Deputy Administrator's Listening Post
April 20, 2006

The following topics were discussed at the April 20, Deputy Administrator's Listening Post:

MU Salary Lapse

During the Round Robin, a question was asked about the possibility of the MU Salary Lapse being returned to HQ. In response, it was indicated that yes, both the Area and MU salary lapse may have to be returned to HQ. **However, this has been clarified. The Area Directors were advised that only their share of salary lapse must be reserved for the potential return to HQ. LAO's should check within their Area to determine if any further guidance was published regarding the MU salary lapse.**

2007 National Administrative Officers' Conference

The 2007 Nation Administrative Officers' Conference has been scheduled for December 4-6, 2007, at the Marriott Savannah Riverfront Hotel, Savannah, Georgia. A Planning Team has been established as follows:

Larry Cullumber, Director, Acquisition and Property Division (APD), Beltsville, MD, Co-Leader
Steve Edney, Deputy Area Director (DAD), SAA, Athens, GA, Co-Leader
Dave Carter, Office of the Deputy Administrator, AFM, Beltsville, MD
Mari Gomez, LAO, Weslaco, TX
Carlean Horton, LAO, Stoneville, MS
Lisa Mullenax, LAO, Lincoln, NE
Wayne Reeves, RL, Watkinsville, GA
Steve Schaefer, APD, Washington, D.C.
Diane Strub, DAD, MWA, Peoria, IL

The Planning Team met in Savannah on March 22-23, 2006, to see the facility and begin planning the agenda. Although no official slogan has been decided on yet, the general theme will be "The LAO of the Future." The conference will focus on the challenges of the future, the changing nature of the LAO's job, and the skills and competencies needed for the future. There will be breakout sessions and a variety of functional experts on site. We are looking at having several "block buster" speakers including two authors of well-known books (leadership, diversity), and a futurist. The Team is using the feedback received from the last conference (Kansas City, 2004) to improve this conference. The Team is working on a variety of assignments now, including: gathering input from the LAO community on both plenary and breakout sessions, *Ask the Experts* sessions, speakers, a Web site, etc. The LAO team members will be surveying the LAO's soon; keep in mind when responding that hot topics of today, may not be hot topics in 2007.

Asset Management Reporting Requirements

The next activity under the President's Management Agenda Initiative on Asset Management is completion of the University Space Worksheet. Beginning in FY-06, Agencies are required to track and report State-owned and Foreign-owned properties they have been given the right to use

in <u>other than</u> a leasehold arrangement. The Area Property Management staff discussed a draft Excel spreadsheet prepared by Facilities Division (FD) to assist the Areas in capturing University-owned and State-owned space occupied by ARS under Cooperative Agreements, Memorandum of Understanding, or no agreement at all. The worksheet identifies the information required for CPAIS data entry and to meet these reporting requirements. The worksheet was accepted for use with minor changes. FD is preparing instructions for completing the worksheet and will forward the revised worksheet with instructions to the Areas by April 21, 2006. It was emphasized that HQ acknowledges that these activities are new, but with the heightened accountability required by the President's Management Agenda, we need to capture this data in order to accomplish the overall intended outcomes of the Asset Management Plan to manage the facilities portfolio of the Agency. Senior Agency management, including the Area Directors (AD's), are rated annually on how well they are meeting the requirements of these initiatives. LAO's and DAD's contribute significantly to the successful accomplishment of these activities on behalf of the AD's. A concern was raised by the LAO's relative to university space; no funds invested in older buildings, while new buildings are being built. Can funds be planned by MU's to upgrade space or encourage universities to improve conditions? In some cases, there are safety and health issues. **In response, the LAO's were encouraged to elevate their concerns if they are safety and health related; MU base funds cannot be used to improve university space.**

Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Initiative

The AFM Strategic Plan includes a Business Plan Activity to develop and implement a facility Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Program to address general maintenance, preventive maintenance, and repair of facilities to minimize the life cycle costs of the facility. It's important that we get a handle on our O&M costs in order to analyze possible alternatives that will be more cost effective to the location and minimize the impact to the research programs. The Areas have the lead on this activity; however, Facilities Division staff will be a resource to any committees that are established by the DAD's. This initiative will begin after the agency's guiding principles for facility design, construction, management and utilization are established. Facilities Division will establish a committee that will utilize the recently developed Building Block Plan to develop principles as to how the Agency acquires, operates, and disposes of real property assets. The DAD's have nominated Jeff Van Houten, PWA, for this committee. Refer to Bulletin 06-303 for the guidance and instructions on capturing O&M costs.

