

In Reply Refer To:
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September 13, 2005

Memorandum

To: All FWS Employees

From: Deputy Director /s/ MARSHALL P. JONES JR.

Subject: FY 2005 Activity Based Costing (ABC) Survey Results and System Improvements

First, let me thank everyone who participated in last month's FY 2005 ABC survey. We had over 4,400 responses, representing over 45% of the workforce, in the two weeks the survey was open. As a result of the employee engagement level and the very helpful and constructive responses received, we anticipate making many improvements that will contribute to greater accuracy of cost data as well as providing a more user-friendly ABC coding structure. I want to take this opportunity to let you know some of the survey results, and to describe some of the actions we are taking to improve the ABC system.

Survey Results

- Employees need a way to ask questions about coding specific work tasks and to identify work that does not exist in the activity dictionary;
- Employees believe the activity dictionary and T & A worksheet need to be restructured and reorganized;
- Many employees want an explanation on how annual leave should be coded;
- Employees believe the Service's ABC website needs to be reworked to allow easier access to guidance and other instructional material;
- Employees feel that there is redundancy within definitions of different activities that needs to be clarified or removed;
- 73% of respondents were staff, while 27% were managers or supervisors
- 66% of respondents were in field stations;
- 33% felt the instructions on the ABC website on selecting ABC codes were unclear or could not be found;
- 75% have read the descriptions and tasks for the ABC codes they select;
- 50% of respondents are not coding to the "actual work" they perform as guidance currently reads. For various reasons, they are coding to the "ultimate outcome" of the work, or a combination of both depending on the circumstances;
- 40% of respondents were unaware that in preparing Travel Vouchers and Purchase Requests, selecting an ABC code is required;

- 33% answered that they “frequently” or “very frequently” use their budget activity/subactivity code/element when determining which ABC code to select;
- 40% said that their work is not captured in the current activity dictionary;
- respondents were split on whether there were too many or too few codes;
- 70% say it takes them less than 10 minutes per pay period to select their ABC codes on the T&A worksheet.

Actions to Improve ABC Coding Accuracy

The Deputy Regional and Assistant Directors Group has been working to improve the ABC system and you will begin to see these improvements during the first quarter of FY 2006. These improvements include:

- Reorganizing and restructuring the activity dictionary and T&A worksheet;
- Issuing clearer guidance and making sure the guidance is accessible;
- Making arrangements for ABC technical staff to conduct field visits to explain changes in the ABC system and how the information collected from ABC is being used;
- Increasing the work included in the activity dictionary while slightly reducing the actual number of activities;
- Clarifying activity definitions and tasks, including examples of what work does or does not belong to that activity;
- Improving how the ABC system handles transactions with erroneous or missing ABC codes;
- Validating the mapping of ABC activity costs to the Service’s performance goals.
- Updating the official FWS ABC website (<http://www.fws.gov/planning/abc>)
- Form to submit questions to experts
- Expanded Frequently Asked Questions and an archive of Questions and Answers
- Portal for all ABC analysis tools, FWS performance goals, and planning information
- Detailed information on Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and PART

As the Interior Department and the Service move forward with greater use of ABC data to formulate budgets and measure performance, it is very important that all employees pay careful attention to how they are coding their time. By ensuring the ABC data are as accurate as possible, you will be helping the Service compete during a tight budget climate and demonstrate our successful performance toward meeting the Department’s strategic goals. We recognize that the ABC system is a new way of doing business, and expect that it will continue to need improvement as we gain more experience with it. The Deputies Group will continue to make improvements in FY 2006 to address employee concerns. We may ask you to participate in another survey next year to see how we have improved and where we still need to make adjustments.

Thank you again for your participation. If you have questions about the survey results, please contact Brad Fearn at Brad_Fearn@fws.gov.