OMNI Project End Report Executive Summary

January 8, 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: OMNI PROJECT END REVIEW

On August 4, 2008, the Department of Corrections (DOC) successfully implemented the Offender Management Network Information System (OMNI). This system replaced the Offender Based Tracking System (OBTS) – a legacy application that has been used by the department for the past 25 years.

This milestone is a significant achievement for the department. Efforts began in 1999 to replace OBTS, but the project had difficulty in moving forward until we engaged Sierra Systems in September of 2006. Working together, DOC and Sierra Systems delivered OMNI in less than 24 months.

In November 2008, the department moved forward with a comprehensive Project End Review (PER) to identify lessons learned and best practices associated with this project. Key findings are presented in this executive summary. A more detailed analysis is available in the full length report. This report covers the time frame beginning September 2006, through August 2008.

In order to obtain a broad perspective, different stakeholder groups were asked to provide feedback: DOC Executive Management, Department of Information Services Executive Management, OMNI Project Managers, Project Sponsors, Steering Committee Members, OMNI Subject Matter Experts, OMNI Users, DOC Mid –Management, Sierra Systems, and other contract vendors' input was gathered through live workshops, individual interviews, and an on-line survey where respondents could provide anonymous feedback. The process was structured; participants were asked to provide feedback in several key areas. Free-form feedback was also gathered.

Several themes surfaced based on stakeholder feedback. The highlights are summarized below, by category:

Business Readiness and Stakeholder Involvement

- ✓ Involving stakeholders during the development and implementation process provided visibility into the new application, created a sense of ownership, and increased enthusiasm for the roll-out of the new application. However, stakeholders expressed a need for resources more tailored to their specific needs during these activities.
- ✓ DOC engaged Sierra both for the Development project to build OMNI, but also for an Implementation project. The Implementation project was critical to the success of OMNI. Through the Implementation project, we created a sense of ownership among stakeholders, assessed organizational readiness, and set about a structured process to prepare the organization and the users for the Implementation of a new system. However, due to fiscal limitations, users felt that implementation activities ended too soon after the application was deployed. DOC post implementation resources were not sufficient to fully support the needs of the business.

Application Development

- ✓ Involving DOC operations staff (with a thorough understanding of DOC business processes) in the application development process ensured the new application would meet business needs.

- ✓ Solid business requirements were not present at the beginning of the project. This affected the quality and timeliness of the application development process. Application development was also impacted by a lack of understanding of the OBTS system. Having the Sierra application developer's offsite presented a challenge in having visibility into the application development work and in communication between the development teams, the test teams, and the business teams. It did have the advantage of reduced costs and very good access to resources.

- ✓ The highly compressed schedule that Sierra Systems inherited was due to fiscal and authorization constraints. One result of those constraints was that we released the application earlier than optimal, resulting in more ongoing defect resolution efforts than anticipated.

Project Governance, Organization and Roles

- ✓ The OMNI project was well managed with effective leaders and coordinated according to a defined project management methodology. Disciplined structure and staffing, with defined roles and clear direction, directly contributed to the smooth execution of the project.

- ✓ Strong Executive leadership was instrumental in bringing the project to a successful conclusion.

- ✓ A clear understanding of project objectives and willingness to embrace obstacles to success on the part of both DOC and Sierra was critical. Specifically, when unanticipated problems were encountered, we worked as a team to come up with solutions to the problems that allowed attainment of the primary project objectives. It is clear that there are many competing demands on a project like OMNI and the ability to balance these demands and to be willing to make the tough tradeoff decisions is what enabled our teams to deliver successfully.

- ✓ The specialization of staff, in one or more application functional component, created subject matter experts. This approach made it easy to get answers when clarification was needed. However, when there was turnover in staff, knowledge was not always transferred creating a learning curve and impacting schedules.

Testing and Defect Resolution

- ✓ Blended test teams involving DOC and contractor developers, testers, and business staff increased communication across teams which allowed for timely resolution of issues and application defects. Time constraints focused testing on application functionality, but decreased the testing on other areas. Synchronization, data conversion, and other areas were negatively impacted by the reduction in testing.

Methodologies and Approach

- ✓ Having a detailed project plan, complete with a deliverables timeline, was beneficial and contributed to the timely completion of work, staff accountability, and served as a guide to measure progress.
- ✓ Published methodology and documentation was adequate for the project, but could have been improved. While documentation was available, it was often vague and inconsistent with subsequent documents. The incorporation of project methods into the business worked well and added structure for the users of the new systems. As a result, the project was viewed as a success.

Technical Infrastructure

- ✓ Using a Mainframe platform to run a Java application on Websphere was not, in the opinion of DOC and Sierra Systems, either the most cost effective or the best application performance choice for the successful implementation of OMNI. DOC believes that the post deployment performance issues were significantly aggravated by the choice of the Mainframe, and by the lack of adequate tools and support to diagnose and correct Websphere and DB2 issues.

Training, User Support & Reference Material

- ✓ Different training approaches and reference materials should have been made available for staff to address varying learning styles.
- ✓ Cascading communication and support worked well especially when tools and information passed directly from supervisors and managers to their respective staff. However, this practice did not consistently occur and caused frustration in some parts of DOC.

Vendor Relationships

- ✓ Adopting collaboration and open, clear communication between Sierra and DOC as the primary operational methodology enhanced project successes, and prompt issue resolution.