



# PROCURING AND IMPLEMENTING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES AND NEEDS



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# INTRODUCTION



Criminal justice agencies increasingly leverage offender tracking technology in the supervision of accused and convicted criminal offenders. According to a 2016 survey conducted by The Pew Charitable Trusts, agencies were supervising more than 88,000<sup>1</sup> individuals with offender tracking technology, a 30-fold increase from the roughly 2,900 reported a decade earlier<sup>2</sup>. Although this represents a rapid growth curve, it may be expected that as initiatives across the country designed to reduce jail and prison populations gain traction, the use of this technology as a means to safely supervise individuals in the community will further expand.

In light of the increasingly important role that offender tracking technology plays in community supervision, the Justice Technology Information Center (JTIC), a program of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), embarked on an effort to better understand the challenges faced by agencies and the assistance they require to make better decisions about identifying, evaluating, selecting, procuring and implementing this technology.

## Methodology

To identify the needs of community supervision agencies, JTIC staff assembled an expert panel of administrators and program managers with responsibility for their agencies' offender tracking programs. The major task was to discuss the key

## KEY FINDINGS

- Agencies would benefit from free, objective sources of information.
- Agencies need networks and platforms to share information, lessons learned and pitfalls.
- Agencies would benefit from a peer-to-peer review of key program activities such as requests for proposals (RFPs), contracts, policies and procedures.
- Model testing protocols would make it easier to evaluate products.
- A conformity assessment program is needed to support the NIJ Offender Tracking System standard.
- Model contract language would help agencies avoid common mistakes.
- The industry lacks a common lexicon, which can make procurement and contract negotiations challenging.
- Agencies need research to guide implementation practices, including how to leverage the potential of the technology as a positive reinforcement tool.
- Agencies need research and best practices to leverage the full power of the location data collected.

challenges associated with identifying, evaluating, selecting, procuring and implementing offender tracking technology and the development of needs, strategies and/or tools to address these challenges. JTIC identified a pool of candidate panelists through review of published documents and recommendations from various organizations. Staff endeavored to identify

<sup>1</sup> This figure does not include the thousands more monitored by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for immigration violations.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Charitable Trusts, *Issue Brief: Use of Electronic Offender-Tracking Devices Expands Sharply*, Sept. 7, 2016. As of March 1, 2018: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2016/09/use-of-electronic-offender-tracking-devices-expands-sharply>

potential panelists with experience and expertise in probation, parole and pretrial organizations, as each sector can face different challenges. Further, the JTIC team sought representation from different geographic regions as well as several levels of organization (e.g., federal, state and county) and varying agency size. The center ultimately convened a group of 13 panelists. Appendix A provides a list of panelists and their organizations.

The JTIC facilitators asked panelists to complete a pre-workshop questionnaire. The first part focused on the distinct facets of the technology acquisition and implementation process as identified by JTIC staff. Panelists considered the issues associated with each facet and then ranked them in terms of the challenges faced by their agency:

- Challenges related to **identifying offender tracking technology products** (what products are available on the market).
- Challenges related to **evaluating the products** (how to compare competing products).
- Challenges related to **selecting the product** (choosing the right product for an agency).

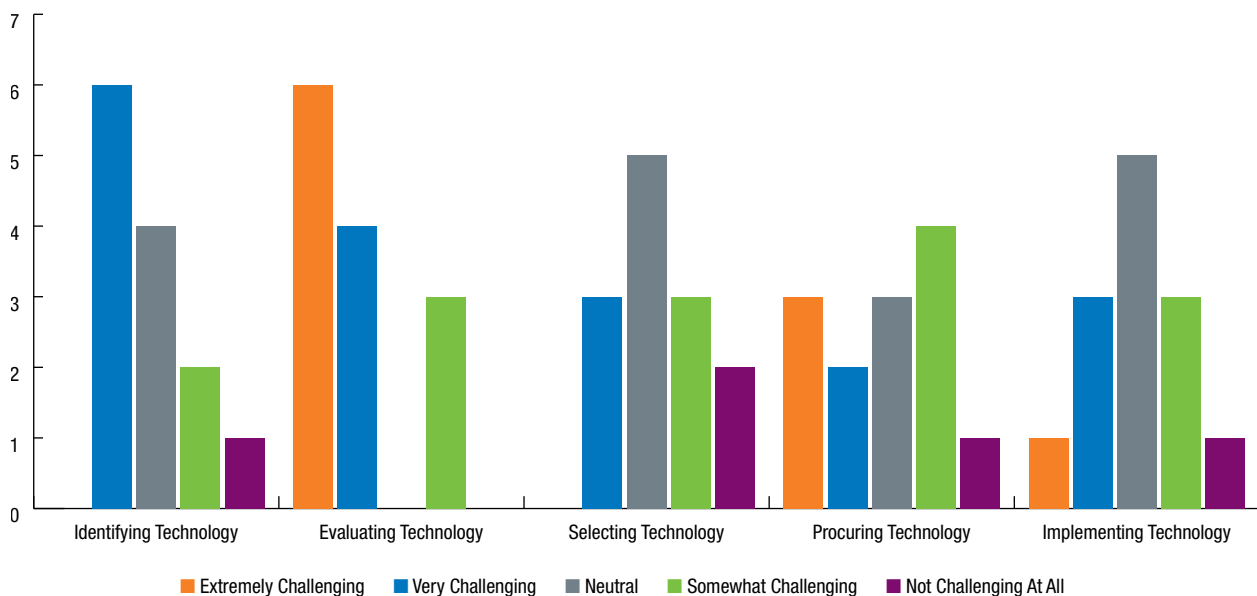
- Challenges related to **procuring the technology** (ability to acquire the product deemed best for the agency).
- Challenges related to **implementing the technology** (how challenging is it to apply the technology and/or get the desired outcomes).

