

JDO-2026-032
JUSTICE BEACON SOLUTIONS™
Execution-Layer Governance Series

Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™)

The Document Gap: Why Governance Frameworks Cannot Govern What They Do Not Document

(Public Safe Authority—Edition)

From Signal → Interpretation → Human Decision → Operational Outcome

Issued by

Stephanie L. Fleming PhD, MS
Founder & Principal | Justice Beacon Solutions™

Janna M. Broaddus
Director of Operations | Justice Beacon Solutions™

JDO-2026-032

Version 1.0 | 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20511877>

Public Safe Authority —Edition

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Status	Description
1.0	2026	Active — Initial Release	Foundational authority publication presenting Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) as an execution-layer governance discipline for AI-supported and high-pressure operational environments.

© 2026 Justice Beacon Solutions™, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Only the most current published version of this publication shall be considered authoritative. Prior versions may be revised, superseded, archived, or designated non-operational.

Author Note

This publication forms part of the broader Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) publication ecosystem.

JDO™ was developed to improve visibility into how human decisions form within operational environments and to support institutional understanding of execution-layer conditions.

This publication serves as an institutional translation document and should be read alongside JDO-2026-030: *Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™): The Foundational Governance Discipline for Execution-Layer Decision Environments*.

Abstract

Governance frameworks for artificial intelligence increasingly emphasize transparency, accountability, compliance, technical assurance, auditability, and risk management. While these efforts address important governance concerns, many leave a critical question insufficiently examined: what documentation exists regarding how operational decisions form between system-generated information and institutional action?

This publication introduces the concept of the documentation gap as a governance condition in which institutions possess extensive visibility into policies, procedures, technical outputs, and outcomes while possessing substantially less visibility into the conditions surrounding decision formation itself. The paper argues that many governance systems can explain what information was generated, what actions occurred, and what outcomes resulted, yet remain comparatively limited in their ability to explain how authority formed, how judgment evolved, and how operational conditions influenced institutional action.

The report further argues that governance maturity increasingly depends upon understanding not only systems and outcomes, but also the decision environments connecting them. Within justice and public safety settings, where operational decisions may affect liberty, safety, constitutional interests, and institutional legitimacy, this gap becomes particularly significant.

This publication expands the Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) canon by defining the documentation gap as a governance concern and examining its implications for accountability, transparency, oversight, and institutional defensibility. The publication is conceptual and doctrinal in nature and intentionally excludes operational methodologies, reconstruction procedures, implementation frameworks, measurement systems, scoring structures, analytical processes, and proprietary Justice Beacon Solutions™ governance mechanisms.

Keywords

Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™); governance; documentation; accountability; transparency; operational decision-making; execution-layer governance; institutional oversight; public safety governance; AI governance; decision visibility; governance maturity.

1. Introduction

Modern governance systems are increasingly sophisticated.

Across government, public safety, corrections, courts, supervision, and other high-consequence environments, institutions have invested heavily in policies, procedures, audits, compliance programs, performance measures, transparency requirements, and technology oversight frameworks. These efforts are intended to improve accountability, strengthen institutional trust, and ensure that complex systems operate responsibly.

Yet despite these advances, a persistent governance challenge remains.

Many institutions possess extensive documentation regarding:

- what policies required,
- what systems produced,
- what actions occurred,
- and what outcomes resulted.

Far fewer possess equivalent documentation regarding how operational decisions formed between those points.

As a result, governance systems often evaluate outcomes without fully understanding the conditions under which authority developed and institutional action occurred.

This paper argues that a significant documentation gap exists within many governance environments and that this gap limits the ability of institutions to fully understand, explain, and govern operational decision-making.

2. The Governance Landscape

The last decade has witnessed substantial growth in governance efforts addressing artificial intelligence, automated systems, algorithmic accountability, and institutional oversight.

Governance discussions increasingly focus upon:

- transparency,
- explainability,
- accountability,
- risk management,
- auditability,
- fairness,

- and compliance.

These frameworks perform important functions and address critical concerns surrounding the deployment and use of technology in institutional environments.

However, many governance structures remain primarily focused on:

- system design,
- technical performance,
- policy requirements,
- compliance obligations,
- and outcome reporting.

Less attention has been directed toward documenting how human judgment evolves after information is received but before institutional action occurs.

