

July 1, 2027 - June 30, 2029

Nebraska Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda



NEBRASKA JUDICIAL BRANCH STRATEGIC AGENDA 2027-2029

The Nebraska Judicial Branch reassesses and refines its six overarching initiatives for the 2027-2029 Strategic Agenda. The Judicial Branch's top priority is to resolve legal disputes fairly, impartially and apply the law accurately to dispense and advance justice. It is essential that in the twenty-first century, the provision of justice is sustained through accessible courts and related services to achieve community safety, promote the general welfare, and encourage civility among people. The six overarching initiatives of the Nebraska Judicial Branch are:

Initiative 1: Modernization of Court Information Technology and Infrastructure

Initiative 2: Strengthening Communities through Quality Court and Community Supervision

Initiative 3: Enhancing Public Trust and Confidence

Initiative 4: Enhancing Access to the Courts

Initiative 5: Ensuring the Rights of all Citizens — Children, Families, the Elderly, and Other Vulnerable Populations

Initiative 6: Regulating the Legal Profession

INITIATIVE 1:

MODERNIZATION OF COURT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Nebraska Judicial Branch is committed to delivering fair, efficient, and accessible justice through responsible technology investment. As technology continues to evolve, modernizing court information systems and infrastructure is essential to support judges, clerks, probation officers, attorneys, and citizens. Courts must ensure that all court users have the similar access to court records regardless of their role or physical location. Courts must contain complete and accurate records to produce data for legislative needs, research, and reports in an efficient and precise manner.

This initiative focuses on the Judicial Branch implementing and maintaining modern technology solutions to create efficiencies in the operation of the court, enhance technological access for external court users, continuously improve access to justice, and provide quality data and research.

- Modernize case management systems
 - Data hub creation
 - JUSTICE 2.0 case management system
- Modernize Infrastructure
 - Cloud-based access
 - Unified Judicial Branch system
 - Cybersecurity measures
 - Electronic communication tools
 - Statewide operational processes
- Modernize public online services
 - Self-represented litigant e-filing
 - Digital evidence submission and storage
 - Jury management
 - Electronic document storage and automated retention standards

Grant Awarded for Data Hub

The Judicial Branch has secured funding to launch the data hub initiative. Work is already underway, including development of a Request for Proposal (RFP) to procure a qualified vendor who will support implementation and long-term modernization efforts.

INITIATIVE 2:**STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES
THROUGH COURT AND
COMMUNITY SUPERVISION**

Probation and problem-solving court officers play a critical role in delivering court-ordered supervision, which promotes community safety, behavior change, accountability, and rehabilitation. This work is grounded in evidence-based practices that prioritize validated risk assessments, individualized responses, human behavior, brain development, targeted programs/services, and decisions rooted in solid data and research. Probation and problem-solving courts are designed to meet the diverse needs of individuals under community supervision, including tailored services for youth, emerging adults (18–25 year-olds), veterans, post-release supervision participants, and those experiencing behavioral health needs, ensuring interventions are responsive, effective, and aligned with best practices.

- To keep communities safe, highly skilled probation staff collaborate with:
 - Local law enforcement
 - Schools
 - Treatment providers
 - Other community resources
- Cost savings for Nebraskans by:
 - Diverting youth and adults from more costly and restrictive settings
 - Reducing recidivism
 - Promoting long-term behavioral change
 - Keeping individuals in their communities, attending school, working, and supporting their families
 - Obtaining employment and paying taxes
- Probation and problem-solving courts adhere to the following principles:
 - Individuals and stakeholders are valued, heard, and supported
 - A culture of leadership is prioritized
 - Principles of implementation science are used across the organization
 - Staff development
 - The individuality of justice-involved people is embraced

16%**Juvenile Recidivism Rate****19%****Adult Recidivism Rate****26%****Problem-Solving Court
(PSC) Recidivism Rate****Nebraska Probation System Mission:***Inspiring hope, empowering individuals, and strengthening communities.*

INITIATIVE 3:

ENHANCING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY

Building strong relationships within the Judicial Branch, across state government and with the public is essential to fostering trust and confidence in the judiciary. This is accomplished through fiscal responsibility and strong ethical standards. As a separate and co-equal branch of government, the Judicial Branch relies on meaningful collaboration with other branches of state government, justice stakeholders, and the public to inform on the role of the courts, the jury system, and the merit selection process.