According to the results (see Figure 1), the panelists believed the process of evaluating the technology to be most challenging, followed by technology selection and identifying the available technology options. In contrast, panelists deemed procurement and implementation issues relatively less challenging.

The second part of the questionnaire asked panelists to identify specific challenges or obstacles faced by corrections agencies with respect to each of the major facets of the process. The comments received help JTIC staff prepare for the workshop.

The questionnaire also asked panelists where they get information to support their decision-making processes. The most common responses included vendors, the Internet, internal staff experts and colleagues in other jurisdictions. Finally, the questionnaire asked panelists to consider the potential

**FIGURE 1: CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY**



value of free, objective information to support the decision-making process (see Figure 2). According to the group, these resources would be very important across the board, but most beneficial in support of agency efforts to identify and evaluate available technology options. Agencies also need support to more effectively implement the technology. Panelists identified procurement as least important, possibly because each jurisdiction has unique requirements and processes and may not benefit as much from general guidance.

After compiling and reviewing survey results, JTIC brought panelists together for a two-day workshop in December 2017. During the morning of the first day, JTIC staff presented the major results from the pre-workshop questionnaire and outlined the goals of the workshop as follow:

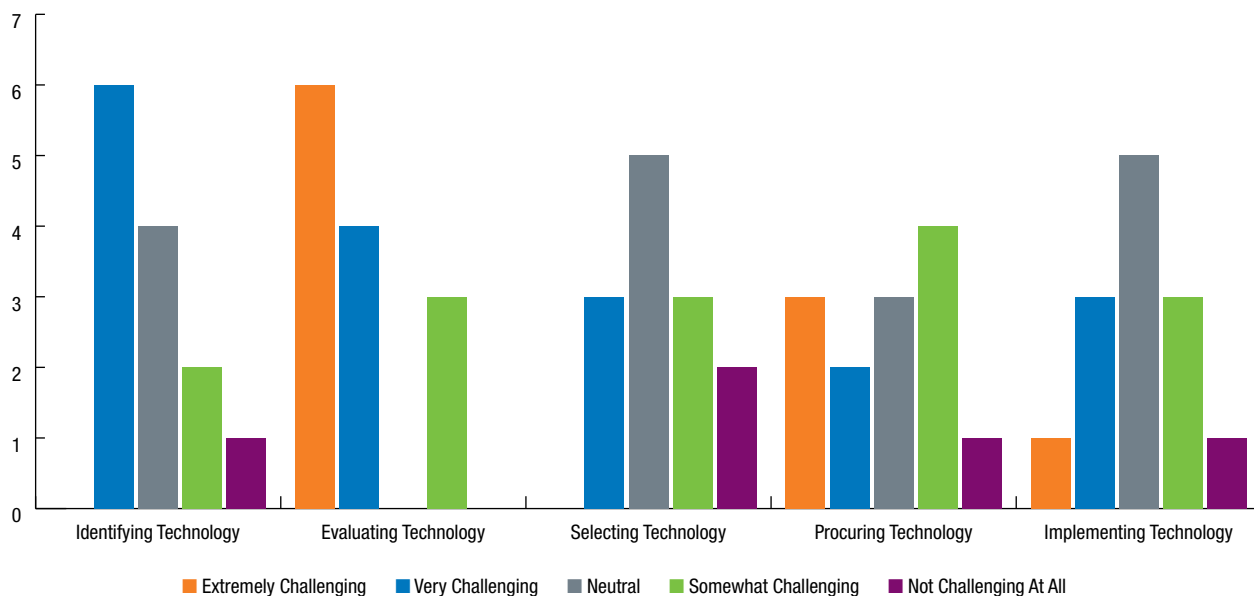
1. Encourage information sharing and peer support.
2. Identify common threads.

