

Automation of Trial Court Functions

Overview

There is a need for the State Courts System to document and clearly articulate, to the legislature and others, the comprehensive automation requirements of the trial courts within a framework of defined functions and in accordance with the mission, vision, goals, and strategies of the Judicial Branch. This discussion, while ongoing for many years, was brought to the forefront by SB1718 and the publication of AOSC09-30 IN RE: Statewide Standards for Electronic Access to the Courts. The question of priority in automation was specifically raised by the legislature's Technology Review Workgroup (TRW) in questions posed to the Florida Courts Technology Commission (FCTC) at their November meeting. In particular, the TRW asked:

- **What court functions need to be automated/integrated in the various court divisions?**
- **What is the recommended business priority and implementation sequence?**

The FCTC charged the OSCA to lead an effort of senior court management to develop an answer to these questions. To that end, Court Services, with the assistance of Chief Judges, Trial Court Administrators and OSCA unit chiefs developed a broad list of functional areas that could benefit from automation/integration. At a meeting of senior court managers on January 5, 2010 a set of evaluation criteria was developed so that these functional areas could be assessed in terms of overall value to the court system. Finally, a meeting of Trial Court Administrators and other high level managers was convened on January 25, 2010 to determine court functional elements and identify a priority for their automation/implementation.

With input from court administration, program managers and other court leadership, this automation/integration priority scheme can serve as a foundation for the State Courts System's official position on the automation of trial court functions. This information is intended to be used as a part of the FCTC response to the TRW and by court leadership during the 2010 legislative session and beyond.

Methodology

The included automation schema was developed in a four step process:

1. **Information Gathering** – information on court functions was compiled through a variety of sources including Supreme Court Orders (AO09-30, AOSC03-16), National Center for State Courts information, and individual circuit processes and procedures. Input was requested from all circuits.
2. **Function Distillation and Evaluation** – all of the available information sources were distilled into a comprehensive list of twelve function categories. A decision process was defined to evaluate these functions.
3. **Brainstorming** – OSCA staff from all units met to solidify the function list and develop evaluation criteria necessary to prioritize court functions.

4. **TCA Meeting** –Trial Court Administrators (or their designees) met to finalize the court functions list and to determine the relative importance and implementation priority of those functions.

Trial Court Administrators Meeting

-SEE ATTACHED DECISION PROCESS CHART-

The Trial Court Administrators arrived at their results through the use of a decision matrix methodology that evolved over four phases within the January 25th meeting (please refer to the attached Trial Court Functions Decision Matrix).

Phase I: Review and adjustment – this phase included group discussion to review, adjust and finalize the court function categories/definitions and the decision criteria/definitions. It also included discussion to assign relative weights to the decision criteria.

Phase II: Ranking of function categories – In this first iteration, participants individually ranked each function category separately in each of the six decision criteria. The results were compiled, scored and a preliminary ordering was established.

Phase III: Refinement of rankings – in this second iteration, participants discussed the results of the first iteration and adjusted the ordering appropriately. In terms of automation (only), this ordering establishes the relative importance of each function to the courts.

Phase IV: Implementation Priority – In this final iteration, the function categories were evaluated to determine a priority for implementation in terms of the overall value to the court system. Dependencies and operational relationships were considered and functions were further grouped to identify those categories that should be implemented concurrently.

General Definitions (as used for this exercise)

- **Function-** Any court-related activity or project performed by court or clerk staff in the trial courts. In terms of priorities, the importance or characteristics of the function itself are considered, not the larger component that it might be a part of.
- **Automation-** The application of technology to the accomplishment of a function to allow that function to be performed with greater speed or accuracy, more frequently, with less human interaction or at a reduced cost.
- **Integration-** Any project that ties two or more computer systems together to share operations or data. For purposes of prioritizing the function categories, the exact implementation does not matter as much as whether the need for integration exists.

Trial Court Function Categories and Definitions (as used for this exercise)

-SEE ATTACHED TRIAL COURT FUNCTIONS LIST-

Case Processing- Those functions that involve the efficient and effective movement of cases through the court system. This broad category consists of the following subcategories:

- **Case Intake-** Those functions related to the filing and perfecting of court pleadings (including ministerial pro se' assistance).
- **Case Management/Tracking-** Those functions involved in moving cases through the various stages of the trial court process leading to greater certainty, predictability, and efficiency in how a case is progressing through the system (including pro se' assistance).
- **Case Scheduling-** Those functions related to calendaring and scheduling proceedings and case events.
- **Resource Management-** Those functions related to the assignment, monitoring, and analysis of resources that support the adjudicatory process and ensure the protection of due process rights.
- **Court Proceedings-** Those functions related to the processing of cases in the courtroom.
- **Document Management-** Those functions involved in the processing, maintenance and handling of court documents.
- **Public Information-** Those functions involved with informing the public about the court system.

