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Technology Talk: Purchasing a New CAD or RMS Soon? National Standard Functional Requirements Are on the Way

By Jennifer Zeunik, Project Manager, Law Enforcement Information Technology Standards Council, IACP

TECHNOLOGY TALK

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he information-sharing capabilities of law enforcement agencies across the United States vary as much as the agencies themselves. Some have the resources and staff to implement and support highly technical information systems, but others need help defining the basic requirements for their agency's information technology systems. Help is on the way: the Law Enforcement Information Technology Standards Council (LEITSC) will soon issue functional requirements for information sharing.

LEITSC, composed of representatives of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), and funded through the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and National Institute of Justice (NIJ), believes that standard specifications, if driven by the law enforcement community with input from the vendor community, would help standardize the capabilities of all law enforcement IT systems. Small and large agencies alike can benefit from the adaptation of standards that facilitate interoperability and information sharing.

Over the last three years, the council has worked to develop a strategy and the partnerships necessary to establish, document, and validate the standard functional requirements for CAD and RMS. A LEITSC subcommittee developed baseline sets of requirements by pulling common functions and language from law enforcement requests for proposals (RFP), technical documents, and user manuals. This information was loaded into a computerized tool that would enable the committee to review and make changes in real time, as well as to illustrate the workflow for each function. The committee was then split into subcommittees to address the CAD and RMS requirements separately.

The LEITSC CAD subcommittee has completed validation of the CAD requirements, which is to say that they have worked through each word of the functionality descriptions and workflows to ensure its validity and applicability to law enforcement. Currently, pertinent committees and sections within each of the participating associations are reviewing the CAD

requirements. Once the review is complete, the CAD requirements will be open for review and comment by each association's general membership and the law enforcement community for 30 days before it is finalized and released. The document will be available for review on the LEITSC Web site (www.leitsc.org) by the end of June 2005.

The LEITSC RMS requirements describe approximately 20 business functions that are recommended to be included in any law enforcement RMS. The RMS subcommittee has completed validation of 75 percent of the RMS requirements. It is anticipated that validation will be complete by August 2005. The RMS requirements will then be reviewed by the committees and sections within each of the participating associations and will then go on to be open for review and comment by each association's general membership and the law enforcement community for 30 days. All comments will be considered by the RMS subcommittee and incorporated as appropriate. The final LEITSC RMS functional requirements will be available by the end of 2005.

Maintenance and Future of Requirements

With continuation funding, LEITSC will continually review and update the requirements to reflect new technologies and changes in the law enforcement and public safety community.

The council will also expand the project to include validation of CAD and RMS information exchanges, as well as to add technical specifications and XML schemas. And, the group hopes to expand its development of functional requirements to other law enforcement information systems (mobile computing systems, for example).

Outcomes

LEITSC believes that the functional requirements will provide benefits for not only the law enforcement and public safety community, but also for the vendor community who will ultimately build the products that law enforcement agencies use. For law enforcement practitioners, the requirements will do the following:

- Facilitate development, and reduce costs of development, of CAD and RMS requests for proposal in law enforcement agencies
- Facilitate information sharing and communication between systems
- Standardize language in defining functionality of CAD and RMS systems
- Provide a starting place to begin to define system functionality
- Provide a level playing field on which to work with vendors on development of CAD and RMS
- Manage expectations of CAD and RMS system functionality by defining standard functionality that all systems should include

For vendor community, the requirements will do the following:

- Define the least level of functionality to which all systems should be built to
- Encourage development of products built using open standards
- Facilitate communication with law enforcement customers regarding system expectations

The efforts of this initiative will ultimately influence the interoperability of justice information technology solutions that meet the technical, practical, and political needs of the public safety community, laying the foundation to get the right information to the right person at the right time in the most affordable manner.

Agencies preparing to make CAD or RMS purchases should pay particular attention to these efforts as they can dramatically reduce the cost of achieving interoperability and the time associated with crafting and reviewing requests for proposals. ■

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