3. Identify current challenges and the needs that will help address those challenges, in order to inform NIJ's future research.

To facilitate the information-sharing process, JTIC staff called on each participant to give an overview of agency activities related to offender tracking. Panelists provided their name and background; their agencies' experience with offender tracking, including how long they have used it, the number of enrollees, the type of population enrolled and their current provider; one challenge faced by their agency; one lesson learned; and something they hoped to take away from the meeting.

JTIC staff used a structured brainstorming approach to guide discussions, taking a sequential approach to approximate how agencies acquire and deploy technology. The brainstorming began with challenges related to **technology identification**, then moved on to **technology evaluation**, **technology selection**, **technology procurement** and finally **technology implementation**.

**FIGURE 2: IMPORTANCE OF SOURCE FOR FREE, OBJECTIVE INFORMATION**



# CHALLENGE I

## IDENTIFYING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY



Before agencies can procure, acquire and implement offender tracking technology into their agency operations, staff members must have awareness and understanding of the options available to them. Therefore, the first set of challenges addressed related to **identifying offender tracking technology products**, i.e. what products are available on the market or on the horizon.

### LESSON LEARNED

*Take the time to talk to vendors other than your current provider. The more information you have about the marketplace, the better positioned you are to identify your options.*

During discussions, the panelists noted that the offender tracking technology industry is continuously evolving, which creates particular challenges for agencies. Panelists said that most agencies tend to be passive in learning about innovations, new providers, and mergers and acquisitions<sup>3</sup>, primarily due to time constraints. Further, when agencies are satisfied with their current providers, there is no urgency to learn about innovations made by existing vendors or newcomers to the industry.

<sup>3</sup> In recent years, a number of major vendors have been acquired by other companies. For example, Attenti acquired 3M Electronic Monitoring Division in 2017, Securus Technologies acquired Satellite Tracking of People in 2013 and GEO Group acquired B.I. Incorporated in 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Market Survey of Location-Based Offender Tracking Technologies, Version 1.1. [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249889.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249889.pdf)

The panelists said that agencies would benefit from the establishment of a vendor database containing up-to-date information about all known providers who meet certain minimal standards. Although not discussed in depth, they said that the database should be vetted in some way to ensure that the vendors listed are qualified and can actually deliver the services required.

### VOICE FROM THE FIELD

*“How do you even know who to invite to bid? Lack of information about vendors and technology innovations can prevent an agency from finding the right match.”*

In a related need, panelists noted that agencies face challenges keeping abreast of all of the features and functionality offered by each vendor. They said the field would benefit from regularly updated environmental scans of the offender tracking system (OTS) marketplace, such as the *NIJ-funded Market Survey of Location-Based Offender Tracking Technologies*<sup>4</sup> conducted by the National Criminal Justice Technology Research, Test and Evaluation Center in 2016. This recommendation seems to reinforce the need for frequent updates of this type of work as well as the need for better outreach to promote the availability of such resources.

The final need listed in this area pertains to how vendors come to understand the requirements of the field as they develop their products. Vendors that have a better understanding of the needs of the field are more likely to meet these needs. According to the panelists, many existing vendors convene user groups consisting of agency customers and may use these venues to discuss the needs of the field. Although these meetings are beneficial, the panelists said they tend to focus on particular products. Ideally, the field, as a whole, should formally articulate current and future needs so that all vendors receive the same information.

This information would benefit all vendors, particularly nascent companies with products still in development. The panelists noted that these requirements could be gathered in a variety of ways such as national forums, possibly associated with trade association conferences, or online questionnaires.

**LESSON LEARNED**

*Communicate regularly – let your vendor know what your current needs are.*

**TABLE 1: IDENTIFYING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY**

Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
Agencies find it difficult to stay abreast of all offender tracking technology vendors.	Develop and maintain a database of <i>bona fide</i> or qualified vendors.
It can be difficult to obtain information about the features and functionality offered by each vendor.	There is a need for regularly published environmental scans of the marketplace.
Vendors do not necessarily know the current/future needs of the field.	Facilitate platforms such as national forums or surveys to gather requirements on a regular basis.



# CHALLENGES 2 AND 3 EVALUATING AND SELECTING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY



During discussion, the facilitators realized that panelists saw little distinction between *evaluating* and *selecting* offender-tracking technology; therefore, for the purposes of this report, they combined these categories.

