



State of Tennessee

Department of General Services
Central Procurement Office

2019 George Cronin Awards for Procurement Excellence

SafeTN Mobile App

Executive Summary

In March of 2018, the State of Tennessee's School Safety Working Group recommended a statewide review of all 147 school districts' facilities and safety procedures. This review, conducted by the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security (TDOSHS), the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) and officials at each local school district, found that all school districts in Tennessee were eligible to apply for two grants to receive funding to address safety and security needs. As a result, the 2019 budget passed by the Tennessee General Assembly included a one-time grant of \$25 million from the School Safety and Security Grant to address vulnerabilities and risks. The approved budget also included \$10 million in recurring funding from the Safe School Grant to continuously support safety and prevention programs. One of the recommendations from the statewide review requested TDOSHS to secure a developer to create a statewide school safety mobile application for use by students, faculty and staff to anonymously report concerning or suspicious behavior to a case worker at TDOSHS, who could then dispatch the report to the appropriate party. Five percent of the \$25 million (\$1.25 million) School Safety and Security Grant was set aside for the design, development and implementation of the mobile app.

In late June of 2018, the Central Procurement Office (CPO) began developing a procurement strategy for the mobile app. The CPO researched similar mobile apps that were already developed and available in the App Store and Google Play Store to present to the project team. These existing mobile apps either did not fully meet the needs of TDOSHS or included too many options that fell outside the scope of the grant and overall school safety initiative. The CPO's Technology Team provided the project team with Statewide Contract 233 which is a NASPO ValuePoint Cooperative contract that allows state agencies the ability to submit Statements of Work (SOW) that include professional services for IT projects that are less than one million dollars and include tasks such as analysis, planning, design, development, upgrades, onetime maintenance, installation, integration and knowledge transfer. The SOW goes through a procurement process with the State of Tennessee's Managed Service Provider (MSP), but relies on state evaluators to review and score proposals. The MSP issued a SOW to its network of suppliers in late October 2018 and received 6 proposals. These 6 proposals were scored and the apparent awardee was announced in January 2019.

The SafeTN Mobile App will help TDOSHS and TDOE meet their joint goal of producing an easy to use mobile application that will allow students, parents and community members to submit secure and anonymous safety concerns to help identify and intervene upon at-risk individuals before they hurt themselves or others and ultimately help prevent violence, suicide, bullying, self-harm and other forms of threatening behavior.

Innovation

The SafeTN Mobile App initiative is innovative in part due to its unique procurement method. The Cloud Solutions NASPO ValuePoint contract was procured by the State of Utah and became effective on September 16, 2016. Joining this agreement gave the State of Tennessee an alternative approach to procure IT services through the MSP using their SOW process which gathers proposals from a pre-qualified network of vendors. After hearing all the stakeholders' needs, it was recommended by the CPO that the SOW process be utilized by

TDOSHS to secure a qualified developer that would partner with them to fully meet their requirements and deliver the desired mobile app within the required timeframe.

Utilizing this new method helped the CPO avoid the common pitfall of being overly prescriptive in its solicitation when the needs are not yet fully known. The drafting of the technical requirements is not comprehensive and allows the vendors to provide assumptions and input into their unique approach that will ultimately be negotiated into the state contract. In the CPO's standard RFP processes, all requirements need to be finalized and included in the solicitation in order for the vendors to align their proposal to the technical requirements and therefore be found responsive. The processes also require the respondent to provide bank reference, positive credit references, customer references, credit reports and at minimum 25 different requirements to be addressed in the general and technical response section of the RFP. This SOW solicitation had nine general questions such as "provide a brief description of experience developing apps of similar size or scope for State or local government for iOS, Android and any other platforms" or "what security measures do you have in place to protect data and ensure its preservation?" that were drafted specifically for this project. These open-ended questions allow vendors to provide concise explanations about how they would approach the project for state evaluators to quickly review and score.

Next, the abbreviated timeline of the SOW process through the MSP allowed the CPO to post the Request for Services and announce a recommended awardee in the span of 62 calendar days (42 business days); whereas, the CPO's standard RFP process takes on average 120 calendar days. Having this innovative SOW process available for use allows CPO to be strategically agile when initiatives such as this are expected to completed in an expedited manner.

Lastly, there is no risk using this process for a vendor to protest the award thereby prolonging the process and ultimately the development of the mobile app.

