OCIO *connections*

Happy
Spring!

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Delivering on a Dynamic Vision

President Harry Truman said, "A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties." I am optimistic that the USDA OCIO Team will meet all opportunities head on and successfully deliver on our critical mission - Chris Smith

Chris Smith came to USDA in 2007 to be Chief Information Officer for Rural Development. He had been at the General Services Administration, responsible for IT enterprise shared services delivery for GSA and cross serviced 30 external organizations. In early 2008, he was appointed Deputy Chief Information Officer for USDA and Associate Chief Information Officer for Integration & Operations (in an acting capacity for both). He comes to us well versed in service delivery, service requirements and expectations and, with his experience as chairman of the ITS Information Technology and Funding Committee (ITFC), improving the dialogue among our customers.

"When you step back and look at USDA you see a vast, incredibly complex organization with diverse businesses," Chris told us. "These include finance, banking, and insurance for agriculture; venture capital and investment; technical assistance; international trade; economic development; science; economic research; natural resource management for forests, soil, and water; rural real estate and utilities; food safety and nutrition, and much more. The USDA OCIO Team delivers the vital IT infrastructure which moves billions of USDA dollars and mission critical information where they are needed."

Turning Challenges into Opportunities

- OMB security requirements have catalyzed a USDA-wide effort to review our systems and coordinate IT management.
- Advances in technology provide opportunities for flexible and innovative services that help USDA deliver its many missions and programs. For instance, an upcoming unified communications approach that enhances email, video and teleconferencing will allow for greater collaboration among USDA staff and our customers.
- The challenge of meeting customer needs and exceeding expectations amid tighter budgets means OCIO is focused on constantly improving business processes and services and delivering highly secure, highly available, highly robust infrastructure at best value.

A Proactive, Agile OCIO

Chris Smith describes his priority as realizing the overall vision for OCIO as

Photo: Chris Smith

"a dynamic provider of world-class enterprise IT services." He sees the OCIO enterprise approach as offering a balance that provides secure, reliable, and robust managed core services for the whole Department, with other specialized services tailored to the specific needs of USDA's organizations.

Helping move that IT vision forward across USDA is a new OCIO executive team (see page 2). Chris' colleagues provide critical organizational continuity and share a commitment to the enterprise vision. "There is lots of energy. We are thinking across OCIO to improve how we do things. And we are building and adapting a variety of quality management techniques to strengthen our long-range planning and fine-tune ongoing activities."

Facilitating the Business of USDA

Everything about IT at USDA is interconnected in one way or another. As Chris puts it, "OCIO facilitates the business of USDA. The various security issues – such as vulnerabilities to our networks and Personally Identifiable Information – highlighted the need for an enterprise approach and challenged us, as a department, to move forward. It also highlights how important all our teams are at Cyber Security, ITM, ITS, NITC, and TSO."

When asked if he had any words of wisdom for the OCIO community, Chris said, "Have fun! We all can make OCIO a world-class IT enterprise for one of the biggest diversified organizations in the world."

✐ OCIO's NEW APPOINTMENTS ✎

Joining Chris Smith are new ACIOs who bring institutional continuity, experience, and energy to their leadership positions:

Left to right: Sandy Facinoli, ITM; Kent Armstrong, NITC; John Donovan, TSO; Chris Wren, ITS; Mary Heard, Cyber Security.

Sandy Facinoli, acting ACIO of Information Technology & Management (ITM), was appointed in February 2008. Prior to her appointment, Sandy served as Deputy ACIO for ITM under Chris Niedermayer. Sandy has been with USDA for 20 years, serving in many positions across the Department. A nutritionist by training, Sandy joined USDA as the director of the Food and Nutrition information center at the National Agricultural Library. She became Deputy Director of Communications and Education at the Food Safety and Inspection Service before joining OCIO in 2002.

Kent Armstrong, acting Director of the National Information Technology Center (I&O/NITC), was appointed in December 2007. He replaces Kathleen Rundle who retired in January. Kent has been at NITC since 2001, serving initially as the Business Integration Manager and more recently as Chief of the Project Management Office. He joined USDA in 1978 and has worked for Food Safety and Quality Service, Packers and Stockyards Administration, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, and Farm Service Agency.

