
Agency Name: Hampton Roads Chiefs of Police, Virginia
Technology Program Name: LInX – Law Enforcement Information Exchange
Competitive Category: Excellence in Communications and Interoperability and Innovation in Information Technology
Agency Size: Regional
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Executive Summary:

Information sharing has become a mission critical component of today’s public safety mandate. There are over 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States. A significant majority utilize some type of computerized database to collect incident and investigative information in their respective jurisdictions. Moving this data across disparate systems and political boundaries into the hands of those who “need to know” has been and continues to be a significant obstacle. Although the technology exists in many forms, the structure and process required to “make it happen” has yielded limited results. As the 911 Commission report poignantly stated “the biggest impediment to connecting the dots is the human or systemic resistance to sharing information.”

The LInX project has provided a structured format that can be utilized by other regions as a template in which to model a successful project. The project assists all participating jurisdictions in achieving their individual agencies’ operational goals, while linking those individual goals to regional law enforcement objectives.

LInX has been able to achieve this in Hampton Roads, Virginia by creating a governance process that has the responsibility of establishing a comprehensive suite of policies, guidelines and procedures under which the group and system function. The sixteen local, state, and federal agencies contribute their information into a data warehouse. It is designed to improve upon the current capabilities of individual agencies and provides advanced technologies that will directly support the operations of street officers, investigators, analysts, and executive management, allowing them to exploit the combined multi-jurisdictional data from all agencies within the region.

Its user-friendly format provides an intuitive analytical tool that illustrates relationships among all people, address, incident, and property from the collected information regardless of the format of the information, structured or unstructured data. It’s this integration of *free text* and narrative investigative records which can reveal the true ‘nuggets’ of information that allow investigators and analysts to connect the dots. The effort also provides a means to develop analytic products that would have never been possible without the project, including regional threat assessments, regional trends, and information gaps.

Program Narrative:

Information sharing is an integral component of successful law enforcement. Information sharing is not about technology, but about adopting a new way of thinking and acting that puts the well-being and safety of all citizens in a region ahead of any one locality.

Criminals find relative ease in crossing jurisdictional boundaries and exploiting this weakness. Additionally, the attacks of 911 and its subsequent analysis have revealed glaring deficiencies in our ability to "connect the dots". Although the vast majority of information resides in state and local databases, much of the discussion and models have presented a federal or "top down" application within this information pyramid. The paradigm needs to be inverted by local and state agencies creating information sharing projects that will more effectively augment their crime fighting capabilities while simultaneously assisting the national mandate for the defense of our Homeland.

The southeastern region of Virginia is commonly known as Hampton Roads. Its geographical proximity to accessible waterways and the nation's largest natural harbor makes it one of the principal maritime trade centers in the country. The military installations, shipyards and the world's largest naval base make it a "target rich" environment for criminals and terrorists. Law enforcement services, for the 1.7 million residents, are provided by 16 municipalities. Further, because of the critical infrastructure and institutions, a number of state and federal law enforcement agencies have a strong presence in this area.

Each of these agencies utilizes computerized records management systems (RMS) that collect incident and investigative data. Moving this data across disparate systems and political boundaries into the hands of those who "need to know" has been and continues to be a significant obstacle. Although the technology exists in many forms, the structure and process required to "make it happen" has yielded limited results.

The Hampton Road's Chiefs of Police Association embarked on an ambitious program to link this technology. A governance structure was created to develop a workable process that would allow officers, investigators, and crime analysts the capability of accessing the tremendous potential stored in these databases. The Law Enforcement Information Exchange (LInX) had its genesis in the commitment by the executives of these agencies to "get the information to those tasked with the security" of our communities by leveraging local, state, and federal information into a single system.

The LInX system was constructed on the following precepts;

- The system builds upon and enhances existing records management systems and doesn't require the purchase of new records systems or build new infrastructure. Further, it utilizes existing infrastructure that most state systems have in place for connectivity with information sources such as NCIC, warrants, watches, and alerts.
- A governance board of agency CEOs closely monitors the system with a strong MOU and tight oversight, security, privacy impact, data retention audit and evaluation policies. Governance wanted to ensure that participating agencies still retain the responsibility of data ownership in their respective systems.
- The system creates a powerful data warehouse that would integrate, search, and analyze structured and unstructured (free text) data and provides investigative and analytical products for the investigator or analyst. LInX contains powerful link analysis tools that allow crime analysis within a single jurisdiction or across an entire region, thus having a direct impact on terrorism prevention, gun violence, drug trafficking, cybercrime, gang activities and other local or regional criminal activities. Line officers would have immediate access to a tactical level that searches and references names, aliases, addresses, vehicles, mugshots and other needed data across multiple RMS systems in this regional data warehouse. Investigators and analysts have the ability to conduct conceptual (Google™-type) searches for information such as "red Camaro" or "chrome plated .45" or "Spanish speaking male". Linkage capabilities to analyze and link "free

- text" data; witness statements, victim statements, officer case notes, etc., are a unique attribute of this system.
- The system is built on national standards, i.e., Global Justice XML. It maximizes compatibility with other systems and allows easy additions of agencies or systems and enhanced capabilities. Further, its ease of construction allowed for full implementation in a short period of time.
 - The system is easy for officers and investigators to use and utilizes browser-based technology. This information-sharing concept puts all of the right information into the hands of those who need it most. *It allows officers and investigators to know things they were previously unable to know.* Further, the federal partnership with NCIS and the FBI has created a mechanism in which a robust information stream is being channeled upward to assist efforts in the protection of our Homeland.

LInX in Hampton Roads currently has tied 16 local, state, and federal agencies together. Expansion into a statewide project is being contemplated and has the endorsement of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police (VACP) and the Virginia Sheriffs Association (VSA). Further, the success of this program has gained national attention from the Department of Justice and is being replicated in other projects around the country such as Puget Sound, Hawaii, Corpus Christi, Texas, and Jacksonville, Florida.

Few projects have been able to achieve collaborative and coordinated law enforcement efforts across jurisdictional boundaries. The greatest single information need of the law enforcement community is cross-jurisdictional data from the many entities that exist within a single geographic area. Further, only a few areas have developed systems that permit the routine sharing of investigative data, police reports, and intelligence data among county, city, and state police. Almost none routinely shares this level of information with federal, state, county or municipal agencies across jurisdictional boundaries. A true collaborative law enforcement sharing effort is different from what currently passes for information sharing because it integrates structured reports and *free text* data from all levels of law enforcement into a single data warehouse that can be directly accessed from the offices of each participating agency. The structure and processes developed in the LInX project have created an information sharing mechanism that realizes the full potential of disparate data systems and collates this information into a usable, relevant environment that enhances the capability of public safety at all levels.