ID # (assigned by CSG): 12-S-26-TX

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Texas

Assign Program Category (applicant): Government Operations and Technology > Information Systems (Use list at end of application)

Program Name: MobiPlan – Fleet Optimization

Administering Agency: Texas Department of Agriculture

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1. How long has this program operated (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old as of [date] to be eligible for this year’s award.

   The system has been in operation since January 2011. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) piloted the system in one of TDA’s five regional offices in January 2011, and a second regional office was brought on board in February, 2011. The program went live in all regional offices in April 2011.
2. Describe the program:

   a. Why was it created?

   TDA is responsible for enforcing a wide variety of laws and regulations such as: testing fuel pumps and scales to verify accuracy; enforcing state and federal laws and regulations; the distribution and use of pesticides; and enforcing plant quality and quarantine regulations at nurseries and large-scale growing operations. Enforcing these laws and regulations is accomplished through the implementation of programs that require more than 77,000 on-site inspections each year. These inspections are conducted at locations spanning the 268,581 square miles of Texas from the most densely populated cities to very remote rural areas. As a result, traveling demands associated with TDA’s heavy inspection workload is highly consumptive of the agency’s budget resources.

   TDA’s goal in implementing a fleet optimization program was to achieve fleet-wide cost savings, streamline the delivery and field service planning processes, increase driver and asset productivity, and improve customer service.

   b. Why is it a new and creative approach or method?

   The system provides a more holistic solution to TDA’s inspection planning needs; enhancing TDA’s ability to more concisely and strategically schedule inspections across the year.

   Prior to the implementation of MobiPlan, TDA inspections were scheduled through a manual system that utilized a variety of reports that contained inspection information for many unrelated programs. This system lent itself to scheduling inspections based on inspection due dates without necessarily considering the most logical and economical routes available. Optimizing inspection schedules and driving routes demanded the development of a system that considers a broad range of inputs including: the economic goals of TDA, inspection due dates, route efficiency, inspector skill sets, inspection durations, shift rotations, break schedules, and customer preferences such as unique business hours of operation, etc.

   The MobiPlan system creates logical clusters of inspections. By having a system that automatically schedules routine, follow-up and re-inspections, more attention can be focused on risk-based inspections, trend analysis, delinquent and ad-hoc needs. The program maximizes efficient use of resources, saving more money over time.

   c. What are the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order?

   Each day, MobiPlan analyzes all inspection requirements for the upcoming nine months. MobiPlan generates logical clusters of inspections, and the most efficient routes, optimally assigning inspectors by comparing inspector skills, availability and location to the needs of the customer. MobiPlan knows which customers need inspections, the skills each require, which inspectors possess those skills, and where each inspector resides.
The system produces a daily schedule for each of TDA’s 145 inspectors. The assignments are transmitted to TDA’s system of record (BRIDGE). The inspectors connect to BRIDGE with their mobile inspection application (PIER) and receive their assignments. The inspectors also receive a daily email from MobiPlan, which shows turn-by-turn driving directions to and from each inspection site, as well as predicted drive time, on-site duration and expected end times. As inspections are performed, the inspection data is entered into PIER and transmitted back to BRIDGE. Inspections not performed are re-sent to MobiPlan for future planning consideration.

The notion of re-churning or deferring inspections to future dates is based upon the principle that inspections are contemplated by MobiPlan before they’re truly due. For example, inspections may be required every four years but are eligible for consideration and planning by MobiPlan as early as nine months before their due date. This flexibility enables improved load planning across the year, smoothing the peaks and troughs that occurred with TDA’s previous model of manual forecasting and planning.

d. Is it effective? Provide tangible results and examples.

TDA performed 20.4 percent more inspections with only a three percent increase in gallons of fuel consumed. This was accomplished with 5.1 percent fewer inspectors. The number of inspections increased and the number of miles driven per inspection decreased by 13.4 percent.

TDA achieved a 20.4 percent reduction in costs in 2011 from 2010.

The average cost per inspection performed in 2009 and 2010 was $203 and $184, respectively. In January 2011 the cost per inspection dropped 28 percent to $132, and remained at an average of $147 through December 2011; a 20.4 percent savings compared with 2010 and a 28 percent savings compared with 2009. The centralization and automation of explicit business rules has facilitated shared goals across TDA regional office operations, fostering a better sense of community as well as creating opportunities for program areas and compliance functions to communicate their needs.

3. Did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator’s name, present address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

Yes, the program originated in Texas. It was created by MobiCorp of Austin, Texas (formerly known as Pointserve), a developer of fleet management and route optimization economic models and software. TDA adopted one of MobiCorp’s products, MobiPlan, a system that can distribute work across multiple resources and days. TDA’s system of record (BRIDGE) and MobiPlan work hand-in-hand.

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

TDA is not aware of any similar programs operating in any other state.

5. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter when attempting to adopt this program?

TDA’s system of record (BRIDGE) was modified extensively to accommodate the MobiPlan system, however these modifications further benefited TDA by allowing the automation of multiple business rule standards, as well as balance priorities across multiple agency programs. TDA discovered limitations of the system that prevented some business activities from being integrated into optimized daily plans. TDA could reap further benefits through the automatic scheduling of inspections that require specialized equipment (heavy scales, large volume provers, etc.). Currently, these must continue to be manually managed.

The MobiPlan system is not capable of computing the inspection requirements of Texas, as a whole. This limitation necessitated that TDA continue to use regional boundaries. While removing regional boundaries would not necessarily yield additional savings, we were unable to explore this possibility.

Current assignments are generated and transmitted to inspectors once-a-day. Having the ability to make dynamic, real-time changes to the plans during the day could further enhance TDA’s ability to provide even better customer service and would provide greater flexibility in meeting ad-hoc or emergent needs.

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