

## 2021 MiFILE UPDATE

Over the past year, MiFILE has made substantial progress. Important changes were made to the program, the focus of product development and implementation was shifted, and challenges were overcome. All of these efforts were targeted to speed up delivery and better meet the needs of our customers.

### Program Changes



In 2020, the MiFILE team and the State Court Administrative Office implemented changes to provide the best service in implementing MiFILE throughout the state. This included hiring a program manager; replacing consultants with a permanent core MiFILE project team; establishing the internal processes

necessary for long-term development and implementation of the product; hiring new team members for development, testing, and implementation; and organizing the team to accomplish the product development and implementation goals necessary to onboard and service 315 court locations on the MiFILE Standard Solution.

### Shift in Focus of Product Development and Implementation

Not only have we restructured the MiFILE program, but we have shifted our focus for both product development and implementation. Previously, the focus was to “finish” the system and roll it out to all the courts. However, the system will always be undergoing enhancements as we learn more from MiFILE users, business needs change, technology advances, and the program matures. In order to build a system that is broadly attractive to all users, several surveys were conducted with courts and the State Bar to gather feedback to help us realign the goals of the program, and to assist us in prioritizing development of new features and functionality. This feedback has been extremely useful, and we plan to continue seeking user input to support developing features and functionality that best meets the needs of all stakeholders. What does this mean? Delivering functional product sooner to more users with regular improvements planned.

### Implementation Challenges and the Trial Court Funding Structure

We have also been planning to address the challenges associated with the funding structure of Michigan courts and its impact on the pace in which we can reasonably implement MiFILE statewide. This funding structure affects not only court resources but also influences the business operations and organizational culture of the courts. To ease the impact of these constraints, we have developed an implementation methodology and resources that will enable us to better help the courts and MiFILE users to make decisions about implementing MiFILE and to adjust to and manage the organizational change that will come with e-Filing.

To implement as many courts as quickly as possible, we must not only standardize our implementation processes, but we must also standardize court integration with the MiFILE system. However, standardization can be hindered by the local funding of case management systems and court operations. To address these constraints on the MiFILE program, we have developed a more reasonable implementation approach that attempts to simplify and standardize integration as much as possible, and that takes into consideration a court's readiness for e-Filing. This readiness includes the court resources, integration complexities, technological abilities, and technological infrastructure.



This month, we have started engaging courts interested in implementing MiFILE now. The initial batch of courts is small (about a dozen) so that we can make necessary adjustments to our implementation process, but as we gain the necessary experience and skill, we will increase the number of courts implemented each year. High level information about the implementation process can be found on our MiFILE website.

## **Product Development Challenges and Pre-Existing e-Filing Courts**

While implementing the MiFILE Standard Solution in new courts, we will also be enhancing the MiFILE Standard Solution, including adding functionality for e-Filing other case types. We conducted surveys of both the e-Filing courts and the State Bar to determine an initial set of development priorities for the next several years. In the meantime, much of the product development over the past 18 months has involved significant changes to the service management functionality, setting up a testing environment suitable to support product development and wide-scale implementation, creating court training modules, and recording filer videos. Although the testing environment is not evident to the stakeholders, it is paramount to the success of the MiFILE program. This framework will set the program on solid footing to develop, test, and release functionality on a regular basis while implementing the Standard Solution in new courts.

With regard to service management functionality, this major change will prepare MiFILE for e-filing and e-service of public cases, of a more sensitive nature than civil cases, and to make party and service management more robust for all users. There will be further enhancements to the service management functionality, but this first round of changes sets the stage for a long-term vision to leverage MiFILE to better manage case participant data from disparate court systems and to reduce the use of incongruent data and duplication of effort from the

various systems that integrate with MiFILE. We are glad to announce that we will be releasing these changes soon.



We have also made substantial progress on development of MiFILE DMS, the cloud-based document management system that will be provided to courts without charge. We expect development of the base functionality to be completed by the end of the second quarter of 2021 and ready for testing by courts who are now engaged with the MiFILE program to implement the MiFILE Standard Solution this year.

Also of importance to note is that there are several variations to MiFILE currently being used around the state. This has a significant impact on our ability to consistently develop new functionality in the Standard Solution. To clarify, the MiFILE Standard Solution is implemented in three model courts, while the original e-Filing pilot courts have modified versions of the TrueFiling component that is used in the Standard Solution. Although the pilot courts use MiFILE branding, they are not on the MiFILE Standard Solution, and each version offers different case types and slightly different user experiences than the Standard Solution. Therefore, until the pilot courts are on the MiFILE Standard Solution, we have had to figure out ways to move development of the Standard Solution forward while accommodating the existing variations. These variations have slowed our development of new functionality.

### **Meeting the Needs of our Customers**

The MiFILE team is excited about its progress in 2020. We are confident that time spent restructuring the program, reorganizing staff, and developing our methodology for development and implementation will serve to better meet the needs of our customers – the filers, the courts, and the citizens of Michigan – and that we are better able to meet our development and implementation goals for the MiFILE Standard Solution.