John Donovan, acting ACIO for Telecommunications Services and Operations (I&O/TSO), was appointed in December 2007. Prior to his appointment, John served as Deputy ACIO for TSO under Jan Lilja who joined the Smithsonian Institution in April 2007. John has been with USDA for 20 years, serving most of his time with the Food and Nutrition Service. He has been with OCIO since 2001, first as the Deputy for the Universal Telecommunications Network project office, and Special Assistant to the CIO and Deputy CIO from 2004 – 2006.

Chris Wren, acting ACIO for Information Technology Services (I&O/ITS), was appointed in November 2007. Chris came to OCIO/Information & Technology Management (ITM) in 2006 as the Enterprise Architect for USDA, responsible for managing a program of about 250 investments with a combined annual budget of $1.2 billion and also contributing to the Integrated IT Governance Process, weaving together functions such as Capital Planning, Enterprise Architecture, Security, and Procurement. Prior to USDA, Chris was at GSA since 1990, first with FEDSIM and then with IT Solutions.

Mary Heard, acting ACIO for Cyber Security, was appointed in March 2008. She served as Lynn Allen's Deputy in the Office of Cyber Security since January 2006 after an interval at the State Department, Office of Inspector General, where she was responsible for the audits of global IT inspections. Mary started at USDA in 1977 and was one of the first cadre of computer specialists in the USDA Office of Inspector General. She has a dual certification as both a CPA and a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP).

✐ New ITS Appointments ✎

Greg Montgomery, acting Deputy ACIO, was appointed last November after Eric Won was detailed to a project at GSA. Greg joined the Infrastructure Governance Division of ITS in Spring 2006, first as Project Management Branch Chief, then as Acting Division Director. Greg transferred to ITS from OCIO's Cyber Security Office where he had worked since its inception.

John Gambriel, acting Director, ITS Infrastructure Governance Division. John joined ITS in February 2006 as a project manager at the IGD-Program Management Branch where he implemented project management discipline at ITS. He began working at USDA in July 1998 and served as the Director of Infrastructure and Security at the Office of the Chief Financial Officer-Financial Systems.

Federal Desktop Core Configuration (FDCC)-From OMB Mandate to USDA Accomplishment

In March 2007, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) announced the FDCC as a security requirement for all Windows XP and Vista computers that process US Government data. Jim Donohue, FDCC Lead for USDA Cyber Security, says, "It is a standard configuration with hundreds of security settings designed to provide a baseline of security and minimize access points hackers use to enter the network."

Threats from hackers, espionage, and organized cyber-criminals are real. Because the computing systems at the USDA support billions of dollars of programs, financial services, and privileged information, protecting them is a top priority.

USDA's Challenge

At USDA, there are 17 fairly autonomous agencies and 12 staff organizations; over 150,000 employees and contractors, (some working remotely using mobile computing devices); 105,000 affected computers; over 3,500 office locations across the country and overseas; and thousands of business applications spread out among them all.

According to Kelvin Fairfax, Director of Security Compliance/Cyber Security/OCIO, "the FDCC task at the USDA is extremely complex." By helping every agency make its implementation plan, USDA is figuring out how to implement FDCC in a way that does not stop delivery of USDA's services.

"Each USDA agency and departmental office has its particular applications, equipment, workforce, partners, and IT infrastructure," Jim Donohue explains. Cyber Security is working with each agency and departmental organization to help them test the FDCC settings on their specific combination of networks and computing systems, identify problems affecting business processes or services, and find solutions. The USDA's efforts are two-tiered, with:

- The Cyber Security Advisory Council (CSAC) brings together CIOs from all USDA agencies and Departmental offices to discuss FDCC issues and progress at a high level;
- Agency teams of engineers work out the details of testing FDCC on their systems.

FDCC at the Service Center Agencies' Common Computing Environment

The Service Center Agencies (SCA) consist of the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Rural Development, with more that 45,000 employees in offices across the country. OCIO/Information Technology Services (ITS) manages their *Common Computing Environment*, a shared computing system with core services and support. Each Agency then adds its particular set of business processes and technical requirements to its system.

The FDCC challenge experienced here is common to all other agencies, except the SCA have support

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FDCC Timeline

March 2007 – FDCC settings established by National Institute of Standards and Technology in collaboration with Microsoft, the US Air Force and others.

Feb. 1, 2008 Goal - All Government Departments and Agencies were to submit an inventory of their Windows XP and Vista computers. Only a few of them met that date.

March 31, 2008 Goal – Departments are to provide a technical survey of systems and implementation status.

July 31, 2008 USDA Goal – Full FDCC implementation .

