Chapter XVIII

A Collaborative Communications Center and Public Safety Data Systems

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Executive Summary

During 2004 Waukesha County, Wisconsin, implemented a collaborative 9-1-1 public safety communications center. This case study describes the implementation of the Waukesha County Communications Center (WCC) and illustrates the challenges involved when multiple governments collaborate on a project involving complex technology. The implementation of the new center provided an opportunity to move to advanced technology for all of the aspects of dispatch work. The project also provided an opportunity to implement an integrated criminal records system for all participating municipalities. The biggest difficulties the WCC faced in the implementation process were a delay of several months in the switchovers from the old centers due to addressing problems and also some difficulty in achieving response time on calls that was acceptable to the center’s partners. By late 2005, the new center had a number of plans in place to address these and other issues that commonly face projects of this magnitude.
Background

About the Communications Center

The new Waukesha County Communications Center serves as the 9-1-1 public safety answering point (PSAP) and dispatch center for the County Sheriff, 28 of the county’s 37 municipalities, and a number of fire departments and fire districts. The center also acts as the primary PSAP for all wireless calls within the county, and wireless calls found to be for other centers are in turn transferred to those centers with information previously not available to them. The county also provides radio services to most municipalities in the county with a 13 channel, 800MHz trunk radio system with seven receive/transmit locations.

About Waukesha County

Waukesha County includes 576 square miles of suburban and rural areas at the western edge of the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The 2004 population of the county was 377,193, making it the third largest county in the State of Wisconsin. An elected County Executive administers the operations of the county while a 35-member part-time County Board is elected by district and serves as the legislative branch. Six department heads are also directly elected: the Sheriff, Clerk of Courts, County Clerk, County Treasurer, District Attorney, and Register of Deeds.

The Adopted Operating plus Capital Budget for the county for 2006 was $251,215,355. The county has a variety of sources of revenue including property tax; the 2006 county property tax levy was $87,595,762.

All areas within the county are included within one of the county’s 37 cities, villages, or towns. Each municipality develops its own budget independently of the county. Like the county, the municipalities have the authority to levy property taxes. Almost all municipalities have their own police forces, although five of the municipalities also contract with the County Sheriff for police patrol. The municipalities are also responsible for fire protection, which they provide through a combination of full-time and volunteer fire departments and also several shared fire districts.

Local Governments are Collaborating

Local governments are increasingly seeking to collaborate with each other as a way to improve service and reduce costs. Some areas in which local governments in Wisconsin have collaborated have been:

- Police services, such as the Sauk-Prairie Police Department, serving the villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin;