

**Panel: Public safety, IT often divided over technology funding**

Urgent Communications By Kimberlee Payton-Jones

May 22, 2014

ATLANTA--“We have run out of money. Now we have to think.”

This quote generally is attributed to Winston Churchill, but Steven Williams—a major and chief technology officer (CTO) for the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles—thought it aptly summed the day’s discussion at the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Law Enforcement Information Management (LEIM) Training Conference and Technology Exposition.

Williams made his comments immediately following yesterday’s panel discussion in which chief information officers (CIOs), information technology (IT) directors, and law-enforcement officials discussed the ever-changing relationship between IT and law enforcement during the budgetary process.

One constant theme is a disagreement about funding for new technology. Brian Kelly, CIO for Portage County, Ohio, said he believes that sharing costs is the best way to deal with budgetary constraints.

“Coming together and collaborating shared services and getting out of the silos that we have been in since Lincoln in this country,” is the best approach to covering the cost of much-needed technological upgrades, Kelly said.

There are more than 17,000 local-government entities in the U.S., and it makes sense for those entities to consolidate and share costs, he said.

“We should look at this an opportunity to keep officers on the street, but be able to implement some of this cool technology,” he said.

While consolidating resources might be an ideal solution, other members of the panel noted that law enforcement and cities are often antagonistic and not cooperative. Clint Hubbard, IT director for the Albuquerque, N.M., police department and former state law-enforcement officer, noted that part of the problem is that “elected officials just don’t understand the true costs” associated with running a department.

“My budget is only for staff. There is no budget for anything else,” Hubbard said. “People don’t have an appreciation of how much technology there is and how much it costs.”

Another source of frustration is that there is no one person or department responsible for implementing new technology, Hubbard explained. As such, even if there was an adequate budget for new technology, it is difficult to get it implemented.

Public-safety officials can help matters by being as clear as possible when seeking technology funding, according to Bill Schrier, the [FirstNet](#) state point of contact for the state of Washington and former chief technology officer (CTO) for the city of Seattle.

Law enforcement “needs to be more transparent in what they are doing and how they are using technology,” Schrier said.

While funding for new technology is an issue, another issue is the fact that much of the technology available to law enforcement is underutilized.

“There is technology sitting in organizations that is not even being used to a tenth of its capability,” said Mike King, national law-enforcement manager for Esri, which develops GIS software.

All of the panelists agreed that being more creative about the use of the technology that is available to them, including social-media outlets, is the best way to work within the parameters of their funding limits.

[Link to Article](#)

[Link to Urgent Communications News Articles](#)