

FCCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE | ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

DO MORE WITH LESS

Rethinking Court Resources in the Federal Judiciary

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BASELINE CONTEXT

The Federal Operational Reality

3 ON-TIME BUDGETS

Times the federal government has been fully funded by Oct 1 since 1977.

28 YEARS OF DELAY

Years since the last on-time federal budget successfully passed (FY 1997).

118 CR FUNDING DAYS

Average days per fiscal year federal courts operate under temporary funding.

4 FULL-YEAR CRs

Fiscal years funded entirely by temporary stopgap measures since 2007.

13.2 VACANCY DURATION

Average months a district court judgeship vacancy sat empty as of March 31, 2026.

43 DAYS SHUTDOWN

Total days spent under active federal government shutdown operations this FY.

ROADMAP

What to Expect Throughout This Session

- Acknowledge Constraints
- Push Past the Pressure Cooker
- Surface "Hidden" Assets
- Optimize Existing Resources
- Think Strategically

Status Quo



Moving Forward

The Operational Pressure Cooker

AI Docket Avalanche

Generative AI lowers filing barriers, triggering a massive surge of complex, low-friction legal actions.

Caseload Volatility

Retroactive court funding metrics lag severely behind immediate, localized caseload swings.

Institutional Culture

Decentralized structures and deep deference protocols mean change must be built on consensus.

Rigid Structural Baseline

Internal factors beyond local administrative control:

- Unpredictable budget standoffs
- Stagnant capital funding programs
- Persistent judgeship vacancies
- Slow-moving hiring & procurement
- Inflexible staffing allocation rules
- Fixed and aging physical spaces

Rapid Tech Evolution

Courts must adapt to modern cybersecurity, network strain, and complex legal evidence parameters, while generally working with national legacy systems that cannot and do not evolve at the pace of technology change.

Trust & Public Pressure

Declining confidence in institutions fuels public demands for speed, access, and procedural transparency.

Security Strains

Soaring physical and cybersecurity threats strain already-limited federal court administrative capacity.

A Resource Worth the Investment:

Why Sending Your Team to a Conference Like FCCA Is a Smart Investment

The ROI Case

One actionable insight that prevents a single costly mistake — a failed hire, a missed resource, a preventable turnover — pays for attendance many times over.

Peer Learning You Can't Get Online

Direct, candid conversations with colleagues facing identical constraints — in big courts and small ones. The hallway conversations matter as much as the sessions.

National Network, Local Impact

Relationships built at FCCA produce shared resources, collaborative solutions, and peer support that outlast the conference by years.

Ideas That Actually Transfer

Concrete takeaways from courts that have already solved problems you're still navigating.

Vetted, Court-Specific Content

Sessions specifically designed by and for federal court administrators. No need to translate concepts from corporate or other frameworks that don't take into account the unique realities of the federal judiciary.

Awareness of Emerging Issues

From AI adoption to succession planning to budget advocacy, your team returns knowing what's coming before it arrives at your courthouse door, enabling proactive planning vs reactive responding.

Staff Development & Retention

Professional development signals investment in your people. Courts that send staff to conferences retain them at higher rates.

COMPOUND STRAIN

The Stagnation Vortex of Court Operations



The cycle is not broken by working harder. It is broken by thinking differently.

