

**US Department
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Viva Las Vegas!

The saying “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas” was not the case for the December 12-13, 2006, Customer Advisory Board (CAB) meeting. CAB members left Las Vegas with an abundance of information to share with their fellow co-workers. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) co-hosted the fall meeting and organized a tour of the Yucca Mountain Repository. It was evident that EPA invested quality time in the planning and preparations to host the CAB meeting. Fifty-three CAB members representing twenty-five Federal program agencies attended the fall meeting, including seven first time attendees.

The meeting opened with the newly-appointed CAB Chair Joe Vitale of USDA’s National Finance Center (NFC) and newly-elected Vice-Chair Debbie Byrd of Centers for Disease Control (CDC) welcoming everyone to Las Vegas and the semi-annual CAB meeting. They expressed their appreciation to Al Lewis and Art Weiss of EPA for co-hosting the meeting. Kansas City Financial Center (KFC) Director Gary Beets also welcomed CAB members to the meeting and mentioned how he was pleased with the turnout and stated he was sure it had nothing to do with the location. Mr. Beets thanked our special guest attendees: Michael Norman (GSA), Meyer Persow (OPM), Dawn Johns (FMS), and Lisa Ford (FRB, Kansas City); without their support the CAB meetings would not be as successful as they are. He commented on the early-out buy-out that was offered to nine KFC employees and mentioned that there were a total of ten employees retiring with over 261 years of institutional knowledge by the end of 2006. Those employees were: Don Wansing (PFB), Linda Blackburn (FSSB), Chuck Catlett (FSSB), Barbara Giacomo (FSSB), Joanne Gillum (EOB), Ethel Keesaer (FSSB), Dianne Keith (FSSB), Elaine May (AMB), Cindi Thomas (EOB) and Sandra Thurston (FSSB). Mr. Beets mentioned that these employees and their knowledge will be greatly missed but not to worry, the KFC staff will still provide the best customer service.



CAB Chair Joe Vitale (NFC) and CAB Vice-Chair Debbie Byrd (CDC)

Introductions were given in a round-table format with each guest providing their name and agency. The spring minutes were approved and the presentations began. Throughout the meeting CAB members presented agency updates and KFC management briefed the group on Center updates.

Day one of the two-day event was conducted in a manner similar to past CAB meetings. The December meeting provided customer agencies with a schedule packed full with updates and information.



Mr. Al Lewis, Director of EPA-Las Vegas Finance Center, participates in the agency updates.

(continued on next page)

Viva Las Vegas!

Yucca Mountain Repository



Topics and speakers who presented at the CAB meeting included:

Retirement & You, Meyer Persow, OPM, provided a very informative presentation on what you need to know to retire within the government.

Pandemic Planning, Randy Brown, KFC, provided a presentation on what KFC is doing to prepare for a pandemic flu outbreak and how our customer agencies would be affected.

Connectivity, Denise Quirarte, KFC, provided a presentation on FMS connectivity changes regarding disaster transition to KROC and eventual decommissioning of HROC.

ITS.GOV, Francie Abbott, KFC, provided a brief presentation on what ITS.gov is, its benefits, enhancements and agency implementation.

Governmentwide Accounting, Michael Norman, FMS-DC, provided a detailed and informative update on the Governmentwide Accounting and Reporting Modernization project.

PAM, Ed Barlett, KFC, provided an informative presentation on the status of the PAM project as well as the impact to agencies.

CTX Format Overview, Denise Quirarte, KFC, briefed the CAB members on the benefits of using CTX and upcoming offset of CTX payments in 2007.

Day two consisted of a full day tour of The Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain Project. CAB tour participants had the opportunity to talk with experts in geology, engineering, waste management and environmental science. They also had the opportunity to visit the crest of Yucca Mountain, see ancient volcanic cinder cones, explore a sophisticated underground laboratory, and view exhibits that described various studies of the mountain. This tour was not only extremely interesting and informative but also provided a way for CAB members to get to know each other on a more personal level. Several members commented on enjoying the time together and getting the chance to connect face-to-face.

The CAB continues to be a great way for KFC to receive feedback from our customer agencies. A number of attendees commented during the meeting how much they appreciate the people at KFC for their help and dedication. The CAB is success not just because of the two days' worth of meetings, but because KFC provides exceptional service all year long. KFC would like to thank all the presenters and CAB members for attending last year's meeting in Las Vegas and a special thank you to EPA for their time and effort in co-hosting this successful meeting.

For more information on CAB membership, contact Lauren Ray at (816) 414-2113.



The December CAB meeting head table includes Debbie Byrd of CDC, Joe Vitale of NFC, KFC Regional Director Gary Beets, KFC Deputy Director Susan Robinson, KFC FSSB Manager Francie Abbott, and KFC EOB Programming Supervisor Denise Quirarte.

