



## A Strategic Action Plan for DSS-J

Submitted to LPSCC by the DSS-J Policy Committee

September 2012

### Executive Summary

In 1996, Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners and public safety officials obtained voter approval of a \$7.5 million bond to improve information technology among the county's law enforcement and justice agencies. This bond money was used to fund the development of DSS-J, a common data warehouse that would integrate public safety data from local sources while allowing individual agencies to continue their operations and data systems without interference.

Over the past decade, DSS-J has allowed users to query justice agency data, track events such as criminal incidents, arrests, case dispositions and criminal histories, and respond to requests for research regarding operational and policy issues affecting the public safety system. The system is used by research analysts and DSS-J staff to evaluate programs and policies, design and generate recurring reports, and provide relevant notifications to partners in the justice system.

In its FY 2010 adopted budget, Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners formally transferred responsibility for the administration of DSS-J to the County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC), which agreed to oversee the development of DSS-J through a Policy Committee and ensure data security through a Security Committee. This Policy Committee, recognizing the tremendous benefit already demonstrated by this data warehouse, also determined that an action plan was needed to identify strategies that would improve the administration and operation of DSS-J and ensure the realization of the system's full potential. Those strategies seek to:

1. Increase the use of DSSJ data to inform decisions of LPSCC's Executive Council, elected officials and policy makers;
2. Increase users' ability to understand and access data in DSSJ;
3. Sustain and grow the community of DSSJ users;
4. Provide leadership and vision to guide the use of DSSJ as a strategic public safety resource;
5. Improve the performance and cost-effectiveness of the DSSJ technology platform, and
6. Increase the types and sources of data in DSS-J.

The Policy Committee believes that the implementation of these strategies will (a) improve the focus and direction of DSS-J, (b) ensure the realization of the system's full potential of this critical public safety data system (c) justify the county's continuing financial support for the system and (d) most importantly, ensure that Multnomah County's public safety policies and practices are data-driven, evidence-based and cost-effective in reducing crime and recidivism.

**Serving  
Public  
Safety  
Agencies in  
Multnomah  
County**

## A Strategic Action Plan for DSS-J

Multnomah County's Decision Support System - Justice (DSS-J), as the foundation for data-driven policy making and evidence-based practices in public safety, represents one of the County's most valuable assets. However, growing technological costs and years of budget cuts have prevented realization of the full value of this critical interagency data system. In light of a pressing need to increase the cost-effectiveness of local government, including the public safety system, and Multnomah County's strong commitment to data-driven policies and evidence-based practices, the DSS-J Policy Committee developed a Strategic Action Plan that (a) reviews the development of the system; (b) discusses its current operation and uses and (c) identifies strategic actions that could improve the administration and operation of DSS-J and ensure the realization of the system's full potential.

### History of DSS-J

In 1996, Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners and public safety officials obtained voter approval of a \$7.5 million Criminal Justice Information Technology Bond to improve information technology among the county's law enforcement and justice agencies. In June 1997, following a review of 22 requests for funding by nine agencies, a committee chaired by District Attorney Mike Schruck recommended a proposal by the Local Public Safety Coordinate Council (LPSCC) to develop a repository for public safety data extracted from the county's key justice agencies: DSS-J.

DSS-J was envisioned as a data warehouse that would regularly extract *copies* of public safety data from local sources and then integrate those data into a central, linked repository while allowing individual agencies to continue their operations and data systems without interference.<sup>1</sup> Research analysts could then access public safety data that was mutually-intelligible and stored in a common format, making analysis and evaluation more accurate and efficient. Justice professionals could also use the data included in the warehouse to track offenders throughout the system and to manage their caseloads better. Ultimately, LPSCC Council Members and other agency heads would use the reports and analysis gleaned from DSS-J to inform budget decisions and ensure programs and policies are evidence-based and supported by data.

In order to realize this vision, DSS-J was designed to provide users with:

- a simple, cost-effective way to access public safety data;
- accurate and adaptable reporting of aggregate public safety statistics;
- complete and reliable tracking of individual cases and offenders across justice agencies and throughout the public safety system;
- case linking that allows for in-depth analysis of system-wide issues; and
- reports that support program performance and outcome measure tracking.

By 2000, DSS-J was fully operational, with administrative oversight provided by LPSCC through a DSS-J Policy Committee chaired by Jim Hennings, Executive Director of Metropolitan Public Defenders, with technical support and ongoing system maintenance provided by Multnomah County's Information Technology Division (County IT).

