



Uncomplicated Courts Initiative (UCI)

Process Redesign Pilot Project Request for Applications

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Overview

This section is an at-a-glance summary of the Uncomplicated Courts Initiative (UCI) pilot project. It's intended as a starting point only. Eligibility criteria, roles and responsibilities, and other details are provided in the sections below. Learn more on our project page [here](#).

What is it?	A funded pilot partnership to redesign how courts handle high-volume civil cases (i.e., debt collection, eviction, small claims) so self-represented litigants can navigate them more easily
Who's behind it?	IAALS , the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, in partnership with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), with funding from the State Justice Institute (SJI)
What funding is available?	\$30,000 awarded as a single grant
Who can apply?	Any state or local court with jurisdiction over high-volume civil matters
What's involved?	A 3-phase partnership over one year to redesign the high-volume process and tee up a pilot. This includes the following steps: 1. Phase 1: Assessment of the court's current high-volume process, including landscape and user research 2. Phase 2: Conceptual redesign of the process in collaboration with IAALS and NCSC 3. Phase 3: Development of an implementation plan and launch of the redesigned process pilot, including identifying necessary rule and practice changes and designing pilot logistics. Once the implementation plan is handed over to the court, IAALS and NCSC will reassess the partnership with the court to identify any continuing needs for assistance with implementation and will work with the court to potentially seek additional funding to assist with further design support, technical assistance, and/or evaluation.
What's the timeline?	Application closes: October 23, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. MT Application review and selection: October-November 2026 Award notification to applicants: December 2026 Phase 1 (pilot kickoff & assessment): January-April 2027

	Phase 2 (process redesign): May-August 2027 Phase 3 (pilot design & launch): September-December 2027 This timeline assumes the selected court has not independently completed any of these phases already. If they have, the timeline would be adjusted accordingly. The pilot won't be completed in this time frame, but by the end of Phase 3, the court will have launched a pilot and have a clear, actionable plan for implementing its redesigned process.
What does the application require?	A completed application form and letters of support from (1) the chief or presiding judge and (2) the court administrator or clerk
Who do I contact with questions?	Danielle Kalil, IAALS Director of Civil Justice & the Judiciary, at danielle.kalil@du.edu

About this Pilot

IAALS, in partnership with NCSC, is seeking a court partner to participate in the UCI Pilot Project. The selected court will work alongside a team of national experts to diagnose, redesign, and launch a fundamentally simpler approach to processing high-volume cases.

IAALS and NCSC will provide technical assistance, design expertise, and up to \$30,000 in funding. The court will contribute institutional knowledge, stakeholder relationships, data access, and willingness to redesign their process.

The goal is to build on the innovation already happening in courts around the country, apply user-centered design, and create a simplified model for redesign that other jurisdictions can follow.

Project Leadership & Partners

IAALS

IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver, is the project lead. IAALS is a national, independent research organization that innovates and advances solutions that make our civil justice system more just. Every day, IAALS reexamines how the American civil justice system can better serve the needs of us all. Through purposeful collaboration, listening, and research, we jumpstart the groundbreaking and achievable solutions that will clear a path to justice for everyone. Because justice for all will never be a reality if those seeking justice cannot access the system designed to deliver it.

National Center for State Courts (NCSC)

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) will provide technical assistance throughout this pilot. NCSC is a community of dedicated researchers, consultants, educators, and former practitioners who drive innovation and progress in courts and justice systems. NCSC's reputation for trusted leadership allows us to work alongside top judicial officers to examine some of the most complex and significant issues facing society, and our team of experts is deeply committed to advancing just, free and safe communities.

State Justice Institute (Funder)

The State Justice Institute is a nonprofit corporation authorized by Congress to award grants to improve the quality of justice in state courts across the United States. SJI funding supports this pilot through a grant to IAALS.

