2011 Innovations Awards Application

DEADLINE: MARCH 28, 2011

ID # (assigned by CSG): 2011-

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: North Carolina

Assign Program Category (applicant): Public Safety/Corrections (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name: PPO Dashboard (Probation/Parole Officer’s Dashboard)
2. Administering Agency: North Carolina Department of Correction
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The PPO Dashboard is a comprehensive tool to assist Probation and Parole officers with the management of their large offender caseloads. The PPO Dashboard provides a quick view of critical and upcoming items, as well as an interface with the Office of the Courts to receive daily alerts of new criminal and infraction activity on their offenders.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 28, 2011 to be considered.

This process was implemented October 2008.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

In early 2008, two North Carolina college students, one of whom was the student body president, were murdered in separate events, several weeks apart. As the investigation progressed, it was alleged that the two crimes were committed by the same individuals. The suspects were probationers who, during the time frame of the murders were having multiple and escalating encounters with the Criminal Justice System. Law enforcement, Courts, Juvenile Justice, and Adult Corrections all had pieces of the puzzle relating to the offenders, but none had the entire picture. It became apparent that improved sharing of this knowledge, as well as a tool to more effectively manage large caseloads, might have resulted in a better outcome, possibly with lives being saved.

A particularly critical part of the problem appeared to be the link between Courts and Corrections
(probation officers, prisons, etc.). If probation officers could have prompt knowledge of new interactions between their probationers, law enforcement, and/or Courts, they could assemble a better picture of behavior and take rapid, appropriate action.

The Probation officer's Dashboard makes this connection between the Courts and Corrections. The PPO Dashboard accomplishes this by employing an innovative, cost-effective link between web applications and existing legacy mainframe applications.

The second area of concern was offender management. Due to budgetary constraints, Probation officers were tasked with supervising ever increasing caseloads. Trying to manage these large caseloads using batch-oriented technology, Probation officers struggled to keep track of the many requirements and activities (such as home contacts, drug tests and court dates) associated with each offender under their supervision. The officers needed an offender management tool to assist them in prioritizing the work for their caseloads and notifying them of possible issues with their offenders.

By interfacing daily with court activity and providing an effective caseload management tool, the PPO Dashboard has helped improve public safety.
12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

In June of 2008, the technical team at the Department of Correction (DOC) created a caseload view for probation officers. This caseload view, or roster, shows each officer's list of offenders with pictures, home address, work information, and supervision information. It also notes key activities associated with the offender: such as when the last contact was made, when the home and job were last visited, the date of the last drug test, gang information, etc. There are multiple filters for the officer to pull up a list of the offenders they need to take action on, as well as multiple ways to sort their case list. This caseload view was a necessary first step in order to later superimpose the Court matches to this view for the probation officers.

In August 2008, DOC formed a team to work with Courts to develop a process to receive court data nightly and match court data with the individuals on the Corrections database. With aggressive expectations of completing this large project in six months or less, the project team divided the tasks up to work concurrently, completing the interface with the Courts ahead of schedule and under budget.

Subsequently, the PPO Dashboard System was enhanced to not only display the date of the last contact/activity but also the date the next contact is required, and a calendar of scheduled appointment dates, violation hearings and court dates. Additionally, links to other key information concerning offenders such as case plans and the risk/needs assessment tool were included.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

Before the PPO Dashboard, officers used a legacy system that required them to access many screens and reports to get a ‘big picture’ view of their caseloads. They had to manually keep track of when their next contact with the offender should occur, of any upcoming court dates where the officer may be required to also attend, and numerous tasks required in the supervision of the offender. When managing 80 – 100 offenders, this proved to be a difficult and inefficient process. The Dashboard concept that is usually used to provide management with numbers and statistics was applied to this tool that provides the Probation officers with alerts and notifications to help them more efficiently manage their offenders. With a single click, the officer’s entire caseload is presented and items that need immediate attention and items that need to be addressed intermittently are highlighted in red, while upcoming items are highlighted in yellow.

14. What were the program’s start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The PPO Dashboard continues to change and improve. Initial programming cost by Correction development staff was approximately $75,000, with additional help coming from Courts development staff to develop the data feed. One developer continues to work on enhancing the application.

