VERMONT JUDICIARY

To: Rep. Kathleen James, Chair
House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure
From: Marcia Schels, Chief Technology Innovation Officer
Re: Overview of Judiciary IT and Data Systems
Date: March 11, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a general overview of the Judiciary's IT and Data Systems, which are housed in the Technology Services Center (TSC). TSC develops and implements information technology initiatives that support a workforce of 400+ staff and judicial officers in the Vermont Judiciary, as well as 18,000+ external users.

We are a small but mighty workforce of 26, working together within the following organizational framework:
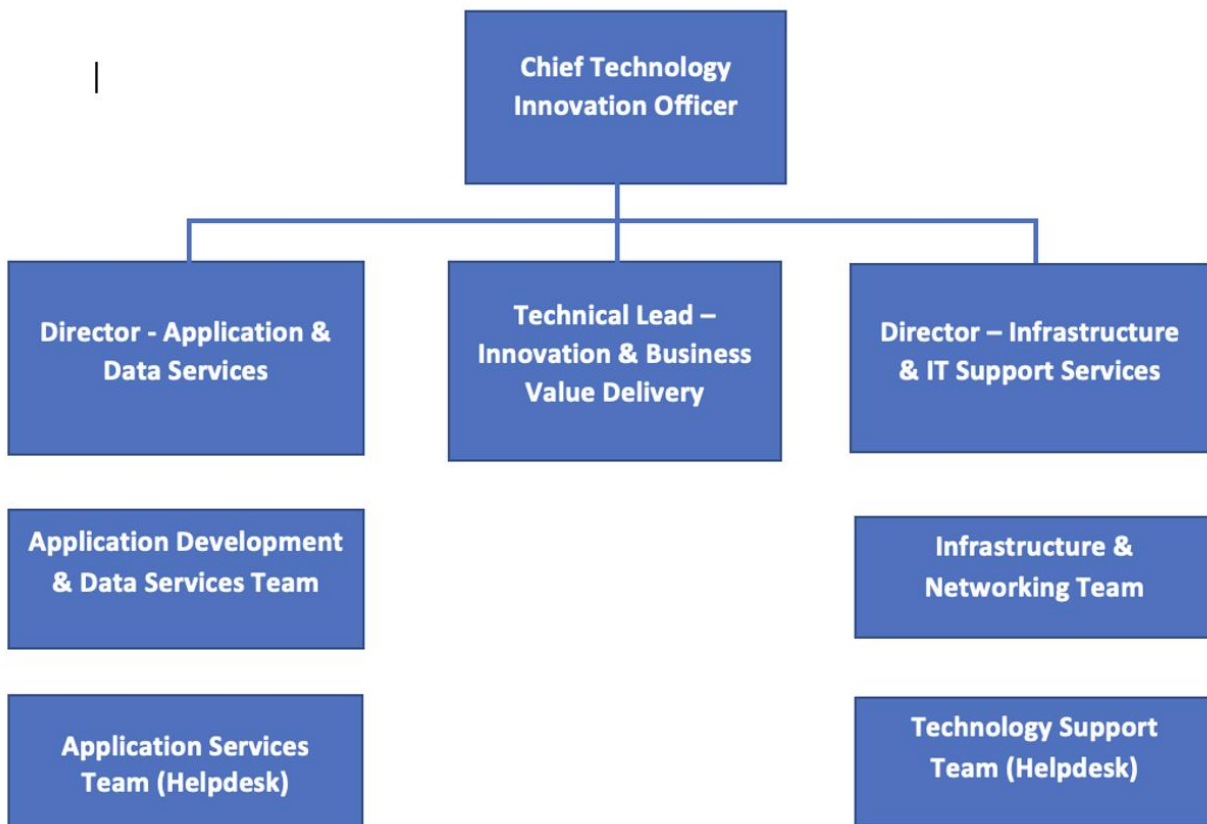
Responsibilities of the TSC include:

- Enterprise applications and data exchanges
- Desktop and user support
- Technology and application training and support
- Voice and data communications (phones and networks)
- Business intelligence (statistics and reporting)
- Cybersecurity management of technology in facilities across more than 30 locations and 65 courtrooms (courthouses, correctional facilities and administrative offices)

Driven by advances in technology and the increasing need for efficient, transparent, and accessible justice systems, the Vermont Judicial IT systems have undergone significant evolution and modernization in recent years.

- Digital Case Management: The Vermont Judiciary shifted from a paper-based system to a digital case management system. This change has streamlined the filing, tracking, and management of cases, reduced paperwork and improved efficiency.

- E-Filing Services: The introduction of e-filing now allows lawyers and self-represented litigants to submit documents electronically. The 46,141 new cases filed in the superior court (civil, criminal, family, probate and environmental division) and the 42,963 new cases filed in the Judicial Bureau in FY24 are in electronic form.

- Online Services: The Public Portal is a web-based platform that offers court users and members of the public customized role-based access to court records, hearing calendars and other data. The Portal also provides a convenient way to pay court fines online form anywhere on any compatible device. The Vermont Judiciary also provides online services for case research and court calendar viewing.

- Virtual Hearings and Video Conferencing: Video conferencing tools have become integral, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. The Vermont Judiciary, along with courts around the world, adopted virtual hearings to ensure continuity of judicial processes. This shift has also increased access to justice, particularly for those in remote areas. We will be transitioning from the current Webex platform to a Zoom platform in the Fall and Winter.

- Data Reports: A Court Reporting (CORE) Business Intelligence application was written in house with Microsoft SQL Server and Power BI, hosted in Azure to facilitate data reporting for the myriad of data requests the Judiciary receives.

- Digital Evidence Management: The Vermont Judiciary has implemented an online digital evidence management system to safeguard the integrity of digital evidence (e.g. video

and audio) and streamline the evidence management process through the Judiciary system.

- <u>Migration to Independent Network:</u> The Vermont Judiciary has implemented an IT network that is independent of the ADS network. This new network has better cybersecurity, faster speeds, and triple redundancy. In addition, this has reduced ongoing costs.

- <u>Improved IT Infrastructure:</u> All Public Access Terminals have been replaced, all Jury Kiosks have been upgraded, all courthouses have been re-wired or are in the process of being re-wired and we are in the process of replacing all courtroom sound systems. In addition, we now have secure WIFI (public and private) in each courthouse.

- <u>Cybersecurity Enhancements:</u> As the judicial systems become more digital, the importance of cybersecurity has escalated. The Vermont Judiciary has invested in robust cybersecurity measures* to protect sensitive personal and legal information from cyber threats and ransomware attacks.

These advancements reflect a broader trend towards a more digital, accessible, secure, and efficient judicial system, leveraging technology to meet the challenges of modern justice administration.   We are pleased to have accomplished these improvements in coordination with the other two branches of Vermont government, thanks to a Vermont Tri-Branch IT effort featuring monthly meetings organized by the Judiciary and continual ad-hoc problem/incident communications.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this broad overview of the Judiciary's IT and Data Systems. We're very grateful to the Legislature for its support which made our IT investments and improvements possible. Please let us know if you would like any additional detail.

<u>*Cybersecurity Measures</u>
- 24/7 Monitoring Security Operations Center as a Service – Artic Wolf
- Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA) – Aruba Clearpass
- Threat Detection – Wildfire
- Endpoint Protection – Cortex XDR
- Endpoint Management – Intune
- Response and Mitigation – Palo Alto Networks Unit 42
- Network Firewalls – Internal and External
- Infrastructure Monitoring – PRTG and UpTime.com
- Security Auditing – Penetration Testing
- Air-Gap Backup Protection – Rubrik