



Webinars Resource: Lessons Learned on the Path to Creating a Racial Justice Blueprint

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

To assist courts in the development and implementation of their own racial justice blueprints, the Communication and Implementation work group hosted webinars with state court leaders who shared their experiences.

The workgroup's two webinars were - Where Do We Begin: [Lessons Learned on the Path to Creating a Racial Justice Blueprint](#) and [Maintaining Momentum on the Path to Creating a Racial Justice Blueprint](#).

Judicial leaders and state court administrators and staff from Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Washington participated.

The work group has distilled key takeaways from the webinars and organized them into the following focus areas:

- Policies
- Data, Research, Transparency
- Workforce Development
- Stakeholders
- Customer Service

POLICIES

Recommendations

- Identify policies within the court's control.
 - Examples include court rules, social media policy and EEO monitoring.
- Consider case type, measures of success and sustainability.
 - Criminal – fines & fees, bail, sentencing, juries, indigent defense, probation, risk assessment, FTA

- Civil – landlord/tenant
- Success and sustainability – will action or change create a one-time “success” or long-term change?

Progress

- Bond: New court rules that require least restrictive bond conditions, least amount of monetary bail to secure appearance with ROR taking precedence and use of universal bail schedule before initial appearance in municipal courts.
- Fines and fees: Initiative that suspended/waived collection of fees, no DL suspension for failure to pay and no late fees.
- Anti-discrimination: Single policy based on best practices to create clear expectations and responsibilities for all parties, establish process for filing complaints and timely investigative process, also addresses requests for accommodations.

DATA, RESEARCH, TRANSPARENCY

Recommendations

- Create databases to track information.
 - Personnel demographics
 - Program information and case process/outcomes
 - Performance goals
 - Racial equity metrics
- Work with research organizations to examine disparities and develop recommendations – focusing on impacts on people and recognizing their experiences.
- Survey staff about personal experiences, changes they would like to see occur and goals for providing service to the community.

Progress

- Collect race, ethnicity, and gender data.
- Create database partnerships with universities to develop data platforms that track interactions from first contact with law enforcement through to post-case dispositions.
- Conduct town hall meetings to collect information about court user experience.
- Develop employee demographics/diversity dashboard.
- Conduct a racial disparities study.
- Assess juror diversity using juror lists.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Recommendations

- Evaluate workplace culture.
- Assess recruitment and retention activities.
- Review and/or create leadership programs.
- Dedicate a location and/or staff person with resources to support your efforts.
- Provide experiential workshops to help staff understand the different types of lived experiences and perspectives of those coming before the court. Also provide instruction on how to have difficult conversations.

Progress

- Recruitment at minority job fairs.
- Create culture of inclusivity through staff webinar series, topical conversations.
- Provide staff DEI training.
- Develop leadership program designed for attorneys from diverse backgrounds to create path to judiciary.
- Offer listening sessions for employees to share experiences.
- Evaluate hiring process.

STAKEHOLDERS

Recommendations

- Gain buy-in for your efforts. Outline shared goals/vision and report out to the public.
- Enlist the support from your Supreme Court to guide your work and garner support from others.
- Develop a video on bias for jurors, clerks, staff, etc.
- Identify ways to include the legislative and executive branches in your efforts.
- Include advocates, interest groups, service providers, re-entry councils and others in your activities as appropriate.

Progress

- Develop videos to address a range of topics, including unconscious bias for jurors.
- Establish advisory councils and committees with advocates, legislature, public defender leadership.
- Adopt social media policy with guidelines/boundaries addressing bias and prohibited conduct.
- Launch educational campaign to promote equity.
- Engage with public through town hall meetings.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Recommendations

- Find ways to make court a more inclusive experience to build community trust. Examples include interpreters, art in public spaces, nametags, etc.
- Tap into local resources to improve outcomes for people coming to court.
- Solicit feedback from the public and court users through listening sessions, town halls and other public events.
- Gain support from community experts and celebrate your successes with the community as a whole.

Progress

- Work with federally recognized tribes on issues that affect their members.
- Develop deeper trust between court staff and the community with service-oriented gestures like name tags.
- Conduct listening sessions and community conversations on race.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

- Leverage the influence of your chief justice or judicial leader to engage disinterested parties.
- Ensure your efforts are properly staffed to obtain maximum results.
- Invest time in developing productive relationships with community partners and service providers in communities of color without appearing defensive.
- Be creative with limited resources.
- Set deadlines to keep projects on track.
- Document a baseline and incremental developments to monitor progress.
- Work across all levels of an organization.
- Conduct a racial disparities study.
- Assess juror diversity using juror lists.

Visit ncsc.org/racialjustice for additional information.

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