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from the ITS Architecture Definition Branch (ADB) and the Infrastructure Deployment Branch (IDB). Corey Wright, of ADB, is the ITS point of contact for SCA FDCC activities. His team works closely with the agencies to analyze the best way to test and integrate FDCC requirements into the SCA environment. Barry Hodge and Don Michelli, of IDB, lead the ITS team that focuses on implementing the FDCC settings and on testing core workstation applications. Meanwhile, FSA, NRCS, and RD each have teams testing their specific business applications.

Phil Owen, Chief, FSA Configuration Management and Support Group, notes: "The implementation will require redevelopment of existing business applications as well as the purchase of new or changed commercial off the shelf (COTS) applications. With little or no funding targeted for either of these endeavors, it will be a difficult and lengthy process to meet the challenge being presented to us. The staff we have working towards this goal are all professionals and dedicated to providing a good product. Their goal is to insure that everyone will be able to continue to do their jobs as they need to, without any loss of service to USDA's customers. It will be done as required."

Steady Progress

There is good news, though. "Our tests on the client applications (the tools that work within an employee's computer) had no problems with the settings," Ken Carpenter, leader of the NRCS FDCC team, reports, "However, NRCS has 80 web-based applications and we'll need to test them all before we can produce a valid project plan." On March 3, 2008, a FDCC status report to CFO/CIO Chuck Christopherson showed 25 USDA organizations were on track but 4 (those with the largest and most complex systems) were not.

Where does that place USDA in terms of FDCC implementation by July 31, 2008? Some agencies and offices will be ready; however, others will be methodically testing and producing project plans to safely implement FDCC either by updating existing software, deploying new compatible applications and hardware, or working out other acceptable solutions.

On the Road with the Cyber Security Expo & Roadshow

The 2008 Cyber Security Expo and Road Show started its national "Protecting & Safeguarding Information" tour in St. Louis on January 15. What started in 2007 as an intensive 2-day exposition and series of presentations at USDA's Whitten Building headquarters in Washington, DC went national this year. The tour also included Fort Collins (Jan. 17); Washington, DC (Jan. 29 & 30); Kansas City, MO (Feb. 12); Albuquerque, NM (Feb. 14); and New Orleans (Feb. 26/27).

The Whitten Building Patio was filled with 43 booths where vendors and USDA Agency security experts demonstrated their services and programs. An executive meeting room was dedicated to presentations. The Expo opened with comments from Chuck Connor, Deputy Secretary; Chuck Christopherson, CFO/CIO; and Lynn Allen, ACIO-Cyber Security.

They focused on protecting the integrity of USDA program delivery by enhancing computer security and safeguarding personal identifiable information (PII). This was followed by two days of presentations on accomplishing those goals (for which attendees received security training credits). The presentations included topics such as PII protection; disaster recovery planning and practices; the big picture on threats to information security; best practices for wireless security; and defense against identity theft. For a complete list of topics covered at the many venues, go to:

http://www.ocio.usda.gov/security/index.html.

Cyber Security Coordinator, Evelyn Davis, with support from NITC Marketing Program Manager, Bruce A. Pacot, teamed up to produce the Expo and Roadshow. They began assembling and coordinating participants, topics, and logistics in 2007. The actual road show was from January through February 2008. They were helped locally by Kevin Brackens, St. Louis; Sharon Boderick, Washington, DC; Meria Whitedove, Ft. Collins; and Gail Phillips, Kansas City.

Photo: Deputy Secretary Connor opens the 2008 Cyber Security Awareness Expo in Washington, DC.

Photo: USDA headquarters' Patio was filled with 43 booths presenting diverse cyber security services.

IT Shadow Day Brings High School Students to OCIO

From Megen Davis, Director, Information Management/ITM

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) hosted students from Ballou Senior High School in Washington, DC as part of the Federal Information Technology (IT) Job Shadow Day. The USDA was one of 26 Federal agencies that participated in the program designed to help recruit the next generation of IT professionals into government. It is sponsored by the Federal Chief Information Officers Council in partnership with the Association for Federal Information Resources Management (AFFIRM) and the Junior Achievement (JA) organization.

The students were exposed to a broad array of IT areas, including Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-12, where students were fingerprinted and observed the production of a USDA LincPass; at Network Operations, students were given a tour of the network operations center; at Geographic Information Systems (GIS), students located their homes and school using enterprise GIS tools and discussed how USDA uses GIS tools to protect our food supply; and at Cybersecurity, students discussed vulnerabilities in their home computers, cell phones, etc., and how people could try to attack government systems using these devices.

