

Strategic Plan  
(2012-2014 Version 1)

Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council (957)  
Agency Plan

Mission Statement

The Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council (CASC) provides continuing legal education, training and technical assistance to Virginia's elected prosecuting attorneys to improve prosecutor effectiveness in enforcing the law and thereby strengthening the criminal justice system in the Commonwealth.

Vision Statement

The Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council aims for a corps of professional prosecutors armed with the knowledge, skills and support to promote the fair and effective administration of justice.

Information Technology

**Current Operational IT Investments**

Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council (CASC) manages its responsibilities with modest IT resources – 6 laptops and 1 desktop provided and maintained by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency / Northrup-Grumman (VITA/N-G) partnership. CASC provides administrative support and technical assistance to 60 Commonwealth's Attorneys' offices currently using the Virginia Commonwealth's Attorneys' Information System (VCAIS), a prosecutorial case management system. The CASC website, [www.cas.state.va.us](http://www.cas.state.va.us), provides prosecutors with news of training opportunities and on-line program registration, prosecutor position announcements, and a publicly accessible Commonwealth's Attorney locator. CASC conducted its first live webinar in 2012.

**Factors Impacting the Current Agency IT**

**Proposed IT Solutions**

Looking ahead, CASC currently is updating our audio-visual equipment as part of a distance-learning project that seeks to make more training opportunities available to prosecutors at a lesser cost and reducing the need for extensive travel to training venues. Additionally CASC is exploring alternative case-management system solutions currently commercially available to prosecutor offices.

Financial Overview

The Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council maintains all general fund accounts in the Commonwealth's Accounting and Reporting System (CARS). CASC follows all state regulations as stated in the Commonwealth Accounting Policies and Procedures (CAPP) manual.

Budget Component	2013 GF	2013 NGF	2014 GF	2014 NGF
Base	592,613	38,450	592,613	38,450
Changes to Base	-3,125	0	-3,125	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>589,488</b>	<b>38,450</b>	<b>589,488</b>	<b>38,450</b>

Agency Goals

- Provide high quality continuing legal education training to prosecutors.

*Goal Summary and Alignment*

Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council seeks to encourage prosecutorial excellence by offering Virginia's prosecutors comprehensive continuing legal education and training specifically addressing the challenges of prosecuting criminal cases in the Commonwealth. Well-educated and trained prosecuting attorneys are better prepared to fulfill their responsibilities to effectively and ethically promote public safety and the fair and effective administration of justice.

*Long Term Goal*

Protect the public's safety and security, ensuring a fair and effective system of justice and providing a prepared response to emergencies and disasters of all kinds.

*Societal Indicator: Crime*

- Provide all Virginia prosecutors an opportunity to meet professional requirements mandated by the Virginia State Bar to maintain their licenses to practice law.

*Goal Summary and Alignment*

Attorneys in Virginia must participate in continuing legal education to maintain professional licensure. The Virginia State Bar mandates attendance of at least 12 hours of Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) annually, including 2 hours of ethics. CASC seeks to provide adequate opportunities for every Virginia prosecutor to satisfy MCLE requirements with timely training programs relevant to the prosecution of criminal cases.

*Long Term Goal*

Protect the public's safety and security, ensuring a fair and effective system of justice and providing a prepared response to emergencies and disasters of all kinds.

*Societal Indicator: Crime*

#### Programs and Service Areas for Agency

- 32604: Prosecutorial Training

#### Customers

Pre-Defined Customer Group	User Specified Customer Group	Customers Served Annually	Potential Annual Customers	Projected Trend in # of Customers
Local or Regional Government Authorities	120 Locally elected Commonwealth's Attorneys, their Assistants and support staff	689	689	Stable

#### Key Risk Factors

The Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council currently manages its core responsibilities with a small workforce – 7 staff members- and a modest budget. Four of six CASC staff will be eligible to retire with unreduced benefits within five years. Maintaining CASC services at even its current level requires registration fees for major programs, grant funding, volunteer program faculty drawn from among Commonwealth's Attorneys and public safety agencies, and a highly efficient and well-motivated staff. Alternative (grant) funding resources and partnering opportunities have proved valuable to CASC, but do not offer a stable and predictable foundation for planning training and related services. Well-planned training programs require substantial lead time in preparation and as much as two years advance commitment to a meeting location.

