

Back-to-back to background checks for a safer Georgia



GEORGIA BUREAU *of*
INVESTIGATION

STATE: Georgia

AGENCY: Georgia Bureau of Investigation

AWARD CATEGORY: Cross-Boundary Collaboration

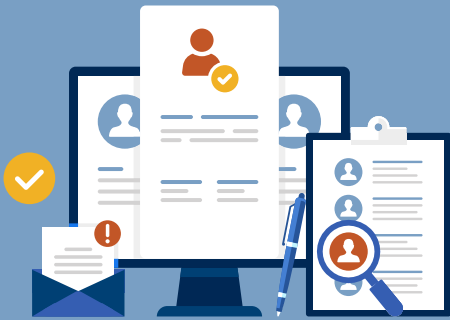
PROJECT DATES: December 2023 – March 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Who's looking after your children today at daycare? Or your aging parents at an elder care center? How about our most vulnerable who seek care from community health facilities? Who's staffing those centers?

Plenty of good people, no doubt. But you want more assurance than just giving folks the benefit of the doubt. Required background checks by employers can help create confidence. And the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) is innovating to make those checks even more effective.

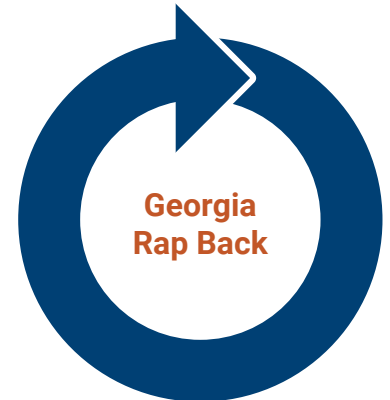


With enhancements to GBI's Georgia Rap Back service, new continuous checking and real-time notifications mean background checks are much more than an isolated, point-in-time analysis. As more employers and entities subscribe to the service, a more complete picture of their staff is possible. And that builds assurance that the right people are in the right spots, in care facilities, government agencies, law enforcement, and beyond.

The successful implementation of the expanded Georgia Rap Back subscription service, driven by collaboration among legislators, vendors, GBI staff, other government agencies, and citizens, has improved a widely valued GBI service.

By leveraging innovative technologies and a citizen-centric approach, GBI has not only solved a critical business problem but has also significantly strengthened public safety and fostered greater trust in Georgia's background check process.

The cost-effective model, with the supplier absorbing startup costs, further demonstrates the project's value and sustainability.



WHAT PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY DOES THE PROJECT ADDRESS?

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) sought to address the problem of inefficiencies and repeated background checks on individuals in various employment, licensing, and volunteer roles across the state. The existing system required numerous agencies to conduct separate and often redundant background checks on the same individuals, leading to wasted resources, delays, and a fragmented approach to ensuring public safety.



This hindered agencies' ability to efficiently manage their workforce and volunteers. Citizens seeking employment or volunteer opportunities also faced unnecessary hurdles and delays in the onboarding process.

The Next Generation Identification (NGI) Noncriminal Justice Rap Back service is managed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Criminal Justice Information Services Division. With legal authority when an individual's fingerprints are submitted through an approved NGI connection and retained in the NGI system, they can be enrolled in the Rap Back service. Once enrolled, the individual's fingerprints will be subject to future research in the NGI system. With Rap Back, an electronic notification will be generated if sometime later the employee, volunteer, or licensee engages in any criminal activity where fingerprints are taken and submitted to the NGI system. Notification will also be sent if any previously unreported criminal activity is updated to the identity history summary.

Without Rap Back, employers depend on their employees to self-report their own criminal activity or have it discovered because of re-fingerprinting, possibly years later.

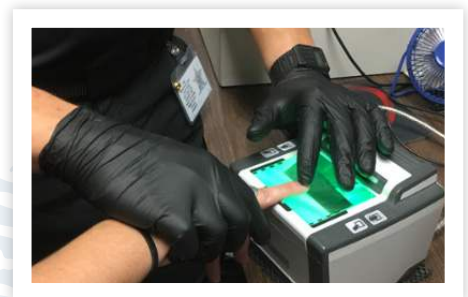
In fact, since the evaluation is continuous, Rap Back reduces the requirements and the need to re-fingerprint for the same position. This saves time and money.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?



