OCIO — Information Technology Services
ITS Connections
Issue 13   May 23, 2007

San Antonio 2007 - ITS Management Conference
Maximizing Leadership Potential to Leverage Change

The ITS Management Conference (May 14-18) focused on three themes:

➢ Change - In 2008, ITS will become a fully reimbursable service provider to our customers;

➢ The tools and processes needed to effectively leverage *change* to ensure ITS operates efficiently and provides our customers comprehensive quality service while improving the long-term integrity of the shared IT infrastructure;

➢ Improving our leadership, management, and workforce skills to strengthen our organization, team by team.

The 6 "Cs" -
ITS/OCIO leadership provided consistent perspectives about change that can be called the 6"Cs":

1) Change - Rich Roberts, retiring ITS ACIO, looked back at over 42 years of change, as he helped build USDA's IT capabilities from the age of the mainframe to our current networked infrastructure, the Common Computing Environment, and mobile computing. Rich described the creation of ITS as a great step forward for USDA and said that 2008 will be a significant year, when ITS will prove itself as a bona-fide 100% reimburseable enterprise within the government. Rich ended his opening remarks saying, "With technology like SMS, new ways of using our teams, and tools and processes such as the new Cost Management Information System (CMIS), ITS Service Catalogue, Strategic Plan, and workforce development initiatives, we will be a "can-do" enterprise that is competitive and respected... A76 won't be an issue because we are the best choice for comprehensive services!"

2) Customers - Eric Won, ITS Deputy ACIO, talked about the contradictory pressures from our customers. He said, "They want more for less, which is not always possible. But, with ingenuity, better use of resources, and finding efficiencies, we can find the right balance." Bob Suda, ACIO for Intgration and Operations, emphasized our responsiblity to do what we can to help our customers provide their services to America's farming and rural communities, as well as increased responsiblities for security and privacy. He also spoke about the importance of communication and credibility.

Photo: ITS managers and leaders at the ITS Management Conference in San Antonio during the week of May 14, 2007.

Photo: Bob Suda adresses the ITS managers.

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Spring Calendar

	May
Memorial Day	28
Final day to complete Security & Privacy Training	30

	June
Flag Day	15
Father's Day	17
1st day of Summer	21

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3) Communication- Bob said the best way to synchronize our services with customer expectations is through effective, personal communication between IT specialists and customers, ITS staff and managers, and across divisions. He recommends we increase direct communication like phone calls and face-to-face meetings, and not rely so completely on impersonal methods, like email.

There is also much to communicate: our vision and ideas of the future, and the many ways we support our customers in delivering their programs.

6) Creative Solutions- Dave Combs, CIO, spoke about 5 key topics: safeguarding private information; the debut of the ITS governance boards - ITS Management Oversight Committee and the IT Financial Committee - and the goal of achieving consensus on our service levels, budgets, and the many new responsibilities we share with our customers on security, privacy, and other issues; a new approach to harnessing the thousands of unsecured agency data centers; and the upcoming consolidated enterprise messaging system that will bring all USDA agencies into a single email system. At the heart of all these is the need for *creative solutions.*

4) Credibility- Bob moved on to our reputation as an organization, which is linked to providing our customers the services they expect and communicating our ability to do even more. This combination gives us credibility, but we must clearly present our story.

Bob spoke about two new governance committees where ITS can build on our credibility and, working with our customers, achieve the fifth C, *Consensus.*

Photo: Dave Combs, USDA-CIO.

5) Consensus- The upcoming debut of the ITS Management Oversight Committee (IMOC) and the IT Financial Committee (ITFC) will help provide ways to bring OCIO, ITS, and our customer agencies' leadership to a consensus on services, costs, and the methods to manage a variety of challenges and improvements. Bob concluded, "The point is quality of service. The way we get there is explaining what we need to achieve it and being able to justify and verify it. Then we can get the agreements we need to move forward."

Dave called on all of us at ITS to offer ideas to help advance our ability to respond effectively to our many challenges.

Those challenges were highlighted by Janell Duke, whose Security FAQ presentation addressed many ongoing concerns; Greg Gage covered security responsibilities and A123; Scott Snover provided an overview of the technical challenges and opportunities across the infrastructure; and Carol Henson presented a number of awards to managers and field staff. We also had updates from Kelly Stelmach on the Service Catalogue and Nadim Ahmed on Service Level Agreements. Note: We will cover these topics in future issues of Connections.

