



LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN (PLAN) 2023 - 2025

National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers
Advancing Trial Court Leadership through Education, Research and Personal Growth

300 Newport Avenue, Williamsburg, VA 23185-4147

757.259.1841 office | 757.259.1520 facsimile | www.napco4courtleaders.org

An independent, tax-exempt organization in accord with Section 501(c)(3) U.S. Internal Revenue Code

Three-Year (2023–2025) Strategic Campaign

This document represents the second three-year strategic campaign (January 2023 through December 2025) for the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers (NAPCO). It was developed by a special committee which met during a full-day retreat on August 20, 2022, in Anaheim, California prior to the Association’s Sixth Annual Leadership Academy and Conference. The plan builds on numerous accomplishments and improvements since NAPCO’s first strategic campaign (plan) was finalized in March 2018

Key strategies the Association intends to pursue in this three-year period will continue to enhance the competencies and capabilities of judicial leaders, chief executive officers, and trial court leadership teams. As a blueprint for action, the strategies strengthen the viability and sustainability of the Association and permit ongoing innovation and operational improvements in leadership teambuilding, court user services, and justice system programs.

What’s a Campaign Approach to Strategic Change?

A campaign approach to devising strategic directions is a new, flexible, more open-ended way to develop plans to mobilize organizations using “vital improvement themes” rather than detailed strategic planning objectives. Results can also be achieved much faster. Formalized strategic planning frequently takes many months, involves cumbersome procedural steps, depends on detailed assumptions about trends that can easily prove wrong over time (i.e.; pandemic), and changes in priorities and leaders can divert painstakingly crafted objectives.

This new methodology is particularly suited to loosely-coupled organizations like nonprofit associations where organization leaders are volunteers, staff is limited, and most board members have little time to devote to lengthy formal approaches. Through a campaign technique loosely-coupled systems can focus on substantial and sustained planning, not the plan itself as a document. As such, activities can move forward by consensus not detailed approvals.

Strategic Planning Committee

Mr. Raymond L. Billotte, Administrator, Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County (Chairperson)
Hon. John J. Russo, NAPCO Board Chair, Court of Common Pleas of Ohio, Cuyahoga County
Hon. Erick L. Larsh, Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of Orange
Hon. Toddrick Barnette, Chief Judge, District Court of Minnesota in Hennepin County
Hon. Eric C. Taylor, Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles
Hon. Fred Horn (ret.), Superior Court of California, County of Orange
Hon. Pamela Pryor Dembe (ret.), Court of Common Pleas for Pennsylvania, First District
Hon. Paula M. Carey (ret.), Chief Justice, Massachusetts Trial Court
Hon. Dennis J. Smith (ret.), Circuit Court of Virginia, County of Fairfax
Mr. Alan Slater (ret.), Chief Executive Officer, Superior Court of California, County of Orange
Mr. Bob Wessels (ret.), Court Manager, Harris County Courts of Law, Houston, Texas
Mr. John A. Bello, Court Administrator, Massachusetts Trial Court
Mr. David Yamasaki, Court Executive Officer, Superior Court of California, County of Orange
Mr. Gordon M. Griller, NAPCO Executive Director
Ms. Patti Tobias, Principal Court Management Consultant, National Center for State Courts

Introduction

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”

... John F. Kennedy

A healthy democracy provides everyone with access to fair and impartial courts that safeguard the rights of all people, enjoy the confidence of the public, focus on truth-finding and the rule of law, and reflect the diversity of our country. Leaders of trial courts, specifically chief or presiding judges and court executives, play a critical role in ensuring these goals are achieved and maintained.

It is a reality in today’s world that leading and managing a trial court is a two-person job. It is also true that although judges and managers approach their jobs from different orientations – judges from a culture of professional discretion and autonomy, and managers from a mindset of organizational performance and accountability – effective trial court leadership requires balancing both perspectives.

