



OCFO

OCIO

connections

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Performance Management Training (AgLearn) - Due by August 31

OCFO / OCIO Calendar September – October

Labor Day	9/1
USDA Security & Pii Awareness Poster Contest	8/15-9/15
Autumn begins	9/22
Fall Equinox	9/23
Columbus Day	10/13
Halloween	10/31

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NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER: SUPPORTING USDA'S PRIORITY INITIATIVES by Jerry Lohfink

The National Finance Center (NFC) was formed in 1973 to provide a centralized payroll and personnel system and a centralized voucher and invoice processing system. NFC pioneered the use of information technology by utilizing mainframe computers and other strategic technology to complete its work. By the early 1980s, NFC had established itself as a leader in developing and operating cost-effective administrative and financial systems. In 1983, NFC began cross-servicing other Departments.

NFC is an essential entity of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) and its mission is to serve USDA and other Federal departments by providing reliable, cost-effective, employee-centric systems and services. NFC offers services within several Governmentwide lines of business and agency-specific services outside of formal lines of business. These lines of business fall under the Administration's eGovernment

program. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) manages the eGovernment portfolio. It has organized the eGovernment lines of business into five portfolios: (1) Government to Citizen; (2) Government to Business; (3) Government to Government; (4) Internal Efficiency and Effectiveness; and (5) Cross-Cutting.

USDA established separate business lines to ensure dedicated focus on such Governmentwide services as human resources management and financial management systems and operations. NFC supports USDA's commitment to realize the important goals and results of these

lines of business by taking on a primary role in several and a supporting role in others.

NFC's human resource services operate as part of the eGovernment Human Resources Line of Business (HR LOB). The HR LOB is a Governmentwide program to operate modern, cost-effective, standardized, and interoperable human resources (HR) solutions. The HR solutions provide common, core functionality that supports the strategic management of human capital and address duplicative HR systems and processes across the Federal government. NFC was competitively selected by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to be an HR LOB service provider.



Photo: NFC Headquarters in New Orleans, Louisiana

As an approved HR LOB service provider, NFC's knowledgeable and skilled staff conducts the following traditional functions for agencies in a cost-effective manner: position classifications, staffing requests, personnel action requests, and/or payroll transaction processing. NFC operates a modern, commercial-based human resource information system, *EmpowHR*, which is currently being rolled out across USDA. *EmpowHR* addresses the system functions of the HR LOB short-term Concept of Operations (CONOPS) developed by OPM.

(Continued, page 2)

EmpowHR is an integrated suite of commercial and Government applications that support all critical HR functions in a single enterprise system. *EmpowHR* provides comprehensive employee information enabling agencies to: (1) make critical decisions concerning workforce utilization; (2) forecast workforce turnover and placement; and (3) project future resource budget allocations on a fiscal year basis, for optimum achievement of agency mission goals. NFC also offers payroll services as one of OPM's designated four Federal payroll operation centers. NFC pays more than 600,000 Federal employees working in 170 Federal entities each pay period.

In addition, NFC serves as the official record keeper of USDA's personnel data. NFC provides regular updates to OPM's Governmentwide recordkeeping system and updates USDA employees' retirement records. It also interfaces with benefit providers ensuring the accuracy of coverage and investment information and provides tax reporting for payroll-related events. Also related to the HR LOB, USDA has acted upon an opportunity to eliminate more than \$30 million of costs associated with timekeeping services while updating and modernizing existing time and attendance systems. NFC is in the process of working with the Office of the Chief Human Capital Manager

to orchestrate the roll-out of a commercial time and attendance system which will allow USDA to eliminate significant costs associated with timekeeping and accounting error correction. The application, webTA, also automates timekeeping and labor management processes, improves data accuracy, reduces the number of costly payroll errors, and satisfies a variety of Federally-mandated compliance requirements.

Another way NFC supports the attainment of USDA's priority initiatives is by being a good steward of the resources USDA and its other customers entrust to its care. NFC is very focused on complying with Departmental security and privacy efforts aimed at protecting valuable information assets. Through its security and internal controls programs, NFC strives to be a leader in ensuring that its business areas can operate effectively while managing the business risks associated with physical and information security as well as fraud, waste, and abuse.

The employees of NFC are very proud to contribute to USDA's accomplished record of highly successful results and valuable contribution to its constituents. For more information about its services and value proposition, visit the NFC Web site at www.nfc.usda.gov.

A Note from CFO/CIO Charles R. Christopherson, Jr.



