

Information Builders enables agile information solutions with business intelligence (BI) and integration technologies. WebFOCUS – the most widely utilized business intelligence platform – connects to any enterprise system or application and enables simple and intuitive interaction with information.

Colorado Department of Corrections

Snapshot

Organization

The Colorado Department of Corrections is responsible for 22,000 prison inmates at 22 state facilities and six private facilities across Colorado.

The Challenge

Streamline manual reporting processes, cost-effectively enable end-users to run their own reports, provide timely information about inmate activities and facility trends, and assist financial personnel with budgeting and project management.

The Strategy

A self-service application that reports against data stored in various information systems and delivers accurate information.

The Results

Users no longer need to wait for IT professionals to create reports and retrieval time for information on inmate activities has been reduced from one week to 10 minutes.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS and Information Builders' Consulting and Customer Education.



Clear Conviction With WebFOCUS

Colorado Department of Corrections Deploys Business Intelligence for Inmate Tracking and Financial Reporting

At the Colorado Department of Corrections, senior managers know that creating and maintaining effective information systems isn't simply a matter of maximizing operational efficiency. It is essential for public safety. With 22 state prisons and six private prisons logging an average of 42,000 incidents per year, accurate incident tracking is critical for the protection of department workers and inmates. The Department of Corrections needs software tools that give department personnel an overview of prison operations while also enabling them to drill down to individual inmate activities.

These ongoing concerns motivated the department to acquire a complete business intelligence (BI) solution. After studying available options, the department deployed WebFOCUS to lock down its reporting activities with an affordable yet comprehensive business intelligence environment.

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"We track a tremendous amount of people and dollars through our WebFOCUS reporting system," says Paul Engstrom, a project manager in the business technologies group at the Colorado Department of Corrections. "WebFOCUS not only handles our financial reporting, it also enables us to accurately track inmate behavior, such as fights and gang activity, as well as report on inmate health issues and facility trends."

WebFOCUS represents a decisive upgrade for Engstrom and his colleagues. For many years, the Colorado Department of Corrections has depended on a COBOL system called Colorado Financial Reporting System (COFRS) and a 4GL inmate-tracking and case-management system called DCIS. Both of these systems could create reports, but they usually required IT personnel to manually access hundreds of screens to gather relevant data – a process that could take up to a week for a single report. "Our legacy systems did a great job of capturing data, but a bad job of reporting," Engstrom admits. "Managers and directors were accustomed to waiting a week for reports and IT personnel had to build them one screen at a time from month-old data."

Accessory Before the Fact

Engstrom started using WebFOCUS soon after he joined the department. "I recognized that we had a powerful tool on hand, so I started writing a few reports on my own," he recalls. "Before long I was turning around report requests in a matter of minutes. Once the staff became accustomed to that level of efficiency, they wanted more."

Engstrom recommended moving the entire department to a self-service reporting model, freeing IT personnel from the shackles of creating and delivering reports using the legacy procedures. Director of Administration L.D. Hay and Chief Information Officer Paul Lewin saw the wisdom in this approach, but first they decided to evaluate several reporting environments from the leading business intelligence vendors.

"We were already using other business intelligence software in the department, but it was cumbersome and hard to learn," Engstrom explains. "It was also tremendously expensive. Every user needs a license to run reports – at \$400 to \$800 per user – and we wanted to roll out a self-service reporting environment to 6,000 people."

Another leading BI vendor pitched its technology to the decision-makers at the department. In addition to exorbitant licensing fees, they wanted \$800,000 to build a custom reporting system. "Based on my experience, I was confident WebFOCUS could accomplish everything these vendors demonstrated, for a lot less money," Engstrom states. "Because Information Builders does not require licenses for self-service users, I believed we could roll out a reporting system to our entire user base for a fraction of the cost of these other solutions."

The Department of Corrections' senior management dedicated the necessary resources and selected WebFOCUS for the job. They fast-tracked the implementation process by hiring Information Builders' Consulting to help them create and deploy a self-service reporting system. "We had the consultants in-house for four weeks," Engstrom says. "They delivered a system that exceeded our expectations – within budget. Maintenance costs were well within the limits of the correctional system's capabilities, and much less costly than the other vendor proposals."

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New Management Tools in Custody

In short order, Information Builders' Consulting created a self-service incident tracking system that completely eliminates paper-based manual reporting processes. “The consultants were very helpful and efficient and were aided by the valuable, hard-working staff of the department,” says Lewin. Senior management further invested in the success of the project by sending key staff to Information Builders' Customer Education classes to help direct the activities of the group and streamline the implementation. “We plan to use Information Builders' Consulting and Customer Education for future projects,” Lewin continues. “They understand our needs and are really focused on helping us become more productive.”

