

Financial Express

The San Francisco Financial Center Spring 2011 Newsletter

Several Small Steps for Financial Management Enable NASA to Take Some Big Leaps

A Perspective by Kevin Werner, NASA



When adults ask me where I work and I reply “NASA”, they get this dreamy look on their face and say, “Wow, that must be so exciting!” I was at a father/daughter retreat one weekend, and was wearing a NASA T-shirt. One kid followed me all over the playground, peppering me with questions about NASA I could not even begin to answer and exclamations of “COOL” to the few answers I could provide. So, this photo of me in a space suit is as close to outer space as this accountant will ever get.

Don’t get me wrong, even we accountants do some pretty amazing, exciting things. (Well, at least WE think they are amazing and exciting!) During my career at NASA we have gone from ten different accounting systems to one standardized commercial enterprise management system (we chose SAP) for the Agency. We have standardized our financial processes across NASA. We have gone from almost no metrics to running 147 monthly metrics to measure financial performance. This year the combined efforts of staff across NASA resulted in some amazing financial management “leaps”:

- Shortest down time for fiscal year end (overnight); even the NASA Administrator commented on this one!
- First time NASA produced financial statements that are auditable and fairly presented, with noted exceptions, since FY2002.
- As a result of successful efforts to integrate property information with the financial accounting system, NASA is now substantially compliant with the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act (FFMIA) for the first time since FY 2000.

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The San Francisco RFC Perspective by SFC's Director

*Welcome to the Spring 2011 issue of the
San Francisco Financial Center (SFC)
"Financial Express" newsletter.*

Although we have just completed the first three months, so far this year has been full of activity; in January, Dave Lebryk, Commissioner Financial Management Service (FMS) issued a letter to inform agencies that some important changes were underway to streamline and modernize electronic payments, collections, and central accounting and reporting programs. The letter outlined upcoming requirements and timelines for each of these areas. I encourage you to review the letter and make certain that your agency is ready to meet the dates indicated. To learn more, visit: <http://fms.treas.gov/ccmm/final-CFO-letter-01-14-11.pdf>.

With many changes in full swing, SFC will work hard to share important information that may impact your agency. I want to call your attention to several items in this issue:

- A Customer Advisory Board (CAB) member perspective by Kevin Werner, Deputy CFO Finance NASA Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California.
- A recent meeting hosted by SFC for the Internal Revenue Service.
- A CAB Corner update on our recent CAB Conference in San Diego, California. One of the hot topics covered on the agenda was Cloud Computing. Those who attended the CAB appreciated learning more about this cutting edge technology. They also enjoyed an incredible onboard tour of a U.S. Navy ship.
- A new system was implemented to improve the way customer calls are managed at SFC.

Your next chance to attend a CAB Conference will be on August 23-24, 2011 at the Federal Reserve Bank in San Francisco, California. We have been working diligently to provide you with an array of topics covering important FMS programs and initiatives, and interactive sessions where agencies share their "best practices". To register, please visit us at: <http://www.fms.treas.gov/sfc/MainCAB.html>.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the "Financial Express" and urge you to send your comments/feedback for future articles to: financialexpress@fms.treas.gov.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. P. Oberhelman".

SFC Welcomes IRS Visitors



A group photo of SFC and visitors from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) February 23-24, 2011.

The San Francisco Financial Center (SFC) hosted a meeting for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on February 23 - 24, 2011 in Emeryville, California.

The purpose of the meeting was to meet face-to-face with our new agency customer. In the past, the IRS was serviced by the Austin Financial Center (AFC). However, due to the transition from AFC to a Debt Operations site, SFC is now the liaison for IRS.

Due to the transition from the Austin Financial Center to a Debt Operations site, the San Francisco Financial Center is now the liaison for the Internal Revenue Service.

Philip Belisle, Regional Director and Rene Schwarzman, Director, Customer Account Data Engine (CADE) Office of IRS, both provided

opening remarks. During the roundtable discussion each participant briefly introduced themselves and shared their objective for the meeting.

Several operational issues were identified on the agenda as well as various program topics. The agenda focused on

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CAB CORNER

On March 15-16, 2011, the SFC hosted its 11th CAB conference in San Diego, California. Program highlights included updated information on the Payment Application Modernization (PAM) implementation, the All-Electronic Treasury initiative, and an onboard demonstration of the Stored Value Navy Cash card along with a tour on a U.S. Navy ship.



Extreme Networking Reaches New Heights

— By Rick Corrigan

What makes the San Francisco Financial Center (SFC) Customer Advisory Board (CAB) Conference a unique experience is the networking of ideas, partnership building, and outreach projects in a group environment.

One of the more popular networking events for the CAB members is the touring of Federal agency sites. These behind the scene visits give members an opportunity to learn about the missions of different agencies.

