

# JUSTICE FOR ALL

A TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT INITIATIVE

## TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2020



## **Executive Summary**

This marks the fifth strategic plan for the Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission (the “ATJ Commission”), which will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2019. From the outset, the ATJ Commission set many worthy goals. Many of those goals and objectives focused on educating the public on existing resources, encouraging and creating opportunities for increased pro bono, and developing resources for litigants that must represent themselves. An overarching goal was to connect participants in the Tennessee justice system with resources that can help them.

These broad themes have remained constant in the ATJ Commission’s work, and have been carried into this Plan. They have helped the ATJ Commission develop and focus its role in the Tennessee access to justice community.

This Plan details new ideas, programs, and initiatives that the ATJ Commission will undertake over the next two years. The ATJ Commission will continue to promote and expand its identified successes, such as the Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance, #Help4TNDay, Pro Bono and Faith Days, Pro Bono Recognition, Plain Language Forms, ATJ Fund Distributions, the Justice For All website, court kiosks, and other long-standing programs. The ATJ Commission will also continue to support and lift up its equal justice community partners.

## **The Process**

The ATJ Commission engaged in a strategic planning process in the spring of 2018. The process included surveying members of the commission as well as key stakeholders, and a daylong planning session with current and incoming commissioners.

## **Surveys**

A stakeholder survey was distributed to the ATJ Commission members and members of the ATJ Commission's six Advisory Committees, the Education Committee, the Faith-Based Initiatives Committee, the Family Law Committee, the Pro Bono Committee, the Public Awareness Committee, and the Self-Represented Litigants Committee. Sixteen responses were collected and the themes reflected the value of the ATJ Commission in connecting, educating, and long term policy planning. Key strengths identified were leadership, diversity, and communication. The responders identified weaknesses such as lack of resources and support outside of the courts. One frequently expressed weakness is a lack of awareness of the work of the ATJ Commission. Specific anticipated challenges identified were lack of resources, such as funding and

volunteers, lack of public awareness, a need to refocus priorities, and sustainability of the work of the ATJ Commission.

Respondents were asked about their own challenges and needs. Most commented that they encounter a lack of resources, lack of funding, and lack of volunteers. Changes in technology was also a frequently reported challenge. The survey also asked about unaddressed needs the ATJ Commission should consider. Those responses included more support for legal aid, more public awareness, being responsive to technology changes, and the need to prioritize resources. Lastly, they were asked where the ATJ Commission should focus its efforts to be most effective over the next two to three years. Suggestions focused on raising awareness of existing resources, pro bono opportunities, and legal aid support and funding.

A second survey focused on trends and was distributed to judges, court clerks, private attorneys, legal aid attorneys, mediators, law schools, and other stakeholders. In addition to providing the ATJ Commission with the information necessary to conduct its planning session, this survey enabled the ATJ Commission to connect to stakeholders in the judicial system. Survey users were asked to rank eighteen different services and concepts related to the Tennessee equal justice community, and were given the opportunity to write-in responses.

Over 135 surveys were returned and the ATJ Commission reviewed the responses during the planning session and identified the following themes and issues:

- People don't know about existing resources
- People need help in the courtroom
- Need to partner with other agencies
- Need to engage local judges
- Efficient use of volunteers
- Funding for legal aid and legal service providers
- Training attorneys
- More focus on rural legal services
- Education for judges on self-represented litigants issues
- More resources for self-represented litigants, including expanded court forms
- Transportation to and from clinics, the court, etc.
- Reasonably priced CLE opportunities
- Partner urban lawyers with rural need and take lawyers to the community
- Create more general civil legal advice clinics and issue-specific clinics
- Education on legal system processes
- More resources on limited scope representation

## Planning Session

During the planning session, the ATJ Commission reviewed the survey responses and the work of the past few years to understand current trends and learn of unique ideas. It identified key accomplishments and learnings, as well as opportunities for the future. Opportunities identified were:

- Younger lawyers and law students want to do pro bono work
- Potential to collaborate with the business community
  - Benefit from shared expertise
  - Access to technology
- Creative ways to increase resources, including funding for legal aid
- Create greater awareness of the ATJ Commission to target audiences
- Relevant and robust website and online presence
- Translation services for forms, signs, and other legal materials
- Special topic legal clinics, in areas like expungement and family law
- Expand the ATJ Commission's reach at the state and national level
- Navigation programs to get people through their case from start to finish
- Videos and printed materials in the courthouses

## Two Year Vision

The Commission developed a vision for the next two years by answering the question: To Expand Our Reach, What Do We Want and Need to See in Place at the Commission in Two Years?

The vision includes:

- **A Self-Representation Toolbox**
- **A Mechanism that Matches Need and Resources**
- **A Clear Brand and Executed and Evolving Communications Plan**
- **A Robust Network of Volunteers and Partners**
- **Making Judges Stronger Partners and Champions**
- **Collective Impact Strategy for Funding**
- **Coordinated and Focused Training to Better Equip Attorneys**

## Roles

In realizing the vision, the ATJ Commission identified that its role is to:

- Facilitate
- Educate
- Communicate
- Remove barriers
- Develop resources
- Advocate
- Connect

## Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities determined to reach the vision and leverage the roles of the ATJ Commission are:

- 1. Build the Process for Funding**
- 2. Build and Refine Support Services**
- 3. Build and Equip the Network**
- 4. Capture and Promote Our Brands**

The ATJ Commission decided that five Advisory Committees will be necessary to carry out these strategic priorities. The five Advisory Committees are:

- Faith-Based Initiatives Committee
- Family Law Committee
- Pro Bono Committee
- Public Awareness Committee
- Self-Represented Litigants Committee (and Mediation Subcommittee)

The ATJ Commission will continue the work of its work groups and task forces developed around specific legal issues or projects, including the Immigration Task Force and the Expungement Work Group.

