



Department of Management

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State IT Recognition Awards

Category: Cross-Boundary
Collaboration

Project:

**Iowa Integrated Justice: Protective
Orders and Adult Drug Court**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Iowa Integrated Justice (IIJ) is a model for modern cross-boundary collaboration and governance, operating as a statewide interoperability network that securely exchanges real-time data among local, county, and state agencies. Breaking down traditional governmental silos, IIJ connects two branches of government, 10 state-level agencies, 72 county attorneys, 99 county sheriffs, and 266 local police departments. The system achieves three core objectives: enhancing public safety through immediate information access, maximizing administrative efficiency by eliminating redundant manual processes, and expanding the data pool of Iowa agencies for policy evaluation.

Following a milestone cloud migration in 2025 that secured unprecedented system scalability, IIJ continues to evolve through collaborative partnerships. This application highlights two newly deployed, high-impact data exchanges that showcase exceptional inter-branch teamwork: the **Adult Drug Court** exchange and the **Protective Order Notice** exchange. Developed through a joint coalition between the Judicial Branch, the Department of Corrections (DOC), and the Office of the Attorney General (AG's Office), these exchanges eliminate thousands of hours of manual double-entry, bridge communication gaps in specialty courts, and deliver automated, life-saving notifications directly to registered crime victims. By leveraging shared infrastructure, Iowa has turned isolated agency repositories into a unified, life-saving network.

IDEA

The foundational challenge of criminal justice administration is that while a citizen interacts with a single justice system, their data is fragmented across independent systems. Iowa's Judicial Branch, the Department of Corrections (DOC), and the Office of the Attorney General (AG) all operate on separate legacy systems. IIJ was created in 2005 to solve that lack of interoperability and continues to grow as agencies need to securely communicate and share critical data.

In 2025, IIJ completed a migration from on-premise hardware to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI), making IIJ even more secure, resilient, and scalable. With improved system uptime, modern API gateway routing, and enhanced encryption frameworks for sensitive substance abuse and victim data, the state established the technical maturity required to push development on these two new data exchanges and move them rapidly toward production.

These two exchanges addressed distinct operational challenges that frequently degrade government performance:

1. THE OPERATIONAL SILO (Adult Drug Court)

For Iowa's specialty Adult Drug Court program, both DOC probation officers and Judicial Branch specialty court coordinators manage the

identical cohort of participants. Historically, without system integration, staff in both branches were forced to manually double-enter identical compliance metrics, substance abuse treatment notes, drug testing results, and legal status data into completely separate, disconnected databases. This layout represented an inefficient use of highly specialized personnel, introduced operational drag, and increased the risk of data-entry discrepancies that could impact Judicial or DOC probation decisions.

2. THE COMMUNICATION GAP (Protective Order Notice)

For civil protective orders, the Judicial Branch processes the legal mandates, while the AG's Crime Victim Assistance Division is tasked with notifying victims. Relying on manual workflows or batch exports delayed critical notifications, leaving vulnerable victims waiting hours or days for updates regarding their immediate safety. The Judicial Branch had all the information the AG's Office needed; they just didn't have a way to quickly and effectively share that information.

The core concept was to leverage the newly optimized, cloud-based IIJ architecture to build two targeted, cross-boundary data pipelines. Instead of proposing costly, redundant software overhauls for individual agencies, the partnership focused on engineering automated, secure XML/JSON messaging streams. The goal was simple: capture data once at the point of origin, and securely push it across branch boundaries in real time to empower the partner agency.

THE BEFORE VS AFTER WORKFLOW

	Legacy Manual Process (Before)	Cloud-Native IIJ Data Exchange (After)
Data Integrity	High risk of clerical errors and disparate information due to multi-branch manual entries.	Single point of origin capture with automated, real-time data replication across agencies.
Staff Bandwidth	Analysts and coordinators lost hundreds of hours annually performing administrative double-entry.	Administrative overhead is completely eliminated, allowing staff to pivot to intensive case management.
Notification Latency	Victim notifications delayed by batch processing cycles or paper-based workflows.	Instantaneous. Triggers execute real-time automated messaging the moment an order status changes.

IMPLEMENTATION

Executing these exchanges required a rigorous, multi-agency governance model that balanced strict data security with agile technical development. Implementation was completed over two primary phases:

CROSS-BOUNDARY GOVERNANCE & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Before a single line of code was written, the project teams established inter-branch Working Groups composed of Judicial IT directors, DOC program managers, AG victim advocates, and IIJ system architects. These groups navigated complex statutory privacy requirements surrounding Protective Order security levels, victim confidentiality, and substance abuse privacy regulations to draft comprehensive project Charters. These legal frameworks established definitive project scope, clear data ownership boundaries, business logic parameters, and strict security requirements.