This observation should not be interpreted as a criticism of existing governance efforts.

Rather, it reflects the reality that governance systems have historically developed around systems, rules, controls, and outcomes, while the operational conditions surrounding decision formation have often remained comparatively difficult to observe.

The result is a governance landscape that frequently possesses substantial visibility into the beginning and end of institutional processes while possessing less visibility into the decision conditions that connect them.

3. The Documentation Gap

The documentation gap refers to the space between information generation and institutional action where decision formation remains insufficiently documented, observable, or explainable.

In many environments, institutions can readily identify:

- what information was available,
- what policy requirements existed,
- what actions occurred,
- and what outcomes resulted.

More difficult questions often include:

- How was information interpreted?
- What competing priorities existed?

- What contextual pressures influenced judgment?
- How did authority form?
- Why did one course of action appear more reasonable than another at the time?

These questions frequently sit outside traditional documentation structures.

As a result, operational decision formation may become one of the least visible yet most consequential elements within governance systems.

The documentation gap does not suggest that institutions lack accountability.

Nor does it imply that governance structures are ineffective.

Rather, it identifies a governance domain that remains comparatively underdeveloped despite its importance to understanding institutional outcomes.

Figure 1: The Documentation Gap

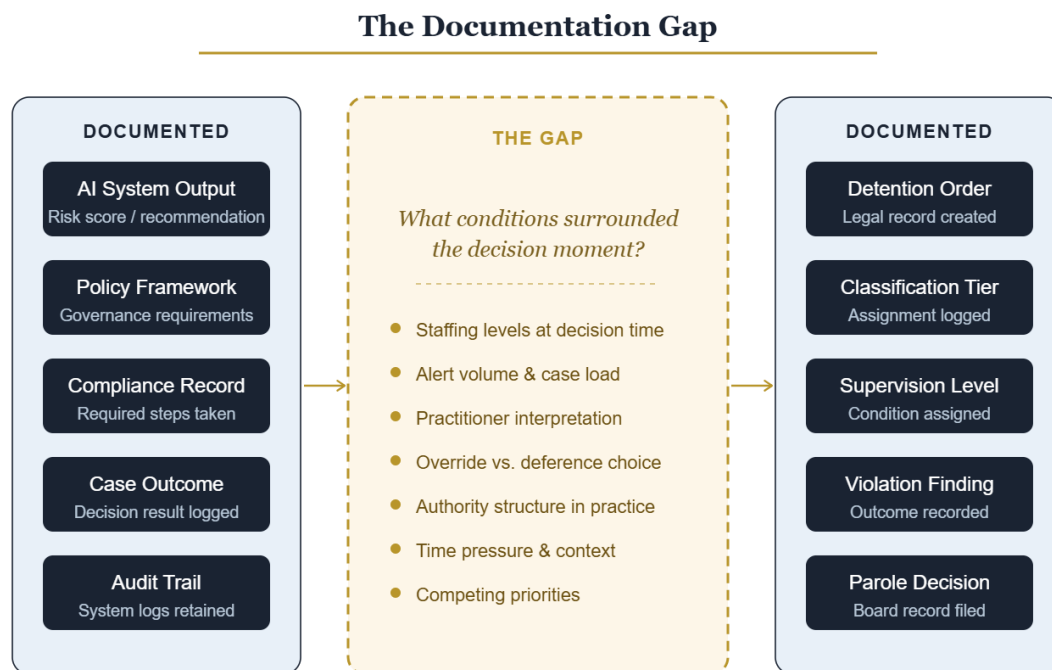


Figure 1. The Documentation Gap. Conceptual illustration showing the governance space between system-generated information and institutional outcomes. The conditions surrounding operational decision formation remain comparatively less visible within existing governance structures.

Figure 1. The Documentation Gap.

Conceptual illustration showing the governance space between system-generated information and institutional outcomes. While policies, technologies, actions, and outcomes are frequently documented, the conditions surrounding operational decision formation often remain comparatively less visible within governance structures.

4. Why Justice Environments Are Different

While the documentation gap can exist across many sectors, its significance becomes particularly pronounced within justice and public safety environments.

In commercial settings, decision failures may result in financial losses, operational inefficiencies, customer dissatisfaction, or reputational harm. While these consequences can be substantial, justice systems frequently operate under conditions where decisions directly affect liberty, public safety, constitutional interests, institutional legitimacy, and long-term human outcomes.

