

IDAHO
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
COMMISSION

2025-2028 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



COLLABORATING FOR A SAFER IDAHO

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LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

The Idaho Criminal Justice Commission is made up of over 20 leaders representing all facets of our criminal justice system. We work together to address important issues and challenges by developing and proposing balanced solutions. Our representative leadership stands up for what is right by upholding the rule of law and working to ensure fair and just treatment for all stakeholders moving through the system. This level of collaboration requires engagement of all branches of government, community-based organizations, and the private and philanthropic sectors working toward a shared vision for betterment. For us that means ***collaborating for a safer Idaho***.

The strength of our communities is built upon a foundation of public safety. This ranges from preventing crime, educating young people, supporting families, protecting victims, and improving reentry of incarcerated individuals back into society.

Today, more than 1.9 million people call Idaho home and as our population increases, so does the demand for resources, infrastructure, and services to keep our neighborhoods safe and our justice system strong. We have worked together to create this strategic action plan to guide our focus for the next three years. Through targeted subcommittees and focus areas we are well positioned to deepen collaboration with our peers and partners across Idaho.

By investing our resources wisely, we will continue enhancing the safety of our state.

Ashley Dowell, Chair

Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections

Kieran Donahue, Vice Chair

Idaho Sheriff's Association

IDAHO CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION MEMBERS

Below is the list of current Idaho Criminal Justice Commission members. Please note, all members were not active participants during the strategic planning process.

1. **Ashley Dowell; Chair**, Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections
2. **Kieran Donahue; Vice Chair**, Idaho Sheriff's Association
3. **Tracy Basterrechea**, Idaho Chiefs of Police Association
4. **Jonathon Brody**, Judge, District Court
5. **Denton Darrington**, Public Member
6. **Bill Gardiner**, Idaho State Police
7. **Seth Grigg**, Idaho Association of Counties
8. **Justin Whatcott**, Interim U.S. Attorney, District of Idaho
9. **Carson Tester**, Office of the Governor
10. **Ross Edmunds**, Office of Drug Policy
11. **Todd Lakey**, Senate Judiciary & Rules Chairman
12. **Bernadette LaSarte**, Public Member
13. **Erik Lehtinen**, Idaho State Appellate Public Defender
14. **Grant Loebs**, Idaho Prosecuting Attorney Association
15. **Chris Mathias**, House Judiciary, Rules & Administration
16. **Jeff Nye**, Idaho Attorney General's Office
17. **Sara Omundson**, Idaho Supreme Court
18. **Monty Prow**, Idaho Department of Health & Welfare
19. **Darren Simpson**, Judge, District Court
20. **Bruce Skaug**, House Judiciary, Rules & Administration Chairman
21. **Christine Starr**, Commission of Pardons & Parole
22. **Thomas Sullivan**, Magistrate, District Court
23. **Bree Derrick**, Idaho Department of Correction
24. **Greg Wilson**, Idaho Department of Education
25. **Melissa Wintrow**, Senate Judiciary & Rules
26. **Vacant**, Public Member

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Idaho Criminal Justice Commission (ICJC) is a statewide body established to promote and support improvements in Idaho's criminal justice system. The commission is composed of key stakeholders involved in the daily operation of agencies and partnerships working to keep Idaho safe. ICJC’s purpose is to facilitate collaboration, research, and the development of evidence-based practices that enhance the fairness, efficiency, and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Idaho.

Over the course of a three-month engagement (October to December, 2024) ICJC developed a three-year strategic action plan as outlined in [Executive Order 2020-20](#). **Through intentional collaboration with all areas of the criminal justice system, ICJC has identified legislator engagement as their collective focus and a core set of subcommittees for development and implementation of strategic initiatives.**

2025-2028 Subcommittees

ICJC has selected five subcommittees for focused attention within the criminal justice system—creating a holistic and collaborative effort across sectors. By leveraging data on legal trends, public concerns, and research rooted in best practices, subcommittees will work together to propose research-backed and evidence-based solutions that enhance effectiveness and efficiency in Idaho’s criminal justice system.