Administration- Those functions that support the efficient and effective operation of the court system. This broad category consists of the following subcategories:

- **Budget and Financial Management-** Those functions related to financial management of court resources.
- **Personnel Management-** Those functions related to the management, retention, and training of court personnel.
- **Research & Data Administration-** Those functions related to the processing, analysis, and presentation of court data in support of court operations and management decisions (including performance measurement).
- **Technology Management-** Those functions related to the use of technology within the court system.
- **General Administration, Management, & Oversight-** Those functions related to efficient oversight and management of the court system that do not fit into other Administration categories.

Decision Criteria and Definitions (as used for this exercise)

Frequency/Effort/Scope (High → Low)- This criterion considered the automation of a particular function in terms of the scale or scope of that automation on the court system including volume, labor and statewide applicability.

Complexity (Simpler →Complex)- This criterion considers how involved the function is by looking at interactions between different process components including expected iterations with other data systems or sources, external agency coordination and other functional dependencies.

Importance to Strategic Issues (Most → Least):

This criterion considers the relevance of a function/automation project to the court’s mission, vision, strategic issues (incl. goals 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.1, and 5.1) and other core concerns.

Ease/Difficulty of Implementation (Easy → Difficult):

This criterion considers the how difficult or easy automating a particular function might be including a consideration of the cultural and process changes required, and existence of prototype or pilot systems related technological issues.

Monetary Cost (Low → High):

This criterion considers how much the automation of a function would cost compared to how much it would save or the value it would provide.

Workload/Productivity (Greater → Least):

This criterion considers the impact of automation on key aspects of court workload and productivity including primary and secondary judicial workload and judge/staff productivity and availability.

Final Recommendations

-SEE ATTACHED TRIAL COURT FUNCTIONS DECISION MATRIX-

What court functions need to be automated/integrated in the various court divisions?

A set of common trial court functions has been identified across all court divisions. All function categories identified -are significant to the court system and should be automated to some degree over time. For these function categories, the Trial Court Administrators determined an ordering of their relative importance to court operations. For example, Public Information is listed last because a great deal of automation already exists in this area.

1. Case Management/Tracking
2. Case Intake
3. Document Management
4. Case Scheduling
5. Court Proceedings
6. Budget & Financial Management, Resource Management, and Research & Data Management
7. Personnel Management and Technology Management
8. General Administration, Management & Oversight
9. Public Information

What is the recommended business priority and implementation sequence?

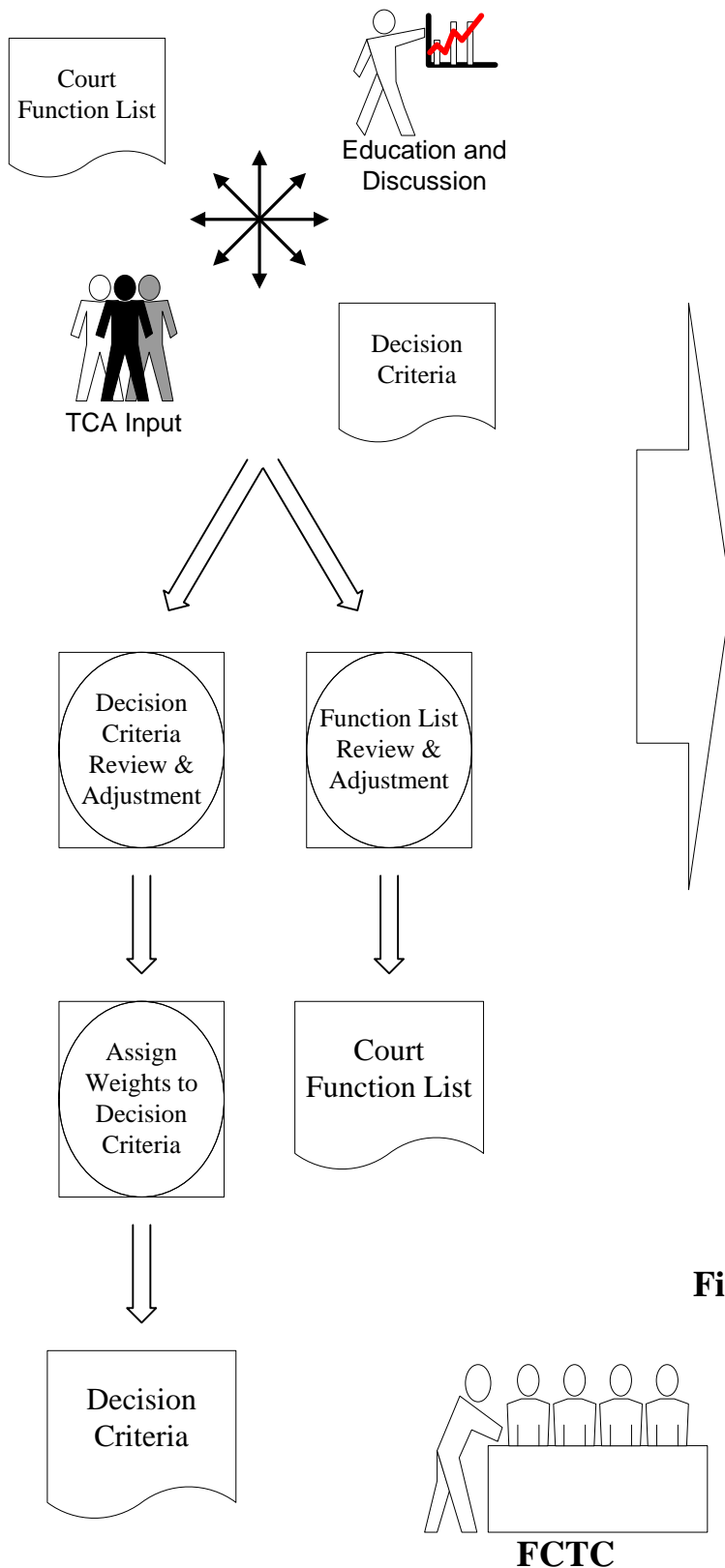
The recommended implementation priority may be viewed below. Functions given the same priority should be implemented concurrently to ensure inherent dependencies are addressed and operational relationships are maximized.