Panelists identified testing various products in operational scenarios as the one of the most important elements of the evaluation and selection process; however, they noted that conducting rigorous tests could be technically challenging as well as a drain on resources. Those issues may deter some agencies from more thorough testing. There may be opportunities to improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of this process. For example, although each agency may have unique requirements, the field would benefit from model testing protocols that cover both hardware and software features. These protocols could form a uniform basis for testing that agencies can modify based on their particular needs. More importantly, panelists said that sharing test results is critical.

## LESSON LEARNED

*Always try to use your own agency data when testing a product's software capabilities.*

Panelists pointed out that in some cases, vendors try to have agencies sign memoranda of understanding indicating they will not share results. Ultimately, these results from other agencies could provide important information to assist in the technology evaluation process, and the panelists asked for platforms to facilitate sharing, as allowable. Panelists also identified

the need to explore partnerships with local educational institutions as a force multiplier. For example, resources within a college's engineering or social science department could assist in the development and fine-tuning of fair and replicable testing protocols. Additionally, student monitors could ease the burden on staff.

## LESSON LEARNED

*Do not be pressured by vendors who try to charge your agency for a pilot or who will only offer it at no charge in exchange for a testimonial.*

Comparing competing products can prove challenging as well, according to the panelists. They identified a number of needs that, if addressed, would improve this condition. For example, although NIJ's *Criminal Justice Offender Tracking System Standard 1004.00* was a milestone achievement, the field needs a conformity assessment program that validates which products meet the standard. NIJ is currently working on the development of such a program; however, the process for determining conformity has not yet been established. According to the panelists, in an ideal world, conformity would be determined through independent, third-party testing, as this approach would best help agencies distinguish those products that meet the minimum performance criteria as outlined in the NIJ standard. If this approach proves impractical, a vendor self-declaration system may also be useful.

### LESSON LEARNED

*The NIJ Standard can provide important benchmarks for product comparison.*

A related need called for the establishment of an entity to perform *Consumer Reports*-style evaluations of offender tracking technology and publish performance ratings. Several other groups had previously made this particular recommendation, which has proven difficult to execute.<sup>5</sup> With that said, the recommendation serves as evidence that agencies continue to struggle to compare products.

### VOICE FROM THE FIELD

*“Some vendors do one thing well, but overall the product is not strong – a ranking system would be ideal.”*

Panelists suggested that improved communications among offender tracking program managers would make it easier to gain critical information about actual performance issues, which could be a more viable alternative to a formal rating system. They identified a number of potential options to improve information sharing, including email groups, in-person meetings at national and regional association conferences, and quarterly web-based meetings.

### VOICE FROM THE FIELD

*“It would be very useful to get feedback from other agencies who have tested or used a product to see what works best in various environmental conditions such as in mountains, valleys and urban areas.”*

All things being equal, an agency is likely to prefer contracting with vendors that continually work to innovate and improve their products. According to the panelists, this information is not readily available, which can hinder the evaluation and selection process. To remedy this, they called for the development of forward-looking market scans designed to provide insight on developing innovations. Panelists acknowledged that vendors might be reluctant to share specific details about these efforts for fear of losing competitive advantage. To gain some information, the panelists suggested that agencies should ask vendors proxy questions that may provide an indication of the vendor’s commitment to innovation. For example, an agency might ask a vendor what percentage of revenues is dedicated to research and development.

### LESSON LEARNED

*Ask vendors for current customer references and follow up. Validate all claims.*

**TABLE 2: EVALUATING AND SELECTING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY**

Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
Conducting a thorough pilot/evaluation is resource intensive.	Develop model testing protocols that can be modified for use by each agency.
	Establish a platform for agencies to share test results, as allowable.
	Explore costs and benefits of partnerships with educational institutions to support pilots and structured evaluations.
It can be difficult to compare competing products.	Establish a conformity assessment program to support the NIJ Offender Tracking Standard. <sup>6</sup>
	Establish a <i>Consumer Reports</i> -type evaluation and performance rating system.
	Establish national and regional communication networks for offender tracking program managers to share information on product performance, etc.
It can be challenging to identify the vendors who are actively innovating.	Produce forward-looking market scans that provide information on vendor investment in R&D.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of an independent entity to evaluate and rank technology had been discussed by NIJ’s Community Corrections Technology Working Group (unpublished).

<sup>6</sup> NIJ is currently exploring options to determine the most appropriate type of program for this particular technology.