SUBCOMMITTEES & FOCUS AREAS	
Public Safety	The safety, protection and well-being of the public to prevent and reduce crime.
Prevention & Diversion	Alternative solutions that address underlying criminal behavior related to mental & behavioral health and substance abuse.
Criminal Offense & Conviction	Examination of key issues surrounding the classification, prosecution, and consequences of criminal behavior.
Rehabilitation & Reentry	Treatment and training to help offenders exiting the criminal justice system and reintegrating into society.
Grant Review Council	Oversees disbursement of federal grant funding to support criminal justice initiatives under the purview of Idaho State Police.

OVERVIEW OF ICJC

ICJC was created by a 2005 Governor’s Executive Order to promote efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. For 20 years the commission has collaborated across the three branches of government by working on systemic issues such as mental & behavioral health disparities, illicit drug use, fentanyl, human trafficking, sex abuse crimes, and the rehabilitation of offenders. ICJC continues to advance strategic recommendations to improve the safety of Idahoans.

Leaders are guided by a strong sense of duty and purpose to take deep dives into issues and topics with a deliberate view on how to contribute their expertise. With both a breadth and depth of representation there is a balanced approach to leveraging the connections within the criminal justice system to improve legislation, align priorities, and come together around common goals.

VISION	MISSION
Collaborating for a Safer Idaho	The Idaho Criminal Justice Commission is committed to collaboration to address important criminal justice issues and challenges by developing and proposing balanced solutions, which are cost-effective and based on “best” practices to achieve a safer Idaho.
VALUES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ We are committed to learning and enhancing our understanding.▪ We communicate honestly.▪ We encourage open dialogue and feedback.▪ We are flexible and innovative.▪ We keep our commitments.▪ We respect all contributions.▪ We are sensitive to the unique perception and needs of others.	

The purpose of ICJC is to provide policy-level direction and to promote efficient and effective use of resources, based on a data-driven approach and evidence-based practices for matters related to the state’s criminal justice system. To that end, ICJC shall identify critical challenges facing the criminal justice system and recommend strategies to resolve them by:

1. Developing and adopting a three-year strategic plan to be reviewed annually.
2. Analyzing the long-range needs of the criminal justice system.
3. Assessing the cost-effectiveness, return on investment and performance measures of the use of State and local funds in the criminal justice system.
4. Reviewing data and reporting relating to Idaho’s implementation of the Justice Reinvestment Act and subsequent criminal justice reforms.

5. Advise and develop recommendations for the Governor and the Legislature, when appropriate, on public policy and strategies to improve the State’s criminal justice system.
6. Review and evaluate criminal justice policies and proposed legislation to determine the impact on the State’s adult and juvenile justice systems.
7. Promote communication among criminal justice professionals and the respective branches of State and local government to improve, professionalism, create partnerships, and improve cooperation and coordination at all levels of the criminal justice system.
8. Research and evaluate evidenced-based practices and use findings to influence decisions on policy.

ICJC membership is composed of public agencies and organizations working directly within the criminal justice system in preventative, intervention-based and rehabilitative capacities.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

ICJC retained Spark! Strategic Solutions to facilitate the development of the three-year strategic action plan. The planning process was divided into five key stages using the Spark Method™ framework. Three



facilitated group discussions and 17 one-on-one interviews were held with ICJC to define the criminal justice system and identify its strengths, challenges, and opportunities. The end goal of the plan is to provide ICJC with an actionable guide as they implement a refined subcommittee accountability structure.

Uncover the Challenges

The first phase of the planning process involved research and review of criminal justice through the lens of Human-Centered Systems—a three-layered model that showcases the important context of centering people at the heart of all planning efforts. Using this framing, ICJC members discussed the micro, meso, and macro levels of the system as it relates to criminal justice in Idaho.

At the micro-level, the safety of Idahoans was identified as the key focus of problem-solving and system alignment. Public safety was discussed as the universal driving force of the criminal justice system and highlighted as the responsibility of all Idahoans.

The meso layer identified agency and community partners as the primary entities working to keep the public safe and the justice system fair, effective and efficient.

The macro layer focused on the broader community as the shared spaces and places that people live and gather. The definition also includes the shared values, identity and core beliefs that people hold as a means of bringing them together.

Criminal Justice System Definition

ICJC defines the criminal justice system as a set of governmental institutions and processes responsible for enforcing laws, maintaining social order, restoring victims of crime, and ensuring that justice is served when crimes are committed. The criminal justice system heavily relies on community partners and other non-governmental entities to help prevent crime and provide services to at-risk populations.

