

2025-2029  
Strategic Plan  
United States Bankruptcy Court  
Central District of California

This plan defines the strategic direction for the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California from 2025 through 2029. The Court will focus on the following four fundamental issues to achieve specific and measurable results:

- Issue 1: Enabling Broad Access to the Court
- Issue 2: Fair and Effective Court Operations
- Issue 3: Judiciary Workforce of the Future
- Issue 4: A Flexible and Responsive Infrastructure

**Issue 1: Enabling Broad Access to the Court**

Issue Description. How can the Court assist individuals and businesses in need of bankruptcy relief or need to respond to a bankruptcy filing? How can the Court provide debtors, creditors, businesses, and attorneys access to the Court and its resources? How can the Court ensure open and frequent communication with and education of the bar in the age of remote hearings and less in-person contact?

**GOAL 1.1: OUTREACH TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS**

*Ensure that debtors and creditors know how to appropriately access bankruptcy resources*

Strategies:

- Expand outreach and education about attorney referrals, self-help desks, website resources, and financial literacy, as well as unethical bankruptcy petition preparers
- Enhance and improve the Court's website and social media presence for maximum effectiveness
- Increase outreach to underserved communities and partner with organizations such as educational institutions, charities, houses of worship, uniformed services, groups with potentially vulnerable populations, and other governmental organizations
- Support and facilitate self-help centers and pro bono programs throughout the District

**GOAL 1.2: OUTREACH TO BUSINESSES**

*Ensure that businesses know how to appropriately access bankruptcy resources*

Strategies:

- Have sufficient outreach and public education to ensure that businesses in financial distress are aware of bankruptcy laws, referral resources, and bankruptcy-related fraudulent schemes
- Investigate and identify barriers that prevent small businesses from accessing Court resources

- Maintain and develop relationships with a diverse range of organizations, community groups, and bar associations
- Study the existing business bankruptcy procedures to see whether there are barriers to business access

#### GOAL 1.3: OUTREACH TO ATTORNEYS

*Ensure that attorneys know how to appropriately access bankruptcy resources*

##### Strategies:

- Encourage greater judge participation in bench bar meetings
- Make efforts to educate the bar regarding Court procedures for in-person and remote hearings
- Create opportunities for informal non-case related communication with the bar regarding the improvement of the judicial process and Court operations
- Continue with *The Central Guide* sessions and explore other opportunities for training

## **Issue 2: Fair and Effective Court Operations**

Issue Description. How can the Court take into consideration the circumstances and needs of a wide variety of parties and professionals? How should the Court operate effectively so that cases are heard and ruled on promptly? How can the Court increase the fairness and effectiveness of how parties and professionals interact with the Court?

### **GOAL 2.1: NON-DISCRIMINATION**

*Deliver justice that is impartial and fair, regardless of financial circumstances, English proficiency, race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, pregnancy, religion, age, or disability*

#### **Strategies:**

- Ensure that the Court's website has multi-functional navigational tools for all individuals
- Promote the education of judges and Court personnel on issues of diversity, implicit bias, and cultural literacy
- Consider the adverse impact on parties or professionals with limited financial resources when developing procedures
- Facilitate in-person and remote access to Court proceedings for all individuals, including improved accessibility

### **GOAL 2.2: CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES**

*Enhance procedures and forms to be clear and responsive to the needs of litigants*

#### **Strategies:**

- Streamline forms, rules, and other resources
- Provide information in common languages spoken in the District
- Strive to limit variances and effectively communicate unique procedural requirements
- Develop mechanisms to improve proceedings involving non-English-speaking individuals and others with communication barriers, including the expanded use and funding of interpreter and translator tools and services
- Continue to develop and create a central repository of informational materials and media for Court users
- Expand the availability of automated Court information and data to the public and staff
- Encourage judges to provide sufficient explanation for litigants to understand rulings

### **GOAL 2.3: INFORMED JUDGING**

*Ensure judges have the resources to make informed decisions*

#### **Strategies:**

- Promote educational opportunities and access to the latest developments in the law and training for judges and staff
- Provide accurate and timely procedures and rules to judges and staff
- Ensure Court procedures remain in compliance with relevant statutes, rules, and policies