Our new Toolset: CMIS, Strategic Plan, & Workforce Development

After operating in the background for the first two years after the creation of ITS, the Infrastructure Governance Division stepped forward and unveiled a number of initiatives highlighting IGD's role in support of all ITS Divisions.

Cost Management Information System (CMIS)-advancing ITS' financial credibility.

Lisa Johnson, our new Financial Management Branch Chief, unveiled CMIS, which captures ITS operations expense data and lets us turn the information into a variety of useful reports that track our costs of operations. We can isolate specific service lines or show the comprehensive services provided to our customers. 2006 is the first year we can do CMIS reports; this data advances our credibility as we present the case for effective

IT budgets and cost recovery during IMOC and ITFC meetings. CMIS will also synchronize with the efforts of the Service Definition Branch's Service Catalogue, and Nadim Ahmed's work putting together Service Level Agreements.

ITS Strategic Plan-

George May, Business Planning Branch Chief, distributed the first draft of the ITS Strategic Plan. It presents the long-term vision of ITS — to become a Center of Excellence by 2011. It also defines our goals for achieving the vision:

➢ Becoming an organization with the structure and resources to effectively manage our operations;
➢ Developing a world-class workforce;
➢ Optimizing and securing an infrastructure that effectively supports our

USDA Office of the Chief Information Officer

Information Technology Services
STRATEGIC PLAN
FY 2007 - 2011

Photo: Rich Roberts reinforces presentations by George May & Matt Cross on the Strategic Plan and Workforce Development.

customers;
➢ Establishing a reliable funding stream.

George emphasized the interactive nature of this document - it is a beginning which all of ITS will contribute to as we define the details that will achieve those goals.

Workforce Development-

Matt Cross, Lead Training Specialist, finished the formal part of the week with a preview of an ambitious but achievable ITS-wide training program to assure both managers and staff have the skills and opportunities they need to succeed.

Field Perspectives - TSD Profiles: Large Office Teams @
Fort Collins, Co - Fort Worth, Tx - Greensboro, NC - Lincoln, Ne - Portland, Or - Salt Lake City, Ut
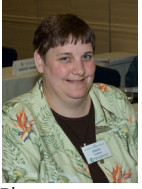

Photo:
Kristi Hawks.

Kristi Hawks , based in the Linclon, Nebraska, is the Group Manager for six diverse Large Office teams ranging from North Carolina to Oregon. They support a number of very important technology centers for NRCS, FSA, and OCIO. Her staff of twenty-eight IT specialists supports, collectively, 1425 workstations and 600 servers. But these numbers are just part of the story, because this equipment is used for remote sensing, aerial photography, cartography, soil science, management and oversight activities, and in support of ITS.

Fort Collins, Colorado
has four IT specialists, Steve O'Shell, Travis Haagenstad, Josh Restad, and Nick Link. They support Fort Collins' 355 workstations and 400 servers. The programs they support include the NRCS Information Technology Center, OCIO's eGov staff, and ITS (AMD, IDD, IOD, IGD, and TSD).

Local tidbits - Among Fort Collins' claims to fame are its yearly average of 300 sunny days that can be enjoyed at its many nearby parks, rivers, and on 20 miles of city trails.

Photo: Ft. Collins staff includes Travis Haagenstad,left, and Steve O'Shell, right.

Photo: Front row, left to right, Gary Bump, Jonathan Cagle, Scott McCulloch, Donald Kapalka & Steven Farwell; back row, left to right, Greg Kalb, John Higgins, Jay Sellers, Hank Borg, David Click, Jim Whitney, & Eric Wiley.

Fort Worth, Texas
has 12 IT specialists with about 200 years of combined experience. They support eight NRCS facilities: the National Cartography and Geospatial Center (NCGC); Central National Technology Support Center (CNTSC); Central Remote Sensing Lab (CRSL); National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center (NDCSMC); National Employee Development Center (NEDC); National Headquarters/Deputy Chief of Management Services Division; Operations Management and Oversight Division, and NRCS Legislative and Public Relations Staff. These groups use 500 workstations and 100 servers.