The Problem We're Solving

In approximately 75% of civil cases, at least one party is navigating a potentially life-altering legal matter without the help of a lawyer. Self-represented litigants face:

- A system designed with the assumption that almost everyone has a lawyer, despite the fact that self-represented litigants are the majority users in high-volume case types
- Procedures that are overwhelming, assume legal expertise, and offer little meaningful guidance
- High-stakes outcomes (lost income, lost housing, serious harm to mental health and financial well-being) riding on compliance with those complex procedures
- Deep power imbalances between represented and unrepresented parties
- Limited and high-cost legal help that prevents them from getting assistance
- Court staff and judicial officers who want to help but are limited by ethical rules and must manage growing caseloads with limited staffing and resources

These challenges make it so self-represented litigants can't navigate the process and often stop trying, losing by default without understanding what happened. They also may result in judges and court staff overwhelmed by a deluge of cases they can't adequately support. The status quo isn't serving the court or litigants. Our theory is that the problem goes beyond just a lack of information. The process itself needs to be redesigned and simplified.

What Do We Mean By "High-Volume"?

For the purposes of this pilot, high-volume cases share three characteristics:

- **High Frequency.** Case types that dominate dockets because the volume of cases filed is high, in urban jurisdictions and rural courts alike.
- **High Stakes.** Civil cases that directly and significantly impact a person's livelihood, housing, or financial stability. Eviction and consumer debt are primary examples, but any high-volume civil docket with these dynamics qualifies (minus the exceptions listed below).
- **High Likelihood of Self-Representation.** Cases where a self-represented defendant is typically up against an institutional or corporate plaintiff with legal representation.

Out of Scope: Complex civil litigation, personal injury, family law and domestic relations, and traffic cases are not eligible case types for this pilot.

Vision & Guiding Principles

The UCI redesign is anchored in the shifts outlined below, which define the transition from a traditional, system-preserving model to our vision of an “uncomplicated,” people-centered one. The shifts exist along a continuum. Different courts will find themselves at different points along the continuum based on their resources, culture, and infrastructure.

Traditional		Uncomplicated
Complicated, opaque procedures		Simple, intuitive pathways
Lawyer-centric design		User-centric design
Stagnant or peripheral technology		Strategic, tech-enhanced interface
Court as a place		Court as a service with flexible access
Formal and reactive court role		Proactive and service-oriented court role
One-size-fits-all case management		Case management tailored to high-volume dockets
Case disposition as the primary goal		Just resolution as the primary goal
Adversarial approach		Problem-solving approach
Lawyer-exclusive assistance		Multidisciplinary ecosystem of support
Lack of data		Regular collection & use of high-quality data

What Do We Mean By “Redesign”?

Courts have tried many strategies to help self-represented litigants navigate a complex system: better websites, plain-language forms, navigators, online filing portals. These changes are all important. They help make a complicated process easier to get through. But they don’t make the process itself simpler. In this pilot, we challenge courts to move beyond helping people cope with complexity; instead, we want to reduce it.

We define redesign as three elements working together: simplifying the process itself, improving how people interact with it (for example, through user-focused technology), and expanding help for those who need it. The strongest redesigns incorporate all of these elements. But to truly redesign the process, simplification has to come first.

When a process is intuitive, staff spend less time explaining it and fixing mistakes. Help isn’t needed for every part of the process, and attorneys can focus on the most complex tasks. And litigants can meaningfully participate. Technology and support layered onto a genuinely simpler process make that process even better. The same tools layered onto an unchanged, complex process—while perhaps an improvement from the status quo—are less effective.

Take answer requirements, for example. Filing an answer is hard for most self-represented litigants. A court could make it easier by explaining the form better, creating a simple and standardized form, or turning it into a plain-language interview that generates the answer for litigants. All of those help. But redesign asks a more basic question: do we need an answer at all? If the same facts could be gathered in a simpler way that doesn’t require litigants to navigate the complexity of a legal filing, maybe the formal answer requirement can be removed. Once that foundation is in place, plain language and guided tools can make what remains even easier. They’re enhancing a simplified process, not tweaking a complex one.