The criminal justice system involves several stages, from the investigation and arrest of suspected criminals to the prosecution, trial (and in appropriate cases) punishment and rehabilitation. The system is designed to uphold the rule of law while balancing the rights of the accused with the need for public safety and justice.



Areas of the Criminal Justice System & Framework

The visual representation of the system includes eleven areas that showcases the interdependency, process of engagement, interception, and steps to reentry for those convicted of crimes.



Public Safety: The foundation of the criminal justice system that works to ensure the safety, protection and well-being of the public. Includes traditional law enforcement methods as well as prevention strategies such as outreach, education, and community engagement.

- **Law Enforcement:** Has an established presence in communities to prevent and deter crime and respond to emergencies. Also responsible for investigating crimes, gathering evidence, and arresting individuals suspected of committing criminal acts.
- **Prevention & Diversion:** Strategies aimed at proactively steering individuals away from criminality and traditional legal processes. Alternatives to arrest, prosecution, or incarceration that connect individuals with appropriate services or interventions.
- **Criminal Courts:** Provide a venue where criminal charges are brought, accountability is determined, sentences are imposed, and victims are heard. Criminal courts include treatment courts.
- **Prosecution:** Represents the government and is responsible for determining which (if any) charges are filed. Prosecutors have the duty to see that justice is done through plea negotiations, trial, or as otherwise appropriate.
- **Defense:** Provides zealous advocacy and ensures client's rights are protected throughout the criminal justice process.
- **Trial Process:** The trial is where both the prosecution and defense present their cases before a judge or jury. It's a formal procedure where the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- **Sentencing:** If the defendant pleads guilty or is found guilty, the judge imposes a sentence. Sentences could include incarceration, probation, fines, and other sanctions and vary based on the severity of the crime, impact on the victim, and the circumstances of the defendant.
- **Corrections & In-Custody Settings:** Refers to the systems in place to manage individuals who are sentenced to incarceration or released back into the community under supervision.
- **Appeals and Post-Conviction:** The defendant has the right to challenge the conviction and/or sentence. The appellate court reviews legal errors made in the criminal case.
- **Pardons & Parole:** A pardon is a government action that allows a person to be relieved of some or all of the legal consequences of their criminal conviction. Parole allows a person to serve some portion of their indeterminate sentence in the community while under supervision.
- **Rehabilitation & Reentry:** Strategies to reduce recidivism and help individuals become productive members of society by addressing root causes of criminal behavior and providing the necessary tools and support.

Engage with Compassion

The second phase of planning involved deep listening to identify shared values, definitions, aspirations, experiences, and barriers to overall well-being in the context of the criminal justice system. ICJC

discussed several questions through individual and group engagement to prompt reflection on the past and current state of their work.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges, and Pain Points

There is a deep respect and appreciation for the current leadership of ICJC and their ability to drive actionable change. Members feel the core strength of the commission revolves around the connection and collaboration between members who represent the full spectrum of the criminal justice system. The level of expertise around policy and advocacy helps drive systemic change and supports a willingness to discuss difficult topics in a safe and open environment that mines for differing perspectives.

With a strong commitment to public safety and protection of Idahoans through crime prevention and reduction, commission members feel there is more that can be done to materially improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the justice system.

When identifying weaknesses, ICJC members highlighted a lack of concentrated focus on shared goals, prevention-based policy and guidance for the existing subcommittee structure. There is a strong desire to work with legislators to advise and support criminal justice policy development using the commission's expertise. This has been difficult because of the diminishing awareness of ICJC's existence and purpose. Political dynamics are posing challenges related to development of useful legislation because of differing beliefs and a lack of collaborative engagement. This impacts the ability to proactively support public safety concerns related to growing trends in issues such as human trafficking, sex abuse crimes, mental health and substance use disorder, cartels, cybercrime, housing, and economic uncertainty. Rural and frontier communities lack options and need more supportive services to address these challenges as well.

Informational meetings and presentations would benefit from more action-oriented conversation. There is also a desire for more engagement from absent members of the commission and consistency in attendance for the duration of scheduled meeting times. While the criminal justice system is well represented from a broader perspective, monthly meeting attendance has not been consistent.

