



NEWS AND NOTES FROM NEW MEXICO

THE COMPREHENSIVE IMPAIRED DRIVING PROJECT

In February 2009 Governor Bill Richardson declared that New Mexico has gone from being the worst State in terms of impaired driving to being seen as a model in the fight against impaired driving. “Our solutions are working,” he said. “We have changed the culture in New Mexico. No one thought it was possible, but it has happened.”

According to the New Mexico Department of Transportation, alcohol-related deaths are down 35 percent since 2002. Success like this does not occur by chance. Leadership at all levels is a driving component in reducing the numbers of alcohol-related fatalities. From the Governor’s office to the local community organizer, leadership and hard work can and will make a difference in reducing impaired driving.

Previous issues of *News and Notes From New Mexico: The Comprehensive Impaired Driving Project* focused on the various leadership components of the model the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau (TSB) worked to develop. Starting at the top with the Governor, TSB, the DWI czar, the DWI Leadership Team, communication specialists, the sheriffs and deputies in the project counties, to the people working at the community level to support the entire program; leadership, in its various forms, has been instrumental to success. However, behind the scenes of all of this activity is the project manager, the person who brings all these players together, handles the details of the project, and ensures that all of the components are working in concert to effect true impaired driving system improvement. Issue 4 of *News and Notes from New Mexico* will take a look at project management and the role of the project manager in leading and directing the various components of this effort.

COMPREHENSIVE IMPAIRED DRIVING PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In September 2004, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, through a competitive procurement process, awarded a cooperative agreement to the New Mexico Department of Transportation’s Traffic Safety Bureau (TSB) to test a model to improve a State’s comprehensive impaired driving system.

The development of the project management team for this multi-faceted effort evolved over time. Initially, the acting TSB chief, Mike Sandoval, served as the project manager. Not only was Sandoval responsible for the day-to-day responsibilities of this project, he was also responsible for New Mexico’s entire traffic safety program. TSB district program managers who are responsible for communication with enforcement agencies throughout the State supported Sandoval as the project grew exponentially. As plans for this project crystallized, it became increasingly apparent that a full-time project manager was needed to handle this massive endeavor. In this case, TSB determined that hiring a project manager under contract best suited the State’s needs.

TSB determined that it needed a person with the skills and experience to work effectively with each component of the impaired driving system and who could motivate individuals to take action. TSB selected Maria Martinez as the project manager. Martinez has a long history of pulling coalitions together for common goals. She served as director of the Division of Motor Vehicles and thus had the working knowledge of the impaired driving system. She was appointed by the Governor to serve on the working group that developed the initial *New Mexico Multi-Agency DWI Strategic Plan*. Martinez had the recognition and respect of her peers providing the opportunity to work independently at all levels of the public and private sectors.

COORDINATING NEW MEXICO'S IMPAIRED DRIVING DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

One of the most critical aspects of the New Mexico impaired driving demonstration project has been the management of this multi-agency initiative and its many contractual and communications challenges. Martinez accepted the responsibility for managing this mammoth coordination effort. She worked directly with Sandoval and in close coordination with Rachel O'Connor, New Mexico's DWI czar.

Project Management New Mexico Impaired Driving Demonstration Project



PROJECT MANAGER'S ROLE

As project manager, Martinez was responsible for all aspects of project implementation, collaboration, and outreach to both governmental agencies and to community leaders. As illustrated, the project manager served as the liaison and contact person for all project components. Coordination among and between each program component is key to successful project management. For example, she worked in concert with TSB district program managers to oversee subcontracts, provide project planning, and facilitate implementation with law enforcement agencies and other entities in the six New Mexico counties and the Navajo Nation included in the project. TSB district program managers augment consistent coordination with other law enforcement agencies, with other planned activities, within respective districts, with the activities of the overall project.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

High visibility law enforcement activities have been a key ingredient to the success in reducing alcohol-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities in New Mexico. For this project, high visibility impaired driving law enforcement is defined as periodic high intensity and sustained enforcement efforts, supported by a coordinated media publicity plan. It is critical to let the population know, through appropriate communication strategies, that law enforcement agencies are actively enforcing impaired driving laws and that law enforcement officers are seen by the driving public undertaking these enforcement activities. The cornerstone of this effort is the *Comprehensive Impaired Driving Enhanced Law Enforcement Plan*. This plan detailed the specific impaired driving enforcement activities to be undertaken by the sheriff's department in each of the project counties for the upcoming quarter.

Working closely with participating enforcement agencies, Martinez worked to develop guidance, provide assistance to develop these plans, and coordinate with each outreach coordinator and TSB's media contractor. She interacted extensively with sheriffs, other agency administrators, and full-time DWI officers in each of the participating counties to achieve the objectives laid out in the plan.

Contract Management

TSB entered into contracts with the sheriff's department in the six New Mexico counties and the Navajo Nation to conduct enhanced impaired driving enforcement activities. In essence TSB funded DWI units in these counties and the Navajo Nation. TSB requires these participating law enforcement agencies to implement and maintain project activities with full-time, dedicated DWI officers, above and beyond usual DWI activities. Managing these contracts is one of Martinez's primary responsibilities. A primary goal of New Mexico's contract management process is to develop and maintain objectives for consistent and continued visibility law enforcement activities. Contract oversight and project management also involve processing reimbursements of salary, benefits, court overtime, training, and authorized equipment expenses. In general, contracts are executed for one- to two-year terms. An example of lessons learned in the area of contract management is the need for early execution of contracts. While development of contracts with some counties can be straightforward and timely, others require a more complex and lengthy contract and budget approval process at the local level.