- Record Court proceedings accurately and completely to ensure that high-quality transcripts and audio recordings are readily accessible
- Provide resources and training on strategies for effectively dealing with litigants who may have physical or mental health challenges

#### GOAL 2.4: COST-EFFECTIVENESS

*Provide and promote cost-effective ways to resolve disputes*

##### Strategies:

- Support and encourage the use of alternative dispute resolution procedures
- Develop clear procedures for remote telephonic and video appearances that are
- dependable and effective
- Evaluate and implement systems to broaden self-help resources available via video

#### GOAL 2.5: ASSESS AND ENHANCE CASE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

*Improve case management procedures as needed to increase satisfaction for all user groups*

##### Strategies:

- Maximize system performance to allow timely access to process and review Court documents
- Streamline and simplify case management policies, procedures, and practices
- Identify and implement enhancements to calendaring and order upload programs to provide more efficient processes and additional management tools
- Review and enhance the use of digital systems in courthouses

#### GOAL 2.6: SELF-REPRESENTED ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

*Ensure that self-represented litigants are provided with access to the Court through technology*

##### Strategies:

- Improve the Court's website resources and access for self-represented parties
- Enhance functionality and ease of use of electronic filing
- Encourage electronic filing where consistent with Court Rules

#### GOAL 2.7: NON-ATTORNEY SERVICES

*Ensure assistance is cost-effective, appropriate, and professional when litigants use the assistance of non-attorneys*

##### Strategies:

- Monitor and work to eliminate abusive and fraudulent conduct by bankruptcy petition preparers, applicants and agents for unclaimed funds, and other parties
- Study new and emerging research and initiatives on effective and legal use of non-attorney assistance

## GOAL 2.8: SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT

*Review, design, and implement judicial best practices and partner with individuals, bar associations, educational institutions, and other organizations to share data and information to help improve the bankruptcy system as well as other related areas of law*

### Strategies:

- Continue to provide accurate and helpful case data and information
- Foster dialogue between bench, bar, and staff on best practices
- Identify and communicate issues on which data and information would be most helpful to judges, federal and state lawmakers, and organizations
- Continue to evaluate and expand alternative dispute resolution programs

## GOAL 2.9: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

*Seek the resources necessary to operate effectively*

### Strategies:

- Implement cost-effective strategies to manage limited budget resources, seeking opportunities when appropriate to engage in national initiatives and shared services with other Court units and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts
- Identify and offer opportunities for interns and externs to support the mission of the Court
- Pursue supplemental funding when needed to augment the Court's budget and provide additional resources for Court initiatives
- Maintain a culture of responsible stewardship of all Court resources
- Develop procedures and systems for contingencies including government shutdown, mega case filings, or sudden budgetary constraints

### **Issue 3: Judiciary Workforce of the Future**

Issue Description. How can we assist judges and staff in responding to a fluctuating caseload? How can the Judiciary and workforce reflect the community we serve? How can we pursue effective communication and collaboration when considering the size of the Court and its geographical complexity? How do we develop new and existing talent to meet the needs of workforce demands, technological advancements, and shifting public expectations?

#### **GOAL 3.1: STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

*Adhere to codes of professional conduct, ethical practices, and civility standards for judges, Court personnel, the bar, and other professionals*

Strategies:

- Maintain a workplace that fosters dignity, courtesy, patience, and respect
- Promote performance based on integrity, efficiency, helpfulness, and empathy
- Encourage the reporting of workplace misconduct and reduce barriers to reporting workplace misconduct through the Court's interactive Employment Dispute Resolution process
- Educate and train judges, staff, and volunteers on ethics rules and Codes of Conduct

#### **GOAL 3.2: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES**

*Attract and retain a highly-skilled and well-trained workforce*

Strategies:

