



OCFO

OCIO

connections

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HONORING OUR VETS
VETERAN'S DAY
NOVEMBER 11, 2008

OCFO / OCIO Calendar November – December

Election Day	11/4
Veterans' Day	11/11
Thanksgiving Day	11/27
Christmas Day	12/25

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THIN CLIENT SOLUTION

by Eric Harris and Victor Winnard

Envision – Innovate – Achieve. Those three words reflect the mantra of each member of the Washington Communications and Technology Services (WCTS) Division team. WCTS strives to provide innovative, cost effective information technology (IT), network data, and voice communications services for the D. C. Metropolitan area. WCTS' customers include the Office of the Secretary, Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), Office of the Chief Financial Officer, and U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) executive agencies located in Washington, D. C.

Early in 2007, WCTS staff began exploring solutions for better management, security, and more cost efficient solutions for Departmental desktop management. Numerous companies and government agencies using the Thin Client computing solution were studied. In addition, findings on industry Return on Investment (ROI) were researched.

WCTS concluded that Thin Client computing could address many of the new IT and security requirements as well as the new Federal mandates facing the Federal government. Thin Client is a server-centric "thin" hardware and software desktop solution that replaces hardware at the desktop with the operating system, application software, data, and CPU power residing on network servers.

The benefits of a Thin Client infrastructure solution include:

- Improved service delivery and management of customer resources;
- Increased security;
- Cost savings;
- Enhanced capacity to support both the Citrix Telecommute and Windows Terminal Services solutions;

- Uniform Department-wide desktop infrastructure; and
- Supports the *Going Green* mandates.

In the spring of 2007, Bob Suda, former USDA Associate Chief Information Officer, mandated that WCTS pilot the new technology for the Department. In June of 2007, the Thin Client architecture was installed and tested. The OCIO management team was one of WCTS' first customers to participate in the pilot phase. The management team was more than happy with the technology's ease of use, projected cost reductions, and reduction in security vulnerabilities.

The pilot phase was utilized to help determine equipment type, product functionality, potential ROI, and product reliability. WCTS selected three of the leading manufacturers of thin client devices: Wyse, Neoware, and Hewlett Packard. The cost of each device ranges from \$400 to \$800.



Photo: A typical Thin Client desktop

Subsequently, WCTS selected the Thin Client technology to augment its existing Citrix telecommute environment/architecture. The Thin Client solution can improve productivity while reducing hardware, software, support, and downtime costs.

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Thin Client provides a secure, productive desktop and remote computing environment by centralizing data storage on the network. This dramatically reduces desktop data security vulnerabilities.

WCTS selected Accelera Technologies to assist in the installation and upgrade of the architectural backbone in January 2008. The server installation is complete and will support approximately 1,000 users. WCTS designed this solution to be upwardly expanded to support more than 10,000 users Department-wide and can scale this design to grow as the needs and requirements of the Department change.

WCTS will deploy the Thin Client solution to three categories of users: 1) regular users, 2) power users, and 3) high end users. WCTS will work with agency

representatives to decide which users are good candidates for the Thin Client solution.

WCTS has successfully deployed Thin Client devices to the Continuity of Operations (COOP) Level 4 location and the OCIO COOP location in Beltsville, Maryland. In addition, the Thin Client devices have been successfully deployed by WCTS in agencies within the Department.

WCTS will provide a full range of services to support all aspects of Thin Client implementation and operation. Valarie Burks, WCTS Director, states, "WCTS is very excited about the possibilities and improved efficiencies that Thin Client will bring to USDA. It is definitely a technology that, when properly utilized, will help USDA to operate more efficiently and securely."



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

As we start a new fiscal year, I look forward to the progress our OCFO and OCIO teams will continue to make in the upcoming year. Privacy, cyber security, and implementation of the Financial Management Modernization Initiative (FMMI), as well as many other projects, will be an important part of 2009. We will continue to see progress in the movement to four enterprise data centers and the usage of Voice and Video over Internet Protocol. Continued progress on these things will allow both OCFO and OCIO to continue to reduce spending, which will be crucial in order to make progress in other areas. There are many projects and goals that the leadership of both organizations has set for our teams. I know that each of you will continue your hard work to ensure that we succeed.