LOCAL RULE 5.5 PLEADINGS AND FILINGS

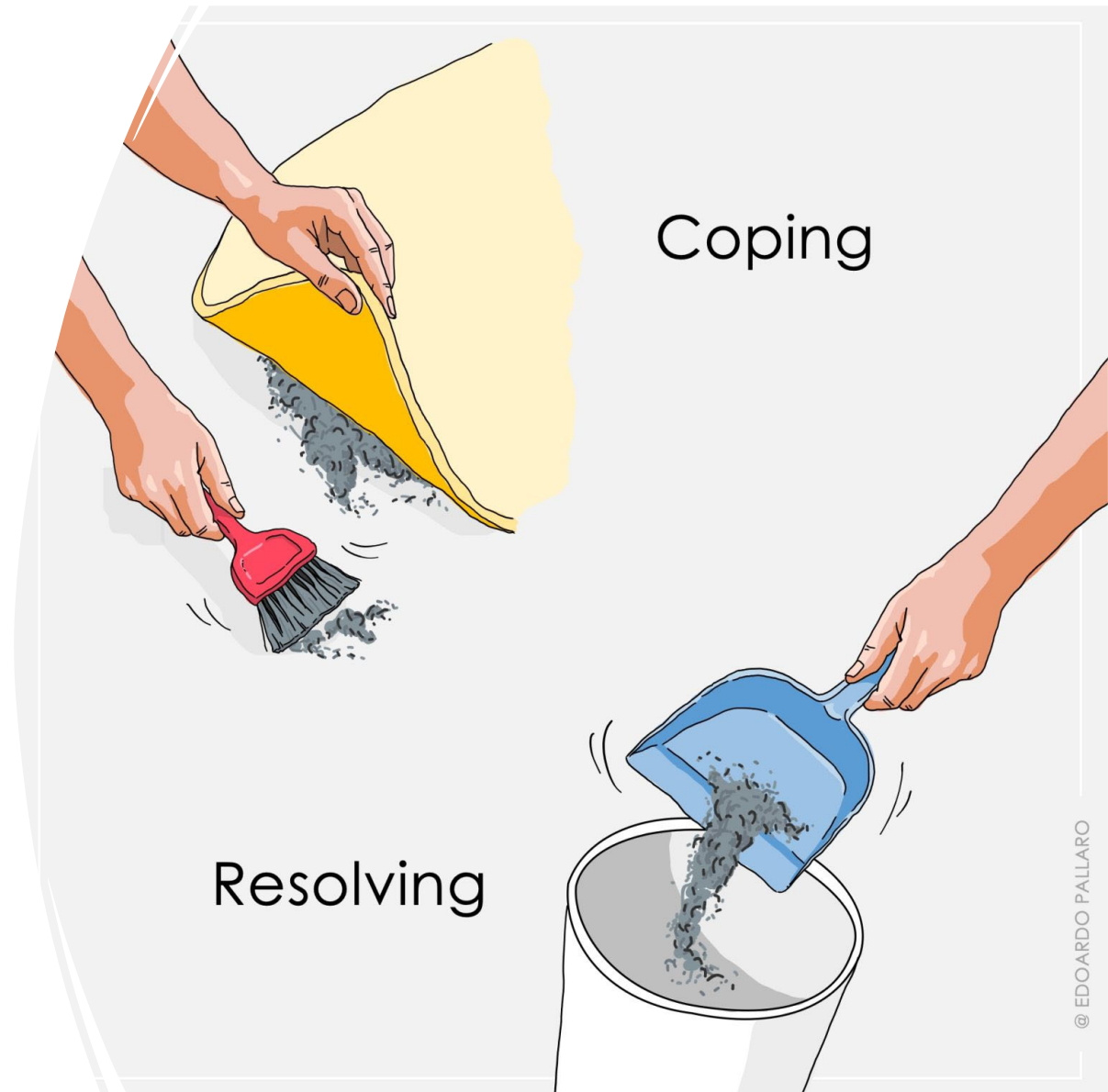
(a) The original of all pleadings, motions, and other papers, together with two copies thereof, shall be filed with the Clerk. All pleadings, motions, and other papers shall be typewritten, photocopied, mimeographed, or printed in type not less than elite, in double space, letter size, using only one side of the page, and shall be filed by the Clerk unfolded and without manuscript covers. Attorneys shall take notice of case numbers assigned to each case and shall note such numbers upon all pleadings, orders, and judgments.

RETHINKING RISK

The Myth of the Free Status Quo

Sticking to comfortable habits feels secure, but ignoring issues and deferring maintenance allows risk to accumulate and compound.

Strategic Pivot: Court executives must shift away from defensive risk avoidance and steer toward proactive risk closure.