- Increase retention of high-performing employees by offering continual, meaningful work tailored toward both the individual's existing and potential skillset
- Evaluate non-monetary employee benefits, such as hybrid and flexible work models, to increase employer interest
- Recruit people who possess the education, skills, experience, commitment, and desire to serve the public
- Examine workforce demographics, assess future human capital needs, and maintain a current workforce succession plan
- Introduce law students to the world of bankruptcy practice by providing exemplary hands-on work and learning experiences to externs

#### **GOAL 3.3: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

*Cultivate the continuous learning and development of the existing workforce to meet current needs in fulfilling the mission and future trends impacting succession plans.*

Strategies:

- Foster a culture of learning where judges, chambers, and Clerk's Office staff strive to keep needed skills current
- Enhance leadership effectiveness through continuous leadership development training and programs

- Promote career mobility through formal training and development programs offered both internally and externally
- Educate judges and Court personnel on and the use of existing and emerging technologies
- Encourage judges to obtain feedback from the bankruptcy bar on judicial performance

#### GOAL 3.4: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

*Foster a culture that keeps employees committed to the Court's mission and engaged in the work that they perform*

##### Strategies:

- Maintain a positive work environment that recognizes high achievement, satisfaction, and employee engagement
- Boost work performance and embrace change through continuous reinforcement of mutual trust, active participation, and connection to a shared purpose
- Incorporate employee engagement strategies that recognize and promote the importance of public service and each employee's role in the Judiciary
- Strengthen current employee and judicial involvement with the new-hire onboarding process
- Continue to support the Court's Strategic Planning Council and Centers of Excellence as a conduit to facilitate ongoing feedback and innovation

#### GOAL 3.5: LINES OF COMMUNICATION

*Facilitate clear communication within the Court*

##### Strategies:

- Promote programs and activities that enhance communication among judges, chambers, and staff
- Implement initiatives to ensure that all divisions communicate and collaborate effectively
- Continue to build an organizational culture that encourages open communication, transparency, civility, and consideration of all perspectives

#### GOAL 3.6: DIVERSITY

*Develop and maintain a judiciary that reflects the community the Court serves*

##### Strategies:

- Foster diversity in the Court's workforce by maximizing efforts to attract and retain employees of differing backgrounds, foreign language capabilities, and experiences
- Encourage law students and attorneys to enter the bankruptcy field to provide a diverse and qualified pool of applicants for future judgeship openings and urge them to apply.
- Emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion through leadership training and practices
- Institutionalize diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts through regular recognition presentations, awareness training, and micro-learning opportunities

### GOAL 3.7: COLLABORATION

*Maximize opportunities to work together to achieve the mission of the Court and enhance the Judiciary*

#### Strategies:

- Pursue opportunities to share services within the Judiciary, including no-cost and cost-reimbursable services
- Encourage collaborative work efforts through the adoption of project management principles, software, team-building exercises, action learning teams, and other efforts
- Volunteer to serve on national, circuit, and other committees and working groups to ensure the Court has a voice on critical initiatives and programs
- Share the innovative uses of technologies which highlight the individual strengths and talents of the Court

### GOAL 3.8: FLEXIBILITY

*Be a flexible organization able to respond to changing demands*

#### Strategies:

- Prepare employees to perform one another's jobs where feasible and appropriate to ensure uninterrupted coverage
- Provide the opportunity, knowledge, tools, and support to share work among staff in different divisions
- Enhance technical capabilities so that available staff may record hearings from any location
- Conduct ongoing reviews of the Clerk's Office organizational structure to ensure effective management practices



#### **Issue 4: A Flexible and Responsive Infrastructure**

Issue Description. How does the Court implement new technology to achieve administrative efficiencies and improve public access? How do Court facilities ensure continuity and remain safe and functional to accommodate future needs?