Courts determine legal status.

Corrections agencies exercise delegated authority over confinement and supervision.

Community supervision organizations make decisions affecting liberty, compliance, and public safety.

Law enforcement agencies routinely exercise discretionary authority under evolving and uncertain conditions.

Within these environments, decisions are rarely made under ideal circumstances.

Operational personnel often work within conditions characterized by:

- incomplete information,
- competing priorities,
- time pressure,
- resource constraints,
- environmental uncertainty,
- and evolving situational dynamics.

The operational reality of justice systems frequently differs from the orderly appearance later presented through reports, investigations, reviews, and institutional reconstruction.

By the time an event is reviewed, information may be consolidated, timelines reconstructed, outcomes known, and documentation expanded. The operational conditions that existed at the moment of decision formation may be significantly more difficult to observe.

This distinction matters because governance systems ultimately seek not only to determine what happened, but also to understand how institutional authority was exercised under the conditions present at the time.

The inability to document those conditions creates a visibility challenge that can affect accountability, oversight, defensibility, and institutional learning.

As justice systems increasingly incorporate AI-supported technologies, automated alerts, predictive systems, and digital decision-support tools, understanding this governance challenge becomes even more important.

Technology may generate information.

Policies may define expectations.

Outcomes may reveal consequences.

Yet decisions remain the mechanism through which institutional authority ultimately becomes action.

For this reason, the documentation gap presents a uniquely important governance concern within justice environments.

5. Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™)

Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) emerged from the recognition that many governance systems possess substantial visibility into systems and outcomes while possessing comparatively limited visibility into the operational decision environments connecting the two.

The discipline was developed to examine how decisions form, evolve, and become institutional action within AI-supported and high-consequence operational environments.

Importantly, JDO™ is not:

- an audit framework,
- a compliance program,
- a technology evaluation model,
- a vendor assessment process,
- an accreditation standard,
- a certification mechanism,
- or an incident investigation methodology.

Rather, JDO™ functions as an operational governance discipline.

Its central concern is not whether systems technically functioned as designed, nor whether policies formally existed.

Instead, the discipline focuses on understanding the conditions surrounding decision formation itself.

The field recognizes that outcomes are rarely produced by technology alone.

Likewise, outcomes are rarely explained solely by policy requirements.

Institutional outcomes emerge through the interaction of:

- information,
- interpretation,
- authority,
- judgment,
- discretion,
- environmental conditions,
- and organizational context.

The discipline therefore seeks to improve visibility into the decision environments where these interactions occur.

By doing so, JDO™ expands governance discussions beyond traditional questions of technical performance and procedural compliance to include the operational conditions that influence how institutional action ultimately develops.