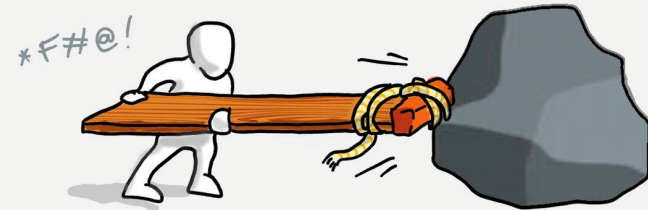
NOW WHAT?

Rethinking Resources:

- Surface “hidden” resources
- Optimize resources



It's not the resources,



but the resourcefulness



that turns limits into leverage.

© EDOARDO PALLARO

RETHINKING RESOURCES

Step 1: Surfacing “Hidden” Resources

Most courts are utilizing only a fraction of what is actually available.

The smart investments don't require adding an FTE or a budget increase.

OUTSOURCING

Strategically contracting specialized skills to expand the court's core operational capabilities.

Ask: Can I contract this out?

SHARED SERVICES

Collaborating with neighboring districts, partner agencies, or external organizations to pool resources.

Ask: Could this be shared?

INTERNAL EXPERTISE

Uncovering hidden technical skills that already exist within your employee ranks and the broader court community.

Ask: What can you already do?

OUTSOURCING SPOTLIGHT

Flexible Engagement Options

01

Task-Based Expert & Consulting Services

Temporary expert and consulting support — with root cause analysis, process documentation, and institutional knowledge built in.

02

Management Consulting

One-time, recurring, or ongoing advisory support for leadership teams and organizational challenges.

03

Transitional & Capacity Consulting Support

Former judiciary professionals engaged as expert consultants for defined-term transitional, surge, or specialized project needs.

04

Information Technology

AI strategy, IT audits, CM/ECF support, and more

05

Project-Based Services

Scoped deliverables with a defined SOW, timeline, and outcome.

06

Coaching Services

Certified coaches with federal judiciary experience — executive, professional development, new parent, and special circumstances.

07

Staff Engagement & Training

Workshops, training, team-building, and retreat facilitation; staff surveys; employment engagement strategy.

Guide to Judiciary Policy Sec. 520

Expert/Consulting services must be temporary or intermittent.

TEMPORARY: Continuous; less than a year; non-renewable

INTERMITTENT: Non-continuous; no more than 130 days of work in 12 months; renewable

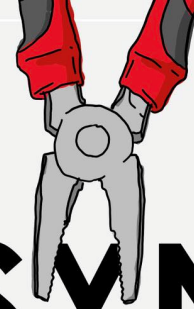
Outsourcing: Work smarter, not harder.

From

BUSYNESS

To

BUSINESS



ONE EXAMPLE

THE EMPLOYEE MANUAL REVAMP: ONE PROJECT, MULTIPLE BENEFITS

THE PROJECT

Overhaul 200-page employee manual with internal inconsistencies; outdated references; proliferation of appendices; didn't match actual practice.