When properly understood, the tension between these orientations has the capacity to both recognize the mutual interdependence of these points of view, and accept the fact that any other form of governance and leadership would detract from them and the purposes of a trial court to consider each case fairly and independently while ensuring the entire adjudication process functions in a timely and efficient manner.

As a nonprofit public benefit corporation, NAPCO understands this needed leadership balance and underscores it in our current

strategic campaign through four overarching themes, designed to: (a) strengthen the viability and sustainability of NAPCO; (b) promote continued innovations in education, research, and personal growth for presiding judges and court executives as productive pairs and for their court leadership teams; (c) create more energized and engaged committees; and (d) heighten NAPCO’s significance and outreach through webinars, special programs, mentorships and partnerships with other court improvement groups.

Strategic Themes Embody NAPCO Values

These four themes, in turn, flow from a handful of collective governance and leadership principles which are characteristic of a democratic court system upon which NAPCO is founded. To provide a clearer context for these themes, it is important to briefly understand some of NAPCO’s key governance and leadership values.

Trust and Confidence

The fair, impartial and efficient application of the Rule of Law is essential if the judicial branch is to be worthy of the people’s trust. We believe that through the actions of skilled, competent trial court leaders, trust and confidence in the courts and the judicial system can more effectively be accomplished.

In this belief, we conclude that critical leadership qualities can be learned and improved over time. Such skills include responsibly influencing and working with others; developing a capacity for emotional intelligence and active listening to empower and develop others; strategic thinking, innovation and courage to make tough

decisions; high and enduring concern for ethical actions and customer needs; and effectively collaborating and communicating with justice system partners.

Such skills exercised through positive, capable leadership are discernable in the work of a trial court and how it competently and responsibly interacts with court users and stakeholders in the operation of its judicial officers, staff, and programs. When such leadership is perceived and embedded within the decision-making practices and actions of successive leaders, it is our contention that community attitudes about the importance, value and worthiness of a court will ultimately rise as well.

Teambuilding and Collaboration

As a leader-focused organization, NAPCO is dedicated to providing training for chief / presiding judges and court executives in teambuilding skills between them. Collaterally, NAPCO concludes that it is vitally important to nurture synergistic partnerships between judicial and nonjudicial leaders at all levels in the court, not just at the top. Teamwork skills are essential throughout the court whether they involve a department or special project judge working together with court managers or a single trial court judge interacting with her judicial assistant or case coordinator to manage her docket.

Positioned at the center of the local justice system, the trial court is also the single entity vested with ensuring overall processes are fair and impartial. As such, court leaders have an obligation to coordinate independencies among justice system partners by working beyond the boundaries

of the court itself. This mandate positions the court as more than just a justice system stakeholder. It expects the court to take a systemwide, coordinating, problem-solving role to ensure the decisional independence of judges in individual cases, the institutional independence of the court, and the effective functioning of the entire system. The court cannot effectively carry out its role as justice system guardian without simultaneously promoting systemwide efficiency and upholding fundamental due process rights. Presiding judges and court executives are crucial to enabling those objectives by building workable and effective relationships with other justice system partners.

Succession Planning

An essential part of NAPCO's leadership and governance value structure is succession planning. The availability of mid-level and senior judicial and nonjudicial people to tackle future justice system challenges in responsible and effective ways is critical in sustaining high-performing courts. Succession planning must be built into the fabric of each judicial system at every level. NAPCO is committed to assisting court leaders in identifying and growing diverse, capable leaders within their courts, and helping them create useful leadership tracks and strategies that meet best practice principles.

Decision-making Courage

NAPCO promotes change, including disruptive, innovative change as experienced by many courts in today's uncertain, fast-paced world where we all have been disrupted by unforeseen problems (Great Recession; fluctuating caseloads; COVID-

19) as well as challenged by changes in our high-tech digital world. Court leaders must have the capacity to lead in such an environment. How will our workforce, work itself, judging, and access to justice change, and what should court leaders do now to prepare for it? In living in our turbulent times, leaders must be able to promote creative, motivated and empowered employees, which in turn, frequently means reorganization, reengineering, and new ways of providing products and services. Loyalty, trust and support from the top is critical in ensuring judges and staff can perform and bear the dislocations required by change.

