

# NASCIO Recognition Awards 2003

## Wisconsin Department of Justice – AISLE

**Title of Nomination: Wisconsin Department of Justice - AISLE**

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**CATEGORY: Digital\_Government\_G\_to\_G**

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## Executive Summary

<sup>1</sup> The National Law Enforcement Telecommunication System got its start in the 1960s as a law enforcement Teletype service. Today it is a sophisticated message-switching network linking local, state, and federal agencies together to provide the capability to exchange criminal justice and public safety related information. The system is operated and controlled by the states. Every state is a member of NLETS. Federal systems such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center (NCIC), U.S. Treasury's Treasury Enforcement Communications System (TECS), Department of Justice's System (JUST), Postal Inspection Service, Naval Investigation Service, Interpol, Air Force OSI, U.S. Secret Service, Department of State, Immigration Service Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) along with other federal agencies also utilize the network.

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In February 2003, the Wisconsin Department of Justice became the first state in the nation to implement a new web based interface with the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications Systems (NLETS)<sup>1</sup>. The project was called AISLE, which stands for Accelerated Information Sharing for Law Enforcement. AISLE was funded in part by a grant from the National Institute of Justice and required working closely with a private corporation called ATS (Advanced Technology Systems) on the technical design. This successful partnership for the first time allows law enforcement to request information on out-of-state vehicles or persons from a web browser and gets the response back within seconds.

The Wisconsin AISLE project was also the Department of Justice's first foray into Web Services, using XML (eXtensible Markup Language) and SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol). There are four planned phases to AISLE for Wisconsin, which all fit into the strategic redesign of their key law enforcement system, TIME 2000 (Transaction Information for the Management of Enforcement). The first phase of AISLE involved a three person technical team along with several members of the Department's Crime Information Bureau, who provided the vision and requirements for the project. Phase I took approximately four months. It was developed in Java using IBM's Websphere tools and platform. Information traveling between law enforcement personnel and WI DOJ is secured using SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) and information traveling between WI DOJ and NLETS utilizes a private network.

AISLE is one of the first steps Wisconsin is taking to improve the availability and usefulness of data for the tactical and strategic operations of law enforcement throughout the state and beyond. By using advance web based standards and tools, like Web Services, it will become easier to link with sources of information at the local, interstate and international level. This will provide quick, inexpensive and secure access to more comprehensive and accurate data. The ultimate result will be a wider variety of law enforcement personnel that have better information available to them when and where they need it.

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### I. Description of the project

This AISLE project is named after the federal grant under which it was implemented - Accelerated Information Sharing for Law Enforcement.

The Department of Justice, in collaboration with the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) and a private company, Advanced Technology Systems (ATS), has worked to implement an Internet browser application that can be used by law enforcement personnel throughout the state (and, indirectly, the continent) to query out-of-state person and vehicle information in a matter of seconds, and get the results of those queries delivered to their browser screen.

The system was implemented using the DOJ's first foray into "web services," which use eXtensible Markup Language (XML) and Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) to transmit requests and responses between web servers.

AISLE is accessible only through our eTIME browser application, which is the redesigned web version of our TIME 2000 system. eTIME is only in its infancy and currently only handles vehicle and person queries. To access AISLE, our eTIME browser application sends a call to a web service via SSL that resides on our eTIME XML Gateway (EXG), sending the information along (in XML format) regarding a vehicle or person query. The EXG, recognizing that the request is for another state, passes the information along to another web service called the NLETS Handler. That web service communicates, via SOAP & XML, with a web service at NLETS over a private network. At NLETS, they unwrap the message, extract the XML, and convert it into a query for the specific state, in the language that state's system understands.

The state then returns results of the query to NLETS in their legacy format. NLETS then converts the message into XML, wraps it up, and returns it to the NLETS Handler and then to Wisconsin's EXG. The EXG unwraps the message and sends the XML response data to the eTIME browser application, which matches it up with a style sheet and displays it to the user. All of this happens in a matter of a few seconds.

This portion of the project was completed in approximately four months time, and has been in production since the beginning of February 2003. The project enabled DOJ technical staff to gain valuable experience developing with XML, SOAP, and web services, which we will now put to use in several other projects currently in planning stages.

The completion of this effort leads us directly into the next phase, Phase II, which will provide criminal rap sheets from our criminal history database, in XML format, through our eTIME browser interface. We will be using much of the same technology learned in Phase I.

### II. Significance to the improvement of the operation of government

Because of the result of this project, law enforcement need only an Internet connection and browser software (Internet Explorer or Netscape, for example) to run queries on vehicles or persons from any other state in the union, Canada, and Puerto Rico.

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As an example, an officer in Northern Wisconsin who stops a vehicle with Minnesota license plates can now use the eTIME system to query Minnesota's vehicle records database right over the Internet. This is usually done through the agency's dispatcher, but in the future could be done from a device in the officer's car, or a personal electronic device they carry.

Many law enforcement agencies find it difficult to afford software and network fees to run these same queries against our current system, TIME 2000. For that reason, some of them do not even have access. By allowing access to these queries through a browser application, smaller counties (with smaller budgets) can get similar access to important criminal justice information as their larger peers. In addition, future mobile Internet access will free dispatcher time, speed access to information for an office, and deliver it to a much greater variety of "on the scene" locations.

### **III. Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state**

One of the first groups in Wisconsin to recognize the benefits of AISLE will be smaller law enforcement organizations with no current access to our TIME 2000 system. They will be able to enhance their ability to perform investigations involving out-of-state entities, and will be able to quickly get critical criminal justice information in the potential life-and-death situations that they face.

A secondary group of beneficiaries will be law enforcement agencies at all levels that will enjoy improved access to critical information. They will also be able to take advantage the more open, standard interfaces that are being deployed if they wish to connect their systems to ours.

The taxpayers can also benefit from this system, especially as it grows to eventually replace the TIME 2000 system. Since nearly every personal computer comes with Internet browser software, agencies will no longer need to buy interface software to access criminal justice information. A simple Internet connection, which can be less than \$20 per month, would replace the need for costly network usage.

The Department of Justice and state of Wisconsin also enjoy the added benefit of expertise in a new technology that will be used immediately to enhance the system even more and offer more sharing of Justice information. As mentioned previously, the next step is to use this knowledge to provide criminal rap sheets in XML format to eTIME users. This technology will be used to make DOT driver and vehicle registration information from DOT available through eTIME. It will also be used to automatically transfer case disposition information from the District Attorneys' case management system to our criminal history repository, ensuring that law enforcement gets the most recent and accurate information on criminals. Communicating between these systems, as well as between others in the future will be easier and less costly due to the use of open, standard protocols. All of these initiatives will enhance officer safety, the safety of the general public, and the effectiveness of state and local governments.

### **IV. Return on investment, short-term/long-term payback**

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There have been no specific cost benefit calculations done for the Wisconsin AISLE project. The primary benefit is improved public safety due to improved information sharing among law enforcement and justice entities. There are many assumed benefits, both in terms of direct dollar savings and efficiencies. Some of the major ones are listed below:

- The ability for smaller law enforcement agencies to access critical information without paying for expensive network connections and software.
- The ability for the Wisconsin Department of Justice to provide access to its information resources, and to take advantage of other sources of information using open, standard technologies.
- The ability for local law enforcement agencies, and other state agencies to share information with each other and the Department of Justice using open, standard technologies.
- The improved effectiveness of law enforcement organizations when information is delivered securely, quickly and conveniently, directly to a wide variety of “on the scene” locations.

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