

**Quality and Productivity Commission  
28<sup>th</sup> Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program  
"Los Angeles County: Ahead of the Curve"**

**2014 APPLICATION**

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):

**NAME OF PROJECT:**

**PD VIRTUAL OFFICE & VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVE**

**DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION:**

JANUARY 1, 2012

(Must have been implemented at least one year - on or before June 30, 2013)

**PROJECT STATUS:**

Ongoing       One-time only

**HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY  
SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT?**

Yes       No

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. Summarize the problem, solution, and benefits of the project in a clear and direct manner.

1 The Public Defender sought to improve attorney communications with incarcerated  
2 clients and reduce unproductive in-court wait time. The solution was to create a remote  
3 virtual office so that attorneys could video conference with incarcerated clients and  
4 access their work stations and technology tools from almost anywhere. The Public  
5 Defender deployed 449 video-enabled laptops to attorney staff to capitalize on the  
6 Court's Wi-Fi network at a total project cost of \$1,077,000. This Initiative improved the  
7 quality of representation of clients in custody by increasing the number of attorneys who  
8 could communicate with clients via video and increasing the frequency of attorney-client  
9 communications throughout the court process. It also resulted in cost savings and cost  
10 avoidance through reduced mileage and travel expenses estimated at \$450,000 for the  
11 first two years of the Initiative. Additionally, utilization of the same technology allowed  
12 attorneys to access their virtual office and convert unproductive in-court wait time  
13 estimated at over \$1 million dollars in the first two years. The Initiative's total cost  
14 savings and avoidance exceeded \$1.5 million so that the Public Defender realized a  
15 complete return on investment in less than two years.

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$ 703,125	\$ 58,512	\$ N/A	\$ 761,637	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

**SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER  
210 WEST TEMPLE STREET, 19<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

**TELEPHONE NUMBER**  
(213) 974-2811

**PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME**  
NOBLE KENNAMER

**TELEPHONE NUMBER**  
(949) 370-6762  
**EMAIL**  
nkennamer@pubdef.lacounty.gov

**PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE**  
(PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME)  
JOANNE ROTSTEIN

*Joanne Rotstein*

**DATE**  
7/14/14

**TELEPHONE NUMBER**  
(213) 974-3036

**EMAIL**  
jrotstein@pubdef.lacounty.gov

**DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE**  
RONALD L. BROWN

*Ronald L. Brown*

**DATE**  
7/14/14

**TELEPHONE NUMBER**  
(213) 974-2801

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1<sup>st</sup> FACT SHEET – LIMITED TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **Challenge, Solution, and Benefits** of the project.

**CHALLENGE**

Public Defender attorneys faced two significant challenges in their everyday practice of representing indigent clients charged with a crime. First, in order to provide effective client representation, Public Defender attorneys need to frequently communicate with clients as the case progresses. The growing complexity of legal issues requires ever-increasing attorney-client communications. Between 2000 and 2011, Public Defender communication with incarcerated clients occurred by driving an average of 46 miles round-trip to one of the seven major jails located throughout the County and having a face to face interview or by video conferencing from a shared office video unit to the jail and conducting a face to face client interview via video. However, fiscal constraints along with the need for increased communication led us to an effort to maximize the use of video conferencing for incarcerated client communications. The best opportunity for increased communications was through the implementation of laptop video conferencing for our attorneys so that they could video conference from their individual office or virtual work area—any space with Wi-Fi connectivity where a confidential conversation could be conducted.

Second, Public Defender attorneys spend a significant amount of time in court waiting for their cases to be called. While away from their offices, most attorneys did not have access to their work stations and technology tools. The Public Defender sought to increase the number of attorneys who could convert this unproductive time and increase productivity while waiting in court or other remote locations during the workday.

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**SOLUTION**

The solution was to acquire and deploy Wi-Fi and video capable laptop computers to 449 attorneys to increase the number of attorneys who could video conference with incarcerated clients, increase the frequency of those communications, and to increase the number of attorneys who could access their work stations and technology tools in order to recapture unproductive time.

