

LONG RANGE PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Case Management		
Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
1.	Expand site-based <i>pro bono</i> assistance program.	With the opening of the <i>Pro Se</i> Clinic at the Riverside Division in 2011, all five divisions now have onsite self-help desks to provide <i>pro se</i> parties with free legal information, reference material, and <i>pro bono</i> support.
2.	Encourage increased use of telephonic and video appearances where appropriate.	Judges Clarkson and Wallace hear Riverside Division cases assigned to them from their Santa Ana Division courtrooms by video conference. Chief Judge Peter H. Carroll hears Northern Division cases from his Los Angeles Division courtroom. In past years, Judges Bluebond, Bufford, E. Carroll, Donovan, and Neiter were assigned a portion of the Riverside Division case filings that they heard by video conference from their Los Angeles Division courtrooms.
3.	Encourage judges to serve in a different division at least once a year.	No updates to report.
4.	Facilitate the judges' ability to prepare more orders.	The mobile version of Lodged Order Upload (LOU-e), which allows judges to remotely access and approve orders, was implemented in August 2011. The Lodged Order Upload (LOU) program was launched in September 2007. Multiple enhancements were implemented in CIAO!
5.	Reduce Clerk's Office labor component for all case processing and case management functions.	<p>The Clerk's Office began testing an automatic discharge feature that will substantially reduce labor involved in this manual process. Lodged Order Upload (LOU) program launched in September 2007 and usage has increased steadily since then and is now more than 75 percent. ECF usage became mandatory on April 1, 2007. High volume claim filers registered to use ECF. Quality control tracking program developed to identify common errors and users with high error rates to target training/remedial action. Online training modules developed to replace CM/ECF classroom training. Clerk's Office also performs automatic dismissal of deficient cases to reduce referrals to the judges. Adopted district-wide procedures for the electronic service of adequate protection orders and relief from stay orders.</p> <p>Headers no longer need to be inserted for the Proof of Service (POS) and Notice of Entry (NOE), greatly reducing staff labor. Orders are now much easier for attorneys to prepare, reducing time spent by Court staff answering questions, such as how to add POS and NOE pages, and also time spent by staff fixing orders where the formatting was unacceptable due to the way in which the POS and NOE were imported into the order.</p>
6.	Standardize docket entries.	Trained registered ECF attorneys to use correct docket codes. Discontinued routine docketing of unused orders. Quality control tracking program developed to identify common errors and users with high error rates to target training/remedial action. Online training modules developed to target common errors/inconsistencies.

Case Management		
Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
7.	Explore the ability to process documents while working at an alternate location. (See also Human Resources Objective #1)	<p>Telework program in place. Clerk's Office staff at divisions also use electronic systems to assist each other as needed.</p> <p>In 2011, half of the 20 people in Operations Support, the Court's new centralized unit for quality control of petitions, processing discharges, and providing ECF support, began teleworking between two to three days per week.</p>
8.	Facilitate, as appropriate, the administration of small cases.	Proposals from trustee working committee being considered by Rules Committee. Made new national forms available on the Court's website for small business cases. Individual Chapter 11 Task Force developed forms that were approved for individual chapter 11 cases.

