

Bureau of Justice Statistics

Strategic Plan, FY 2024–2029



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Message from BJS Acting Director Kevin M. Scott

As 1 of 13 principal statistical agencies and the official source for U.S. criminal justice statistics, BJS is responsible for providing independent, reliable, and timely information on the criminal justice system to the President, Congress, the judiciary, state and local governments, and the general public.

This is a time of significant transformation in the world and workforce, and we recognize changes occurring across the criminal justice system and with the rapid flow of information. BJS understands the need to evolve to keep pace. We are exploring new resources and programs to provide information that our customers need, rethinking the way we operate to improve efficiency and timeliness, and looking at ways to build, diversify, and empower our staff.

This strategic plan identifies five goals for fiscal years 2024–2029:

Goal 1: Produce Official Statistics on the Criminal Justice System

Goal 2: Modernize Data Collection, Analysis, and Publication

Goal 3: Improve Business Processes and Operational Enrichment

Goal 4: Empower a Diverse Workforce

Goal 5: Improve Customer Service and Recognition of BJS as the Official Source for Criminal Justice Statistics

These goals, as well as the corresponding initiatives described in the following pages, are a clear reflection of BJS's dedication to produce critical, timely, and high-impact statistical information necessary for the development and implementation of criminal justice policies and programs.

The goals and initiatives in this strategic plan are ambitious, and we believe the BJS team has the vision, talent, and focus to achieve them. Staff have demonstrated their dedication to supporting each other through change, and with the support of leadership, we will be able to advance and deliver more effectively on the BJS mission to collect, analyze, publish, and disseminate information on crime and the operations of justice systems at all levels of government.

Kevin M. Scott, PhD
Acting Director



Introduction

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) was established on December 27, 1979, under the Justice Systems Improvement Act of 1979, Public Law 96-157 (the 1979 Amendment to the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, Public Law 90-351). A component of the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) in the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), BJS is DOJ's primary statistical agency, and it is 1 of the 13 principal statistical agencies throughout the Executive Branch focused on collecting, compiling, processing, and analyzing information for statistical purposes.

Mission Statement

The mission of BJS is to collect, analyze, publish, and disseminate information on crime, individuals who commit crimes, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government including federal, state, local, and tribal levels. BJS delivers critical, timely, and high-impact statistical information to the public to inform policy and decisionmaking. The agency also provides financial and technical support to state, local, and tribal governments to improve both their statistical capabilities and the quality and utility of their criminal history records.

Vision Statement

To be the primary source of official and reliable criminal justice statistics in the United States.

Who We Are and What We Do

BJS is one of six OJP program offices, including the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. As an OJP component, BJS is supported by several business offices covering administration, financial operations, information technology, legislative affairs, public affairs and communications, and legal counsel. BJS also collaborates with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other OJP and DOJ components. BJS frequently receives requests for statistics and reports from government entities outside OJP, including other DOJ agencies, Congress, the White House, and nongovernment entities such as the media and the general public. These requests are in addition to the standard data collection and reporting that BJS continually conducts.

