, the Court has struggled to find effective solutions to the imbalance between the number of calls being received by the Court and the number of staff available to answer those calls. As part of this effort, the Court has conducted internal studies that have shown that the majority of calls are requests for information that is available in CATS. In order to provide faster response to these callers and to improve support to those callers whose questions can not easily be answered without research, the Court plans to install an automated system to provide general case information.</p> <p>The Court has been interested in implementing a fully-integrated IVR system for many years. With the advent of smartphones and other mobile handheld devices, the development of a web application or mobile web access may prove to be more useful. In fact, a recent, informal survey of individuals coming to court indicate that up to 23% of those who frequently access the internet do so with a mobile device. As the Court begins project planning, both IVR and mobile access systems will be considered.</p> <p>With the installation of such a system, defendants or attorney could call a Court telephone number or visit a website or web application and, through a series of menu selections for specific case details, enter (or speak) the case number to receive current information. Information may include such items as the amount owed, the last payment date and amount, the next scheduled court date and the current finding on the case. Obviously, with the IVR or mobile web application able to respond to a certain portion of requests for information, the Court would be able to handle a larger number of calls and more personalized service to those who require it.</p> <p>As part of the IVR and / or mobile web application, functionality would also be included to provide better monitoring and management of the telephone system to track such information as the number of calls received, the number of available telephone operators, the average duration of calls, etc. At a glance, a manager or other supervisory staff could view telephone system information on a monitor or LCD screen and make decisions as to the number of staff who are currently answering incoming calls and whether additional staff should be assigned to the telephones due to the current call volume. With this kind of information available, the Court would be in a better position to allocate its resources based on where service is needed.</p>

Initiative 6
Upgrade CATS
Year(s)
2014 - 2015
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
<p>In 2013, the Court will begin a comprehensive review and analysis of the CATS application to identify its upgrade needs. At that time, the current application will be approximately 7 years old and this will be the optimal time to begin the upgrade process before its 10-year useful lifespan is reached in 2015.</p> <p>Since its inception, the Court's case management information system has existed as a client-based application, running on workstations belonging to its network with the appropriate client software installed. With the common use of web browsers, an increasing number of proprietary systems are migrating to web-based functionality – in essence, freeing the application from the confines of its own network and the need for specific software installation.</p> <p>As part of a major upgrade, the migration of CATS to a web-based application would provide multiple benefits. First, as indicated, workstations with current access to CATS would no longer require the installation of the software that is required to run the application, reducing the costs associated with purchasing, maintaining and supporting such software. Second, web-based functionality would expand accessibility to CATS to other City departments and vendors who can not currently meet the system or network requirements of accessing CATS in its current client-based form. In addition to this, a web-based version of CATS could expand its accessibility outside of the City's network and allow its use – with the appropriate security credentials – via the internet, thereby allowing the Court to conduct more effective community court sessions.</p> <p>Along with this functionality, the Court will consider migration to other database and application development platforms in order to stay current with the latest technologies and tools.</p>

Initiative 7
Upgrade Court Website
Year(s)
2015
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
<p>By 2015, the Court's website will require a comprehensive review and update to employ the latest technology and platforms. At that time, the Court will assess the types of devices being used to access the internet and explore additional enhancements that can be made in light of both the technologies that have become available and also what the public has come to expect in terms of online court services.</p> <p>As in the case of the 2011 website upgrade, the Court will take style and format cues from the City's main website to maintain a consistent look and feel between those pages and the case information query system. While database-related programming will take place as an ongoing system maintenance project, the Court will contract with a vendor to develop the necessary graphics and other visual elements in order to provide the most seamless integration possible with the City's main website. As part of this process, the Court may need to invest in additional software programs that will facilitate that development.</p>