Forward Challenge 2007

On June 6, 2007, the Kansas City Financial Center (KFC) participated in a Forward Challenge exercise as a part of the Financial Management Service’s (FMS) Business Continuity Plan (BCP). This year the crisis involved a possible terrorist threat to detonate a “dirty bomb” in the National Capital Region (Washington DC), as well as threats in Austin, TX, Dallas, TX, and California. In the exercise, FMS headquarter employees evacuated the city and the responsibility for conducting FMS mission essential functions (payments, collections, and cash forecasting) was transferred to KFC.

The scope of this year’s Forward Challenge included transferring the devolution of authority to KFC as the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and the various Assistant Commissioners within FMS were unable to conduct the business of the Agency. When the devolution of authority was implemented, KFC Regional Director, Gary Beets, served as the Agency official overseeing the coordination of mission essential functions (MEF). At that point, Mr. Beets set up three teams (payments, collections, and cash forecasting) to assist in communication and coordination of FMS MEF activities. Throughout the day, KFC received exercise injects (scenarios) and would then coordinate with the appropriate FMS personnel, Federal Reserve Bank (FRB) personnel, and others to discuss how these situations would be handled.

At the conclusion of the exercise, the Forward Challenge team members met for a Hotwash conference call to discuss the lessons learned during the exercise. Forward Challenge participants were asked to give their general observations, as well as areas of concern. KFC stepped up to the plate and showed its ability to pull together as a team to accomplish this task.



Forward Challenge participants discuss lessons learned during the 2007 exercise.

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Taking The Green

In September and October 2006 the first round of Financial Management Service (FMS) employees, including Lauren Ray, Tony Byers, Maria Jordan and Walker Woods, traveled with representatives from the Mid-America Payment Exchange (MPX) to 16 cities to conduct training seminars on the Green Book and Treasury Check security features. In May 2007 Mike King joined Tony Byers on the road for three more weeks of seminars in 9 different cities. These presentations were a partnership opportunity for FMS and the Mid-America Payment Exchange (MPX) that strengthened relationships and supported the ACH community. This was a great opportunity for FMS to provide superior customer service through increased personal interaction with other financial institutions and members of the ACH community. This opportunity allowed FMS to help train attendees on the rules related to government payments and to have a dialog with professionals who work with these as a part of their jobs.

The presentations given by the Kansas City Financial Center (KFC) analysts were part of day-long seminars for Financial Institution ACH operators on Returns and the Green Book. Treasury's participation is valued by the financial institutions. The training was broken into two parts with MPX leading one session and FMS leading the other. The MPX representatives covered non-government Returns and Reclamations and recent ACH rule changes. The FMS presentation covered the rules applying to government payments that are contained in the Green Book, recent updates and security features used in Treasury checks.

Attendees from MPX-member financial institutions were eager to hear directly from FMS about the Green Book and the rules that impact their organizations. These training sessions were an opportunity to increase the dialog between FMS and ACH professionals. The attendees got to ask questions and received feedback in both a group setting and on a one-to-one basis. This was a great way to put a human face with our organization and to provide valuable training and information about the role and services provided by FMS.

The two and a half hour presentations gave the KFC representatives a lot of time with the attendees and allowed the opportunity to get to know FI ACH operators face-to-face. Lauren, Tony, Maria, Mike and Walker all reported that the presentations all went very well and each had the opportunity to address questions about real government payments and reclamations.



Who is MPX?

The Mid-America Payment Exchange (MPX) is a not-for-profit trade association responsible for providing payment systems education, support and industry leadership. MPX serves more than 2,000 financial institution and corporate members throughout Arkansas, Southern Illinois, Indiana, Southwestern Iowa, Kansas, Western Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

MPX has been in existence for 30 years and has delivered valuable education services and assistance to its members. MPX offers valuable educational services and customer assistance for various payment systems resources.

Visit MPX on the web at <http://www.mpx.org>

Book On The Road

The partnership with MPX benefits both organizations and supports and strengthens our relationship with the ACH community. For MPX, having official Treasury representatives adds credibility to their seminars. For Treasury, the presentations provide a venue to increase communication with members of the ACH community and provide better customer service through education about government payments. This is important for an organization like FMS because it provides direct customer communication and feedback while providing a worthwhile benefit for the attendees. This direct interaction can help FMS to identify and better understand the needs of our fellow ACH professionals and our customers. With an increased understanding of issues faced by the ACH community, FMS can develop and enhance programs that are meaningful to our customers and the fellow ACH professionals.



What? No Power?

MPX Presenters
Standing (L—R): Tony Byers, Mike King, Walker Woods
Seated (L—R): Lauren Ray, Maria Jordan

All of the presentations went off without a hitch; well, almost all of them. The last presentation, held here in Kansas City, experienced some minor technical difficulties. In the middle of the presentation the hotel where the event was being held experienced a power interruption. The room lost power and had no lights, air conditioning, and the computer and projector shut down. Walker said that he just did his best to smile and roll with the punches. It definitely kept things interesting!