That’s the mindset behind this work. This doesn’t mean simplification is the only thing that matters. User-centered design, legal help, and technology all remain essential, and we expect them to be part of any strong redesign effort. What we’re looking for is a partner in ambitious redesign—a court willing to start by rethinking the process itself, and then layering the other strategies on top of that foundation. We’re not looking to simply add tools and help to an otherwise unaltered process.

See

Additional Information & [FAQ](#) to learn more about the redesign philosophy driving this project.

UCI Pilot Project Goals

IAALS has the following goals for this pilot project.

Goal 1: Center user experience and build a blueprint for gathering it.

Court redesign often moves forward without a structured way to capture the experience of people actually navigating the process (i.e., self-represented litigants, court staff, and other stakeholders). A goal of this pilot is to center those experiences throughout assessment and redesign, then document what worked and what didn't in a blueprint other courts can use to replicate the process.

Goal 2: Design toward just resolution for all parties in high-volume cases.

A simpler process should mean more opportunity to participate, enhanced fairness, and fewer cases decided by default. The pilot will be built around these outcomes, informed by indicators such as participation and default judgment rates, procedural error rates, and whether litigants understood the process and felt fairly treated. Whether the redesign actually achieves just resolution is something the pilot will measure once it's underway.

Goal 3: Design a simpler end-to-end process.

The redesign that emerges will be specific to the partner court's context, but it should reflect core principles: fewer steps, clearer pathways, and a process built around the people who use it. By the end of Phase 3, the goal is for the court to have both a redesigned process and a plan to implement it, something other courts can draw on even before this pilot produces results of its own.

Goal 4: Build a model for scaling redesign nationally.

IAALS wants other courts to be able to replicate this work. While every court's redesign will look different, the core principles described in Goal 3 can be scaled to other jurisdictions. IAALS will document what it takes to assess, redesign, and plan for implementation, including the resources required and barriers encountered, so other courts don't need to reinvent the wheel.

Goal 5: Generate evidence for end-to-end process redesign and its impact on users and courts.

Most research looks at isolated fixes, not at what happens when a process is redesigned from the ground up. This pilot aims to produce rigorous, publishable findings on whether system-wide simplification works, documented for other courts to replicate. In addition to measuring user indicators like default rates and litigant understanding, we'll also measure whether reduced complexity eases the burden on court staff over time through measures like staff time spent on repetitive questions or fixing errors, efficiency of hearings, and staff-reported experience supporting litigants. Achieving this goal requires the pilot to be underway, and IAALS's participation in an evaluation is pending additional funding.

How the Pilot Works: Our 3-Phase Approach

This pilot project is meant to be a collaborative process where IAALS and its partners work alongside a court to diagnose problems, redesign processes, and test solutions.

What IAALS and its partners bring:	What courts bring:
• Research • Design expertise • A model for a simplified process • Technical assistance • A network of national experts • Evaluation expertise	• Institutional knowledge • Stakeholder relationships • Access to data • The authority to change how things work • On-the-ground ability to implement and test new approaches

The Three Phases

This project is laid out in three phases: assessment, process redesign, and pilot launch. Each phase is designed to build on the previous one. This section lays out what happens in each phase, along with a projected timeline. The timelines are tentative and will be customized to the needs of the selected partner court.

Phase 1: Assessment

Description	Projected Timeline
Before anything is redesigned, we need to understand the current process. Not just how it works on paper, but how it is experienced by the people moving through it. In this phase, IAALS helps the court convene stakeholders including judges, court staff, self-represented litigants, and community partners to identify where the current process breaks down. Where and when do people get lost? Where do errors occur? Where does the process create unnecessary friction? What does the data tell us? After collecting the necessary qualitative data from court users and stakeholders, IAALS synthesizes findings into a clear picture of where intervention is most needed.	January-April 2027

Phase 2: Process Redesign

Description	Projected Timeline
Armed with insights from Phase 1, IAALS and NCSC work with the court to redesign the case process. The goal is not incremental tweaks but meaningful simplification. The redesign that emerges will be specific to the court's context, but it should reflect core principles that can be scaled to other jurisdictions: fewer steps, clearer pathways, and a process built around the people who use it.	May-August 2027

