

## **2008 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION**

CSG reserves the right to use or publish in other CSG products and services the information provided in this Innovations Awards Program Application. If your agency objects to this policy, please advise us in a separate attachment to your program's application.

ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-S-06FL

**Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:**

State: Florida

Assign Program Category (applicant): **Corrections**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Program Name:   | <b>Absconder Initiative</b>  |
| 2. Administering Agency                                      | <b>Florida Department of Corrections</b>   |
| 3. Contact Person (Name and Title)                           | <b>Vernon Barber, Correctional Program Administrator</b>                           |
| 4. Address   | <b>2601 Blair Stone Rd., Tallahassee, Florida 32399</b>                            |
| 5. Telephone Number  | <b>(850) 922-0846, (850) 410-3437</b>  |
| 6. FAX Number  | <b>(850) 487-4427</b>  |
| 7. E-mail Address  | <a href="mailto:absconders@mail.dc.state.fl.us">absconders@mail.dc.state.fl.us</a> |
| 8. Web site Address  | <a href="http://www.dc.state.fl.us">http://www.dc.state.fl.us</a>                  |
| 9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program. |  |

**In early 2006 the Secretary of the Department of Corrections established a goal to reduce the number of absconders on record (44,040) by 20% within one year. Through development of new strategies to more efficiently investigate, track and resolve absconder cases, the total number of absconders was reduced by 11,320 or 25.67% exceeding the original goal of 20% by an additional 5.67%.**

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

**The absconder initiative began on February 28, 2006 and ended on February 27, 2007 however the new strategies developed during the initiative are still being utilized.**

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

**The Absconder Initiative was created to reduce the number of offenders who have active warrants for violation of probation with whereabouts unknown (absconders).**

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

- a. **A statewide advisory review committee was created to assist the Absconder Unit in developing and refining strategies to locate and apprehend absconders.**
- b. **Field Liaisons were identified in each area of the state to work closely with the Absconder Unit, field staff, and local law enforcement agencies to increase**

**absconder apprehensions. The Liaisons also worked with the community and local media groups such as “Crime Stoppers” to publicize high-risk absconders and generate leads from the public.**

- c. Staff was trained in each area of the state to more efficiently process tip and lead information and coordinate apprehension efforts.**
- d. An Absconder Unit Intranet web site was created to provide training and other absconder-related resources to field staff.**
- e. An Absconder Tracking Database was created to track and record the progress of absconder investigations.**
- f. A “Have You Seen Me?” section was added to the department’s public web site <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/apps/wanted/index.asp> to feature sex offender and other high profile absconders for the purpose of generating email tips. The web page receives in excess of 800,000 hits per month.**
- g. The Absconder Unit developed partnerships with the following government agencies to assist with locating and apprehending absconders:**
  - i. Florida Department of Children and Families**
  - ii. Agency for Workforce Innovation**
  - iii. Florida Department of Law Enforcement**
  - iv. Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles**
  - v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**
  - vi. U.S. Social Security Administration**
  - vii. Veterans Affairs**

**13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?**

**Although an Absconder Unit already existed at the Department’s headquarters, this was the first time an Absconder Initiative was implemented that involved staff on a statewide level.**

**The Absconder Initiative was an efficient use of limited resources and funding which promoted public safety, and established a great use of partnerships with other agencies. This initiative was implemented with no legislative mandate – just the Department’s own commitment to serving the public by reducing the absconder population.**

**14. What were the program’s start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)**

**The Absconder Unit was allocated two additional investigative positions at a cost of \$74,000 plus four additional support staff positions at a cost of \$70,720. The Department paid for internet search services including:**

- **Accurint (Search for absconder address information) - \$3,058.25**
- **Appriss (Identifies absconders booked into jail facilities in other jurisdictions) - \$60,000**
- **Social Security Death Index (Search conducted to identify deceased absconders) - \$3,500**

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

**The program cost during the time of the initiative was \$363,958. This included \$209,000 in salaries for 5 full time investigative positions, \$88,400 in salaries for 5 support staff positions and \$66,558.25 for the various internet services utilized during the project.**

16. How is the program funded?

**Legislative appropriation through the Department's General Revenue Fund.**

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

**No**

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

**Computers, Microsoft Office Programs, Internet Services such as Accurint and JusticeXchange, The Florida Crime Information Center and National Crime Information Center, The Departments Offender Based Information System and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Sexual Predator Database.**

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

**Yes, Former Secretary James McDonough**

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

**No**

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

**Yes, as a result of the new strategies implemented during the initiative, the total number of absconders has continued to decrease.**

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

- **The total number of Absconders was decreased by 25.67% in one year and continues to decline.**

- **The total number of Sex Offender Absconders was decreased by 38.76% in one year.**
- **Public Safety has been increased due to there being less wanted absconders on the streets.**
- **By establishing partnerships, the initiative achieved success without significant increase in workload for field staff and without a need to hire additional field staff to complete the task.**
- **The total effectiveness of the initiative was limited by the legal challenges related to extradition of offenders who have been located in other states.**

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

**Through absconder training, Field staff have become increasingly proficient with handling absconder issues on their own thereby involving more people in the absconder apprehension effort.**

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

**Other states can model their programs after Florida's Absconder Initiative, however they would still face limitations related to extradition of wanted offenders located in other states.**