

Title of Nomination: VIRGINIA'S ONLINE GRIEVANCE DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM

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Executive Summary

Virginia's On-line Grievance Data Collection System

Seldom is it heard that a state government's "cross-agency" information and technology project is completed with little or no budget, within nine months, while significantly enhancing the quality of data, with a potential savings to the state of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Virginia Governor Mark Warner's challenge to state employees to create a more efficient government inspired an IT collaboration that did just that.

Virginia's Department of Employment Dispute Resolution (EDR) is charged by law to collect and analyze information on Virginia's approximately 1,200 annual state employee grievances and to make related recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on enhancing the grievance process, and as a result, benefiting the state's workplace. For over the past decade, the information has been collected manually using hard copy submissions from each executive branch agency.

EDR successfully collaborated with a group of state agencies from three separate secretariats to create a state-of-the-art IT system that enables all executive branch agencies to report employee grievance data to EDR on-line. This new electronic system, started in May 2002 and completed with "live date" in February 2003, replaces the former "paper based" process and eliminates the need for double and often times triple data entries, duplicated work hours, photocopying, mailings, and countless reams of paper. The system resides on a SQL Server at Virginia's Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM), and utilizes the latest in asp.NET programming, HTML web page design, Active Reports, and for optimum efficiency, interfaces with the state's Personnel Information Management System (PMIS).

Old "Paper Based" System: This labor-intensive process involves the creation and mailing of three sets of identical documents, manual data entry and report generating of identical information at three separate locations, and an end result of grievance data being reported the year after the conclusion of a grievance.

New "On-line Data Collection Form" System: Under the new "on-line" system, the reporting agency enters the data once and the reporting process is complete. The reporting agency's Human Resources Representative simply goes on-line and accesses the secured on-line data collection form. Next, the employee's (grievant's) social security number is entered and all needed personnel information is automatically downloaded via an interface with the state's PMIS system. The answers to ten user-friendly "drop-down box" questions must then be entered. Finally, the "submit" button is clicked and the data is instantly relayed to a database and the reporting process, including monthly, quarterly and year-end reports, is complete. Additionally, the database will allow agencies access to various "agency specific" reports that are also available on-line.

Due to this unique and "gratis" collaboration among five of Virginia's executive branch agencies, the direct cost to the state of Virginia for this sophisticated IT system was less than \$5,000.

Virginia's Online Grievance Data Collection System

Department of Employment Dispute Resolution

Seldom is it heard that a state government's "cross-agency" information and technology project is completed with little or no budget, within nine months, while significantly enhancing the quality of data, with a potential savings to the state of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Virginia Governor Mark Warner's challenge to state employees to create a more efficient government inspired an IT collaboration, which accomplished just that.

Project Description

Virginia's Department of Employment Dispute Resolution (EDR) successfully collaborated with a group of state agencies from three separate secretariats to create a state-of-the-art IT system that enables all Executive Branch agencies to report employee grievance data to EDR online. This new electronic system, started in May 2002 and completed with "live date" in February 2003, replaces the former "paper-based" process and eliminates the need for double, and often times triple, data entries, duplicated work hours, photocopying, mailings, and countless reams of paper. The system resides on a SQL Server at Virginia's Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM), and utilizes the latest in asp.NET programming, HTML web page design, Active Reports, and for optimum efficiency, interfaces with the state's Personnel Information Management System (PMIS).

The Beginning: A snowball effect of teamwork was created when EDR began to envision an IT project that involved several agencies and targeted a business process common to them all. That process involves all of Virginia's Executive Branch agencies reporting to EDR on data pertaining to the approximately 1,200 annual state employee grievances. For over the past decade the information has been collected manually, using hard copy submissions from each agency.

Old "Paper-based" System: This labor-intensive process involves the creation and mailing of three sets of identical documents, manual data entry of identical information at three separate locations, and an end result of grievance data being reported over a year after the conclusion of a grievance. The former "paper-based" method of reporting worked as follows:

- At the inception of an employee's grievance, copies of all relevant documents were created and then forwarded from the facility where the employee worked, to the agency's central office. Manual data entry also took place at the facility level.

- Once the central office received these documents, it manually entered the exact same information and generated a third set of copies to be forwarded to EDR.
- EDR would then decipher the documents and manually entered the data for yet a third time.

Significance to the Improvement of the Operation of Government

Recognizing the inefficiency of the "paper-based" reporting process and the increased margin of error associated with multiple data entries, five state agencies spanning over three secretariats collaborated in an unprecedented sharing of state IT and personnel resources to create a state-of-the-art reporting system.

