



**Seattle Municipal Community Court  
Evaluation Plan**

**Introduction**

On September 6, 2013, the Seattle Municipal judges adopted several committee recommendations to revise Community Court protocols and procedures. One such recommendation included a budget request of increased funding for the new position of Community Service Crew Chief, designated to transport, supervise and mentor participants for community service activities. With the City Council's Resolution 31425, all existing programs that are expanded and/or requesting new funding for the 2014 budget, as well as all newly created programs, are expected to establish measurable program goals, assess the current status of the program, estimate expected future effectiveness, and finally, assess how the program met or failed to meet expected goals. The request for a new Community Court position meets the Resolution's conditions for inclusion, and thus the program must follow the Resolution's requirements for an evaluation plan to measure its effectiveness.

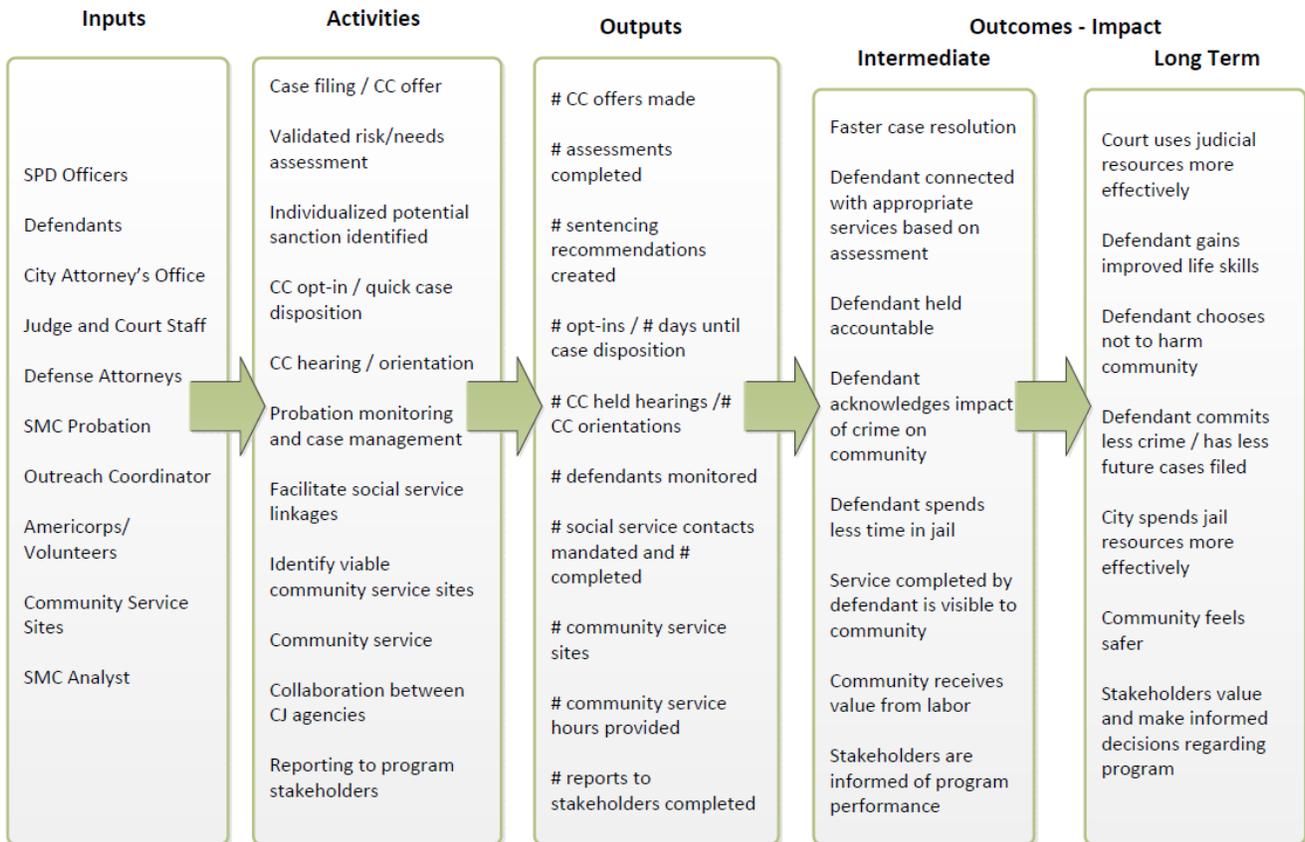
**Background**

An initial request from the Budget Office was made for an updated Logic Model, which provides a framework to identify inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, with quantifiable measures to aid in evaluating the effectiveness of a program. Community Court's new Logic Model, an update of the program's logic model developed by the Court in 2007, was recently approved by the Community Court Executive Committee and provided to the City Budget Office (see Figure 1).

The Budget Office's Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) for Community Court was approved by the City Council in November 2013 and provides a list of measures from the updated Logic Model that are required to be reported back to the Council by **July 2014** (see attached). To meet this requirement for continued funding, the following describes the plan for collecting the data to evaluate the Community Court program.

