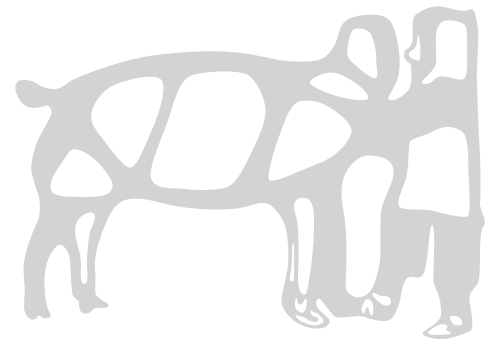
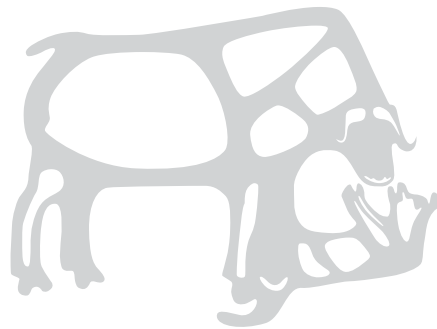




# Department of Justice 10-year Strategic Plan 2012-2022

June 2012



10-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



## Message from the Minister of Justice



I am pleased to present a 10-year strategic plan for the Department of Justice. This document is a significant milestone for the Department. For the first time, this plan presents a vision to support the Northwest Territories' justice system during the 17th and 18th Legislative Assemblies.

As in other jurisdictions, the NWT justice system is made up of a complex blend of inter-related institutions and services, ranging from the independent court system to the contracted police services of the RCMP to the services of the Department and to the grass-roots actions of community justice committees and victims services workers. These institutions and people, together with many others, work diligently to ensure the NWT is a safe society where the rights and freedoms of citizens are protected, and our communities are safe for families and our most vulnerable people.

Like other jurisdictions, our justice system is experiencing significant challenges while also exploring innovative ways of improving services. A long-term strategic plan is vital to navigating through such times:

it provides a clear picture of where we need to focus available resources and why. This plan has been built on insights gained from frontline staff, partners and stakeholders through a variety of means, including daily interactions between agencies and workers, and more targeted reviews and consultations in program areas. It also reflects feedback from political leadership, including Members of both past and present Legislative Assemblies and community leaders.

The Department will work with the RCMP, departments and agencies to identify actions to move forward on this strategic plan. These actions will be reflected in the Department's annual business plans and summarized in a 5-year implementation plan. The Department will also put in place a means to measure and report on progress, and fine-tune our actions in light of new information or changing circumstances.

I am confident that this strategic plan and companion implementation plan will assist in building a more responsive and accessible justice system for the residents of the NWT. It is important that NWT people have confidence in the justice system's institutions and services. I look forward to working with agencies, frontline workers and leaders as we move forward together.

Honourable Glen Abernethy  
Minister of Justice



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## Introduction

Justice systems across Canada are entering an era characterized by innovation and creativity. Recognizing that the needs of their residents are diverse and continually changing, they are finding new approaches, building different types of partnerships, and redefining service delivery. The Northwest Territories (“NWT”) Department of Justice (the “Department”) is no different. NWT residents have a broad range of justice needs that require unique northern solutions. Like its southern counterparts, the Department plans to make innovation the cornerstone of its work over the next decade so that northerners have access to justice and that the rights and freedoms of all residents are protected.

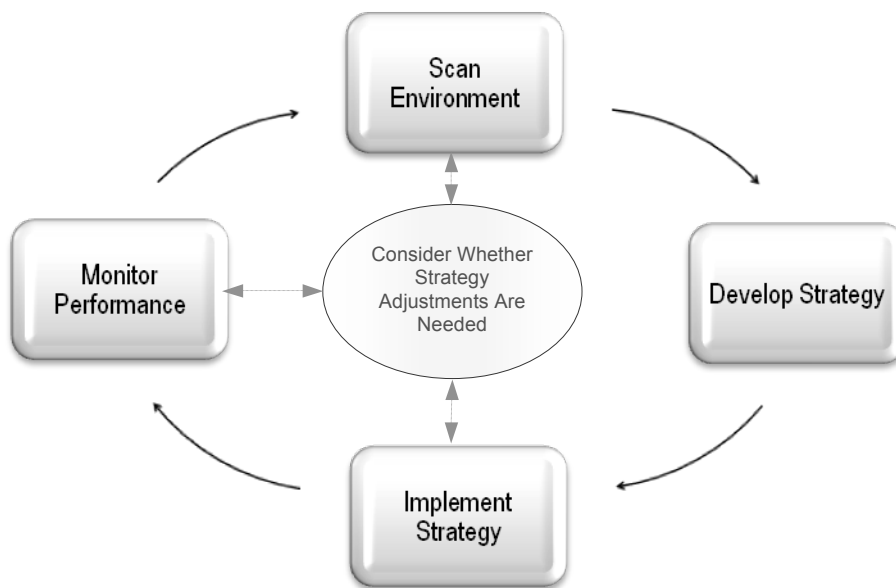
This strategic plan presents a high-level overview of what the Department does, the issues it is expected to face, where it sees itself in the future, and how it hopes to get there. The strategic plan sets the course for the Department for the next ten years, spanning the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assemblies of the Northwest Territories.

