



MCIS NEWSLETTER

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Recap of SP2011

In September the MCIS organization performed their Strategic Planning for 2012-2013. The meeting was held at Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids, MN and the event started with an open house at the MCIS new offices. Our attendance for the conference had 53 participants of which there were 13-Assessors, 10-Auditor Treasurers, 4- Recorders, 1- Payroll/Financial, 10-MIS, 12-MCIS, and 1 moderator. Below I will provide an overview of the results of strategic planning; but for the details of the conference and to view a draft of the final report, please refer to the Strategic Planning web site page.

With the "Rewrite" project in the rear view mirror and good progress made on the 2010-2011 issues, the conference attendees spent time on emerging trends, brainstorming issues, and then defining the top few issues. The following is an overview of the issues identified:

Platform Flexibility: i-Series platform future

A topic brought up by the MIS group, but not handled properly during the sessions, was the concern of the i-Series platform being a long-term approach for the MCIS organization. The goals are:

- Determine the current issues/concerns Counties are having with the i-Series platform.
- Using the strategic plan outlined, how does it address the concerns or what is lacking.
- Work with the MCIS Board to determine long-term platform.

Platform Flexibility: Browser based interface

Modernize the "user access/interface experience" to the i-Series applications that perform inquiry, maintenance and print/batch processing directives. The goals are:

- Ability to utilize the browser
- Ability to utilize "windows" type interface such as drop down boxes, navigation panes, better utilization of mouse, incorporate additional screen real-estate, buttons, tabs, and so forth
- Remove dependency on function keys
- Improve the intuitiveness to get around once inside the application
- Promote accessibility through other devices
- Improve public's ability to utilize specific areas of the system

Recap of SP2011Continued

Data Dictionary

Inability to easily interpret/identify data elements, interrelationship of data/tables, and structure of the tables without the assistance of MCIS staff. Thus, we need to create a data dictionary that accomplishes the following:

- User friendly, query-able, on MCIS website, updates frequently
- Implement a version quickly on “prioritized” tables that can be expanded over time
- Needs to satisfy needs of multiple departments

Platform Flexibility: Improve flexibility/accessibility of i-Series platform

With the increase demand to improve public access to information and the need to access MCIS software data from other non i-Series platforms, we need to improve “ease of access” to/from 3rd party applications and platforms. The goals are:

- Create “tools/utilities” which open up access to MCIS software systems data from other platforms/languages.
- Allow county staff and 3rd party to use tools they are accustomed to retrieve and update data.
- Open up accessing information through other devices.
- Reduce dependency on MCIS staff to support integrating/interfacing specific solutions.
- Potentially utilize technologies that allow for ease of augmenting staff with external resources

Hosting: Shared Services Considerations

With an increasing demand to contain costs within member counties, there is a need to look at services that could be shared between counties that promote savings. Besides the i-Series, the counties should identify services that have the potential to be shared and would have favourable impact to on-going costs. For example: email hosting contracts, group purchase on software product, and so forth; but should not be limited to an MIS focus.

Hosting: i-Series

With MCIS development focused on the i-Series and limited staff at counties involved with the support of the i-Series, assess feasibility, and approach for MCIS hosting software products associated with i-Series. Goals of this initiative:

- Network Administration duties hosted at MCIS for i-Series
- Equipment resource sharing occurring at hosted site
- Support proper interactive and printing performance levels
- Contain and/or reduce cost versus county ownership

Scope of Services

Within the context of the joint powers agreement, how can MCIS achieve the goals of our mission statement while containing costs and continuing to meet member county needs. The goals are:

- To explicitly define services
- To educate members on services, and changes to services.

The strategic plan that was developed looked at all of these issues as one and presented a proposal to the MCIS Board on October 27, 2011, on how to address these issues over the next few years. But the plan placed the i-Series as the platform, and before the plan can be refined; that issue needs to be addressed. As a result, the MCIS Board formed a subcommittee of Jaci Nagle(Koochiching/Board Chair), Gary Griffin (CWC), and Steve McMahon (Lake) to provide information back to the MCIS Board at the January 26, 2012 Board Meeting regarding the platform issue. At that time, we will have more information on how to refine and proceed on these strategic issues.