OCIO — Information Technology Services

ITS Connections

Volume 1, Issue #3 June 10, 2005

ITS Provides E-Learning for All!

One of the key goals of the ITS Training Team is to provide avenues for training and the necessary tools to increase employee development opportunities.

The ITS Training Team is pleased to announce the availability of the improved AgLearn environment for online training and the Skillsoft Library of courses. This enhanced combination of tools will be a convenient and effective e-learning system designed to help meet the training needs of ITS and its customers.

ITS has secured licensing for the Skillsoft libraries that include both IT and Business/Professional courseware. The Skillsoft libraries include over 1200 IT courses in the areas of software development, Server OS Technologies, Network Technologies, Enterprise Database Systems and Web Design. Major desktop applications are also included. Most of the courses range from introductory courses up to intermediate and advanced classes. Included are over 70 practice exams to prepare students for certification exams.

The Business Skills library contains courses specifically designed to assist in the transition from the technical professional arena into management. College credit programs are also available.

IT course areas cover:
- Software development,
- Server OS Technologies,
- Network Technologies,
- Enterprise Database Systems
- Web Design.
- Operating Systems
- 70+ practice exams

Business/Professional course areas include:
- Professional Effectiveness
- Management and Leadership
- Project Effectiveness
- Sales and Customer Facing Skills
- Finance
- HR and Administration
- Business Strategy and Operations

One of the key goals of the ITS Training Team is to provide new avenues for training and the necessary tools to increase employee development opportunities. This e-Learning system is one of the resources being provided to help employees and their organizations meet our ever evolving business objectives.

Both AgLearn and the Skillsoft libraries can be found at: http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/. To access this site, you will need to use your e/Authentication ID and password.

The Skillsoft licenses are in effect now and courses should be available in your Learning Management System (LMS) profile. If they are not visible, please contact the AgLearn Helpdesk at AgLearnHelp@genphysics.com or via phone at (866) 633-9394.

To ensure all interested parties are kept informed of future plans the ITS Training Team will continue to share information on these and other training opportunities through the ITS Connections Newsletter and the ITS Training intranet website (coming soon). If you have any questions related to this training opportunity, or have any comments to share, please contact the ITS Training Team at ITSTraining@usda.gov or by calling the Help Desk at 1-800-457-3642.

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ITS Calendar

OCIO All Hands Video/Teleconferences at 2pm, EST:

Tuesday	July 19
Tuesday	Oct. 18

Contact Information

Please share with us your story ideas, comments, calendar items, ingenious solutions, questions or answers. Email us at:

ITSConnections@usda.gov

Now that we are members of the ITS organization and no longer work for one of the Service Center Agencies, how will we know what IT services to provide and what the agency priorities are?

Service Level Management— From Concept to Reality

The establishment of the ITS in November 2004 brought a lot of changes to us all. One of the biggest changes has been how the Service Center Agencies (SCA) get IT support. Instead of tasking their respective IT staffs to fit the needs of the agency, the SCA must now rely on a fee-for-service organization to fill those needs. Each agency now must estimate what types of services it wants, ITS must figure out what it costs to provide the services, and the SCA must then pay for those services. Some of us have seen changes in the way things operate and some of us have not. All of us may have seen, heard, or read about some new terms: service line; service level, or service line manager. Those terms are at the heart of our new way of doing business and they are moving from the pages of our Day 1 Guide to operational reality.

This process has generated questions such as:

➢ ***How*** will ITS provide comprehensive services to the agencies?

➢ ***How*** can we coordinate our activities and expertise?

➢ ***How*** can we effectively collaborate to support our customers across divisions and branches?

In order to answer these and other questions, following is a brief Q & A that may clarify how ITS will move forward in service delivery:

Service Level Glossary

Service Level Management
The process of defining, agreeing, documenting and managing the levels of customer IT service, that are required and cost justified.

IT Service
A described set of facilities, IT and non-IT, supported by the IT Service Provider that fulfils one or more needs of the customer and that is perceived by the customer as a coherent whole.

Customer
Recipient of the service; usually the customer management has responsibility for the cost of the service, either directly through charging or indirectly in terms of demonstrable business need.

Service Management
The management of Services to meet a customer's requirements.

