



Judicial Administration Adviser Jennifer Ehmann, right, works with RMI judges.

## Court training: It's about time

The RMI Judiciary is usually at the center of disputes, which means it is used to handling the difficult issues. Lately, the courts have moved onto possibly their toughest assignment by taking on the challenging task of addressing “time management.”

Time management might seem like an oxymoron in regards to the Marshall Islands, which, shall we say, has a relaxed view toward use of time.

But the courts are jumping into the arena head first with the aim of moving cases to completion in a timely manner. That some pending land disputes in court date

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back to the 1980s confirms that this is no easy matter to control.

High Court Chief Justice Carl Ingram has dramatically increased the resolution of pending cases in the past several years by putting attorneys on notice through “calendar calls” that they either have to take action to move old cases forward or they will be dismissed.

Another action is bringing judges, court staff and lawyers together to work on time management. Twenty-four participants from the court and attorneys from the private sector, local government, Micronesian Legal Services, and Public Defender were trained and collaboratively developed time goals during a three-week training

program recently.

The workshop was facilitated by Jennifer Ehmann, a Judicial Administration Adviser for the Pacific Judicial Development Program.

The aim of time goals are to support the timely resolution of cases and to strengthen predictability and transparency in judicial and administrative processes consistent with international conventions and the RMI Constitution that guarantees a speedy trial.

Good management of time contributes to efficient and effective court proceedings and processes, said Chief Clerk Ingrid Kabua.

## Judiciary pushes to meet global standards

**INGRID K. KABUA**  
Marshall Islands National Coordinator and Chief Clerk of the High Court

The RMI Judiciary remains on the path to court excellence initiated by the Pacific Judicial Development Program’s 2011 15 Cook Island Performance Indicators.

For each jurisdiction, the next step may be different. For the RMI Judiciary, the next step is to implement the International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE), a seven-factor quality management tool to improve judicial processes and systems.

Through the Responsive Fund, the RMI Judiciary hosted a five-day workshop from May 19-23 in Majuro, Marshall Islands on implementing the IFCE.

The IFCE calls for a self-assessment, an analysis of needs, an improvement plan, and implementation. In 2011 and 2013, the RMI Judiciary completed self-assessments, but had not gone further. The objectives of the May workshop were three fold: to conduct a realistic self-assessment; to determine what action can and should be taken; and to prepare a court improvement plan.

The workshop was led by Elizabeth Connolly, Manager of Policy and Planning for Federal Court of Australia, and was well attended by the judges of the High Court,

District Court, Traditional Rights Court, court staff, and members of the legal community.

Ms. Connolly started off with a review of the framework and the seven different areas of excellence. Next, she walked the entire court team through completing a realistic self-assessment, forcing the judges and staff to take a hard look at the courts. With the self-assessment in hand, she met separately with the judges of the various courts, with staff, and with representatives of the bar to solicit actions the judiciary could take and to develop a plan forward. By meeting with the judges, staff, and bar separately, she ensured a full and frank exchange of ideas.

By the end of the workshop, Ms. Connolly had helped the RMI Judiciary complete the first draft of a comprehensive court improvement plan, one that is consistent with its 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. The workshop has put the RMI Judiciary firmly on the path to implementing the IFCE.

Benefits of this activity will live on because self-assessments will be repeated every other year. The RMI Judiciary will also institutionalize the process through its National Judicial Planning and Development Committee. The workshop is one we would strongly recommend to other judiciaries interested in implementing the IFCE.