Association of Transportation Safety Information Professionals

Application for Best Practices Recognition
2004

Part One: Project Summary

Project Title: Automated Crash Reporting System

Project Description: *Fully automate the process of data collection for crash scene investigation to include summons issuance, tow slip management, and all related business processes using a statewide implementation of the TraCS software for all law enforcement agencies in Delaware.   The uniform collection and storage of statewide crash data to one central location will enable all consumers of crash data to receive the collected data to promote, share, and monitor all aspects of highway safety.*

Nominating Person Contact Information:

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Project Manager Contact Information:

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Lead Agency for Project: *Delaware State Police*

Participating/Cooperating Agencies (if any): *Office of Highway Safety, Division of Motor Vehicles, Department of Transportation, Office of Emergency Medical Services, all state and local law enforcement, and the Delaware Justice Information System, an integrated, electronic, criminal justice system.*

Other Project Team Members:
  ***Mrs. Jana Simpler**-Chairperson, Traffic Records Coordinating Committee, Office of Highway Safety, sponsor agency of project.*

Which National Agenda goals apply? *The project addresses National Agenda Goals 1, 2, and 3 even at this stage of the program, but intends to address all 6 when completed. It is only fair to comment though on those we have impacted to date, i.e., goals 1, 2, and 3.*

Which steps in the management process does the project support? *This project will address all identified steps in the management process when fully completed. Although just emerging from a pilot phase, the system will vastly improve these steps while simultaneously supporting the National Agenda goals.*

Reference the priority in your traffic records strategic plan to which this project applies: *Our traffic records strategic plan prioritizes the use of shared, value added data to address highway and traffic safety issues emerging from an analysis of our data. The main supporting mechanism having equivalent importance is the reference to this project as the sole foundation for achieving not only the priorities in our strategic plan, but also the means by which all agencies will be able to address these individual priorities. The implementation of this project is the number two priority behind only the collaboration of multiple agencies necessary to achieve the common goal of traffic and highway safety in our state.*

Project Cost: planned $: <u>230,672.00</u>   actual $: <u>133713.68</u> to date

Extent of Project Implementation: *As of January 2004, the TraCS DE version has been installed and running at ten agencies statewide consisting of 50 officers from these various agencies as well as the central repository at the Delaware State Police. All pilot officers are using the software to capture full data requirements including narrative and drawing information. Submission of this data to a centralized server located at the Delaware State Police provides secure but unrestricted access to any participating agency who wants to evaluate their data individually or in the aggregate for all agencies so as to address any highway safety concern or issue being monitored.*

Summary of Project Benefits: What was improved, who benefited, and how?

The benefits of this project in timesavings alone are priceless. Officers who used to hand write traffic reports, including summonses, tow slips, and insurance information exchange sheets spent their time over and over again recording the same information on the various forms we used. If an operator was being arrested for more than two charges, the same information on the traffic summons needed to be replicated on another one. Tim savings has been preliminarily measured to be approximately 2 hours of an officer's day. This translates into more unobligated patrol time; time that is directed by supervision to troubled areas experiencing high rates of crashes or moving violations. This risk management approach by our supervisors in directing patrols, which resulted from timesavings is directly related to the feedback we are able to provide them to stay abreast of life threatening highway, roadway, and vehicle variables affecting our crash experience.

Part Two: Project Detail

Project Description: *Statewide implementation is planned to include 100% of all law enforcement agencies in Delaware (52 agencies) for crash investigation. Implementation will include full service suite of ancillary duties associated with crash investigation to include but not be limited to: crash data reporting, traffic summons issuance and tracking, tow slip issuance, tracking, and storage management, driving under the influence of alcohol related reports, police high speed chase reporting, force reports, and other traffic records reporting. To date, crash report and tow slip issuance is implemented in pilot getting ready for a full-scale rollout in April 2004. Data collected is sent to a central server and it can be pushed back to agency record management systems upon request. Traffic ticket data will be pushed to mainframe criminal justice server and or court databases depending on the disposition of the traffic stop/crash from the roadside or scene. ALL data shall be available to stakeholders on the Traffic Records Coordinating Committee for analysis or use in their agencies as needed. We also intend to map locations of crashes, arrests, DUIs, and any other activity for strategic identification of safety related enforcement and programs. Our philosophy with all of our data collection is to collect it once, as close as possible to the source of the data, and then allow value added input, i.e., courts will append dispositions, etc., and make the data accessible to safety management, and enforcement professionals to enhance their ability to provide, promote, and implement traffic safety programs.*

