



Northeastern Judicial Circuit Treatment Services

4/23/26

Mr. Jonathan Mattiello
Executive Director
State Justice Institute
11951 Freedom Drive, Suite 1020
Reston, Virginia 20190

Re: Northeastern Judicial Circuit Strategic Planning

Dear Mr. Mattiello:

The Northeastern Judicial Circuit in Georgia (Court) respectfully requests a \$50,787 project grant to engage the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to assist with the development of a new strategic plan for its accountability courts, located in Hall and Dawson counties.

INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

The Northeastern Judicial Circuit of Georgia serves Hall and Dawson counties and operates a comprehensive system of accountability courts, including a Drug Court, Mental Health Court, DUI Court, and Family Treatment Court. Each court emphasizes treatment, supervision, and accountability to improve participant outcomes, enhance public safety, and reduce recidivism. Over the past two decades, the Circuit has experienced significant growth in both personnel and programming. In 2025, the agency employed nearly 50 staff members and served over 900 participants across all programs. The Circuit currently serves nearly 10% of all accountability court participants in the state of Georgia. While this growth demonstrates a strong response to community need, it has outpaced the Court's ability to consistently define, communicate, and maintain a unified strategic vision across programs. As operations have expanded in scale and complexity, the need for a coordinated approach to guide decision-making, align resources, and sustain long-term success has become increasingly critical.

NEED FOR FUNDING

Despite its growth and impact on the community, the Northeastern Judicial Circuit has never operated under a formal strategic plan. As a result, the accountability courts currently lack a structured framework to guide long-term decision-making and ensure alignment across all expanding programs. Funding is needed to support a formal strategic planning process facilitated

by the National Center for State Courts. External expertise is critical to provide an objective assessment of current operations, engage stakeholders across disciplines, and guide the development of clear, measurable goals. This investment will position the Court to manage continued growth effectively, strengthen coordination across all programs, and improve long-term outcomes for participants and the community.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

If awarded, grant funds will be used solely to fund the development of a new strategic plan for its accountability courts, using the strategic planning expertise from NCSC. NCSC will facilitate, advise, and assist the Court with organizing and executing the planning effort and writing the updated plan. Below is a description of the proposed tasks, across five phases, to accomplish the project:

Phase A: Meeting Facilitation with Strategic Planning Committee

Task 1: Kickoff Meeting and Initial Meeting with the Court's Strategic Planning Committee

An initial kickoff video meeting will be held among NCSC and the Court's project liaison and selected staff, where they will discuss the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Strategic Planning Committee and outline logistics, meeting schedules, discuss options for gathering data, and the milestone activities. Strategic Planning Committee membership should represent a cross section of judges and key staff involved with the accountability courts who are respected by their peers and who possess an extensive knowledge of accountability courts and the governance in which they operate.

The NCSC project director will hold an initial meeting with the Strategic Planning Committee virtually. At this meeting, the Strategic Planning committee with facilitation from the NCSC project director will:

- Identify communication channels and the timing of future virtual meetings with the Strategic Planning Committee.
- Identify the people to be interviewed, participate in focus groups, and receive the survey.
- Establish the dates, protocols and responsibilities for distributing and compiling the survey.
- Establish the timing of the on-site Strategic Planning Summit.
- Identify the person(s) who will perform administrative tasks necessary to facilitate the project.

The initial meeting will also be used to identify background materials that the Court's project liaison will provide to the NCSC project director to help NCSC understand the accountability court's governance structures, decision-making processes, and performance indicators.

Phase B: Community Outreach

NCSC will work with the Strategic Planning Committee to develop a community outreach and data gathering strategy that is efficient yet effective and solicits input from a reasonable cross section of the accountability court's stakeholders. This will include the use of online survey tools and virtual focus groups.

Task 2: Strategic Planning Outreach - Survey

NCSC will work with the Strategic Planning Committee to plan, schedule, and execute internal (judges and coordinators) and external (other accountability court team members and stakeholders) surveys to identify the court's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the future from the perspective of judicial branch employees and external accountability court stakeholders.

Task 3: Strategic Planning Outreach – Virtual Internal and External Focus Groups

NCSC will work with the Strategic Planning Committee to plan, schedule, and execute virtual internal and external focus groups (up to 10 focus groups) with various audiences such as judges, coordinators, treatment court team members, and other accountability court stakeholders.

NCSC will prepare a detailed report summarizing the results of the internal and external surveys and focus groups that will include:

- Executive summary of survey objectives and participation rates.
- Key themes and quantitative results (satisfaction levels, priorities, areas for improvement).
- Qualitative feedback (if open-ended responses were collected).
- Cross-cutting issues between internal and external groups.