For the Protective Order Notice exchange, the coalition had to overcome specific bureaucratic challenges and legal red tape. Civil Protective Orders feature varying security levels, and extensive cross-agency negotiations were necessary to determine which orders could safely and legally be shared via the automated pipeline. Through deliberate mediation, the agencies determined that data for all temporary and permanent domestic abuse and sexual abuse civil protective orders could - and should - be shared. It is a core part of the mission of IIJ to assist agencies in overcoming these systemic bureaucratic hurdles and to mediate resolutions that promote a collaborative, data-sharing mindset across state government.

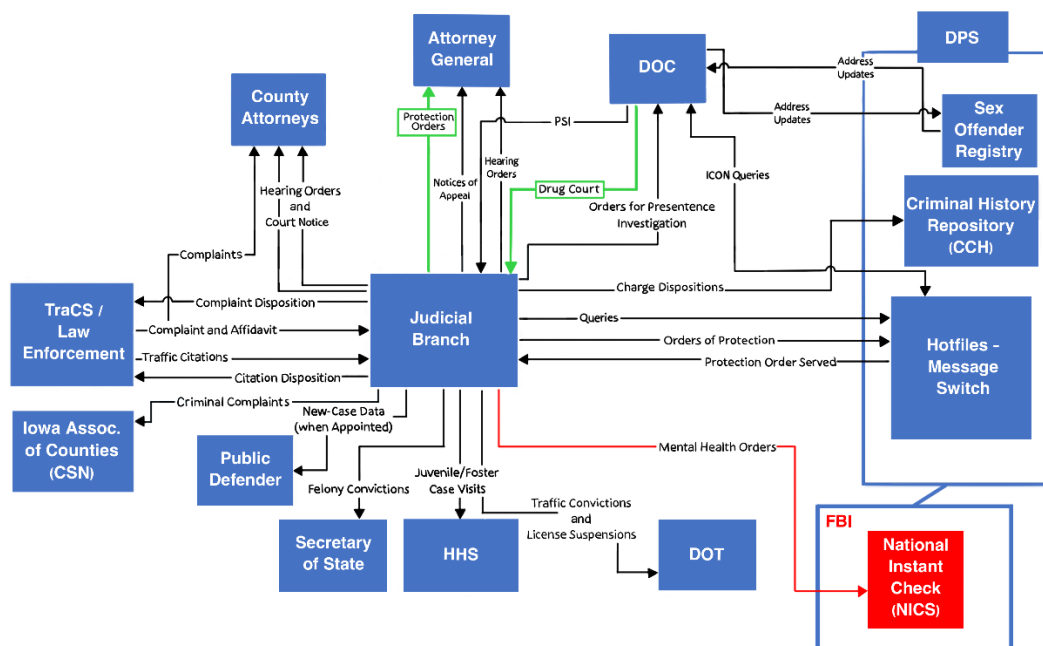
For the Adult Drug Court exchange, the primary cross-boundary hurdle shifted from legal restraints to fiscal governance. The implementation required asymmetrical funding: the DOC would incur the primary development expense for the project by paying their external vendor to modify the agency's offender management system (ICON). Conversely, the Judicial Branch would serve as the primary operational beneficiary from the data pipeline, receiving the automated records to streamline their specialty courts. IIJ successfully stepped in to mediate a collaborative fiscal solution, engineering a cost-sharing model. The final project costs were split equally, funded one-half through a grant awarded to the Judicial Branch and one-half through centralized IIJ operational funds. By setting aside insular, siloed budgetary concerns, the three participating entities demonstrated that financial boundaries could be overcome to achieve a high-value safety outcome impacting both the Executive and Judicial Branches of government.

TECHNICAL INTEGRATION & DEPLOYMENT

Leveraging the OCI platform's advanced enterprise service bus capabilities, technical teams mapped complex data fields between disparate agency applications:

- **Adult Drug Court:** Developers successfully integrated the Judicial Branch's specialty court Adult Drug Court Application with the DOC's ICON system. Automated database triggers were established so that when a DOC officer updates a participant's progress, behavioral/legal status, or drug test result, the record instantly populates the Judicial Branch's application via secure web services. This automation effectively prevents double-entry and eliminates the threat of disparate information across branches.
- **Protective Order Notice:** Real-time data streams were established to capture the issuance, service, modification, and dismissal of temporary and permanent domestic abuse and sexual abuse civil protective orders. Based on an immediate data trigger within the Judicial Branch system, IJJ instantly encrypts and routes this payload to the AG's victim notification system, ensuring that processing and subsequent delivery to the constituent are as timely as possible.