OUTCOME

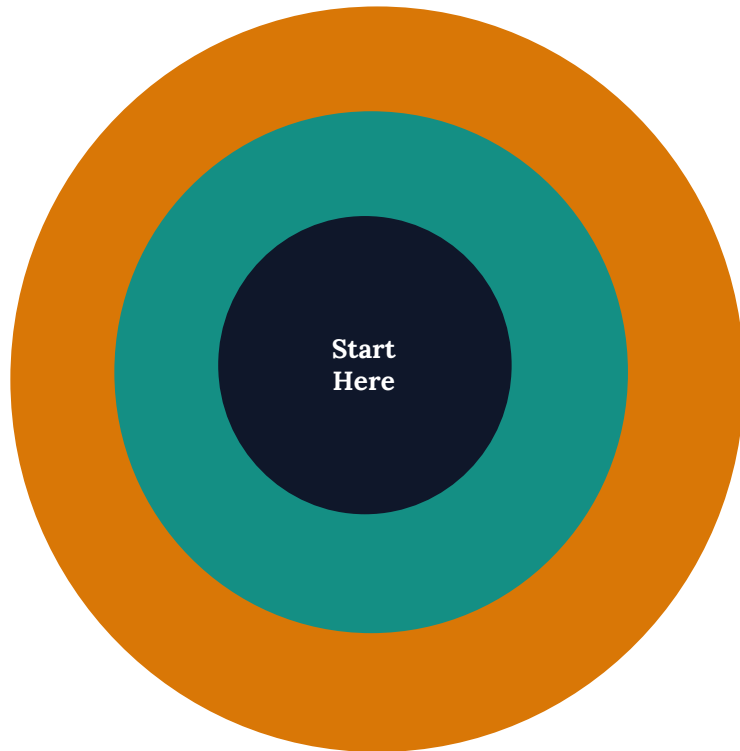
Streamlined 19-page Manual with self-updating links to national and other policies; added revision tracker; diffused responsibility for regular updates from one individual to multiple departments with assigned sections; created a sole "source of truth" for local employee policy; created not just an updated document but an efficient, updated system to maintain the document as a living artifact moving forward with built-in checks and no sole source of failure.

BENEFITS

- Saved innumerable internal administrative hours for present and future staff to review a bloated (and largely unused, though necessary) document, freeing staff to engage in higher-value work;
- Saved new staff time in trying to read and reconcile a 200-page manual.
- Eliminated ambiguities and confusion created by internal inconsistencies and policy clashing with practice.
- Improve staff trust by enabling reliance on policy rather than trying to navigate unwritten rules and office politics
- Aligned resources by appropriately delegating review responsibility and eliminating risk of single point of failure;
- Relief of crossing an overwhelming task off the to-do list.

SHARED SERVICES

Expanding the Collaboration Lens



Within Your Courthouse

The partners closest to you are often the easiest place to start.

Joint training with Probation/Pretrial · Civic outreach effort with FDO



Across Districts

You don't have to solve a problem another district already solved.

Shared specialized staff or systems · An interdistrict partnership on a shared challenge



Beyond the Judiciary

Look outside the judiciary for capacity you're not currently tapping.

University law school clinics · State court & agency partnerships

INTERNAL EXPERTISE

Surfacing the Talent Already in Your Building (and Beyond)

Ask Directly

Most hidden skills stay hidden because no one ever asked.

Structured employee skills survey · “What do you want to do more of?” conversations · Exit interviews that actually get used

Build the Record

Turn what you learn into something durable — not tribal knowledge.

Internal resource / skills directory · Cross-training log · Single-point-of-failure map

LOOK BEYOND CURRENT STAFF

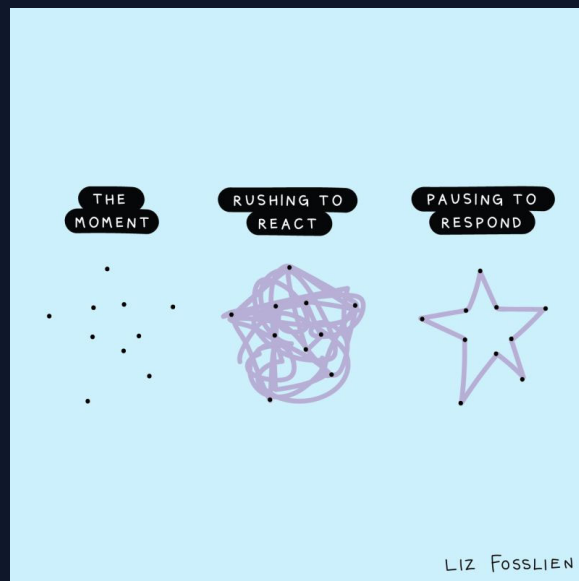
Institutional knowledge doesn't have to leave just because someone does.

- Alumni & retiree networks
- Former-employee “on call” arrangements
- The 3B Talent Community

RETHINKING RESOURCES

Step 2: Resource Optimization

Optimization is not about austerity or budget reductions. It's about thinking systematically and strategically to leverage the full potential of available resources.



OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

Surfacing and considering all available resources – including free, low-cost, and strategic investment options – when considering a court need.

Ask: What are my options?

ALIGNMENT

Ensuring that your most limited, irreplaceable resources – people, time, attention, and budget – are explicitly deployed where they create the highest institutional value.

Ask: Is this the best use of [my time/their talent/this money]?

STRATEGY

Moving from merely surviving resource constraints to navigating within them with deliberate, forward-looking intent.

Ask: Am I addressing the root issue? Am I reacting or responding?





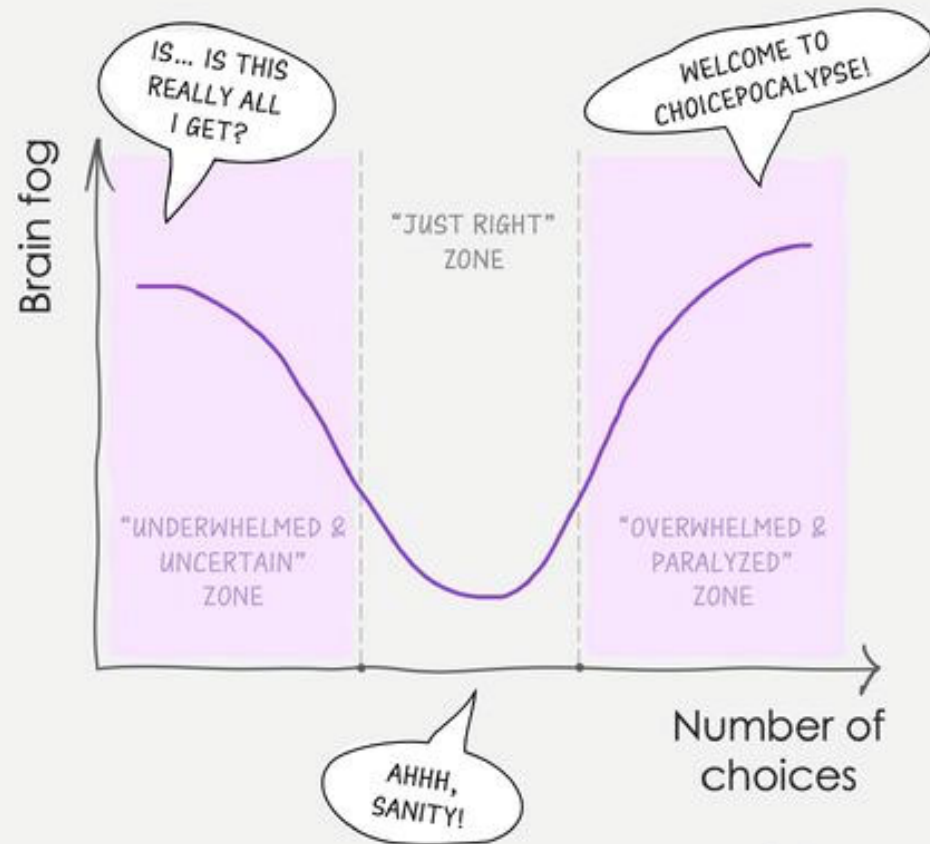
OPTIMIZATION BLUEPRINT

Opportunity Mapping: The Digital Resource Directory

[RESOURCES DIRECTORY URL]

BROWSE BY CATEGORY			
CATEGORY Court-Specific Organizations 15+ resources	CATEGORY Quality, Process & Management 7 resources	CATEGORY Alternative Dispute Resolution & Mediation 2+ resources	CATEGORY Access to Justice & Dispute Resolution 14 resources
CATEGORY Federal Workforce News & Events 6 resources	CATEGORY Technology, AI & Innovation 12 resources	CATEGORY Human Resources & Wellbeing 5 resources	CATEGORY Probation & Pretrial Resources 3 resources
CATEGORY Defender & Criminal Justice Resources 8 resources	CATEGORY Plain Language & Accessibility 9 resources	CATEGORY Legal Associations & Bar Organizations 9 resources	CATEGORY Law Clerk Resources 3 resources
CATEGORY Highlighted Federal Court Programs 10+ programs	CATEGORY Recommended Reading 2 books	CATEGORY Third Branch Solutions Materials 4 items	