Past visits include a tour of NASA Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California; the U.S. Mint in Denver, Colorado; and the Bureau of Reclamation's Hoover Dam in Boulder City, Nevada. CAB members have also enjoyed visits to the National Park Service's Alcatraz Island in San Francisco, California, and most recently a behind-the-scenes

tour and onboard demonstration of the Navy Cash card program on the USS Wayne E. Meyer in San Diego.

Another area where networking has been an effective tool at the CAB conference is the workgroup projects. The first project was the Disaster Recovery workgroup. The workgroup's goal was to implement solutions to payment processing challenges during a disaster. Disaster Recovery Directories were given to all SFC customer agencies to help support the continuation of timely payments in the event of a disaster. The latest workgroup is the Financial Management Service (FMS) Programs Access Project. The goal of the project is to standardize the security enrollment process for FMS applications.

The next SFC CAB conference will be August 23-24, 2011 at the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank. For more information about the San Francisco CAB conference, call the SFC Customer Service Center at (510) 594-7300 or send email to: San.Francisco.Financial.Center@fms.treas.gov.

Don't hang up that phone!



Don't hang up! Yes, it is the right number. It is the San Francisco Financial Center's (SFC) new help desk. Do not be surprised to hear the following greeting next time you call SFC :

“Welcome to the U. S. Treasury, Financial Management Service, San Francisco Financial Center. The hours of operation are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM PST. Please select from the following options so that we can direct your call....”

SFC is changing the way customer calls are managed in order to provide more efficient service. Customers are able to select from a few short menu options that will take them directly to a subject matter expert, who can help them. The new system provides simplicity for the customer because it is no longer necessary to maintain a myriad of numbers for SFC. The main customer service number for SFC is 510-594-7300. Customers calling the old numbers will be instantly re-directed to the main number. The number for Same-Day Payments did not change. Please listen carefully to the menu options as there may be intermittent changes as the system is implemented.

These are the menu options that the SFC Help Desk provides

- **Reclamations:**
 - ACH reclamation debits
 - Status on the Notice of Reclamation.
 - Federal benefit repayment information
 - All other inquiries
- **Payment Inquiries:**
 - Direct deposit information
 - Payment identification
 - Payment offsets
 - All other inquiries
- **Electronic Operations Branch:**
 - Computer Operations.
 - Payment Scheduling, and Certification
 - Secure Payment System (SPS)
 - Programming
 - All other inquiries

Agencies calling after normal business hours will continue to receive assistance until 11:30 PM. Calls received after 11:30 PM will be returned the next business day. Please let us know what you think.

("Several Small Steps for Financial Management, Enable NASA to Take Some Big Leaps" continued from page 1.)

Another "lunar leap" the Agency accomplished during 2008 was to consolidate many of the more routine business functions (e.g., portions of Accounting, Travel, Human Resources, Training, and Procurement) from across NASA and transition them to the NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC). Prior to this each NASA Center used its own unique processes to perform these business functions. NSSC started from the ground up to build a new facility, hire staff, train them, assign them to NASA Centers, and build customer relationships. The NASA Centers had to reconcile their data, ship physical files, and transition the data to NSSC. As a result of this, some NASA Civil Servants were freed up to work in other areas, and some contractor resources were freed up as well. Since then, growing pains have been worked through, standardization of NASA processes has occurred, and significant cost savings have been generated.

Of course, there are many other exciting things NASA is involved in. Our NASA standardized business processes enable our scientific and technical staff to achieve some "lunar leaps" of their own, such as:

Kepler Continues Search for Earth-size Planets

During its successful first year, NASA's Kepler space telescope discovered its first exoplanets (planets beyond our solar system) AND confirmed the first planetary system with more than one planet crossing in front of the same star. In addition, during June Kepler scientists released 43 days of science data on more than 156,000 stars to determine if orbiting planets are responsible for variations in the brightness of hundreds of stars.

www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/kepler/main/index.html

NASA's Airborne Infrared Observatory Sees "First Light", Conducts Science Flights

SOFIA, a joint NASA-German Aerospace Center program, achieved a major milestone in May with its first in-flight night observations, called "First Light." SOFIA is a highly-modified Boeing 747SP jetliner fitted with a 100-inch diameter reflecting telescope that allows researchers to better understand a wide range of astronomical phenomena, including how stars and planets are born, how organic substances form in interstellar space, and how super-massive black holes feed and grow.

www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/SOFIA/multimedia/imagegallery/index.html

LCROSS Uncovers the Moon's Buried Treasures, Wins Awards

Nearly a year after announcing the discovery of water molecules on the moon, scientists revealed new data uncovered by NASA's Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS). The mission found evidence that the lunar soil within shadowy craters is rich in useful materials, that the moon is chemically active, and has a water cycle. Also this year, LCROSS won Popular Mechanics magazine's 2010 Breakthrough Award for innovation in science and technology, the National Space Society's 2010 Space Pioneer Award in the Science and Engineering category, and the Space Foundation's 2010 John L. "Jack" Swigert, Jr., Award for Space Exploration. www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/LCROSS/multimedia/index.html.

