



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2015 Local Government Excellence Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

(All programs nominated must have been fully operational for a minimum of 12 months, prior to January 31, 2015)

Deadline for Nominations: March 3, 2015

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (select only one):

- Community Health and Safety
Community Partnership
Community Sustainability
Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Electronic Warrant Payments Shared Services Program

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Arlington, City of Carrollton, City of Euless, City of Grand Prairie, City of Plano

Jurisdiction population(s): City of Arlington (379,577); City of Carrollton (126,700); City of Euless (53,224); City of Grand Prairie (183,372); City of Plano (274,409)

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented for at least 12 months prior to January 31, 2015, to be eligible. The start date [on or before January 31, 2014] should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: June Year: 2013

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, September 2015. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Mike Eastland
Title: Executive Director
Jurisdiction: North Central Texas Council of Governments

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Jessie Shadowens-James
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Problem Assessment

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is a voluntary association of, by and for local governments, and was established to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit, and coordinating for sound regional development. NCTCOG serves the 16-county region of North Central Texas, which is centered on Dallas and Tarrant counties and includes an approximate population of seven million people.

In May 2012, at the request of some member cities, NCTCOG hosted a meeting to discuss a shared services initiative that would enable the electronic acceptance and transfer of credit card payments for court issued warrants among different cities. The need for this approach was attributed to the travel patterns of people in the DFW region. It is common for people having an outstanding warrant in one city to be arrested or stopped for a traffic violation in another jurisdiction. The process that was being used to collect and disburse payment between cities was cumbersome and resulted in inefficient use of staff time in all functional areas involved. In addition, it created a liability for cities to jail a warrant holder until the city that issued the warrant picked up the offender.

The attendees at the meeting agreed that this issue was ripe for improvements. A decision was made to further explore an automated solution. The cities of Arlington, Carrollton, Euless, Grand Prairie, and Plano volunteered

to lead this effort and brought in Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) representing Municipal Judges, court administrators, detention officers and finance staff to create a task force and determine how a program could be designed and implemented. The next step was to draft a Request for Proposals (RFP) to send to appropriate vendors and then score responses. Government Payment Services (GovPayNet) was deemed best suited to support the program.

Program Implementation and Costs

The task force recommended that an implementation team/pilot group be formed to launch this effort. This pilot group consisted of the five jurisdictions that participated in the task force. Representatives from these jurisdictions included the various disciplines necessary to consider their respective operational needs, as well as best practices for their agencies. Meetings were held with the pilot group representatives to keep the project on schedule and ensure that all of the needs of the group were met.

The pilot group, NCTCOG staff, and GovPayNet staff developed a simple, uniform payment process that facilitated the acceptance of payments for arrest warrants utilizing existing "best practices." This did not significantly change the basic steps and legal procedures for making payments and communicating release authorizations. Automating manual processes, but not requiring substantial procedural changes, eased the implementation process. The pilot group also developed guidelines and checklists for future participating agencies. Additionally, a Universal Plea Form was created

through a collaborative effort involving Judges and court personnel.

With the completion of testing of the payment process, the pilot group went “live” simultaneously on June 17, 2013. On-site and remote training was provided prior to the launch date for jail staff, court staff, communications/dispatch staff, warrant staff, financial services staff, and others at each pilot jurisdiction to ensure that all parties were fully satisfied with the new process.

Once the pilot group completed their respective implementation and had processed payments for a period of six months to assess operations, it was determined that the system was working as intended. Phase II of the project then began to offer this program to additional cities. Pilot group members led meetings with their counterparts from other cities to explain the program and its benefits.

Results/Outcomes

From the EWP program launch in June 2013 until October 31, 2014, there have been over 1,700 transactions processed and in excess of \$920,000 transferred directly to participating agencies, which will continue to grow as agencies are added. As of October 2014, the EWP Program has 12 participants. There are an additional six entities that are ready to begin implementation and six that are awaiting Council approval to join the program. A goal has been set to add a minimum of 18 agencies in 2015.

There are several benefits for participating jurisdictions. The minimized

time, cost, and risk associated with prisoner detention/transfers account for the most substantial benefit. The NCTCOG, along with the pilot group, has estimated cost savings per prisoner of approximately \$130. This figure includes time savings for Police Officers, Detention Officers, Court Clerks, Municipal Court Judges, and Accounting Personnel. The estimated total cost avoidance is in excess of \$200,000 thus far. This will also increase as agencies are added.

Benefits for the participating agencies are as follows:

- Offered at no cost to participants (a nominal transaction fee is charged to warrant holders who pay with a credit card);
- Minimized administrative costs, including city overhead such as checks, envelopes, and mailing;
- Payments are made directly from the vendor to the jurisdiction.

Not only participating jurisdictions benefit from the EWP Program. Citizens with warrants also benefit from having the option to pay their warrants and/or fees, especially those for other cities, via credit card and thereby reduce their detention time.

Lessons Learned

The growth and success of the EWP Program thus far would not have been possible if not for the pilot group. The five cities involved recognized the benefit that such a service would bring not only to their own cities but other cities in the NCTCOG region. They speak to these benefits during one-on-one

conversations with their counterparts, in regional meetings, and interviews with the media. When structuring the program, they kept the needs of future participants in mind and continue to serve as SMEs as others join the program.

The ability to easily duplicate the process across many cities has been a major contributing factor to the program's success. It is important to use standardized practices as much as possible, with the Universal Plea Form being just one example. With these uniform processes, new agencies can be added almost seamlessly. The ability to decrease risk, save administrative dollars and provide this new service without significant disruption to the jurisdiction has attributed to the program's growth thus far and will likely ensure continued success.

