

## The Pathway to Becoming a Judicial Center of Excellence

**Overview** – The proposed model to extend the reach and relevance of the Texas Judicial Council’s Shared Solutions initiative builds on lessons learned during *Shared Solutions 2.0* and incorporates the information sharing and court improvement concepts presented in the National Center for State Courts’ paper [\*“Herding Lions: Shared Leadership of State Trial Courts.”\*](#)

Participants in the Judicial Council’s *Shared Solutions 2.0* initiative identified nine areas of court management in which high performance could be achieved in Texas’ courts. These include governance, technology, data driven management, strategic thinking and planning, financial management, caseflow management, procedural fairness, professional development, and access to justice. Performance benchmarks within each of these areas were also developed. These benchmarks will serve as the framework on which participating jurisdictions will mark their progress toward becoming a high performing court—a *Judicial Center of Excellence*.

**Process** – The proposed approach to advancing the Judicial Council’s *Shared Solutions* concepts will involve outreach to court and county leaders throughout the state to invite them to become a *Judicial Center of Excellence*. The proposed model provides for two tiers of recognition:

- **Pursuing Excellence** – Following the completion of a performance improvement readiness self-assessment and submission of an application to the Judicial Council, jurisdictions can receive the *Pursuing Excellence* designation from the Judicial Council. OCA, as staff to the council, will provide support and technical assistance to jurisdictions that are designated as *Pursuing Excellence* to help them improve their performance. This designation will be valid for up to two years.
- **Judicial Center of Excellence** – Jurisdictions that are able to show evidence of improved performance can receive the designation of *Judicial Center of Excellence* from the Judicial Council. A participating jurisdiction will have to show that it has met eight of ten benchmarks in a performance area in order to be recognized as a *Judicial Center of Excellence*. This designation will be valid for up to three years.

The performance assessment tool that was developed as part of the *Shared Solutions* initiative will be used to establish levels of functioning and mark performance-related progress.

Each participating jurisdiction will determine which of the nine areas of court management on which to focus. Excellence can either be pursued at the individual court or court system (majority of courts in the same level within a jurisdiction) level or for the system as a whole.

Individual Court or Court/System Participation	System-Wide Participation
Access to Justice	Governance
Procedural Fairness	Technology Resources
Caseflow Management	Financial Management
Professional Development	Data-Driven Management
	Strategic Thinking and Planning

A jurisdiction that demonstrates achievement in all nine areas of performance can be recognized as a *Top Texas Court*.