## Planning Process

This plan was constructed from the many conversations the Department has had with clients and families, community stakeholders, Aboriginal governments, its territorial and federal counterparts, and members of the Legislative Assembly. This plan also relies on the findings of recent research and evaluation reports that shed light on the Department’s strengths, where improvements could be made, and on projected trends.

Like any long term plan, this document represents a best guess at what the future holds. The Department considers strategic planning an ongoing, cyclical process that will require continual monitoring and updating over time. The figure below shows the strategic planning cycle, but also demonstrates how the Department expects to make strategy adjustments as lessons are learned and the environment changes.

**FIGURE 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**



## **Document Outline**

This document is organized in the following way:

<i>Department Profile</i>	A brief overview of the Department of Justice – its unique responsibilities, what it believes and the key services it provides.
<i>Environmental Scan</i>	The major issues the Department is expected to face in the next 10 years, and the opportunities the Department can leverage to meet its challenges.
<i>Strategy Framework</i>	A conceptual framework for how the Department’s strategy is organized.
<i>10-Year Strategy</i>	The Department’s vision, mission and the major directions for the 10 year period from 2012 to 2022.
<i>Next Steps</i>	A brief statement about how the Department will go about implementing its strategy.



### Responsibilities

Established by the *Department of Justice Act*, the Department is responsible for administering the justice system in the NWT in a manner that respects northern and Aboriginal values and encourages community involvement. It does this by:

- Working with communities so residents are safe and secure;
- Ensuring that residents have access to justice, including legal aid, the courts, alternatives to the courts and other justice-related services;
- Providing legal services to the Government of the Northwest Territories (“GNWT”) and its agencies;
- Ensuring the safe custody and supervision of offenders;
- Protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals and groups; and
- Promoting respect for the law and the Constitution of Canada.

As part of the administration of the justice system in the NWT, the Department is also responsible for providing the human and financial resources necessary for the operation of a separate branch of government – the judiciary or court system. NWT Courts are independent of the executive branch of government (Cabinet and government departments) and the legislative branch of government (Legislative Assembly). As a separate branch, NWT Courts have their own records and information technology systems, and require specialized infrastructure to hold court proceedings in a safe and secure setting. Department of Justice staff are responsible for supporting the operation of the courts and maintaining these systems, with respect for the courts’ independence. As such, the Department’s Court Services Division is in a unique position of working for both the executive and judicial branches of government.