Community Outreach		
Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
1.	Expand relations with minority bar associations.	No updates to report. The Court has regular interaction with local bar associations in the District that have diverse memberships.
2.	Obtain funding for foreign language interpretation and translation services.	The Court's FAQs were translated into Spanish and posted on the Court's website in a project coordinated by the Debtor Assistance Project and funded by the Attorney Admissions Fund.
3.	Encourage effective cross-cultural communication in the courtroom.	In January 2010, the Court and Public Counsel initiated steps to partner with local colleges to have volunteer Spanish translation services available at reaffirmation hearings. The project, now spearheaded by Public Counsel, has students from CSULA and the Northridge Institute volunteering their translation services in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley Divisions.
4.	Create bankruptcy education programs.	<p>In 2011, the Clerk's Office initiated its "Raising the Bar" series of bankruptcy education programs conducted for Court staff by subject matter experts from the local bar. Raising the Bar programs are videoconferenced to all five divisions and the series is being taped for future use. The Education Committee continues to arrange bankruptcy education programs for the off-site BOJ Seminar, other quarterly BOJ meetings, and externs/law clerks.</p> <p>Sponsored by the chambers of Judge Saltzman in Riverside, the Court continues to offer three training sessions annually to incoming law clerks and externs, in the spring, summer, and fall. The one-day session is conducted by bankruptcy judges and guest speakers.</p> <p>In 2011, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court provided training to 143 law clerks and externs, with 69 percent coming from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court and the remainder from the U.S. District Court. Attendance jumped by 38 percent over 2010, from 104 to 143 participants, with about half of the increase coming from the Bankruptcy Court and the other half from District Court.</p>
5.	Create pamphlets in Spanish available for the public on the nature of chapters 7, 11, and 13	A Spanish translation of the Court's FAQs was posted on the Court's web site in 2009.
6.	Review all information available to the public and revise it to accord with changes in the law.	Public Information QC Committee reviewed the Court's website. Some changes implemented, including a major overhaul of the FAQs. "Don't Have An Attorney" section added to the Court's website. Project completed to modify Local Bankruptcy Rules, forms, notices, and other Court documents to conform with the Statutory Time-Periods Technical Amendments Act of 2009.
7.	Provide public education on issues such as separation of powers, judicial independence, rule of law, and <i>stare decisis</i> .	Judges often participate in panel discussions and programs sponsored by universities, law schools, bar associations, etc.

Community Outreach		
Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
8.	Update the Court's website periodically to keep it current and user-friendly.	The Clerk's Office has begun a major overhaul of its website to include search features and other enhancements that will substantially improve its user-friendliness. The Court's website is updated regularly to reflect current court information and processes, public notices, judges' practices, etc. A "Contact Us" feature was added in 2010 to get feedback from the public. All forms on the Court's website are fillable PDF files.
9.	Encourage legal assistance from <i>pro bono</i> attorneys for parties who cannot afford an attorney. (See also Facilities and Security Objective #7)	The Court collaborates with the local bar to provide free and low cost legal assistance to unrepresented parties through the Debtor Assistance Project. The Court now has onsite self-help clinics at all five divisions that provide legal information, reference material, and <i>pro bono</i> support.
10.	Make electronic filing more accessible to the public.	The Court began testing <i>Pro Se Pathfinder</i> , a national CM/ECF program for <i>pro se</i> filers to electronically file petitions, and will make it available at its self-help clinic in Los Angeles in 2012. Completed numerous ECF training sessions for members of the local and national bar. Online training modules developed to replace CM/ECF classroom training for new attorneys, as well as targeted error prone areas and LOU.
11.	Publicize appropriate means to communicate suggestions for Court rules and procedures.	<p>In 2009, the Court initiated the Bar Advisory Board. This board, comprised of representatives from local bar associations that provide feedback and suggestions to the Court, is a useful vehicle for communication between the Court and the Bar.</p> <p>In 2011, the Bar Advisory Board provided extensive feedback on the Court's new website. Two members of the board volunteered to be on the IT Committee and made valuable recommendations on operational and procedural matters.</p> <p>Judges and executive management attend local bar functions to maintain open communication. The Court continues to seek input from the public on local rules, requesting comments through public notices and the <i>Court News</i> publication.</p>

