

Town Hall Update and Progress Paper

—Initial meeting took place in Prescott, Arizona in December 2000—



Prepared by the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission

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Executive Summary

In December 2000, criminal justice leaders from around the state gathered in Prescott, Arizona to tackle two topics of paramount importance to the state's criminal justice community. The Town Hall Meeting, the first of its kind, took place on December 11, 12 and 13 and examined the current and future state of Arizona's information technology infrastructure and worked to identify processes that addressed system-wide improvements among all stakeholders. These meeting outputs were captured in the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission's *Criminal Justice Trending in the 21st Century* strategy paper that was released in February 2001 for Town Hall participants and the state's criminal justice leaders.

As follow-up to the initial Town Hall meeting and strategy paper, the ACJC thought it was time to provide an update about the progress made on action items for the topics of information technology and system improvements. This brief report will provide updates on information technology improvements specifically related to Town Hall action items about common data sharing, security policies for sharing such data, technology advancements, DNA technology and dedicated funding to support the needed technology infrastructure. In regard to the second topic, this progress report will detail advances made to the statewide radio communications interoperability plan as well as identify increased activity related to prevention, recruitment, retention and training of sworn police personnel and criminal justice support positions.

This report highlights projects that the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission is aware of or participating in and in no way seeks to imply that these Town Hall outputs are the only activities occurring among and between criminal justice agencies statewide. If you wish to have other Town Hall projects and accomplishments included in future updates, please contact ACJC Executive Director, Michael Branham.

Information Technology Progress

As a refresher on the information technology piece of the Town Hall Meeting, participants were asked to consider and answer the following question: "How can we handle information in a way that provides crucial criminal justice information for varied purposes for many users from multiple platforms?"

With that question in mind, and understanding where the criminal justice system was in regard to this topic just a few short years ago, the following will detail progress made on this Town Hall topic since February 2001.

Records Integration

A high level overview of objectives includes the need to replace "stand alone" computers and databases with networked capabilities in an effort to abolish duplicative work among departments—and ultimately between agencies—by linking and ensuring compatibility between new and legacy (current/existing) computer systems. The first step in bringing this goal to fruition was the ACJC's creation of the Integration Executive Steering Committee which was formed to specifically address system-wide policy, products, ethics, security and potential

standards. This ACJC committee is comprised of stakeholders and subject matter experts collectively making decisions to move the state forward, through consensus, on integration projects. The Integration Executive Steering Committee cooperatively created the governance structure for the statewide criminal justice records project and will assist in developing integration standards with assistance from the Government Information Technology Agency (GITA) as we move forward. However, individual criminal justice agency adoption of these proposed integration standards is voluntary.

Records Integration Success Stories for 2001

- *October 1, 2001—Arizona awarded \$1 million from National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP) to help state agencies improve the accessibility, completeness and quality of the state's criminal record systems that link to the FBI.*
- *September 13, 2001—the Kearny, Florence and Superior Police departments successfully linked to the Pinal County Sheriff's Office network and are now able to share arrest and incarceration information.*
- *September 10, 2001—Middle-ware software between Coconino County and DPS, the Central State Repository, was successfully connected to allow information to electronically flow from Coconino County to DPS. Coconino County is the pilot test site for Arizona's Criminal Justice Records Integration Project.*
- *August 23, 2001—Cochise County Sheriff's Office and the Tombstone Marshals Office began to electronically share arrest and incarceration information.*
- *April 4, 2001—the Coolidge Police Department went live with a new Computer-Aided Dispatch/Records Management System.*

Needs Assessment

The first step in bringing the records integration project closer to completion centered on gathering information about current systems and developing a budget for statewide computer integration. The needs assessment is one part of a multi-step process that allows us to build a business case for the state integration model. In August 2001, the Acting Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Larry Greenfield, approved ACJC's request to use \$237,317 in reverted funds to kick-off the statewide needs assessment to evaluate Arizona's computer integration progress. The needs assessment, in evaluation of Arizona's current and future computer state, will provide answers to the following questions: "What technology currently exists, what is needed to link systems, what needs to be replaced, what standards are needed for integrating systems, how much will it cost, who will share the cost and how long will it take?" The needs assessment report will be available in January 2002 from the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission.

Additionally, the ACJC, in cooperation with the Arizona Department of Public Safety executive staff, went to Washington D.C. to meet with key congressional leaders this summer to discuss the necessity of a \$500K appropriation in the 2002-2003 federal budget for the statewide computer integration needs assessment as well as financial assistance for Arizona's communication interoperability plan. The Arizona Department of Public Safety has taken the lead in the communications/radio system interoperability project for the state and created a working group comprised of law enforcement and public safety practitioners to keep the project moving forward. The interoperability project dovetails into the needs assessment piece, but

requires that prior to moving forward on the communication interoperability project, a needs assessment must be completed.