- Through ongoing education, the Judicial Branch enhances its duties with:
 - Competence
 - Professionalism
 - Ethical considerations
 - Best practices
 - High-quality customer service
- The Judicial Branch provides community-oriented outreach opportunities for direct engagement through:
 - Oral argument sessions at high schools, colleges, and law schools
 - Annual Supreme Court Summer Tour
 - College career fairs
 - Speaking engagements
 - Nebraska Court User Survey
 - Engaging with media on court coverage
 - Other public-focused activities
- The Judicial Branch communicates its purpose, performance, and value to the public through:
 - Social media
 - News articles
 - Proclamation ceremonies
 - Newsletters and direct outreach
 - Podcasts
 - Video productions

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INITIATIVE 4:

ENHANCING ACCESS TO THE COURTS

All citizens who come before the courts are entitled to fair and equal justice. Courts must swiftly and fairly resolve cases while remaining impartial, efficient, and accessible to all court users. Courts accomplish this by ensuring that all individuals – regardless of age, ability, income, or language – can participate meaningfully in the legal process.

- **Language Access Program** recruits, trains, and certifies court interpreters and coordinates the appointment of qualified interpreters to facilitate communication in the Nebraska Judicial Branch.
 - Develop a comprehensive Interpreter Certification Pathway for aspiring interpreters
 - Standardize the method for coordinating Language Access needs
 - Identify emerging language trends
- **Self-Represented Litigation Initiative** assists many Nebraskans who come to court without an attorney. Self-help centers, online resources, forms, and guides provide these individuals with essential tools to navigate the legal system. The Judicial Branch continues to develop resources to help court users better understand procedures, prepare necessary documents, and make informed decisions, ensuring that lack of legal representation does not prevent them from accessing justice.
 - Further expand, standardize, and enhance SRL tools and resources
 - Broaden the reach of self-help centers across Nebraska
 - Enhance availability of SRL assistance remotely and virtually
 - Improve accessibility and usability through online and in-person resources
 - Modernize the Nebraska Judicial Branch's self-help website
 - Launched additional DTEN video-conferencing systems, allowing court users in a clerk's office to connect instantly with court staff in other counties
 - Develop electronic filing application for self-represented litigants

INITIATIVE 5:

ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF ALL CITIZENS — CHILDREN, FAMILIES, THE ELDERLY, AND OTHER VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Courts are to safeguard the rights of those who cannot fully advocate for themselves. Judicial involvement is critical to the success of the courts' efforts to effectively support children, families, elderly, and vulnerable individuals.

- **Office of the Public Guardian** serves with integrity to empower and advocate for vulnerable Nebraskans through education and support, safeguarding individual rights and maximizing independence while ensuring dignity and safety.
 - Continue to improve guardian & conservator education
 - Build public awareness of the growing need for guardians & conservators
- **Office of Dispute Resolution** enhances and advances the use of mediation and restorative justice across Nebraska through Parenting Act mediation, parenting plans, facilitating child welfare and juvenile justice conferences, and restorative justice practices.
 - Expand implementation of a parenting plan review pilot and education
 - Develop a new formula to ensure equitable distribution of Parenting Act funds
 - Collaborate with OPG to increase mediation for guardian & conservator cases or those in need of a guardian or conservator
- **Judicial Branch Education** educates Judges and Judicial Branch employees in order to maintain and increase their professional competence to ensure the delivery of quality services.
 - Identify best practice standards for working with self-represented litigants
 - Identify best practice guidelines for Guardians Ad Litem (GAL) for parents in juvenile court proceedings

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: Nebraska Court Improvement Project (CIP)

CIP has been leading the Upstream initiative, a community-based approach that leverages court resources, judicial leadership, and child welfare and juvenile probation partnerships to enhance community collaboration through community mapping and action planning.