In 2010, Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners formally transferred responsibility for the administration of DSS-J to the County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC), which agreed to oversee the development of DSS-J through a Policy Committee and ensure data security through a Security Committee. At the same time, LPSCC also hired a Public Safety System Analyst based on a recommendation from the 2008 Multnomah County Public Safety System Planning Report, which described the short-term need to:

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<sup>1</sup> A common *operational* data system was judged to be prohibitively expensive and would cause intolerable disruption to daily justice operations; see Riles, Suzanne B. (2000). Increasing Justice Program Evaluation Capacity with a Data Warehouse. Honolulu, HI: American Evaluation Association Conference.

Enhance criminal justice research capacity. Fund a dedicated, independent systems researcher to examine cross-agency criminal justice system data to identify and quantify improvements to the criminal justice system.<sup>2</sup>

For the past decade, DSS-J has become a critical asset of the county's public safety system. In a 2006 report, LPSCC listed DSS-J first among its 11 major initiatives over the preceding decade, reflecting the importance of this data warehouse to the county's public safety community.

### **Current Operation and Uses of DSS-J**

DSS-J extracts data nightly from the databases of participating justice agencies<sup>3</sup> and then links that data together for storage in a common database. This process enables DSS-J to provide information in a timely and cost-effective manner that would otherwise be unavailable or would require too much time and effort to make the task feasible.

DSS-J's data warehouse permits the development of aggregate statistics on cases, defendants and offenders as they cycle through each agency. Users of DSS-J are able to query justice agency data and track events such as criminal incidents, arrests, case dispositions and criminal histories. The system also allows research staff at LPSCC and affected justice agencies to respond to requests for research regarding operational and policy issues affecting those agencies or the entire public safety system. In 2011-2012, the DSS-J Online Application was accessed 4560 times by local criminal justice agencies.

### *Development of Reports and Evaluation Tools*

With Multnomah County's strong commitment to evidence-based practices, evaluation of public safety strategies and programs has become a precondition of county funding and increasingly of outside grant funding. The importance of outcome evaluations in validating public safety strategies and programs and the need for system-wide, interagency outcome data to conduct these evaluations, makes DSS-J extremely valuable to Multnomah County.

In its 10 Year Report, LPSCC cited numerous examples of influential research based upon data generated by DSS-J, including the Support Services Division's report, "If Crime Is Down, Why Is Our Workload Up?" (March 2000) by Jim Carlson, LPSCC's October 2003 report, "A Focused Look at Sentencing in Multnomah County: Addressing Over-Representation of Racial and Ethnic Minorities," and the Budget Office Evaluation, "Overdose Trends in Multnomah County" (2005) by Matt Nice. DSS-J was also used to track failure to appear rates of defendants' released on recognizance for the purpose of validating the Department of Community Justice's "Recog" risk assessment instrument and to evaluate the success of the STOP Drug Court; DSS-J staff are currently working with analysts from DCJ and LPSCC to develop a standardized FTA report that would allow users to track court appearance rates for a variety of offender sub-populations.

DSS-J has also been integral in the development of the Sentencing Support Tool, which was designed as part of an effort to (1) promote the use of evidence-based practices in a sentencing process that traditionally fails to focus on "what works;" and 2) encourage consideration and advocacy of evidence-based practices based on the outcomes of *actual* sentencing decisions in Multnomah County. The tool allows judges, attorneys and other justice professionals to examine recidivism rates for similar offenders (age, ethnicity, gender and criminal history) that were given different sentences. The results of the Sentencing support tool are routinely used as part of presentence investigation reports, and the impact on recidivism is a required subject in PSI reports. Although the tool cannot be used to determine the "best sentence" or causation, it invites further analysis and discussion of what sentences are most likely to reduce recidivism for a certain population of people.

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<sup>2</sup> Crime and Justice Institute, Multnomah County Public Safety System Planning Report, 2008, p. 17

<sup>3</sup> Participating agencies include the Oregon Judicial Department, the Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney's Office, the Portland Police Bureau and the State Department of Corrections.