##### **GOAL 4.1: TECHNOLOGY**

*Develop, manage, and use the best technology to sustain and further efficient and effective Court operations*

###### **Strategies:**

- Maintain an IT project review process to determine project feasibility and prioritization
- Review the IT Strategic Plan to ensure alignment with the vision, goals, and initiatives of the Court and compliance with the *Guide to Judiciary Policy*
- Enhance and support the IT infrastructure to provide a consistent, reliable, accessible, and secure technology experience
- Assess needs and implement improvements in case management systems
- Participate in national committees and programs to further the development and advancement of Court technology and implementation of best practices
- Evaluate new and existing national applications on a frequent basis
- Institute IT project management and software development methodologies
- Implement solutions that enable better analysis of data, automate repetitive tasks, and provide predictive analytics

##### **GOAL 4.2: COURTROOM TECHNOLOGY**

*Develop a district-wide plan for courtrooms to support trends and advancements in technology*

###### **Strategies:**

- Examine courtroom technology guidelines and requirements
- Upgrade courtrooms to maximize use of modern courtroom technology and video appearance capability
- Implement procedures for the electronic submission of exhibits for evidentiary hearings
- Keep current on emerging technologies used by Courts and public and private sector organizations
- Analyze the technologies and associated costs necessary to implement virtual or immersive courtroom experiences
- Ensure Court recording systems are current and optimized for audio quality

##### **GOAL 4.3: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY**

*Promote projects to ensure the security of all the Court's information technology*

###### **Strategies:**

- Implement Judiciary IT Security Scorecard requirements
- Participate in IT Security Assessments and programs offered by the Ninth Circuit and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to promote security

- Leverage available security tools, resource packets, templates, and awareness materials
- Establish and maintain redundancies in all critical systems
- Expand security awareness through training and frequent communication

#### GOAL 4.4: MOBILITY

*Create a mobile-friendly Court utilizing a secure infrastructure and systems to meet the increasing demand and evolving need for connectivity*

##### Strategies:

- Provide users with the required training and equipment guidelines to successfully work remotely
- Utilize platform-agnostic applications and consider the potential for mobile solutions when initiating new IT projects
- Promote opportunities for digital collaboration and continuous improvement in audio and video technology
- Share and promote the use of collaboration tools and unified messaging applications
- Expand the use of and allowance for electronic payments, where possible, subject to the guidelines set forth by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts and applicable law

#### GOAL 4.5: PAPER REDUCTION

*Undertake actions to establish systems, practices, and procedures that encourage a reduced reliance on paper*

##### Strategies:

- Conduct a feasibility study on existing paper-based procedures to determine what processes may be automated or digitized
- Expand the use of and allowance for digital signatures, where possible, subject to the guidelines set forth by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts and applicable law
- Encourage use of existing electronic systems in lieu of paper to save time and space while improving access to information

#### GOAL 4.6: STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

*Improve systems and the use of technology through experiential learning*

##### Strategies:

- Involve public stakeholders in the development and upgrades of technological systems and solutions
- Implement new systems and solutions through pilot project initiatives
- Deliver pre-development stakeholder training
- Promote communication and facilitate the exchange of ideas through outreach and user satisfaction surveys

- Expand attorney representation and participation on IT issues

#### GOAL 4.7: FACILITIES AND SECURITY

*Maintain safe and accessible Court buildings capable of meeting the Court's current and future needs.*

##### Strategies:

- Identify, monitor, and address building and safety improvements
- Maintain an updated district-wide long-range space plan
- Pursue funding to ensure all courtrooms are ADA-compliant
- Participate in security committees to enhance security and safety
- Design cost-effective office spaces as funding permits to incorporate healthy, well-building-inspired principles
- Continue to strengthen the Court's relationship with the U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Protective Service, the U.S. General Services Administration, and lessors
- Cultivate close working relationships with all federal Court representatives to ensure the space needs of the Court are addressed

#### GOAL 4.8: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

*Adopt procedures that protect people, processes, technology, and facilities to ensure employee and public safety and continuity of operations in the event of an emergency or disaster*

##### Strategies

- Review and periodically re-evaluate the Court's security and emergency procedures
- Conduct systematic testing and training on security and emergency procedures
- Maintain an up-to-date Continuity of Operations Plan for the Court and Occupant Emergency Plan for all Court facilities
- Communicate and coordinate the Court's Continuity of Operations Plan and strategies with other Court units and appropriate public safety agencies