Key implementation steps included: *Step 1* -- working collaboratively with the court to establish a plan and standards for Wi-Fi connectivity at each major court location in Los Angeles County and then implementing the plan; *Step 2* -- identifying a standard for lightweight laptop computers capable of serving as a video conferencing terminal and for use as a remote attorney work station and obtaining funding for the acquisition of the laptop computers; *Step 3* – distributing laptop computers along with appropriate training and software to attorney staff; *Step 4* – developing and implementing a strategy to effect change within the office to ensure acceptance of the expanded video conferencing capability and the use of remote access to legal digital solutions; and *Step 5* -- establishing metrics to assess the savings and cost avoidance in travel expenses and the recapture of previously unproductive time and applying the metrics to the project.

Unique critical factors required by this initiative included: (1) Increased collaboration with the Sheriff for an expanded video communication system; (2) Increased collaboration with the Courts to develop and implement adequate countywide Wi-Fi connectivity throughout Los Angeles County courthouses; (3) Remote access to digital legal representation tools; and (4) A change in the Public Defender culture to accept and apply these remote digital tools.

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LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN (DETAIL IS REQUIRED FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS): COUNTY STRATEGIC GOALS OF OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY AND INTEGRATED SERVICES ARE SUPPORTED THROUGH THE DEPLOYMENT OF A REMOTE VIRTUAL OFFICE TO COMMUNICATE WITH INCARCERATED CLIENTS AND RECAPTURE UNPRODUCTIVE DOWN TIME.

**BENEFITS**

Los Angeles County General Funds in the amount of \$ 1,077,000 were used to fund the project. Funds covered the cost of laptop computers, computer accessories and communications software.

This initiative improved the quality of representation of clients in custody. It increased the number of attorneys who could communicate with clients via video and increased the frequency of attorney-client communications throughout the court process. It also resulted in cost savings for eliminated mileage expenses and cost avoidance for avoided travel time. Additionally, utilization of the same technology resulted in increased productivity by attorney staff through enhanced remote connectivity to Public Defender technology tools from anywhere and at any time.

The project began in January 2012. The first year of metrics for laptop video conferencing demonstrated an increase of 15% or 1,800 video interviews over the baseline year, 2011. These additional 1,800 interviews resulted in cost savings (mileage) and cost avoidance (travel time) of nearly \$193,000. Second year data (2013) demonstrated an increase of 20% or 2,400 interviews over 2011 and cost savings and cost avoidance of \$256,512 in mileage and travel time. Mileage saved and travel expenses avoided in the first two project years totaled approximately \$450,000. Additionally, the Public Defender saw an increase in productivity through the use of the attorney's remote virtual office. It is estimated that each attorney recaptured approximately .3 hours per week for a total of 6,735 hours annually. This recaptured time equates to a cost avoidance of \$505,125 annually.

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**COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFIT):** If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation.

**Cost Avoidance:** Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes.

**Cost Savings:** A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes.

**Revenue:** Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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**Cost Savings and Cost Avoidance Calculations for Calendar Year 2013 over 2011 Baseline**

Cost avoidance comes from both components of this Public Defender Initiative: (1) Enhancing Video Communications and (2) Accessing Attorney Remote Virtual Office.

In 2013, the Public Defender avoided 2,400 additional trips over 2011 to County jails due to this Public Defender Initiative. The average mileage avoided for each round-trip is 46 miles and 1.1 hours of travel time for a total of 110,400 miles and 2,640 hours of travel time avoided. This equates to a cost savings of \$58,512 for mileage and a cost avoidance of \$198,000 for travel time. Additionally, use of the remote virtual office recaptured approximately .3 hours per attorney (laptop) per week for a total of 6,735 hours per year and cost avoidance of \$505,125 annually.

**Enhancing Video Communications**

2400 trips saved X 46 miles RT =110,400 miles X .53/per mile = \$58,512  
2400 trips saved X 1.1hours/RT=2,640 hours X \$75/hour = \$198,000  
 Total travel savings= \$256,512

**Accessing Attorney Remote Virtual Office**

449 attorneys X .3 hours X50 weeks = 6,735 hours X \$75/hour (average attorney hourly rate) = \$505,125 annually

**Total Cost Savings and Avoidance for calendar year 2013 = \$761, 637**