

Acquiring Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) Software and Services:

Key Topics for Law Enforcement to Consider

Law enforcement agencies that are committed to participating in the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) will base their submission of data on their records management system (RMS). Research indicates that approximately 80% of local law enforcement agencies acquired their RMS from commercial suppliers. In making their transition to NIBRS reporting, most agencies will work with their current service provider to add IBR reporting capabilities to their current RMS and to provide the services (training, software installation and configuration, support) necessary to enable NIBRS compliance and reporting. Depending on local procurement practices and the total cost of the solution, some agencies may issue a sole source contract to the RMS supplier to make the changes and provide the services, but many others will be required to solicit bids using a request for proposal (RFP) or other open competitive procurement process.¹ In some cases, agencies may choose to acquire a completely new RMS.

Regardless of the method for acquiring software and related services, agencies should address some key issues in their RFPs or SOWs for the implementation of IBR. A number of implementation issues need to be considered in the acquisition process, and the list provided below is not exhaustive. To assist in this process, BJS and the FBI have issued a supporting companion document entitled “NIBRS — Acquiring Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) Software and Services: Model Statement of Work” that further expands on best practices for agencies acquiring software and services. The following is provided as guidance in drafting the RFP or SOW:

1. Required conformance to incident based reporting

The service provider should include the following capabilities in the IBR modification or extension to the RMS:

- a. Conformance to the most current version of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) standards, as well as any modifications or further IBR specifications established by the state. NIBRS technical specifications are available on the FBI web site. [<https://ucr.fbi.gov/technical-specifications>] The software should be able to generate a NIBRS file in a format that conforms to the technical reporting specifications established by the FBI or the relevant State UCR Program Office. It should be noted that the FBI (and state programs) are actively transitioning to XML submissions of NIBRS data, so agencies increasingly should require contractors to conform to the FBI’s Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD) as published at the time of contract on the FBI web site.
- b. Inclusion of all data elements, edits and quality control rules for entry and validation of data as specified in the FBI NIBRS specifications, and as modified or extended by

¹ OJP financial policy allows grantees to issue sole source contracts for up to \$150,000 without requiring OJP approval. Larger amounts require advance approval and full justification.

the state. The FBI is making a rules engine available for data submissions using the most current XML format (XCOTA) that service providers can use to ensure that their data submissions are NIBRS conformant (<https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs-xml-x-cota-tool>). The NCS-X program is also making an open source *NIBRS Pre-Certification Tool* available that will enable local agencies to test their NIBRS submission before formally reporting the data to either their State UCR Program or the FBI for validation and certification. This *NIBRS Pre-Certification Tool* (which can be accessed at <http://nibrs.search.org/nibrs-web>) helps reporting agencies identify and resolve data quality issues and potential errors before the files are even submitted to state and federal reporting program.

- c. Ability to submit the IBR data to the state in a format and frequency as specified by the state or the FBI in the event the state is not prepared to receive the data and has agreed that the agency should report directly to the FBI. Submissions must conform to the specifications published by the state or the FBI regarding protocols and formats to be used.
- d. Assistance with and support for certification of IBR reporting accuracy by the state (or by the FBI where the agency is involved in direct reporting). This should include submitting and correcting IBR data submissions to the point of certification by the state or the FBI

As part of the evaluation process, the agency may wish to require that the software provider demonstrate that state IBR or FBI NIBRS requirements have been met. This can be based on the software provider's experience performing IBR reporting in the state or has assisted an agency to be certified in another state or with the FBI. The service provider should present evidence that the data edit and validation rules will be included in the offering at the time of delivery.

2. Migration of legacy data

Legacy data is the data that the agency has captured in the past that may have been designed to support the summary UCR program with its limitations on offense categories and use of the hierarchy rule. Attempts to convert this data to a NIBRS architecture can introduce significant errors and may in many cases be very difficult without actually reentering incident reports under the new rules of NIBRS. Given the limitations in the potential for conversion, such an attempt may actually distort the historical statistics on crime and prevent a continuation of the trend analysis. The complexity and opportunity for error introduced by the conversion of data from a Summary UCR based system to a NIBRS based system suggests that such a conversion is not a sound practice. A preferred approach is that the software provider should be informed that there is no intent to migrate existing data to conform to IBR reporting specifications, but that it is desired that the legacy data be preserved in such a way that summary UCR reports may continue to be generated in order to maintain continuity of historical time series. Accordingly, the software provided must be capable of replicating summary UCR reports for purposes of maintaining historical time series statistics from IBR data for a predefined period.

3. Training requirements

Training needs are an important part of the services that each agency should acquire to make a successful transition to NIBRS, but the needs will vary significantly depending on the extent of the changes that must be introduced and the capability of the agency to provide its own training program and other factors. The following is a list of the full extent of training services that might be appropriate and the agency should determine which of these services are required. These service provider training components can be augmented with additional agency IBR training which can be delivered at no cost from the FBI.

The software provider should make available training for the following audiences:

- a. System manager training in the operation of the IBR software including the submission of data to the state or FBI as appropriate;
- b. Training for the personnel in the agency responsible for quality control review and correction of incident reports;
- c. Training for command and management staff on the processes that are required to produce valid IBR data submissions and on the utility of IBR for local agency purposes;
- d. The design of and materials to train officers and analysts that may be involved in data entry of incident reports; and
- e. Follow up training addressing any remaining data or process issues pertaining to end users, supervisors, records clerks or system manager issues as determined by the agency to be delivered 6 months following certification of IBR submittal.
[Note: it will provide for more clarity and understanding if the instructions to the software provider specify the estimated number of people to be trained in each of the above categories.]

4. Ongoing software support

The software provider will be required to include support for the IBR software including the IBR submission to the state or FBI and any modifications to the RMS required for ensuring continuing compliance to IBR requirements in the same fashion and in the same degree and for the same time period as specified in the RMS software maintenance agreement currently in place, with a minimum duration of service being one year. Agencies should consider modifying their RMS maintenance agreement to include as a covered cost any future changes to the NIBRS standard required by either the FBI or their State UCR Program.

5. Integration of external systems

The agency should include in the RFP or SOW all external systems that may be affected by the implementation of IBR. The RFP or SOW should identify all external systems that are 1) not currently considered as a part of the RMS, and 2) collect data that is helpful and relevant to creating and disseminating incident-based reports so the service provider can determine the method of interfacing such systems to the RMS. The service provider should include in their proposal the means of implementing such interfaces including the specific protocols to be used and periodicity of data transfer where applicable. Examples of external systems that could be

considered relevant include body-worn and in-car camera data, ALPR, facial recognition, evidence tracking systems, mobile reporting platforms, CAD, jail booking, fingerprint processing (AFIS), etc.