As we begin preparing for the end of the fiscal year, I reflect on the impact OCFO and OCIO teams have made over the past year within USDA and across government. Our teams are involved in several Lines of Business including Geospatial, Homeland Security Presidential Directive – 12 (HSPD-12), and the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) taskforce. Recently, we made great strides with the HSPD-12 project. Members of the OCIO team are helping to set up mobile enrollment stations around the country, affording Federal employees who are remotely located the convenience of getting their LincPass without traveling too far. Employees throughout USDA are assisting with the improvement and enhancement of Geospatial systems across government. By combining information and technology from several areas, the Federal government is well on its way to a more comprehensive and effective means for storing and disseminating geographic data. After the launch of USASpending.gov, members of the FFATA Taskforce continue to help members of the Governmentwide task force to make improvements to the quality of data being reported through the site. Thank you to all of our team members participating in projects across the Federal government.

LINC PASS ENROLLMENT TOUR by Carol Van Natta

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12) mandates that Federal government personnel have "smart" personal identification cards (USDA's is called a LincPass). To meet the USDA's target of enrolling 60 percent of employees and all laptop users by September 30, 2008, the OCIO Identity and Access Management (IAM) team created a summer program to accomplish just that. More than 45 mobile enrollment stations operated by trained Registrars are on "tours" to 160 cities and towns across the United States (including Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam). These stations are enrolling a combined total of about 4,000 people a week, putting USDA on track to meet the deadline.

The summer enrollment tour complements IAM's related project to roll out two-factor authentication for laptop users across the USDA agencies. All agencies have begun the implementation which includes enabling laptops with a smart card reader and middleware, changes to an agency's Active Directory (computer network), and ensuring that laptop users have a LincPass.



Photo: The LincPass and smart card readers

As we move into the next fiscal year, the emphasis will be on completing enrollments. We will roll out two-factor authentication for users of *all* USDA computers -- not just laptops -- and start implementing the use of LincPass cards to gain access to USDA buildings and facilities.

OCIO's CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS (COOP) by Joyce Cheng

In May 2007, the President issued National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD 51, Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD 20, National Continuity Policy that requires the Federal executive branch to maintain a comprehensive and effective continuity capability.

In February 2008, the new Federal Continuity Directive 1/FCD 1, *Federal Executive Branch National Continuity Program and Requirements*, was issued that provided specific guidance to departments and agencies to assist them in meeting the requirements of the new NSPD 51/HSPD 20 policy.

The HSPD 20 and FCD 1 take a more specific approach to continuity preparedness than their predecessors Presidential Decision Directive 67 and Federal Preparedness Circular 65. The new direction states that Federal executive branches should view continuity preparedness as an effectively managed continuity program rather than a continuity of operations plan. The FCD 1 specifies incorporating continuity requirements into daily operations and describes, with some detail, a continuity program management cycle. "Continuity responsibility and planning," it states, "should not be a separate and compartmentalized function. It must be fully integrated into all aspects of an organization's daily operations."

The directive identifies four pillars that provide the support structure for managing an effective program and ten key components that form the content of the continuity program. The pillars are: Leadership, Staff, Communications, and Facilities.

A team, established by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), was chartered previously to revise the existing OCIO continuity of operations plan. In the midst of the recent changes in homeland security policy, the team is building a plan that will lay out the groundwork for OCIO to establish a continuity program. The OCIO COOP Plan is scheduled to be released in the near future.

The ability of OCIO to meet the challenges of national homeland security preparedness and its ability to respond to a wide range of emergencies will require the coordinated effort of all OCIO personnel. The ultimate goal is to produce a continuity capability and organizational resiliency within OCIO that provides the vital support that our customers expect from us.

Information on FCD1 can be found at <http://www.fema.gov/government/coop/index.shtm>.

Information about NSPD 51/HSPD 20 can be found at http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/laws/editorial_0607.shtm.

10 Key COOP Components
Essential Functions
Delegations of Authority
Continuity of Communications
Human Capital
Devolution of Control and Direction
Orders of Succession
Continuity of Facilities
Vital Records Management
Test, Training, and Exercise
Reconstitution

LEAN SIX SIGMA: IMPROVING PROCESSES, ELIMINATING OBSTACLES

by Dik Saalfeld

You may be familiar with Six Sigma, the management methodology developed to improve corporate processes and eliminate manufacturing defects. Six Sigma has been adapted to various scenarios since its initial development. OCIO and OCFO have begun using a variant, Lean Six Sigma, to improve and standardize processes and eliminate defects. Six Sigma combines two methods of improving the workplace. "Lean" reduces waste and expedites processes. "Six Sigma" improves individual product quality and product consistency.