## CHALLENGE 4

# PROCURING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY



How an agency approaches procurement of offender tracking technology and how it enters into contracts with vendors can have lasting implications on operations. Panelists discussed how policies and procedures governing procurement vary by jurisdiction and how this structure could impact the technology products from which an agency can choose. For example, some jurisdictions can invite vendors to bid on upcoming contracts; however, other jurisdictions establish vendor registration sites, which place the onus on the vendor to check for open bids. Vendors that do not register cannot bid. This can be a problem, particularly for smaller or start-up vendors that may not understand the process. Ultimately, this disconnect can result in a less-than-ideal outcome because agencies miss the opportunity to evaluate all options. To improve vendor awareness of current opportunities, panelists suggested an independent, national website that lists all open bids. This would help ensure that all vendors have the same information and equal access to bidding on a contract, which should improve competition and result in better outcomes for agencies.

### VOICE FROM THE FIELD

*“OTS are not like office supplies where you can automatically go with the lowest bidder. Price is one of the least important evaluation criteria.”*

### LESSON LEARNED

*Writing specifications is an art. Find the balance between specifications that are too narrow and too broad.*

The panelists acknowledged wide variation in the level of expertise among agencies with respect to the technology, and identified a variety of potential pitfalls and lessons learned. For example, many agencies struggle when developing procurement documents and typically either structure specifications too broadly (which may allow the bulk of vendors to qualify) or too narrowly (which may include vendor specific-language that eliminates competition). In either case, the result can create problems. Other lessons learned include the need for contract language specifying the agency's expectations with respect to the expertise of the assigned account representative and the ability to request a replacement, as needed; clearly articulated performance criteria and grounds for termination; and requirements for both initial and regular booster training. Further, panelists said changing vendors when a contract expires is so cumbersome, it may not be worth the effort. Part of this issue relates to the vast amounts of data collected and stored by the incumbent. Agencies often fail to plan for the need to move data from one vendor's system to another's. To mitigate this, panelists said contract language should include

### LESSON LEARNED

*The account representative should be experienced, knowledgeable about the product and responsive to agency needs. Consider requiring the vendor to submit the representative's qualifications as part of the RFP. Larger programs may consider requiring on-site presence.*

provisions calling for cooperation between outgoing and incoming vendors so that agency data transfer takes place as seamlessly as possible. NIJ funded the development of the Offender Tracking Record Transfer Service Specification<sup>7</sup> to help agencies with this type of data transfer. Another suggested approach called for contract language that allows the agency to retain access to data and the interface for a specified period beyond the contract expiration date. To address these and other common pitfalls, the panelists recommended the development and dissemination of model contract language. Further, they said that agencies would benefit from having their procurement documents and contracts reviewed by peer networks to obtain experienced and varied perspectives.

### VOICE FROM THE FIELD

*"We need an informal review network across jurisdictions. It is always helpful to have another pair of eyes."*

Panelists also said that agencies would benefit from better information on contracting alliances as a vehicle to procure offender tracking technology, specifically how to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. For example, when using an alliance, a consortium, rather than an individual agency, establishes the contract specifications. Therefore, agencies need to review these specifications to determine how well they align with their needs. If there is sufficient alignment, agencies might consider joining an alliance. The advantage lies in a pre-negotiated contract with terms that typically are more favorable than those an

agency could get on its own; however, agencies must use whoever wins the alliance contract. Ultimately, if an alliance meets an agency's needs, it may present a viable option that streamlines and speeds up the process. Ultimately, more agencies might take advantage of this structure if they understood the pros and cons.

### LESSON LEARNED

*Ensure that the contract allows for sufficient coverage for lost and damaged equipment so that operations can continue without interruption.*

Finally, the panelists discussed problems associated with the lack of common terminology within the offender tracking technology industry. They said that terms such as "active" and "passive" tracking, "tamper," "ad hoc reporting" and "significant improvements in technology" remain open to interpretation by each vendor and agency. As a result, agencies may not get what they believe they are entitled to by the terms of their contracts. To mitigate these issues, the panelists called for development of a common and agreed-on lexicon. Panelists acknowledged that this would be a difficult task, as the technology evolves quickly and the lexicon would require regular updates. Further, no entity has the authority to require its use. With that said, NIJ's Offender Tracking Systems Standard establishes several definitions and may serve as a guide.

Some agencies find developing specifications a challenge; they also may not buy in large enough volume to get good value. Develop resources to increase awareness of contracting alliances and provide guidance on the pros and cons of this approach.