Workplace Wellness

Increasingly courts are required to absorb responsibility for society's challenges and problems in the form of unfunded mandates, and ever-increasing numbers of court users seeking help and solutions with an array of legal, social, addictive and behavioral problems. Workplace motivation and positive morale can be challenging. Court leaders are powerful contributors and role models in tangible, everyday ways in making judges and staff feel valued and productive. Research shows four conditions allow employees to thrive: providing decision-making discretion (empowerment), sharing information, promoting civility, and offering performance feedback. NAPCO embraces these norms and is committed to providing leadership training and programs that promote them.

Customer and User Focus

Lastly as a new professional association on the national scene, NAPCO fully understands that if trial courts and local

justice systems are to be perceived and grow as accessible, legitimate institutions, court leaders must actively listen, clearly perceive, and creatively address the concerns and problems of court users. High-performing courts continually exhibit a strong resolve toward honestly assessing their impact on others and improving their services to the public. Essentially, they display an empathetic bond with their customers.

Unfortunately, all too often many organizations – not just courts – succumb to what appears to be a somewhat natural tendency to go through a metamorphosis over time and lose their real purpose; their reason for being. They “morph” toward greater concern for the members of the organization than for those they serve. And they can eventually become detached from their original purpose.

The promise of a trial court in a democracy is to promote and safeguard the rule of law through a multitude of ways by: providing clear, accessible access to court services; demystifying judicial processes; reducing unnecessary trial court delay; and ensuring fair and unbiased treatment. The essence in doing so well as a court institution rests squarely on the shoulders of court leaders.

NAPCO is a Professional Association of Presiding Judges, Chief Executive Officers, and Court Leadership Teams Dedicated to Improving and Leading the Nation's State and Local Courts

What's the Genesis of NAPCO?

Trial courts are essential to a healthy democracy where the rights of all are protected and justice is carried out fairly and impartially. Local and state courts are the engines of our justice system, handling 98 percent of all cases filed in the United States. They excel and flourish when led by skilled, competent, innovative and caring court leaders.

How Does NAPCO Spark Leadership Improvement?

Our goal is to utilize webinars; workshops; leadership academies; studies; publications; mentoring; annual conferences; personal reflection; and collaborations with justice system improvement groups to teach useful leadership skills and philosophies to presiding judges and court executive officers in order to help them develop as *productive pairs* who will work effectively with each other and their leadership teams to responsibly and creatively manage our nation's trial courts.

How is NAPCO Organized?

We are an independent, nonprofit, 501 (c) (3) public benefit corporation operating under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

What are NAPCO's Basic Values?

We value and advocate for fair, accessible, efficient, apolitical, inclusive and accountable state and local trial courts dedicated to truth-finding and the rule of law.

How is NAPCO Funded?

Membership dues, government grants, donations, conference and workshop fees.

1. Strengthen NAPCO's viability and sustainability.

The Association begins its seventh year of operation in 2023. A cornerstone educational event each year is a 3 ½ day Leadership Academy and Educational Conference hosted by a trial court. In the early years of the organization, NAPCO leaders purposefully decided to use its treasury to keep registration fees low and offset annual meeting and operating expenses to promote widespread attendance.

That strategic decision greatly aided the rapid growth of the organization as a new, vibrant and important professional association on the national trial court leadership scene. As of September 2022, NAPCO's membership registry totaled slightly over 350 court leaders. Moving forward, the Association now needs to ensure annual conference and operating revenues and expenses are effectively balanced.

Additionally, NAPCO has been fortunate for the support of the National Center for State Courts in its initial years of operation. Of particular assistance was the Center's allocation of a senior staff member to dedicate a portion of his time to function as the Association's Executive Director. Once that person retired from full-time Center service, he agreed to continue such duties pro bono. Recently, however, he advised the Board that in early 2024, he'll more fully retire and a successor will be needed. A key objective for NAPCO leaders over the near term will be to develop a succession plan and

make certain a smooth transition to a new Executive Director takes place.

