

# **2008-2009 GRAND JURY REPORT**

## **Riverside County Business Registration and Licensing Program**

### **Background**

Riverside County, which was chartered on May 9, 1893, consists of five supervisorial districts and is the fourth largest county in the State of California. It provides governmental services to a population of two million plus. There are 26 cities in Riverside County.

Since its inception and especially since 1980, the tremendous growth in county population required more expansion of governmental entities. As information technology evolved, many agencies developed proprietary information storage systems to enhance their specific service to the public.

The 2005-2006 Riverside County Grand Jury issued a report critical of the lack of a countywide business registration and licensing database. On March 21, 2006 the Riverside County Board of Supervisors had approved the use of the Business Registration and Licensing Program (BRLP).

Subsequently, on August 29, 2006 the Board of Supervisors approved the Grand Jury report. The Board of Supervisors' response was modified and it recommended further analyses on the sharing and access of the BRLP database by the Weights and Measures Division (WMD) of the Agriculture Commission. The WMD was identified for specific use analyses due to its responsibility to monitor the vending of products by volume, weight or other measure.

However, as a result of the Board of Supervisors' 2006 recommendation, the BRLP computer system was assigned to the Department of Building and Safety on November 1, 2006. In January 2007 the Business Registration and Licensing Division (BRLD) was created to provide a database of businesses located in unincorporated areas of the county. (This database could then be used as the sole mechanism to identify current unregistered businesses.)

### **Findings**

1. The intended application of BRLP is to register businesses in the unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The intent went further by expecting, but not requiring, other county departments to input their permitting information. This would result in the capture of fees not currently collected by the county.

2. As it now exists, the BRLP does not serve the purpose for which it was intended. This causes many instances of duplication of effort or no action at all, resulting in unnecessary expense and/or loss of revenue. Investigation has shown there is little or no utilization of the program to notify other county agencies, which may have an interest in features of the same business.
3. The BRLP is designed as a two-tier system, the first tier of which contains only information that is not of a personal nature. The casual seeker of information can retrieve no more than the name of the business, address, telephone number and type of business in which it is engaged. The second tier, which is only accessible to personnel of the BRLD, contains much more data protected by privacy statutes. This tier's data is only given to those who make a formal request to BRLD personnel and can show a legitimate need for the information. The program requires several follow-up efforts via telephone and/or e-mail to finally obtain the necessary data.
4. Due to lack of direction by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and the County Executive Officer to the implementation of BRLP, the result is an ineffective system, which does not fulfill its original intent.

## **Recommendations**

**Riverside County Board of Supervisors  
Riverside County Executive Officer  
Agriculture Commissioner  
Director, Weights and Measures Division  
Director, Transportation and Land Management Agency  
Director, Department of Building and Safety  
Director, Chief Information Officer,  
Riverside County Information Technology**

1. When this system is properly implemented, its use must be mandated by the Board of Supervisors to enable all county departments and agencies to develop data and share appropriate information with other agencies having similar needs.
2. Redesign or replace the BRLP with software providing the necessary data required by all county agencies to meet the needs for which it was originally intended. It is essential that all permitting departments of the county government, which have legal requirements, enter data into and retrieve data from the system on a timely basis.

3. Redesign or replace BRLP to allow direct access to the second tier by those agencies, which require specific information for their operations, which would be more cost effective.
4. The Riverside County Board of Supervisors and County Executive Officer must be more active in the implementation and monitoring of the previously approved countywide computer system.

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