CITY OF MILWAUKEE

MUNICIPAL COURT

Strategic Technology Plan

2008 – 2012

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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 Development 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 while increasing revenues that benefit the City, County and State of Wisconsin. 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:

- Installation of a digital audio recording system in each courtroom to replace the use of magnetic tapes in recording trials and other sworn testimony in 2002
- Implementation of an online payment website to accept credit card payments on cases with a balance due in 2005
- Establishment of a general email address to accept correspondence from the public in 2005
- Upgrade and enhancement of its Municipal Court Management Information System (MCMIS), now known as the Case Automated Tracking System (CATS), in 2006
- Use of electronic file and funds transfers for the payments received by the Court's collection agency in 2007

This document defines the Court's five-year strategic technology plan for 2008 – 2012 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	Year
1	Electronic Case Jackets / Document Imaging	2008 – 2010
2	Review and Update Hardware and Software Replacement Schedule	2008
3	Enhancement of Information Technology Staff Skills	2008 – 2010
4	Additional Electronic Interfaces with State of Wisconsin Agencies	2008
5	Disaster Recovery Planning	2008 – 2009
6	Website Improvements	2008 – 2009
7	Enhanced Web Services and Public Kiosks	2010
8	Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System	2011
9	Upgrade CATS to a Web-Based Application	2012

Details regarding each of these initiatives can be found on the following pages.

Initiative 1
Electronic Case Jackets / Document Imaging
Year(s)
2008 - 2010
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Fair and reliable adjudication of cases Accountability for public resources
Details
The Court's interest in a full document imaging system, integrated with its case management application, dates back several years. A preliminary review in 1992 and a full workflow study in 1995 showed that implementation of such a system would provide immediate and long-term benefits to the court and its customers. While funding constraints prevented the Court from implementing a document imaging system at that time, the upgrade of the CATS application to a Windows-based environment designed around an Oracle database has made a document imaging system the next logical step in the evolution of the Court's technology. By replacing physical case jackets with electronic images of all documents currently residing within the jackets, the Court could eliminate all processes requiring the locating, storage, retrieval and re-filing of these jackets. Workstations with access to the CATS application would be able to view citations and supporting case documents without the need to retrieve paper files or request the Records Section to locate and copy the documents. Major primary benefits of this project include: • Increased staff efficiency and the resulting ability to handle greater case loads without a corresponding increase in staff • Increased accessibility to Court staff, police and other issuing agencies, prosecutors and others in the criminal justice community of the documents filed with the court • Elimination of the need to create, move, track, file and store paper-based case jackets which is not only expensive but slow, inefficient and subject to errors, mishandlings and loss A major secondary benefit of a document imaging system would be its ability to serve as a vital component of the Court's disaster recovery plan. Paper files represent potential revenue to the City of Milwaukee of approximately $7 million per year. In the event of a fire or other disaster, the destruction of these files would greatly impact the effective adjudication of cases and would likely result in the majority of cases being dismissed due to a lack of supporting documentation. A document imaging system with full system redundancy and offsite backups of the images would provide a secure and recoverable repository for these mission critical documents.

Initiative 2
Review and Update Hardware and Software Replacement Schedule
Year(s)
2008
Funding Source
Operating
Objectives
Fair and reliable adjudication of cases Effective enforcement of court judgments Accountability for public resources
Details
In many environments, hardware and software is replaced / upgraded only when it reaches end-of-life and is no longer supported by the manufacturer. In certain situations, the hardware or software is kept in place even after support is no longer available from the manufacturer and is only replaced or upgraded when a failure eventually occurs. While aiming to extend the life of all of its IT resources for as long as possible, the Court also recognizes the need to be proactive in maintaining a current technological environment. To that end, the Court will review and update its schedule for the replacement of the hardware and major software components of its network environment. By updating and implementing this schedule, the Court will ensure a stable and reliable network environment to support Court operations and avoid the need – and the associated costs – for specialized support and maintenance of aging components.

Initiative 3
Enhancement of Information Technology Staff Skills
Year(s)
2008 - 2010
Funding Source
Operating
Objectives
Fair and reliable adjudication of cases Court accessibility to the public Effective enforcement of court judgments Accountability for public resources Enhance public safety
Details
Following the implementation of a proprietary case management information system in 1995, the Court has outsourced the programming services and support necessary to keep the application up to date with the Court's operational needs. As with any organization that has integrated a highly-functional IT application into its way of doing business, providing this system support is critical to accomplishing the Court's ongoing mission and meeting its established objectives for delivering justice to the community. In more recent years, however, the Court has worked to reduce the higher costs associated with these outsourced services, eliminating the associated project management portion of the work in 2001 and instead depending on a single programmer to complete ongoing programming work. To further reduce these costs while simultaneously ensuring the long-term availability of programming resources, the Court plans to gradually transition from outsourced services to in-house programming support. To do so, the Court secured approval for the creation of a Programmer I position as a permanent addition to its staff and will involve this position in both the ongoing programming projects as well as several of its strategic technology initiatives. In addition, the Court has modified its Network Analyst – Sr. position to include basic programming support in the formal job description, which will serve to provide additional programming resources should this become necessary. To develop the programming skills required of these positions, the Court will establish an informal mentoring program in which the current contractor will provide training and support to the City employees, allowing them to become familiar with the application environment and learning how to provide the expected level of support to the Court. As Initiative 1 concludes in 2010, the Court will eliminate the use of outsourced services for its ongoing programming support needs.

