State Probation Office Assesses Jail Occupancy Rate with Simulation

State Department of Probation

Success Story

Government

ProModel Optimization Suite

CHALLENGES

The mission of the Office of Probation for any state in the US is to provide seamless services to the victims, communities, offenders, and courts of that state. The administration of probation is a complex and ever-changing process. Recently a state probation organization's Sr. IT representative contacted ProModel looking for help understanding, analyzing, and improving its probation office processes. Its systems and infrastructure needed to be updated, but before that could begin they needed to understand the "As Is" condition of its processes and all that was involved.

During the project, the US Justice Department planned to release about 6,000 inmates early from prison—the largest one-time release of federal prisoners — in an effort to reduce overcrowding and provide relief to non-violent drug offenders who received harsh sentences over the past three decades. The inmates from federal prisons nationwide were set free between Oct. 30 and Nov. 2 of the same year. This followed action by the U.S. Sentencing Commission—that reduced the potential punishment for future drug offenders from the previous year and then made that change retroactive. The panel estimated that its change in sentencing guidelines eventually could result in 46,000 of the nation's approximately 100,000 drug offenders in federal prison qualifying for early release.

It became important to also determine the impact of this action on this state's probation services and local jail systems.

OBJECTIVES

The Probation Office was interested in using Predictive Analytics to analyze the as-is condition of its processes:

- Where might there be any bottlenecks or constraints?
- Assess the impact of the new law on the probation office workload and the local county jail occupancy rate.
- Where could other improvements be made?

SOLUTION

In order to model and simulate the current processes, they needed to be fully understood and documented. ProModel's resident lean expert was brought in to work with Office of Probation personnel to create a quick high-level Process Simulator Model of the voucher process. Together in a room with four or five probation team employees, ProModel documented in Microsoft Visio, the ins and outs of the voucher system. When this model was built and simulated, the results so closely resembled the realities of the current process and resource utilization of certain team members, that the go-ahead was given to proceed to a complete model of the voucher process.

The entire probation process was modeled and simulated by several experienced members of the ProModel consulting team, along with Office of Probation personnel. The following processes models were completed:

1. Voucher process
2. Juvenile probation process
3. Adult probation process
4. Problem-solving court process

One Part of the Overall Model

VALUE PROVIDED

As part of the law change, convicts who are guilty of certain felonies will spend part of their sentence in probation instead of spending all of it in prison. These felons are at a higher risk level than the current average probationer, and will likely cause a disproportionate workload increase on the probation officers as well as take up county jail space should custodial sanctions need to be implemented.

This simulation model clearly communicated that the current processes and resources available were not adequate to handle the predicted increases in probation candidates. Several areas of the process were evaluated for improvements and the model was used to validate several proposed IT enablers and Lean modifications.

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