### LESSON LEARNED

*When there is not universally accepted terminology, carefully describe what is required. Avoid using "buzzwords" that might be open to interpretation.*

<sup>7</sup> <https://it.ojp.gov/GIST/186/Offender-Tracking-Record-Transfer-Service-Specification--Version-1-0>

**TABLE 3: PROCURING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY**

<b>Problem or Opportunity</b>	<b>Associated Need</b>
Vendors are not always aware of opportunities to bid on contracts and may be excluded from consideration, which limits options available to the agency.	Develop and maintain a national website or clearinghouse of offender tracking technology contract opportunities.
Agencies often struggle when writing procurement documents, resulting in specifications that can be too broad or too narrow. Other pitfalls include failure to specify performance criteria, renewals and clear grounds for termination; failure to plan for data transfer from vendor to vendor if a contract is awarded to a new party; failure to specify training requirements (both initial and booster); and failure to establish expectations for account representative skills and experience.	Develop model contract language to avoid these pitfalls. Establish a network of peer reviewers to assist agencies with fine-tuning procurement documents.
Some agencies find developing specifications a challenge; they also may not buy in large enough volume to get good value.	Develop resources to increase awareness of contracting alliances and provide guidance on the pros and cons of this approach.
There is a lack of clarity in the technical terminology used in the offender tracking technology industry.	Develop common lexicon of terminology that vendors and agencies understand and adopt.

## CHALLENGE 5

# IMPLEMENTING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY



### LESSON LEARNED

*It is important to manage expectations. Although OTS can be a powerful tool to support supervision in the community, it is just one tool in what should be an overall case management strategy.*

Panelists discussed a wide range of challenges with respect to the implementation of offender tracking technology. Although there has been some research on the effectiveness of offender tracking systems in reducing recidivism and improving compliance with supervision conditions, they said agencies need further research. For example, the field would benefit from studies that examine which offender groups respond best to monitoring; the most effective duration of monitoring; indicators that an offender needs more or less monitoring; whether monitoring supports treatment objectives; and what other factors may help or hinder outcomes. Further, agencies need research to support evidence-based responses to violations, which may take the form of a sanctions grid.

### LESSON LEARNED

*Communicate successes; these will help offset the fallout from the inevitable failures.*

Panelists noted the importance of establishing program goals, especially when justifying a program's existence or expansion to administrators or legislators. The ability to demonstrate success is critical for a variety of reasons. For example, positive metrics can support arguments for maintaining and expanding the program. Further, when the inevitable individual failure (technical and/or offender-initiated) occurs, it is helpful to refer stakeholders to broader, program-wide results. Because agencies implement offender tracking programs for various reasons (e.g. internal initiative, judicial order, statutory requirement) and may have different objectives based on the target populations (e.g. pre-trial release from detention vs. high-risk sex offender), developing appropriate measures can be challenging. Agencies therefore need resources to help establish program goals and objectives, and also to identify key metrics beyond recidivism. For example, if offender tracking improves offender accountability by providing daily structure, an agency can realize cost-savings through reducing missed court dates or treatment sessions.

### LESSON LEARNED

*The input of key stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement, courts, victim's advocacy groups) can help ensure the success of a new program.*

<sup>8</sup> While no standards for OTS caseload size exist, the American Probation and Parole Association recommends a ratio of 20:1 for intensive supervision (highest risk) as a rule.

According to the panelists, agencies have primarily used offender tracking systems for surveillance and monitoring purposes. However, applying the technology more in alignment with rehabilitation efforts could produce benefits. Agencies can accomplish this in a variety of ways. For example, officers can choose to use location data to “catch offenders doing the right thing,” e.g., being home by curfew or at a mandated counseling session. Further, agencies could explore delivering positive reinforcement of desired behaviors through “gamification,” whereby offenders earn points to redeem for rewards. To help agencies make this shift in orientation, panelists called for research to guide the development and dissemination of best practices.

#### VOICE FROM THE FIELD

*“Problem-solving courts have demonstrated that incentives work. We need to incorporate rewards for compliance into OTS technology and programs.”*

Offender tracking technology is a powerful supervision tool. However, it places a great burden on staff who need to monitor location points and respond to alerts and violations. As agencies track more offenders, the burden increases and, the panelists said, the lack of established workload ratios could create a challenge to justifying the need for additional staff. They asked for research to support the development of workload standards. The panel did acknowledge that such standards would be difficult to establish, as the process involves many variables. For example, some officers may have a dedicated caseload of tracked offenders, while others have a mixed caseload. Other variables to consider include offender risk level, services contractually performed by the vendor vs. the agency, agency policies and procedures, and the nature of the alert/monitoring center structure.