Figure 2: Traditional Governance Visibility vs. Decision Visibility

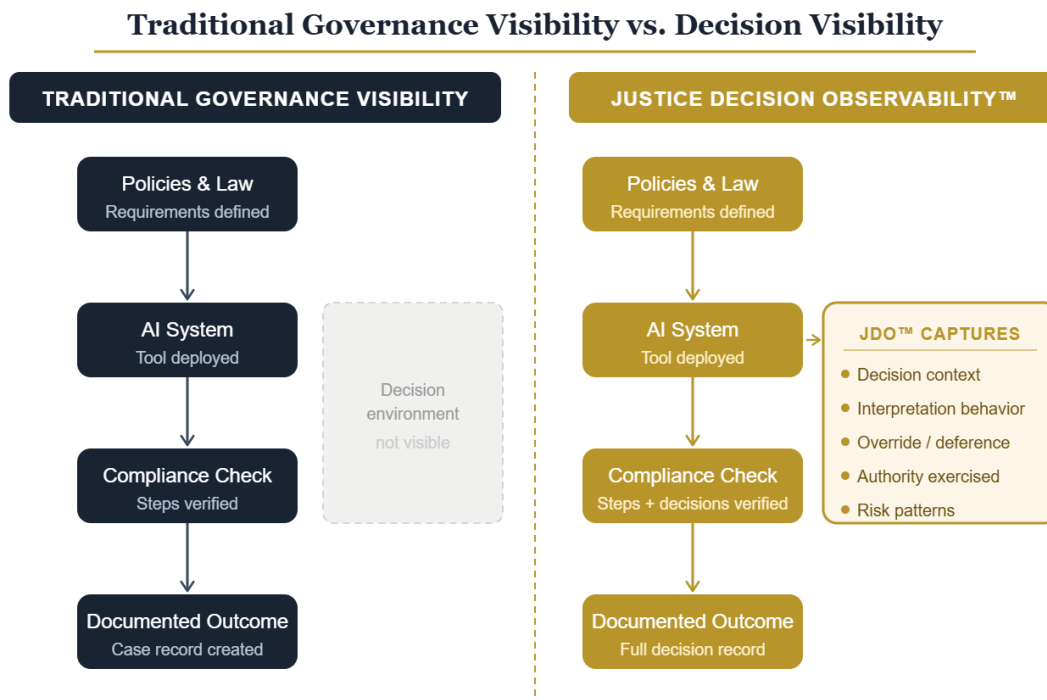


Figure 2. Traditional Governance Visibility vs. Decision Visibility. Conventional frameworks emphasize policies, systems, compliance requirements, and outcomes. Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) improves visibility into the decision environments connecting those elements.

Figure 2. Illustrative comparison demonstrating how conventional governance frameworks often emphasize policies, systems, compliance requirements, and outcomes, while Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) focuses on improving visibility into the decision environments connecting those elements.

In this sense, Justice Decision Observability™ is best understood as a governance discipline concerned with decision visibility rather than decision control.

Its purpose is not to dictate operational behavior.

Its purpose is to improve institutional understanding.

6. The JDO™ Governance Architecture

Like other mature governance disciplines, Justice Decision Observability™ is supported by a broader conceptual architecture that examines multiple dimensions of operational governance.

These dimensions include questions associated with:

- operational conditions,
- decision environments,
- institutional authority,
- critical events,
- recurring governance patterns,
- organizational adaptation,
- and accountability visibility.

Collectively, these concepts support a more complete understanding of how decisions form within complex institutional environments.

Importantly, the governance architecture referenced within this publication is conceptual rather than procedural.

This paper does not disclose:

- methodologies,
- reconstruction procedures,
- implementation frameworks,
- analytical processes,
- scoring systems,

- measurement structures,
- governance instrumentation mechanisms,
- or proprietary Justice Beacon Solutions™ operational components.

The purpose of the architecture is not to provide implementation guidance.

Rather, it serves as a conceptual structure for understanding governance questions that frequently exist between system-generated information and institutional outcomes.