NCSC continues to partner with NAPCO in presenting educational programming, providing faculty for webinars, and contracting with us for operational support through its Association Services (secretariat) staffing. In many ways, NAPCO's central purposes as an organization largely parallel those of the National Center.

To achieve these ends, NAPCO will...

- Create a balanced budget for all future annual Leadership Academies and Conferences beginning with the 2023 Boston event;
- Conscientiously plan all annual conferences in accord with the *Conference Guidelines* document developed for the Program and Education Committee;
- Minimizing the use of hotels as educational sites (use instead law schools, universities, urban convention centers, or bar association CLE facilities);
- Explore utilizing a single major city as a multi-year conference site and thereby promote multi-year contracts for cost savings regarding hotels and separate educational sites;

- Develop a workable goal of breaking even in years 2023 – 25, then achieve a positive cashflow for future conferences;
- Identify sponsors (not necessarily law-related) and increase the amount of funding from them for annual conferences;
- Consider periodically increasing conference registration and membership fees to keep pace with rising costs;
- Explore monetizing various leadership education curricula (example: videotape Academy Day and offer it as a package to court educators complete with exercises, scenarios, and hand-outs)
- Consult with the National Center for State Courts regarding options and ideas regarding succession planning in the transition to a new Executive Director;
- Ensure the appointment of a new Executive Director three to six months prior to the departure of the current Director to allow sufficient time for training, collaboration and knowledge sharing between them;
- Develop a detailed job description for the Executive Director | Chief Financial Officer | Secretary position;
- Examine grant funding as stipends, honorariums, curricula adaption initiatives, and technical assistance programming for educational programming, research efforts, and strategic projects;
- Obtain an SJI grant to livestream portions of NAPCO's annual conference; and
- Ensure annual conferences are fully digitized and as eco-friendly and paper-free as possible.

2. Promote continued innovations in education, research, and personal growth for PJs and CEOs as productive pairs and for their leadership teams.

NAPCO's unique niche in national court educational programming, research and self-improvement is its steadfast emphasis on promoting and strengthening leadership competencies and team-building skills among top judicial and nonjudicial leaders in state and local trial courts and within their leadership teams. We commonly do so through a Socratic approach, a structured, cooperative dialog between individuals based on proven leadership principles. In this way, we have found it is easier and more helpful in stimulating critical thinking and the ability to draw out ideas and thoughts about the everyday aspects of leading courts as loosely coupled, professionally dominated organizations.

In group learning experiences during Leadership Academy Day, educational workshops, and webinars, we strive to jointly engage judges and non-judicial leaders as productive pairs in exploring hypotheticals, scenarios, role plays, and interactive questions. In publications, research, webinars and personal growth studies, NAPCO employs a variety of teambuilding themes and lessons that emphasize ways PJs, CEOs and leadership teams can effectively work together.

In furthering these learning experiences over the next few years, NAPCO will...

- Continue to produce monthly webinars on innovative, relevant leadership topics from October thru June each year;
- Produce short *LEADERSpeak* videos similar to TED Talks featuring generic advice on leading courts from selected, seasoned court leaders;
- Develop and routinely update a detailed policy and procedures guide regarding annual conference planning and operations;
- Explore and secure grants to develop monographs, curricula, seminars, education programming, lesson plans, studies, or reports on innovative, helpful trial court leadership and teambuilding issues;
- Examine the feasibility of a leadership mentoring program for new or struggling PJs, CEOs, and leadership teams; and
- Evaluate the practicality of structuring leadership programming for specific types of trial courts (i.e.; rural courts, limited jurisdiction courts, lay-judge courts).