Local tidbits - On June 6, 1849, Maj. Ripley S. Arnold established a camp on the bank of the Trinity River. He named it Camp Worth in honor of Army General William Jenkins Worth, a hero of the Mexican War. The United States War Department officially named the post Fort Worth on November 14, 1849.

Greensboro, North Carolina
has two IT specialists busy supporting two NRCS facilities: the East National Technology Support Center (ENTSC) and the East Remote Sensing Lab (ERSL), with a combined 125 workstations and 5 servers. Greensboro also has an off-site federal NRCS employee in Pennsylvania who is supported by the PA ITS/TSD group.

The LO has participated in the Computers for Schools program and donated all of their 2001 and older computers to schools in the community. It was a challenge, considering this was a new office for NRCS and computers came from other offices that were closed. The ITS/TSD staff worked with other states to process all this gear in EATS for the donations.
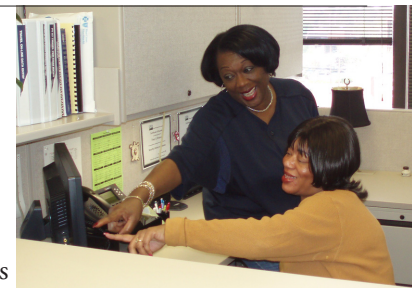

Photo: Marie Reynolds, left,and Valerie Turner, seated.

Local tidbits -
- Greensboro was settled in 1749 and is near a Revolutionary War battlefield, which is now a national military park.
- The first sit-in during the civil rights movement occurred in Greensboro at the Woolworth lunch counter in 1960. In 2006, the International Civil Rights Center & Museum opened to commemorate the event.
- The Chrysler Classic of Greensboro is one of the oldest national PGA Tour events. It is held in Greensboro every fall at Forest Oaks Country Club.
- Guilford County (Greensboro & High Point) is the furniture capital of the world.

Lincoln, Nebraska is the base for three IT specialists and Kristi Hawks, GM. They support two NRCS facilities – the National Soil Survey Center (NSSC) and the National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center (NDCSMC). These facilities use 155 workstations and 10 servers.

In addition to standard desktop computers, the Lincoln office maintains computers that are connected to specific instruments in the NSSC laboratory that test

Photo: Lincoln, Nebraska Large Office Team. Left to right, Kristi Hawks, Group Manager, Jarred Decker, Ryan Reinke, & Betty Raymond.

soil samples for the entire United States. The Lincoln team maintains these computers in the AgLO environment so they stay patched, secured, and part of the common computing environment, (even though some vendor software packages make this a challenge).

Local tidbits - Lincoln has a soil sample from each of the 50 states in the NSSC office *and* a local artist in the NSSC that paints beautiful pictures using soils.

Portland, Oregon has three IT specialists who support three NRCS facilities – the National Water Climate Center (NWCC), the West National Technology Support Center (WNTSC), and the West Remote Sensing Lab (WRSL). The facilities have 145 workstations and 20 servers.

Portland Large Office is unique in that the OCIO ITS employees, Steve Heer, Mary Martin and Jean Trainor have a view from their windows of an active volcano – Mount St. Helens.

Local tidbits -

☞ The latest eruption of the mountain occurred in late September 2004; after 18 years of relative quiet, hundreds of earthquakes signaled Mount St. Helens' reawakening.

☞ Portland Large Office is very proud of its donations of excess computer equipment to the local school districts. In the past years it has donated upwards of 1.2 million dollars of equipment to schools.

Photo: Mary Martin, Portland.

Photo: Salt Lake City LO Team. Left to right, Greg Stagg, David Lundquist, Carl Hethery, & Doug Hendry.

Salt Lake City, Utah has four IT Specialists supporting FSA's Aerial Photography Field Office (APFO), which maintains a national archive of over 50 years of aerial land images.

Local tidbits - These aerial images are used by USDA's GIS programs and can be accessed by the public through Microsoft's Virtual Earth and, soon, on Google Earth. APFO has 145 workstations and 65 servers.

Delivered: Deployment Highlights from the IO Lab.

Below are a few of the major ITS/SCA project deployments out of a total of 20 projects deployed in April 2007 (these include numerous security patches and software upgrades).

