

Not only did Windward Reports meet all of LESA's necessary criteria, such as sophisticated customization and integration features, but "being able to use Word as an editor was a big selling point," says Mark Knutson, Assistant Director, IT.

# Windward Reports Protects and Serves LESA

**F**or law enforcement organizations, accurate record keeping isn't merely good business practice; it's a matter of life and death. That's why when the Law Enforcement Support Agency (LESA) of Pierce County, Washington, the city of Tacoma and several surrounding communities needed to overhaul its record keeping system, it turned to Windward Reports to help protect the more than 800,000 citizens it serves.

## The Organization

LESA was formed as a result of an inter-local agreement between the City of Tacoma and Pierce County in 1974 to provide cost-effective, united police and sheriff emergency communications services. A few years later, the organization consolidated its records management and technology. LESA supports 14 law enforcement agencies, and about 165 employees work in four divisions: Communications (9-1-1), Records Management, Administration, and IT. The IT group writes most of the software for law enforcement, such as warrants, a report writer template, the records management system, and more.

## The Challenge

The IT staff supports more than 1,600 users who access the flagship Records Management System from their city or



rural office, in the field, or on the go via laptop in their patrol cars. Add to this the fact that LESA has the capacity to store almost 30 terabytes of information, and you can see what a challenge it is to provide smooth access to a large database of information for so many users.

Until recently, the IT group was using a basic third party tool to link users to the records system, but this tool had little flexibility. For example, when the staff needed to change a report tem-

plate, they needed to contact the third party and wait for them to make the change. It was an inefficient process, so in January 2007, the staff began looking around for a new reporting software solution. Staff members came up with a functionality list that included the following criteria:

**Streamlined reports.** Because police reports can be very large and dynamic, the reports needed to be able to omit

unnecessary sections and not have empty placeholders.

✓ **Customization.** It was crucial that the new reports could be customized to match the look of the previous reports so that users didn't need to be trained to use and understand the new reports.

✓ **Integration.** The staff couldn't afford, both in terms of time and money, to overhaul their entire system, so the software needed to be able to integrate into existing products.

✓ **Tailor-made look and feel.** Police records have specific requirements in terms of look and feel. Some examples include the ability to print text vertically (think case numbers along the side of a report), the ability to print one section on multiple pages, and a header and footer on each page along with a "special" footer (a records processing block that is affixed to the bottom of the first page).

✓ **Variety of output formats.** The documents must not be editable. Since PDF is the industry standard for this, LESA needed PDF as well as other output format options.

✓ **Authentication features.** Those viewing the reports must be able to distinguish the records as official via some type of watermark.

✓ **Back-end flexibility.** The reporting software must work both on local machines and on a Web server.

### The Solution

LESA's IT staffers conducted research online to see which various reporting tools might meet their criteria. They discovered Windward Reports, which enables any user, technical or non-technical, to design reports using AutoTag, an easy-to-use add-in for Microsoft

Word or Microsoft Excel. Report designers simply open up Word and create their own designs. After using the trial version available through Windward's Web site, LESA created some preliminary reports and realized Windward was the right solution.

"From a technical point of view, Windward was very easy and flexible to integrate," says Mark Knutson, Assistant Director, IT. "Just a few lines of code were needed."

Not only did the software meet all the necessary criteria laid out above, but "being able to use Word as an editor was a big selling point," Knutson adds. "This makes it nice to give a report to techies and non-techies alike."

### The Results

Now that LESA is using Windward Reports, where staff members can create and change report templates on the fly, the agency is saving significant time in creating reports. No longer do they have to wait hours or even days to edit a report; a LESA employee can create or edit a report in minutes. And that's beneficial given the number of reports the agency deals with.

Reports are distributed in two different ways: to clients outside of the network, and also via the internal Web server. This latter method is in use almost constantly; since mid-March, it has generated about 1,600 reports per weekday, with roughly 700 reports on weekends.

And LESA's reporting needs won't stop here. The IT department plans to convert an additional application, a distribution process that sends completed reports to outside individuals and groups, such as prosecutors.

"We'd like to reiterate that Windward as an agency has been great to work with," Knutson says. "They've been really responsive."



### About Windward Reports

*Windward Studios has been in business since 1995. Based in Boulder, Colorado, the company was formed to develop innovative software products for both enterprise and individual customers. Windward Reports is the only comprehensive report generator to use Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel as a layout tool, thus cutting the learning curve to virtually nil while saving time and money for both technical and non-technical users alike.*

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