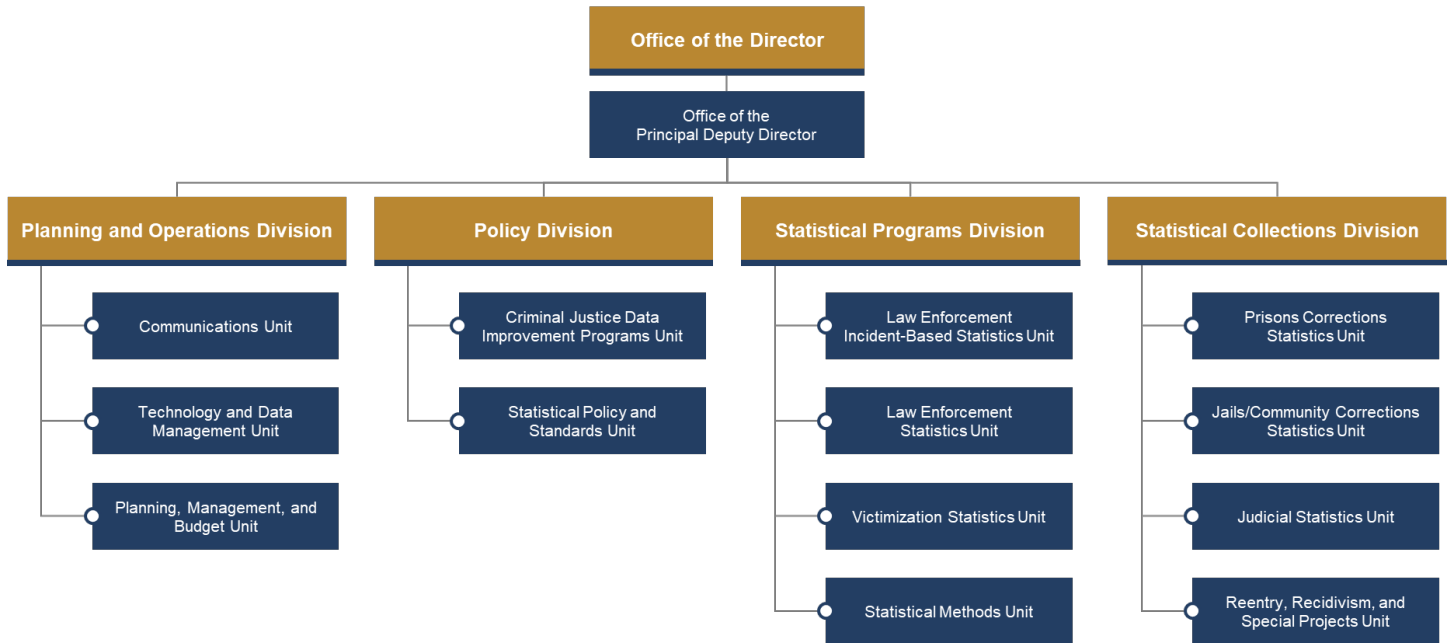
BJS is dedicated to developing, maintaining, and disseminating all of its statistics and data products in accordance with the highest professional and statistical standards. The agency has long maintained the strongest commitment to integrity and objectivity while striving to produce impartial, timely, and accurate statistics, as established in its governing statute. In carrying out its mission, BJS adheres to the principles and practices established by the federal statistical community. BJS maintains over three dozen major statistical series designed to cover every stage of the U.S. criminal and civil justice systems. Statistics are published annually on several topics, including criminal victimization, populations under correctional supervision, and the federal criminal justice system, and periodically on several more.

BJS has a highly skilled and dedicated workforce with a passion to fulfill the agency's mission. Their commitment and diligence results in a disproportionately large amount of data collection, synthesis, publishing, and technical assistance work relative to the agency's size and budget. The organization exemplifies a diverse, supportive, and mission-focused culture where employees feel valued and are empowered to use their talents. Whether through national data collections or assistance to states and communities, BJS is dedicated to improving the quality, comprehension, and accessibility of criminal justice statistics, which can inform policymakers and enhance the national discourse concerning criminal and civil justice.



BJS Organization

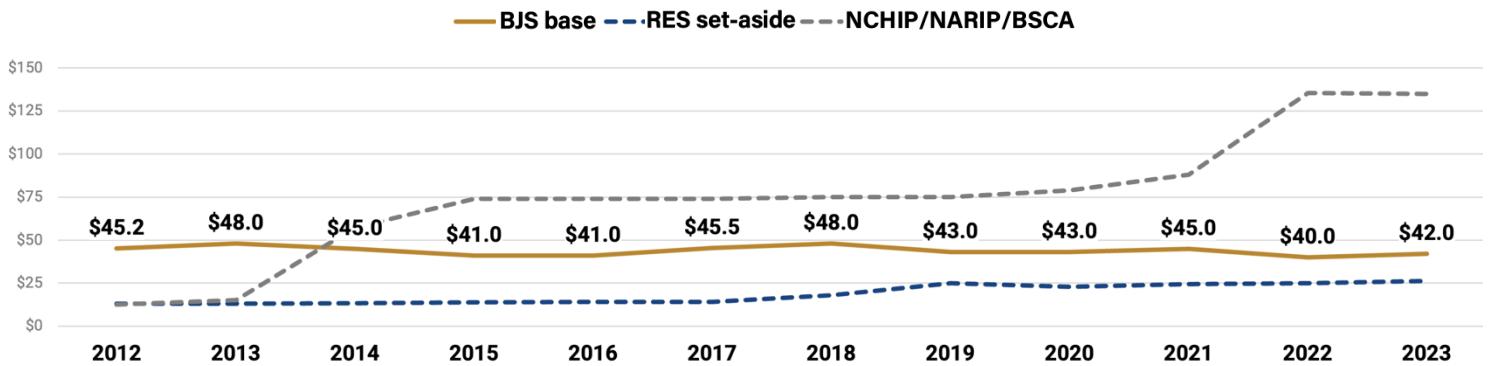
The BJS organization, illustrated in the graphic below, comprises the Office of the Director, the Office of the Principal Deputy Director, and the four divisions that span its operational and programmatic units.