New "Online Data Collection Form" System: Under the new "online" system, the reporting agency enters the data once and the reporting process is complete. The need for double and often times triple data entries and photocopying is eliminated. The new online system works as follows:

- The reporting facility or its agency's human resource representative simply goes online and accesses the secured online data collection form.
- Next, the employee's (grievant's) social security number is entered and all relevant personnel information is automatically downloaded via an interface with the state's PMIS system.
- The answers to ten user-friendly "drop-down box" questions must then be entered.
- Finally, the "submit" button is clicked and the data is instantly relayed to a SQL Server database and the reporting process, including monthly, quarterly and year-end reports, is complete.

Cross-Agency Team (names listed by agency in alphabetical order):

1. Department of Employment Dispute Resolution
 - Jennifer S. Alger
 - Deborah M. Amatulli
 - William G. Anderson Jr.
 - Leigh A. Brabrand
 - Diana H. D'Amato
 - Claudia T. Farr
 - June M. Foy
 - Marsha C. Heath
 - Deborah J. Henderson
 - Doris H. Price
 - Paul G. Prissel

2. Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM)
 - Timothy R. Connor
 - Allen D. Kass
 - Belchior A. Mira
 - Bradley D. Paul
3. Department of Health (DOH)
 - Rebecca E. Bynum
 - Grace M. Diliberto
 - George Pilarinos
4. Department of Corrections (DOC)
 - Beatrice L. Anderson
 - Jean Hall-Dabney
 - Edward E. Schultz, Jr.
 - Gerald L. Wicker
5. Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS)
 - Diane P. Anthony
 - William E. Brenzovich, Jr.
 - Malinda C. Roberts
 - Ramsey F. Roth
 - Stephanie H. Wade
 - Tracey D. Watkins
6. The "cross-agency" team became fully assembled with the recruitment of a Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) "Information Systems" intern, Toni J. Wickham, who, like all the other members, made unique and significant contributions.

Additional Benefit Realized by Taxpayers, Agencies and State

As mentioned above, this new electronic system replaces the former "paper-based" process and eliminates the need for double and often times triple data entries, duplicated work hours, photocopying, mailings, and countless reams of paper. All of this translates into savings of postage, paper, copies and an immense amount of time, as the reporting agency simply enters the data once and the reporting process is complete.

Cost Savings and Efficiency Advantages Include:

- **Elimination of FTEs - Savings of \$331,500 per year.** The efficiency associated with using the online data system will likely eliminate at least one Full Time Employee position from each of the five dominant state agency users: 5 x \$66,300 (average HR Rep's salary + benefits) = \$331,500 per year.
- **Postage - Savings of \$2000 per year.** Approximately 1,200 grievances are filed per year. Savings is based on both the inter-office mail rate at 7 cents per ounce and the U.S. Postal Service rate at 37 cents per ounce.
- **Paper/Copies – Savings of \$4,000 per year.** The need to create and send multiple documents associated with a grievance to EDR is eliminated.
- **Quality of Data** - The Quality of data is increased, as multiple data entry is eliminated. Data is entered once by the agency's (facility of central office) human resource personnel who will likely have direct access to the parties involved.
- **Timeliness** - Data is entered once and is immediately posted to the SQL Server database. The "paper-based" system resulted in a minimum one-year time lag.
- **Entire grievance process to be offered online** - "Form A", which is the form all employees must fill out in order to file a grievance, will soon be available online. The online data system will work in tandem with "Form A".
- **Agency Specific Reports** - Unlike costly publications of the past, agencies will now have access to various "agency specific" reports online.

Return on Investment

The direct cost to the state of Virginia was less than less than \$5,000. Over a year ago, a similar but far less sophisticated project was proposed with an estimated starting cost of \$125,000 - a project quickly shelved amidst dire warnings about state finances.

Itemized Costs Include:

- Salaried employees' hard work and dedication.
- \$4,600.00 for the recruitment of a Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) "Information Systems" intern.

This state-of-the-art system resides (free-of-charge) on a SQL Server at the Department of Human Resource Management. Modifications and maintenance of this new system will likely cost the state of Virginia no more than one full-time employee.

In Conclusion: We believe this "cross-agency" information and technology collaboration is the beginning of a solution to a challenge that many states face: how to fund costly but high-performance information technology projects that serve more than one agency. This system went live this past February and has been successfully implemented in all state agencies under eight of the ten Executive Branch secretariats. Complete implementation throughout Virginia's entire Executive Branch is expected by June 15, 2003.

To Access the Online Grievance Reporting System:

1. Go to www.edr.state.va.us
2. Click on "Grievance Procedure" on left-hand side of screen.
3. Click on "Online Grievance Data Reporting Form".
4. Enter "testedr" for Username.
5. Enter "testedr" for Password and click on "login".
6. Click on "Select an Application" and choose "EDR".
7. Enter the Social Security Number: 555-55-5555
8. Begin entering data. System will guide you through pages and indicate all required fields. If you have any questions, please call EDR's Chief Deputy Director, Paul Prissel, at (804) 786-7994.