- 1) Case Management/Tracking, Case Intake, Document Management, and Case Scheduling
- 2) Court Proceedings and Budget & Financial Management
- 3) Resource Management and Research & Data Management
- 4) Personnel Management
- 5) Technology Management
- 6) General Administration, Management, & Oversight
- 7) Public Information

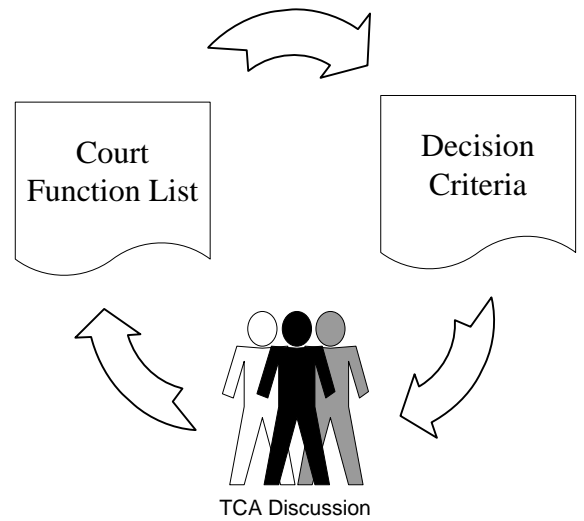
Court Function Automation Decision Process

1. Identify those functions within the court system that need to be or would benefit from automation and/or integration
2. Identify a priority for the implementation of that automation

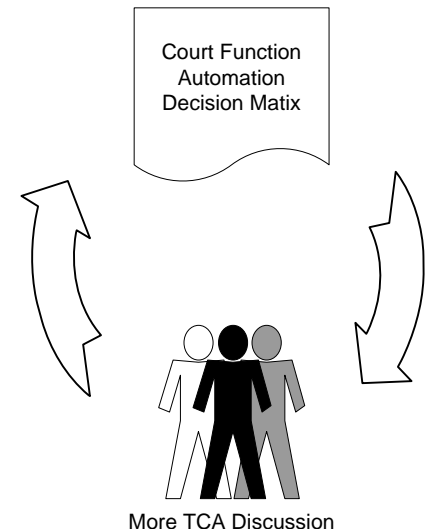
Overview and Discussion



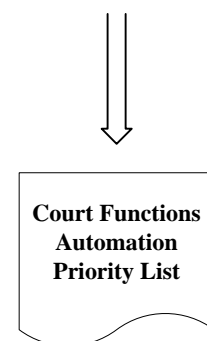
First Iteration - Ranking



Second Iteration - Refinement



Final Product



Trial Court Functions (as of 1-25-2010)

