



Ohio Sunset Review Committee
Agency Questionnaire

Ohio Judicial Conference
Agency Name _____

Judge Paula Giulitto, Chair / Paul Pfeifer, Executive Director
Point of Contact _____

Agency's primary purpose and its various goals and objectives

The Ohio Judicial Conference was statutorily created more than 60 years ago to serve the Ohio Legislature by providing insight into proposed legislation that could impact the courts. The Conference strives to be a resource to the members of the General Assembly and to all Ohio judges. The Ohio Judicial Conference's primary purpose is to improve the administration of justice in Ohio. Ohio Revised Code section 105.91 provides, in part, that the Judicial Conference is,

"organized...for the purpose of studying the co-ordination of the work of the several courts of Ohio, the encouragement of uniformity in the application of the law, rules, and practice throughout the state and within each division of the courts as an integral part of the judicial system of the state; to promote an exchange of experience and suggestions respecting the operation of the judicial system; and in general to consider the business and problems pertaining to the administration of justice and to make recommendations for its improvement."

To that end, the Judicial Conference offers services to Ohio judges, to the General Assembly, and to the Executive Branch that help to preserve judicial independence and accountability, promote public confidence in the law, and enhance the quality and professionalism of the judiciary. The Ohio Judicial Conference is an agency within the Judicial branch of Ohio government that represents all Ohio judges. In that capacity, it facilitates collaboration among judges in all counties and jurisdictions through the work of its 21 standing committees. It conveys a judicial perspective to the General Assembly and other justice system partners on behalf of all judges in Ohio. It makes recommendations for improvement to the law through a legislative platform and is instrumental in the implementation of best practices, and the fair and uniform application of law throughout the state. The Conference cooperates and collaborates with the Supreme Court of Ohio and the judicial associations to give judges a forum, a resource, and a voice in the governance of their branch.

Agency's past and anticipated workload, number of staff required to complete workload, and total number of staff

All 722 Ohio judges are members of the Ohio Judicial Conference. The Judicial Conference has five officers, an Executive Committee of approximately fifty judges, and 21 committees composed of over two hundred judges representing every jurisdiction and every area of the state. Judges volunteer to serve on Judicial Conference committees and receive no compensation for the time and labor associated with committee work.

The Judicial Conference has a staff of eight that comprises a judicial services division, a legislative services division, and an Executive Director. The employees of the Judicial Conference, in accordance with the Conference's enabling statutes, provide professional and policy support to the judges, the Judicial Conference Officers, the Judicial Conference Executive Committee, the Judicial Associations and the standing committees of the Conference.

These employees are responsible for reviewing all legislation as it is introduced in the General Assembly, monitoring legislation with a judicial impact, providing guidance and insight to judges as they formulate opinions on the impact of legislation, providing input and advice to legislative sponsors regarding judicial impact and statutory construction, and helping to ensure the fair and uniform implementation of new laws by educating judges about legislative enactments. The staff also plans and hosts the Ohio Judicial Conference Annual Meeting, the Court Technology Conference, the Retired Judges Seminars and the Judicial-Legislative Exchange, as well as providing administrative support to the judicial associations.

The staff of the Ohio Judicial Conference collaborates and partners with the Supreme Court of Ohio whenever it is possible to do so. Because the Supreme Court is the final arbiter of the constitutionality, interpretation, and application of legislative measures, however, the Court often avoids providing advice on legislation. Instead, the Judicial Conference provides this resource.

In addition, OJC staff work to build understanding between the three co-equal branches of government by facilitating communication between judges and the members of the General Assembly and the Executive Branch, and with other justice system partners such as the Ohio State Bar Association, the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission, the Ohio Public Defender, the County Commissioners Association, and the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association.

Agency's past and anticipated budgets and its sources of funding

The Ohio Judicial Conference is funded by General Revenue Funds which pay primarily for personnel, and a rotary fund that generates revenue through membership dues, registration fees for events like the Judicial Conference Annual Meeting, and royalties from the publication of Ohio Jury Instructions. The rotary fund currently covers a portion of personnel expenses along with costs associated with the management of Judicial Conference Committees and meetings, development and maintenance of the Judicial Conference website, and implementation of strategic plan priorities.

During the last biennium, FY 2022-2023, the Judicial Conference received a general revenue appropriation of \$1,096,459 and \$1,116,066, and a rotary appropriation \$588,234 and \$554,809 respectively. The total appropriation for all funds was \$1,684,693 in FY '22 and \$1,670,875 in FY '23.

For the FY 2024-2025 biennium, the Judicial Conference received a general revenue appropriation of \$1,192,000 and \$1,231,000, and a rotary appropriation of \$616,853 and \$674,109 respectively. The total appropriation for all funds is \$1,808,853 for FY '24 and \$1,905,109 in FY '25.

Number of members of its governing board or other governing entity and their compensation, if any

All Judicial Conference powers are exercised by the Executive Committee, which consists of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio, the Chief Judge and Chief Judge elect of the Ohio Court of Appeals Judges Association, the presiding officer and the presiding officer-elect of the Common Pleas, Juvenile, Probate, Domestic Relations, and Municipal/County court judges associations, the co-chairs of the standing committees of the Ohio Judicial Conference, the five Officers of the Judicial Conference, the Administrative Director of the Supreme Court of Ohio, and the Executive Director of the Judicial Conference. Justices and judges receive no compensation for their service on the Executive Committee or other committees of the Judicial Conference.

Currently, the Executive Committee consists of approximately 50 judges. The full Executive Committee meets quarterly. The Judicial Conference Officers meet monthly by conference call with the presidents of the Judicial Associations joining these calls every other month.

Additional notes

The Ohio Judicial Conference respectfully requests reauthorization.

The Judicial Conference serves an integral role in the Ohio Judicial System. Because the Supreme Court of Ohio is the final arbiter of the constitutionality, interpretation, and application of legislative measures, it often cannot comment on legislation before it comes to the Court in the form of a case or controversy. The Judicial Conference was created to perform this role and to serve the Ohio Legislature by providing judicial perspective on proposed legislation. OJC staff review all legislation for judicial impact, educate legislators about judicial impact and work with them on statutory construction, recommend statutory changes that will improve the administration of justice in Ohio, and help ensure the fair and uniform implementation of new laws. This input helps to prevent unintended consequences, which may otherwise have to be resolved with litigation. The Conference provides a forum for judges to discuss such issues and build consensus in a diverse community. The Judicial Conference benefits all Ohioans by helping to ensure access to the courts, due process, and the ability to obtain fair and impartial justice.