

## APPENDIX G. CVISN SURVEY LESSONS LEARNED

**Specifically for this Guide, in April 1999 several of the CVISN States responded to these questions:**

- » What did you do right that you'd recommend to other states?
- » What didn't you do that you wish you had?
- » What issues do you wish you could have settled earlier?
- » In general, what lessons learned would you like to share about project planning, phase planning, contracting, organization, and teaming?

The next several sections are the answers provided by the states.

### G.1 Lessons Learned – California

#### What did you do right that you'd recommend to other states?

- Agreed to the concept that CVISN required a multi-agency and industry effort.
- Approved over 100 carriers who volunteered to participate in this demonstration project either directly, through agents, or through leasing companies.

#### What went right:

- Agreed to the concept that CVISN required a multi-agency and industry effort.
- Established an executive steering committee and a working level task force early in the project.
- Conducted an Industry Day to give the motor carriers a brief overview of CVISN to solicit their participation.
- Approved over 100 carriers who volunteered to participate in this demonstration project either directly, through agents, or through leasing companies.
- Established an industry advisory council early in the project.
- Developed the CVISN project plan with staff from the participating agencies.
- Assigned project management and state architect responsibilities to state staff.
- Utilized federal funds for only new hardware/software development and evaluation.
- Contracted for an independent project oversight and quality assurance early in the project.

What didn't you do that you wish you had?

- Seek federal funding through earmarks for funds committed.
- Evaluate, in detail, the availability and functionality of core infrastructure systems.
- State teams attending the workshops should demand significant break out sessions for open state interaction.
- Be concerned about lack of qualified vendors to support CVISN development.
- Be proactive in discussing multi-state development contracts to minimize cost.
- Conduct concurrent development of the documentation required for state and federal approval (state-FSR; federal-project plan).
- Recognize the impact that Y2K requirements have on technical resource availability.

What issues do you wish you could have settled earlier?

- Finalize and encumber all federal funds early in the project, rather than on a year-by-year basis.
- Reduce the gap time between planning workshops.

**G.2 Lessons Learned – Colorado**

- It always takes more time, money, staff and effort to do these projects than is economically feasible. At least if you're one of the pilot or prototype states.
- It is our hope that over time vendors will have gained the necessary experience and knowledge that will allow them to give reasonable estimates and to rely less on state staffing in order to insure project success.
- With few vendors willing to take the risk and provide these services to the states, there isn't the competitive marketplace that the states need to insure reasonable pricing.
- Get industry involved and keep them there. Besides our monthly meetings, which are well attended by both state and industry representatives, we have hired an industry representative to act as a “go between” to insure that the concerns and needs of both sides are being communicated.

### G.3 Lessons Learned – Kentucky

- Uniformity/compatibility among numerous states is necessary before the full benefits of CVISN can be realized
- Coordination efforts are directly proportional to the number of organizational units involved. The fewer the number of organizational units (departments) containing the credentialing, safety, and electronic screening processes, the easier it is to administer the CVISN activities.

### G.4 Lessons Learned – Maryland

- Involve operations staff from day one: describe the business process first, then identify the functions of the system. Improve the process if you can, rather than just automating it, but don't stake the project on your ability to change the business process.
- Learn what the most-responsible agency's engineering staff needs, and what they like and hate. They, too, will have to live with the system after it's built.
- Make sure supervisors (and THEIR supervisors) know that it will take staff-hours for requirements and again for testing, and some in between, too.
- Use CVISN as a catalyst: stick your neck out to make "the right thing" happen for the state staff in areas broader than CVISN. You make friends and build momentum that way. (Examples: promote use of TCP/IP network access and make it available to other projects; eliminate dumb terminals in favor of client/server systems- let others get onto the CVISN workstations; deploy capabilities where they belong, not just where they are now.)
- Set small milestones very early; make them larger and farther apart only when confident in the capabilities and commitment of the vendors.

### G.5 Lessons Learned – Michigan

- In summary, Michigan has found that proper staffing and a strong commitment at the very beginning can avoid many pitfalls and lead to a much smoother project.
- The #1 issue that our committee has faced from the very start of this project has been the lack of a full time person to “run” this project. States coming on board should realize the major time commitment required and the need for a full time project manager.
- Michigan found that a person who is a full time state employee and project manager for CVISN just does not have enough time to do both jobs. Most states have at least one person full time assigned to CVISN.
- Further, turnover has been a problem. Michigan has had a number of different project managers, who were state employees but left due to promotions, reassignments, etc. This created a void while the new project manager comes up to speed.
- Hiring a consultant at the start to assist the project manager brings consistency and a dedicated person who works on CVISN only.
- It is important to insure that the agency designated as the lead agency and administrator of the contract is willing to put forth the needed resources and staff time.

