

Department of Information Technology

LOB #134:

COURTROOM TECHNOLOGY

Purpose

The Courtroom Technology Office (CrTO) LOB was developed in partnership between the three Fairfax County Courts (Circuit Court and Records, General District Court (GDC), Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC)) and the Fairfax County Department of Information Technology (DIT). The CrTO was created to implement modern courtroom technology and automation for 40 operational courtrooms and related support offices. The CrTO coordinates research, and facilitates automation and technological enhancements throughout the court system to include the Courts, Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney, Office of the Sheriff, Fairfax Bar Association, and the Fairfax Law Library. The CrTO ensures that judges, support staff, and administrative personnel have complete and reliable access to information and the necessary technological support for high-tech trials and proceedings.

Description

The Courtroom Technology Office (CrTO) is a Department of Information Technology function created in 2007 supporting all three Courts, managed by a Courtroom Technology Officer, under the direction of the Chief Judge, Clerk of the Court, and the Fairfax County Chief Technology Officer. Core services for courtroom technologies include planning, design, implementation, maintenance and support for court proceedings. The CrTO provides expertise in the prevailing technologies and trends in courtroom management, knowledge of proceedings and protocols in all three Courts, including state legislative and judicial requirements.

The CrTO LOB was initially a discrete, specialized program with three staff, supporting the General District, Circuit and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, focusing specifically on providing expertise and project management for courtroom technology for newly constructed courtrooms. Upon the successful completion of 14 new high-tech courtrooms, the CrTO activity expanded to include additional courthouse construction-related projects (26 renovated courtrooms, data center modernization, etc.), as well as directing numerous application projects, and supporting day-to-day IT operations for the courts. In 2014, CrTO also began supporting the technology needs of the Office of the Commonwealth Attorney.

The CrTO primary objectives in carrying out its work include:

- Improve citizens access to the courts
- Facilitate trials and hearings
- Share common resources
- Consistency, flexibility, adaptability, scalability

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The CrTO ensures that judges, support staff and administrative personnel of the 19th Judicial Circuit have reliable access to the information they need and the technological support required for high-tech trials and proceedings. Technologies include:

- Courtroom Technology Management System (CTMS)
- Courtroom Digital Audio Recording (CDAR)
- Enhanced Courtroom Interpreting (ECI)
- Video Teleconferencing for video arraignments, remote testimony, protected witness, audio/video overflow monitoring, remote petitions and protective court orders
- Judge, Clerk, Attorney and Presenters Management Control Panels
- Electronic Wayfinding and Automated Dockets
- Public and Private Wireless Access, Mobile Workforce
- Virtually Connected Courtrooms - Towns of Herndon and Vienna
- Specific on-going projects for the courts including scanning and case imaging, automated civil enforcement processing, calendaring and reservation systems and bring your own device capabilities

Courthouse and courtroom technology must be closely aligned with state and local agencies to facilitate the flow of information to the Court system and to broaden the spectrum of information sources available to the Courts. The CrTO provides:

- Strategic planning for effective use of the courts' information resources
- Research, development, implementation and support of modern courtroom technologies
- Project Management for implementation of Courthouse and courtroom technological solutions
- Guidance to ensure compliance with County IT Strategic Plan and Corporate Enterprise policies and procedures
- A judicial and executive management forum for policy and decision-making via the Court Technology Executive Governance Board.
- Liaison and partnership opportunities between the Courts, County, Supreme Court of Virginia, and other jurisdictions
- Staff support to the Judiciary and affiliated court services-related organizations

The CrTO collaborates with the Agencies Software Solutions and Development Support, Technology Infrastructure, and Cyber Security LOBs in DIT and may draw upon those resources as needed. In carrying out its mission, the CrTO coordinates Court technology systems requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia through partnership with the State's Supreme Court.

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Benefits

The CrTO primary objectives in carrying out its work include: improving citizen access to the courts; facilitating greater efficiency and manageability in conducting trials and hearings; sharing common resources; and providing consistency, flexibility, adaptability, scalability for the associated technology solutions and resources.

Substantial benefits and opportunities have been realized by centralizing courtroom technology between the three courts and sharing resources and infrastructure. This LOB has leveraged limited resources and saved the County the cost of having to staff individual positions for each Court, and while resources are extremely limited compared to the mission and duties, has performed remarkably well. The technologies in the Courtroom have provided for:

- Greater efficiencies in trial proceedings
- Cost savings for some cases in travel for litigants
- Made the court more responsive to the needs of the increasingly diverse client population served
- Strengthened compliance
- Greater efficiency in handling of intake
- Supported the integrity of Court process and data
- Modernization to accommodate the broad consumer and business use of technology

The implementation of Court Technology solutions have also improved trial management, and provided savings for the County, the courts, attorneys, and litigants.