HOW OCFO AND OCIO CONNECT  TO SUPPORT USDA INITIATIVES

Financial Operations Overview

By Susan Showalter

As part of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), the Associate Chief Financial Officer for Financial Operations (ACFO-FO) provides oversight of USDA agencies' financial functions by establishing financial policy and administering the appropriate controls to ensure compliance. John Brewer, ACFO-FO, directs the three divisions under the ACFO-FO umbrella: Accounting Policy and Consolidated Reporting Division (APCRD), Controller Operations Division (COD), and Systems Analysis and Requirements Division (SARD). ACFO-FO is responsible for Department-wide financial operations and reporting which includes assets of \$140 billion and operating costs of \$90 billion for 7 mission areas, 18 agencies, 3 corporations, and 11 staff offices.

APCRD, under the direction of Kevin Close, performs financial reporting functions that include the preparation of the Department's consolidated financial statements, as well as acting in an advisory role to financial management personnel throughout the Department.

COD, under the direction of Charles Wallace, is responsible for the operational financial functions. In

addition to financial reporting, COD services to customer agencies within USDA include administrative payments processing, certification of payments, cash and property reconciliation, Intra-governmental Payment and Collection (IPAC), vendor table maintenance, related regulatory policy compliance, and support (i.e., training). Division activities involve many diverse tasks such as payment of agency utility bills and USDA's timely and accurate reporting to the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

SARD, under the direction of Howard Campbell, provides operational financial guidance and assistance to financial management officials and personnel throughout USDA. SARD works closely with the Office of the Associate Chief Financial Officer for Financial Systems (ACFO-FS) regarding use of existing financial management tools and development of new financial management accounting systems such as the Financial Management Modernization Initiative (FMMI).

The three ACFO-FO divisions work collaboratively to manage the finances of one of the largest departments in Federal government.

Managing IT Change by Sheila Greene and Steve Spector

Information Technology (IT) change management is required to keep the Information Technology Services (ITS) large, complex computing environment updated and operational. Daily, the computers of more than 50,000 Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development (RD) employees (and their partners) automatically receive new software, upgrades, and security features — the last stage of a methodical and carefully executed deployment process. The Infrastructure Deployment Branch, also known as the Interoperability Lab (IO Lab), conducts the deployment process and uses newsflashes to communicate with the support staff.

Newsflashes provide a quick, efficient method of providing critical information to IT support staff. The ITS Newsflash has evolved over the years. At first, information was sent out to IT staff when mainframes were being serviced or down for an extended period of time. Information provided to IT staff allowed them to better plan their work and respond to end users when questions arose about why a service was unavailable or a remote program would not run.

As the computing environment moved from mainframes to local workstation processing, the information in the newsflash notified the IT support staff of all actions and events that affected the end users. The ITS Newsflash is directed primarily to ITS-Technical Support Division (TSD) staff but is also received by other ITS operational and support

organizations that need to be notified. The information in the Newsflash helps the TSD staff plan for upcoming application releases, project deadlines, and information about broken processes and applications. As originally intended, it informs the IT staff of critical information so they can respond to end users when questions arise.

The ITS Newsflash itself has evolved into a document library where each Newsflash (beginning in June 2006) is created for a specific project or announcement. Each Newsflash is named with a date and category format so it can easily be retrieved from an archived database and the needed information referenced. ITS Newsflashes are sent to all ITS-TSD staff using an email distribution group. A Portable Document Format (PDF) version of the newsflash is attached for easy, off-line reference and the content of the Newsflash is also readable in the email itself. Archives of the Newsflashes are stored on the IT Resources Web site and can be sorted and reviewed by category, subject, title, platform, operating system and date.

Each IT change is evaluated, tested, and deployed in a way that assures the computing system will remain secure and stable. Detailed information about the IO Lab and managing IT change is featured in ITS Connections *Issue 5* and *Issue 6*.

The *Deployment Highlights* below were selected from 239 projects completed during July and August 2008. *Bottom photos: Courtesy of ITS, NRCS, and USDA Photo Library.*

Deployment Highlights - July/August 2008

Agency/Initiator and ITS Release Manager	Project Name	Deployment Description
RD Initiator- Michael Dinneny TS/IDIB Release Manager David Hyde	DB2 PE 8.1 (Personal Edition) Fix Pack (FP) 16 is an application used by Rural Development for database applications on individual workstations.	Fix Pack 16 for this application was deployed to all Kansas City Large Office users of the IBM DB2 Personal Edition Software to resolve several critical security vulnerabilities as described in the June 2008 desktop vulnerability report issued by the Security Office.
RD Initiator- Carol Townsend ITS/IDB Release Manager - Kristen Gallogly	Guaranteed Loan System (GLS) Word Plugin is an application used by Rural Development to import Word documents into the RD Image Repository directly from within MS Word. The image repository stores images of various documents for GLS and other RD systems. This saves users from having to print the documents and scan them into the RD Image Repository.	This upgrade has been accomplished via Systems Management Server (SMS) deployment to 50 client workstations located in the St. Louis offices.
NRCS Initiator- Ken Rojas ITS/IDB Release Manager- Kathy Bashaw	Waterway Design Tool is an application for NRCS used by States actively involved in grass lined waterway design as a conservation practice at the state, county, and field office level.	This application was distributed through the Engineering Field Tools Framework (EFT) and was installed via remote installation from the National Engineering Field Tools Update Center (http://www.eft.nrcs.usda.gov).
NRCS/Initiator - Greg Hadish ITS/IDB Release Manager- Kathy Bashaw	NRCS Data Tools for ArcMap 9.2 is an application designed by and for NRCS in Iowa to provide field office ArcMap users with simplified methods for accessing geodata and editing.	This application was deployed through the IT Resources Web site. The application is specific to Iowa NRCS.



