With a renewed focus on preparing for the future, the CCJ embarked on a strategic planning exercise during 2012 with the clear intention of reviewing its operations and checking the pulse of its stakeholders to enable it to set clear priorities and develop a road map for the next five years. The strategic planning exercise will provide the CCJ with a framework within which it will prepare itself to address the challenges of the future, and establish the parameters by which the Court will know if it is achieving the goals it has set for itself.

The CCJ Strategic Planning Leadership Team (SPLT)

A Strategic Planning Leadership Team was formed to develop the Strategic Plan and to guide the organisation through the next stages of its development. The members of the SPLT are:

- The Right Honourable Sir Dennis Byron – Court President
- The Honourable Mr Justice Adrian Saunders – SPLT Chairman, Judge of the Court
- The Honourable Mr Justice Jacob Wit – Judge of the Court
- Master Christie-Anne Morris-Alleyne – Court Executive Administrator
- Mrs Wendy Lewis-Callender – Deputy Court Executive Administrator
- Ms Paula Pierre – Court Registrar and Chief Marshal
- Mr Larry Ramoutar – Financial Comptroller
- Ms Seanna Annisette – SPLT Coordinator

The SPLT has had the guidance, help and support of consultant, Dr Daniel Straub, who brought to the table decades of court administration and court strategic planning experience.

To ensure the success of the strategic planning process, stakeholder and customer engagement was viewed as an important and critical element. Therefore, various activities were facilitated to allow the Court’s stakeholders and customers to participate in, and contribute to, the development of its Strategic Plan.

Stakeholders Engagement

With the assistance of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the CCJ hosted its first Regional Stakeholders’ Strategic Planning Session on 1 March, 2012 at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad, in Port of Spain.

Moving from Strategic Planning to Implementation

This session received the participation of several regional judicial sector stakeholders including, the Conference of Heads of Judiciary and Chief Justices of the Caribbean, Presidents of the Bar Associations of CARICOM countries, representatives of labour and business sectors of CARICOM countries, and representatives of civil society including Jamaicans for Justice and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

In delivering welcome remarks at the Opening Ceremony, the Right Honourable Sir Dennis Byron, President of the CCJ, shared his vision for the CCJ’s Strategic Planning exercise, stating that it:

“... will allow the Court to reflect on its formative years, assess its performance, and most importantly, ensure that its operations are well-aligned with the expectations of the region and the people it serves.”
The then President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards TC, CMT, Ph.D, congratulated the Court on its efforts while delivering opening remarks to the gathering:

“The fact that you have come together, during this time, not as a cloistered legal entity, but in company with business, labour and civil society, speaks clearly of your recognition of the need to understand the societies that you are called to serve. One cannot easily set aside the importance of an intimate understanding of the cultural dimensions that shape these societies. They must have a place in guiding the decisions that are taken in every aspect of our lives, not least those which pertain to law.”

Against the backdrop of these encouraging statements, the participants delved into the Strategic Planning session with various exercises, which were designed to provoke candid feedback and discussion. In guiding the sessions along, facilitator Dr Daniel Straub, reiterated the importance of the inclusiveness of the CCJ’s strategic exercise to the overall success of the initiative.

A workshop was also facilitated for the members of the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission (RJLSC) and the trustees of the CCJ Trust Fund. These two groups came together to give feedback on the Court’s accomplishments and their expectations for the future.

A similar exercise was held for the CCJ’s judges, management and support personnel over the period 4 and 5 April, 2012, to facilitate open and honest dialogue. Apart from this session, surveys were designed to gather information on the internal customers’ experience with working at the CCJ.

To ensure the widest reach of its regional stakeholders, the Court also surveyed those persons who have come into direct contact with the CCJ (including attorneys and litigants), to assess their experience with the Court’s judicial services.

Stakeholder and customer feedback were considered, analysed and evaluated by the SPLT. Where the internal and external views coincided, the Court could draw some satisfaction. Where there was dissonance, the work yet to be done was identified and solutions to shortcomings structured into the strategic plan.

A working draft Strategic Plan was developed in October 2012 that identified strategic issues, goals, strategies and priority areas. The draft document was circulated among stakeholders and customers prior to finalising the document.

The consensus emerging from this exercise was that it was well worth the time and resources committed to it, and there emerged a sense of general satisfaction that everyone wanted “aboard” the CCJ ship, to be part of the crew as it sets out on a new course.

Under the theme; Responsive, Innovative, Inspirational, the CCJ launched its Strategic Plan for 2013 to 2017 on 6 December, 2012 at the CCJ headquarters in Port of Spain.

The newly-stated strategic direction for the CCJ focuses on seven issue areas:

1. Access to Justice;
2. Independence and Accountability;
3. High Performance Work Environment and Workforce Engagement;
4. Equality, Fairness, Integrity and Promoting the Rule of Law;
5. Organisational Capacity for Caseload Growth;
6. Attaining and Preserving Public Trust and Confidence; and
7. Enhancing Regional Justice System Performance.

The Court’s Strategic Plan has been distributed widely “so that everyone can assess what we have laid out and can hold us to account for what we say we will accomplish” as stated by the Honourable Mr Justice Saunders, SPLT Chairman, at the launch of the strategic plan.
Operationalising the Strategic Plan

In order to implement its new strategic agenda, the Court recognises that it must now translate its strategic plan into a detailed road map that is followed at every level of the organisation: the Bench, the Court Administrative Leadership Team (CALT), the various units and the individual employees.

After the fact-finding stage, as part of its method of implementation, the court outlined a suite of progressive steps and targets to be attained incrementally.

Much time and energy were expended by the Court leadership to get all personnel to “buy into” the plan. A process of “MAP-ing”, the drawing-up of Multi-Action Plans, was set in motion. Each member of each Court unit was called upon to participate directly in the composition and construction of a unit plan. These exercises were designed to ensure that all persons not only understood thoroughly what the end strategic goal would be and why it would be important, but also how it would be attained. This was an excellent team-building stratagem, reasoned to be the best way to motivate the greatest number of persons to collaborate to move the plan – their plan – forward.