Information Security and Access

In regard to information sharing and access, a number of meetings have taken place between the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to develop a web-based pilot project that would provide, among other things, crime lab results through the Internet. The DPS is moving forward on developing a web-based crime lab result posting solution for law enforcement agencies, county attorneys and the Attorney General's Office to use for real-time information access in criminal case preparation. The project is slated to go online in July 2002, with pilot tests on the system commencing in March 2002. Funding for this project was made possible through reverted National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP) funds approved by Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Evaluation of federal and state statutes relating to privacy and protection issues is currently underway by DPS, FBI and end users. Websites like DPS' sex offender database are paving the way for new and innovative ways to implement and utilize web-based technology. The Arizona Department of Public Safety is currently working with the Arizona Motor Vehicle Division to gain access to driver license photos via the web so that images can be used for immediate investigative purposes. The Arizona Department of Corrections utilizes the power of the web for their Inmate Datasearch program and provides information on inmates who have been in the custody of ADC since 1985.

Another issue that was discussed during the December 2000 Town Hall centered on the need of the federal government to play a more active role in Arizona's criminal justice system. Currently, it is believed that "bottle-necks" occur between federal authorities and state and local agencies. Federal agency Town Hall participants are currently evaluating ways to improve information and technology sharing between federal, state and local authorities. Federal agencies are exploring opportunities for enhancement of their communication infrastructure in an effort to increase information sharing among all agencies. The Government Information Technology Agency (GITA), in cooperation with the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, Administrative Offices of the Courts and the Arizona Department of Public Safety, have begun looking into setting up minimum security and infrastructure standards that can be voluntarily adopted by county and local agencies via special projects or grants.

Technology in the Field

A significant output from the December 2000 Town Hall Meeting focused on improving officer safety by providing accurate and quick access to criminal information from both fixed (agency) and remote (field) locations throughout Arizona. Some of the technologies discussed during this session included equipment that is extremely expensive and unfortunately still in the development stage. As in the past, the criminal justice community will continue to update and replace technologies as they become available to ensure and improve officer safety in the field.

The more attainable goal of providing accurate information and access to officers in the field has been moving forward and making progress. To date the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, in cooperation with the Administrative Office of the Courts, Arizona Department of Public

Safety, the Arizona Department of Corrections and the Office of the Governor applied for and received a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance after applying to the National Governor's Association (NGA) to automate the Juvenile Online Tracking System (JOLTS), the Adult Probation Information System and the statewide court orders of protection files. Prior to receiving the NGA/BJA funding, the AOC worked with statewide court administrators to prepare 147 of the state's 180 courts computer systems to ensure that dispositions are sent to and received by DPS, the state's Central Repository. A current challenge in this process relates to the idea that there are 30 plus courts in Arizona that have no standard automation system to ensure that dispositions are sent electronically to DPS.

DNA Technology

Town Hall participants also discussed the DNA issue and focused on the need to reduce and eliminate the state's backlog to expedite investigation and prosecution of criminal cases. For the first time in June 2001, the ACJC released nearly \$600,000 available through "Fill the Gap" laboratory enhancement grants to Arizona's five, full-service forensic laboratories (DPS, Phoenix PD, Scottsdale PD, Mesa PD and Tucson PD) to update equipment, purchase computers and/or add personnel. The Forensic Crime Lab Grant, made available through Fill the Gap funds, also allowed the Phoenix PD to take the lead in developing a statewide laboratory strategy that will help identify the costs associated with bringing all Arizona labs up to the same operational standard. The statewide laboratory strategy will also help Arizona build a business case for seeking federal laboratory dollars that will be available for the next several years.

Dedicated Funding

The idea that the criminal justice system needs a sustainable financial source is not a new concept. While everyone agrees that developing a dedicated funding source is extremely important, the realization/implementation of this goal is very problematic due in part to the additional tax burden that will be shouldered by Arizona residents. However, there are some successes in regard to dedicated funding in Arizona. For instance, the 9-1-1 service implementation is a good example of how dedicated funding brought this important service to fruition in a way that helps citizens in communities throughout Arizona on a daily basis. Clearly, there is more debate and study that needs to go into the dedicated funding discussion among stakeholders. Within the next 12- to 24-months, concepts will be explored with the goal of developing a statewide strategy to follow. This comprehensive strategy will be cooperatively developed between criminal justice agencies, citizens and businesses in Arizona. In the short term, political and economy issues may inhibit implementation of dedicated funding. However, the ACJC, with a host of others, is exploring and researching how other programs and projects have successfully implemented dedicated funding through legislation in other states.

System Improvement Progress

This particular Town Hall Meeting topic focused on exploring opportunities to improve and increase inter-agency cooperation through expanded system improvements by capitalizing on resource sharing and alignment to deliver a more coordinated team approach between local and state criminal justice agencies. As a refresher, this topic sought to explore how we could work together in a way that will not harm other agencies, but will still create an interactive/proactive environment that will allow us to work smarter together.