Introducing VoIP

by Susan Moore

Traditional telephone networks devote an entire phone line to the transmission of a conversation. With Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), conversations are digitized, compressed, and transmitted over a network that also carries data. As a result, VoIP uses substantially less bandwidth than a traditional telephone call and can consequently be more cost effective. Because VoIP voice packets are transmitted in a fashion similar to other data, users can attach documents to voice messages. In addition, call waiting, call forwarding, call blocking, and caller identification (caller ID) are typically standard features of VoIP and can be easily activated by system administrators at no extra charge. VoIP handsets are usually small and lightweight enough to be easily moved from location to location within the same VoIP network. Thus, it is important to note that migration to a VoIP network from a traditional telephone network requires replacement handsets as well as network components.

In an effort to take advantage of the benefits of VoIP, six of USDA's largest agencies have already implemented independent VoIP networks based on different technologies. While this approach supports individual agency missions, it leads to redundant resources and can result in a lack of interoperability between networks across the enterprise.

More than a year ago, USDA agencies and staff offices launched Phase I of an enterprise-wide VoIP initiative to ensure that next-generation VoIP projects meet common standards, eliminate redundancies, and optimize end-to-end performance. The VoIP working group comprised nearly forty agency representatives and two contractors — one to document requirements, perform baseline research and deliver findings; the other, to develop baseline standards.

Working group members discovered that VoIP standards are generally still immature, and though many of them are adopted by national and international standards organizations, vendors' implementations of such standards still vary. Moving forward, working group members agreed that Internet Protocol (IP) deployments should evolve toward common enterprise architecture with each new acquisition. They also determined that:

- Enterprise IP architecture should promote flexible and forward-thinking interoperable standards to avoid becoming a source of technology stagnation in the USDA.
- The enterprise network backbone will require technology upgrades to maintain current levels of availability and quality of service for both voice and data to support unified IP requirements.
- Agencies must be willing to support Universal Telecommunications Network/UTN-to-the-desk connectivity to avoid unnecessary "hops" between legacy local area networks and the enterprise backbone. This will enable network

operations troubleshooting to the desktop and end-to-end security enhancements.

USDA has now transitioned to Phase II which is managed by USDA's Technical Review Board (TRB), a change control board established to maintain the integrity of the USDA enterprise network backbone. The TRB has formed an Integrated IP Standards Subcommittee and VoIP Working Group that will make recommendations for the definition, prioritization, and enterprise-wide adoption of integrated IP standards to the USDA Executive Change Control Board (ECCB). The ECCB will review the TRB recommendations and submit them for approval to the USDA Chief Information Officer. In addition, the subgroup plans to:

- Review and comment on IP Acquisition Approval Requests;
- Identify and recommend Department-wide standards for network IP services such as Voice and Video over IP;
- Implement a strategy for migrating from stove-pipe legacy IP networks into a single, unified IP enterprise backbone;
- Develop and implement a governance strategy and guidelines for managing IP technologies across the Department;
- Manage processes for maintaining IP network configuration change control;
- Establish processes for incorporating IP into the USDA Enterprise Architecture;
- Promote enterprise-wide IP acquisitions; and
- Make recommendations for USDA enterprise policy on IP technologies.

Agencies that have an IP installed base and those interested in IP technology will have an opportunity to actively participate in the TRB Integrated IP Standards Subcommittee and VoIP Working Group. For more information contact Vernelle Archer, TRB Chairperson, at: 301-504-2040.

Did You Know?

In Fiscal Year 2008, Washington Communications and Technology Services processed more than 200 million messages, trapped more than 156 million spam messages, and answered more than 14,064 Employee Locator inquiries.