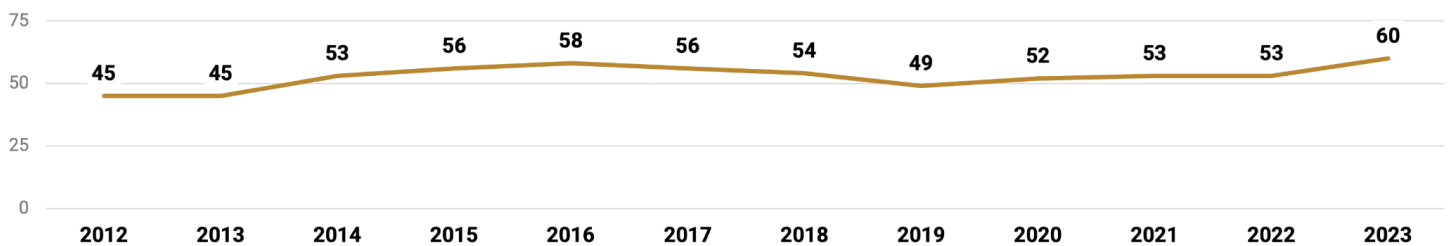
BJS Funding Overview

BJS operations and statistical collections are funded through a combination of sources. The graph below shows funding trends from 2012 to 2023 for the BJS statistical base; Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (RES) set-aside; and the National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP), NICS Act Record Improvement Program (NARIP), and Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) appropriations (beginning in FY 2022). The second graph depicts the number of BJS staff members by year, within that same time frame.

