State of Missouri
2009 Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity
Executive Summary

Team Name: Offender Finance Office

Nominator: Lenard D. Lenger

Nominating Department: Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC)

Category: Process Improvement

Executive Summary: Historically, the department releases over 18,000 offenders annually and with each release, the offenders were given up to $200 from their personal account and additional funds for transportation if needed, all in the form of cash. Any remaining balances of their personal accounts were provided to the offenders in the form of a check. Institutional couriers ("runners") picked up offender release funds from central office and transported them back to the institution. Petty cash funds were utilized when offender releases were processed with short notice.

To address the inefficiencies of this process, in December 2007 the Offender Finance Office (OFO) launched a pilot of the Debit Card Program for offenders released from the DOC. The success of the pilot program has been a resounding success and has since been implemented at all DOC institutions. This program has also been duplicated by several companies now offering a similar service to state departments of corrections.

The offender Debit Card Program has allowed the DOC to process offender releases more efficiently, timely, and most importantly, securely. Below are just a few of the benefits resulting from the implementation of this program, both for the department and the offender.

- Eliminates the need for release cash at the central office and institutional locations.
- Eliminates the need for institutional couriers to stop at Offender Finance to pick up and deliver release information.
- Releases are processed more quickly and efficiently.
- Releases can now be processed at non-conventional times, after 5 PM and on weekends.
- Virtually eliminates the theft or loss of cash assets.
- Offenders have instant access to all of their funds.
- Offenders do not have to locate a place to cash checks issued to them by the department.
- Offenders do not have to absorb check cashing fees.
- Offenders are able to recover their funds if the card is lost or stolen.
- Offenders have a private PIN number to access their funds.
- The cards are good at any bank ATM or establishment that takes debit or credit cards.
- Offenders have access to a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week customer service via a toll-free 800 number and a website provided by the issuer of the debit cards.

The offender Debit Card Program highlights the DOC's commitment to the Missouri Reentry Process (MRP). MRP's aim is to increase public safety and decrease victimization by preparing offenders to be productive, law-abiding citizens.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Department: **Corrections (DOC)**

1. **Project or team name.**

Offender Finance Office

2. **List the name of all team members, job titles, state agency department, and/or community organization.**

Rodney Kueffer, Fiscal & Administrative Manager, DOC   Darlene Wansing, Accountant II, DOC
Tracy Clennin, Accountant I, DOC   Shana Carl, Account Clerk II, DOC
Jacquelyn Heiman, Account Clerk II, DOC

3. **Nomination category.**
   (Check *only one*)

   ☐ INNOVATION   ☐ CUSTOMER SERVICE

   ☒ PROCESS IMPROVEMENT   ☐ TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

   ☐ EFFICIENCY

4. **Describe why you selected this nomination category.**

Although the Debit Card Program easily incorporates all nomination categories, we have chosen Process Improvement because it really improves and enhances the process of releasing offenders under many scenarios while minimizing the use of staff resources.

II. BACKGROUND

1. **When did the team begin?**

The Offender Finance Office (OFO) is a sub-section of the department's Fiscal Management Unit. As such, this sub-section has been in existence since the department became a separate cabinet level department in 1981. The OFO began the research and development of this program in May 2007.

2. **When did the team implement this project?**

The Debit Card Program was piloted in December 2007 and implemented state-wide in May 2008.

3. **How long has the project been implemented?**

   ☐ 0 - 3 Months   ☐ 4 – 6 Months   ☐ 7 - 9 Months

   ☐ 10 – 12 Months   ☒ 12 or more   ☐ On-going Project

III. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENT

1. What did the team accomplish? (*Use specific data and examples to identify accomplishments and whom benefited: i.e. agency, division, department, citizens, individuals, etc. Information must be included for nomination to be considered for GAQP.*)

The Debit Card Program has, first and foremost, benefited the offenders because they now have full access to all their funds upon release. With these funds at their disposal, they are able to access many services to assist in their transition back into the communities...services like transportation, housing, meals, etc. In addition, the program has enhanced security because the department is no longer transferring an estimated $2 million in cash across the state via runners. And finally, the program has reduced the amount of time to process a release from 3 days to just a few minutes.