Phase 3: Pilot Launch

Description	Projected Timeline
A process redesign is only the starting point. We will translate the redesigned process into something a court can implement. In this phase, IAALS, NCSC, and the court turn the Phase 2 redesign into a concrete implementation plan and launch the pilot. This includes identifying which court rules need to change and how, which practices or procedures need to be revised, what logistics (such as staff training, new forms, scheduling, or data infrastructure) are needed to put the redesign into motion, and what data the court should collect along the way. For example, if the court discovers in Phase 1 that litigants are dropping off because filing an answer was too burdensome, and Phase 2 proposed eliminating the answer requirement in favor of a different fact-gathering method, Phase 3 is where we will take initial steps toward piloting that change. The pilot won't be completed in this time frame, but by the end of Phase 3, the court will have launched its pilot and will have a clear, actionable plan for implementing its redesigned process.	September-December 2027

Once the implementation plan is handed over to the court, IAALS and NCSC will reassess the partnership with the court to identify any continuing needs for assistance with implementation and will work with the court to potentially seek additional funding to assist with further design support, technical assistance, and/or evaluation.

What if my court has already done some of these activities?

It's possible your court has already embarked on one or more phases. For example, your court may have already conducted user research, and you now want help redesigning your processes to incorporate that research. That's fine! Just make clear in your application what you've already done. If your court is selected, we'll adjust the project phases and timeline accordingly.

Funding

A total of \$30,000 is available through funding from the State Justice Institute and will be awarded as a single grant to the selected court. Court partners will serve as sub-grantees.

Because the court is co-designing a new process with IAALS and NCSC, we will not require courts to specify exactly how they will use the funds at the time of application. Courts may elect to use the funds at any phase, but the funds must be disbursed by October 2027. Examples of how funds might be used include:

- Phase 1: supporting data collection or community engagement activities
- Phase 2: hosting redesign workshops
- Phase 3: purchasing a tool, hiring design consultants

IAALS must approve how funds will be used before they're disbursed. Per SJI protocol, funds will be disbursed as reimbursements for project activities. Below are some general examples of allowable and unallowable expenses. This list is not exhaustive.

Allowable Expenses	Unallowable Expenses
• Design consultants • Software subscriptions • Improved data management • User research incentives • Meeting or workshop costs	• Salaries • General court operations overhead • Meals and refreshments • Trinkets (hats, mugs, portfolios, t-shirts, coins, gift bags, gift cards, etc.)

Eligibility & Selection Criteria

Who can apply?

Any state or local court with jurisdiction over high-volume civil matters (as defined above) is eligible to apply.

What are we looking for in a court partner?

IAALS will select one court partner based on the following criteria. Strong applications will demonstrate readiness across all five areas and a commitment of necessary in-kind court resources to the project.

What are we looking for?	Why?	What will a strong application demonstrate?
Leadership buy-in	Redesigning a process requires the authority to change it.	Judges and court administrators are not only supportive in principle but actively committed to the work. All applications must include a letter of support from the chief or presiding judge and the court administrator or clerk.
Ability to convene the right stakeholders	Phase 1 depends on the court's relationships.	Existing relationships with a multidisciplinary group, including judges, court staff, self-help personnel, community partners, and court users. Applicants should describe how they would reach and engage self-represented litigants during the assessment phase.
Cultural readiness for redesign	We need a court willing to honestly assess their existing process.	Evidence that the court is willing to candidly question whether the current process is clear and navigable and change what isn't working. Prior reform experience, even if unsuccessful, is valuable. We want to know what you tried, what you learned, and how you will achieve buy-in.
Baseline data capacity	To measure impact, we need to know where things stand.	Existing infrastructure for collecting case-level data, such as filing dates, disposition dates, appearance rates, default judgment rates, continuances, length of hearings, number of hearings, and representation status. Courts with this data in place are better positioned to measure impact.
Capacity for sustained engagement	This is a multi-year, multi-phase commitment.	A designated point of contact with sufficient time, interest, and authority to drive the work, and a clear picture of who has decision-making authority. Applicants should identify their greatest anticipated barrier(s) to success and describe what support would help them overcome it.