"Together, the two techniques bring specialized tools like statistical analysis and process mapping to improve our business so we can be more competitive," says CFO/CIO Chuck Christopherson. "Lean Six Sigma empowers employees

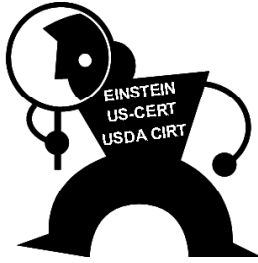
to provide insight and direction. It allows employees to manage positive and continual change toward better processes. Most importantly, Lean Six Sigma eliminates waste. Through a series of projects, measurements, analysis, improvements and controls, Lean Six Sigma will allow us to change over time.

"Under this methodology, we can review our processes several times a year. This cycle allows us to make small changes instead of large restructurings."

Christopherson adds that the non-value-added steps a process accrues over time lead to waste. "Sometimes these steps act as a band-aid to correct problems with systems, workgroups, communications or even management," he notes. "Lean Six Sigma provides constructive tools to address these issues. The invest-

ment in this program shows our dedication to all of our employees' success."

Employees interested in tapping the potential of Lean Six Sigma to improve their workflow can visit the OCFO Web site at <http://www.ocfo.usda.gov/index.html>. From there, click on the words, "Lean Six Sigma," which are located near the bottom of the screen. While the site is under continuous development, projects will be updated frequently. Lean Six Sigma professionals will train and mentor participants in the development of their projects. Projects will be accepted based on whether they can introduce efficiency and cost savings to a process. Interested parties are encouraged to inquire through their supervisors.



EINSTEIN – INSIGHTS INTO INCIDENT HANDLING

By Shana Lee and Kelvin Fairfax

The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Memorandum M-08-05, *Implementation of Trusted Internet Connections (TIC)*, dated November 20, 2007, mandates that all Federal executive agencies use the

EINSTEIN Program to provide the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) with increased situational awareness of network internal vulnerabilities.

The EINSTEIN Program is a Department of Homeland Security (DHS), US-CERT, initiative that facilitates the identification of, and response to, cyber threats and attacks to improve network security. EINSTEIN collects network flow records (i.e., records of connections made to Federal executive agencies' IT systems) and uses a set of pre-defined signatures based upon known malicious network traffic to prevent known malicious activity from reaching Federal networks. EINSTEIN increases, and does not replace or reduce, current network security practices.

The impact of EINSTEIN has been significant. Previously, USDA only had tools to detect malicious activities at its network borders. With EINSTEIN, the US-CERT can obtain data captures of activities on USDA's inner routers

(e.g., viruses contained in e-mail attachments that bypassed border detection) and forward the captures of suspicious activities, the source and destination Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, the protocol used to communicate, the time suspicious activities were noted, and the destination port to USDA for investigation. Participating in the EINSTEIN Program has resulted in an estimated 30 percent increase in the number of incidents being reported and an increased awareness, collaboration, and involvement within the USDA, its agencies and staff offices, and its senior management in addressing incidents.

When asked about some things USDA agencies and offices can do to reduce the number of vulnerabilities being identified by EINSTEIN, Kelvin Fairfax, Director of the Security Compliance Division, notes that adhering to Departmental policies, scanning all internet protocol addresses monthly, timely patching, and promptly addressing security alerts, incidents, and suspicious activity reports could decrease the number of network-related incidents by 25 percent or more. Incidents such as lost or stolen laptops or Blackberries would not be affected, however. Reducing those types of incidents will require all employees to stay vigilant about securing their government-issued equipment.

For more information about incident handling and cyber security, visit <http://www.ocionet.usda.gov/ocio/security/index.html>.

HOW OCFO AND OCIO CONNECT  TO SUPPORT USDA INITIATIVES

GovTRIP! MAKING TRAVEL EASY by Angela Bennett

As part of the President's Management Agenda, eGovernment Travel continues to be a major transition for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) from its legacy Travel System to a centralized electronic processing system. The purpose of implementing a fully integrated Web-based travel system is to provide a beginning-to-end solution for creating, authorizing, and reimbursing government travel. This incentive began as a vision to create a common platform that would streamline online travel services (including transaction processing for Federal employees) while complying with Federal travel policy.