CASE PROCESSING	
1) Case Intake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • filing of cases • review of affidavits • ministerial pro se' assistance • perfection of case pleadings
2) Case Management/ Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pro se' assistance • initial review and assessment for differentiated case management • monitoring/triggering/notification of case events/progression (tickler system) • tracking/coordinating crossover cases • tracking attorney information • attending/participating in pre-trial interventions • attending/participating in case conferences • tracking discovery • monitoring the need for services & providing referrals • tracking competency and other evaluation reports (i.e., GAL, home study, service provider) • tracking compliance with court orders • tracking treatment and test results • tracking substance abuse history • tracking drug court client academic, employment, housing, health, income, etc. • processing child support delinquent judgments and drivers license suspensions • tracking traffic violation information (including drivers license suspensions) • jail population monitoring • review & authorization of search warrants • review & authorization of arrest warrants • tracking arrest information • tracking offense information • tracking booking information • tracking length of time in custody • tracking terms of probation • tracking defendant/litigant/juvenile demographics • tracking extradition • tracking school information and child placement (for juveniles) • case closure
3) Case Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • docketing/scheduling proceedings (tickler system) • calendaring
4) Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring/analyzing use and cost of resources • assigning and providing court reporting services • requesting, assigning, and providing court interpreting services • coordinating/tracking/providing ADR/mediation services • processing court-appointed attorneys • tracking/processing guardianship examiners and other expert witnesses • drawing jury venire and pool • summons jurors • reviewing jury excusals • orientation and swearing in jurors • assigning jury panels • enforcing failure to appear for jury service • maintaining jury lists

5) Court Proceedings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre-hearing preparation (e.g., case review, legal research, witness lists) • attending/participating in court proceedings (e.g., first appearances, pre-trial hearings, grand jury hearings, motion hearings, trials, panel conferences, pre-disposition hearings, disposition hearings, status hearings, judicial review hearings, post-disposition hearings, etc.) • locating dockets • accessing and reviewing case information (locate via case indexes, view multiple documents/pages at the same time) • accessing and processing forms • reviewing motions and other case pleadings • communicating with participants • rescheduling cases (continuances) • disposition of cases • prepare, review, edit, sign, and print orders/judgments • preparing sentencing forms • determining need to transfer cases • taking court minutes
6) Document Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • case file maintenance • archiving and destruction • review exemptions for public records • information redaction/ensuring the protection of confidential information • photocopying • certifying/notarizing documents • processing citations • processing official court documents (i.e., orders, judgments, notices, summons, subpoenas, writs) • processing financial affidavits • processing reopened cases • processing appeals • processing case transfers • maintaining list of process servers • preparing documents for court proceedings • maintaining court attendance record • evidence/exhibit maintenance & disposal
7) Public Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • processing public requests for information • providing public education • publishing verdicts
ADMINISTRATION	
8) Budget & Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring budget allocations, expenditures, balances • developing state and county budget requests • processing budget amendment requests • collecting and dispersing filing fees, fines, costs, payments, and special assessments • processing fee waivers • bond processing • paying jurors & witnesses • indigence determination • auditing and authorizing bills and vouchers for payment • financial auditing • purchasing and procurement • contract management • grant management

9) Personnel Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • processing payroll • processing benefits • processing timesheets • position advertising • processing applications • holding new employee orientations • processing performance reviews • maintaining personnel files • coordinating fair employment issues
10) Research & Data Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data management system development • data collection/transmission • data entry • maintaining databases/data warehouses • data quality control • record searches • developing reports/data output • processing data requests • performance measurement (e.g., monitoring- access & fairness, workload coverage, timeliness, quality & uniformity of services, efficient use of resources, reliability & integrity of records, collection rates, employee satisfaction, etc.)
11) Technology Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application research & development • programming • technology training • maintaining technology systems • other technology support services
12) General Administration, Management, & Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervision • program oversight • strategic planning • policy development • internal legal support • development of administrative orders • training & staff development • emergency management • space planning & utilization • ADA coordination • security planning • intergovernmental coordination • acting as a member or staff of committees • administrative support

Automation of Trial Court Functions

Decision Matrix - Final Recommendations

(Relative Ranking from 1 to 12 - Lowest is best)

	Phase II							Phase III	Phase IV	
	Criteria							Rank Order	Adjusted Rank Order	Implementation Ranking
	Frequency/ Effort/ Scope	Complexity	Importance to Strategic Issues	Ease/ Difficulty of Implementation	Monetary Cost	Workload/ Productivity	Total Score			
	(weight)	1	2	1	2	2				
Functions										
1) Case Intake	1	9	4	11	10	2	53.5	3	2	1
2) Case Management/ Tracking	2	12	1	12	11	1	53	2	1	1
3) Case Scheduling	3	5.5	3	7	3	3	35	1	4	1
4) Resource Management	6	5.5	8	6	7	6	62.5	8	6	3
5) Court Proceedings	4	11	2	10	12	4	63	9	5	2
6) Document Management	5	8	6	9	6	5	58.5	5	3	1
7) Public Information	8	2	5	4	8.5	7	59	6	12	7
8) Budget & Financial Management	7	3	9	3	2	8	54.5	4	6	2
9) Personnel Management	9	1	11	1	1	11	61.5	7	9	4
10) Research & Data Management	10.5	10	7	5	4	9	70.75	10	6	3
11) Technology Management	10.5	4	10	8	5	10	77.75	11	9	5
12) General Administration, Management, & Oversight	12	7	12	2	8.5	12	92	12	11	6