Electronic Warrant Payments: Shared Services Program Frequently Asked Questions

Questions:

1. Is there a kiosk on site for individuals to pay their warrants?
   - Payment services are currently not available via a kiosk device. Payment services are offered on-site via card swipe and remotely whereby the cardholder conducts transaction via phone (toll-free call to a Live Agent Call Center Specialist) and via the internet by accessing GovPayNet website or by a link on the participating agency’s website.

2. There is normally a 2 day delay for processing credit card payments. Would we be able to identify what money came in for what payment or would we just receive a large batch?
   - Funds are transferred via ACH on the next business day at 3 pm ET and will be acknowledged by the receiving bank within 48 hours of funds transfer. An ACH Transfer Report is transmitted by GovPayNet when funds are transferred and that report contains details of payments comprising the total funds transferred.

3. How many individuals in the jails actually have credit cards to make payments? Has there been any analysis of how useful this will be in our jails?
   - This will vary from city to city. For example, in Plano and Arlington, they had a much higher usage of credit card payments than Grand Prairie. The level of credit card usage will differ based on how the information is relayed to the public. If someone calls and inquires about getting a friend/family member out of jail, it could be explained to them that the credit card option may be faster. In places like Arlington where they do not take cash (aside from exact payment via a money order), they would be able to see a greater benefit from this system. GovPayNet is a payment service provider whose specialty is servicing the criminal justice sector and it is their experience based upon 15 years in servicing this niche that many individuals have the ability to pay via credit card on-site or can contact someone to make payments remotely. Communicating the credit card payment option will be very important for each agency to assist with the success of this initiative. GovPayNet will provide media tools to the NCTCOG and each participating agency to assist in making the public aware that payment via credit card is a viable, simple, and convenient option.

4. Can other people make payments for the arrested individual?
   - All remote payments (payments made by phone and web) are payments when the cardholder is not present, so the answer to this question is YES. The arrested defendant can contact others to make the payment on his/her behalf, or agency staff can communicate these payment options and pertinent details for payment to callers to the jail or the court facility, and/or payment information can be made available on the participating agency’s website about this payment program.

5. Can the universal plea form be attached electronically with the documents?
   - The plea form now requires the defendant to sign the document and a witness is required to the signature. Attaching such through GovPayNet is not currently possible and courts would likely require original documents should they forfeit a cash bond or in the event a fine is paid and a plea of guilty or not guilty is entered by the defendant.

6. Is there still an opportunity to add/edit the universal bond form?
   - Yes, it is still open for discussion, though the edit process would require discussion and agreement from SMEs who have already approved the current form.

7. How does a cash transaction work?
   - If an individual would like to make a payment with cash, the agency’s current process would still be utilized. This only provides a tool to be used for credit card transactions.

8. Can individuals pay roadside without being brought in to the court/jail?
   - Government Payment Services can and does offer this functionality. Currently such payment services are being offered or are scheduled to be offered to some of the participating agencies. Depending upon each individual agency’s needs, roadside payments can be made on-site in the field via a swipe device and/or via a toll-free
9. Can you elaborate on the fees charged?
   - There is a 5% fee charged for bail payments and a 3.5% fee for any non-warrant fines that are paid. Government Payment Services assumes all risk for these transactions and must charge the differing amounts based on the level of risk. Once a payment has been confirmed as received, there is no risk or cost to the agency in the event of a fraudulent charge.

10. Are individuals able to go in to pay a fine for another city even if it is not at a warrant stage?
    - It is possible for GovPayNet to accept payments for any participating agency for fines, costs, and cash bail through the current agreement with NCTCOG and engagement letter executed by each respective agency. This initial effort, however, is focused on electronic warrant payments, but GovPayNet can offer such payment services and solutions.

11. If someone is in custody and wants to pay warrants, but they do not have enough to pay all of the warrants, how is the decision made as to what gets paid first?
    - The individual making the payment will decide what to pay, which is the current process.

12. Is there a database that verifies when the payment is made to ensure the payment amount is correct?
    - No. When the warrant is confirmed by the issuing agency, the required payment amount is confirmed. When the payment is made to GovPayNet, a confirmation of payment is sent to the issuing agency. The issuing agency will cross-check the payment with the amount owed, and will notify the arresting agency when/if the payment is sufficient to cover the warrant. An individual will not be released by the arresting agency until the issuing agency confirms the correct amount has been paid. GovPayNet has also created a standard form for use by participating agencies that will allow for the requisite agency identifier (Pay Location Code), warrant information, and payment amount to be provided a third-party on-site. GovPayNet will provide this document in a pdf file format to participating agencies and will produce these forms for agencies as needed.

13. How do you handle refunds?
    - Because there is no chance of chargebacks once payment has been confirmed from Government Payment Services, Arlington’s experience is to treat the money as cash. In those cases, the person would not be refunded back to their card. They would be refunded with a check. An agency will refund a cash bail in the same fashion or manner as is current practice. In the event of a payment that requires a refund due to unusual circumstances, GovPayNet provides a 24/7/365 Agency Priority Line (a toll-free phone number) for agency assistance. If funds have already been transferred via ACH by GovPayNet to the agency then the agency will have to handle any refund of funds since the agency is already in possession of money.

14. How long is the contract period and when does NCTCOG have to go out for additional bids?
    - The current contract was executed February 2013 and is effective for 5 years. At the end of the term, the decision will made to either extend in one year increments or to go out for a bid at that time.