The Virginia Commonwealth's Attorneys' Information System (VCAIS) administered by CASC is now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year of use and has been installed in approximately 60 local Commonwealth's Attorneys offices. As of now, VCAIS remains a stable and reliable case management system, but its continued viability cannot be guaranteed and it currently is supported by one CASC computer systems engineer. The agency is preparing for the need to transition offices to different case management solutions.

#### Products and Services

CASC offers prosecutors cost effective opportunities to meet Virginia's professional requirements regarding continuing legal education while improving prosecution skills and criminal law knowledge. Our major product is our training.

The CASC website, [www.cas.state.va.us](http://www.cas.state.va.us), provides current information on prosecutor training opportunities and on-line program registration, prosecutor position announcements, and a public Commonwealth's Attorney locator. CASC staff collects gang information reported from public safety agencies for distribution to prosecutors and law enforcement. Commonwealth's Attorneys receive a weekly email update of court decisions, legislative actions, and topical news, along with information about training opportunities. CASC also provides Commonwealth's Attorneys with an annual legislative update and a program for training local law enforcement on new laws.

CASC provides technical support to 60 local Commonwealth's Attorneys' offices using the Virginia Commonwealth's Attorneys' Information System (VCAIS), a prosecutorial case management system.

#### Trends

##### Rankings & Customer Trends

CASC focuses specifically on Virginia's 120 independently elected Commonwealth's Attorneys and their staffs - currently about 689 prosecutors. The number of assistants has declined slightly due to budgetary cutbacks since FY2008.

Training needs vary, but all prosecutors benefit from quality training for relevant core knowledge and skills, supplemented by specialized training and information in response to emerging legislative, judicial and societal developments. Providing adequate training opportunities in lean budget times will require creative efforts to expand the size of programs and add alternative programs. The increased expense of traveling has prompted the agency to expand the availability of regional programs closer to our customers. In the long term, CASC expects increased reliance on distance learning alternatives to central site training programs.

Trend Name	Trend Area
Number of programs offered	Steady

#### Performance Highlights: Service Performance & Productivity Initiatives

CASC offers prosecutors cost-effective opportunities to meet Virginia's professional requirements regarding continuing legal education while improving prosecution skills and criminal law knowledge. In FY2012, CASC presented 22 programs. Attendance for 3 annual statewide prosecutor programs exceeded 1000. More than 670 prosecutors and other government attorneys attended the Spring Institute. CASC conducts a week-long Trial Advocacy program for prosecutors and a variety of specialty and regional programs for teams of prosecutors and law enforcement officers, including Advanced DUI Prosecution (2locations), DUI-D (Drug) Prosecution (4 locations), an Insurance Fraud program, the "Top Gun" drug prosecution course, the "Trauma to Trial" sexual assault investigation and prosecution course, and a Child Fatalities investigation and prosecution course. CASC partnered with other public safety agencies and the Office of the Attorney General to present gang training for law enforcement officers and prosecutors.

CASC closely monitors the quality of the programs from student evaluations. In FY2012, 100 percent of attendee evaluations rated CASC programs as "Excellent" or "Good."

#### Management Discussion & Analysis

##### Future Direction, Expectations, and Priorities

CASC focuses on its training activities. Prosecutors need targeted training to improve their trial skills and knowledge of the criminal law. There are few opportunities for Virginia prosecutors to obtain this training from other sources and CASC intends to continue to be the resource of choice for all of Virginia's prosecutors. Maintaining core services of the agency - professional training and information support services – within limited budgetary resources will continue as CASC's priority.