Commission members desire more actionable alignment across uncoordinated efforts and gaps within community-based services relating to meeting mental health and substance use disorder. Those at-risk or already involved in the justice system require more support and services—and yet prevention and intervention programs are underfunded.

Members expressed deep concern regarding workforce development as resources become more strained and limited related to recruitment, wellness support, and professional development. Staff are experiencing high levels of burnout and overexertion due to the growing needs within the system.

There is a declining pool of talent coming into the criminal justice field and efforts are needed to support the growth and development of these professions.

The lack of support for victims of crime is another area of concern as some members feel the system is heavily criminal/defendant focused. There are huge gaps in providing access to resources and wrap-around services to protect and help stabilize victims of crimes and families.

Opportunities for Consideration

With the support of commission members, there are several opportunities to explore as ICJC realigns priorities for activation.

- Restructuring of subcommittees to drive operational level work, with ICJC providing oversight and expertise to guide development of targeted recommendations and strategic initiatives designed to materially improve the criminal justice system. This will help strengthen the commission's advisory role by making annual recommendations to the governor and legislature as appropriate.
- Peer-to-peer outreach amongst legislators to increase awareness and understanding of ICJC's existence, role and advisory capacity. Continue building on the engagement of legislators through an annual meeting before the legislative session begins. Ideally this would occur by October of each calendar year. In addition, extending invitations to present and discuss draft legislation would help increase year-round interaction.
- More streamlined engagement of ICJC members through intentional presentations that offer space for strategic discussion and actionable insights. Reconsideration of meeting capacity, location, and technological support would be helpful to ensure those outside of the Treasure Valley can attend meetings. As per the executive order, travel costs are not provided and this may pose a barrier to engagement.
- Continued collaboration with the Idaho Behavioral Health Council (IBHC) through alignment of subcommittee work to implement shared strategies to leverage effectiveness and efficiency of resources. Research-based identification of accessible and affordable community supports for criminals, victims of crime and families in need of services would be helpful to explore to provide a continuum of care.

Align Existing Resources

The third phase of planning focused on understanding how partners could be engaged and mobilized to support under-resourced areas of the system. The discussion centered on ways to foster effective organization and efficient coordination through collaborative partnerships to leverage resources.

Idaho Behavioral Health Council

The most highlighted collaboration for impact centered on working with IBHC. Their vision is that adults, children, and their families who live with mental illness and addiction receive the behavioral

health care services they need when they need them. They believe if this vision is realized, then people in Idaho will have a better quality of life, reduced risk of involvement with the criminal justice system, and make our communities healthier, safer places to live.

Like ICJC, IBHC brings together the three branches of government and community partners to work collaboratively on systems change. With a focus on behavioral health there is opportunity for aligned strategies and implementation cross-over between the parties.

Mental health and substance use disorder have risen to concerning levels over the last ten years. According to the [2024 Idaho Justice System Stakeholder Survey](#), crime related to mental illness and illicit drug use were two of the five most selected system-wide challenges. In addition, the percentage of all criminal offenses recorded in the Idaho Incident-Based Reporting System that were drug offenses increased from 9% in 2009 to 25% in 2023. In that same time, the drug offense rate increased 55%, while most other types of crimes decreased.

Key areas of collaboration with IBHC could include alignment with the following recommendations as outlined in their [2024-2028 strategic action plan](#):

- **Workforce**—Implement strategies to increase recruitment and retention to strengthen the behavioral health professional workforce. There is opportunity to add the criminal justice professional workforce to this endeavor as well.
- **Help the Helpers**—Provide support to individuals with occupational exposure to secondary trauma from working in the justice system, crisis response, and as first responders, and their families.
- **Primary Prevention Programs and Protective Factors**—Identify and implement coordinated evidence-based or evidence-informed primary prevention strategies that support community, family, and child well-being. Identify opportunities to minimize risk factors and enhance protective factors and promote long-term resiliency in children, youth, and adults with a significant emphasis on those having trauma symptoms.
- **Crisis Centers**—Expand the functionality of crisis centers.
- **Diversion Systems**—Develop early diversion and deflection tactics to avoid long-term engagement with the criminal justice system: prearrest, post arrest, and beyond.
- **Criminal Justice-Continuum of Care**—Ensure continuity of care for those entering and leaving the criminal justice system by providing treatment and ensuring links to services for those coming out of incarceration.
- **Competency Restoration**—Review and reform the competency restoration process for adults (18-211/212) and juveniles.
- **Supportive Housing**—Increase availability of supportive housing for people with behavioral health conditions.