3. Create more energized and engaged committees.

As NAPCO grows and matures over the next three years, it is crucial that the work of its standing committees and their members be more involved and active in developing the services and products of the Association. They are a practical way to structure and manage the work of the organization and provide counsel and advice to the Executive Committee, acting for the Board, and the Board of Directors itself.

The Association currently operates through five (5) standing committees, exclusive of the Executive Committee. They include Finance; Strategic Planning; Membership and Marketing; Program and Education, and Website and Technology. The original thinking of the founders of the organization was to keep the number of standing committees small to facilitate collaboration among committee members was followed in restructuring the Association in 2015. Subcommittees may be created by committee chairpersons or a consensus of committee members.

It is the intent of Board, that the standing committee system operate in accord with the following overall guidelines...

- The function, scope, responsibilities, authority and organizational relationships of standing committees should be formally outlined and updated from time to time;

- An Executive Committee member shall chair or co-chair each standing committee and to the extent feasible co-chairs should consist of a presiding judge and court executive officer;
- The Board Chair, Executive Director and Secretariat shall sit as ex-officio members on all committees;
- Committee volunteers should be actively solicited from the Association's membership so that committee composition encompasses diverse geographic regions as well as different types and sizes of trial courts;
- Standing committees should meet via interactive video or tele-conference as necessary, but at least every other month at a minimum;
- The Board of Directors or Executive Committee may create *select committees* by resolution to conduct special investigations or consider specific issues which are not renewed on a permanent basis;
- The work and results of all standing or *select committees* shall be assessed and formally presented to the Board of Directors annually; and
- Adherence to best practices in committee operations is critical to ensure committee productivity (see NAPCO Guidelines on Productive Committee Duties and Obligations).

4. Heighten NAPCO's significance and outreach through webinars, special programs, mentorships and partnerships with other court improvement groups.

In Ancient Greece, victorious athletes were presented with laurel wreaths to wear. They, were, and still are, signs of great accomplishment, unless you start resting on them. That is to say... You get lazy or complacent or satisfied about what you've achieved because you're basking in the memories of former glories. This human tendency has significance for organizations as well, including NAPCO.

Since our Association appeared on the national scene in 2016 with the purpose of enhancing leadership skills for trial court presiding judges, court executives and their leadership teams, it has attained a high level of national prominence for its educational, research and professional growth accomplishments. It is vital to our ongoing work, that we not only continue to elevate our impact in promoting solid, enlightened court leadership programming but to do so at continuously high-levels and in new, increasingly helpful ways.

NAPCO also understands the significant value to our members of collaboration, cooperation and building alliances with other professional court and justice system improvement organizations. Given the breadth and complexity of issues facing courts today, no one association has the capacity to comprehensively address the myriad of topics that impact trial courts.

Collaborative relationships with other justice associations requires significant effort, open and transparent communication, and clear internal goals and directions. In that regard, NAPCO is committed to building strategic alliances with all professional court-related organizations, including most importantly the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), Conference of State Court Administrators, and the National Association for Court Management (NACM)

To achieve this initiative, NAPCO intends to pursue the following strategic directions...

- Improve the video technology for webinars through more professional video effects similar to television presentations (i.e.; use of titles for presenter names, picture in a picture “wipe effects” in transitioning between sources – equipment / software cost is nominal: \$800 for a a Black Magic Design ATEM Mini Pro ISO unit);
- Investigate the creation of a mentorship program for new presiding judges;
- Survey membership regarding leadership topics for webinar presentations.

- Partner with the National Center for State Courts on 2–3 day special seminars at a trial court site featuring Center experts and NAPCO PJs and CEOs, working as part-time TOPS employees thru the Center, on court operational topics (i.e.; caseload management, self-represented litigants, strategic planning, etc.);
- Develop an outreach program to new PJs and CEOs thru the Membership / Marketing Committee;
- Videotape all Academy Day presentations and offer special one-day seminars to various courts and states;
- Explore ways to partner with CCJ; COSCA; NACM; AJA, Council for Court Excellence, Center for Court Innovation, NASJE, Conference of Court Public Information Officers, etc.