What is each partner responsible for, and what will be expected of the court?

This pilot project is designed to be collaborative. Its success depends on each partner bringing something unique and essential. The following outlines what each party commits to across the three phases.

IAALS	• Lead and coordinate the pilot, including partner selection and project management. • Provide technical assistance, court process simplification expertise, and design expertise through all three phases. • Gather feedback from court stakeholders. • Support the convening of and engagement with external stakeholders. • Lead implementation planning in Phase 3, including defining success metrics and data collection infrastructure to set the stage for an evaluation. • Lead project-related expenses up to \$30,000. • Develop and disseminate a final report documenting the redesign process. • Pending funding, conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot project. • Pending funding, develop and disseminate a final report documenting evaluation findings and lessons learned for a national audience.
NCSC	• Provide expertise in court process simplification and redesign during Phase 2. • Consult on implementation and assist with staff training during Phase 3. • Provide technical assistance across Phases 2 and 3, including help translating redesign decisions into changes to the court's business practices. • Bring national perspective and connections to support pilot development.
The Court	• Convene and engage a multidisciplinary stakeholder group in Phase 1 with support from IAALS, including judges, court staff, self-help personnel, community partners, and court users, building buy-in to the redesign in the process. • Participate actively in Phase 2 redesign workshops and decision-making. • Provide access to baseline data on the following: case-level data (filing date, disposition date, continuances), outcome data (defaults, dismissals, settlements), representation status, user demographics or proxies (fee waiver, language, ZIP code), case duration, user experience data (surveys, web pulses, feedback forms).

- Launch the redesigned pilot process at the end of Phase 3 and carry implementation forward after the one-year IAALS pilot period ends, including sustaining the internal capacity, staff time, and institutional commitment needed to see the redesign through.
- Identify, collect, and report data on performance measures throughout the pilot period.
- Designate a primary point of contact with sufficient time and authority to drive the work, both during the funded phases and through implementation.
- Participate in monthly check-ins with the IAALS/NCSC team during Phases 1-3, and in periodic check-ins with IAALS after the first year.
- Actively collaborate with IAALS and NCSC on communications and outreach related to the initiative, including publicizing the court's participation, sharing key milestones and lessons learned, promoting project resources and findings, and participating in opportunities to elevate the pilot's outcomes and impact with local, state, and national audiences.
- Help identify and facilitate opportunities to capture qualitative insights from judges, court staff, stakeholders, and court users, including experiences, stories, and feedback that can help illustrate the pilot's implementation and impact.
- Collaborate on the final report.

Application Process

To apply, please complete the following steps:

1. **Application.** Complete the [online application form](#).
2. **Letter from Judicial Leadership.** Provide a letter of support from the chief or presiding judge of the applying court, signed and on court letterhead.
3. **Letter from Administrative Leadership.** Provide a letter of support from the court administrator or clerk of court, signed and on court letterhead.

Note: The letters from judicial leadership and administrative leadership may be submitted separately or jointly.

Review & Selection Process

All complete applications will be reviewed by a selection committee made up of representatives from IAALS, NCSC, and the UCI Advisory Committee. Applications will be evaluated using the five eligibility criteria listed in the **Eligibility & Selection Criteria** section.

The review process will proceed in two stages:

1. **Initial screening.** All applications will be reviewed by IAALS staff to confirm completeness and basic eligibility.
2. **Substantive review.** Eligible applications will be scored using the five selection criteria. Finalists may be contacted for a follow-up call or additional information before a final selection is made.

IAALS is committed to an open, competitive process. Outreach will be conducted broadly to ensure courts of varying sizes, geographies, and resources have the opportunity to apply.

Selected applicants will be required to execute a sub-grant agreement with IAALS prior to receiving any funds. The agreement will outline the scope of work, reporting requirements, data sharing expectations, and the terms of fund disbursement.