- This project has enhanced new community programs: *Handle with Care*, *Thrive Mentoring*, and after school programs
- Expand Upstream Project across the state

INITIATIVE 6:

REGULATING THE LEGAL PROFESSION

The legal profession is indispensable for protecting individual rights and liberties in a free society. The Nebraska Supreme Court regulates the practice of law for the protection of the public by overseeing the attorney admission process, requiring continuing legal education, administering attorney discipline, and preventing the unauthorized practice of law. The Judicial Branch oversees attorney admissions through the State Bar Commission, and attorney licensure and Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) through Attorney Services.

In August 2024, Attorney Services launched a [new online portal](#) for processing applications for new attorney admission to the Nebraska Bar, annual attorney licensure, and MCLE compliance. In combination with companion rule changes, this portal has resulted in:

- Decreased time required for new attorney application processing
- Improved accuracy and timeliness in attorneys and sponsors reporting MCLE
- Greater public protection through new attorney succession planning requirements
- Decreased future need for court-appointed trustees, reducing court expenditures
- Expediency in attorney discipline for non-compliance with licensure requirements
- Simplified application process for judicial vacancies and nominating commissions

Bar Exam Update

State Bar Commission rule changes established passing scores on the NextGen Uniform Bar Exam (UBE), a revised exam emphasizing proficiency in the legal skills necessary for new practicing attorneys. The Nebraska Supreme Court and State Bar Commission have been proactively planning with Nebraska's law schools for successful administration of the NextGen UBE in July 2027.



“Much of our mission focuses on the delivery of justice to the citizens of Nebraska and comes in many different forms. Our work involves operating courts; supervising adults and juveniles on probation, post-release supervision, and problem-solving courts; and serving our most vulnerable individuals by providing public guardianships. These efforts increase public safety and make Nebraska a great place to live and raise a family, all while saving taxpayer dollars.”

~ Chief Jeffrey J. Funke, State of the Judiciary Address, January 2026

The Nebraska Supreme Court wishes to acknowledge and thank the following Committees for iadvancing the priorities of the Judicial Branch of Government:

Judicial Branch Leadership

Supreme Court

Chief Justice Jeffrey J. Funke

William B. Cassel

Stephanie F. Stacy

Jonathan J. Papik

John R. Freudenberg

Jason M. Bergevin

Derek R. Vaughn

Court of Appeals

Chief Judge Francie C. Riedmann

Michael W. Pirtle

Riko E. Bishop

Lawrence E. Welch, Jr.

PaTricia A. Freeman

Michael E. Piccolo

Nebraska District Judges' Association

Nebraska County Judges' Association

Nebraska Separate Juvenile Court Judges' Association

Workers' Compensation Court

Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation

Corey R. Steel, State Court Administrator

Gene D. Cotter, Probation Administrator

Supreme Court Committees and Commissions

Under the authority of the Nebraska Supreme Court, the following committees and commissions are tasked with leading Judicial Branch initiatives and ensuring operational strategy and practice for the administration of Branch functions and delivery of services statewide.

Access to Justice Commission

Committee on Equity and Fairness

Consortium of Tribal, State and Federal Courts

Self-Represented Litigation Committee

Commission on Children in the Courts

Commission on Guardianships and Conservatorships

Advisory Council on Public Guardianship

Statewide Court Security Clearinghouse Committee

Dispute Resolution Advisory Council

Judicial Branch Education Advisory Committee

Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Commission

Probation Services Committee

Committee on Problem-Solving Courts

Public Education Outreach Promoting Law & Equity Media Committee

Technology Committee

Judicial Resources Commission

Judicial Ethics Committee

Judicial Qualifications Commission

Supreme Court Personnel Board

Committee on Practice and Procedure



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