Initiative 4
Additional Electronic Interfaces with State of Wisconsin Agencies
Year(s)
2008
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Effective enforcement of court judgments Accountability for public resources Enhanced public safety
Details
With the ongoing development of both CATS and other agencies' systems and capabilities, the Court now has the opportunity to increase the number of external systems with which it interfaces. First, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) has recently implemented its Traffic and Violation Registration Program (TVRP) which will allow jurisdictions to report vehicle registration denial and release orders electronically, eliminating the need to mail printed documents. As with the interface that is currently reporting convictions and license suspension orders via electronic file transfers, this new interface would allow more immediate processing of the Court's vehicle registration denial orders and reduce the costs associated with reporting these activities via manual, paper-based procedures. Second, the Wisconsin Department of Justice (WDOJ) is currently working to establish an electronic interface process for eTIME, a system which provides access to criminal history information, including persons wanted throughout the State of Wisconsin. As part of a project to replace and redesign the current writ service process, the Court is eager to establish this interface with the WDOJ such that its outstanding warrants and commitments would be present in eTIME, allowing the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department and other outlying municipal jurisdictions to be advised of an individual's wanted status. With this data more accessible to a greater number of law enforcement agencies, the Court's judgments could be better enforced, more cases could be brought to a disposition and the law enforcement community would have more tools at its disposal for locating these individuals. In addition to these interfaces, the Court would also explore the possibility of establishing an electronic interface directly with the MPD for the purpose of receiving citation information. The need for such an interface would be largely dependent on whether the City opts to continue contracting with a 'data entry' vendor which would, presumably, shift its services from data entry to data management and services. However, should the City opt not to contract for these additional services, an interface – and corresponding enhancements to system functionality to replicate the case filing process– may be required and would dramatically reduce vendor error rates and staff labor costs to provide for more efficient workflow in the Court.

Initiative 5
Disaster Recovery Planning
Year(s)
2008 – 2009
Funding Source
Operating
Objectives
Fair and reliable adjudication of cases Court accessibility to the public Effective enforcement of court judgments Accountability for public resources Enhance public safety
Details
In recent years, the City – in conjunction with federal mandates from the Office of Homeland Security – has been working to establish Continuation of Operation / Continuation of Government (COOP / COG) plans that encompass the business operations of all of its departments. As we participate in these efforts, the Court has recognized the need to enhance its IT environment to provide increased dependability and redundancy in the event of a disaster. As in Initiative 3, disaster recovery planning is critical to ensuring that the Court can accomplish its ongoing mission and meet its established objectives for delivering justice to the community even if a disaster – large or small – were to strike. In addition, the Court has a responsibility to ensure that its data, which represents both public records and a source of City revenue, is well protected and recoverable under any circumstances. Over the next two years, the Court intends to reconfigure its network environment, making use of the newer technologies available to provide redundant and recoverable systems. In addition, the Court plans to work with the City's Information and Technology Management Division (ITMD) to become a partner in its efforts to establish an IT recovery site and to make purchasing decisions that will allow for a greater degree of hardware and software compatibility – and, therefore, a greater degree of cross-support – among City departments.

Initiative 6
Website Improvements
Year(s)
2008 - 2009
Funding Source
Operating
Objectives
Court accessibility to the public Effective enforcement of court judgments Accountability for public resources
Details
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. 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. In addition, 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. 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.

Initiative 7
Enhanced Web Services and Public Kiosks
Year(s)
2010
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Fair and reliable adjudication of cases Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
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. 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: • 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 or deny additional online requests if several previous requests have already been made. • Court Document Printing – With the website providing real-time access to case information, the Court would be able to offer a variety of documents available for print from the website, such as a court docket or defendant case summary, which would reduce the number of individuals who come to the Court in person to request these documents. 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.

Initiative 8
Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System
Year(s)
2011
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
As with document imaging, the Court has been interested in implementing a fully-integrated IVR system for many years. 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 would plan to install an IVR system to provide general case information by automatic voice response. With the installation of such a system, defendants or attorney could call a Court telephone number 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 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. As part of the IVR system, 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.

Initiative 9
Upgrade CATS to a Web-Based Application
Year(s)
2012
Funding Source
Capital
Objectives
Court accessibility to the public Accountability for public resources
Details
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. 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.