Figure 1.

Seattle Community Court Logic Model



**Evaluation Plan**

Multiple sources will be utilized for collecting the data for Community Court's measures, including the Community Court Management Systems Analyst (MSA), Probation, the City Attorney's Office, the RPEG team, and querying of the Court's in-house database, MCIS. See Table 1 for measures, the group(s) currently collecting the data, and the proposed frequency for data collection. The bolded measures represent the data elements that are to be collected per the SLI. Those not in bold are measures included in the Logic Model that will help track workloads, average case resolution time, and defendant compliance.

Table 1.

Measure	Data Collection by	Proposed Frequency
<b># CC offers made by City Attorney, by type of offense</b>	<b>City Attorney's Office</b>	<b>Quarterly</b>
# of CC assessments completed by Probation	Probation	Quarterly
# of sentencing recommendations from City Attorney	City Attorney's Office	Quarterly
<b># of CC Participant Requirement Agreements signed (opt-ins), by type of offense</b>	<b>Probation</b>	<b>Quarterly</b>
# of CC held hearings	MCIS	Quarterly
# of defendants actively monitored by Probation (non-warranted status)	MCIS	Quarterly
<b># of social service contacts ordered, by type</b>	<b>MCIS</b>	<b>Quarterly</b>
# of social service contacts completed, by type	MCIS	Quarterly
<b># of defendants receiving court-ordered services, type and amounts received</b>	<b>MCIS</b>	<b>Quarterly</b>
<b># of community service hours ordered</b>	<b>MCIS</b>	<b>Quarterly</b>
<b># of community service hours completed</b>	<b>MCIS</b>	<b>Quarterly</b>
<b>Average time between CC offer and court-ordered agreement</b>	<b>City Attorney's Office</b>	<b>Quarterly</b>
Average time between filing date and court disposition	MCIS	Quarterly
<b># of community service sites</b>	<b>MSA</b>	<b>Annually</b>
# of reports to stakeholders	MSA	Annually
<b>Value and visibility to the community</b>	<b>Outside evaluation</b>	<b>Biennially</b>
<b>Impact of CC on defendant recidivism</b>	<b>RPEG</b>	<b>Biennially</b>
<b>Impact of CC on use of judicial and jail resources</b>	<b>RPEG</b>	<b>Biennially</b>
<b>Impact of CC on perceived safety in the community</b>	<b>Outside evaluation</b>	<b>Biennially</b>

CC=Community Court

To aid in the collection of Community Court data, a few additions were recently made to MCIS and SeaTrac to better track case information. Two new case event codes were added for consistency with Mental Health Court and Veteran’s Court, including:

- Removed from SMCC, and
- Graduated from SMCC.

Several SeaTrac Activities that are regularly utilized by Community Court Probation were added, including:

- GED (Social Service Contact),
- ID Replacement Assistance (Social Service Contact),
- Library (Social Service Contact),
- Self-Awareness Class,
- Self-Awareness Refresher Class,
- Library (Social Service Contact), and
- Voicemail (Social Service Contact).

Instead of using “Other” with a note field, having specific Activity codes will create more accurate reporting of the number of defendants with these conditions. New MCIS Obligations were also created for Community Court, including:

- SOCI: Social Service Contacts, and
- SELF: Self Awareness Class.

Previously, the Court utilized the obligation “Other” (OTHR) for the majority of Community Court conditions. As with the creation of new case events and Activities, having specific Obligations will allow for more detailed reporting. The short term outcomes are normally straightforward data collection without much analysis needed.

Unlike short term outcomes that are easily measured, intermediate and long term outcomes are more difficult to quantify. For example, to establish that the “community feels safer,” would involve a survey of citizens.

Other measures would require an external evaluation and/or a large amount of staff time to properly assess the effectiveness of the program's impact. The SLI includes a statement regarding the long term outcomes that "the Council recognizes (that) the definition and measurement of these three impacts will require analysis and discussion." The ability to properly evaluate for long term outcomes is both complex and dependent on the resources available.

Although we like to assume all of our programs are effective, without a plan for evaluation, there leaves only anecdotal evidence. In the words of author Antoine de Saint-Exupery, "*A goal without a plan is just a wish.*" By defining program goals and quantifiable measures, the evaluation of a program's effectiveness is accessible. This evaluation plan allows for Community Court to meet the Council's requirement for continued funding by establishing measurable program goals and assessing the current status of the program, as well as providing a framework for evaluating the Court's goals for the program. These goals include collaboratively addressing the needs of defendants with chronic conditions who commit low level offenses (collaboration and problem-solving focus), holding defendants accountable in a timely manner (immediacy, accountability, and court engagement), and paying back the community harmed by their crimes (coalition building and accountability). Once a baseline of data has been collected, the Court can begin working toward estimating expected future effectiveness and subsequently, assess how the program met or failed to meet expected goals.

