



Mobile Data Hosting: An Overview

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Introduction

Today, more than sixty customers in 25 states provide mobile data hosting services for users of InterActMobile applications (InterActMobileCop® and InterActPocketCop®) in other agencies. Hosting arrangements vary in size from Kentucky, where the Kentucky State Police hosts over 250 local police and sheriff's departments statewide (as well as serving its own officers), to agencies that host one or two neighboring departments. In this whitepaper you'll find an explanation of hosting, a discussion of some of the key benefits, and a description of how InterAct Public Safety Systems can help host agencies build and manage a hosting service.

Hosting Defined

Hosting allows InterActMobile users in one agency to query state and federal data sources through another agency's mobile data system. In a hosting arrangement, one agency (the host agency) assumes responsibility for housing and maintaining InterAct's InfoServer™ software, server hardware and communications software and hardware on behalf of one or more other agencies (user agencies). The host agency provides access to the state Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS), National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and the International Justice and Public Safety Network (known as Nlets) for all end users. The host agency is also responsible for: a) providing network access to the server to all users, and b) maintaining the state interface connection.

Although each hosting arrangement is different, they all must address the same foundational requirements.

Organization

Hosting arrangements vary. Usually the host agency is also a mobile data user agency, but a non-user organization, such as a regional Public Safety Communications Center, can also serve as host (as long as it is able to meet state and CJIS security requirements). In some cases, hosting is part of a broader countywide or regional resource sharing arrangement that might include other systems or services, such as joint dispatch. In many cases, however, the hosting arrangement is developed and maintained exclusively for mobile data access and information sharing. In addition, the host and user agency jurisdictions do not have to be contiguous or even within the same county or region (although they must be in the same state).

Host and User Agency Responsibilities

Generally there is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the host and each user agency that details responsibilities of each party. The MOU typically covers, among other items, data and device security, and procedures for reporting issues and requesting help. There is also a process within each state for notifying the state CJIS (and obtaining approval where necessary) that any existing or new user agency mobile Originating Agency Identification (ORI) number will be using the host agency state connection. This process may require a letter of agreement from the host.

Financing

Financing arrangements also vary. In most cases where there isn't a separate direct funding source (e.g., county budget), the host agency assesses an annual user agency fee (in addition to an initiation fee). The fee structure is often based on the number of mobile devices and client licenses, although some hosting arrangements apply a flat fee per agency. In some cases the host agency also assumes responsibility for purchasing and maintaining all InterActMobile client licenses and related software; in others, each user agency purchases its own. (At least one hosting service requires participating agencies to purchase the client software from InterAct Public Safety Systems, but includes the annual software maintenance cost in the annual hosting support fee.)

Benefits of Hosting

A hosted service offers both cost and operational benefits to participating agencies.

Cost Savings for Hosted Agencies

Often the most compelling benefit to user agencies is a **significant reduction in cost**, especially in server and network hardware and software, and the personnel to support the system. Hosted agencies also benefit from volume pricing – based on all users in all participating agencies - for InterActMobile client licenses.

The Kentucky State Police estimated that it saves each hosted agency as much as \$175,000. A hosted agency in another state determined that it saved approximately 40% through its hosting arrangement with a neighboring jurisdiction. In the case of small departments with little or no IT support staff available, a hosted service is often the only way to bring mobile data to officers in the field.

Operational Benefits

Beyond cost savings for hosted agencies, hosting offers benefits to the end users in all participating agencies, including the host.

Information Sharing

Hosting also allows InterActMobile users in participating agencies – including the host agency - to share information, improving their operational effectiveness and helping protect their safety. Where agencies are linked to a common CAD system, such as InterActCAD, available police units from nearby communities can be dispatched through InterActMobile in incidents requiring mutual aid or crossing jurisdictions, such as pursuit of a suspect.

Improved Officer Safety

Even where there isn't a CAD link, mobile users in both host and hosted agencies can communicate silently with units in other departments and share information, such as photos or "be on the lookout" (BOLO) announcements. To target messages to only the appropriate users, dynamic groups can be easily set up through the InfoServer Administrator (ISA) tool so that only units in adjacent jurisdictions, for example, are visible to a user. Perhaps most importantly, in a hosted environment an "Officer Needs Assistance" alert from any user in any agency will be sent instantaneously to everyone in every agency, ensuring better backup and improving officer safety.

Benefits to the Host Agency

In addition to realizing improvements in operations and officer safety by sharing information more easily and more widely with other participating agencies, the host agency can benefit in several ways:

Cost Recovery

As indicated above, many host agencies assess a fee for providing hosting services. Generally this fee is structured to cover the cost of acquiring and maintaining central site hardware and software and providing support. By spreading these costs across multiple agencies, everyone – including the host agency – benefits financially. Moreover, the additional funding can enable the host agency to dedicate personnel resources to system administration that wouldn't be otherwise affordable, which improves the level of support for host agency users as well.

Economies of Scale

Whether or not the host agency assesses fees to recover the costs of hosting other agencies, it benefits directly from volume pricing for InterActMobile client licenses for its own end users. (Note: the lower pricing extends to the host agency even if user agencies purchase their client software licenses directly.) These same economies of scale can also apply to network charges and other expenses.