This LOB is considered a best practice by the Center for Legal and Court Technology (aka Courtroom 21 Project – College of William & Mary Law School), and is an active participant in Court conferences nationally. The program has also been lauded by the Fairfax Bar Association and has received the following honors:

- Governor's Technology Award, 2012 "*IT as Efficiency Driver, Court and County Collaborative Partnership Model*"
- VACO (Virginia Association of Counties) Achievement Award, 2012 Innovative County Program "*DIT Court Technology Model: Coordinated County and Courts*"
- NACO (National Association of Counties) Achievement Award, 2009 Best-In Category "*Courtroom Technology Management System*"

Mandates

This Line of Business is not mandated; however, the CrTO does support multiple court programs and services that are mandated.

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Trends and Challenges

There are ongoing challenges relevant to the growth and changes in population and demographics to be served including Non-English speaking clientele; security and confidentiality of court-related information handling; and the rapid pace of change in technology and adoption of technology correlated to the law and legal proceedings.

There is a major challenge in keeping up with the required technology investments, and in providing adequate resources to support internal and external demands. Currently, 18 of 40 courtroom technology management system (CTMS) courtrooms require hardware replacement and digital refresh. An additional 11 courtrooms will be renovated and integrated with CTMS over the next three years.

The courts are highly reliant on the CrTO to be able to conduct technology dependent court trials and proceedings. Any lapse in technology slated for use to run a trial can contribute to continuances and rescheduling or other worse scenarios. To remain effective and to be able to maintain service level expectations, CTMS equipment lifecycle replacement schedules must make sense and can't be spread too far between cycles. CrTO technology is unique, and while newer solutions are tending to use more industry standards, special skills are still required for implementation and operations. Existing staff will not be able to maintain the pace of keeping up with the current inventory, changes in technology, support for additional courtrooms and existing field offices, and multiple on-going applications and non-courtroom related projects.

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
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FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$498,595	\$498,560	\$505,240
Operating Expenses	239,657	298,880	295,000
Total Expenditures	\$738,252	\$797,440	\$800,240
General Fund Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$738,252	\$797,440	\$800,240
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	5 / 5	5 / 5	5 / 5
Total Positions	5 / 5	5 / 5	5 / 5

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Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Number of Courtroom Production checks	4,996	4,950	4,975	5,977	6,867
Number of Help Desk Calls	642	878	1,982	2,388	2,500

Courtroom Technology is projecting an increase in both Courtroom Production checks (daily audio-visual and other system-related checks) and help desk calls as the operation attempts to keep pace with 600 users spread throughout the courthouse and 14 remote locations, and equipment to include 12 dedicated courthouse servers, 750 computers and more than 500 peripheral devices (printers, scanners, faxes, etc.)

The Fairfax Courts are highly reliant on the Courtroom Technology Management System (CTMS), which includes more than 3,000 integrated electronic system components in 18 courtrooms, Master Control Room, Adult Detention Center and Courtroom Testing Center. Non-Courtroom CTMS functionality are supported in 2 Jury Assembly rooms, 3 Jury Deliberation rooms, and multiple high-tech conference rooms. An additional 11 courtrooms are scheduled to be renovated over the next 3 years resulting in CTMS support for 29 courtrooms adding approximately 1,500-2,000 additional system components, an increase greater than 50% over current levels of activity. Existing staff resources (5.0 FTE) are at capacity supporting existing CTMS workload. An urgent need for additional technology support staff will be necessary to keep pace with future growth and workload demands.

In the Circuit Court alone, demand for CTMS courtrooms exceeds current availability. Efficiencies gained via CTMS courtrooms are experienced by all participants on a daily basis (Judges, Clerks, Attorneys, Citizens, etc.) and are validated by the waiting list to utilize a CTMS courtroom. Delayed responses due to lack of resources may cause courtroom disruptions, relocation of trials, and the potential of rescheduling a case.

The Court Technology Office is also involved in time consuming product research and evaluation, and multiple projects throughout the year to expand the functionality and capabilities of CTMS and other Court applications that include coordination with the Supreme Court of Virginia and other State and County agencies.