Changes Taken In Stride On The Help Desk

The Kansas City Financial (KFC) Help Desk Unit (HDU) has been in existence for just over a year, and what a year it has been!

After the retirement of three of the original five members, the HDU utilized temporary help from the Financial Services and Support Branch (FSSB)- Claims and the Executive Office. Geri Hughes, Kelly Caldwell and Ty Edwards were of great assistance on temporary detail until the HDU finally received permanent replacements in April. Veterans **Vicki Haddad** and **Dorothy Perrett** have been joined by **Amber Janouschek** and **Annette Gomez**, and the two newest members are off to a great start!



**KFC Help Desk
(L—R)
Amber Janouschek, Dorothy Perrett, Annette Gomez, Vicki Haddad**

The HDU averages 1,919 calls each month, with June of '06 topping the charts at an incredible 2,615 calls. Although there are times when everyone is on the phone at once, most calls are answered on the first ring, and very few go to voicemail. Customer agencies and the public often express delight at having reached a government agency where real people answer the phone, and they are able to explain their needs without having to navigate intricate phone menus that don't ever seem to have an option fitting their situation. The HDU is the public face of KFC, and providing excellent customer service leaves everyone with a good impression of the professionalism and expertise found throughout the Financial Management Service.

Although providing exemplary customer service is the primary focus of the HDU, the auxiliary duties performed by the team have also changed over the past year. In addition to PC work order requests, external PACER access requests, unidentified remittances, special handling requests, and a host of other duties, the HDU is now taking on the additional responsibility of handling R06 requests from other agencies. While this ACH return service can be time-consuming, the additional duties are offset by a decrease in other areas. Since KFC reclamations were consolidated into the San Francisco office, reclamation calls have tapered off, reducing overall call volume by a fourth in recent months.

The HDU members must be flexible to keep abreast of the many changes that have, and will continue, to come their way. They share information in weekly strategy sessions, group e-mails and impromptu meetings to ensure a consistent and accurate message to other agencies, financial institutions and the general public. Research is often involved for unusual requests, and the HDU team members are always open to special projects of many varieties. The most important aspect of the job is to remain adaptable to the ever-changing workload.

Regardless of the fluid nature of the help desk duties, or the changing policies and programs, your Help Desk Unit is here to serve you with expert guidance. Call the friendly folks at 816-414-2100 for fast, professional attention to your needs!

Certifying Officer... Your Roles and Responsibilities

During the December 2006 Customer Advisory Board (CAB) meeting, Kansas City Financial Center's (KFC) customer agency members expressed a strong interest in taking a Certifying Officer training class. Due to retirements, changes in positions, and growing business needs, the need for this training was a must. KFC Regional Director, Gary Beets felt the same and worked hard to facilitate the training here at FMS.

On May 14th and again on June 5th, KFC held Certifying Officer training classes, for 39 individuals representing seven KFC customer agencies. The training provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of being a Certifying Officer. Attendees learned about the differences between Certifying Officers and other accountable officers. The class also covered the roles of the Certifying Officer in the payment process, and the Certifying Officer's legal liability if a loss occurs. Through a close examination of relevant statutes and Comptroller General decisions, the class provided attendees with the knowledge to confidently certify federal payments, ensuring they are legal, proper and correct. During the class, the attendees worked in teams to solve practical exercises and case studies.

The Kansas City Financial Center received positive feedback on the training. Several agencies expressed that this was an excellent learning opportunity for them and their employees. If your agency would like more information about taking a Certifying Officer or any other Treasury-related training class, you can contact Treasury Agency Services at 202-874-9560 or visit their website at www.fms.treas.gov/tas.

KFC's customer agency members attend Certifying Officer training.



Angela Romano (FMS) was the instructor for both Certifying Officer classes.

KFC Welcomes New AMB Administrative Officer

In May of 2007, the Kansas City Financial Center (KFC) announced the selection of its newest officer. Crystal Duckworth was selected to take over for Carole Kelley, who retired as the Administrative Officer for the Administrative Management Branch (AMB), effective June 1, 2007.

Crystal obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri, before beginning her federal career in 1999 as an auditor for the Department of Health and Human Services. Since March of 2003, Crystal has worked as an accountant in AMB and was responsible for the day-to-day operations within KFC. As part of Crystal's new responsibilities, she will oversee building issues and supervise the budget, accounting, purchasing, check vault, supplies, warehouse and EEO Council. Crystal stated, "It will be hard to fill the shoes of Carole as she is great at what she does, but I'm very excited and look forward to the challenge."

Outside of work, Crystal enjoys spending time with her husband, Aaron, and son, Jacob. When time permits, Crystal likes jogging and hanging out her with friends.



Congratulations to Crystal on her new position!



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DECEMBER 2007 CAB

We're going to Kansas City...Kansas City here we come!



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