The ATJ Commission will also develop a Founding Fellows group, to include former ATJ Commission members.

## Goals and Implementation Plans

### Strategic Priority: Build the Process for Funding

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Year Goals</b>	<b>Actions/Tasks</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Key Metrics</b>
<b>Launch a Founding Fellows Group</b>	Determine chair, structure and purpose of group: advocacy and education, connections, funding	6/30/18	Staff and Commission Chair	Key connections and funding plans identified
	Hold first meeting and determine goals for 2018	8/31/18	Staff and Commission Chair	First meeting held and remaining 2018 meetings calendared
<b>Begin Building a Funding Strategy</b>	Educate Commission on Collective Impact  Identify plan for future funding	1/31/19	Staff	Funding Plan Created

## Strategic Priority: Build and Refine Support Services

1 <sup>st</sup> Year Goals	Actions/Tasks	Timeline	Responsibility	Key Metrics
<b>Build the Education/ Event Calendar</b>	Faith Based - <b>Sewanee</b>	4 /18/18	Staff and Various Commission/ Committee Reps; Commission Chair	Meet Target # of Attendees  Increase # of Volunteers  Increase # of programs in each grand division
	Participate in Clerk of Courts Annual Conferences – <b>Chattanooga and Franklin</b>	5/18 and 8/18		
	TBA CLE Presentations at TBA Annual Conference - <b>Memphis</b>	6/15/18		
	Child Support Administrators Meeting – <b>Nashville</b>	6/21/18		
	Family Law Practice Regional Summits - <b>Statewide</b>	9/30/18		
	TFJA Regional Trainings – <b>Statewide</b>	10/18		
	PBFDays – <b>Statewide</b>	10/18		
	Juvenile Magistrate Training	9/28/19		
	Pro-bono Recognition Events – <b>Tri-Cities, Knoxville, Memphis, Nashville</b>	Fall 2018		
	Help4TNDay – <b>Statewide</b>	4/2019		
Pro Bono Summit – <b>Statewide</b>	4/2019			
<b>Successful Implementation of Kiosks, Forms, Clinics</b>	Fund and announce up to 10 kiosks	4/31/18	Staff; Public Awareness Committee; Self-Represented Litigants Committee	Track use of kiosks  Report on technology access across the state
	Evaluate use and efficacy of kiosks	2019		
	Assess technology access/support in courts across the state	11/30/18	Staff  Self-Represented Litigants Committee  Faith-Based Committee; Pro Bono Committee; Mediation Subcommittee	Attendance and Feedback on usefulness  New forms and videos created or linked; Automated Resources  Hold pilot remote clinic
	Create a process to get regular information from clinics	6/30/18		
	Review and continue to build out the toolbox	3/31/19		
	Pilot remote legal and mediation clinics	10/31/18		

## Strategic Priority: Build and Equip the Network

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Year Goals</b>	<b>Actions/Tasks</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Key Metrics</b>
<b>Connect with Rural Bars</b>	Conduct listening tour to identify needs Identify ways to connect with unaffiliated bars	12/31/19	Staff; Commission members; Pro Bono Committee	Track # of attorneys reached
<b>Conduct training on rural practices</b>	Identify ways to tailor our services to local bars	3/13/19		
<b>Ensure our CLE'S are relevant and learner based</b>	Research and implement best practices on training and education on how people learn	On-going	Staff	Evaluations of CLEs and training events

**Strategic Priority: Capture and Promote Our Brand**



<b>1<sup>st</sup> Year Goals</b>	<b>Actions/Tasks</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Key Metrics</b>
<b>Implement communication plan to educate how to access services</b>	Using current plan, begin implementation and review regularly	Ongoing	Staff and Public Awareness Committee	Meet communication plan goals
<b>Develop mission statement and core values</b>	Use Commission meeting to design	6/30/18	Commission	Mission statement completed and used
<b>Seek a PR Firm for pro bono work on brand</b>	Identify and reach out to potential PR firms who take on pro bono clients	10/31/18	Staff; Commission Chair; ATJ Fellows	Pro bono PR firm secured

## Mission Statement

Following the planning meeting, the ATJ Commission began working on one of the immediate needs identified as part of the plan, to develop a mission statement to clearly define the ATJ Commission's role in the Tennessee access to justice community. The Commission worked over the spring and summer to debut the mission statement in conjunction with the strategy plan. Going forward, the ATJ Commission will measure its successes and potential opportunities using the mission statement below.

**The Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission  
provides collaborative leadership to create solutions and  
resources that address and eliminate barriers to justice for all.**

## Summary

The planning session re-emphasized that the ATJ Commission is simply one partner in the collaborative equal justice ecosystem in Tennessee. This Plan outlines how the ATJ Commission will continue to expand its role as the coordinating arm of this ecosystem over the next year. The ATJ Commission will evaluate the projects and goals outlined here in early 2019 and set goals to carry it into 2020. The ATJ Commission's work is not yet done, and it will continue to act with its partners to make access to justice a realization for every Tennessean.

The ATJ Commission wishes to thank the equal justice stakeholders and members of the Tennessee legal system who participated in its planning surveys. Further the ATJ Commission wishes to thank Liz Allen Fey, of Lead, Think, Do, for her guidance and leadership in developing this Plan and re-energizing the Commission.