Upon request, the Controller Operations Division, Customer Liaison and Training Branch conducts training sessions for USDA agencies in New Orleans, Washington, D.C., or an agency site on a fee-for-service basis. Continuing Professional Education credits are awarded upon successful completion of the course. For more information, call (504) 426-5471, or email: customer.training@usda.gov

USDA Security and Pii Awareness Poster Contest

by Evelyn Davis and Shang Lee

Personally Identifiable Information, or Pii, refers to information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity. Pii can include information or combinations of information such as social security numbers (in complete or truncated form), place of birth, date of birth, mother's maiden name, biometric record, fingerprint, iris scan, DNA, medical history, medical conditions, financial information, credit card numbers, bank account numbers, etc.

USDA must protect Pii for both employees and customers since Pii has a direct and critically important impact on everyone's life. To heighten awareness and increase involvement of everyone who may be handling or in contact with Pii, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), Cyber Security, sponsored a USDA Security and Pii Awareness Poster Contest that began August 15 and ended September 15, 2008.

The theme of the contest was *"Protect It Like Your Own."* As part of the rules, contestants were required

to submit posters that focused on the security and Pii awareness theme and suggest preventive measures to protect information Department-wide. All works had to be original and became the property of USDA. Cyber Security will be authorized to use, reproduce, publish, and publicly display the posters and/or designs, in whole or in part, in any manner for any security awareness purpose.

Employee participation has been excellent and judging will be difficult. The final count is 91 posters submitted by employees from Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Forest Service (FS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), OCIO, and Rural Development (RD). The creativity and variations on the theme shown on the posters received have been impressive.

Military Service is Creditable Toward Retirement

by Loyce Smith and Bruce Pacot

Generally, all honorable active duty military service is potentially creditable under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Some military service is creditable automatically; but, other military service may require that you make a monetary deposit to your CSRS or FERS account.

Options to buy back military time to count towards your civilian retirement are dependent upon your time of service and your civilian retirement system. Once you become employed with the Federal government, you have 2 years to complete the formal process or interest will be added to the calculated amount you owe (approximately 3 percent of total military earnings). Some employees have waited until retirement time and have retired without this additional benefit. You should not wait! Review the information immediately so you can obtain a benefit for serving your country.

You must request a statement of your military earnings from your military finance center by completing an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Form RI 20-97, Estimated Earnings during Military Service, and send it to the appropriate military finance center. Your DD-214, Report of Transfer or Discharge, must be attached to the request. Once you receive the earnings statement, you must submit the returned

form to Human Resources (HR) for verification and final calculations that will be sent to the National Finance Center for processing. HR will notify you when this action is completed so you can select the payment plan that is appropriate for you to finalize this process. Once you select the appropriate payment plan, the compounded interest fee will stop. It is important to pursue the options NOW! It is imperative that you complete the deposit before OPM finalizes your retirement application. There are several articles in the Government Executive publication (www.govexec.com) that refer to this topic. Other regulations that apply to receiving this benefit can be found at the following Web sites:

FERS Retirement Information
<http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdfimage/RI90-1.pdf>

CSRS Retirement Information
<http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdfimage/RI83-2.pdf>

Estimated Earnings for Military
http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/RI20-97.pdf

You are encouraged to contact your HR servicing benefits specialist for any questions regarding military service credit and additional information on procedures needed to make a deposit to your civilian retirement system.

Secretary Schafer Visits South Dakota

by Trish Harrell



Photo: Secretary Schafer and Trish Harrell, TSD/SD

Secretary Ed Schafer visited the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) State office in Huron, South Dakota, August 21, 2008. All available employees gathered to listen as the Secretary gave a very personable speech about his background and his experiences since becoming Secretary of USDA.

Secretary Schafer is very supportive of technology. As Governor of North Dakota, he worked hard to convert the State over to computers. He also spoke about the security challenges all agencies within USDA face and about the lack of funding from Congress.

After his speech, he took group pictures with representatives from each agency. I was the only representative from Information Technology Services so I was able to get an individual photo with the Secretary. It was a unique and delightful experience to meet Secretary Schafer face-to-face. I will keep this special photo with my other memorabilia.

Motorcycle Club Rides for MLK Memorial

by Lydia Wilkins



Photo: Lydia Wilkins, ITS/IGD

In 2006, the U.S. Congress authorized construction of a national memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr., to be built in Washington, D.C. adjacent to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial, between the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials. The Lincoln Memorial is where the civil rights leader delivered his famous *I Have a Dream* speech. King will be the first African-American honored with his own memorial in the Mall area and the second non-President to be commemorated in such a way.