Referring to the National Agenda Goals, tell how your project relates to each one you listed in Part One of this application:

- **National Agenda Goal #1-The program involves a leader(s) who promotes importance of highway safety information systems, used for safety policy and program decision-making**

  Two Cabinet Level Secretaries to the Governor endorse this project. The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and the Secretary of Transportation oversee the various divisions collaborating in this effort of data collection and information sharing. Under the Secretary of Public Safety is the Office of Highway Safety, the Division of State Police, and the Office of Emergency Medical Services. Under the Secretary of Transportation is the Department of Transportation and the Division of Motor Vehicles. This project proposes to allow all these stakeholders access to the crash data information system so they may evaluate problems, issues and trends and then develop safety policies and programs to address them while supporting and guiding the decision making process with access to meaningful and real time data.

- **National Agenda Goal #2-Involves the coordination of the collection, management and use of highway safety information among various organizations responsible for highway transportation policy.**

  The coordination of the collection, management, and use of this highway safety information is covered in Number 1 above. Furthermore, these organizations comprise the Traffic Records Coordinating Committee in Delaware and we meet frequently to discuss the project's implementation and future direction. All organizations will share the data collected at the scene of a crash by the on-scene officer involved.

- **National Agenda Goal #3-Represents an example of integrating the planning of highway safety projects with highway safety information systems.**

  Information gleaned from the highway safety information system is transferred into the identification, development and implementation of highway safety projects. After analysis, this data is the supporting information to allow highway safety professionals in our state to address the issues threatening the safety of motorists and pedestrians on our highways. Data indicating the level of success of our programs is then used to help evaluate future programs as well as identify new goals for improvement.

Referring to the management approach to highway safety, tell how your project supports the management steps you listed in Part One:

- **Establish Safety Goals-***after a baseline year is established, the project's data collection effort will allow Highway Safety and Law Enforcement Agencies to establish new and improved safety goals.*

- **Identify Problems-***The traffic records database will permit easy problem identification through simple data mining search techniques as well as an opportunity to graphically display problems areas on a map. This process will allow decision makers to get a graphical representation of these problems in an effort to address a tactical solution to the underlying issues causing them.*

- **Plan Programs/Countermeasures-***Having the right amount of data that is both timely and accurate will allow our planners to suggest countermeasures and plan future programs depending on the trends that emerge from the data.*

- **Implement Programs-***from these countermeasures and programs that are planned resulting from reviewing our data, program implementation will follow with measurable results available from the additional data collected. These programs are evaluated for their effectiveness and impact on all aspects of highway safety.*

- **Monitor Program Operations-***Program monitoring is quicker and easier and more informative when data is fresh, accurate, timely and accessible. When these ingredients are in place, planners monitoring these programs are capable of responding quickly to collateral areas of concern that may not have been readily identifiable without the accessibility to the data.*

- **Evaluate Effectiveness-***Measurable results support the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of a given initiative. Regardless of the outcome, a program is relatively easy to evaluate once the data populates the information system.*

The project database is accessible by highway safety planners and statisticians for evaluative purposes that help to establish and clearly identify safety goals. It is our intent to use COTS products to provide the necessary analytical and strategic data mining tools to accurately address each and every one of the management tasks listed above.