Project Name	Agency/Initiator & ITS Release Manager	Deployment Description
CLU Maintenance Tool & GIS Enuironment Tool Used by FSA on over 8,,000 workstations.	FSA- Ted Payne Release Manager - David Hyde	ITS-IDB Installed the two applications via SMS to Over 8,500 workstations. The installation through SMS was able to pinpoint machines with specific combinations of installed software.
ArcGIS 9.2 - BPA 2006 Geospatial Workstation image development. This project narrows the scope of the Workstation image build specific to ArcGIS 9.2 Workstation development with the BPA 2006 Geospatial Workstation.	NRCS- Stephen Webber Release Manager- Frank Hoeppel	This is one of a set of delivered components of the overall ArcGIS 9.2 project.
Cisco Supervisor Desktop V.7.1.0.22 This software is used by the St. Louis, MO call center supervisors for monitoring and managing CAD software.	RD- John Prett Release Manager - David Pfaffenberger	Currently in pilot testing. Will be delivered via SMS to over 500 workstations automatically. Expected early June.

Overtime and Premium Pay Primer III: Compensatory Time Off

This is the third in a series of articles about overtime and premium pay. In our first and second articles we covered some basic information including definitions, the differences between flexible work schedules and compressed work schedules, and how your overtime pay is determined. You may want to refer to those articles as you read this one.

What is compensatory time off? Compensatory time off is time off with pay in lieu of pay for overtime hours worked. You must work overtime hours and be eligible for overtime compensation before you can be eligible for compensatory time off. You earn 1 hour of compensatory time off for each hour of overtime work. It is important to know if the overtime hours worked were regularly scheduled, irregular, or occasional, and whether or not you work under a flexible work schedule (FWS). Compensatory time off is:

➢ Time off with pay in lieu of overtime pay for *irregular* or *occasional* overtime work.

➢ Or, under an FWS, time off with pay in lieu of overtime pay for *regularly* scheduled or *irregular* or *occasional* overtime work.

How does your FLSA status affect compensatory time off?

It is important to know if you are exempt (not covered) or nonexempt (covered) under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The box below explains the differences.

Understanding Your FLSA Status

If you are FLSA exempt:

➢ Upon your request, compensatory time may be approved in lieu of overtime pay for your irregular or occasional overtime work.

➢ You can be required to receive compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay for irregular or occasional overtime work **IF** your rate of basic pay is above the rate for GS-10, step 10. This GS 10/10 rule also applies to employees on special salary rates – you would still look at the GS pay rate to determine this.

➢ You can not be required to receive compensatory time in lieu of overtime pay for regularly scheduled overtime. Upon your request, compensatory time may be approved in lieu of overtime pay for regularly scheduled overtime only if you work under an FWS. The ITS FWS's are maxiflex and flexitour.

➢ Compensatory time can not be approved (or required) in lieu of overtime pay for regularly scheduled overtime if you work under a compressed or standard work schedule.

If you are FLSA nonexempt:

➢ Upon your request, compensatory time may be approved in lieu of overtime pay for irregular or occasional overtime work.

➢ You can not be required to receive compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay for any work, i.e., no mandatory compensatory time is permitted in lieu overtime pay earned under the FLSA.

➢ Upon your request, compensatory time may be approved (not required) in lieu of regularly scheduled overtime only if you work under an FWS.

➢ Compensatory time can not be approved (or required) in lieu of regularly scheduled overtime if you work under a compressed or standard work schedule.

The New TSP Ticker
A way to keep track of your TSP investment

FUND	G	F	C	S	I
May 4, 2007 close	$11.90	$11.38	$16.76	$20.40	$24.40
Daily Change:	$0.00	$0.02	$0.04	$0.07	$0.20
This Month (%)	0.00%	0.09%	1.64%	2.00%	1.67%

FUND	L 2040	L 2030	L 2020	L 2010	L Income
May 4, 2007 close	$18.19	$17.30	$16.46	$15.14	$13.13
Daily Change:	$0.06	$0.06	$0.04	$0.03	$0.01
This Month (%)	1.39%	1.29%	1.04%	0.73%	0.38%

If you have it, enjoy it! ITS policy has been in accordance with the USDA Departmental Policy requiring employees to use earned compensatory time off by the end of the leave year following the leave year in which the time was earned. If you don't use the compensatory time within this timeframe, you are paid for it at the overtime rate in effect when you earned it. ITS asks that employees limit compensatory time accumulations to 80 hours and use compensatory time before using annual leave, as long as this does not result in your forfeiting any annual leave. Also, you only carry compensatory time with you when you go to another OCIO organization – otherwise you receive payment for the time.