With the self-service reporting system in production mode, the department now has highly flexible querying and reporting capabilities. Previously, if an incident such as a fight occurred, prison officers had to handwrite reports that were reviewed and eventually stored away in a filing cabinet. Now, duty officers can document incidents directly into electronic forms, route documents online, and store them on disk for future access. This allows for a wide range of user-directed reporting activities. For example, prison directors can review incidents at their facilities in the past 24 hours or over a specified date range, while executives can obtain an overview of everything that has occurred across all the facilities in the state. They can also drill down to obtain details about a specific incident or inmate.

“The new system provides powerful management tools,” Lewin confirms. “For example, correctional professionals in charge of managing the facilities can review a certain type of incident at a specific facility or study trends of inmate activities, such as a tendency to congregate just out of sight of a surveillance camera. Managers can also use WebFOCUS reports to analyze whole correctional systems. Analyzing these types of incidents helps correctional professionals determine the training needs for staff, update policies to deal with institutional problems, review gang issues, and analyze a cadre of other issues. Being able to analyze data in this way improves safety for both the staff and the inmates while achieving the mission of the department.”

The new reporting capabilities not only enhance public safety, but also aid departmental planning, streamline budget formulation, and simplify regulatory compliance. For example, WebFOCUS helps the department meet the requirements of the American Correctional Association (ACA), which serves as the accreditation bureau for the Colorado Department of Corrections. “We are required to report certain events,” Lewin explains. “WebFOCUS helps us categorize and submit the reports we need to comply with these mandates.”

WebFOCUS also delivers financial reports, accessing data from the department's COFRS system via the state comptroller's office. Business managers can run both ad hoc and canned reports. For example, a business manager can quickly determine how much a certain facility spent on each component of its operation, or compare actual expenses against budgets over any time period. These reports not only help control current costs, but also simplify the process of formulating budgets for future operations, as required by the Colorado General Assembly.

Find Out More

To find out how our solutions can help your company succeed, talk to an Information Builders representative today. Contact your local Information Builders office, visit us at **informationbuilders.com**, or in the U.S. and Canada, call **(800) 969-4636**.

Aiding and Abetting the Flow of Information

As the WebFOCUS deployment picks up speed, the department is placing one or two power users at each facility who have been trained to manage and create reports using WebFOCUS Developer Studio. "Already, our summary and incident tracking reports can be accessed by authorized users throughout the entire department," Engstrom says. "Beyond that, we are rolling out the self-service reporting environment at a new facility every few months. While the power users require some training to create new types of reports with Developer Studio, we can train self-service users in about 30 minutes over the phone. We don't foresee any performance issues as we scale the system to accommodate lots of reports and thousands of users," Engstrom adds.

As new users are brought online, they are assigned appropriate levels of access according to the department's existing LDAP security architecture, ensuring that sensitive material such as medical reports can only be accessed by appropriate personnel, in accordance with HIPPA guidelines.

WebFOCUS runs on an HP server running Microsoft Windows. Users access reports from the WebFOCUS Report Server via standard Web browsers on any computer. The COFRS financial system stores data in a VSAM database, which is downloaded into a Microsoft SQL Server data mart that has been structured for reporting. The DCIS system stores reporting data in Informix tables. "WebFOCUS can work with all of these data types – and dozens of others as well," Engstrom maintains. "This gives us lots of flexibility to expand its use throughout the Department of Corrections - and perhaps to other Colorado state agencies as well."

Ultimately, the department's goal is to deploy integration technology from iWay Software, a subsidiary of Information Builders, to enable various types of event-monitoring activities. For example, the department could use iWay to "listen" for specific incident types. When designated events occur, iWay could broadcast a notification to the people who need to know, such as duty officers, swat teams, or medical professionals. "I'd like to automate these critical activities, so nobody will have to pick up the phone to report incidents in the midst of a crisis," Engstrom says.

Yet even without these advanced capabilities, the self-service reporting system is quickly proving it's worth. "The value of the system is easy to see," Engstrom emphasizes. "For example, an administrative assistant who previously spent 40 hours per week compiling a summary report can now create that same report in about 30 minutes. Those savings apply at each of our 22 facilities, so automating that one type of report alone represents a huge quantitative improvement. Like many of our personnel, these users now have the tools to run a report at will instead of waiting for someone else to do the job for them."