USDA awarded an eGovernment Travel contract to replace its legacy Temporary Duty (TDY) and Government Transportation System (GVTs) travel applications on June 23, 2006. The contract was awarded to Northrop Grumman Mission Systems (NGMS). NGMS developed a web-based travel management tool that streamlines and consolidates USDA travel operations into a simplified, end-to-end travel system called GovTrip. This travel system includes functionality for travel authorizations, reservations, vouchering, and split-disbursements for both foreign and domestic travel. The new split-disbursements feature, which allows payments to the Bank of

America (BOA), contributes to improving the no tolerance initiative for late payments and delinquencies.

GovTrip also interfaces with the USDA financial system and the BOA database to account for transactions through the spending chain of advances, obligations and reimbursements. The interface also grants travelers the ability to view charges incurred on their government individually billed account (IBA).

USDA developed a strategy for implementing GovTrip in six phases. As of July 2008, USDA has successfully integrated more than 47,000 travelers into GovTrip. As USDA moves into Phase V of the GovTrip transition, the system has proven to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of travel processing time, cost savings, and flexibility with user preferences in booking reservations.

Upon completion of Phase V, approximately 56 percent of the USDA will be actively using GovTrip. NGMS reported the millionth GovTrip voucher was approved and paid on July 16, 2008. By the end of 2008, USDA will be fully integrated into GovTrip with an estimated 85,769 travelers.

Employee relocation travel will continue to be processed through the legacy Travel system. USDA agencies will continue to process local travel as they currently do.

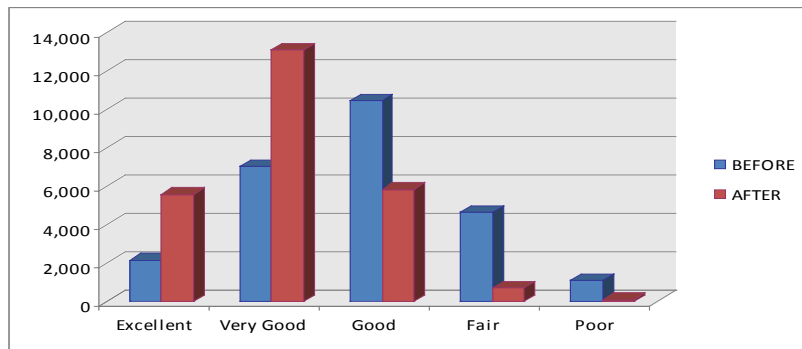
AGLEARN SURVEY YIELDS POSITIVE RESULTS by Kathy Fallow

Traditional classroom training is often expensive and can be inconsistent. Current studies indicate that learners find online training to be more accessible than and just as effective as traditional training. Increasing the use of online training provides USDA employees with expanded learning opportunities.

Online training has several advantages. Employees can take training *just in time*, acquiring knowledge at the time it is needed for job performance rather than waiting for a class to be available. Training that is always available in AgLearn means that learners can apply their newly acquired knowledge on the job while it is still fresh in their minds. Employees can also use AgLearn online training to acquire *just enough* training. Rather than work through all the lessons of a course, employees can review only the material they need in order to achieve results; saving time and avoiding loss of productivity. Another advantage is that online learning is learner centered and self-paced. Online training allows advanced learners to speed through or bypass known topics while novices can learn at a slower pace, reviewing less familiar content and repeating practice exercises until proficient. Also, travel expenses are eliminated because students do not have to travel to class—it comes to them.

AgLearn has more than 3,000 courses and a new feature called Books 24x7 which all USDA employees can use at no

additional cost. Login to AgLearn at <http://www.ablearn.usda.gov> today and browse through the thousands of courses in the catalog or use the catalog search function to find specific courses. Each time a USDA employee completes one of these online courses, he/she is asked to answer six survey questions. The results of survey responses strongly suggest that this online training is providing a meaningful impact on job performance. The following bar chart depicts responses to the statement: *Please rate your knowledge or skill regarding the training topics BEFORE and AFTER taking the course.*



To view all of the survey questions and responses, click on <https://ablearn.usda.gov/scorm-content/JobAids/SkillSoftSurveyResults.pdf>.

NEW PERFORMANCE RATING PROCESS FOR ITS by Michael Tolle

Departmental Regulation 4040-430, Performance Management, has been issued to standardize performance appraisal systems throughout USDA. A number of USDA staffs are currently working under provisions outlined in this regulation; however, Information Technology Services (ITS) employees will not be covered until the performance rating period beginning October 1, 2008.

ITS employees are required to complete the AgLearn Performance Management course by **August 31, 2008**. This course describes the new system in more detail. Also, the ITS Employee Services Branch and the Bureau of the Public Debt (BPD), Human Resources service provider for ITS, will provide more information and tools to help supervisors and employees transition to the new system.