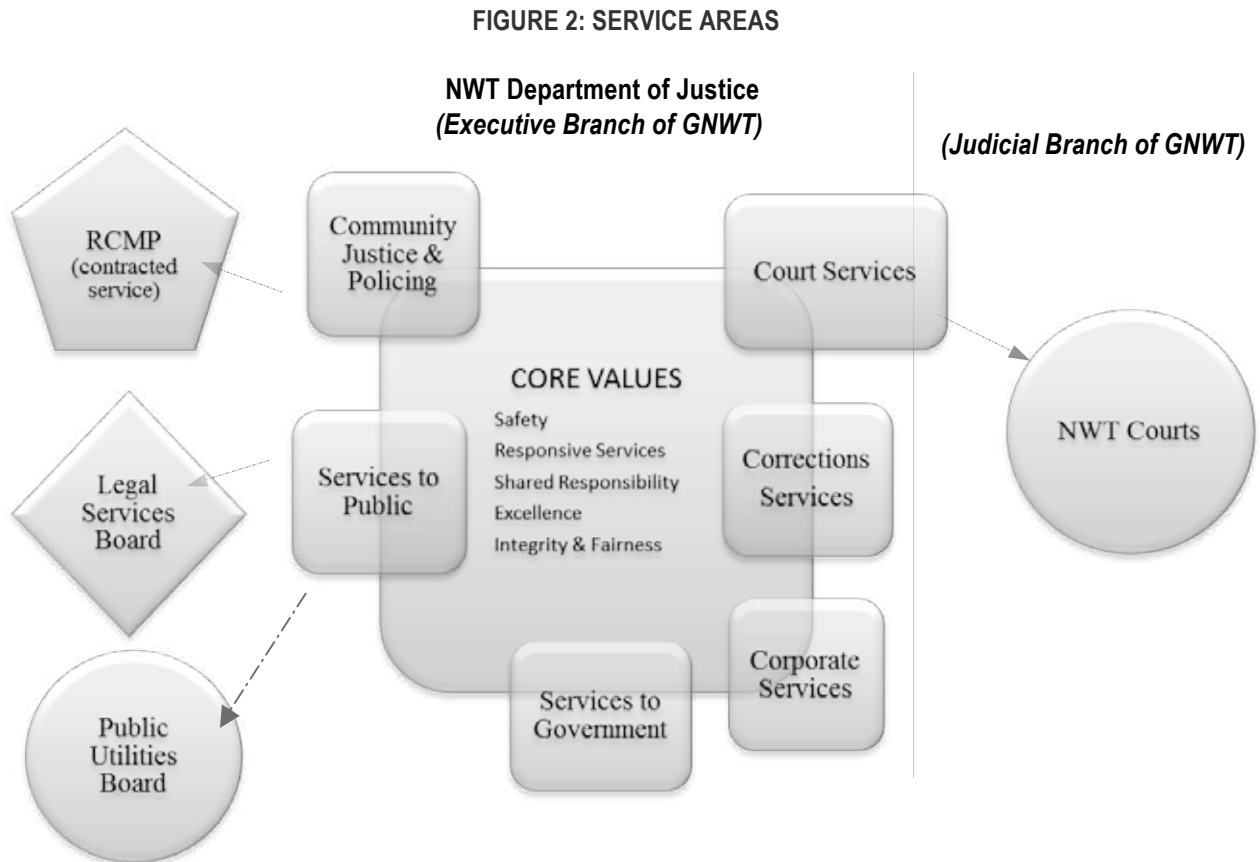
### Values

The following values are the guiding principles that govern how the Department conducts its business.

<i>Safety</i>	Supporting and promoting the right of residents to be safe in their homes and communities.
<i>Responsive Services</i>	Making services client-focused, accessible, understandable and efficient.
<i>Shared Responsibility</i>	Collaborating with communities, other government departments, with the judiciary, with its partners and with the people it serves.
<i>Excellence</i>	Striving to excel through continuous learning, innovation, and strong partnerships to deliver services for the good of the people of the NWT.
<i>Integrity and Fairness</i>	Dealing fairly, respectfully and equitably with individuals and organizations.

## Key Services

The Department provides services in six broad areas<sup>1</sup>, each according to the Department's core values, as depicted below (Figure 2).



### Corporate Services

This includes the corporate management activities of the **Directorate, Policy and Planning Division**, and **Finance Division**. These areas are responsible for determining the Department's overall direction and policy, monitoring the Department's performance, and effectively and efficiently managing its resources. Corporate services also includes the activities of the **Information Services Unit**, which is responsible for one of the GNWT's largest and most diverse portfolios in terms of information technology applications, security and technical infrastructure.

### Services to Government

The **Legal Division** provides legal advice and representation to GNWT departments and specified public agencies. Lawyers conduct litigation, provide legal opinions and advice, and one position is dedicated to prosecution of territorial offences. GNWT bills and regulations are prepared by the **Legislation Division**, and legal translators prepare French versions of these documents. The Legislation Division also prepares and maintains records of statutory appointments for GNWT departments and agencies. The **GNWT Access and Privacy Office** is responsible for advising and supporting GNWT public bodies on access and privacy matters, and oversees the administration of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

<sup>1</sup> The functional areas outlined in this section vary from those used in the Department's Main Estimates document.

## Services to Public

The **Legal Registries Division** provides services for land titles registration and the registration of secured interests in property other than land. This Division also regulates securities trading and registers business corporations, societies, partnerships and business names. The **Maintenance Enforcement Office** monitors, enforces and collects child support payments. Services to the public also include specialized services available from the **Office of the Children’s Lawyer, Public Trustee’s Office, Coroner’s Office** and **Rental Office**.

The **Legal Services Board** (soon to be renamed the **Legal Aid Commission**) provides legal services for most criminal and family law matters, and some civil cases. It determines eligibility for legal aid in accordance with the parameters established by the *Legal Services Act* and the regulations made under the Act. The board is also responsible for the court worker program and public legal education.