The GBI realized it needed to expand the Georgia Rap Back subscription service. This service enables authorized agencies to receive ongoing status notifications of any criminal history reported to the FBI, eliminating the need for repeated background checks on the same individual. These are state agencies that use the Georgia Applicant Processing Service (GAPS) as a part of their hiring or license-issuing process.

When a fingerprint is captured using a livescan machine, the prints are sent to the Georgia Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS). When an employee with an active Rap Back subscription is subsequently fingerprinted, notification is sent to the employing or licensing agency. This could be for reasons such as an arrest or update to criminal history.



By upgrading AFIS and improving GAPS, the project streamlines the entire background check process. The transition to a secure cloud environment and the implementation of advanced cybersecurity measures not only enhance data protection and ensure compliance but also improve the overall operational efficiency of GBI. This translates to faster processing times and better resource allocation for the agency. By providing continuous monitoring and real-time notifications, the project offers a more responsive and secure service, fostering greater trust in the bureau.



The expanded service helps optimize resources, accelerate hiring processes, and enhance public safety by transitioning from outdated, one-time background checks to a more robust and efficient approach.

WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT?

This service is different in its holistic approach to modernizing and enhancing the entire fingerprinting and background check process. Unlike similar initiatives that focus solely on technology upgrades or isolated improvements, this project integrates multiple cutting-edge solutions. The expanded implementation of the Georgia Rap Back subscription service offers continuous monitoring, a significant advancement over traditional one-time background checks. The project's emphasis on scalability ensures that additional agencies with statutory authority can use the GAPS system for Rap Back services, expanding their reach and impact. Also moving the system to secure cloud-based infrastructure with advanced cybersecurity measures demonstrates GBI's prioritization of data security, compliance, and system accessibility.



WHAT MAKES IT UNIVERSAL?



The need for efficient and secure background checks is universal for state government to ensure public safety across multiple industries, including education, healthcare, and childcare. A government's mandate to protect vulnerable populations and maintain public trust requires a robust and up-to-date background check system. This project also aligns several state CIO priorities, particularly cybersecurity and risk management, cloud adoption and optimization, and digital government and citizen experience. Every state faces the critical need to safeguard sensitive data and modernize its IT infrastructure while enhancing the delivery of government services to its citizens.

The integration of advanced cybersecurity measures and the transition to a secure cloud environment also reflect universal priorities for state governments seeking to protect sensitive information and ensure the reliability and accessibility of their critical systems.

IMPLEMENTATION

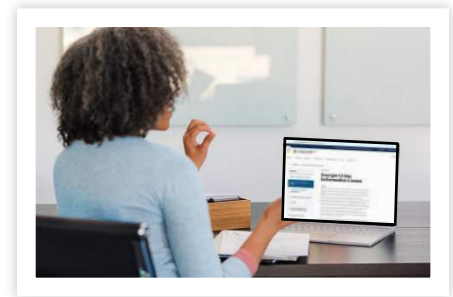
WHAT WAS THE ROADMAP?

The project management approach for this initiative included initiation and planning, design and development, implementation and integration, testing and validation, deployment and training, and ongoing monitoring and maintenance. **This approach allowed for thorough planning and execution.** The project fits within GBI's and Georgia's goals to modernize technology infrastructure, enhance data security, and improve efficiency of critical government services. It also addresses Georgia's need for secure and scalable systems that can accommodate multiple agencies, contributing to a more integrated and effective statewide technology environment.



Stakeholders were involved in developing a detailed project plan, ensuring that the system met all requirements, performance indicators, and service-level agreements. Extensive testing and validation were conducted to ensure the system's functionality and security before its statewide deployment. Training sessions were provided for end users to familiarize themselves with the new process, and ongoing support and maintenance were established to guarantee the system's efficient operation.

This structured approach, with clear phases and stakeholder involvement, was crucial for managing the complexity of the project and ensuring its successful completion.



 Georgia Crime Information Center



The positive impact on stakeholders, such as reduced redundancy, improved data protection, and enhanced public safety demonstrates the project's success.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?