THE CONFUSION CURVE



CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

Court Specific

- NACM and NCSC
- Highlighted Federal Court Programs
- Affinity Organizations

Stress Savers

- Informational Resources
- Niche Needs
- Plain Language and Accessibility

Potential Partners

- University Programs
- Emerging Tech
- Talent Community

Alignment: Deploying Surfaced Assets Effectively

Operational Calibration

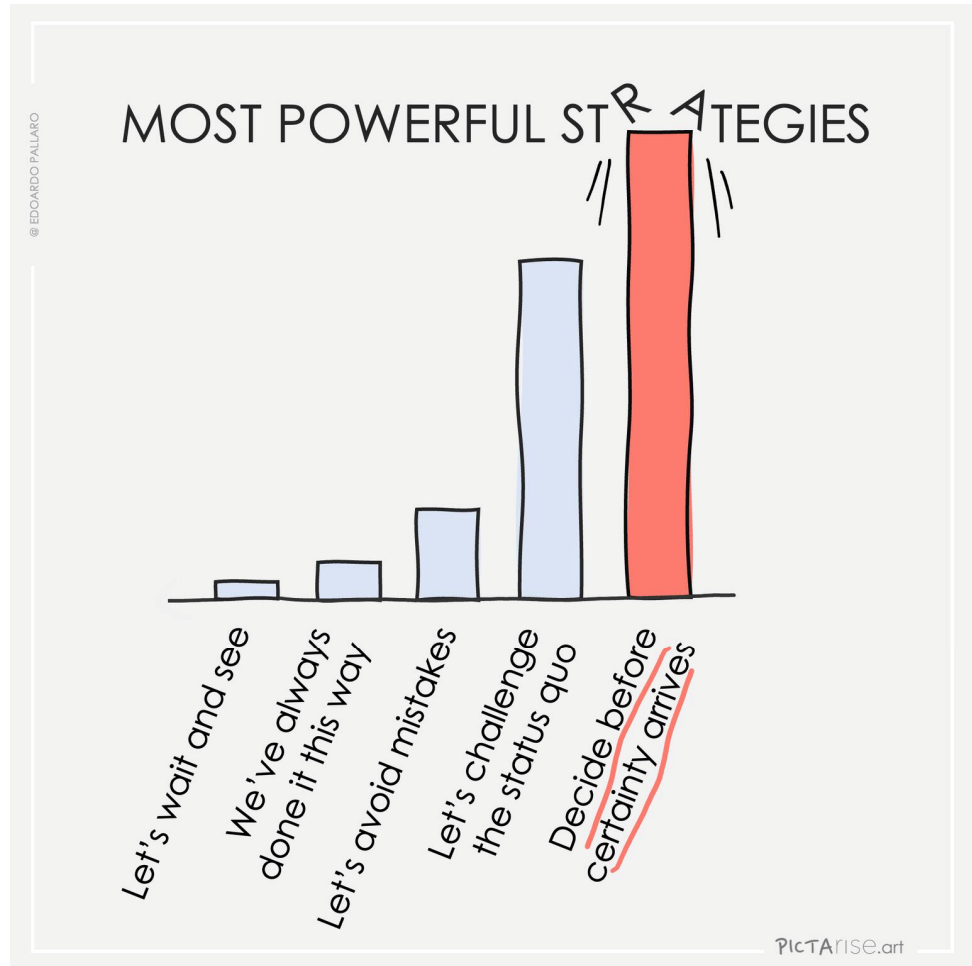
Surfacing hidden assets is only step one. True alignment means intentionally reorganizing staff, schedules, and attention to proactively address core priorities.

"A bad system will beat a good person every time."