In 2012-13, the Department assumed responsibility for the provision of financial, administrative and operational support to the **Public Utilities Board**. The Board is an independent regulatory agency responsible for the regulation of energy utilities in the Northwest Territories. The main function of the Board, derived from the *Public Utilities Act*, is to protect the public interest by establishing utility rates that are just and reasonable to the consumer, while at the same time allowing the utilities the opportunity to earn a fair rate of return.

## Community Justice & Policing

This includes providing support to communities to develop and implement sustainable local justice programming in the areas of restorative justice, victim services, community policing, crime prevention and family violence. It also includes policing services for NWT communities delivered by **RCMP “G” Division** through a 20-year agreement between the GNWT and the Government of Canada.

## Court Services

This includes administrative support for NWT Courts – **Court of Appeal, Supreme Court, Territorial Court, Youth Justice Court, and Justice of the Peace** – which collectively represent the independent, judicial branch of government. The Court Services Division is also responsible for the delivery of alternative dispute resolution services.

## Corrections Services

The **Corrections Service** provides safe custody and supervision of adult and youth offenders, both through the operation of territorial correctional facilities, as well as the supervision of offenders sentenced to conditional sentences and probation orders. The Division also supports and delivers culturally-relevant programs that support offender rehabilitation and reintegration.

The following set of challenges and opportunities were identified by examining the issues the Department expects to face in the next decade, coupled with an assessment of its capacity to address those issues.

### Challenges

The Department is responsible for providing programs and services that address the needs of NWT residents, within the confines of available resources. The Department will find the most effective yet efficient ways to meet this obligation by expanding on initiatives already underway to address the following challenges in the coming 10 years.

1. **A new approach to crime reduction is needed** – The NWT has the highest police-reported crime rate in Canada and the rate is increasing at a time when crime rates in southern Canada are decreasing. This is influenced, in part, by the high number of police per capita in the NWT, which results in a higher level of reporting. Nevertheless, a high rate of crime is also driven by a myriad of social factors. A “tough” approach on crime – using the tools of punishment and incarceration – has been limited in helping many offenders. The next 10 years calls for a re-examination of how best to deploy the justice system’s resources to more effectively address the social issues behind crime, working in partnership with other agencies for a comprehensive approach.
2. **The needs in NWT communities vary widely** – It will not be operationally or financially possible to provide justice services exactly the same way in each community. Some services will continue to be so specialized that they are only offered in one location. Likewise, the types of services required for communities like Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik will vary significantly from the types of services that are required in other communities. The challenge for the Department will be to continue to explore how each NWT community can have access to justice services in a way that is appropriate for its needs and is sustainable over time. Ingenuity and customizing of services to meet local needs will be required.
3. **The civil/family law system is not fully responding to families** – The civil/family law system is expensive and time consuming, and does not always provide an effective response to the needs of families in crisis or in transition. The formal legal system can be ill-equipped to resolve family issues that are complicated and emotionally charged. While there are a range of supports for families already in contact with the formal justice system, such as victim services and mediation, the Department’s role is currently limited in helping the family unit before contact with the formal system. A new collaborative approach to meeting the needs of families in transition is required.
4. **Factors outside the Department’s control are driving demand** – The Department will continue to experience a significant increase in demand for services, based largely on factors outside its control. For example, the costs and workload associated with trials, court settlements and court travel are largely controlled by the NWT Courts, and will continue to be highly unpredictable. As well, changes in federal legislation plus cutbacks in federal and territorial programs will have residual and cumulative effects on the courts, corrections services, policing, victim services and legal aid. Large-scale economic development projects are also expected to create pressures on the justice system, as will changes in demographics. Measures to better forecast and address changes in demand are required.

5. **The Department's financial capacity is limited** – The Department is not adequately funded to deliver core services and is struggling to sustain its operations. Services required by legislation, and services that are essential to public safety, are critically underfunded. Many organizations across the NWT are facing similar circumstances. Over the next 10 years, financial capacity will be further weakened by cost drivers outside the Department. As a result, there will be pressure to significantly reduce discretionary programs to offset the overall Department deficit. Ironically, it is the discretionary programs, such as crime prevention initiatives, that have the potential to reduce costs in the long term. The Department will need to make difficult financial decisions that are mindful of the effects on partner organizations.
6. **The Department is not sufficiently staffed** – The Department is expected to face a shortage of skilled staff throughout the justice system. Recruitment for specialized positions will continue to be difficult, and staff will require training to perform their jobs effectively. There are currently not enough positions in some territorial functions to create a critical mass for the delivery of legislated justice services. As a thinly staffed organization, particularly for centralized functions, the Department will continue to be exposed to business continuity issues caused by staff absences and turnover. Without an adequate number of skilled staff in place, the Department will be unable to adequately fulfil its mandate.
7. **Technology is at risk of failure** – The Department has aging and outdated technology that poses serious security risks. The information systems in courts and the security systems in corrections facilities are outdated and at risk of failure. Other important systems, such as the offender management system, require significant upgrades to protect information security and confidentiality. There are currently only three staff positions dedicated to managing existing technology and information systems, and to plan for improvements. Over the next 10 years, significant investments in technology infrastructure are required.