Figure 3: Governance Maturity and Documentation Depth

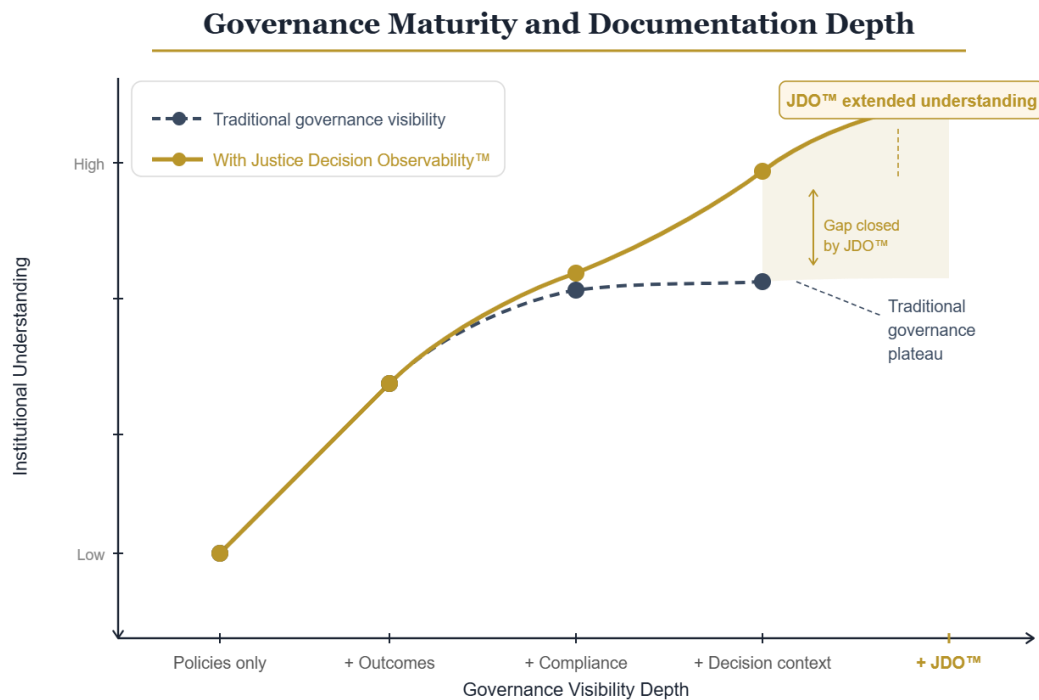


Figure 3. Governance Maturity and Documentation Depth. Conceptual representation illustrating how institutional understanding may expand as governance visibility progresses from policies and outcomes toward greater awareness of operational decision environments and decision formation conditions.

Figure 3. Conceptual representation illustrating how institutional understanding may expand as governance visibility progresses from policies and outcomes toward greater awareness of operational decision environments and decision formation conditions.

Viewed collectively, the architecture reinforces a central proposition of the discipline:

Governance systems cannot fully understand outcomes if they cannot observe how decisions formed under the conditions present at the time.

This proposition represents the foundation upon which the documentation gap concept rests.

When decision environments remain insufficiently documented, governance visibility remains incomplete.

When governance visibility remains incomplete, accountability, transparency, and institutional learning may also become constrained.

The JDO™ governance architecture therefore functions as a conceptual lens through which institutions can better understand the operational realities surrounding decision formation.

7. Conclusion

Governance systems have traditionally focused on policies, procedures, controls, technologies, compliance requirements, and outcomes.

These elements remain essential.

They provide structure, accountability, consistency, and oversight across complex institutional environments.

However, a critical governance challenge remains.

Many institutions possess extensive documentation regarding:

- what policies required,
- what systems produced,
- what actions occurred,
- and what outcomes resulted.

Far fewer possess equivalent visibility into how decisions formed between those points.

This publication has described that condition as the documentation gap.

The documentation gap represents more than a missing record.

It represents a governance limitation.

When decision environments remain insufficiently documented, institutions may struggle to fully understand operational judgment, authority formation, contextual pressures, and the conditions that shaped action.

As AI-supported technologies, automated alerts, predictive systems, and digitally accelerated environments continue expanding across justice systems, these governance challenges are likely to become increasingly important.

Institutions will continue asking:

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Who made the decision?

Was the outcome reasonable?

Yet answering these questions may require more than visibility into systems and outcomes alone.

It may require visibility into the decision environments connecting them.

Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) emerged from the recognition that governance systems increasingly need the ability to understand how decisions form under real-world operational conditions.

The discipline does not seek to replace existing governance frameworks.

It seeks to complement them.

Policies remain important. Compliance remains important. Technology governance remains important.

Governance systems cannot fully govern what they do not document.

And as institutional environments become increasingly complex, understanding decision formation may become one of the most important governance challenges of all.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Disclosure Statement

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used Claude Sonnet 4.6 (Anthropic) and generative AI-assisted drafting tools to assist with content development, editing, formatting, organization, and language refinement.

Following the use of these tools, the author(s) reviewed, revised, verified, and approved all content. The author(s) assume full responsibility for the accuracy, interpretation, conclusions, and final form of this publication.

Generative AI tools were not used as authors and do not meet authorship criteria. All intellectual contributions, governance concepts, theoretical constructs, interpretations, and conclusions remain the work of the identified authors.

Related Works

Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) Canon Series

This publication forms part of the broader Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) Canon Series developed by Justice Beacon Solutions™.

Foundational Canon References

Fleming, S. L., & Broaddus, J. M. (2026). *The Execution Layer: A Public-Safe Authority Edition on Operational Governance Gaps in AI-Supported Environments* (JDO-2026-026). Justice Beacon Solutions™.

Fleming, S. L., & Broaddus, J. M. (2026). *The Officer at Midnight Problem: Decision Authority, Operational Pressure, and Governance Visibility in 24-Hour Justice Environments* (JDO-2026-027). Justice Beacon Solutions™.

Fleming, S. L., & Broaddus, J. M. (2026). *The Decision That Looked Reasonable at the Time: Hindsight, Operational Judgment, and Institutional Reconstruction Failure in AI-Supported Justice Environments* (JDO-2026-028). Justice Beacon Solutions™.