BJS Statistical Funding (in millions) FY 2012–2023

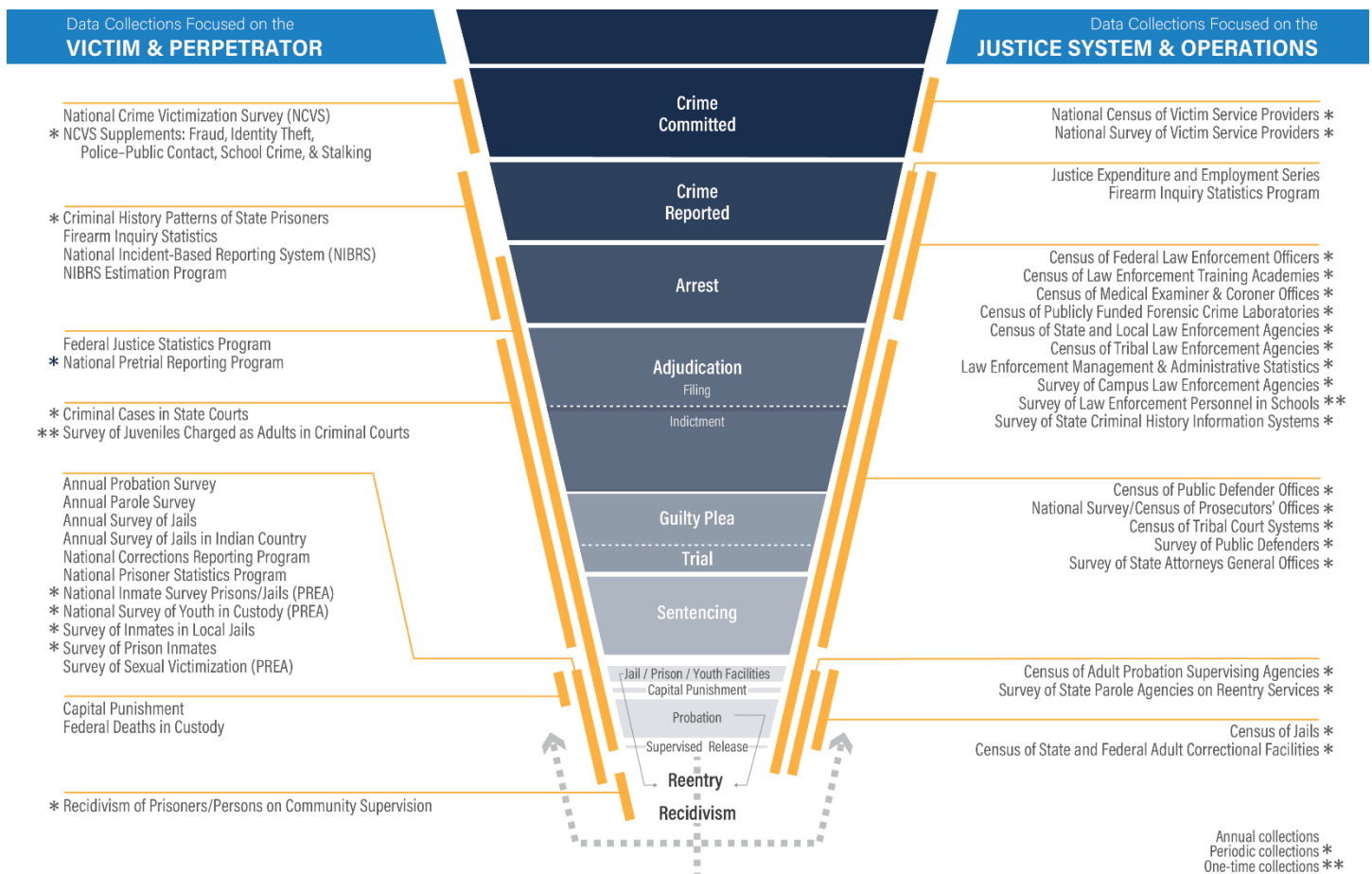


BJS Staff on Board FY 2012–2023



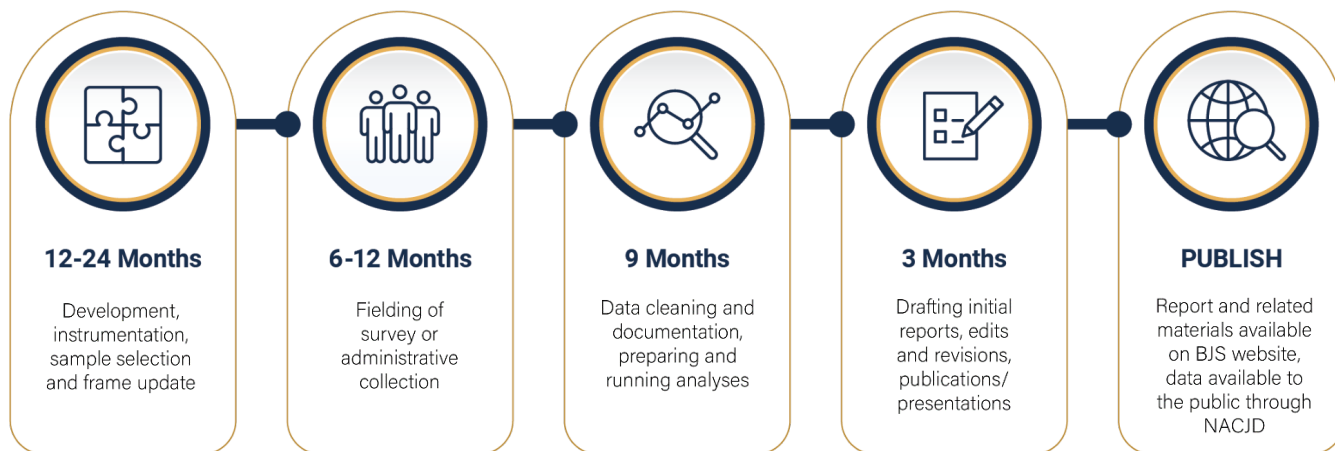
BJS Statistical Coverage of Crime and the Justice Process