Martin Luther King, Jr., was a clergyman, activist, and civil rights icon. He was born on January 15, 1929, and assassinated on April 4, 1968. At the age of 35, he became the youngest man to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring segregation and racial discrimination to an end through peaceful and non-violent means.

In August 2008, I, Lydia "Foxy" Wilkins, rode from Baltimore to D.C. on my black Harley Davidson Nightster with my group, the Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club, Central Maryland Chapter, to help raise more than \$75,000 in donations toward the \$120 million needed to fund the Memorial. I was just a kid when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his *I Have a Dream* speech; but, I remember it like it was yesterday. When I heard about the ride, I knew that I had to be a part of it.

When I think back about those times and his speech, I never thought when Dr. King said, "When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing ..." that I would witness this dream become a reality. It was such an emotional experience for me when we arrived at the proposed monument site to see such a diverse and united group. To read more about the Memorial, visit: <http://www.mlkmemorial.org/>.



Photo: right, Lydia "Foxy" Wilkins

STAFF RECOGNITION

☆ 2008 Length of Service Recipients ☆

- 40 Years - Joyce Baumgartner, Stanley Gray
 35 Years - Gwendolyn Newman, Nancy C. Sanders, Keiko Tarner Whitehead, Barbara A. Williams
 30 Years - Donna Barnett, Cathy Brothers, Lenetta Elias, Carolyn Fountain, William Franklin, Carole Hawkins, William King, Jr., Gary Luttner, Cynthia Larkins, Diana C. Mack, Pauline Myrick, Debra J. Risk, Jon Sandy, Kelly Stelmach, Margo Smith, Dale Theurer
 25 Years - Cheryl A. Bartley, Michael Carpenter, Debra Coates, Francis Corrigan, Valerie Crockett, Robert Darragh III, Phyllis C. Hall, Margaret-Ann Hamilton, Donnie Holmes, Sidney Keyer, Yolinda Lewis, Norma E. Rodriguez, Frederick W. Smith, Daniel R. Snyder, Beverly Washington, Cheryl J. Watkins, Dedria White, Maureen Wood
 20 Years - Brinton Allison, Keith Budreau, Ruth Draper Helland, Mary Eschenbauch, Deborah Le Gear, Jody McElroy, Wanda Swann, Jody Wilde, Lynda Williams, Eric Won
 15 Years - Frederic Ducksworth, Darcy Harding Jr.
 10 Years - Matthew J. Cuthbert, Don C. Harris II, Larry L. Scott
 5 Years - Michael C. Cole, Tony M. Lane

☆ Recent Promotions ☆

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lena Allen, TSD/East | Linda Lewis, TSD/LO |
| Jennifer Gallagher, IDD/SDB | Tom Radermacher, TSD/Central |
| Vickie Harper, TSD/KY | William Voisine, IOD/IDB |
| Scott Hawkins, TSD/AL | |

☆ Recent Reassignments ☆

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Michael Hosbein, TSD/LO | Kathi Smith, TSD/LO |
|-------------------------|---------------------|

☆ Recent Hires ☆

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Richard (Rich) L. Bachert, TSD/ID-OR | Barry Layne Lipscombe, IOD/HOB |
| Kristine Elizabeth Byrne, IOD/OSB | Robert L. Marks, IOD/TOB |
| Jeffrey Allen Dublo Jr, IOD/OSB | Ronald Arthur Millos, TSD/LOR |
| George Ensminger Jr, TSD/TS (DLP) | Amy A. Mitchell, TSD/LA |
| Chuck R. Fisher, IOD/OSB | Phillip Wayne Shute Jr, TSD/LA |
| Thomas Hubert Gondolfo Jr, TSD/AL | Michael Joseph Stevich, IOD/HOB |
| Curtis Wayne Grothman, TSD/LOR | Brian Thomas Torelli, IOD-OSB |
| Dwight Hansen, TSD/NE | James Broughton Tucker, IOD/OSB |
| Jeff Harriss, IOD/OSB | Renee S. Vigil, IOD/OSB |
| Jennifer A. Hoines, TSD/AK-WA | Jason Michael Walters, IOD/TOB |
| Tani Kickham, IOD/OSB | Linda S. Weaver, OCIO/ITS/IGD/ |
| Innocent Lau, IOD/OSB | John L Weber, TSD-LOR |

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 Cyber Security - Evelyn Davis
 National Information Technology Center - Bruce A. Pacot
 Washington Communications and Technology Services - Yvonne Winston

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



United States Department of Agriculture
OCFO - OCIO
Connections Newsletter

HOW OCFO AND OCIO CONNECT



TO SUPPORT USDA INITIATIVES

