
REDUCING MEETING, TRAINING, AND COMMUNICATIONS COSTS

The following highlights several Judiciary efforts for reducing the costs of meetings, training, and communications.

Videoconferencing for Administrative Matters

Over the next few years, the Judiciary will continue to expand its use of videoconferencing. Besides using it in certain judicial proceedings, the Judiciary is increasingly using videoconferencing for administrative meetings, conferences, and training seminars. For example, districts with remote divisional offices use videoconferencing for judges' meetings, district-wide staff meetings, and interactive staff training sessions. As of January 1999, 85 court locations have been installed with videoconferencing capabilities and an increasing number of courts are interested in acquiring this proven technology. Videoconferencing can reduce travel costs, eliminate the inconvenience of travel, and avoid the unproductive work time associated with travel status.

Distance Learning

The Judiciary also will continue to pursue efficiencies over the coming years through expanded use of distance learning. Initial efforts emphasize the use of satellite broadcasting versus traditional training methods. Plans for the future include interactive video teletraining, computer-based training, and desktop videoconferencing. To support these efforts, the Judiciary is in the process of installing satellite dish antennae and receivers in about 250 court locations nationwide.

From its newly constructed Washington, D.C., studio, the Judiciary currently is broadcasting to courts more than 20 hours of programming weekly. Some ex-

amples of program content are retirement systems, contracting, facilities management, court personnel system, automation, and travel regulations. These broadcasts include both videotaped and live interactive teletraining programs. Live presentations include push-to-talk capabilities to allow viewer interaction. Work is in progress to convert current instructor-led training programs to the interactive teletraining format.

Like videonferencing, distance learning programs create efficiencies by reducing the costs and inconveniences associated with travel. In fiscal year 1999, the Judiciary reduced its travel budget requested from Congress by \$1 million in anticipation of savings generated by distance learning programs. Also, distance learning provides quality training to larger audiences that are geographically dispersed at reduced per-student costs.

Completion of the Data Communications Network

The Judiciary will continue realizing efficiencies now that it has implemented fully its Data Communications Network (DCN). Completed September 1998, one year ahead of schedule and below estimated cost, the network provides an internal electronic communications link for all Judiciary employees.

The DCN offers a number of benefits and opportunities for efficiencies. It allows for the easy sharing of case information, opinions, and other information across the country. The e-mail component speeds communications and reduces the number of memoranda, phone messages, and meetings. It facilitates more timely turn-around of information. Traveling judges and employees can work more efficiently by having access to their offices, including receiving and returning messages promptly. The DCN provides an infrastructure to run future Judiciary-wide applications such as the new personnel/payroll and financial systems. The DCN also allows the Judiciary to consolidate software. Communications devices and network versions of software are shared, eliminating the more expensive purchase of individual software licenses.

Completion of the DCN makes possible widespread use of the Judiciary's intranet. Called the J-Net, the site allows electronic dissemination of a substantial and growing number of Judiciary documents. It results in significant savings in paper and postage costs as it allows the Judiciary to disseminate information in electronic versus hard copy formats. The site is visited more than 2,000 times daily by Judiciary employees looking for reports, statistics, newsletters, directories, manuals, and other documents.