



## MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **For First Time in History, Diverse Stakeholders to Develop Strategic Plan for Judiciary**

*Court is seeking qualified candidates to serve on Judicial Council*

LANSING, MI, April 27, 2021 – For the first time in history, a diverse group of justice system stakeholders will develop a strategic plan for Michigan’s judiciary. Created by the addition of [Michigan Court Rule 8.128](#), the [Michigan Judicial Council \(MJC\)](#) will include judges, administrators, attorneys, county clerks, and the public. With a commitment for the MJC to be representative of Michigan’s diverse population and regions, the Court is seeking qualified applicants to serve.

“With nearly 600 judges, 242 courts, and more than 160 funding units, our judiciary is decentralized, complicated, and difficult to coordinate,” said Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack, “The Judicial Council will play a critical role in consulting the public, bringing together a wide range of viewpoints, and developing a path forward that maintains judicial independence, expands access to justice, strengthens transparency, and increases efficiency.”

The Court is committed to an expansive outreach process designed to spur broad and diverse thinking about the future of Michigan’s judiciary. Outreach may include electronic surveys, virtual or in-person focus groups and community town halls, and participation in statewide and regional conferences. The MJC will also compile information gathered from other recent statewide planning and reform initiatives such as the Justice for All Task Force, Trial Court Funding Commission, and Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration.

“Serious discussions are occurring every day regarding mental health, racial equity, access to justice, pretrial practices, the use of money bail, and equitable models for trial court funding,” Chief Justice McCormack added. “These conversations are crucial, but strategic planning for Michigan’s judiciary is essential to coordinate these programs, set priorities, collect standardized data, and provide guidance across jurisdictions statewide.”

The [MJC website](#) includes application instructions, and two application forms: one for judges and one for non-judges. The application deadline is **Friday, May 7, at 5:00 p.m.**

The MJC will convene in July 2021, and embark on a strategic planning process that will include visioning, analyzing trends, reviewing outreach data, and developing strategic goals and long-term strategies for advancing judicial branch reform and improvements.

(more)

## Judicial Council to Develop First Strategic Plan for Michigan's Judiciary

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The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) received a [State Justice Institute \(SJI\) grant](#) to fund the strategic planning process and will work with a consultant over the next year to design and lead an inclusive and comprehensive planning process that will result in a Strategic Agenda for the branch. Once complete, the MJC, along with other groups, will help build support for and implement the Strategic Agenda. The MJC will be involved in an ongoing strategic planning cycle for the judiciary.

Emphasizing the need for planning and coordination, in the grant application, SCAO highlighted a wide range of recent and ongoing initiatives:

- [Justice for All Task Force](#): Committed to providing all Michigan residents access to our civil justice system.
- [Diversity and Inclusion Committee](#): Assist SCAO with recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce and expanding diversity and inclusion training throughout the judiciary.
- [Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration](#): Collecting data, developing recommendations, and implementing reforms to safely reduce county jail populations via non-jail alternatives.
- [MiFILE](#): Developing a statewide electronic filing system for filing and serving court documents online.
- [MI-Resolve](#): Online dispute resolution tool available to users across Michigan to resolve certain disputes.
- [Trial Court Funding Commission](#): Advancing the recommendations of the Trial Court Funding Commission to create a stable court funding system, uniform assessments, centralized collections, a uniform employment system, and providing for all the technology needs of the trial courts.
- [Virtual Courtrooms](#): By purchasing Zoom licenses for every judge in Michigan early in 2019, SCAO was able to give trial courts the tools they needed to continue service during the COVID-19 pandemic. SCAO established a virtual courtroom directory on its website that enabled the public to observe court proceedings across statewide. To date, Michigan judges have held nearly three million hours of virtual court hearings via Zoom and trial court YouTube videos have been viewed more than 35 million times.
- [Problem-Solving Courts \(PSCs\)](#): Michigan's 199 drug and sobriety, mental health, and veterans treatment courts have an impressive record of reducing recidivism and making a positive difference in the lives of thousands of state residents and their families.

For more information, visit [courts.mi.gov/JudicialCouncil](https://courts.mi.gov/JudicialCouncil).

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