Facilities and Security		
Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
1.	Review divisional organization of the Court.	On April 1, 2011, the Ninth Circuit approved a five-year extension on the Court's lease on the Northern Division. Following consideration of a combined Northern Division and San Fernando Valley Division to be located in Ventura County, the Court has decided not to revise its five-division structure and negotiated a new lease for the San Fernando Valley Division, effective November 13, 2011.
2.	Create a plan for court operation in the event of a natural disaster or other catastrophe that affects all or substantial portions of the district.	<p>In 2011, the Court began using Everbridge, a system that enables the instant communication of emergency information to judges and staff by email and telephone. The Court's Continuity of Operations (COOP) team is working with fellow district agencies to coordinate agency COOP plans and recommend inter-agency policy in the event of a district-wide disaster. The agencies continue to meet to discuss preparedness issues on a monthly basis.</p> <p>The Court's COOP plan establishes policy and guidance to ensure the execution of mission essential functions in the event that an emergency in the district threatens or incapacitates operations. The plan is designed for activation during conditions requiring the relocation of leadership and staff to an alternate facility that may be geographically removed from the affected area. The Court's COOP has the capability to be operational within 12 hours of an emergency. It is continuously revised and updated to ensure that essential Court functions will be maintained under all circumstances.</p>
3.	Determine the amount of space used by the Court that is necessary to serve the public.	The Clerk's Office released 9,725 square feet at the San Fernando Valley Division, and has released 14,000 square feet in the Santa Ana Division.
4.	Establish a "virtual" courtroom system.	Santa Ana Division Judges Clarkson and Wallace hear Riverside Division cases assigned to them by video conference between the Riverside and Santa Ana divisions on a routine basis. Chief Judge Peter H. Carroll began to hear Northern Division matters by video from his Los Angeles Division courtroom. In past years, Judges Bluebond, Bufford, E. Carroll, Donovan, Neiter, and Robles were assigned a portion of the Riverside Division case filings that they heard by video conference from their Los Angeles Division courtrooms.
5.	Establish or create technology to enable litigants to appear from wherever they are.	Santa Ana Division Judges Clarkson and Wallace hear Riverside Division cases assigned to them by video conference between the Riverside and Santa Ana divisions on a routine basis. Chief Judge Peter H. Carroll began to hear Northern Division matters by video from his Los Angeles Division courtroom. In past years, Judges Bluebond, Bufford, E. Carroll, Donovan, Neiter, and Robles held routine hearings on Riverside Division cases by video conference from their Los Angeles Division courtrooms.

Facilities and Security		
Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
6.	Validate efficacy of Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) on a continuing basis.	<p>The Court's COOP plan is constantly being updated to ensure it adheres to the latest available version/template and that it reflects the Court's current organizational structure. In addition, the COOP development/implementation team has attended several COOP workshops and validated the Court's plan with those suggested by these workshops. The Court's COOP team also drafted a COOP audit program aimed at validating and testing the information and policies currently outlined in the COOP plan.</p> <p>In 2009, local COOP training was conducted for all staff at the Winter Education Seminar.</p> <p>In 2010, the Central District participated in the National Level Exercise: Eagle Horizon (NLE10). The exercise focused on testing the Court's ability to communicate during an emergency, as well as knowledge of the chain of command and the Relocation Team's preparation of vital records and equipment needed for relocation. The outcome of this year's exercise was positive, with all notifications distributed on time with the appropriate response expected. The Operations Managers/Supervisors were able to assemble in the desired location within ten minutes of the request and identify their vital records and relocation teams. They were all aware of the chain of command that would be used in the event of a COOP emergency.</p> <p>On May 25, 2011, a COOP Decision Team exercise tested the Court's reaction to a major earthquake. On December 8, the Court participated in a Federal Executive Board COOP exercise.</p>
7.	Explore providing space in the courthouses for providing <i>pro bono</i> legal assistance. (See also Community Outreach Objective #9)	With the opening of the <i>Pro Se</i> Clinic at the Riverside Division in 2011, all five divisions now have onsite self-help desks to provide <i>pro se</i> parties with free legal information, reference material, and <i>pro bono</i> support. The Court also makes rooms available for <i>pro bono</i> attorneys to provide legal advice to <i>pro se</i> debtors prior to Reaffirmation Agreement hearings at the Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Northern and San Fernando Valley Divisions.
8.	Make electronic locks and access to doors, elevators, and locations more universal, and limit physical keys and cipher locks.	<p>Judge Mund's office space in the San Fernando Valley has been outfitted with a full security package consisting of a monitor, an intercom, and a door release. This package, funded by the U.S. Marshals and installed by UDT, eliminates the need for visitors to use Judge Tighe's chambers entrance.</p> <p>In the Los Angeles Division, the Clerk's Office has begun installing card readers at the rear door of every bankruptcy courtroom as a security measure. Judges can unlock the rear door by using a card reader. Alternatively, the door can be unlocked by the card reader at the DECRO station. Similar projects are underway at the Riverside and Santa Ana Divisions.</p>