Increased Recruitment and Retention/Training Efforts

Attracting potential recruits has been particularly challenging for Arizona law enforcement over the past several years. In response to this challenge, the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police (AACOP) has been developing an Internet site to recruit potential law enforcement candidates throughout the state. The site, set to launch in spring 2002, will help law enforcement agencies locate potential candidates while at the same time helping these candidates target specific agencies or regions of interest. Additionally, the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC) has been working with the Arizona Office of Tourism and AACOP to place recruitment information in the state's tourism publications, which have national audiences, in an effort to attract law enforcement candidates to Arizona from all over the US. More meetings have been scheduled between the ACJC, AACOP, Arizona Office of Tourism and the County Attorneys and Sheriffs Association to discuss the idea of developing a mailer wrapper that will advertise law enforcement opportunities in Arizona.

Additionally, within the past year the US Department of Justice awarded approximately \$1 million to the Central Arizona College and its partners to develop the Arizona Police Corps Program. This program will develop and recruit college educated academy recruits and send them through a 24-week academy session that is based on a national law enforcement training model. Law enforcement agencies may receive up to \$10,000 per cadet for encouraging participation.

In terms of retention, urban law enforcement area agencies have begun tracking entry level wages in an effort to maintain competitive regional salary standards. Additionally, the Arizona Peace Officer and Standards Training Board (AzPOST) is looking into developing electronic and web-based training platforms as part of an overall state training upgrade in an effort to provide more and easily accessible instruction. These innovations will eliminate travel time, save money and provide greater flexibility for personnel requiring training.

Increased Role of Prevention in Society

During the Town Hall Meeting, participants were nearly unanimous in their opinion that the role of prevention needs to be emphasized, and that the role of crime prevention had been largely overlooked by the criminal justice community. While individual agencies such as the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona, the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections and the Arizona Prevention Resource Center have all emphasized the importance of prevention strategies in their respective public policies, there is still much work to be done. Many of these crime prevention efforts are fragmented, narrow in focus, or particular to the individual agency. They also vary in scope based on demographics and the priorities of

individual communities or constituent groups. According to US Assistant Attorney Dan Drake, “We ‘respond’ in a crisis mode rather than plan and act to prevent the crisis from occurring. Short-term solutions are used to deal with long-term problems.” The United States Department of Justice “Weed and Seed” initiative entails a comprehensive planning process at the community level. It includes coordinated strategies or elements of law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention, treatment and neighborhood restoration strategies as part of an overall strategy to improve the quality of life within a given neighborhood or community.

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) has included Arizona as one of six states where it is working with local state leaders to help embed prevention and policy and practice throughout the state. Arizona participants in the “Embedding Prevention Project” include representatives from the Governor’s Community Policy Office, the Arizona Prevention Resource Center, the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, the Arizona State Legislature and Arizona State University, among others. This national effort spearheaded by the NCPC capitalizes on efforts already underway in Arizona to increase the role of prevention and to implement recommendations made by Deloitte Consulting in 1998 that Arizona pursue establishing a coordinating body for juvenile crime prevention efforts. This recommendation has been passed on by the Legislature to the Governor’s Drug and Gang Policy Council, where work is underway to develop an implementation plan for such an approach.

In 1996, Maricopa County and the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County were faced with overcrowded conditions in the juvenile detention centers and a projected 30 percent growth in the juvenile population over the next 10 years. In addition to exploring more traditional ways of responding to these conditions, they jointly began to explore alternatives to detention and strategies that would reduce the need for Juvenile Court action. One of the significant actions they took was to make an investment in juvenile crime prevention. They targeted this investment to the 20 zip codes in Maricopa County with the highest number of referrals to the Juvenile Court and in the schools with highest truancy rates. During the program’s second year of operation, referrals decreased by an additional 12 percent. Based on this decrease, the Maricopa County’s Office of Management and Budget estimated that the number of juveniles diverted from the criminal justice system could result in a long-term cost avoidance of nearly \$6.8 million per year for a \$442,000 annual investment in crime prevention.

Current efforts to promote prevention as a policy of choice and to pursue establishing a mechanism to encourage greater collaboration in cooperation in the development and sharing of community education/prevention strategies should continue or be redoubled. The criminal justice community must be an active role player in these efforts, and should take a leadership role.

Conclusion

Although much has been accomplished in terms of follow-up to the initial December 2000 Town Hall Meeting, there is still much to do to bring the Town Hall vision and the strategies developed by criminal justice leaders statewide, to fruition. It was understood that many of the meeting outputs would take between five and 10 years to fully implement. However, as demonstrated in this progress paper, this past year the criminal justice system has taken great steps to foster enhanced collaborations, improve communications and build stronger coalitions with respect to a great number of the Town Hall objectives.