15. What are the program’s annual operational costs?

Annual operational costs to maintain the existing functionality are minimal. However, field staff is excited about the application and that has generated a wealth of new ideas. We have found the application provides an excellent framework to implement these ideas, and those improvements keep one developer busy on a continuing basis.

16. How is the program funded?

In the wake of the college student murders and subsequent published statistics about serious crimes committed by probationers, a root cause discussion was conducted by North Carolina government officials at the highest level. Improving the link between Courts and Corrections emerged as a critical need. The North Carolina General Assembly appropriated $140,000 and directed Courts and Corrections to work together to build a link to provide probation officers with improved information that would allow officers to immediately identify individuals who were violating the terms of their probation.
Current enhancements are funded through the State payroll for one full-time employee.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number. No.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program? This system involved a multi-tiered Java web application inter-operating with existing legacy mainframe applications. The security of data is ensured using Public/Private Key technology to encrypt selected private data, combined with login security utilizing existing mainframe RACFID and transaction profiles.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator’s name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address

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20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

We're not able to cite specific states, but we do see very basic roster status tools in use in some other states. However, we have not seen the tight integration with court data, to include arrest data, in any other state that we're aware of. That integration really throws open a window for the probation officer on how their offenders are moving through the criminal justice system. It tightens the reaction time when an offender makes a mistake. It improves our relationship with law enforcement and courts because they now know that we are on top of every move and acting quickly to resolve problems.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The original scope of the project has been fully implemented; however, the recent implementation of Evidence Based Practices (EBP) in the supervision of probationers, has required a constant re-evaluation of how to more effectively supervise the probationers and therefore modifications to the tool are sometimes necessary to support EBP. A feedback system was also incorporated into the web application to allow officers to submit any questions, requests, or comments that would help make the system a better tool. Sometimes a request to provide a way to filter or sort the data has proved to be a simple, yet incredibly time saving feature for the officer.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program’s effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

This project provides multiple benefits for multiple stakeholders. Most importantly, public safety is improved as more probation violators and absconders are identified before they have a chance to commit additional crimes.

The efficiency and capabilities of the probation officers are increased significantly with the use of the PPO Dashboard. The system provides:

- A one page view of an officer’s caseload information which easily identifies areas that require immediate attention as well as upcoming items per offender.
- The tool is a time saver for probation officers who were formerly limited to performing criminal record checks in a separate Court system, requiring them to search county by county for each of their offenders. Interfacing with the Courts provides the following alerts automatically:
  - Alerts on new pending charges are crucial for public safety and provides the officer with the necessary information to start violation proceedings, if necessary.
• Alerts for traffic citations are providing current address and license tag numbers which give probation officers more information to locate offenders in which they have lost contact (absconders).
• Alerts for traffic citations also help officers identify possible driving and/or curfew violations.
• Alerts for newly disposed court cases keep officers informed of any additional supervision and/or incarceration that may be required of the offender.
  ▪ A mapping tool provides an optimized driving route and helps the officer be more time and fuel efficient.
  ▪ A calendar provides a consolidated view of all violation hearings, court dates, and scheduled appointments for all offenders under the officer’s supervision.
  ▪ An online feedback system allows officers to provide comments and suggestions. The feedback on the new PPO Dashboard system has been extremely positive.

This project provides multiple benefits but there are some potential concerns as it continues to grow. The officers are now so dependent on the PPO Dashboard tool, they are continuously asking for new information to be displayed. These enhancements are resulting in ‘busy’ screens and increasing the potential for possible performance concerns as well as cost increases for computer usage.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

Since the PPO Dashboard was originally implemented in October 2008, it has grown substantially. Some new features include:
  ▪ a calendar view that shows the officer all scheduled appointment dates, violation hearing dates, as well as court dates of all offenders on their caseload
  ▪ a mapping feature that allows an officer to select one-to-many offenders from their caseload and create an optimized driving route from the officer’s office to each offender’s home
  ▪ many new filter options have been provided that allow the officer to slice-and-dice their caseloads numerous ways
  ▪ edit functionality has been added as well to allow the officer to update the offender’s address, employment, as well as document the details of all contacts with the offender.
  ▪ the ability to view each offender’s court date and court case details

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

The other states would need to model their tool to fit their technology and would need cooperation between the agencies to share information.

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