And, finally, lest you think NASA employees always have our heads in the clouds, here is an example of how we shine on Earth as well:

Ames "Tops Out" First Building in 30 Years

Construction at Ames continued on NASA's new building, Sustainability Base. As a candidate for the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design platinum-certified office building, it advances the standard for what it means to be "green." Sustainability Base received the General Services Administration Real Property Award in the category of Green Innovation in recognition of the building's creative and original ideas with clear potential to transform the federal community's overall energy and environmental performance.

www.nasa.gov/externalflash/sustainability-base/index.html

As budgets continue to shrink, outsourcing some non-inherently governmental functions is worth a second look. It can make strategic sense to outsource more mundane tasks to free up remaining limited staff to focus on core competencies. Before outsourcing, however, best practices recommend that organizations: develop a full-cost benefit assessment model; develop a plan with milestones for periodic re-evaluation of outsourced services; clearly define how and where impacted staff will be redirected; and clearly define the required data and methodology for projecting cost savings so the calculations are verifiable. Doing so can help truly improve both the bottom line and employee morale.

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important changes as Financial Management Service (FMS) moves forward with their efforts to modernize the Federal government's payments, collections, and central accounting systems. Some topics covered at the meeting included:

- Government-wide Accounting (GWA)
- Payment Application Modernization (PAM)
- Treasury Check Information System (TCIS)
- Over-the-Counter Channel (OTC.net)
- Transaction Reporting System (TRS)

The afternoon of day one provided an excellent opportunity for participants



SFC IRS roundtable discussion.

to take a tour of the facility where SFC staff discussed the functions of that area.

The two-day event provided a perfect opportunity for IRS and SFC to discuss priorities and future initiatives. Following the meeting, both IRS and SFC representatives indicated that they were pleased with the outcome.



Calendar of Events

April 27-28, 2011

U.S. Treasury Post Payment Conference
University of Maryland Inn and
Conference Center
College Park, Maryland

June 29 and/or 30, 2011

ASAP Federal Agency User Group Meeting
GSA Auditorium
Washington, DC

August 2-3, 2011

Financial Management Service
Annual Government Financial
Management Conference
Ronald Reagon Building and
International Trade Center
Washington, DC

August 23-24, 2011

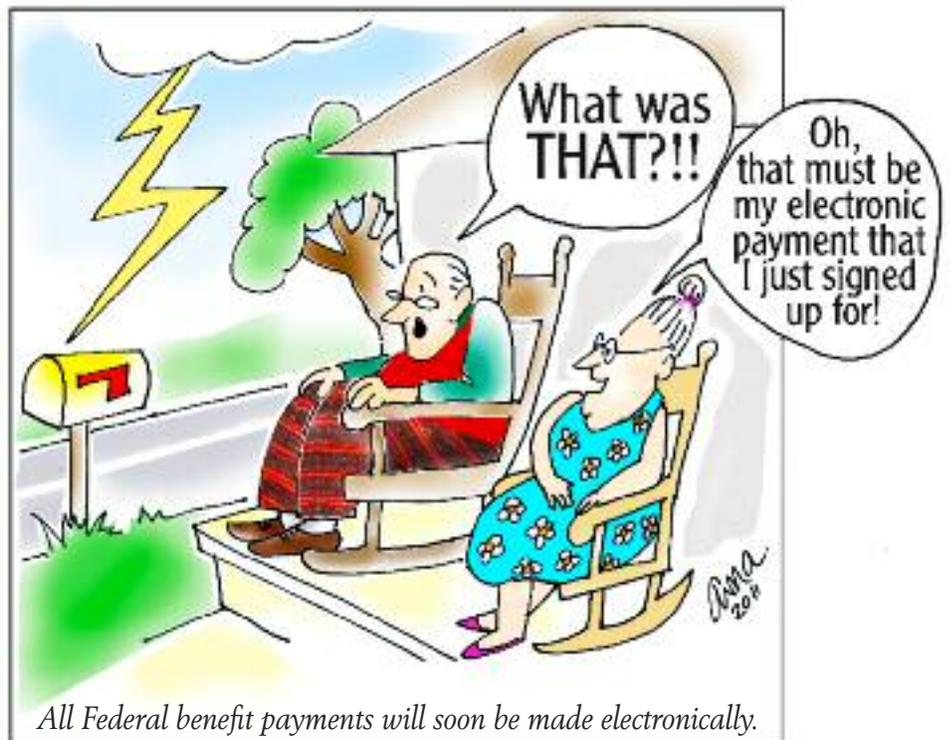
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Questions / Comments

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