Iowa Integrated Justice - System Map



This image shows the entire IJJ system. The two (2) new exchanges highlighted in this application are shown in green. As demonstrated on the map, these new exchanges join a robust network of active and evolving data sharing exchanges among Iowa agencies.

IMPACT

By treating justice data as a shared public safety asset rather than proprietary agency property, this collaboration has achieved transformative outcomes across Iowa:

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY & BANDWIDTH REINVESTMENT

The Adult Drug Court exchange completely eliminated the administrative burden of double-entry for specialty court staff and DOC probation officers. By automating the data flow from the Executive Branch (DOC) to the Judicial Branch, the state has reclaimed hundreds of staff hours annually. Court coordinators and probation officers have successfully shifted their focus away from manual data entry tasks and toward active case management, intensive participant support, and program compliance, maximizing the societal return on investment for specialty courts.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND VICTIM EMPOWERMENT

The Protective Order Notice exchange has achieved a critical human impact: removing delays in victim notification. Statistical trends prove that the 24 hours immediately following the service of a Protective Order are the most volatile and dangerous for the protected party. The instantaneous, real-time transfer of protective order data, including notice of service, from the Judicial Branch to the AG's Office ensures that registered victims receive automated alerts the moment a protective order is active, served, or modified. This eliminates dangerous communication lag, provides vital peace of mind, and empowers vulnerable citizens with actionable, immediate safety information when they need it most.

A SCALABLE MODEL FOR CROSS-BOUNDARY SUCCESS

Ultimately, these two exchanges prove that IIJ is a dynamic, living ecosystem. By securely managing over 2 million total system data transfers every month, Iowa has demonstrated to the nation that independent branches of government can successfully merge technical resources, align strategic goals, and provide dramatically better, more integrated services to constituents.

LESSONS LEARNED

IIJ continues to refine its deployment strategy every time a new data exchange is designed and implemented. As the state completed these two exchanges and continued work on others still in development, several transferable key takeaways emerged:

- **The Power of Signed Charters:** A clear cross-agency Charter featuring formal signatures from all participating agencies including IIJ, the sending endpoint agency, and the receiving endpoint agency is critical to the long-term success of the project. A Charter fleshes out both legal boundaries and business process

issues before technical development begins, effectively preventing scope creep. While this intensive governance and planning stage adds to the initial timeline of the project, this up-front investment pays substantial dividends by streamlining the development and testing phases.

- **Maintaining a Platform-Agnostic Toolbox:** IIJ continues to modernize through its migration to cloud and increased utilization of cloud-native technologies. However, a critical lesson learned is that the state's central data-sharing infrastructure must remain platform-agnostic regarding external endpoints. IIJ must be an adaptive solution that can handle a high volume of diverse connection types without forcing updates on its endpoint users. IIJ must support modern standards like RESTful APIs for large state agencies while maintaining strict backward compatibility for smaller county and local agencies with legacy infrastructure. In the past year, IIJ focused on building a flexible "toolbox of integration patterns." This architectural framework ensures the state can deploy modern solutions for large state-level agencies while simultaneously exchanging critical data with small, low-resource agencies without requiring them to modernize their local systems.

CONCLUSION

The Iowa Integrated Justice (IIJ) system, anchored by the newly deployed **Adult Drug Court** and **Protective Order Notice** exchanges, exemplifies the pinnacle of cross-boundary collaboration and IT governance in state government. By intentionally choosing to leverage and modernize existing enterprise architecture rather than allowing agencies to retreat into costly, isolated software overhauls, Iowa has proven that complex jurisdictional boundaries can be seamlessly bridged to deliver exceptional public outcomes.

This initiative represents more than just a series of successful technical integrations; it stands as a powerful example of cross-boundary trust. The coalition formed between the Judicial Branch, the Department of Corrections, and the Office of the Attorney General successfully navigated intricate privacy constraints, aligned operational goals, and unified distinct branches of government under a shared mission.

The results speak directly to the core of NASCIO's values: operational excellence, profound administrative efficiency, and a measurable human impact on public safety. By automating over 2 million data transfers a month, eliminating the systemic vulnerabilities of manual data entry, and providing instantaneous, life-saving notifications to vulnerable victims, Iowa has established a national benchmark. IIJ proves that when state leaders treat data as a collective public asset rather than proprietary agency property, they can dismantle decades-old organizational silos to create a more responsive, efficient, and profoundly safer government for the constituents they serve.