All applicants, whether selected or not, will be notified of the outcome. IAALS is unable to provide individualized feedback on applications that are not selected.

Key Dates

Milestones	Anticipated Date*
Informational Webinar for Interested Applicants	October 5, 2026 at 12 p.m. MT
Application Deadline	October 23, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. MT
Finalist Notification/Follow-Up Conversations	November 2026
Award Notification to All Applicants	December 2026
Sub-Grant Agreement Executed	December 2026
Pilot Kickoff	January 2027
Phase 1 (Assessment)	January-April 2027
Phase 2 (Process Redesign)	May-August 2027
Phase 3 (Implementation Planning)	September-December 2027

**These dates are subject to change based on project or partner needs. Any changes will be announced on the [UCI pilot webpage](#).*

Evaluation

Rigorous evaluation is a goal of this pilot. The evaluation is designed to test whether end-to-end process simplification eases the burden on courts, produces more participation, results in fewer procedural errors, and ultimately yields more cases decided on the merits. It's also designed to document the process in enough detail that other courts can replicate it.

A formal evaluation by IAALS is contingent on securing additional funding beyond the current SJI grant. Regardless of whether additional funding is secured, IAALS will help the court set the stage and gather the data for an evaluation, so court partners should expect to participate in evaluation planning. Defining success metrics, establishing data collection infrastructure, and capturing baseline data are part of the redesign process itself.

Where funding permits, the evaluation will assess outcomes across five areas:

Outcome Area	Guiding Question
Process outcomes	Did the redesign meaningfully reduce procedural complexity?
Participation outcomes	Did more people engage meaningfully with their cases?
Experience outcomes	Did litigants understand the process and feel fairly treated?
Court outcomes	Did simpler processes reduce burden on court staff and judicial officers?
Replication outcomes	Did this pilot produce a model that other courts can use?

Questions & Contact Information

Questions about this RFA may be submitted to Danielle Kalil, IAALS Director of Civil Justice & the Judiciary, at danielle.kalil@du.edu. IAALS will host an informational webinar for prospective applicants on October 5, 2026 at 12 p.m. MT. Registration information will be available on the [UCI pilot webpage](#).

Please do not contact NCSC or the State Justice Institute with questions about this RFA. All inquiries should be directed to IAALS.

Additional Information & FAQ

Who can apply?

Below are some examples of the kinds of roles that may apply:

- Judges
- State or local court administrators
- County administrative office
- Court clerks
- Self-help center staff

Note: These are examples and not an exhaustive list. Any court stakeholder who can demonstrate both the interest and ability to lead a redesign of the court process and oversee the project may apply.

We will consider applications from groups of courts together. Any groups of courts applying must meet the following criteria:

- The courts all collect data in a uniform way, using the same case management system.
- The courts are applying to address the same case type, and the processes and rules for that case type are similar enough that we could map the process and develop solutions collectively.
- The court user demographics for all courts are similar enough that we can conduct user testing collectively.

Can you say more about the guiding principles?

UCI presents a comprehensive framework that focuses on the following principles:

- **Simple, intuitive pathways.** Processes are designed with the fewest steps needed to reach a resolution. The path from filing to finish is linear, transparent, and easy to navigate without getting lost in technicalities.
- **User-centric design.** Communications, forms, and processes use plain language, are tested with real users, and are accessible in multiple formats (digital, print, video).
- **Strategic, tech-enhanced interface.** Technology is integrated at regular touchpoints to improve the user experience. Digital tools are modern, mobile-friendly, and used intentionally to automate routine tasks, provide real-time updates, and bridge communication gaps.