Human Resources

Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
1.	Evaluate and modify, if necessary, the use of the telework program. (See also Case Management Objective #7).	<p>The Clerk's Office revised its telework program to include additional positions eligible to telework and increased the number of days select operations positions can telework up to 3 days per week.</p> <p>In addition, employees are no longer restricted to teleworking only during off-peak hours, they are now able to work during normal business hours.</p>
2.	Ensure a smooth transition as senior staff members retire.	During 2011 the Court began developing a written succession plan. Educational programs were developed for future leaders and current members of management. The programs focus on leadership, communication, and technical skills. There are currently 68 staff members enrolled in these programs.
3.	Recruit and retain a workforce consistent with the court's technology.	The Court continued to use varied recruiting channels to recruit candidates with relevant training and experience, including utilizing online job boards and posting positions at local university campuses. A high percentage of new hires have computer skills and college degrees and/or relevant work experience, enabling these new hires to quickly become productive staff members. Employee retention continues to be relatively high.
4.	Enhance training for all staff.	<p>With the expansion of the Staff Development Department in 2010, total training hours completed by Court staff for all four periods of 2011 increased significantly by 40 percent, from 5,104 hours to 8,544 hours. Several noteworthy training efforts which occurred during the year included: CM/ECF 4.1 and 4.2 upgrade training; the Ninth Circuit HR Conference; and the launch of the CACB Virtual University.</p> <p>Two new leadership development programs were launched: the Gateway Leadership Program for current managers, supervisors, team, and project leaders; and the Paths to Success program for aspiring leaders. Monthly classes and development activities are completed by participants in each program.</p> <p>Classroom training on desktop applications, including Microsoft Word and Excel, as well as Adobe Acrobat, was offered at all divisions. COOP and safety training continued for Floor Wardens and staff with COOP responsibilities throughout the year. Staff members from across the Central District were able to attend the offsite National Conference of Bankruptcy Clerks (NCBC) conference. IT staff attended the Technical User Group meeting in Las Vegas and the U.S. Probation and Pre-Trial Services National IT Conference in Los Angeles. Annual training on Constitution Day, IT Security Training, and the Winter Education Seminar continued to be conducted.</p>

Human Resources		
Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
5.	Develop a new employee recognition program consistent with national guidelines.	<p>The Court implemented a new employee recognition program called Spot-on-Award for Recognition (SOAR).</p> <p>SOAR gives the opportunity for the Clerk's Office to recognize an employee's contribution to the performance of a team, division, or the entire district. Awards are given based on contributions to the Court in the areas of Customer Service, Outstanding Performance, Teamwork, Suggestions, Special Acts, and Special Service. Awards are divided into three categories: monetary, non-monetary, and time-off.</p> <p>The program also includes custom minted coins that are awarded by the Chief Judge or Clerk of Court for significant contributions.</p> <p>During 2011, the first year that the SOAR program was in place, a total of 372 awards were given to 201 employees district-wide.</p>
6.	Establish a mechanism for line staff to provide feedback to management staff.	<p>In 2011, the Court launched the formation of three Centers of Excellence: Process Improvement, Communication, and Employee Engagement. Members of each center were selected and will meet on a regular basis to identify projects which contribute to further enhancing the Court's performance.</p> <p>The Court participated in two surveys in 2011 designed to improve management and organizational excellence. As a result of these surveys, a suggestion box has been added to the internal website to provide employees an opportunity to provide feedback, ideas, or other suggestions.</p> <p>Also, a work smarter email account was created to provide an opportunity for staff to make suggestions to conserve costs throughout the Court.</p>
7.	Explore alternative work schedules for staff.	The Court offers telework opportunities for staff. An Emergency Telework Program was launched in 2009 to enable Operations staff, with prior approval, to work evenings and weekends when necessary.
8.	Implement digital time card and leave tracking/management systems.	A new digital timecard and leave tracking program is being evaluated with implementation expected in 2012.