Legislators played a crucial role by enacting legislation that mandated the use of fingerprint-based background checks and authorized the implementation of the Georgia Rap Back subscription service, providing the necessary legal framework. Vendors provided the technical expertise and resources required to upgrade AFIS and integrate it with the Rap Back service, absorbing startup costs and ensuring performance and security requirements were met. Agency staff, particularly from GBI and the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC), provided oversight, coordination, and knowledge of existing processes to ensure the new system aligned with operational needs.

Citizens and agency end users were key beneficiaries, and their feedback was crucial in designing a user-friendly system.

Throughout implementation, there was collaboration, clear communication of the project's benefits, and stakeholder involvement in the planning and design phases. There were also internal communications within the agencies and public announcements highlighting the modernization of this state service. The comprehensive training sessions for end users, in addition to these communications, ensured easy adaptation of the new system. These sessions covered applicant registration, agencies' enrollment and their management portal, and the portal to view criminal history results.

HOW DID YOU DO IT?

To allow continuous monitoring of criminal records, AFIS had to be configured to recognize the different fingerprint reason codes, enroll subscriptions, and send pre-notifications to agencies using GAPS. These pre-notifications are for events like a new arrest or expiring Rap Back subscription.



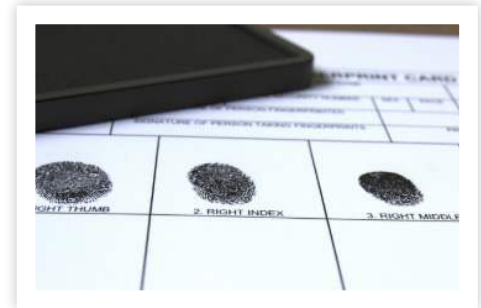
A secure cloud environment hosts the upgraded AFIS and integrated Georgia Rap Back subscription service. Advanced cybersecurity measures were implemented to protect sensitive data and ensure compliance with privacy regulations. The transition to the cloud provides scalability to accommodate additional agencies and ensures availability and reliability of the system. The integration of the Rap Back service with upgraded AFIS enables continuous monitoring and real-time notifications of criminal history changes. This new system provides a modern,

secure, and scalable foundation for GBI's background check process, enabling enhanced efficiency, improved data protection, and delivery of more responsive services.

WHAT DID THE PROJECT MAKE BETTER?

This project significantly improves the efficiency, security, and overall effectiveness of GBI's background check process. Repeated and inefficient background checks across various sectors led GBI to develop a more streamlined and reliable system. There was a clear need to optimize resources, enhance data protection, and provide a more responsive service to both agencies and citizens, leading to greater trust in state government operations. It ensures that individuals in certain positions are continuously monitored, reducing the risk of overlooking potential threats.

Before the upgrade, GBI used a system where numerous agencies conducted separate background checks, often on the same individuals. This resulted in duplicated efforts, administrative burdens, and potential delays in onboarding crucial personnel. The lack of continuous monitoring meant that changes in an individual's criminal history might go unnoticed between periodic checks.



Now, the expanded Rap Back service is a centralized, cloud-based system that provides real-time notifications of criminal history changes. It has eliminated the redundancy of repeated checks and ensures that authorized agencies have access to the most current information, leading to more informed decision-making and enhanced safety protocols.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

The selected supplier absorbed all startup costs, representing significant cost avoidance for GBI. The transition to a secure cloud environment has reduced the need for physical infrastructure and associated maintenance costs. **Customer organizations were able to avoid costs since the price of background checks did not increase.** The citizen experience has also improved with the average transaction time for fingerprint processing significantly reduced. The enhanced security measures and real-time notifications contribute to a greater sense of trust and safety for both state agencies and the public.

WHAT NOW?

Looking ahead, ongoing monitoring and maintenance will ensure the system's continued functionality, security, and reliability. **This will involve regular updates, security patches, and technical support.** The scalability of the cloud-based infrastructure allows for seamless onboarding of additional agencies to use the service. A state agency must have a state Rap Back statute that has been approved by the FBI to receive criminal history information. As more agencies gain this approval, more agencies become eligible to participate in the Rap Back program.

Continued investment will ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of a critical service that protects the citizens of Georgia and enhances the efficiency of its government operations.