— W. EDWARDS DEMING



Strategy: Deciding Before Certainty Arrives



The True Cost of a Traditional Hire

ONBOARDING FACTOR	ESTIMATED COST
Job Posting & HR processing time	\$ 2,500
Interview panel & review panel time	\$ 6,000
Salary + benefits burden (+30-40% load)	\$ 100,000/yr
Onboarding period (6-12 months)	\$ 50,000
Risk premium (bad hire resolution)	\$ 10,000
TOTAL	\$ 168,500+

* Placeholder values—customize locally to match specific GS grades.

Why Contracting is a Strategic Choice

Adding permanent payroll headcount under continuous budget stalemates and shutdown threats carries massive financial and management risk.

- Flexibility: Contracted services can be scoped, phased, or paused instantly. Permanent salaries cannot.
- Outcome Focus: You purchase a finished, guaranteed deliverable—completely removing hiring, benefits, and long-term HR overhead.
- Low Procurement Barriers: Existing micro-purchase thresholds make small, agile engagements straightforward.

RESOURCE EXPANSION

Filling Your Toolbox: Beyond Traditional Assets

Expanding the Scope

Optimizing operations requires looking past standard personnel or budget line items. Modern court environments rely on an interconnected ecosystem of technical, physical, and mental infrastructure.

Cognitive & Systemic Tools

Generative AI models, automated document assembly, workflow automation scripts, and centralized project trackers (e.g., JIRA boards).

Public-Facing Infrastructure

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platforms, automated web chatbots for routine public queries, and digital filing portals.

Physical Environment Assets and Inclusivity

Upgraded AV courtroom technology, ergonomic seating, dedicated collaborative whiteboards, and high-efficiency scanning hardware.

Spaces that are welcoming and inclusive of all staff and public users.

Well-Being & Resilience Tools

Calibrated time-management or deep-work applications, vetted mental health support apps, and internal resilience programs.

Making the Case Upward

Courts are risk-averse by nature. Frame your ask around what the status quo is costing — not what the investment costs.

1

Name the Problem

What is the specific gap, risk, or inefficiency?

State it in concrete terms — unclear priorities, fragmented systems, and inconsistent information are risk factors. Call that out.

EXAMPLE — Case data lives across three unconnected systems, so unit leads can't see current caseload distribution without manually reconciling spreadsheets.

2

Quantify the Risk

What is the status quo costing?

Staff time, turnover, delayed priorities — and what decisions are being made with incomplete or unreliable information right now?

EXAMPLE — Two staff spend ~6 hours a week reconciling reports by hand — over \$10,900/year in staff time alone. Leadership approved last quarter's staffing plan without visibility into actual workload imbalance.

3

Propose the Investment

What are you asking for?

Define the scope, timeline, and cost. Frame it as risk mitigation, not spending — you're asking leadership to close an exposure.

EXAMPLE — A 6-week engagement to build a unified caseload dashboard, at a fixed cost of \$18,000, with a working prototype by week 3.

4

Show the Return

What changes once it's in place?

What risk is mitigated? What capacity is reclaimed? Be specific — vague ROI claims lose. Concrete risk reduction wins.

EXAMPLE — Reclaims 6 staff-hours weekly, gives leadership real-time visibility for the next staffing decision, and removes the single point of failure in manual reconciliation.

The full Business Case Builder tool will be available to you via the QR code at the end of today's session.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

Avoid the Post-Conference Black Hole

01

Brain-Dump Tonight

Capture your big ideas in a notebook or on post-its you can move around. Do it again tomorrow night. And know where that paper is.

02

Prioritize & Ask “How?”

Take your top two and ask: How can I get these done? Build the business case. Rally resources. And act.

03

Email Future You

Send yourself the rest of your ideas — scheduled to send in 1–2 months. When it lands, run the exercise again: act on what you can, reschedule the rest.

END-OF-FISCAL-YEAR OPPORTUNITY

This is the point in the year you'll have the most budget certainty you're going to get. Don't leave money on the table.

Thank You

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Session slides & resources available at:

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