TRS UPDATE

TRS Aims for Smooth Transition Through Open Communication with FPAs

By Monica Shelton, Accounting and Data Management Division

When Federal Program Agencies (FPAs) begin general transitioning from CA$HLINK II to the new Transaction Reporting System (TRS) in fall of 2009, they will be the beneficiaries of an agency outreach program which has focused on opening channels of communication between agencies, developers, and FMS. That effort has resulted in a better understanding by TRS of how FPAs will use the system and how the transition between systems can be eased. Similarly, ongoing agency outreach through 2010 will assist FPAs to more knowledgeably prepare for TRS.

TRS is an FMS-wide transaction broker, data warehouse, and reporting solution that will provide Trading Partners and FMS with a single touch point for the exchange of all financial transaction information across all collection systems. This will enable FMS to normalize financial transaction reporting and standardize the availability of financial information across all settlement mechanisms and collection systems. TRS is a self-contained system with various related external system interfaces.
While TRS will be used instead of CA$HLINK II (CLII), its functionality will be somewhat different. Consequently, the TRS team has been actively engaged in soliciting input from a growing circle of agencies about both how to improve the new system and the transition from CLII to TRS.

TRS Pilot Program

TRS will be implemented in phases. In order for TRS to provide collection transaction information to FPAs, TRS must first implement interfaces with various sources of collections data. As these interfaces are implemented, increasing amounts of transaction data will become available to agencies through TRS.

The Treasury General Account Deposit Reporting Network (TGAnet) was the first collection source for which data can be processed by TRS and sent through to the Governmentwide Accounting system (GWA). Because agencies with different characteristics have different needs, a cross-section of potential pilot agencies was identified from among FPAs using TGAnet with commercial

TRS Project Manager, Christina Cox, talks with FPAs at a recent TRS User Group Session in Washington, D.C. about their upcoming transition plans to TRS.

deposits. Potential pilots varied from the very large to the very small. In December 2008 the following FPAs enrolled in and piloted TRS:

- Department of Defense – Defense Finance and Accounting Service
- Department of Homeland Security – Citizenship and Immigration Service
- Department of Homeland Security – Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- Department of Interior – National Park Service

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- Department of Commerce – National Institute of Standards and Technology
- Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation

Pilot agencies provided feedback on what they liked about the system and suggested ideas for improvement. They also critiqued the TRS training program, user manual, and enrollment processes. Information garnered from pilot agencies has been considered by TRS team members in design, development, training and enrollment of the next phases of TRS. Concerns expressed by pilot FPAs which were beyond the purview of the TRS team were provided to other appropriate FMS entities.

TRS Agency User Group Sessions

In January and February 2009 the second prong of the FPA outreach effort began with a set of introductory sessions about TRS. The three all-day sessions launched the TRS Agency User Group. Once again, a diverse group of FPAs was selected for participation in the Agency User Group meetings. Fifty-eight participants, representing thirty four FPAs, attended.

The highly interactive sessions explained plans for the system, implementation, and the transition. Participants had the opportunity to share insightful information about how they would use the system and its reports, as well as challenges they anticipated in making the transition.

During the sessions participants had the opportunity to work in small groups with a mock-up of a detailed financial transaction report that was in development and make suggestions for improving it. Volunteers were solicited to provide ongoing feedback as report development continues.

As with the pilot input, feedback from participants in the TRS Agency User Group meetings has been used by the TRS Team. Every suggestion was logged and tracked. Concerns more appropriate for other FMS entities have been shared. The first quarterly conference held call to report back on what has occurred as a result of participant input and to update members on new developments, occurred in late May 2009.

In July, the TRS Team hosted its first TRS Agency User Group Session in the West. A full-day post-conference session on July 16 followed the San Francisco Financial Center (SFC) Agency Forum at the Denver Federal Center in Denver, Colorado. Another all-day post-conference event is planned following the FMS Annual Government Financial Management Conference in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, August 6. The TRS Team will be conducting personal outreach by email and telephone to encourage potential participants to register for the session.

Getting Ready for TRS

Many times FPAs lament that they do not have enough time or do not know enough to get ready for a new system. Each TRS Agency User Group session provided agencies with a checklist of internal activities which FPAs may find useful to prepare for TRS. In this way, FPAs have both lead time and direction in preparing for the new system.

Participants were encouraged to review policies, processes, and work redesign, to assess what system-to-system interfaces, reports, and data downloads may need to be adapted, and to determine whether budget modifications may be necessary to make internal changes.

In addition, each FPA also had the opportunity to answer a set of questions that would assist TRS Team members who are coordinating agency enrollment to work more effectively with each agency.

TRS Goal: Listening and Learning Leads to Easier Transitions

The goal of the TRS Team is to listen to end users and to learn from them how to improve TRS capabilities and reports, as well as, enrollment and training processes. A limited set of end users from FPAs will be engaged in User Acceptance Testing (UAT). A cadre of volunteers for UAT is growing from the Pilot Program, the TRS Agency User Group, and others who have identified an interest in participating. Those interested in participating in UAT should contact Monica Shelton, TRS Deputy Project Manager as directed at the end of this article.

Early partnering with FPAs in the development and roll out of TRS has been a primary goal of Christina Cox, TRS Project Manager since she started with the project in 2005. Ms. Cox stated, "One of the first questions I asked upon joining the project was if there was an established TRS User Group and what efforts were underway to engage FPAs to participate?" The TRS project has come a long way in its FPA outreach efforts since that initial question and continues to actively look for opportunities to listen and learn from FPAs.

For more information about TRS or to participate in any of its agency outreach events, contact Monica Shelton, TRS Deputy Project Manager at(202) 874-1346 or Monica.Shelton@fms.treas.gov.