4% Repair and Maintenance Waivers

The LAO's raised the concern that once waivers were granted for new facilities, that they were never rescinded. Even during the warranty period of a new facility, issues arise that are not covered under the warranty, but there are no funds set aside to cover these costs. **In response, it was indicated that the 4% may be low over time, but through the Asset Management process, metrics will be derived that will assist in the evaluation of what the requirements are per asset.**

Energy Related Initiatives

Executive Order (E.O) 13123, Greening the Government through Efficient Energy Management requires use of life cycle cost methodology, energy star, renewable energy and other energy

efficient products, reduction of greenhouse gases, water consumption, training, performance evaluations, awards, and annual report. However, the E.0. 13123 duplicates and conflicts in some cases with the Energy Policy (EP) Act 2005, which was just passed. Therefore, the E.O. 13123 may be rescinded. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 requires federal agencies to reduce energy consumption 2% per year FY 2006 through FY 2015. It also requires procurement of energy efficient products, raise Federal buildings energy performance standards, use of renewable energy, and metering**. Tips on how you may save energy at locations can be obtained at the web site: http://www.eere.energy.gov/femp/operations_maintenance/.** Additional guidance on energy conservation will be forthcoming.

The LAO's were asked to provide feedback on their respective utilities costs and in many cases, there were significant increases in utilities costs. An LAO indicated a renewable energy consultant is being secured by the RL to look at solar energy options.

Facilities Division has begun an initiative for bulk utility purchasing. This would be a more corporate approach to reducing energy costs, but would only apply at sites where deregulation has taken place.

Integrated Acquisition System (IAS):

The IAS Implementation Team has been diligently working on the implementation plan for IAS that will go live June 5. Training for the various user groups has begun. HQ acknowledges that this is another new requirement that will impact the locations. However, as a mandated system in response to the eGov initiative of the President's Management Agenda, we are required to implement the system. The IAS Implementation Team has a cross-section of representation from all levels of the agency including the field and is striving to establish a process that is sensitive to the LAO concerns and in the best interest of the Agency as a whole. The Team recognizes that agencies that have already implemented IAS, have experienced some difficulties and are considering this information in the ARS implementation plan. One of the LAO's indicated that the LAO's that don't have purchasing authority need information on IAS, so that they understand the process and requirements of the system. The LAO's were referred to the IAS Website for all the information published to date on IAS and the implementation plans.

Status of Conversion to USDA's New Personal Property System, Corporate Property Automated Information System (CPAIS)

USDA's plan to implement CPAIS-Personal Property in October 2006 has been temporarily placed on hold due to the priority placed on the Federal Real Property 2006 reporting requirements and funding issues. At this time the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) has not revised the implementation schedule or anticipated deployment date. In the meantime, ARS areas and locations are still expected to continue effective personal property practices that display financial integrity for REE to receive a "green" score on the financial scorecard and withstand audit. Agencies must maintain 100% physical inventory compliance and prompt suspense reconciliation. Acquisition and Property Division will continue to monitor agency status in these functional areas of property management.

HSPD-12 PIV ID Procedure

Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 12, "Policy for a Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors", was issued in August 2004. HSPD-12 encompasses a range of areas including personal identity verification (PIV) for employees and contractors; issuance of identification badges; background investigations; access to Federal property and information systems; and the physical protection of government facilities. Based on the broad scope of HSPD-12, full implementation will require several years. The first step in implementing HSPD-12 was the development and implementation of PIV procedures for new employees. The procedures were effective February 19, 2006, for ARS headquarters components and March 19, 2006, for ARS field locations. A Bulletin incorporating the PIV procedures for the four Research, Education, and Economics agencies will be issued soon. The following items highlight the new requirements:

- New procedures specifically apply to all new hires scheduled to last 6 months or more (including extensions). However, will probably be limitations in the future on facilities/information systems access for employees (e.g. summers) who do not complete the PIV/fingerprint check process.
- Upon EOD, the employee will need to provide two forms of ID and the location (for the field offices) and HRD (for Headquarters) would complete a new AD-1197 form, Personal Identity Verification (PIV) Request, as the sponsor. (Employees are already required to present two forms of identification at EOD for I-9 form).
- The requisite National Agency Check with Inquiry (NACI) forms are now required prior to or upon the employee's EOD to include fingerprints. While they were often not returned for several weeks previously, this would delay obtaining the long-term (non-provisional) PIV.
- Employee's initial id would only be issued on a temporary basis (60 days) until the advanced NAC/fingerprint checks are completed by OPM. (30 day extension is possible)
- After the fingerprint checks are completed, the long-term (non-provisional) badge would be issued. The expiration date would be 5 years from the date of issuance.
- While the USDA guidance has indicated reporting requirements, HRD has established an internal tracking system to report new PIVs. However, periodic reports from the field may be needed on replaced or cancelled PIV badges.

During the discussion on the PIV requirements, a question was asked whether there was a prescribed format for the new ID cards and what the cost will be. No official issuance has been made regarding the new card format, the potential changes in physical access equipment, or the cost. Continue to use existing cards and equipment until further notice. **The FY 2007 ARMP Instructions will provide guidance on planning for these costs.**

Human Resources Information System (HRIS) Update

The Human Resources Information System (HRIS) has 2 new reports:

1. Time in Grade - Lists the date the employee entered their 'present' grade as well as the date they entered the current position.

2. Within Grade Increase Projection - Lists employees who are projected to receive a 'WGI' within the dates specified by the user. One of the LAO's indicated that a batch report received from the Area office didn't correspond to this WGI report; this is being researched.