Fleming, S. L., & Broaddus, J. M. (2026). *The Governance Gap Between Policy and Practice: Why Operational Reality Rarely Mirrors Institutional Procedure* (JDO-2026-029). Justice Beacon Solutions™.

Fleming, S. L., & Broaddus, J. M. (2026). *Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™): The Foundational Governance Discipline for Execution-Layer Decision Environments* (JDO-2026-030). Justice Beacon Solutions™.

Fleming, S. L., & Broaddus, J. M. (2026). *Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™): What It Is, What It Is Not, and Why the Justice Ecosystem Needs It* (JDO-2026-031). Justice Beacon Solutions™.

Current Publication

Fleming, S. L., & Broaddus, J. M. (2026).

The Documentation Gap: Why Governance Frameworks Cannot Govern What They Do Not Document (JDO-2026-032).

Justice Beacon Solutions™.

References

- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1978). *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*. Addison-Wesley.
- Bovens, M. (2007). Analysing and Assessing Accountability: A Conceptual Framework. *European Law Journal*.
- Dekker, S. (2011). *Drift Into Failure*. Ashgate Publishing.
- Dekker, S. (2014). *The Field Guide to Understanding Human Error*. Ashgate Publishing.
- Endsley, M. R. (1995). Toward a Theory of Situation Awareness in Dynamic Systems. *Human Factors*, 37(1), 32–64.
- Hollnagel, E. (2012). *FRAM: The Functional Resonance Analysis Method*. Ashgate Publishing.
- Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Moynihan, D. P. (2008). *The Dynamics of Performance Management: Constructing Information and Reform*. Georgetown University Press.
- Perrow, C. (1984). *Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies*. Princeton University Press.
- Reason, J. (1990). *Human Error*. Cambridge University Press.
- Reason, J. (1997). *Managing the Risks of Organizational Accidents*. Ashgate Publishing.
- Simon, H. A. (1997). *Administrative Behavior* (4th ed.). Free Press.
- Suchman, L. (2007). *Human-Machine Reconfigurations* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Vaughan, D. (1996). *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. University of California Press.
- Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2007). *Managing the Unexpected: Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty*. Wiley.
- Woods, D. D., Dekker, S., Cook, R., Johannesen, L., & Sarter, N. (2010). *Behind Human Error*. Ashgate Publishing.

Copyright and Publication Notice

© 2026 Justice Beacon Solutions™. All Rights Reserved.

Published by Justice Beacon Solutions™.

Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™), JAOGS™, JB-DOF™, DCRR™, CEGR™, DRPI™, ODI™, Decision Visibility Gap™, Moment of Authority™, and associated governance terminology are proprietary intellectual property concepts, governance constructs, and field-defining terminology developed by Justice Beacon Solutions™.

This publication is intended solely for educational, governance, institutional, academic, and research discussion purposes.

Conceptual discussion contained within this publication does not constitute disclosure of proprietary operational methodologies, measurement systems, reconstruction procedures, scoring logic, implementation architectures, governance instrumentation mechanisms, analytical processes, or restricted Justice Beacon Solutions™ frameworks.

This publication does not evaluate institutional legality, individual personnel conduct, algorithmic validity, compliance status, operational certification outcomes, or organizational performance.

Public-Safe Authority Edition Notice

This publication intentionally excludes:

- operational methodologies
- reconstruction procedures
- implementation sequencing
- scoring systems
- analytical frameworks
- governance instrumentation mechanisms
- operational workflows
- proprietary standards
- internal Justice Beacon Solutions™ operational mechanics

No portion of this publication shall be interpreted as authorization to replicate, operationalize, commercialize, derive, reverse engineer, imitate, reproduce, or redistribute proprietary Justice Beacon Solutions™ governance systems, methodologies, operational frameworks, measurement structures, or protected intellectual property.

Only the most current published versions of canon documents, governance standards, and associated Justice Decision Observability™ (JDO™) publications shall be considered authoritative. Prior versions may be revised, superseded, archived, retired, or designated non-operational.

Justice Beacon Solutions™

Creators of the JDO™ Category.

Definers of the Standard.

Setters of the Measurement.

JDO-2026-032 | Version 1.0 | Public-Safe Authority Edition | 2026