Increased Access to Federal Funding

Precisely because of the enhanced operational effectiveness that hosting provides, federal grant funding selection criteria emphasize regional information sharing and interoperability. Many InterAct customers have successfully applied for DOJ and DHS grant funding to initiate or expand a hosted consortium – reducing the cost to local government.

Regional Leadership

While other benefits may be more easily quantified, the opportunity that hosting provides an agency to become a visible leader in the use of technology and information sharing can be equally critical to success. Several local and county government level host agencies have even included state and federal law enforcement agency users in their systems, building a strong foundation for interagency and intergovernmental cooperation that can translate to other initiatives.

Support Available for Host Agencies

InterAct can help agencies in instituting and managing a hosting service in several ways. First, we've designed our products to work efficiently in a hosting environment to both simplify hosting from a system administration perspective and enhance the ability of hosted agencies to share information. As the Kentucky State Police experience indicates, there is virtually no limit to the number of hosted agencies or end users that can be supported.

Product Support

Some of the key features and new products that support hosting include:

- > **Heterogeneous network support.** InfoServer's support for heterogeneous networks means that users in different jurisdictions can be on different wireless networks – radio or IP-based. And all of them can communicate seamlessly with each other.
- > **InfoServer Administrator.** ISA, a web-based tool included in the current standard version of InfoServer, simplifies the process of setting up and managing different groups and other host agency tasks. ISA can be accessed from any location, allowing the host agency System Administrator to resolve problems quickly – even after hours. **Role-based Security (RBS)**, a new ISA feature, significantly reduces the time the host agency has to spend on user agency management. With RBS a System Administrator can extend defined administrative privileges to end users or other managers, while maintaining full and secure control over what those privileges are and who has access to them. For example, a designee in each hosted agency can be assigned the responsibility for password maintenance and other end-user management tasks for just that agency, while overall system management is restricted to designated System Administrators at the host site.
- > **iPass.** iPass Package Building, with Silent Install moves updated releases of InterActMobileCop to the laptop in the patrol car over a network and installs them with minimal (or no) user intervention. In a hosted environment where there are limited technical resources at hosted agency sites, this significantly decreases the administrative overhead and time associated with deploying a new software release in the field.
- > **InfoServer Enterprise.** This special edition of InfoServer packages iPass and a number of other Performance Management and End User Productivity components for hosting environments. This edition also includes **Field Interview Tracker (FIT)™**, which expands information sharing across hosted agencies by including any reports of prior contact with a person or vehicle submitted by officers in other participating agencies when a query is run. With InfoServer Enterprise, these enhancements are available at substantially less cost than if purchased separately.
- > **InfoExchange®.** This add-on tool allows the host and hosted agencies to share information in records management systems (RMS) and other case management databases. With InfoExchange, when the officer makes a standard NCIC/CJIS query by name/DOB, by SSN, or by OLN via InterActMobileCop or InterActPocketCop, a person query is also automatically generated against the RMS Master Name or other target database. With InfoExchange, there's no separate query entry, and the response is exactly where the officer expects it to be - in the InterActMobileCop NCICDisplay or InterActPocketCop Summary Screen.
- > **Matching Recent Inquiry.** MRI Data Sharing, standard with InterActMobile, gives an officer a record of prior queries on that person or vehicle that might be important to the field interview or disposition of the current incident – even if the prior incident was in another participating jurisdiction.
- > **MobileRescue™ and SecureMessage™.** These separate but complementary client applications allow you to bring non-InterActMobile users into the hosted environment. InterActMobileRescue is a CAD dispatch and messaging solution designed for Fire and Rescue agencies that provides data communications interoperability with InterActMobile units. With SecureMessage, InterAct's complementary messaging solution for laptops and handhelds, communications interoperability can be extended to agencies that are not InterActMobile users. SecureMessage can be used to support multi-jurisdictional mutual aid plans, allowing public safety agencies from different jurisdictions with different and incompatible mobile data and voice radio systems to communicate and share information seamlessly with InterActMobile users, as well as each other, through the host site.

Additional InterAct Support Resources

InterAct can also help you get up and running as a host, by:

- > Linking you up with other host agencies to share experiences and approaches.
- > Providing sample MOUs, fee arrangements and other documents that you can use as a starting point in developing your own approach to hosting.
- > Providing assistance in installing and configuring InfoServer (e.g., establishing dynamic user groups by agency) to optimize performance and information sharing.
- > Conducting a no-cost readiness review of your planned host site hardware, software and network resources.

For more information on hosting and how InterAct can help, call 1.800.768.3911.

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InterAct CONNECTIONS FRAMEWORK



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InterAct Public Safety makes Connections for Life™ providing both stand-alone and fully integrated mission-critical public safety and homeland security systems and products. As the pioneers of the first three-screen E911 system 20 years ago, InterAct's passion for innovation is leading the way to Next Generation telephony, dispatch, records management, and mobile data systems. Founded in 1975, InterAct Public Safety continues to extend the definition of public safety with unique applications like intelligent digital video surveillance, alert notification and crisis management systems. InterAct makes it possible for first responders from private, state, local and national agencies to decrease response times and increase their effectiveness in the communities they serve. InterAct is an ISO 9001:2000 certified company.