**32604: Prosecutorial Training**

**Description**

Provide continuing legal education opportunities for all Commonwealth's Attorneys and Assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys in Virginia. Prosecutors depend upon CASC training programs focused on the prosecution of criminal cases in Virginia to meet annual mandatory continuing legal education (MCLE) requirements established by the Virginia State Bar for professional licensure. CASC provides at least 6 statewide training programs per year. Additional regional programs are provided as funding permits.

**Mission Alignment and Authority**

Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council strives to ensure that all prosecutors have the opportunity, through CASC sponsored training and education programs, to exceed the minimum annual continuing legal education requirements mandated by the Virginia State Bar. Attorneys are required to attend 12 hours of approved training annually and 2 hours must be ethics related.

**Customers for this Service Area**

*Anticipated Changes to Customers Base*

The total number of assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys has declined in recent years. No additional positions or funding have been approved by the General Assembly for Commonwealth's Attorneys' offices since FY 2008. The number of funded positions has declined as a result of unrestored budget reductions from previous years. There are 30 attorney assistant positions now without funding because of budget reductions. Additionally, recruitment and retention of highly qualified assistants is made more difficult by relatively low compensation: the statewide starting salary for assistant prosecutors continues to lag behind that of assistant public defenders, magistrates, and legal aid attorneys.

*Current Customer Base*

Pre-Defined Customer Group	User Specified Customer Group	Customers Served Annually	Potential Annual Customers	Projected Trend in # of Customers
Local or Regional Government Authorities	120 Locally-elected Commonwealth's Attorneys and their assistants	689	689	Stable

**Partners for this Service Area**

Partner	Description
<i>No partners currently entered in plan</i>	

**Products and Services**

**Factors Impacting the Products and/or Services**

Additional topical training is offered as funding becomes available and specific needs are identified.

**Anticipated Changes to the Products and/or Services**

**Listing of Products and / or Services**

Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council provides mandatory continuing legal education (MCLE) training programs to Virginia prosecutors to satisfy Virginia State Bar professional licensing requirements and to develop prosecution skills and legal knowledge. Annually, CASC provides MCLE training for the Spring Institute, the Virginia Association of Commonwealth's Attorneys Annual Meeting, and the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Executive Program. CASC also offers specialized multi-day training programs on particular topics: drug offense prosecutions (Top Gun), murder prosecutions (Homicide), trial skills in a domestic violence context (Trial Advocacy), sexual assaults (Trauma to Trial), Advanced DUI, and Insurance fraud (Red Flag).

**Financial Overview**

Budget Component	2013 GF	2013 NGF	2014 GF	2014 NGF
Base	0	0	0	0
Changes to Base	589,488	38,450	589,488	38,450
<b>Total</b>	589,488	38,450	589,488	38,450

**Objectives for this Service Area**

*Objectives for this Service Area*

**Objective**

Ensure all Virginia prosecutors receive quality continuing education through Council sponsored training programs to meet the annual MCLE requirements.

*Description*

Increase attorney satisfaction with Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council training programs.

*Objective Strategies*

No Strategies for this Objective

*Alignment to Agency Goals*

No Agency Goals for this Objective

*Measures*

- Percentage of Commonwealth's Attorneys that rate CASC training programs good or excellent on program evaluations.

Measure Class  Measure Type  Preferred Trend  Frequency

Data Source and Calculation

Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council program participants complete performance evaluations that include an "overall program quality" rating as "Poor", "Needs Improvement", "Fair", "Good" or "Excellent". For each CASC program, CASC collects and maintains evaluations and prepares a performance evaluation summary aggregating rating responses for each category. From these aggregated rating responses CASC calculates a percentage of overall program quality ratings of "Good" and "Excellent" combined for each program. The "Good" and "Excellent" percentages for all programs are combined to calculate and report as an annual (mean) average.

- Number of Continuing Legal Education programs offered.

Measure Class  Measure Type  Preferred Trend  Frequency

Data Source and Calculation

Data based on calculation of number of CASC programs presented annually. This measure is calculated by identifying the number of CASC training programs offering Virginia State Bar approved mandatory continuing legal education (MCLE) credit during the preceding fiscal year. The measure may include multiple live presentations of a program at different times and locations.