- **Court as a service with flexible access.** Courts offer flexible access, including remote and hybrid options for hearings, online filing, and virtual assistance, so participation is possible regardless of personal circumstances.
- **Approachable, proactive court role.** Court staff and judges are still neutral but take a more active, service-oriented role. They guide litigants through the process, provide clear instructions, and ensure that everyone understands what is required at each stage.
- **Case management tailored to the needs of high-volume dockets.** Courts triage cases and use simplified, streamlined pathways for routine matters. They check for procedural compliance while guarding against resolution of cases on procedural technicalities rather than the merits.
- **Just resolution as the primary goal.** The goal of the process is improved outcomes for the people involved, whether or not it results in a formal judgment by the court. Success is measured by the stability of the parties and facilitated through the use of diverse resolution platforms, including pre-filing online dispute resolution and community-based mediation.
- **Problem-solving approach.** Courts actively encourage early-stage resolution and facilitate parties talking early. The process emphasizes procedural fairness and early resolution. Both sides must provide clear, detailed information at the start. Judges ensure that both parties understand the process to equalize knowledge disparities, and courts facilitate early, informed negotiation and settlement.
- **Multidisciplinary ecosystem of support.** The court recognizes a broad network of legal help, including automated tools, non-lawyer navigators, self-help staff, and community advocates. This help is tiered and scalable, ensuring every user has a level of assistance appropriate to their needs. Information about resources is embedded in the court process before hearings so court time is focused on forward momentum for the case.
- **Regular collection and use of high-quality data.** Courts regularly collect high-quality, case-specific data. This information is used to improve core operations, increase transparency, and ensure that reforms are effective and fair.

Can you say more about the project's simplification-first approach to redesign?

Courts shouldn't stop at helping people navigate a complex system. They should be working to make the system itself less complex. That's the philosophy at the center of this project, and we're looking for a court partner who shares it.

The measure of success in this initiative isn't whether litigants have better tools to get through the process, it's whether litigants even need to have those tools to navigate the process in the first place.

Redesign, as we use it here, means three things working together: simplifying the process itself, improving how people interact with it, and expanding help and support for people who need it. Below, we outline each of these strategies, explain why simplification comes first, and use the example of filing an answer to illustrate the litigant experience under each one.

Simplify the Process

This means transforming the process itself, so it's intuitive enough that anyone can navigate it. It can look like removing, streamlining, or combining requirements to lower the burden on litigants.

Examples of how to apply this strategy	What this strategy achieves	How the litigant experiences it
Eliminate formal answer requirements, hold informal hearings, relax the rules of evidence	The process becomes intuitive enough that anyone can navigate it. Help is a bonus, not a requirement.	"I don't have to file a formal answer. I just show up to court and talk to someone."

Simplification is the foundation the other strategies build on. Used alone, the next strategies are still valuable, but they leave the underlying complexity of the process intact. That's why we advocate for starting with simplification.

Improve How People Interact with the Process

This strategy means making the existing system more usable or navigable, for example through user-friendly technology or more accessible, intuitive platforms and materials.

Examples of how to apply this strategy	What this strategy achieves	Where this strategy is limited	How the litigant experiences it
Adopt guided digital interviews, use plain-language forms	Makes a complex process easier to move through.	The underlying rules and steps remain complex, they're just packaged better.	"I still have to file an answer, but this tool makes it easier to do it on my own."

Expand Help and Support

This strategy involves interactive help tailored to litigants' situations, whether legal help or procedural navigation. It also involves equipping litigants with information to help them better understand and navigate the process.

Examples of how to apply this strategy	What this strategy achieves	Where this strategy is limited	How the litigant experiences it
Hire court navigators, host lawyer-for-the-day programs, send a court-issued notice with important information, add a triage website with resources	Increases participation for those who can access the help, improves awareness of what's happening.	It depends on someone else being available. It doesn't scale, and the procedural hurdles are all still there.	"I have to fill out this answer form, but I have information about what it is or someone to help me do it."

All of these strategies have value, and the strongest redesigns use them in coordination to create a smoother, more intuitive litigant experience. But we're not looking for a court that stops at improving the interface or adding help or information while leaving the underlying process untouched. This project prioritizes high-level process simplification first, and we're looking for a court partner ready to pursue comprehensive and ambitious redesign, not isolated improvements.