The new system looks very much like one commonly used prior to implementation of the old pass/fail rating system. There are a number of similarities and a few differences to our current system.

Some highlights include:

Similarities	
Both the current system and the new system have:	
➤ Five summary rating levels	
➤ The same time periods (October 1-September 30)	
➤ One required progress review	
➤ A requirement to address civil rights	
➤ A requirement to address supervisory functions for supervisory positions	
➤ A requirement for an element linked to organizational goals	

Differences	
Current System:	New System:
Core competencies and job specific elements used	Only elements (minimum 3, maximum 7) used
All competencies and elements critical	Noncritical elements allowed, but not required
Each competency and element rated at 1 of 5 levels	Each element rated at 1 of 3 levels
Standards required for all levels	Standards required only at the fully successful level
Unique ITS forms used	Common USDA forms used (AD-435A and B)



Photo: Chad "Chance" Bixby

FIRST PLACE WINNER!!!

Chad "Chance" Bixby, Senior Network Security Engineer, at the National Information Technology Center (NITC) won first place in individual wakeboard competition at the Liquid Force Relentless Weekend Regional event. The KC Watersports cable park hosted the event in May 2008 in the Kansas City, Missouri, area. Chance has been participating in the sport for more than 3 years and travels throughout the United States competing in various wakeboard championship events.

This competition event was held for 2 days and the combination score was compiled to determine the winner. Chad's picture (right) is in the August 2008 *Alliance Wakeboard Magazine* (p. 117) competing to win this individual event. He is intently practicing with anticipation of winning many more events this year. Congratulations and good luck to Chance!



Photo: Chad "Chance" Bixby performing in a competition event



SNEAK PREVIEW OF NEXT ISSUE

- *Managing IT Change* - how ITS keeps the nationwide ITS/USDA Service Center Agency computing system modern, secure, and stable. *Deployment Highlights, February-June*, which profiles a few examples of system upgrades over the year; can be downloaded from the OCIO Newsroom Web page: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/news/index.html>
- *Unified Communications* - an initiative to bring new ways to communicate across USDA.
- *The Controller Operations Division of OCFO* - managing USDA's finances.



USDA Security & Pii Awareness Poster Contest

Contest information is available at <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/security/index.html>

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Washington Communications and Technology Services - Yvonne Winston

To email a POC, just click on his or her name.

STAFF RECOGNITION

☆ 2008 Length of Service Recipients ☆

- 35 Years - Alva Chase (37 years)
- 30 Years - Mercedes Bardell, Linda Smith, Doris Williams
- 25 Years - Iris Anderson, Jane Cosse, Greta Walker
- 20 Years - Linda Burkhardt, Julian Codina, Eleanora Fleetwood, Rhonda Lee, Eddie Reso, Laurie Roy, Freida Scott
- 15 Years - Constance Boteler, Charles Ingraham, III, Floyd Miles, Jr., Leon Powers, Donna Rock, Philip Rudolph, Freida Scott
- 10 Years - Catherine Benoit, John Bowman, Angele James, Denise Nunnery, Bonnie Werner
- 5 Years - Chris Songy

☆ Recent Promotions ☆

Michael Clanton, ACFO/FSPM/OCFO
Patrick Cummings, Telecom Operations Branch Chief, IOD/ITS/OCIO
JoAnne Dixon, Administrative Payments Technician, COD/NFC/OCFO
Sheila Greene, Communications Lead, IGD/ITS/OCIO
Patricia Lott, Systems Accountant, COD/NFC/OCFO
Carlos Metaxes, Jr., Program Analyst, COD/NFC/OCFO
Debbie Sanders, Deputy Director, TSD/ITS/OCIO
Chris Smith, DCIO/OCIO

☆ Reassignments ☆

Kathi Smith, West Region Branch Chief, ITS/TSD/OCIO

☆ Recent Hires ☆

Brenda Jo Brown, TSD/NE	Michelle L. Lackas, TSD/NE
Avis Crawford, OCFO	Roy A Lafferty, IGD/PMB
Terry Lee Cummings, TSD/LA	Carolyn Landeche, OCFO
Heather Robin Goodrich, TSD/AL	Patricia Lott, OCFO
David Melvin Hatton, TSD/OH	Leon Powers, OCFO
Douglas William Havelka, IOD/CSB	Jeramie L. Rawls, TSD/LO/STLMO
Georgia G. Jenness, TSD/NE	Patrice Warren, OCFO
Janelle Marie Krupke, TSD/AK, WA	