Service Level Agreement
Written agreement between a Service Provider and the customer(s) that documents agreed Service Levels for a service

The terms are from ITIL (IT Infrastructure Library), an international inititative that has become a widely accepted approach to IT Service Management.

Q *Now that we are members of the ITS organization and no longer work for one of the Service Center Agencies, how will we know what IT services to provide and what are the agency priorities?*

A Through the practice of Service Level Management.

Q *What is Service Level Management?*

A Service Level Management is a method used to manage the state of IT services through a constant and consistent cycle of negotiating, monitoring and maintaining Service Level Agreements between the IT service provider and its customers.

Simply stated, ITS Service Line Managers (SLM) will work with our customers to determine their needs and expectations. The SLM will then work within ITS to determine the best way to provide for the agencies' needs and to meet those expectations. This means working out how different teams in different divisions and branches will collaborate to provide the required services.

Service Level Management— From Concept to Reality, (cont'd)

...Service Level Management is the foundation on which ITS will fulfill the business needs of the Service Center Agencies.

Q: *What are the service lines?*

A: The seven service lines are:

1. **Telecommunications Services** includes providing, deploying, managing, and supporting voice, wireless, data, and conferencing services to agency offices and staff.
2. **Hosting and Web Services** includes managing the web farms (server, infrastructure, and services) and providing hosting and site deployment, management, and security.
3. **End-User Computing and Application Support Services** includes acquisition and deployment of hardware, software, and custom applications for each agency.
4. **Acquisition and Asset Management Services** includes both the strategic planning and research that precedes acquisitions and the selection, contracting, and management of new IT assets and licenses.
5. **Customer Support Services** focuses on supporting agency employees and their desktop and office systems. This comprises incident management, problem analysis, restoring interrupted service, supporting agency hardware and software, and providing needed services and escalation.
6. **Data Utility Services** includes database management to assure the safety and availability of agency data.
7. **Security Services** includes assuring the highest levels of system-wide service continuity; disaster planning and recovery; network monitoring and protection; incident investigation and response; and security policy formulation and implementation.

Q: *How will the Service Line Managers proceed with Service Level Management?*

A: Some of the first steps the SLM's will take toward Service Level Management are:

- ➢ Set and manage customer expectations and priorities.
- ➢ Develop a framework for measuring and evaluating performance in a reasonable and consistent way agreeable to both parties.
- ➢ Define a minimum level of service to expect.
- ➢ Communicate the range of services offered and associated costs, products supported, access methods, and hours of operation.
- ➢ Enter into an agreement with the SCA known as a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Q: *How will the Service Level Agreement (SLA) be developed?*

A: Working closely with the appropriate division directors and branch chiefs, the Service Line Manager will develop a service level package that ITS can deliver on. The SLM continues to monitor and manage customer expectations. Through a process of negotiation ITS's capabilities are aligned with the customers expectations and agreed upon in an SLA.

Q: *What if expectations change or new services are needed? Can the Service Level Agreement be changed?*

A: Yes. The SLA will be reviewed and updated when necessary and renewed on an annual basis. Likewise, if there are improvements or upgrades to services, the SLA may be reviewed and changed.

In Summary

In summary, Service Level Management is the foundation on which ITS will fulfill the business needs of the Service Center Agencies. At the same time, Service Level Management will track ITS resources that are used and it will charge the SCA for that usage. This article is a very short version of how ITS will accomplish the goal of being a fee-for-service, government owned organization. If you have any questions concerning Service Level Management please send them to ITSConnections@usda.gov. We will try to respond in the next issue of ITS Connections.

Tim's technical abilities are coupled with a true understanding of the business requirements of these varied offices, a situation that has led to the success of this project as a whole.

Tim Walkenhorst Receives Recognition

From Phillip Rendina, Acting Chief, Hosting Operations Branch

During the April 25, 2005 OCIO *All Hands Meeting*, Tim Walkenhorst received recognition for Excellence in Customer Service. Tim is a member of the ITS Infrastructure Operations Division, Hosting Operations Branch. Prior to joining the ITS, Tim worked many years with the Farm Service Agency in Kansas City, MO. Tim has served as the CCE/SCA (Common Computing Environment/ Service Center Agencies) Large Office Team Leader for the past two years.