USDA IT executives spoke about working at USDA, the practical steps they need to take to be competitive, and the rewards

of employment with the Federal Government. The officials told the students that while math and science knowledge is crucial to success in the IT field, they also need to take the courses necessary to be an excellent communicator with customers, colleagues, and managers.

Finally, the students had a session with staff from CSREES' 1890 National Scholars Program (www.ascr.usda.gov/outreach.html) where they discussed how to get into college, opportunities for financial aid, and how to be successful while in college.

The IT Job Shadow Day is an annual event, however, OCIO plans to expand it into a program that would involve more school oriented activities throughout the year and include more USDA organizations both here in the DC area and across the country. For more information, contact Megen Davis at:

Megen.Davis@usda.gov or 202-690-3318.

Photo: Chuck Christopherson presented certificates to (from left to right) Gary Threadgill, Derrick Bell, Symone Wrice, & Christian Gilyard.

Photo: The Ballou High School students review GIS information with Dennis Crowe, Rural Development and Tom Tate, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Update

from ITS Employee Services Branch-Administrative Management Division

If you are a TSP participant, you should have received your annual statement by now. It summarizes the financial activity in your account during 2007 and provides other useful information. Please note the account number listed on your participant statement. For all TSP transactions, use this new account number which replaces your Social Security Number for account access. This is also a good time to review the beneficiary information contained in your annual statement this year.

Other significant changes for TSP participants

➢ **Transfers to Roth IRAs —**

You can now transfer or roll over certain TSP withdrawal payments to a Roth IRA unless your modified adjusted gross income is more than $100,000 or you are married but file separate tax returns. You will have to pay tax now on all of the money you transfer or roll over from your TSP account to a Roth IRA, but your earnings will be tax-free if you satisfy the withdrawal rules for the Roth IRA. For more information, see the *Questions and Answers* on the TSP website. You may also want to consult with a tax advisor.

➢ **Tax credit —**

If you participated in the TSP during tax year 2007, you may be eligible for the Retirement Savings Contributions Credit which is available to participants with a 2007 adjusted gross income of no more than $52,000 if married filing jointly, $39,000 if head of household, or $26,000 if single or married filing separately. For information, consult your tax advisor or refer to IRS Form 8880.

➢ **E-mail updates —**

If you'd like to keep up on TSP developments without relying on the kindness of strangers, TSP now offers a free e-mail subscription service. This service allows participants to receive notifications by e-mail when new information is available on the TSP website. With this service, you automatically receive an e-mail when there is new or updated information posted, without having to visit the TSP website to check for changes.

This is a free service sponsored by TSP and provided through GovDelivery. Your e-mail address will be used to notify you when updates are made; TSP will not use it for any other purpose. If you would like to subscribe, go to http://www.tsp.gov/curinfo/emailupdates.html and follow the instructions to register.

Hatch Act Compliance: A Reminder for the Election Season

With the presidential campaigns in full swing, we thought a Hatch Act reminder might be timely. Federal employees must follow certain rules about what we can and cannot do during this campaign year. The following link provides a memorandum from the Acting Secretary emphasizing the importance of compliance with the Hatch Act and information on prohibited activities regarding political participation:

http://www.usda-ethics.net/rules/political-activity12-2007.pdf

Further guidance is available from the USDA Office of Ethics web site at www.usda.gov/ethics. Specific questions may be addressed by your agency Ethics Advisor or the Office of Ethics at (202) 720-2251.

Using BMC Service Desk Express (also known as Magic Self-Service)

From Doug Havelka, Customer Support Branch/IOD/ITS/I&O

BMC/Magic is a self-service option for requesting IT help that is available to all USDA employees and their partners supported by I&O/ITS (although Magic was rebranded as BMC, many of us still refer to it as Magic). Over 23,000 tickets were created from 15,000 registered users last year using BMC/Magic self-service. You too can use BMC/Magic self-service to create a ticket to solve your IT problem, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The information you input is put into a ticket that is routed to the appropriate ITS group for action.

Screenshot: BMC Service Desk Express/Magic Self-Service sign-in page.

Signing On

1. If you are a New User you need to contact your local ITS Technical Support team member and request a self service account.