Describe the major process steps for your project, including any unique aspects that enhanced success:

- **Leadership's Vision-***we started out with a clear and articulable direction based on an overall vision of our information system plan and how our traffic safety goals fit into this vision.*

- **Planning-***we brought together all the stakeholders and formed a consensus of our goals and how to obtain them.*

- **Research-***doing our homework by finding out what was available and ensure our choice for a traffic records information system met our needs and requirements instead of allowing the needs and requirements to meet the available information systems design.*

- **Product Development-***obtaining the right system, with sufficient, competent, and dedicated resources (human and fixed) so that critical path solutions can be followed, but more importantly, critical decisions concerning project changes in scope and direction can be made.*

- **User Inclusion-***vital to the successful evaluation of any system as well as ensuring user acceptance is the early inclusion of user agencies of the system.*

- **Milestone Acceptance-***at all phases of the project, leadership and the traffic records coordinating committee endorsed the progress of the project plan and implementation.*

- **Pilot Implementation-***obtaining a small but manageable control group to evaluate implementation with valuable and informative incremental successes and identification of failures along the way.*

- **Training *and Education*-***cannot be overlooked or underestimated. This is key to any successful implementation no matter how good or user friendly an information system one thinks they have.*

- **System Evaluation-***this step must be ongoing and involve users of the system. We do this at various levels of the organizations statewide and we do so in an unassuming and open environment to encourage discussion and honest reflection.*

- **User/Administrative Group Meetings-***what is measured is paid attention to, and we enforce this idea by a regularly scheduled user group meetings and traffic record coordinating committee meetings to keep everyone informed and seek ways to improve the system.*

- **Future Planning-***any system must have out year future plans to survive. We have a long term vision for our crash information system, but it's value to us can only be measured by how successful we have been not in investigating crashes, but by using the data we collect to prevent crashes, save lives, and improve traffic safety.*

Provide the evidence and reasoning used to determine the success of the project:

The law enforcement agencies are committed to this project and they are anxious to see the automated crash reporting system implemented statewide. Our stakeholder partners at Highway Safety, Motor Vehicles, the Department of Transportation, and the Emergency Medical Services recognize the value, both intangible and real, to finally becoming rich in both data and information instead of simply being data rich and information poor. That is to say, we will finally be able to use our data to provide information to decision makers at all levels to assist in things like roadway design and traffic pattern engineering, vehicle safety engineering, driver improvement programs, driver evaluation programs, problem driver identification, injury and fatality prevention, and countless other highway safety issues limited only by one's creativity and knowledge of the data.

One way we used our data already was to identify a problem in our middle county (DE has three counties) involving injury and fatal crashes between horse drawn carriages operated by our Mennonite community and motor vehicles driven by the general public. Once the problem of poor visibility and the display of proper safety equipment was identified as a causative factor in these collisions, we worked with the Division of Motor Vehicles, the Office of Highway Safety, and various law enforcement agencies to establish a public awareness campaign and prevention plan that significantly reduced these types of crashes by 54% over two years. Access to our data in a timelier manner and in a more meaningful analytical format allowed us to make such a significant and successful response to this problem.

Why should this project be recognized as a best practice in traffic records?

The Delaware automated crash reporting project should be recognized as a best practice implementation in traffic records because I do not believe you will find another statewide uniform implementation where all the components of both the criminal justice system and traffic records safety have collaborated toward one common goal. We have done this overcoming all geographic and political boundaries that prevent projects such as this from becoming a reality, let alone successful. We have the buy-in from the courts for our automated summonses, the commitment from all law enforcement agencies to collect and contribute data to one common source allowing all who need the data to share and contribute further to the completion of these traffic records. Our implementation is comprehensive, and is capable of providing the necessary data and information to address and touch all aspects of traffic highway safety. Our implementation will be a tremendous time saver for our officers, allowing them to dedicate more unobligated time while on patrol to the implementation of traffic and driver safety solutions. From an overall statewide perspective, we are poised to make great improvements to our identification of problem areas and through a collaborative, informed approach, implement the necessary controls supported by real time data collection to address these areas of concern. Since the variables that need to be addressed in any highway safety program are threefold, i.e., driver, vehicle, and roadway, we believe our approach to detecting, monitoring, and improving these variables, through the use of our information system qualifies for recognition as a best practice in addressing highway safety issues in our state and in our nation.

I would like to thank you for your kind consideration of this application.