A question was asked whether there was a report in HRIS that reflects the full performance levels (FPL). The "Target Grade Check" report reflects those employees that have not reached their FPL and what the FPL is.

E-Travel

The E-Travel vendor was re-competed several months ago. Steve Helmrich, Director, Financial Management Division, is serving on the selection team with other Departmental representatives. Vendor proposals have been reviewed, but the team has asked each vendor for some additional information to assist in the selection process. We hope to have a new vendor selected within the next few months.

FY-06 Strategic Resource Management Planning (SRMP)

The FY-06 Strategic Resource Management Planning (SRMP) meetings went very well. These reviews are an abbreviated, but very focused Area ARMP review. The focus of this year's SRMP's was two fold:

First, to evaluate out year potential financial difficulties defined as any MU not having at least $250K per science year (SY) or $25K of discretionary funding per SY. AD's addressed each of these and the potential plan for how to deal with each.

Second, there was a concentrated effort to bring agreement amongst Agency management on what was referred to as Jewels; e.g., our number #1 research priorities, and then agree on #2 and #3 priorities as well. Attention could then be focused on those Jewel MU's that may have a financial problems in the future that we need to address now.

Our ARMP process and subsequent SRMP reviews remain a vital part of our agency's programming and planning process. As time goes on we will continue to refine the process, but they will remain a streamlined, focused process to place agency attention on where resources are most needed.

ARMPS Training

On March 23, FMD presented ARMP training using the net conferencing function. 98 people logged on and called in and many locations had multiple people participate using 1 access. The training covered policies, processes and the use of the automated system. On April 6, this training was provided "live" to Research Leaders and administrative staff of the Beltsville Area.

FY-07 ARMP Cycle

The FY 2007 ARMP Guidance is under review and will be published shortly. Highlights include guidance on possible abolishment of SY positions, identification of assessments and cost considerations, reminder that SRC's should be reviewed for possible assistance in reducing costs, reminder to use 2.2% for pay cost increases, clarification of information required by the OCIO related to IT, and requirement to capture O&M costs in a separate ARMP.

Pandemic Influenza Project

In support of the USDA's efforts to comply with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security s' (DHS) National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza, ARS has taken steps to develop an Agency-wide Program. Under the direction of the AFM, the agency has appointed a primary and a secondary point of contact for developing a plan of action for maintaining operations during a pandemic event. The primary contact is Mr. Jeff Hayes, Director for ARS Homeland Security Office and the secondary point of contact is Mr. Terry Roark, Chief of the Safety, Health and Environmental Management Branch, Facilities Division.

AFM has also established an Agency Steering Committee to craft, review and update Continuity of Operation Plans to ensure that essential services can be provided to all ARS organizational levels throughout the nation. The committee membership consists of representatives from the procurement/acquisition, human resources, financial, information, biosafety, safety management functional areas and the DAD's.

Business Process Review (BPR) of Extramural Agreements Process Lean Events

A contractor, MSI, has been secured to conduct the BPR of the Extramural Agreements process. "Lean" events have been conducted at several Area Offices. The "Lean Event" concept is a streamlined approach to process mapping. On April 21, MSI will be conducting focus group meetings at NAA, HQ – NPS, and with OCIO. MSI will be meeting soon with Senior Management to discuss the outcome of these events.

AIMS Pilot Test

All Areas trained via webcast during the week of April 10. Very good comments received from participants, approximately 160 participants trained. LAO's were encouraged to provide any further comments to the Extramural Agreements Division. System revisions to fix errors and bugs are progressing well; working with the OCIO.

New Systems

Several LAO's expressed concerns regarding the impact of all the new electronic systems being put in place. In response, it was indicated that many of the systems such as FFIS, CPAIS, and IAS are Departmentally mandated. The AFMC as a whole have many discussion regarding this impact and in implementing these systems, considers how best to do so with as little burden on the LAO's and other field staff as possible. Interconnectivity of systems is always our goal, but unfortunately, limited resources preclude us from moving any faster.

LAO of the Future

It is recognized that the roles and responsibilities of the LAO have changed significantly over the years, especially with the addition of new requirements such as Asset Management and IAS. There is a workgroup that will review and document the skills now required for the LAO. The LAO's job has become more complex requiring analysis and interpersonal communication skills more so than ever before. The top priority of the AFMC is the development of a standard

position description for the LAO; this was the top of a list of 12 occupational categories identified for development of standard position descriptions.

Competing data calls/unrealistic turnaround times

Several LAO's raised concerns regarding competing data calls and unrealistic turnaround times. In response, it was indicated that to the extent possible, these data calls are coordinated at Headquarters. Many of these requirements are from the Department and we have no discretion on the due dates. However, we make every effort to consider first how we can meet these requirements without having to make data calls to the LAO's and other field offices, and only after that, request information from the field.

Changes in Policy and Procedures

It was requested by the LAO's that when new P&P's are issued that a statement be provided that lists the major changes to the P&P if it is a revision of a previous issuance, so that the entire P&P doesn't have to be read right away. In response, the LAO's were reminded that a summary is provided on the cover page of the P&P indicating the major changes and were encouraged to read the P&P's fully.