New Federal regulations, effective May 14, 2007, have set a government-wide 26-pay-period limitation on compensatory time. This means you will need to use your earned compensatory time off by the end of the 26th pay period following the pay period in which you earned it. Employees who have compensatory time to their credit as of May 14, 2007, will have 3 years to use the time. We will provide more detailed information on this new regulation as soon as we receive additional implementation guidance from the Department.

This concludes the third installment of our overtime and premium pay primer series.

If you have questions about any of the information in this article or about overtime pay in general, you may contact:

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or
Claudine Woodyard
Administrative Resource Center
Bureau of Public Debt

304-480-8264 / mailto:Claudine.Woodyard@bpd.treas.gov.

Coming next: Compensatory Time for Travel
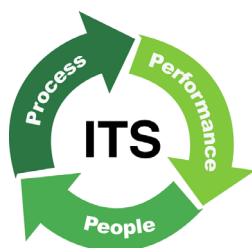
Going Fishing- Rich Roberts Retires

On June 3, 2007, after working almost 42 years with the Department of Agriculture, Rich Roberts, Associate Chief Information Officer, will officially replace his technical hat with one of his favorite fishing hats.

Rich, a native Washingtonian, started with the USDA in 1965 as a GS-2 Engineering Aid working in the Soil Conservation Service, now known as Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He never imagined he would be there for so long. After over 34 years with NRCS, Rich moved to the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), where he has worked for the last seven+ years. Rich's career is proof of the opportunities available to ambitious hard-working employees at USDA.

During his illustrious career, Rich enjoyed a number of firsts: he was the first computer programmer in Engineering to specialize in COBOL, FORTRAN and Assembler; he created the first GIS mapping system in USDA Cartography; he was the first senior Information Resource Management (IRM) official before it was an executive position; and Rich was responsible for creating the NRCS Information Technology organization.

Photo: Scott Snover, Infrastructure Definition Division Director, presents Rich with the first ITS Outstanding Customer Service Award.

Telecommunications Services and Operations (TSO) in OCIO. He was responsible for delivering a common telecommunications infrastructure including local and wide area networks and telephones to approximately 2500 USDA Service Centers and other support offices across the country. The new infrastructure helped to form the one-stop shopping concept, making it easier for farmers and rural communities to do business with USDA. The new environment began the Service Center re-engineering initiatives and provided a common local telecommunications system in addition to decreasing costs. Once again, Rich was not selected for an executive position so he decided to reevaluate his career to determine his next move. As luck would have it, Rich accepted a special assistant position in OCIO to lead the creation of ITS, which led to another acting executive position at ITS, where he was finally awarded the permanent ACIO position. The rest is history.

Rich is very proud of his accomplishments over the last 42 years including a project to build the Local Area Network/ Wide Area Network (LAN/WAN) for approximately $112 million, which was completed successfully, on time, and in scope. He is also especially proud of ITS, the $250 million operation that he managed with the help of an excellent workforce. The satellite database management system, records management, and GIS development are also near to his heart. Rich attributes his success to the ability to listen effectively and transform business requirements into technology solutions.

Photo: Rich & crew, aboard his boat, display a huge fish.

After the dust settled, Rich discovered he was not selected to the newly created executive IRM officer position, as he envisioned. That did not prevent Rich from continuing to make things happen; he simply moved on to create the IRM positions in the different states.

Rich also accepted other temporary assignments including Acting Associate Chief Information Officer (ACIO) at

Rich's family has been very supportive during his long career and he is very proud of their many accomplishments beginning with Barbara, his wife of more than 38 years, and his children Lisa, Brian, and Craig.

Rich and Barbara plan to spend more time fishing and enjoying life at their beach house in Bethany and traveling the world, starting with an Alaskan land and cruise tour with stops in Seattle and Canada. If he can find time, Rich may consider starting an IT consulting business.

Photo: Rich thanks ITS managers for his vest of creative fishing flies.