Transferability

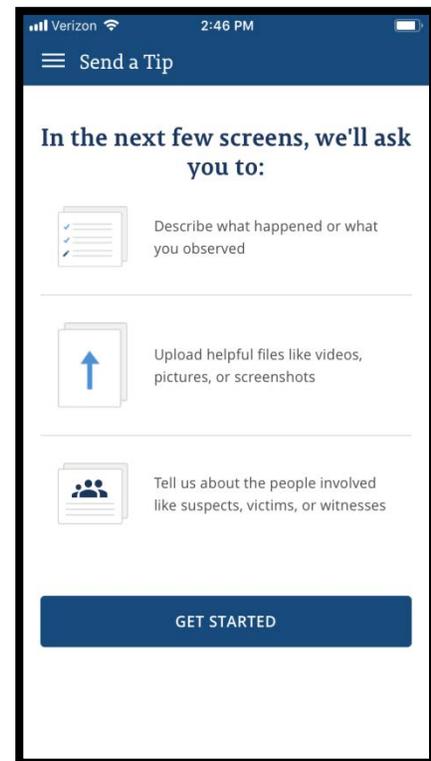
The SOW process conducted through a MSP via the NASPO ValuePoint Cooperative can be used by any state or local government to strategically meet deadlines for IT projects. This project was the first time the CPO had used SWC 233 for app development and now that this project has been successful the CPO will begin to advise other state agencies to consider this method when seeking IT-related services.

The SafeTN Mobile App will be initially marketed to students, parents, and teachers at each of the 1,810 K-12 schools in Tennessee before the 2019 school year starts. In the future, the SafeTN mobile app will be marketed to all Tennessee citizens to ensure maximum convenience to the end user and increase efficiency for TDOSHS and local law enforcement to keep Tennesseans safe. An important factor in the planning phases of this process was for TDOSHS to own the source code for the mobile app. Owning the source code gives TDOSHS the flexibility to replicate or transfer the mobile app to other states. TDOSHS believes the SafeTN Mobile App is extremely transferable to others states based on the simple layout and the standardized workflow that allows statewide participation to be funneled directly to a TDOSHS case worker.

Service Improvement

The greatest service improvement resulting from the SafeTN Mobile App initiative was standardizing the communication strategy as it pertains to sending and receiving safety concerns and reacting appropriately. Before the SafeTN Mobile App, each school district approached reporting suspicious activity in different ways. Some school districts passed these reports to local law enforcement while other districts handled threats by passing them to the school principal or guidance counselor to make an assessment of the situation. Most of these reports were not being passed along to TDOSHS. TDOSHS's preferred method of receiving anonymously reported threats was having each situation submitted to a case worker at the TDOSHS, but because a medium did not exist for the public to submit these reports, the information that was being gathered was incomplete and sometimes unusable. TDOSHS case workers were receiving reports from many different sources (e.g., social media, phone call, emails, etc.) which made determining the severity of the situation extremely difficult. The SafeTN Mobile App has predefined fields for the person anonymously reporting suspicious activity to complete. Each mobile app transmission comes directly to the case worker who is trained to quickly evaluate and immediately respond to these situations based on the information received. The SafeTN Mobile App has merged the preferred path of receiving reports with a standardized submission process to create an effective workflow to accurately assess and quickly act.

Due to the inconsistent nature of threats reported before the mobile app was set up, TDOSHS does not have a baseline to compare how big of an impact this mobile app will have on identifying and intervening in reported threats. TDOSHS and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse will have the ability to use the data collected from the future reported incidents on the mobile app to better serve communities that are at risk and improve marketing of the mobile app in areas where it may not be in use. The SafeTN Mobile App will also help TDOSHS fill the gap in rural areas where local law enforcement does not have access to the same resources as urban areas. TDOSHS hopes the creation of the mobile app increases the awareness of the importance of reporting suspicious behavior and removes any stigma about speaking up when something seems to threaten public safety.



Cost Reduction

Developing and deploying the SafeTN mobile app ended up costing the State \$526,573.00 against a budget of \$1.25M. There are soft cost savings associated with the State being able to utilize a SOW process under a current statewide contract rather than having to conduct a

RFP with a much lengthier evaluation process that would have taken several additional months to complete. Additionally, there is a cost reduction associated with this application being free to download and completely owned by the State rather than a school or district having to pay licensing fees to a pre-existing developer to use their application.

\$74,829.00 x 3 years=\$224,487.00 (Cost of on-premises servers)

\$1,021.50 x 4 months =\$4,086.00 (Cost of servers during development)

\$298,000.00 (Cost charged by the App Developer for design, development and implementation)

Grand Total: \$526,573.00

The remaining \$723,427.00 will be used to maintain the SafeTN mobile app in future years and to make any modifications that are deemed necessary at a later date.

Conclusion

Design, development and implementation of the SafeTN Mobile App occurred during the spring of 2019. TDOSHS and the app developer conducted on-site field testing with officials at several school districts and completed a soft rollout prior to fall 2019 school start. TDOSHS has created a marketing campaign for the start of the 2019 school year to advertise the app. Posters and flyers have been created for all 1,810 schools. TDOSHS will also be sending agents to schools not only to market the app but to educate students on properly identifying threatening and suspicious behavior and to teach effective safety procedures during an emergency.

TDOSHS has been extremely satisfied with the SOW process used to obtain a contract and build a partnership with a highly experienced supplier who has developed over 500 mobile apps for a broad range of public and private sector clients and that have been downloaded millions of times.

The mission of TDOSHS is to serve, secure and protect the people of Tennessee. The development of the SafeTN Mobile App will increase the effectiveness of TDOSHS to carry out their mission and make Tennessee a better place to live, work and raise a family.