## *Design and Generation of Recurring Publications*

Data obtained through DSS-J has also been used to generate weekly, monthly and annual reports of public safety data. Examples include:

- Weekly probation notification reports for judges, listing offenders on bench probation who were recently arrested or booked into jail;
- Weekly DCJ jail bed use reports;
- Monthly reports of defendants held in jail for more than 90 days, permitting the Circuit Court, the District Attorneys Office and public defense attorneys to identify delays in court proceedings and the unnecessary use of jail;
- Reports for the Oregon Health Authority on sentences of persons convicted of Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants (DUII);
- MCSO monthly jail statistics reports;
- Status reports on the County's Court Appearance Notification System;
- Data on protective orders in the Sheriff's jail management system database (aka SWIS – Sheriff's Warrant Information System), which enables searches for protective, restraining and stalking orders; and
- LPSCC's Public Safety Trends document, a report that tracks key trends and processes in the county's public safety system.

## *Cost Savings and Benefits*

It is widely accepted that each report generated through DSS-J would take analysts significantly more time to complete. For example, one DSS-J staff member can put together the Jail Longevity Report in three hours, compared to the previous process that took two analysts three to four days to complete.

Further, once a standard report has been developed in DSS-J, it can be used to generate recurring reports simply by selecting new parameters (such as a date range or filter). DSS-J has helped standardized methodology for certain activities, has provided notifications that lead to faster case processing, and has helped to ensure that the County evaluates its programs with reliable data.

## *Conclusion*

In light of a pressing need to increase the cost-effectiveness of local government, including the public safety system, and because of Multnomah County's strong commitment to data-driven policies and evidence-based practices, the DSS-J Policy Committee recommends that LPSCC approve this Strategic Action Plan and direct its implementation without delay. The Policy Committee believes that the implementation of this plan will (a) improve the focus and direction of DSS-J, (b) ensure the realization of the system's full potential of this critical public safety data system, (c) justify the county's continuing financial support for the system and (d) most importantly, ensure that Multnomah County's public safety policies and practices are data-driven, evidence-based and cost-effective in reducing crime and recidivism.

## **Strategic Actions in FY 2012 and 2013 to Improve DSS-J**

Over the past ten years, DSS-J had proven a valuable resource to Multnomah County. In order to build upon these past successes and to make DSS-J an even more effective and useful tool to a wider variety of analysts the DSS-J Policy Committee recommends that the following actions be taken in fiscal years 2012 and 2013 in order to realize the full potential of DSS-J and to guide stewardship of this important County asset:

### **Strategy 1: Increase the use of DSSJ data to inform decisions of LPSCC's Executive Council, elected officials and policy makers;**

#### **Actions**

- 1.1) LPSCC staff continues to guide public safety discussions of LPSCC's Executive Committee, County Board of Commissioners, Portland and Gresham City councils by providing data and analysis to inform budget and policy decisions.  
*Lead: Policy Committee, Peter Ozanne, Matt O'Keefe*
- 1.2) Monitor County Board and City Council meeting agendas for items relating to public safety.  
*Lead: LPSCC, Matt O'Keefe*
- 1.3) Gather support from agency heads and elected officials whose analysts may be asked to either collect or help analyze some of the relevant data.  
*Lead: Peter Ozanne, Matt O'Keefe*
- 1.4) Allot time on the LPSCC agenda for members to review trends and discuss data.  
*Lead: LPSCC, Matt O'Keefe*
- 1.5) Develop package of products that can be used to inform key stakeholders about the uses of DSS-J.  
*Lead: Matt O'Keefe, Jim Hennings, Doug Bray*

### **Strategy 2: Increase users' ability to access and understand report data from DSSJ;**

#### **Actions**

- 2.1.a) Cube Reports - Provide DSSJ users access to DSSJ data using via Excel and/or Access.  
*Lead: DSSJ Tech team*
- 2.1.b) Cube Reports – Consider trainings on cube reports available in DSSJ  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, Matt O'Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 2.1.c) Cube Reports – Maintain descriptions and definitions of data elements presented in Cube reports.  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, Matt O'Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 2.2.a) Ad hoc reports – Develop a document that provides instructions about connecting to the DSSJ data with ad hoc tools.  
*Lead: DSSJ Technical Team*
- 2.2.b) Ad hoc reports – Consider trainings on ad hoc tools.  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, Matt O'Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 2.2.c) Ad hoc reports – Consider trainings on DSSJ data model.  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, Matt O'Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*

