

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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UAlbany's Center for Technology in Government Releases Capability Assessment Toolkit

Toolkit Lays Foundation For More Effective Information Sharing

Albany, NY - The Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany, announced today the release of a new resource, *Sharing Justice Information: A Capability Assessment Toolkit*. The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), awarded CTG funding to create this toolkit to promote information-sharing capability within and across justice agencies. The multi-year project reflects a broad consensus that integrating justice information will have the potential to save lives, time, and dollars.

"Achieving the benefits of integrated justice information can be a very challenging task," said Anthony Cresswell, deputy director of CTG. "As many of us working with government know, planning an integration initiative requires a solid understanding of capabilities, not just technical, but also the organizational and political capabilities."

The *Toolkit* helps those responsible for planning and implementing information sharing and integration initiatives to answer two key questions: What is our current capability for sharing and integrating information among the organizations involved? and How can these organizations build higher levels of sharing and integration capability? The *Toolkit* defines sixteen basic capability dimensions and provides a detailed survey for those involved in the initiative to assess organizational, technical, and policy-related aspects of capability. The results of the assessment can help determine how to fill gaps in capability both within and across organizations.

"Information sharing initiatives are extremely complex, so agencies must constantly assess their organizational and technical capabilities," said Regina B. Schofield, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). "The toolkit can save time and money while providing a necessary and user-friendly guide for justice information sharing among agencies. In some cases, an agency could complete a mini- assessment of certain system components in as little as an afternoon." >> Read OJP Press Release

The *Toolkit* was developed through extensive collaboration with justice system practitioners and leadership organizations. These included the National Governor's Association, National Association of State Chief Information Officers, and the Justice Information Sharing Professionals. In addition, the usability of the *Toolkit* was tested in field trials in a state-wide initiative, a large city, and a county-level information integration initiative. It was also examined by justice professionals from several smaller jurisdictions for usability and validity in those settings.

"Many times, organizations jump into implementing a technology solution without doing the up front assessment to really understand and quantify the underlying business needs. It is like shooting in the dark!" said Brian Richards, IJIS Program Manager and CLETS Project Manager for the County of Sacramento, California, one of the field trials. "With the assessment, we were able to review a comprehensive metric that reflects the 'overall health' of our integrated justice initiative. It provided a retrospective and strategic focus to the work to be performed."

One of the key design goals for the *Toolkit* was to make it useful in a wide range of justice settings. Therefore the *Toolkit* includes materials and instructions for use in various settings, ranging from small sharing initiatives that might involve only a single agency, up to multi-state initiatives involving many separate state and local agencies. The *Toolkit* is available in two formats. The paper version is a workbook format that can be easily duplicated and distributed to smaller numbers of participants, and results combined by hand. An online interactive version, hosted on the OJP website provides for online collection and summarizing of data into meaningful results, as well as collaborative tools to facilitate use by larger numbers of participants in distributed environments.

The paper version of the *Toolkit* can be downloaded at http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/guides/sharing_justice_info and the online version can be accessed at <http://catoolkit.ojp.gov/>.

The Center for Technology in Government is an applied research center devoted to improving government and public services through policy, management, and technology innovation. The Center, located at the University at

Albany, works with government to develop well-informed information strategies that foster innovation and enhances the quality and coordination of public services. For more information visit www.ctg.albany.edu.

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