

## OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT VISION PROJECT

The Oregon Judicial Department is Oregon's state court system. We became a state-funded, unified state-court system on January 1, 1983, because leaders in the judicial branch, legislative branch, and executive branch came together in 1981 with a common vision for fair and equal access to justice for all people in Oregon. Since then, we have

- taken that vision farther,
- made it our own,
- studied trends that affect how we work and what our customers need,
- recently updated our vision statement with input from people who work in the courts, people who work with the courts, people who use the courts, and people who haven't used them but might need to use them someday.

### The 1994 Vision Statement **JUSTICE 2020: THE NEW OREGON TRAIL**

We began developing our first vision statement in a 1992 conference to consider the future of Oregon's justice services. Participants included judges, court administrators, legislators, local government officials, attorneys, police, corrections officials, social services representatives, other justice-system stakeholders, and media representatives. They tried to anticipate and plan for change over almost 30 years and began to develop a vision of Oregon's courts in the year 2020.

Following the conference, the Chief Justice created the Future of the Courts Committee to oversee this work. A standing committee of the Oregon Judicial Conference, it worked for two years on this initial vision project. After intensive study, discussion, and debate with judges, court staff, and various court users including lawyers and their clients, the Committee proposed the 1994 formal vision statement for Oregon's state courts in a report called **JUSTICE 2020: THE NEW OREGON TRAIL**.

Oregon's state court trial and appellate judges adopted the report unanimously.

The 1994 vision statement

- included substantial information on judicial reform in the previous 25 years and on how the Judicial Department has matured on as a statewide, unified court system;
- assessed the Department's strengths and weaknesses and identified the Department's core values and the strategic issues we faced in the early 1990s and will face by the year 2020;
- outlined the future that is probable if we do not plan to meet future challenges; and
- using scenarios and suggesting strategies, envisioned a better future that is possible if we actively anticipate and prepare for it.

## **The 2001 Vision Statement**

### **JUSTICE 2020: A VISION FOR OREGON'S COURTS**

#### **The Vision for Renewal**

By 1998, it was clear that the future approaches faster than we had anticipated in 1994 and that our vision was “NOFE”—not out far enough. The Chief Justice asked the Future of the Courts Committee to review and renew the original vision and assess our progress. He expanded the Committee to add court staff, legislators, attorney representatives from the Oregon State Bar, the media, and the Oregon Progress Board. Other members include state trial and appellate judges, trial court administrators, and several division directors and senior staff in the Office of the State Court Administrator. The Committee worked with a professional planner who helped the Committee develop a work plan and carry it through to a new vision statement.

#### **The Renewal Process**

The Committee on the Future of the Courts met in September 1998 at Willamette University to plan its work for the next two years. It set three goals and established a work group for each:

- Renewal, which reviewed the 1994 vision for outdated and missing material and proposed that the Committee convene a visioning workshop to seek broader input from stakeholders;
- Advancement, which developed the Committee's web site and potential strategies to promote the vision; and
- Monitoring, which developed potential measures to track our progress in implementing the vision, using the model that the Oregon Progress Board developed for its work in setting benchmarks that the state uses in its statewide strategic plan.

The Committee and its work groups have worked for several years to achieve these goals. The Committee convened the Visioning Workshop in June 2000, inviting various justice system partners and additional judges and staff in the Oregon Judicial Department to spend two and a half days to review the original vision and craft a new, lean statement focused on core ideas and strategies to achieve them over time.

The workshop followed on the heels of the May 2000 Citizens' Conference on Building Trust and Confidence in the Justice System, which involved 300 participants in the tricounty metropolitan Portland area. Those participants reviewed responses from citizen surveys, rated the importance of justice issues that the surveys identified, and evaluated the courts' performance and that of the broader justice system. The Citizens' Conference provided needed input to ensure that the new vision addressed the public's concerns and that the courts will work to meet the public's needs.

The Workshop also included insightful presentations by some of the best and brightest thinkers in Oregon state government and higher education, including the Coordinator of the Center for Population Research and Census at Portland State University, the state economist, the state chief information officer, and the Dean of Willamette University's Atkinson Graduate School of Management. They provided data on various trends and their implications for Oregon courts and the broader justice system and for planning to meet the public's needs.

The Workshop participants found that the original vision had much of continuing value. They worked to "refresh" the vision by culling outdated concepts and strategies from the original vision, identifying missing concepts and proposed goals and strategies for further development, and retaining the concepts and strategies in the original vision that have continuing value. That work led the Future of the Courts Committee to appoint a Visioning work group to consolidate the Workshop products into a new vision statement with goals, core values, and proposed strategies.

The Visioning work group spent several months developing that new statement, with further input from the full Future of the Courts Committee. The work group then invited comments on the draft revision from all state court system judges and staff and various other stakeholders by posting it on our intranet and by walking it around the state for discussion in focus groups and conferences from October to early December 2000. The work group received extensive feedback from:

- 15 focus groups for trial court staff and judges, and in some cases other stakeholders, in 18 counties, generating 156 written response forms as well as oral comments
- 3 focus groups for staff in the Office of the State Court Administrator and Appellate Records Section, generating 31 written response forms as well as oral comments
- 4 focus groups for outside community partner groups, including Citizen Review Board volunteers, attorneys, Oregon Dispute Resolution Commission, and Douglas County community service agencies, generating 55 written response forms
- 4 general presentations to larger conferences and meetings with a total of 370 participants, including the Oregon Association for Court Administration, Circuit Judges Association conference, Oregon State Bar Board of Governors, and Presiding Judges/Trial Court Administrators meeting
- individual responses from several judges and from the Eugene Municipal Court

The Visioning work group compiled the comments and suggestions to review—almost 200 pages of them. It revised the vision statement to address the comments, positive and negative, and the suggestions. The work group presented the revisions to the full Committee for further input, asked the full Committee to update the statement of values, and, noting any language in dispute, submitted the new vision statement with its goals and values to the Chief Justice and State Court Administrator for approval.

The Chief Justice and State Court Administrator approved the language of the vision, five goal statements, and revised statement of values in early 2001. They asked the Future of the Courts Committee to suggest strategies to meet the vision over time, drawing on both the original vision and on new ideas. Over the next four months, the Visioning work group and full Committee identified and organized those strategies for each goal and recommended them to the Chief Justice and State Court Administrator for use by local courts and the Judicial Department as a whole to guide their planning in coming years, for educating judicial branch personnel about our vision, and for informing the public of both our work and our vision for serving them well.

### **Our New Vision**

We give you the Oregon Judicial Department's newly refreshed vision – our hopes for the future – and ask that you give us your comments, your suggestions, and your hopes so that we can be mindful of them as we work to ensure equal access to justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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