Phase C: Strategic Planning Summit

Task 4: Facilitate a 1.5-day, In-person Strategic Planning Summit

NCSC will facilitate a 1.5-day, in-person Strategic Planning Summit that brings together the Strategic Planning Committee for the purpose of reviewing engagement findings and collaboratively shaping the accountability court's strategic direction.

NCSC will complete the following as part of the 1.5-day, in-person Strategic Planning Summit.

- Develop and deliver a presentation summarizing results from:
 1. Strategic Planning Committee meetings.
 2. Internal and external surveys.
 3. Internal and external focus groups, including community and justice partners.

- Highlight key themes, trends, and takeaways, with visualizations and narrative context.
- Provide handouts or executive summaries to support participant understanding.
- Facilitate group discussion and brainstorming sessions to:
 1. Reflect on the key findings.
 2. Identify and prioritize strategic planning goals and objectives.
 3. Explore opportunities, challenges, and potential initiatives.
- Summarize the input gathered during the Summit to include:
 1. Agreed-upon strategic priorities.
 2. Draft or proposed strategic goals and objectives.
 3. Any noted areas requiring further development or consensus.

Phase D: Develop a New 3-5-year Strategic Plan

NCSC will work with the Strategic Planning Committee to develop a comprehensive new 3–5-year accountability court strategic plan. The process will build upon the planning, data collection, stakeholder engagement, and other information-gathering efforts conducted throughout the planning process.

Task 5: Develop New 3-5-year Strategic Plan

Based on the information gathering efforts conducted throughout the planning process, NCSC will work with the Strategic Planning Committee to develop a comprehensive, new, 3-5-year strategic plan.

The strategic plan will include:

- 4-6 strategic priorities or focus areas that reflect the organization’s mission.
- 3-4 actionable goals for each priority/focus area.
- Goals will be grounded in the insights and feedback gathered through the planning process, aligned with the organization’s values and long-term vision, and measurable, where possible, to support evaluation and accountability.
- The final strategic plan will be presented in a professional, accessible format suitable for public dissemination and internal implementation.

Phase E: Technical Assistance to Transition from Planning to Implementation

Following the completion and approval of the 3-5-year accountability court strategic plan, NCSC will reconvene the Strategic Planning Committee to support the transition from planning to implementation.

Task 6: Develop the Outline of a Year 1 Operational Plan

NCSC will work virtually with the Court to develop the framework for a Year 1 Operational Plan. The Plan will identify the action steps needed (day-to-day work) to realize the priorities and goals of the strategic plan. The operational tasks identified will assist in moving the accountability court strategic priorities forward toward completion and equip the court’s leadership with a clear and coordinated approach to operationalize the strategic plan, ensuring that initiatives are carried out effectively and progress is measurable over time.

NCSC will:

- Facilitate a working session or series of working sessions virtually with the Strategic Planning Committee sub-committees to design a practical and sustainable structure for internal implementation.
- Provide guidance on roles, responsibilities, and timelines for implementation oversight, progress tracking, and periodic review.
- Ensure the implementation framework aligns with the strategic priorities and promotes accountability across all levels of the organization.

NCSC QUALIFICATIONS

NCSC is an independent non-profit corporation with the mission to improve the administration of justice through leadership and service to state courts and justice systems around the world. NCSC draws on more than 50 years of experience supporting US-based and global courts with strategy development, organizational assessments, and improving the administration of justice. Importantly, NCSC serves as the secretariat to the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators (“CCJ/COSCA”). NCSC works in close partnership with CCJ/COSCA to develop national policy and best practices, supporting state and local courts with judicial modernization and innovation, and identifying and sharing promising practices to address challenges to successful court systems.

NCSC brings a broad range of resources to any engagement, including: an expert staff, a long standing and trusted relationship with court partners, a wealth of knowledge about and experience working with state and local courts, and institutional links to other national court-related organizations. NCSC’s familiarity with the unique nature of courts and justice systems enhances its ability to work effectively and efficiently with judicial officers, administrators, court personnel, and representatives of court-related agencies.

NCSC’s Programs group is dedicated to rethinking and retooling existing processes and practices, modernizing court operations, and improving justice at the state and local levels. NCSC provides direct court services to courts to improve court management performance across a broad spectrum

of topical areas, including, but not limited to, strategic planning, court leadership, caseload, financial, and technological management, facilities, court security, jury management, behavioral health, juvenile justice, language access, disability accommodations, and access to justice. NCSC's work includes providing knowledge, technical assistance, executive coaching, and consulting services to courts and other interested parties, as well as conducting research and evaluations in all areas of court operations. NCSC can be especially helpful to provide a trusted outside perspective to solicit feedback from diverse stakeholders and to share insight from experiences and successes of other state courts.

No organization in the nation is more knowledgeable about how courts work and the application of modern management principles to court leadership, organization, and operations than NCSC.

CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS

NCSC proposes using the following staff on this project:

Abby Kuschel

Abby Kuschel is a Principal Court Management Consultant in NCSC's Programs group. Since joining NCSC in December 2022, her project work has focused on strategic planning, leadership, court governance, organizational assessments, and treatment courts. Prior to joining NCSC, Ms. Kuschel spent 15 years with the Minnesota Judicial Branch in a variety of roles at the local, district, and state level. Ms. Kuschel worked extensively in treatment court coordination and administration and was a supervisor in the Court Services division at the Administrative Office of the Courts. In this role she supervised statewide program staff in the areas of Court Interpreter Programs, Psychological Services, Treatment Courts, Jury Management, and the Children's Justice Initiative. She also has worked collaboratively with tribal nations in Minnesota for over 10 years. Prior to working in the judiciary, Ms. Kuschel worked in the public health field. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Community Health Education and Psychology degree from the University of Minnesota Duluth.

Lisa Williams

Lisa M. Williams, M.A., is a Senior Court Management Consultant for NCSC with 20 years of justice system experience. Before joining NCSC in 2024, she was a founding member of the first felony Veterans Treatment Court in Ohio and served as program director for 10 years. Ms. Williams simultaneously provided judicial support for 14 years in the Stark County Common Pleas Court, in case management and data reporting for large civil and criminal case dockets. She then served as a policy analyst for the Ohio Supreme Court, providing evaluation and technical assistance to all adult, family, and juvenile treatment court types across Ohio's 260+ certified treatment court programs. She has also served as a presenter for national, state, and local agencies

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for over 10 years. Ms. Williams has a Master of Arts in Research and Evaluation Methods, a Graduate Certificate in Culturally Responsive Methods, a Bachelor of Applied Communication, and an Associate of Applied Business in Legal Assisting Technology.

John Bello

John A. Bello is the Director of Court Operations & Governance in NCSC’s Programs group. His work is focused primarily in the following areas: leadership, governance, case flow and workload management and court space and technology. Mr. Bello previously served as Court Administrator of the Massachusetts Trial Court where he oversaw 6,500 court staff, 97 courthouses, and a \$850 million budget for seven court departments and the Massachusetts Probation Service. As Court Administrator, he was responsible for the administrative functions that supported the Trial Court mission – Justice with Dignity and Speed. These included budget preparation and oversight, labor relations and human resources, information technology, facilities management, capital projects, and security. John also served as co-chair of the court’s Trauma Task Force. In 2017, Mr. Bello was named Associate Court Administrator and guided the efforts of the department heads within the Office of Court Management and coordinated their support of the court departments. He also guided the development and implementation of the Trial Court’s Strategic Plan 3.0 and 4.0, introduced enterprise project management, and led major operational initiatives in collaboration with leaders across all court departments. Mr. Bello joined the Trial Court in 2013 as the Director of Facilities Management & Capital Planning overseeing maintenance and capital improvements for 60 state-owned facilities and working with county and private landlords to manage another 40 court buildings. He oversaw the development of a 20-year Court Master Capital Plan in concert with the state’s Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Task	Months from Project Start								
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Task 1: Kick-Off Meeting and Initial Meeting with Court’s Strategic Planning Committee (Phase A)	X								
Task 2: Strategic Planning Outreach – Survey (Phase B)		X	X						
Task 3: Strategic Planning Outreach – Internal and External Virtual Focus Groups (Phase B)			X	X					

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Task 4: Facilitate a 1.5-day, In-person Strategic Planning Summit (Phase C)					X				
Task 5: Develop a new, 3-5-year Strategic Plan (Phase D)					X	X	X		
Task 6: Develop an Outline of a Year 1 Operational Plan (Phase E)							X	X	X

BUDGET

The total cost of the project will be a firm fixed price of \$76,216. The Court is requesting \$50,787 in SJI funds and will provide a cash match of \$5,079 and an in-kind match of \$20,350. A line-item budget (Form C) and budget narrative are attached, as well as a letter from the NCSC affirming its participation.

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Northeastern Judicial Circuit is well-positioned to successfully implement this project. The Court has an established leadership structure, experienced program staff, and a demonstrated history of managing multi-program operations across its accountability courts. Key stakeholders, including judges, administration, treatment staff, and community partners, are actively engaged and committed to participating in the strategic planning process. The partnership with the National Center for State Courts further strengthens the likelihood of success by providing expert facilitation, proven methodologies, and technical assistance. With strong leadership commitment, dedicated staff, and external expertise, the Court is fully prepared to complete the strategic planning process according to the project timeline.

If you have any questions about our proposal, please contact Heather Herrington, Director of Treatment Services. Ms. Herrington can be reached at 770-536-3837 or Heather.Herrington@nejcga.gov.

Thank you for the opportunity to request this grant.

Sincerely,

Heather Herrington, LPC, CPCS, CMAC, CCS
 Director, Treatment Services
 770-536-3837