



# Department *of* Criminal Justice

## Indigent Defense Commission

**Strategic Plan Review - July**  
**2026**



# A Plan Built on Two Pillars

Created in 2016, the IDC engaged in six months of strategic planning in 2022 — interviews, a summary report, and a full-day facilitated session — to focus its efforts for the next five years. The resulting plan is organized around two pillars, each holding a series of commitments and goals.

## 1 Core System Principles

Standards, established in 2017, that govern how indigent defense is delivered — organizational capacity, right to counsel, scope of representation, independence, specialization, appeals, conflict-free counsel, and effective representation.

Focus: quality and consistency inside the system

## 2 Advocacy

Relationship-building with the legislature and Governor's office, and awareness efforts with county commissioners, attorneys, and the public — the support the system needs to function and grow.

Focus: funding, relationships, and support outside the system

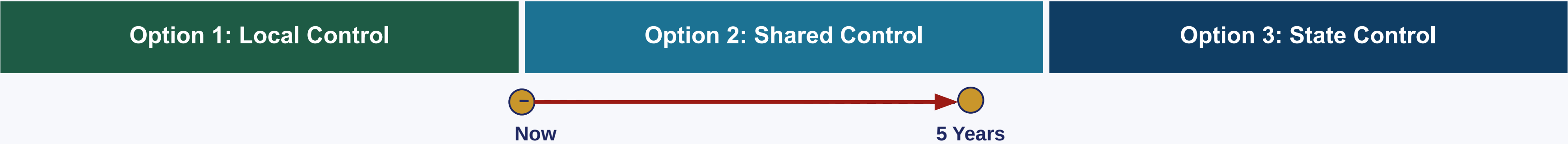
*Why two pillars: strong internal standards mean little without the external funding and relationships needed to sustain them — together they carry the IDC's five-year vision.*



# Principle One: Organizational Capacity

## System Type & Shared Responsibility

The IDC will promote shared responsibility between state and local governments for the delivery of indigent defense services. Indigent defense systems fall along a spectrum from full local control to full state control.



Vision: over the next five years, the IDC moves further along the spectrum toward more state responsibility — building on standards, the grant program, attorney training, and the appellate division.

### Elements along the spectrum:

Standards · Grant program · Training program · Managed assigned counsel · Specialized offices (juvenile, parental, appeals) · Regional Office(s)

PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL



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# Objective One: Organizational Capacity - Structure

## Managing Defenders: Mechanism & Structure

For managed assigned counsel systems, the IDC will promote managing defenders who are full-time with no or reduced caseloads — overseeing contract attorneys within a county or region.

The IDC will give managing defenders more authority over contract attorneys to ensure quality representation through increased supervision.

Measured by: caseload status and growth in contracts naming managing-defender oversight

## Progress made towards goal:

Counties where MD has minimal caseload:  
Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, Utah, Juab/Millard/Wasatch, Carbon, Washington

Counties where MD continues to carry caseload:  
Tooele, Uintah, Cache/Box Elder, Southern Utah Regional

Uintah, Cache/Box Elder MD were forced to take caseloads due to county budget constraints  
Southern Utah Regional MD expected to transition off her cases

PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS



80 %

# Objective Two: Resource Allocation - Grant Monitoring

## Resource Allocation: Grant Renewals

The IDC grant program is renewed annually, indefinitely — unless there is a monitoring issue. This formalizes the IDC's long-held approach of prioritizing renewal funding to give local jurisdictions consistency and stability.

Year 1 deliverables: (1) define "monitoring issue," and (2) outline a response process, including sanctions such as loss of funding.

## Grant Monitoring

IDC has designed and implemented a thorough grant monitoring protocol, including: on site visits and review of invoicing.  
Since its creation, 20 out of the 24 grantee counties have been reviewed.

PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS



100 %



# Objective Three: Resource Allocation

## Grant Program, Generally

- Continue funding distribution through a system-needs evaluation process
- Continue special consideration for localities looking to regionalize
- Continue special consideration for localities establishing public defender offices
- Establish two grant tracks: general needs and pilot programs

By end of Year 3: a process & strategy for the new pilot-program funding track

### Fair & Equitable Distribution

The IDC has approved grant requests without regard to overall distribution across counties, leading to wide variation in state-to-local spending ratios.

The IDC commits to maintaining renewal-funding priority while exploring fair, proportional distribution between state and local contributions.

Y1

A workgroup will be formed to develop a strategy for fair and equitable distribution of resources by county — by the end of Year 1 of the Strategic Plan.

PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS

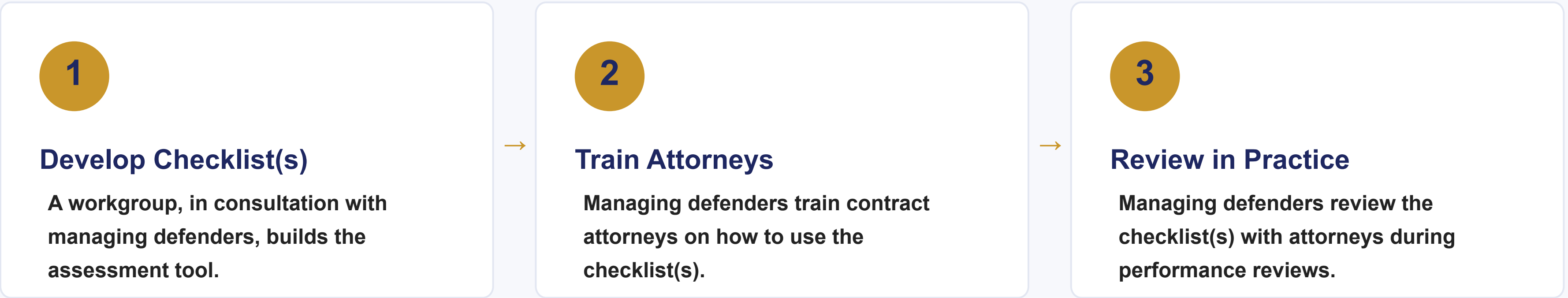


60 %

# Objective Four: Measuring Quality Representation

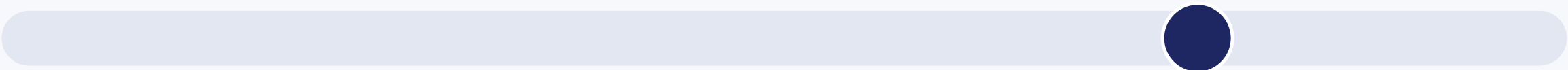
The IDC will promote assessing quality representation

There is currently no statewide tool used by managed assigned counsel systems to measure the quality of representation provided by individual attorneys. The IDC will develop checklist(s) in consultation with managing defenders.



**Y3** A workgroup will be formed to develop the checklist(s) and an implementation plan by the end of Year 3 of the Strategic Plan.

PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL



80 %





# Ongoing Objectives



# Attorney Caseloads

The IDC will encourage appropriate caseloads

## How it works

Using ABA standards, the IDC measures how many full-time attorneys — or the equivalent — are required for each county's client volume, versus how many full-time attorneys the county currently has under contract.

Appropriate caseloads — based on ABA standards — will be tracked by IDC staff across the strategic planning period, counting the number of counties that reduce their attorney deficit to zero.

# Attorney Compensation

The IDC will encourage proper compensation

## 1 Educate the Legislature

The IDC will educate the state legislature for the purpose of securing increased grant program funding.

## 2 Equip Managing Defenders

The IDC will provide managing defenders with resources to educate county commissions toward increased attorney pay.

- Parity with prosecutor offices — collecting data on regular increases, compared to defender contracts
- Variability in attorney compensation statewide — pay specified in individual contracts, adjusted for cost-of-living

# Advocacy

## Public Policy Activities

The IDC will continue to build relationships with state government — both the legislature and the Governor's office.

- Advocate annually for increased funding for indigent defense
- Partner with counties, community groups, and local partners
- Push for specific policy change at the state level

## Culture Change & Education

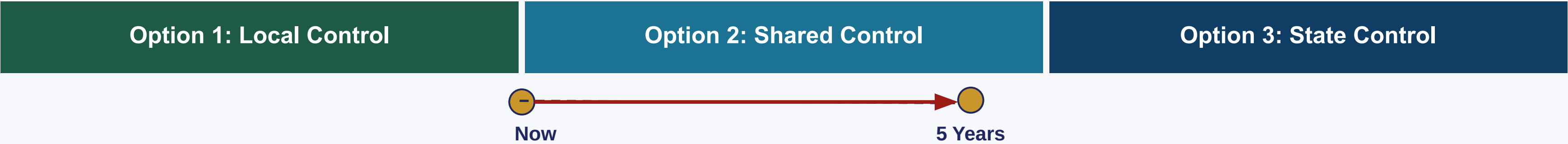
The IDC will continue raising awareness about the value of indigent defense with county commissioners, defense attorneys, and the public.

- Continue CLE trainings for attorneys
- Continue roundtables for managing defenders & administrators
- Maintain listserv communication
- Add small-group, in-person regional trainings
- Commissioners engage directly with the community & public

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**Elements along the spectrum:**

- |                          |                     |                   |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| • Checklist              | • Mitigation        | • MD Caseloads    |
| • Training               | • Grant Monitoring  | • Specialization  |
| • Aggravated Murder Fund | • County Engagement | • Regionalization |

PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL



80 %



# Discussion



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