## Opportunities

While there will be many challenges in the justice system over the next 10 years, opportunities exist for the Department to use its strengths to respond to the needs of NWT residents.

1. **Staff responsiveness** – The major opportunity in the NWT justice system is its ability to adapt and be resourceful. Professional, committed and dedicated staff, at all levels, have proven their ability to quickly respond to challenges and to look for new ways to solve problems. Commitment and responsiveness will be highly valuable to the Department as it moves into the next decade.
2. **Solid relationships** – The Department places a priority on building effective networks and partnerships with organizations and individuals across sectors and jurisdictions. The Department has long recognized that it does not operate in isolation, and that the responsibility for building a safe society is shared between individuals, communities, departments, organizations, and governments.
3. **Strong legislated services** – The Department does an excellent job at providing a broad array of legislated services that are timely and well-received. These services will continue to provide a solid foundation for the justice system.
4. **Respect for culture** – The Department recognizes the importance of incorporating Aboriginal languages, traditions and culture into its programs and services. Several initiatives, such as on-the-land programs and Elder supports for offenders, have been integrated into community justice initiatives, corrections programming, and the court worker program. The Department's respect for culture will allow it to be more responsive to the needs of communities.

# Strategy Framework

## Themes

Building on the challenges and opportunities identified in previous section, the Department has identified three themes for its strategy. These themes apply to each of the goals and priorities, reflecting the Department's overarching approach, and working in stride with the priorities of the current Legislative Assembly.

*Innovation* Innovation is required when historical approaches are no longer effective, when resources are limited or unstable, and when matters are complex. Ingenuity within available resources will be the Department's challenge in the next 10 year period.

*Partnerships* The Department is one organization of many that contribute to a safe, secure and law-abiding society. It is necessary to share knowledge between sectors, between governments, and between jurisdictions, and to work in partnership in order to examine and address complex, systemic issues.

*Continual Adjustment* The Department fully expects that the overall strategy outlined in this document will be updated from time to time, as it gathers intelligence about what actions are working or are not working and how operating conditions have changed.

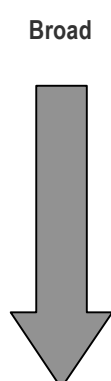
## Scope

The strategic plan identifies how the Department will alter its direction over the next 10 years. Because it is strategic and not operational, the strategic plan does not specifically highlight programs, services or aspects of operation that are already strong and require little change.

## Framework

The Department's strategy is comprised of its vision, mission, strategic directions, goals and priorities. The components move from broad to specific to create a framework where the vision and mission are the preferred future, and the remaining elements identify how the Department intends to get there (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