Martinez worked with the project's enforcement agencies to align and coordinate local DWI enforcement activities with other local enforcement agencies to support New Mexico's four to six periodic Super Blitz enforcement periods and national crackdowns per year. Participating law enforcement agencies identify visibility techniques and conduct enhanced data-driven enforcement activities specific to a geographic area in each jurisdiction. An example of this multi-jurisdictional approach is the coordinated efforts among Rio Arriba County (north of Santa Fe) project officers and local park agencies to enforce anti-drinking laws on public lands during peak recreation seasons. The Rio Arriba Sheriff's Office project officers coordinate anti-DWI activities with the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. National Park Service, the New Mexico State Parks Division, area tribal law enforcement agencies, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Reporting and Data Collection

Reporting and data collection are, as with other initiatives, important elements of the New Mexico Impaired Driving Demonstration Project. Enforcement and other project data drive the analysis and evaluation of project goals, and although rarely exciting, this activity must be considered a priority.

Contractual agreements between participating enforcement agencies and TSB include monthly reporting requirements. As a part of the demonstration project, TSB developed an electronic reporting tool to facilitate data collection and analysis by the demonstration project manager who also oversees the reporting aspect of the project. Martinez trained lead officers from each participating agency to access and to enter information into an electronic database. The electronic data collection system captures arrest data and specific information about high visibility activity. Analysis of the enforcement activity levels and trends can reveal unique concerns and challenges that participating law enforcement agencies face. This information allows the TSB to address these concerns and challenges and provide assistance as needed.

Officer Training

Early in the project, Martinez conducted an assessment to identify current training levels of each participating DWI officer. The assessment included a review of the officer's overall DWI enforcement experience, number of years as an officer, training, and number of arrests. After this analysis, she worked with agency administrators to help respective officers to secure additional training identified by NHTSA and TSB. Mandatory training modules required for participation in the project include: the Standard Field Sobriety Training (SFST), Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP), Police as Prosecutors (POP), and Media Training.

Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Involvement

From inception of the project, NHTSA and TSB co-funded a traffic safety resource prosecutor (TSRP) to facilitate training for project law enforcement officers and local prosecutors. The project manager routinely coordinated with the TSRP to assist project officers with resources related to prosecution and court-related issues. The TSRP, working with or through Martinez, periodically provides statewide regional training for law enforcement officers and prosecutors in an effort to improve the use of evidence derived from video cameras, passive alcohol sensors, traffic records systems, and other innovative methods.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

The New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau is committed to continuing the support for the full-time DWI officers, the DWI Leadership Team, and other important aspects of the project. Martinez was charged with developing a plan to sustain these initiatives. The objective is to reduce TSB funding as agencies gradually institutionalize funding into their own budgets and agency DWI program operations. Contracts with participating law enforcement agencies include language that commits applicable governing bodies to continue fund-

ing once original funding ends. To begin the sustainability planning process, TSB assessed projected Federal and State funding levels for upcoming fiscal years. Second, TSB solicited feedback from lead officers and budget personnel from each participating agency. Based on this analysis TSB formulated a sustainability funding matrix to continue funding at decreased levels thus turning ownership over to the individual counties.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND STATEWIDE COORDINATION

As mentioned in earlier issues, the New Mexico impaired driving system includes important components such as the Governor's DWI Czar, a Governor's DWI Leadership Team consisting of members from State overarching agencies and advocacy groups, outreach coordinators, and a centralized communication plan. The project manager interacted with the DWI Czar and the Governor's DWI Leadership Team on a regular basis by providing policy input and strategic planning advice on integrating results of the NHTSA project into the comprehensive statewide system. Martinez's involvement with the Governor's DWI Leadership Team also provided an opportunity to interact and plan with other State agencies involved in similar or complimentary projects.

Coordination of the community outreach activities, conducted primarily via contract with a DWI prevention advocacy group, is another area where the project manager's oversight is important. Activities associated with the outreach portion of the project include formulation and implementation of community outreach strategies. Martinez provided direction and encouraged consistent community outreach efforts in support of high visibility law enforcement activities. She identified opportunities for local earned media to support the statewide communications plan. And she monitored outreach work plans to ensure consistency with the overall project goals. Attending quarterly meetings of the contractor's outreach staff to review and evaluate past quarter community outreach efforts and to plan for future activities was also very helpful.

Martinez was involved directly with communications planning, in particular the development of paid media resources (television, radio, outdoor, collateral, etc). She provided advice and input for media campaigns and DWI Super Blitz kickoff planning. As the program matured TSB hired a communications project manager to coordinate communications and media activities in concert with New Mexico DOT's public information staff. TSB needed this position due to the volume of communications and media work supporting the project and the overall statewide impaired driving program effort. Transitioning the responsibility for media activities as various project tasks increased served the project well. Once the communication project manager was on board, Martinez was

then able to redirect effort to the many management responsibilities and challenges relative to law enforcement and other program needs that arose as the project grew.

****Since this newsletter was first drafted, Maria Martinez left her role as the project manager for the The Comprehensive Impaired Driving Project to complete her doctoral studies at New Mexico State University. NHTSA wishes Maria the best and expresses appreciation for the time and effort she devoted to make this project successful.****

Identifying and empowering a program manager with diverse skills from motivator to enforcer contributed to the success of this effort. The management team led by Martinez provided the necessary direction, day-to-day guidance, collaboration, and coordination to effectively manage all key components of a comprehensive impaired driving program.

One of the key lessons NHTSA learned from this project is that a strong, dedicated program manager is the foundation that serves as the springboard for success. Managing a program of this nature on a part-time basis is not possible. Strong negotiation skills, solid organizational skills, a sound financial background, and the ability to bring together a diverse subset of people and organizations are the minimum requirements needed to effectively manage and affect the comprehensive impaired driving system.

NEED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

If you need additional information regarding the New Mexico Impaired Driving Demonstration Project, contact one of the following:

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