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Attachments:

2014 Seattle City Council Statement of Legislative Intent

**2014 Seattle City Council Statement of Legislative Intent**

**Approved**

Tab	Action	Option	Version
131	1	A	1

**Budget Action Title:** Municipal Court: Renewal and expansion of Community Court

**Councilmembers:** Budget Committee

**Staff Analyst:** Peter Harris; Traci Ratzliff; Christa Valles

**Budget Committee Vote:**

Date	Result	SB	BH	TR	RC	TB	NL	JG	SC	MO
11/18/2013	Pass 9-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

**Statement of Legislative Intent:**

In approving the budget for the Municipal Court and the new Community Court Crew Chief, it is the Council’s intent to support the renewal and expansion of the Seattle Community Court and its goals of producing better results for defendants and the community. The Council recognizes that Community Court is a collaborative effort by prosecution, defense and the Municipal Court.

Because the success of Community Court depends on the cooperation of all branches of City government, it is to the benefit of all to have a clear understanding of what Community Court is accomplishing, and how. To this end the Council requests that the Municipal Court, City Attorney and Associated Counsel for the Accused provide an initial written report on the following by July 2014:

1. Outputs

- 1.1. The number of Community Court offers made to defendants by the City Attorney, by kind of offense.
- 1.2. The number of Community Court agreements signed by defendants, by kind of offense.
- 1.3. The number of social service contacts mandated for defendants.
- 1.4. The number of community service hours mandated for defendants.

2. Intermediate Outcomes

- 2.1. The average time between a Community Court offer and a Court-ordered agreement.
- 2.2. The number of defendants receiving mandated services, and the nature and amounts of services received.

2.3. The number of community service sites, the number of community service hours completed by defendants, and the value and visibility to the community of this service.

### 3. Long Term Outcomes

3.1. The impact of Community Court on defendant recidivism.

3.2. The impact of Community Court on the use of judicial resources and jail.

3.3. The impact of Community Court on perceived safety in the community.

The Council recognizes that the definition and measurement of these three impacts will require analysis and discussion.

## **Background**

The proposed budget for the Municipal Court includes a new crew supervisor for Community Court, whose job would be to drive Community Court defendants to sites where they perform community service and supervise them there. This is a small part of a large change in Community Court that is already occurring.

The new crew supervisor will free up time for the existing two Community Court probation counselors to assess defendants, develop service plans for them, monitor their compliance, and administer sanctions for failure to comply. Much of this is new work for the probation counselors, and is the result of two major changes.

One of these is an increase in the number of offenses that are eligible for Community Court, combined with a commitment by the City Attorney and Court to use Community Court for more of the offenses already eligible. Some of the eligible offenses are disorderly conduct, failure to appear, pedestrian interference, prostitution, theft under \$750 and trespass.

The other change is an increase in how long the Community Court can have jurisdiction over the defendant. Depending on the signed agreement, the defendant may have service requirements lasting between two weeks and six months.

These and other new features of Community Court are spelled out in detailed procedures. The process is this:

An officer makes an arrest for one of the low-level misdemeanors that are eligible. The City Attorney files charges. If the defendant's criminal history is not disqualifying, the City Attorney offers Community Court as an alternative to the traditional process of setting the case for trial, negotiating a plea or accepting a guilty plea and imposing a sentence.

If the defendant accepts the offer to participate in Community Court, a probation counselor assesses the defendant and proposes a set of actions the defendant must take, each of which has consequences for failure to comply, over a period that can range from two weeks to six

months. The steps and consequences are drawn from a set of procedures developed and agreed to by the prosecutor, public defense and Court. The steps can include chemical dependency treatment, mental health treatment, employment training, literacy training, housing assistance, or other service referrals, as well as community service.

The prosecutor and defendant (and defendant's counsel) have the opportunity to negotiate the probation counselor's proposal. If the defendant agrees to the proposal, the Court signs the resulting order. If the defendant complies with the agreement, the current charges are dismissed or the case is closed. If the defendant fails to comply, the probation counselor can deliver sanctions administratively, recommend Court sanctions, or refer the case back to the Court, which may revoke the Community Court agreement and impose a jail sentence.

The success of Community Court will depend in part on the availability of the services that defendants need. The renewed Community Court intends to do more than point defendants to services, but the ability to require a defendant to obtain a service obviously depends on the practical possibility of the defendant doing so, in each case. Thus the agreements that are crafted will necessarily reflect a balance between the service the defendant ideally would receive and the service the City is able to deliver. One purpose of the report called for by this Statement of Legislative Intent is to identify any service gaps that interfere with Community Court so that they might be addressed by the City.

It is not yet clear how best to measure the impact of Community Court on defendant recidivism, the use of judicial resources and jail, and perceived safety in the community. Measuring the first two impacts should be conceptually straightforward, but defining appropriate comparison groups and collecting data efficiently may present some difficulties. Measuring the impact of Community Court on perceived safety in the community will first require a concrete definition of what a realistic expectation may be for such an impact and how it might be observed.

**Responsible Council Committee(s):** Public Safety, Civil Rights and Technology

**Date Due to Council:** July 31, 2014