2. If you have an account go to the BMC/Magic self-service page at: https://merlin.sc.egov.usda.gov/helpdesk/
   or, if your agency is supported by ITS, click on the TSD icon in your system tray and click self service.

3. **IMPORTANT:** When filling out your ticket, select one of the location boxes. If you're not sure, click the first one - USDA Service Center Request (it includes State Offices).

4. After you have submitted a ticket, click on SHOW MY TICKETS under Support Management on the left side of the screen. This releases the ticket for assignment to the proper group.

5. For more advice on using the Magic Self-Service system, contact your local ITS Technical Support team members. If they aren't available, call the ITS Service Desk at (800)457-3642.

6. Use this link to download the complete illustrated instructions: http://www.ocionet.usda.gov/ocio/its_ep/index.html - click on "Using BMC/ Magic" found on the right.

Delivered! December/January Deployment Highlights from the IO Lab.

Below are a few of the major I&O/ITS/SCA projects out of 56 projects deployed in December 2007/January 2008 These include numerous security patches and software upgrades.

Project Name	Agency/Initiator and ITS Release Manager	Deployment Description
FSA Dairy Disaster Assistance Program (DDAP) III is an FSA application used to facilitate the collection of production and loss data of dairy herds affected by disaster conditions. The data is imported into a web application for processing loss payments.	Farm Service Agency Initiator - Lisa Reynolds Release Manager - David Hyde	DDAP-III was deployed automatically through SMS to 2,294 FSA Servers throughout the country.
Hydrus – 3D Standard is a Windows based modeling environment for analysis of water flow and solute transport in variably saturated porous media: that is, the program is used by NRCS to analyze the movement of water and dissolved chemicals through diverse kinds of soil and earth under different saturations, with equations that incorporate root absorption, the effect of temperature, and other variables to the substances being studied. Flow and transport can be shown in two dimensions: the vertical plane, the horizontal plane, as well as a three-dimensional region exhibiting radial symmetry about a vertical axis. HYDRUS also has an interactive graphics design capability for displaying findings	Natural Resources Conservation Service Initiator - Betty Shatto Release Manager - Kathy Bashaw	The Hydrus 3D package is a COTS (Commercial off the Shelf) application. A "demo" version was deployed through the Distributed File System (DFS) Share site. The DFS Share is used for Large applications (greater than 30mb) and allows TSD Staff to use a Microsoft Utility called Robocopy to download the large files. Robocopy will automatically retry if the connection is lost, and perform integrity checks on the file after it has been downloaded. The "demo" version of the application was deployed to allow NRCS water quality and core irrigation specialists to review the software before purchasing.
System Management Server (SMS) 2003 SP3 Client provides the infrastructure for application and patch deployment. SMS also provides for hardware and software inventory information on all workstations and servers. This upgrade to the SMS Client provides several new reporting options in SMS, including identifying the most common uses on a workstation.	Infrastructure Deployment Branch Initiator - David Pfaffenberger Release Manager- Cookie Matthews	This upgrade included all ITS Servers and workstations - over 55,000 computers received this upgrade to the SMS Client. SMS itself was used to deploy and install this upgrade, which was completed silently in the background, without any user interaction on the workstations.
Community Program Application Program (CPAP) RUS v1.0 is a Windows application used by Rural Development's Rural Utility Service (RUS) staff to track information concerning customers participating in the Electric and Telecommunications Programs. For instance, RUS Electric and Telecom staff can enter and retrieve information about outcomes of meetings with borrowers. The information can then be shared with other Electric and Telecom employees.	Rural Development Initiator - Randy Simmons Release Manager - Beverly Gray	The CPAP install was deployed through SMS to over 225 RD users. Through a Non-Mandatory install, users can choose when the installation happens. CPAP RUS was first deployed by SMS in a pilot. The complete CPAP-Electric/Telecom Programs and CPAP-Water & Environmental Programs, may be deployed to as many as 2,000 users. An Install Guide is being written for distribution for users before the complete SMS distribution.

Farewells

Photo: Jerry Williams and Chris Niedermayer.

Jerry Williams, USDA Deputy Chief Information Officer, Chris Niedermayer, Associate Chief Information Officer/Information Technology and Management, and Lynn Allen, ACIO for Cyber Security, have left USDA for new appointments. Jerry is now at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence as Director of Financial Improvement; Chris is at the Patent and Trademark Office; and Lynn moved to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. We wish them well.

Photo: Lynn Allen at the 2008 Cyber Security Expo.