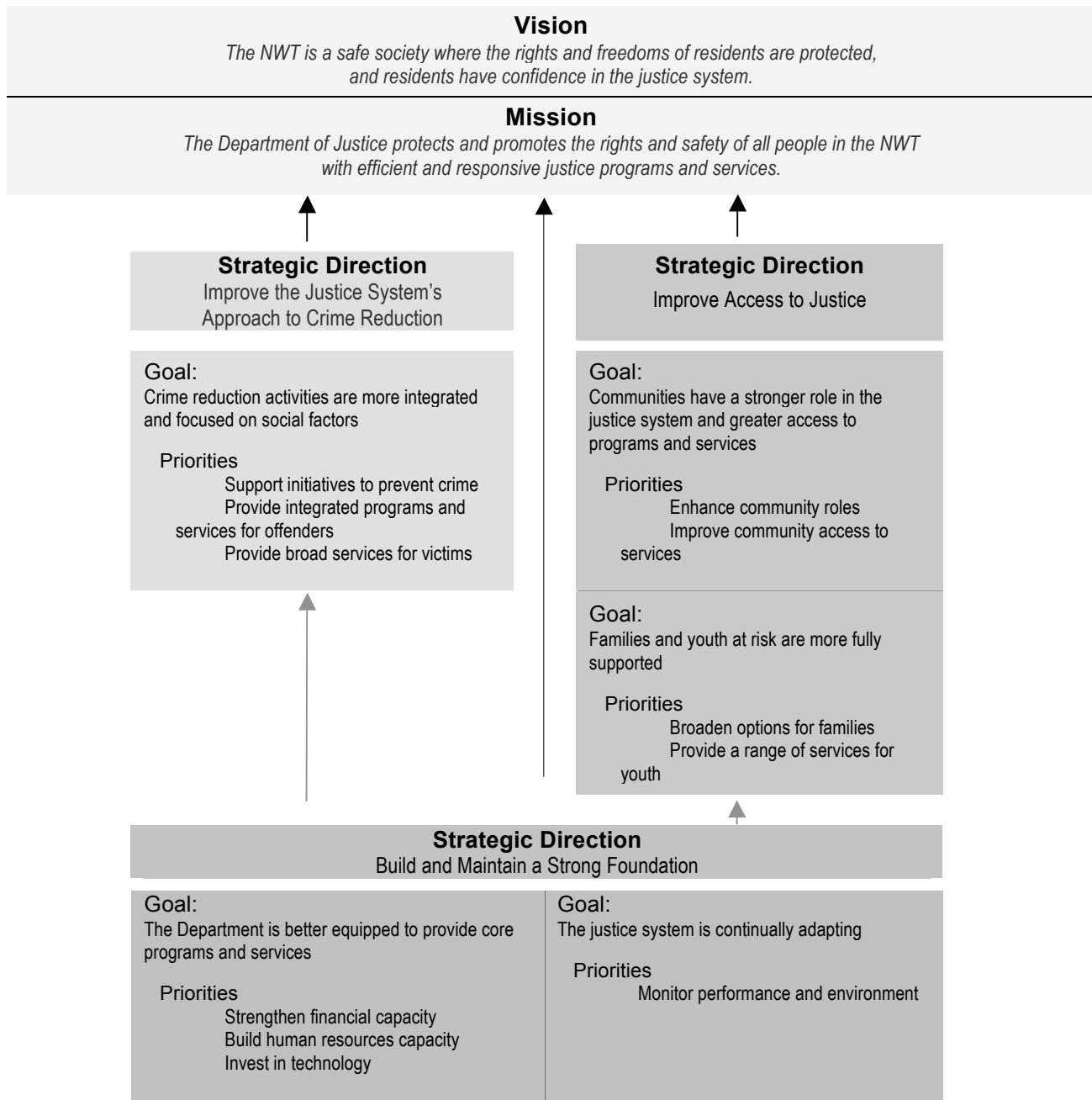


Strategy Component	Description	Purpose in the Strategy
Vision	The vision is a statement about how the NWT might look in the future if the Department achieves its mission. The vision is meant to be forward-looking enough to be relevant for several decades.	Identifies the preferred future
Mission	The mission broadly describes how the Department sees itself operating by 2022.	
Strategic Directions	Strategic directions are the major approaches the Department will take to usher the system toward the mission and vision.	Identifies the major approaches
Goals	Goals are the high-level outcomes the Department hopes to achieve from each of the strategic direction areas.	Identifies the specific areas of focus
Priorities	Priorities are the actions the Department sees as most important to achieve the stated goals.	

# 10-Year Strategy

The Department of Justice designed its 10-year strategy by considering the needs of its stakeholders, the most pressing issues facing the justice system, the priorities of the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, and the capacity of the Department to undertake the work. The results are outlined in this section, using the framework described previously. Figure 4 is a graphical representation of the Department's strategy. A full description of the strategic directions, goals and priorities follows.

**FIGURE 4: OVERVIEW OF 10-YEAR STRATEGY**



## **Strategic Direction:** **Improve the Justice System's Approach to Crime Reduction**

This strategic direction calls for the Department to improve the justice system's approach to crime reduction by focusing on the broad array of factors that influence crime, including social factors. Historical approaches that focused on serving people *after* they came into contact with the formal justice system have proven to be limited in their ability to address the underlying causes of crime and crisis. Under this direction, the focus is on community safety and crime reduction through more responsive programs and services.

### **Goal: Crime reduction activities are more integrated and focused on social factors**

There are complicated and interwoven socio-economic factors at work for people who are at risk of committing crimes, for those who are already offenders, and for those who have been through the justice system and are looking for a fresh start. A new approach to making communities safer means finding better ways to address the needs of these individuals, but also the needs of victims. There is a need to create a unified, interdisciplinary response to the social determinants of crime that consists of education and awareness, crime prevention, reduction and enforcement.