2. Which of the following describes the benefits of the accomplishment? (Check all that apply and provide an explanation)

☒ cost reduction   ☒ time savings

☒ improved process   ☒ other: describe

4. Explain how the accomplishments of the team are beyond regular duties and responsibilities (150 words or less). The accomplishments of the team are within their regular duties and responsibilities. However, together they have assessed an existing process and introduced the use of technology to enhance the process, thereby benefiting both staff and offenders. In addition, the debit card release program has resulted in reductions in staff, increased turn times, and greater internal controls.

IV. MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION

1. Explain how the team measured and evaluated this project (Describe in detail the process and results).

There are a number of ways by which this process was evaluated as outlined below:

1. Turn time – the team determined that the existing process would typically require up to three (3) days to process a release. The institution would receive notice of a scheduled offender release and prepare the necessary paperwork for transmission to Central Office. Central Office would evaluate the offenders account for any outstanding judgments, debts, etc. before determining the balance owed the offender. This amount of cash is then counted and prepared for transmission back to the institution. The institutional "runner" arrives at Central Office when the cash is again counted and verified in the presence of the runner, then secured in a locked box and taken to the institution's business office. The business office opens the locked box and again counts and verifies the amount. The cash is again counted and verified in the presence of the offender upon his release. With the electronic release card process, the turn time from notice of release to providing the offender with a debit card loaded with his balance can now be accomplished in a matter of minutes.

2. Internal Control – Internal Control is enhanced because staff are no longer required to count cash at the various steps in the process. The offender's accounts are kept on an electronic ledger, much like a normal banking operation. Once an offender's account has been evaluated for any outstanding debt, the balance is transferred electronically to a clearing account that is used to load the debit card by our third party vendor. Additionally, the new process provides much greater security of funds because the department is no longer transferring funds via runners over Missouri's streets and highways. The department has estimated it previously transferred over $2 million dollars via runners under the old system.

3. Staff Reductions – The old system required several staff to be knowledgeable of how to process an offender release. Runners from each of our 21 institutions would arrive at Central Office daily to pick up cash, etc. placing demands on staff to process these releases timely so the runner could make it back to their respective institution. The counting of cash and validating the paperwork presents a cumbersome and time consuming challenge for staff. By processing releases electronically, a single person can process multiple releases much more quickly, freeing up other staff to perform or be reallocated to other duties or areas of responsibility. The department

estimates the new debit release card program has resulted in a reallocation of 2 staff positions at Central Office with additional staff savings at the institutional level, estimated at one-half of an FTE per site that was also freed up to perform other duties.

2. Are the benefits derived from this project: (Check only one.)

☒ Recurring   ☐ One-time

3. Please explain in 300 to 500 words.

The ability to process offender releases electronically from Central Office is efficient, economical, and safe. By processing releases electronically, the department is able to avoid the expense of having "runners" travel to Central Office to pick up cash to transport back to the institution and issued to the offender.

V. RECOGNITION/AWARDS

1. Has this project ever been nominated for the Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity? If yes, when?

No.

2. If yes, for which category was it nominated?

n/a

3. Has this project received any other awards or recognition in the past? If yes, describe.

No.

VI. NOMINATOR'S INFORMATION

NOMINATING DEPARTMENT

Corrections

Name	Signature	Telephone Number	E-Mail Address
Lenard D. Lenger	*Lenard D. Leng*	573.526.6441	Lenard.Lenger@doc.mo.gov

VII. DEPARTMENT COORDINATOR INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT

Corrections

Name	Signature	Telephone Number	E-Mail Address
Mary Ann Reeter	*Mary Ann Reeter*	573-526-6553	MaryAnn.Reeter@doc.mo.gov

VIII. DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR APPROVAL

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR'S NAME	DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE*
George A. Lombardi	*G. A. L.*

Nomination must be signed **ONLY** by the Department Director to be eligible for consideration.
Nominations not signed by the Department Director will be returned.