

## AQUIRING A NIBRS COMPATIBLE RMS for LOCAL AGENCIES

A handbook developed under the sponsorship of the Criminal Justice Information Service (CJIS) Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Bureau of Justice (BJS) provides a comprehensive, step-by-step guidance to local law enforcement agencies that are, or are considering, implementing an automated incident-based Records Management System (RMS) that is compatible and compliant with the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).

This handbook provides instructions on how to prepare for and conduct a system acquisition and prepare the agency for conversion to the new system and to NIBRS. It includes lessons learned from other agencies and from vendors and presents relevant templates and examples. The goal of the publication is to take the guesswork out of purchasing a NIBRS-compliant RMS.

Click on the link to go to this manual:

[http://www.waspc.org/documents/cjis/Local\\_RMS\\_manual.pdf](http://www.waspc.org/documents/cjis/Local_RMS_manual.pdf)

Here are some basic considerations for selecting police software:

- Know what RMS features your department needs for its daily operations. If you are not sure what you need in an RMS, your staff may want to visit an automated department and see what advantages it has gained from automation, and what it takes to operate and maintain a system. This does not mean that you necessarily need the same RMS software, but it may give you a general idea of how automation will impact your agency.
- Do not ask a software vendor to tell you what your department needs. Your department's needs should be pre-determined by your own personnel.
- Do not leave the determination of what you need to the department's resident computer expert, or to any other computer expert. What may seem easy to people who already regularly use computers, may not seem so simple to the people in your department who will be using the RMS software – such as records personnel, officers and detectives.
- Putting together a working group made up of representatives of Administration and Crime Analysis, Records, Investigations, Uniformed Patrol, Dispatch (if CADS), IT Staff and other units that may use the system will give a broader view on expectations of each specific groups needs for the RMS software.

- Be aware of resources needed to enter and retrieve information in the system. Information management and data entry may be a full time job for one person or for several persons, depending upon the size of your agency.
- Before purchasing software, be certain the software meets FBI data submission requirements.
- Automated NIBRS submission is an important feature of police reporting, but it is also important to be sure that you have a good RMS.
- Most NIBRS information is routinely captured as a result of normal police report writing and record keeping, and should be a by-product of your routine daily activities.

Good report writing by officers and detectives, as well as good records management procedures, are prerequisites for having a useful automated RMS.

- Make sure that all of your department's needs are solidly covered in the contract with the software vendor, including deadlines and continuing software support.

Clearly, the WASPC CJIS Department has no authority over contractual agreements between law enforcement agencies and their vendor, nor can we offer legal advice. However, we offer the business suggestions below for purchasing a NIBRS compliant RMS, based upon experiences that other local law enforcement agencies have had with vendors:

The vendor agrees to program all edits and all data elements in the national specifications within a specific time frame;

The vendor agrees to make any state mandated or future modifications free of charge if they are to correct specification errors or omissions not identified during testing, or if the modifications are a result of future state or national requirements upon local law enforcement;

The vendor agrees to make corrections to programming errors or omissions immediately;

The vendor agrees to make required future modifications within the times frames specified by WASPC.

- Be sure that you have contracted for adequate training for all your staff that will be using the software.

If you have any questions please contact WASPC CJIS Department at (360) 486-2380.