#### VOICE FROM THE FIELD

*“Our program has grown so much over the past five years with the addition of more pretrial cases. Each year I ask for more FTEs, and I’ve been warned this can’t continue. I need research that will help me prove that our caseloads are too big.”*

A related issue speaks to the voluminous data generated by offender tracking systems. The panelists noted that the data can be overwhelming and many agencies struggle just to keep up with alerts and violations. They believe agencies could optimize the power of the data if they could leverage advanced automated analytics and predictive algorithms. The panelists therefore asked for research to examine the potential of these tools to identify patterns of movement behavior (and anomalies), particularly as they may correlate to dynamic indicators of risk. If, as expected, these relationships exist, these tools could provide important insights that agencies can use to target their resources to the highest risk cases based on current information and patterns. Further, officers in some jurisdictions spend many hours manually reviewing offender location points. Agencies need research to evaluate the utility of automated systems to improve the efficiency of these processes.

#### VOICE FROM THE FIELD

*“In our jurisdiction, our officers spend two hours each day reviewing each offender’s location data points. The goal is to identify precursors to troublesome behaviors so we need advanced analytics to automate these functions.”*

The panelists said the field needs additional guidance on monitoring and alert centers. A monitoring center is a designated location where offender tracking information is received, and alerts are responded to, in accordance with a protocol established by an agency. Typically, a vendor operates a monitoring center on behalf of agencies with which it has contractual relationships; however, some agencies perform many of these tasks in house. An alert center is a designated location where agency employees respond to certain events reported to an agency, especially during hours that assigned supervising officers are not on duty. Alert centers often are part of an agency’s strategy to maintain 24/7 response capabilities while having a majority of the employees assigned to the OTS program work traditional hours. Alert center employees triage violations reported by the vendor in an attempt to resolve as many incidents as possible without having to immediately bring them to the attention of an assigned officer. The panelists said agencies need cost/benefit assessments of operating

each type of center as well as resources that outline the pros and cons of each approach.

**VOICE FROM THE FIELD**

*“Agencies need help figuring out the advantages, disadvantages and implementation issues involved with monitoring and alert centers.”*

Finally, the panel discussed the importance of standards with respect to the implementation of offender tracking programs. Although the performance standard established by NIJ is important, agencies also need program standards that address operations. The American Correctional Association (ACA) maintains standards for electronic monitoring programs; however, these standards are out of date. The panelists asked that JTIC forward a formal recommendation to update these standards to ACA.

**TABLE 4: IMPLEMENTING OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY**

<b>Problem or Opportunity</b>	<b>Associated Need</b>
There is a lack of evidence to support practices.	Agencies need research to inform practice, e.g., most appropriate populations, dosage, factors that help or hinder outcomes, appropriate response to various violations.
Agencies need guidance in changing orientation in using offender tracking to support offender rehabilitation, pro-social support, positive reinforcement and rewards, as opposed to strictly surveillance.	Agencies need best practices.
Agencies face struggles managing workload demands. Additional staff is difficult to justify without empirical data.	Agencies need workload/caseload ratio standards for officers supervising cases with offender tracking.
Offender tracking systems generate vast amounts of data that agencies generally underutilize.	Need to examine the potential of analytics to identify patterns (and anomalies) of movement behavior as dynamic indicators of risk; allow agencies to focus on highest risk cases and potentially identify pre-cursors to negative or troublesome behavior.
Some agencies require officers to manually review offender data points, which is extremely time consuming.	Research the utility of automated software solutions to make this process more efficient.
Demonstrating value of OTS programs can be difficult.	Develop resources that provide guidance in developing goals, objectives and outcome measures aligned with each intended purpose.
Agencies beginning new programs need assistance	Central resource clearinghouse is needed for information on starting offender tracking programs, establishing objectives, policies and procedures, lessons learned, research, legal issues, data sharing issues, etc.
Current standards governing electronic monitoring program operations are out of date.	Encourage ACA to update standards.



# OVERARCHING NEEDS



To facilitate discussion, JTIC staff asked the panelists to consider what resources they wish they had when they first assumed the role of offender tracking program manager. In response, they asked for a central repository of information, materials, links and contacts. The repository would contain resources such as known vendor lists, examples of procurement documents and contracts, policies and procedures, sanctions grids, information on technology trends and contacts to peers in the field. A previous NIJ effort, the Electronic Monitoring Resource Center (since converted to the Corrections Technology Resource Center<sup>9</sup>), was established to serve this exact function. As with the panel's recommendation for environmental scans of the OTS marketplace, it is unclear if there is a lack of awareness of existing resources or whether the resources are inadequate.