Tim Walkenhorst, Hosting Operations.

The CCE/SCA team is responsible for the migration of the existing 11 Large Office sites into the AgLo ONE.USDA.GOV Domain. This work involves both the migration of the user desktops as well as migrating all of the existing legacy servers into the new environment. Additionally, a "Large Office Purchase" was made at the end of FY2004 to bring the infrastructure servers needed for these offices up to a common hardware standard. Tim was instrumental in the conception, design, and implementation of this Large Office deployment. His technical abilities are coupled with a true understanding of the business requirements of these varied offices, a situation that has led to the success of this project as a whole. With all of the Large Offices currently under different phases of their migration efforts, leadership of the migration team and associated Large Office projects have required an individual who could balance a variety of demands from many different sources. Tim is definitely that individual. This project is targeted for completion in July 2005 resulting in all of the 11 offices having been fully migrated into the SCA common computing environment.

Magic Stats / May 2005 (top service call categories for the month)

TOP SERVICE CALL CATEGORIES, May 2005.

SUBJECT	TICKETS	WORK ORDERS
HW – All	3921	3095
FSA Software	1909	1122
Software	1784	1303
COTS Software	1706	640
System Administration	1669	1351
Security	1656	487
Network	1438	797
NRCS Software	1236	885
Subject Pending Review	646	208
RD Software	622	410
Software – OS	575	163
Misc	107	45
Total	**17,269**	**10,506**

CONTACT METHOD FOR SERVICE REQUESTS, May 2005. Of the 17,269 tickets recorded, contact to the ITS Service Desk and Technical Support Division was made in the following manner:

REQUEST TYPE	TICKETS
Automated Alert	126
Call	11,503
Direct Contact	1,429
Email	2,025
FAX	82
Other	296

Magic Stats are compiled for ITS Connections by the Customer Service Branch.

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SERVICE LINE TEAM SUMMIT HELD

By Marilyn Wolfe, LaWanda Burnette, and Bill Yoder

Security experts from across ITS met in Kansas City on April 19-21, 2005 to explore how they could best work together to support their ITS Security Service line. This premier ITS Security Team Summit was called by Greg Gage, Security Line Manager, so that team members could define a new way of collaborating across divisions to provide comprehensive services to meet the security needs of ITS and our customers.

"The purpose of the Security Guild is to integrate ITS' efforts to design and deliver a comprehensive security program that ensures confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all information systems and data for the ITS enterprise."

Summit participants acknowledged the need for them to effectively and efficiently work together to provide the best customer service to ITS customers. They participated in a series of skill-development exercises; shared briefings on on-going initiatives, lessons learned, and other security related topics; and, helped define the ITS Security Service Line offerings including service definitions and metrics.

The Security Guild: Left to right: First row seated, Karen Whiting-Diggs, Doc Sade, Marilyn Wolfe, Stu Keil, Paula Campbell. Second row, Michael Kirby, Philip Pell, Janell Duke, Nancy Myler, Sue Krieg, LaWanda Burnette, Gail Phillips, Greg Gage. Third row, Bill Yoder, Jeff Harriss, Nathan Schmitgen, Jim Whitney, Jim Ward, Tim Slighter. Not pictured, Mary Wilson.

The group established a name and a charter for the team of professionals responsible for security in ITS. ITS Security Guild was chosen as the name and the established charter follows: "The purpose of the Security Guild is to integrate ITS' efforts to design and deliver a comprehensive security program that ensures confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all information systems and data for the ITS enterprise."

ITS' Security Service Offerings include:

- Security Policy Formulation
- IT Service Continuity Planning
- Assurance and Disaster Recovery
- Network Security Monitoring
- Incident Handling and Intrusion Detection
- Investigations and Incident Response

Since the Security Guild is a "virtual team", the members also defined several initiatives intended to improve information security across the ITS organization. They agreed on the importance of: (1) communicating the need for all ITS and SCA staff to be aware of and to avoid security risks; (2) ensuring that security issues are emphasized when inventorying systems; and, (3) sharing information on related security initiatives.

The Guild will remain in contact through email, list-serves, conference calls, and periodic meetings.