BJS manages a comprehensive portfolio of statistical collections spanning the entire criminal justice process (steps represented by horizontal bars). BJS data collections focus on victim and perpetrator information (left column) and justice system and operations information (right column), though individual collections may include information from both categories. Gold leader lines indicate the breadth of the data collections. Note that the available data varies across steps—BJS strives to develop reports and products reflecting the data-rich environment of well-researched information as well as at the innovative edge where less research is available. Most data collections occur periodically (denoted with an asterisk), while others occur annually or are one-time collections (two asterisks).



The Lifecycle of a BJS Statistic

As shown in the graphic below, the lifecycle of BJS statistics—from development of a data collection instrument to release of reports and other products on the BJS website and through the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD)—involves a multi-step process. BJS must follow rigorous data quality guidelines to ensure that the data are accurate, consistent (where applicable), and trustworthy.



BJS Strategic Framework

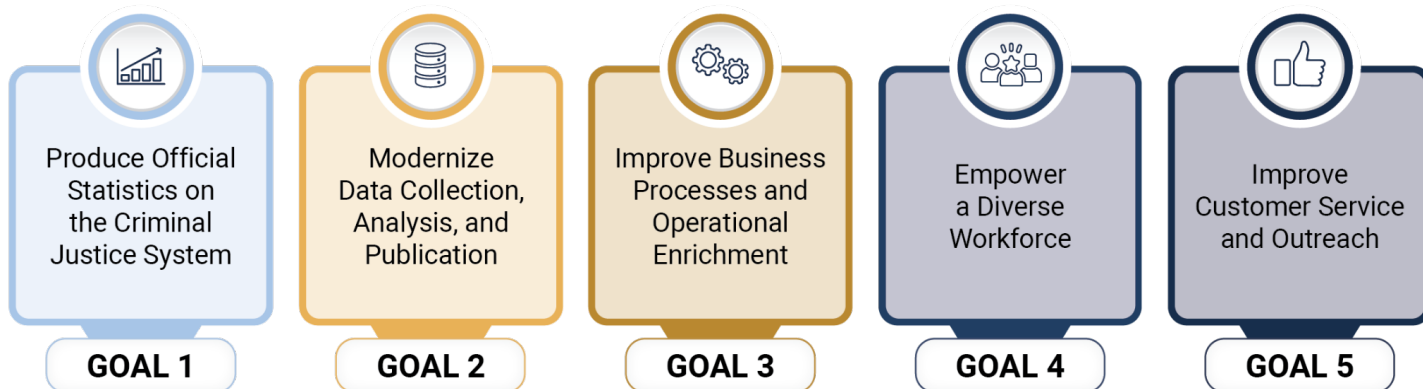
BJS’s position as a federal statistical agency is unwavering, yet its future direction is being shaped by internal and external forces. BJS developed this strategic plan to strengthen and improve the agency’s work in service to its mission. To that end, BJS must: 1) emerge as a more agile agency, committed to building a more modern and comprehensive data and statistical infrastructure; 2) attract and retain a workforce that is diverse, skilled, supported, engaged, and empowered; and 3) position itself to successfully implement organizational changes that improve business processes and build a more streamlined and impactful organization.

BJS considered four elements—data, people, processes, and tools and technology—to frame the development of goals within this strategic framework. These four pillars are illustrated in the graphic below.



BJS Strategic Goals

This plan was developed to create organizational stability and clear strategic direction. BJS leadership, with input from staff, identified five goals—and several initiatives within these goals—that focus on what we do, how we do it, and the improvements we envision in the coming years.



Goal 1: Produce Official Statistics on the Criminal Justice System

In accordance with its mission, BJS will continue to produce critical, timely, and high-impact statistical information to inform policy and decisionmaking.

This foundational responsibility fulfills, in part, obligations under the *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act*, which establishes requirements and processes for federal agencies to modernize their data management practices, evidence-building functions, and statistical efficiency that informs evidence-based policy decisions.