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<sup>9</sup> The public site can be accessed at [https://www.justnet.org/corrections-technology/cor\\_tech\\_res.html](https://www.justnet.org/corrections-technology/cor_tech_res.html). The private site, which may contain agency-specific information, can be accessed with permission. Requests can be made via: <https://www.justnet.org/app/asknlectc/default.aspx>

# CONCLUSION



As criminal justice agencies become more reliant on technology to perform their important missions, it is critical that practitioners have access to the best information to support solid procurement and implementation decisions. The panel identified a wide variety of needs that, if addressed, would support better decision-making with respect to identifying, evaluating, procuring and implementing offender tracking technology. Many recommendations referenced a lack of evidence-based practices and called for additional research to fill these voids. Some recommendations may not be feasible, e.g., calls for a *Consumer Reports*-type performance rating system or the establishment of a common lexicon that all agencies and vendors would follow.

As discussed, the panel believed that the field would benefit from free, objective sources of information. It can be argued that the best sources of information are the individuals who are closest to the work, i.e., the offender tracking program managers and administrators. Therefore, the greatest opportunity for JTIC to address the needs identified by this panel may be facilitation of better communication among these subject-matter experts. Platforms, networks and venues designed to support information sharing appear to be both critically important and feasible from a resource perspective. Further, re-energizing the Electronic Monitoring Resource Center may be another logical step forward. With that said, the success of these approaches will depend on two main factors. First, the platforms must be designed to be as user-friendly as possible. For example, they should be easily accessible, minimizing obstacles and delays associated with login credentialing. Further, they should be structured to automatically push information to users as opposed to requiring users to log into a system to see the activity. Second, practitioners must be willing to take the time to actually use these platforms. Although the panel identified the need for information sharing platforms, it is understood that practitioners have significant workload demands that often prevent them from connecting with their colleagues. As a result, despite their best intentions, these platforms can languish from neglect.

# APPENDIX A

## OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY FOCUS GROUP PANELISTS



Dan Blanchard  
Deputy Director, Adult Probation & Parole  
Utah Department of Corrections

Mike Delaney  
Supervisory Management and Program Analyst  
Court Services & Offender Supervision Agency (DC)

Ivan Downing  
Deputy Chief of Security and Facilities  
Montgomery County DOCR – Pre-Release and  
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Jeffrey Green  
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Terry Grumbo  
Coordinator  
North Dakota Parole and Probation

David Morrison  
Director of Field Operations  
Georgia Department of Community Supervision

Daniel Pires  
Statewide Manager of ELMO  
Massachusetts Office of the Commissioner of  
Probation – ELMO

Hannah Rowland  
Special Operations Administrator  
North Carolina Department of Public Safety Division  
of Community Corrections

Les Schultz  
Director  
Brown County Probation Department (MN)

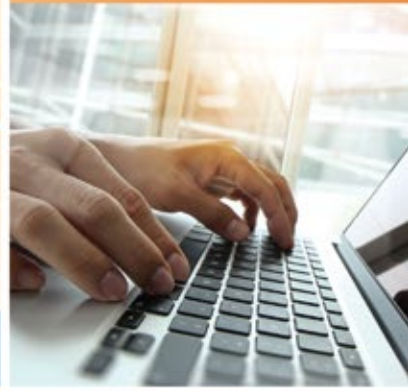
Matthew Sobieski  
Assistant Chief Probation Officer  
Cook County Adult Probation Department  
Lola Spears  
GPS/EMP Coordinator Oklahoma Department of  
Corrections

Pamela Thielke  
Parole Division Director  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Beth Wise  
Operations Manager  
City and County of Denver  
Community Corrections Division (CO)



# APPENDIX B OFFENDER TRACKING TECHNOLOGY FOCUS GROUP AGENDA



STRENGTHEN SCIENCE. ADVANCE JUSTICE.

## Selection and Implementation of Offender Tracking Technology Focus Group Agenda

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Annapolis, MD  
Prince George Room  
December 12-13, 2017

### Day I

- 8:30 Welcome, Overview and Introductions
- 9:00 Discussion: Identify Challenges and Solutions in the Selection and Acquisition of Offender Tracking Technology. What Do Administrators Need to Make Better Decisions?
- 10:30 Break
- 10:45 Identify Selection and Acquisition Needs (continued)
- 12:15 Lunch (on your own)
- 1:30 Identify Selection and Acquisition Needs (continued)
- 2:30 Discussion: Identify Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of Offender Tracking Technology. What Do Administrators Need to Create and Operate More Effective Programs?

- 3:30 Break
- 3:45 Identify Implementation Needs (continued)
- 5:00 Adjourn

## Day 2

- 8:30 Identify Implementation Needs (continued)
- 10:30 Break
- 10:45 How Can JTIC Best Address These Needs? (continued)
- 12:15 Lunch (on your own)
- 1:30 How Can JTIC Best Address These Needs? (continued)
- 2:30 Meeting Wrap Up/Administrative Issues
- 3:00 Meeting Adjourned