NIEM
Bridging Information Systems

TEXAS PATH TO NIEM CASE STUDY

Synopsis

This case study looks at the state of Texas' adoption of NIEM on the Texas Path to NIEM project.

Agency Overview

The Texas Department of Public Safety provides public safety services to people in the state of Texas by enforcing laws, administering regulatory programs, managing records, educating the public, and managing emergencies, both directly and through interaction with other agencies.

Challenge

As Texas state and local information systems experience growing capabilities to share information electronically, statewide information sharing standards need to be in place to minimize duplicate efforts, facilitate semantic and technical consistency, and foster interoperability. This requires strategic planning to set direction and establish resource needs. It also requires short-term tactical development efforts to enable geared-up organizations to immediately move forward with information sharing implementations. Ultimately, the challenge is to coordinate the development and operation of justice systems maintained or managed by dozens and eventually hundreds of participating state and local justice entities using the NIEM standards to enable these systems to share information consistently and accurately in a manner that maximizes the services provided to justice information users in Texas.

Solution

The solution was to:

● Tackle the strategic challenge by updating the five-year-old Texas Justice Information Exchange Strategic Plan.

● Tackle the tactical challenge by developing NIEM 2.0-conformant Information Exchange Package Documents (IEPDs) for 28 high-priority information exchanges.

Together, these two complementary efforts make up a project called the Texas Path to NIEM.

Executive Summary

Challenge

To coordinate the development and operation of justice systems maintained or managed by participating state and local justice entities using the NIEM standards to enable these systems to share information consistently and accurately in a manner that maximizes the services provided to justice information users in Texas.

Solution

Update the five-year-old Texas Justice Information Exchange Strategic Plan; develop NIEM 2.0-conformant Information Exchange Package Documents (IEPDs) for 28 high-priority information exchanges.

Results

Updated plan, reflecting current environment and direction; 28 completed IEPDs ready for system implementation.

To implement this solution, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (DCJ), and the Office of Court Administration (OCA), in coordination with the Texas Integrated Justice Information System (TIJIS) Advisory Committee, selected the Unisys Corporation to develop and create the Texas Path to NIEM.

The solution was based on adoption of the NIEM standards and extension of those standards to meet Texas-specific business needs in a consistent manner across all information exchanges. The Texas stakeholders have been very receptive to using NIEM. They like being able to leverage an existing national standard to reduce development and implementation efforts, while at the same time having the capability to extend the standard to meet the specific business needs of Texas state and local government organizations. They also like the fact that NIEM expands beyond the justice domain to include a broader base of government exchange partners.

In developing the Texas Justice Information Exchange Strategic Plan, a number of focus group meetings were

held to understand stakeholder needs and learn from their experiences and efforts to date. This led to a mission statement, a vision statement, and five key goals to meet that vision. Strategies and deliverables were developed for each goal. One of the goals is to create a Texas Justice Information Exchange Model that conforms to national standards. The strategy to achieve this goal is to:

- Identify and prioritize critical exchanges.
- Analyze the identified exchanges, using the SEARCH Justice Information Exchange Model (JIEM) tool.
- Identify gaps and barriers to sharing.
- Create IEPDs.

The tactical effort to achieve this goal resulted in the complete development of NIEM 2.0-conformant IEPDs for 28 critical information exchanges. Some of the aspects of the project that made this effort successful were:

- The willingness of the stakeholders to enthusiastically invest significant amounts of time and effort to provide input, hold discussions, investigate and resolve issues, and review and comment on the work as it progressed.
- A recognition that the original project schedule was too aggressive and the willingness of the parties involved to extend the effort as needed to achieve high quality.
- The employment of an extensive, iterative exchange content modeling process that graphically depicts detailed business data and relationships to stakeholders while incorporating NIEM concepts and conventions. This approach helps provide confidence that the NIEM XML schema artifacts developed from the model accurately reflect the information exchange business data needs.
- The identification and incorporation of common business data components that were used across the 28 IEPDs, resulting in a high level of consistency and reuse across IEPDs.
- Significant stakeholder representative experience with electronic information sharing concepts and practice.
- The knowledge, experience, and skills of the vendor staff with NIEM and supporting activities, such as

group discussion facilitation, the justice domain, modeling techniques, XML schema development, and documentation.

- Thorough, detailed review by key stakeholder representatives of the business and technical content of the IEPD artifacts.

Results

The Texas Path to NIEM project is an important first step in achieving the vision of a collaborative, continuously improving statewide Texas justice, public safety, and homeland security community that can:

- Accurately and securely share timely information.
- Access information at all levels of Texas government.

By developing and documenting an Information Sharing Strategic Plan with explicit goals and actionable strategies, the stakeholder community can now work together on specific efforts to achieve these goals.

Using the IEPDs for the 28 critical exchanges, a broad set of state and local organizations can move forward with system implementations incorporating information exchanges. Some organizations are ready to implement now and have already begun implementing systems that support these exchanges. Others will join in as circumstances permit. By defining these 28 exchanges up front, participating organizations can implement the exchanges on their own schedules. Early adopters will begin seeing the benefits of electronic information sharing right away, knowing that they will also support interoperability with exchange partners who implement later. The Texas Justice Information Model and common business data components resulting from the development of the 28 IEPDs provide a significant, consistent foundation to facilitate additional IEPD development.

For More Information

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