

www.iacptechnology.org: Your Source for Law Enforcement IT Guidance

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The IACP Technology Clearinghouse (www.iacptechnology.org) was established in late 1996 to provide objective information to law enforcement executives on the benefits of automated data collection and information management. The clearinghouse was created at a time when large amounts of federal and local funding were being dedicated to automated record systems, mobile computing, and computer-aided dispatch.

Through an agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the IACP has created a one-stop shop for IT guidance that promotes automation, interoperability, and integration.

The technology clearinghouse established a Web-based presence to collect and disseminate information technology resources. Thanks to a dearth of objective, law enforcement-specific online resources, the popularity of the Web site grew quickly. During the first year of operation the Web site had 400,000 hits. In 2002 the Web site had 1.8 million hits. Although similar Web sites have emerged in recent years, none has been able to capitalize on the peer-to-peer network that IACP's members have created through the technology clearinghouse.

The core of the clearinghouse is the leading technology programs section. Clearinghouse staff actively survey best-of-breed technology programs to determine what technologies are being employed, what lessons have been learned, and what sources of funding have been tapped to support project specific IT acquisition. The survey results as well as hardware and software successfully employed are then catalogued by agency size and type.

The most important piece of the survey project is the identification and contact information for the project's manager. This

information allows one law enforcement agency interested in a particular technology or computer solution to contact another directly. This peer-to-peer network is commercial-free and an invaluable tool to prevent replication of mistakes and promote the duplication of successes. Law enforcement executives are encouraged to complete a survey form to share their agencies' respective technical advancements. This survey program is regularly updated and expanded.

Another popular section of the Web site is the library of online resources. In this section, links to relevant Web sites are catalogued according to topic. This section offers insight on topics of interest to the IT expert and novice. The funding section of the site offers information on active and legacy funding sources for information technology. These sources of funding range from well known to relatively obscure programs.

To assist with funding and acquisition, a section of active and model requests for proposals (RFPs) are provided. These RFPs are of considerable value to those tasked with writing and reviewing purchasing documents for their respective agencies. The entire Web site is searchable by keyword so that visitors can quickly find the resources they need.

The technology clearinghouse has also proven to be a sound forum to post presentations from the annual conference of the IACP Law Enforcement Information Management Section. Visitors to the site frequently view the comprehensive agenda for each LEIM conference due to the specific contemporary issues they address such as crime mapping, strategic planning, wireless communications, integration, and interoperability. Upcoming LEIM conference information is also featured on the technology clearinghouse site.

One of the newest sections of the technology clearinghouse is the information technology standards component. This initiative is championed by the Law Enforcement Information Technology Standards Council (LEITSC). LEITSC is a consortium of law enforcement executive membership associations,

including the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), National Association of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), and IACP, to promote the development and adoption of IT standards. IT standards will prove to be the solution to maximize the benefits of information sharing while maintaining the sanctity and security of local control of law enforcement sensitive data.

Agencies building, modifying, or replacing legacy information systems are urged to pay particular attention to standards that will allow for efficient and economical integration and interoperability. The LEITSC will soon embark on a project to design functional and technical standards for key law enforcement information systems. The clearinghouse is the forum to track and support the work of the LEITSC project and membership organizations.

The technology clearinghouse is committed to meeting the evolving needs of the law enforcement community. Although the staple issues of the clearinghouse, such as automated crash reporting, mobile computing, intelligent transportation, records management, and computer-aided dispatch will not change, new topics are added on a regular basis. Crime analysis, IT standards, wireless data communication, and a host of other topics are relative newcomers to the clearinghouse.

Thanks to the support of FHWA and NHTSA, access to the clearinghouse is free for all police agencies.

To learn more about the IACP Technology Clearinghouse, call Tom Robey, clearinghouse coordinator, at 800-843-4227, extension 387, or send an e-mail message to him at robeyt@theiacp.org.