Insight Idaho

Another top collaboration highlighted was [Insight Idaho](#). This initiative has a mission to establish a secure, centralized data repository, integrating diverse data sources for improved governance and sharing. ICJC has interest in leveraging the work of this initiative to help guide data-informed decision making as subcommittees implement strategic initiatives.

Insight Idaho can be used as a data repository and resource for reporting on the outcomes and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and ICJC-led initiatives.

Insight Idaho is an integrated data system housed at the Idaho State Controller's Office. The system links data from the Idaho Department of Correction, Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Idaho Supreme Court, Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Idaho Sheriff's Association. It is designed to provide data on cross-agency trends to inform policymakers and stakeholders to help navigate legal complexities with confidence—ensuring actions align with Idaho's legislative expectations.

Idaho Launch | Idaho Workforce Development Council

A third highlighted collaboration was [Idaho Launch](#)—an initiative that connects Idahoans to the skills employers have requested by providing financial assistance to help pay for approved training. With strong concerns in gaps in the criminal justice workforce, ICJC sees collaboration with Idaho Launch and the Workforce Development Council as a worthy exploration to develop strategies to incentivize and curate a pipeline of talent. This can include educating and informing students of potential career paths and outlining specific skill-based learning needed in the industry.

Find Strategic Investments and Evaluate Impact

The fourth and fifth phases of planning used human-centered data (aspirations, barriers, values, and well-being) to design and invest in solutions that create unity and drive positive systemic change. The main activity for this portion revolved around discussion of the best and most impactful subcommittees and focus areas for implementation.

ICJC members discussed the users of the criminal justice system and their journey through the many onramps and offramps based on the areas of system engagement. Various entry points into the criminal justice system were identified. This includes those arrested or detained, people targeted with investigation but never charged, victims and their families, school systems, businesses and individuals who rely on monitoring systems, 911 and crisis calls. While this list is not exhaustive, it showcases the complexity of navigating a system with many layers and stakeholders. Considering the criminal justice system definition, framework, strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities, ICJC discussed a variety of potential focus areas for deeper exploration.

ICJC Priority Area: Legislator Policy Engagement

The top priority for ICJC is engagement of legislators through an annual plan designed to build relationships, capacity and structure to support legislation review. The commission will lead this work collectively through focused agenda items, invitations to legislators to join meetings, and other vetted relationship building strategies that leverage ICJC's expertise in the criminal justice system for policy development.

Subcommittee Structure & Focus Areas

Five subcommittees were identified as the most important overarching focus areas for the next three years. ICJC subcommittees are tasked with developing and translating strategic initiatives into actionable plans that produce tangible results. These focused, high-priority efforts are time-bound initiatives designed to achieve specific goals that align with ICJC's purpose and key areas of the criminal justice system.



Subcommittees will work toward coordinated actions and resources that are allocated over a defined period to achieve a particular set of outcomes while addressing the most pressing needs and opportunities for system improvement.

SUBCOMMITTEES & FOCUS AREAS	
Public Safety The safety, protection and well-being of the public to prevent and reduce crime. SPONSOR: TBD	
Prevention & Diversion Alternative solutions that address underlying criminal behavior related to mental & behavioral health and substance abuse. SPONSOR: TBD	
Criminal Offense & Conviction Examination of key issues surrounding the classification, prosecution, and consequences of criminal behavior. SPONSOR: TBD	
Rehabilitation & Reentry Treatment and training to help offenders exiting the criminal justice system and reintegrating into society. SPONSOR: TBD	
Grant Review Council Oversees disbursement of federal grant funding to support criminal justice initiatives under the purview of Idaho State Police. SPONSOR: Idaho State Police	

Sponsoring entities for each subcommittee will be identified to serve as the lead contact and task manager during the next three-years. Public agency sponsors will populate subcommittees to guide and drive the work forward by developing implementation plans.



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