#### **Priorities**

##### **Support Initiatives to Prevent Crime**

Crime in the NWT is driven largely by socio-economic factors, including addictions and mental health issues, family violence and dysfunction, poverty, homelessness, low literacy and education levels, and low employment prospects. To work more strategically at preventing crime, the Department will work collaboratively with communities and like-minded organizations to support residents, particularly youth, who are at risk of committing crime, by:

- Improving diagnosis and treatment of underlying health and/or social conditions; and
- Identifying and responding to systemic barriers to self-sufficiency and employment.

##### **Provide Integrated Programs and Services for Offenders**

The Department will work in collaboration with communities and agencies to provide a range of rehabilitative programs and services for adult and young offenders. These services will be provided by a network of providers from various sectors, and will include territorial corrections facilities, community-based probation offices and community justice committees. Examples include improved counselling and social supports, intensive therapeutic interventions for addictions or violent behaviours, individual needs assessments and strategies related to mental illness or cognitive disabilities, on-the-land healing and cultural activities, and literacy and workplace skills development. As well, reintegration strategies will be provided to assist offenders to effectively return to their home communities and families.

##### **Provide Broad Services for Victims**

A balanced approach to crime means providing tools and supports for victims, through an array of programs. Family violence programs and supports for victims, such as the Victim Notification Program, will be provided in an integrated way with other social programs, such that services are focused on addressing underlying social factors.



## **Strategic Direction: Improve Access to Justice**

This strategic direction calls for the Department to adjust its programs and services so they better meet the needs of communities, families and youth. This will require the Department to work more closely with local people to understand their unique issues and to customize programs and services in a way that is both responsive and efficient.

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### **Goal: Communities have a stronger role in the justice system and greater access to programs and services**

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Needs across the NWT vary greatly and the approaches that are effective, efficient and sustainable in one community may not be transferable to another. This goal speaks to the Department's intention to improve access to justice by providing affordable services in different ways in different locations, and to encourage the participation of communities in the justice system.

#### **Priorities**

##### **Enhance Community Roles**

The Department will work in active partnership with communities to position them to take a greater role in the justice system. This will include initiatives such as acting upon the results of the review of the Community Justice Program, supporting a community strength-based approach to drug awareness and prevention, and implementing a Community Safety Strategy that tailors solutions to address local issues.

##### **Improve Community Access to Services**

The Department will find creative delivery approaches to improve access to justice, using existing resources. The bulk of this work will focus on smaller communities. Providing services at a level that manages public expectation, curbs costs and promotes the safety of service providers is important. Likewise, improving access to legal aid and legal registry services, for example, will mean exploring how technology can be used to provide distance services. It will also mean making information about the justice system readily available so individuals better understand how to navigate a system that can be complex and intimidating.

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### **Goal: Families and youth at risk are more fully supported**

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The Department will be more responsive to families at risk, in crisis and in transition by providing a full range of supports and services that reach beyond the existing civil/family law system, yet are affordable and sustainable.

#### **Priorities**

##### **Broaden Options for Families**

The Department will build upon the existing civil/family law system so that a broader range of services are available for families. This may include a collaborative justice model with a single community-based contact for families seeking guidance, alternative dispute resolution options, parenting programs, and other initiatives aimed at providing families with information, advice and support.

##### **Provide a Range of Services for Youth**

The Department will have a stronger focus in the next 10 years on meeting the needs of youth. Services such as the Office of the Children's Lawyer, facility planning for young offenders, mediation/parenting programs, and targeted services through community justice committees will form part of that strategy. Risk reduction initiatives, such as the "Not Us" anti-drug campaign, and programs for youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder are other examples.

## **Strategic Direction: Build and Maintain a Strong Foundation**

The strategic directions outlined to this point depend heavily on the Department's ability to strengthen its capacity and resiliency, and to maintain a strong foundation for change. Goals under this direction will leverage the Department's strength as an innovative organization so that the issues of limited financial and human resources, as well as the need for infrastructure investments, can be addressed.

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### **Goal: The Department is better equipped to provide core programs and services**

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Over the next 10 years, the Department will focus its efforts on stabilizing and strengthening its internal capacity by ensuring there are sufficient financial, human and technology resources. While resource issues are common across the entire GNWT, the Department finds itself in a critical situation where the delivery of its core services is threatened. Changes to federal legislation and programs are also bringing increasing financial pressures. The situation of limited and shrinking resources has moved beyond a mere constraint to a critical need requiring focused attention.