- 2.2.d) Ad hoc reports – Maintain descriptions and definitions of data elements presented in the DSSJ data model.  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, others as designated by DSSJ Policy Committee*
- 2.3.a) RDS (Web) Reports - Provide trainings on reports available through the RDS tool.  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 2.3.b) RDS (Web) Reports - Provide definitions and documentation of the data and reports available through the RDS tool.  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 2.4.a) Sentencing Support - Provide definitions and documentation of the data and reports available through the Sentencing Support tool.  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 2.5.a) Recidivism by SID - Provide definitions and documentation of the data and reports available through the Sentencing Support tool.  
*Lead: Galina Abrams, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 2.6.a) GIS Mapping Capacity – Ensure data in DSSJ includes geographic / spatial information.  
*Lead: Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*

**Strategy 3: Sustain and grow the community of DSSJ users;**

***Actions***

- 3.1.a) User Access and Security – Review user access request protocol, process and documents.  
*Lead: Security Committee, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 3.1.b) User Access and Security – consider a process for maintaining current rosters of DSSJ report users and ‘retiring’ users who have not logged in for over a year.  
*Lead: Security Committee, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 3.1.c) User Access and Security – Consider a regular review of Audit reports to inform discussion of trends in usage and data quality.  
*Lead: Security Committee, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 3.1.d) User Access and Security – Consider a process for requesting and approving ‘super-user’ access to DSSJ..  
*Lead: Security Committee, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 3.2.a) User Support - Develop a page on the Multnomah Commons site to house DSSJ training materials, report manuals, data dictionary, access user forms, and other related material.  
*Lead: LPSCC, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 3.3.a) Consulting and Technical Assistance – Provide DSSJ users and LPSCC partners assistance and instruction for using DSSJ to support their specific reporting or analysis needs.  
*Lead: LPSCC, Matt O’Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 3.4.a) LPSCC Subcommittee Support - Provide support to LPSCC Subcommittees by using DSSJ data and reports to inform their work and decision making.

*Lead: LPSCC, Matt O'Keefe, DSSJ Technical Team*

**Strategy 4: Provide leadership and vision to guide the use of DSSJ as a strategic public safety resource;**

**Action**

- 4.1.a) Policy Committee – The DSSJ Policy Committee will meet to guide the work of the DSSJ Technical Team and designate project specific subgroups.  
*Lead: LPSCC, Policy Committee Co-chairs, Matt O'Keefe*
- 4.2.a) Security Subcommittee – The DSSJ Security Subcommittee will be convened as determined by Security Application project work and user access requests require.  
*Lead: Policy Committee Co-chairs, Matt O'Keefe, Galina Abrams*
- 4.3.a) Sentencing Support – Consider forming a sub-group to review the Sentencing Support tool and provide recommendations for its possible redesign.  
*Lead: Policy Committee Co-chairs, Matt O'Keefe, Galina Abrams*
- 4.4.a) Public Safety Data Exchange – Consider forming a sub-group to explore the possible requirements for a real-time criminal justice information sharing system and the role of DSSJ in such a project.  
*Lead: Policy Committee Co-chairs, Matt O'Keefe, Galina Abrams*

**Strategy 5: Increase the types and sources of data in DSSJ;**

**Action**

- 5.1.a) Consider adding data from DOC/CIS to DSSJ.  
*Lead: Policy Committee, Galina Abrams, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 5.2.a) Consider adding data from DCJ eRecog to DSSJ.  
*Lead: Policy Committee, Galina Abrams, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 5.3.a) Consider adding data from JJIS to DSSJ.  
*Lead: Policy Committee, Galina Abrams, DSSJ Technical Team*
- 5.4.a) Consider adding data from MCSO CIMS to DSSJ.  
*Lead: Policy Committee, Galina Abrams, DSSJ Technical Team*

## **DSS-J Committee Members**

### Security Committee:

Doug Bray	Circuit Court
Capt. George Burke	Portland Police Records Supervisor
Travis Sewell	District Attorney's office
Shea Marshman	MCSO
Jann Brown	DCJ

### Policy Committee:

Judy Shiprack	County Commissioner, District 3
Doug Bray	Trial Court Administrator
Mike Schrunk	District Attorney
Peter Ozanne	Public Safety Advisor to the Chair / LPSCC Director
Scott Taylor	Director, Department of Community Justice
Shea Marshman	Director, Sherriff's Office Business Services
Jim Hennings	Public Defender (retired)
Bruce Cuthbertson	Portland Police

### Other regular attendees:

Galina Abrams	DSS-J Senior Business Analyst
Chris Clancy	Manger of County IT Public Safety Applications
Jann Brown	DCJ IT Manager
Matt O'Keefe	LPSCC Staff