

## **N-DEx: A National System for Local Information Sharing**

*By Thomas E. Bush III, Assistant Director, Criminal Justice Information Services Division,  
U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Clarksburg, West Virginia*

**I**n June 2006, current IACP third vice president Chief Mark A. Marshall rightfully noted, “Information sharing has become a mission critical component of today’s public safety mandate.”<sup>1</sup> Chief Marshall went on to explain the efforts made through the partnership of local, county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division in developing the concept for a national information-sharing system based on incident reports and case information, and the deployment of such a system was to be commended. Over a year and a half later, the CJIS Division is on the cusp of realizing the goal of enabling information sharing on a national scale.

In February 2007, the Raytheon Corporation was selected from a competitive bid process to design, develop, and incrementally deploy the Law Enforcement National Data Exchange (N-DEx) system. Having been named as the service provider, Raytheon, along with the CJIS Division, has worked with local and state law enforcement agencies and brought together subject matter experts from the field. Included in these groups are representatives from the IACP, Major Cities Chiefs Association, National Sheriffs’ Association, Major County Sheriffs’ Association, and other local and state law enforcement information technology practitioners. These subject matter experts have been included in the development of system requirements based on the concepts of operations, system functionality, training and audit plans, training guides, and computer-based training modules and materials. Each of these groups represents the law enforcement communities they serve, as well as the United States, in creating a system that will affect the culture of the law enforcement profession and how it investigates crime and protects the United States from terrorism.

The vision of the N-DEx is clear: to share complete, accurate, timely, and useful information across jurisdictional boundaries and to provide new investigative tools that will enhance the ability of the United States to fight crime and terrorism.

### **Overcoming Information-Sharing Challenges**

The challenges in creating this vision were easy to define but much harder to overcome. Through the work of 43 dedicated N-DEx staff members and an active partnership with local and state law enforcement agencies, the N-DEx is about to be deployed. This partnership has resulted in the resolution of a variety of legal and policy issues, technical integration, and communication and funding issues, making it possible to establish the N-DEx in the forefront of the information-sharing environment in just five years.

What many have worked tirelessly to create and others have patiently awaited is quickly becoming a reality. Beginning in late March 2008, the CJIS Division will begin the incremental rollout of the N-DEx with on-site assistance for Increment One partner agencies as the system is introduced to the law enforcement community and the nation. Rollout will begin with the state of Delaware and move across the country to locations in the Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and Sacramento, California, areas. Following implementation in these initial areas, Nebraska; Ohio; Oregon; Texas; and Marietta, Georgia, will next benefit from the N-DEx services and capabilities. Other states and regions will be included as they develop systems that are adequately mapped to the N-DEx system and achieve connectivity.

During the past year, the N-DEx has used a prototype system to assist in developing policy and business rules and address connectivity issues and data submission processes. The submitted data from the Increment One agencies will be transitioned to the operating environment prior to N-DEx deployment. Once the N-DEx is operational, participating agencies will submit data to the operating environment according to their individual policies.

The CJIS Division will begin a "train the trainer" program in February 2008, just before deployment of the N-DEx. This program will include computer-based and classroom training. Computer-based training modules will be placed on the Law Enforcement Online Web site ([www.leo.gov](http://www.leo.gov)). It is recommended that those receiving classroom training go through the computer-based modules before attending formal instruction. Selected trainers from Increment One agencies will attend "hands-on" classroom instruction at the CJIS Division offices. In addition, CJIS training teams will be available to assist agencies as they connect to the N-DEx system.

### **Closing the Gap**

The deployment of the N-DEx is generating excitement within the law enforcement community because it is the first time in U.S. history that local, county, state, and federal information will be openly shared; the true partnership envisioned over five years ago will be achieved. Technology is no longer a problem, because the N-DEx will fill the critical gap in the ability of the law enforcement community to obtain and disseminate public safety and homeland security information from across the United States through one system. Now it is through the commitment of law enforcement agencies to this partnership and their responsibility to protect and defend the citizens of individual communities, states, and indeed the entire United States that information sharing will be realized on a national scale. If history is any indicator, the N-DEx will become a trusted system of service operated and maintained by the CJIS Division as a result of the division's voluntary and trusted relationship with local and state law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice field. ■

### **Note:**

<sup>1</sup>Mark A. Marshall, "N-DEx: The National Information Sharing Imperative," *The Police Chief* 73, no. 6 (June 2006): 38

[Top](#)

From *The Police Chief*, vol. 75, no. 2, February 2008. Copyright held by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, 515 North Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 USA.

The official publication of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

The online version of the *Police Chief* Magazine is possible through a grant from the IACP Foundation. To learn more about the IACP Foundation, [click here](#).

All contents Copyright © 2003 - 2008 International Association of Chiefs of Police. All Rights Reserved.

Copyright and Trademark Notice | Member and Non-Member Supplied Information | Links Policy

515 North Washington St., Alexandria, VA USA 22314 phone: 703.836.6767 or 1.800.THE IACP fax: 703. 836.4543

Created by Matrix Group International, Inc.®