#### **Priorities**

##### **Strengthen Financial Capacity**

This priority requires focused effort to make the justice system more affordable. This will require difficult decision-making to determine how best to deploy limited funds. Over the next 10 years, the Department will work actively to identify and reduce any duplication or overlaps, to explore where partnerships may create efficiencies, to actively monitor and manage cost drivers, and to identify operations that may need to be scaled back or managed under a different model or by another organization. This will also include actively seeking new funding sources, negotiating with the federal government for sustainable policy and program changes, and periodically assessing business continuity risks.

##### **Build Human Resources Capacity**

Another priority is to work toward having the necessary human resources in place to provide core services. To do this, the Department will develop a comprehensive human resource plan and a business continuity strategy to mitigate the effects of turnover, job action or unforeseen circumstances. Together, these documents will include:

- Succession planning in management positions and in operations that are small or vulnerable to staffing changes;
- Honing and expanding the existing recruitment and training model currently used for corrections and courts to encourage NWT residents to consider careers in justice;
- Working with the Department of Human Resources to market hard-to-recruit positions;
- Addressing workplace safety; and
- Ensuring there is adequate coverage for key positions responsible for critical systems and operations.

##### **Invest in Technology**

Over the next 10 years, the Department will invest in its information technology and systems so they are capable of supporting the various functions within the Department. Upgrades for compatibility and consistency with national reporting standards are also required. This will involve a phased-in approach aimed at replacing aging infrastructure, updating old and unstable technology, and providing for the full and

ongoing maintenance of electronic systems. This priority works hand-in-hand with the previous two priorities since strong financial and human resources are essential for effective systems operation.

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**Goal: The justice system is continually adapting**

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The Department of Justice operates in a complex and unique environment that is often driven by factors outside its control. In such an environment, the organizations that are resilient are those that continuously scan their environment for changes, regularly monitor progress toward their goals, and use what they learn to adjust their strategy. While this strategic plan defines the Department's strategy for the next 10 years, part of that strategy is in fact to continuously make adjustments so the likelihood of achieving the vision and goals are increased.

**Priority****Monitor Performance and Environment**

The Department will put into place a monitoring scheme that requires it to regularly assess its progress toward its goals, its performance in implementing the strategy set out in this document, and its operating environment. The Department will develop a performance monitoring approach that allows it to:

- Assess and reflect on its progress, performance and environment;
- Document lessons learned;
- Strategically adjust its activities to increase the likelihood of achieving its goals;
- Document what changes have been made; and
- Report on progress.

## Next Steps

The strategy outlined in this document takes a "balcony view" of how the NWT Department of Justice will approach the next decade. Each of the three strategic directions reflects a new way of operating that will strengthen the Department's ability to achieve its mission. The strategic directions, however, do not comprise the full scope of the Department's work through to 2022. Underpinning the strategy will be the Department's continued provision of strong legislated and core services, which will be modified only if required by one of the strategic directions.

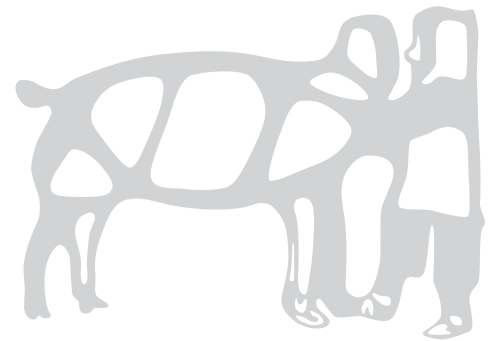
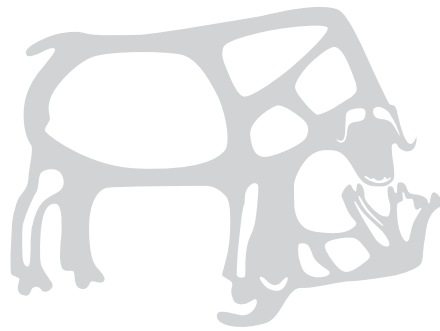
Implementation of the strategy will be guided by a separate, detailed implementation plan. Likewise, the development of a performance monitoring approach will guide the Department in assessing its progress, in making strategy adjustments, and in reporting to its stakeholders on its accomplishments. The Department's next steps are to begin using the strategy to shape its daily activities and annual business plans, and to regularly monitor its performance and changes in its operating environment to keep the strategy current and useful.











The images shown on this report are representative of the front windows of the Courthouse building located in Yellowknife. These iconic images allow us to keep in mind the history of the Justice Department taken from an earlier time. By remembering where we have been, we can most effectively build for our future.

Image courtesy of James Cracknell