- Michigan has had a group of motor carrier representatives from each of the departments that deal with motor carriers working together for over 12 years. This group formed the backbone of the CVISN Committee and allowed us to bypass much of the steep learning curve that individuals go through as they learn not only about what each department does but also about each other.
- Make sure everyone on the CVISN Committee is up to speed on activities of the state agencies. The CVISN Committee spent a lot of time, up front, to bring everyone up to speed learning in great detail about what each department did, what they had in current technology, and also what other types of technology was available or coming in the future. This was made easy by the long working relationship many of us had over the past 12+ years.
- Insure that the committee has a clear and agreed upon overall vision of what CVISN should be.
- Insure that the industry representatives on the committee are given an opportunity to give input and, most importantly, listen to what they say.
- More lead-time from the contractors for information requests would assist all parties involved. It would allow more time to research the questions raised and produce a better product.

## G.6 Lessons Learned – Virginia

### What went right:

- Developed a formal project plan that divided the project into phases and milestones.
- Documented and monitored action items, decisions, and issues.
- Established regularly scheduled project and core team meeting to resolve issues and to drive project.
- Devoted full time CVISN system architect and project manager support.

### What we didn't do but should have:

- Driven the project from a business perspective rather than a technical perspective.
- Assigned a full-time business person to lead the project.
- Assigned DMV technical resources to the project full time, including a managerial level technical resource.
- Established CVISN as a high-level agency objective having executive commitment.
- Developed integrated, realistic schedules having agreement from all vendors and stakeholders.
- Planned hardware and software expenditures in concert with projected use.
- Ensured that all project vendors were contracted by the state and were under the state's control.

### What issues should have been settled earlier:

- Establish formal vendor contracts specifying terms and conditions of delivery.
- Resolve EDI mapping requirements with all development vendors.
- Adopt CVISN architecture into state network infrastructure.
- Involve motor carriers early and obtain their acceptance.
- Determine full staffing and skill requirements.
- Have agreement between all parties regarding what specific functionality would be required to support grant obligations.
- Resolve funding issues early.
- Alert users of vendor schedule slippage to better manage expectations and dependencies

## **G.7 Lessons Learned – Washington**

- It takes longer than you think for mapping to legacy systems.
- For leverage, partner with other states that use the same vendor. *For example, our state is no different than other VISTA states. We should have partnered with them in dealings with Lockheed.*
- All partners (Enforcement Officers, Trucking Association members, and state agencies) were involved at the start. *Example: Early in the project we partnered with the Washington Trucking Associations without any clue as to the importance of that decision. Our intent was noble, in that we thought we wanted them on board so they could “see what we were going to do for (to) them”! In actuality, they become our biggest asset in terms of “insider information” (finding out what really will and will not work) and lobbying for funding. They were the folks that eventually sold CVISN to our state legislators.*
- Established weekly meetings for information exchange and open agenda. *Example: We conducted team meetings once a week (every Thursday morning) that lasted from 1 to 3 hours long. Rule number one...an open agenda with everybody speaking their minds. These meetings proved to be most productive in terms of good communications, sharing ideas and workloads, and sharing lessons learned. Management representatives from various state agencies dropped into these meetings to find out what was going on. They quite often raved about the process and results. We would also conference the vendors/consultants into these meetings.*
- Subcontracting creates communication/schedule/specification problems. *Example: The more subs involved, the harder it was to control the deliverables/time frames. It was frustrating to have one vendor hold up the others. This is a real life hurdle!*

## **G.8 Lessons Learned – Miscellaneous Sources**

- Have some wiggle room in the project plan for the signatories, in the form of an “open issues” list. Otherwise, they will be reluctant to sign a document that seems deadly definitive.
- Good overall project planning facilitates phase planning and monitoring.
- Planning and generating a plan should be formally recognized as a responsibility of a least one team member.
- Use a planning process, format, and tools compatible with tools for monitoring project in your organization.
- Overemphasis on documentation can detract from developing useful planning document.
- If planning document is too long and takes too many resources, it will not be kept current.