Information Management

Obj.#	Objective	Accomplishments/Status
1.	Expand CM/ECF to all constituents.	The Court began testing <i>Pro Se Pathfinder</i> , a national CM/ECF program for <i>pro se</i> filers to electronically file petitions, and will make it available at its self-help clinic in Los Angeles in 2012. The Court now provides online CM/ECF training modules to improve access for those interested in obtaining access to CM/ECF or improve their skills. By the end of 2011, a total of 3,082 attorneys had been registered to electronically file documents via CM/ECF.
2.	Reduce paper/printer costs.	<p>Among bankruptcy courts nationwide, the Central District had the lowest Bankruptcy Noticing Center (BNC) costs per case in 2011, at \$13.15 per case. By comparison with the national average of BNC costs per case (about \$29), the Court saved the judiciary more than \$2 million in 2011. The Court also has the highest percentage of creditors who receive electronic notices instead of paper notices (41 percent).</p> <p>New networked copiers were made available throughout the Court to enable duplex printing, eliminate the need for separate scanners and fax machines while reducing toner expense. The use of PDF files that can be viewed, either from e-mails or from the Court's website, continues to increase (e.g., judicial committee minutes, procedural manuals, reports, newsletters, etc.). The Court studied printing practices and costs to help the Court make business decisions on how to acquire supplies and services more effectively and efficiently reduce expenses.</p>
3.	Enable <i>pro se</i> e-filing safely and in accordance with applicable laws.	The Court began testing <i>Pro Se Pathfinder</i> , a national CM/ECF program for <i>pro se</i> filers to electronically file petitions, and will make it available at its self-help clinic in Los Angeles in 2012.
4.	Educate other bankruptcy courts regarding the benefits and advantages of the calendaring program CIAO! and other software developed by the Court.	<p>Judge Peter H. Carroll and members of the Clerk's Office provided an overview of CIAO! to a national panel from the AO and other courts in 2008. In 2009, a member of the Clerk's Office demonstrated CIAO! to the CM/ECF Next Generation task force.</p> <p>The AO ultimately decided to go with a competing calendaring program, and the Court has ceased promoting CIAO! to other courts, but continues to enhance features in CIAO! to serve the Court's own purposes.</p>
5.	Provide computer terminals in Clerk's Offices for <i>pro se</i> litigants to use for filing court documents electronically.	The Court began testing <i>Pro Se Pathfinder</i> , a national CM/ECF program for <i>pro se</i> filers to electronically file petitions, and will make it available at its self-help clinic in Los Angeles in 2012.
6.	Enable e-filing of proofs of claim by high volume claim filers such as the IRS.	The Court registered the IRS and other high-volume claim filers to electronically file claims through CM/ECF.
7.	Modify CIAO! so tentative rulings are easily included in the docket as findings of fact and conclusions of law in support of court findings.	The Court rolled out the Mobile Judicial Calendar with Tentative Rulings application in December 2011. The application allows users to view judges' calendars and tentative rulings on mobile devices such as iPhones, iPads, and Blackberries. Tentative rulings can be saved to a mobile device for viewing or printing with Adobe Acrobat or another PDF application.