Key Initiatives

- 1.1 – Preserve high standards of data quality and accuracy through processes that promote clear lines of authority within the agency and shared accountability with partners
- 1.2 – Continue to apply and develop rigorous methods to protect privacy and confidentiality of data records

Goal 2: Modernize Data Collection, Analysis, and Publication

BJS seeks to modernize methods for collection, analysis, publication, and dissemination of crime statistics to enhance accessibility of our products and to provide transparent and meaningful information on the criminal justice system.

Since the agency’s establishment in 1979, much has changed across the criminal justice system, in public attitudes regarding survey participation, and concerning the delivery and availability of data. As the nation’s primary source of reliable justice statistics, BJS publications and data products have the potential to inform and impact public policy and to contribute to an improved justice system. As such, BJS strives to ensure that its products are credible, timely, accessible, and relevant.



Key Initiatives

- 2.1 – Improve timeliness of official statistics including through web-first reporting, preliminary releases, and experimental data products
- 2.2 – Increase accessibility of information
- 2.3 – Research and experiment with methods for leveraging nontraditional and administrative data sources to support production of official statistics

Goal 3: Improve Business Processes and Operational Enrichment

To improve business processes and operational transformation, BJS must secure resources to redesign and streamline workflow processes that enhance the development of high-impact statistical projects.

This goal requires BJS to rethink and redesign the way it operates. BJS must align resources to support staff and optimize product development. Practices and procedures to accomplish core activities must adapt and evolve to meet the needs of data providers, respondents, and other stakeholders. Rising costs compounded with fixed or minimally increasing budgets require the agency to further increase efficiency.

Key Initiatives

- 3.1 – Evaluate existing electronic data collection systems and processes and upgrade IT systems as needed to keep up with the collection and processing of traditional and alternative data
- 3.2 – Dedicate resources to underpin the technological infrastructure that supports BJS operations
- 3.3 – Invest strategically in transforming the operational practices of the agency, to include streamlining the workload for BJS staff, establishing product governance procedures, and standardizing the lifecycle of reports and other products
- 3.4 – Assess current and future BJS products against resources and capacity to develop a comprehensive portfolio of BJS product types that are most beneficial to the agency and its stakeholders

Goal 4: Empower a Diverse Workforce

BJS will cultivate an empowered workforce by providing training support towards professional growth, mentorship, and leadership development opportunities.

BJS leaders are invested in fostering a positive and supportive environment where staff are motivated, fully equipped, and empowered in their roles. This effort begins with attracting, building, and retaining an inclusive and engaged workforce, sustaining a pipeline of professional talent, and maximizing opportunities for employees to focus on higher value efforts.

Key Initiatives

- 4.1 – Promote diversity and equity in hiring and advancement
- 4.2 – Increase employee engagement and empowerment through bottom-up and top-down initiatives
- 4.3 – Develop strategies to promote employee retention and to strengthen succession planning
- 4.4 – Maximize opportunities for technical and professional development



Goal 5: Improve Customer Service and Recognition of BJS as the Official Source for Criminal Justice Statistics

BJS is committed to improving customer service through outreach and education that promote authentic partnerships and mutually beneficial collaborations with internal and external stakeholders in the criminal justice system.

To remain relevant, it is imperative that the agency explore new ways to reach and engage with consumers of BJS content. To that end, BJS leadership seeks to build upon long-standing connections and to create new partnerships with state, local, and tribal organizations, academic institutions, researchers, and other stakeholders.

Key Initiatives

- 5.1 – Expand dissemination strategies to meet consumers where they are
- 5.2 – Improve and expand accessibility for all users
- 5.3 – Leverage partnerships to expand the reach of official statistics on the criminal justice system
- 5.4 – Work with partners across the statistical and criminal justice fields to train the next generation of criminologists and statisticians

BJS Commitment

The commitment that BJS leadership has made to continuous improvement, encouragement of staff involvement, and effective communication sets a strong foundation for this framework. The goals and initiatives identified in this plan will put BJS on a path for continued success over the coming years.

BJS leadership is collectively responsible for the oversight of this strategic plan, and progress will be monitored through a process of shared accountability across the agency.

