PHASE II TRANSITION REPORT

Department of Education

Student Financial Assistance

FMS Implementation

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Executive Summary

As part of an effort for continuous improvement and to prepare for future Financial Management System (FMS) implementations, this document was created to identify and discuss outstanding issues from Phase II of FMS. Each issue discussion includes the issue identification, the current response and lessons learned. The areas addressed follow the logical implementation project task packages:

- ✓ Software Implementation*
- ✓ Technical Support
- ✓ Operations Support*
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Change Management / Redeployment*
- ✓ External Dependencies

This document neither intends to supercede the existing Issues Tracking Log and Database, nor suggests that this is a complete listing of all lessons learned from Phase II. Instead, its intent is to articulate some of the issues that arose during the latter part of Phase II so that they could be addressed during Phase III – hopefully to preclude an issue from becoming a showstopper.

* Certain areas, Software Implementation, Operations Support and Change Management / Redeployment, do not have issues listed in this document for the following reasons:

Software Implementation – Oracle GL, AP, PO and FA modules were configured as needed for the system to go live.
Operation Support – The support for this system is covered under a separate task order (TO 35).
Change Management / Redeployment – The changing business needs and resourcing ability is covered under a separate task order (TO 20).

Software Implementation

Issues Identified:

No outstanding software configuration or implementation issues are addressed in this document.

Technical Support

Issues Identified:

Issuing User Identification (User ID's)

ISSUE:
The process developed and documented for issuing FMS userids and passwords for Guaranty Agency users did not work well. The two primary issues involved were:
1. Delay - a significant delay in getting the initial userids and passwords issued in a timely fashion, and
2. Security - an email was sent from the VDC to the FMS project listing all users, their userids and their passwords.

Prior to the FMS request for approximately 175 Guaranty Agency (GA) userids and passwords, no documented procedures existed for creating and issuing such end-user userids and passwords. Procedures were developed and documented by the FMS team after discussions and agreements with the parties involved (FMS, SFA CIO, CSC) concerning the process that would be used to create and issue these userids/passwords. In addition, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) was agreed to and documented which included a 24 hour turnaround on issuing individual userids/passwords. Although these procedures were followed and target completion dates were communicated, the time required to create and issue these userids was considerably longer than anticipated due to the large number of requests (109) sent in the first batch of userids. A second batch was sent including another 42 userids/passwords as well as a third batch including 24 more. Apparently, the necessary support staff was unavailable (or unable) to handle a surge in userid/password requests for external users, particularly in such large quantities at one time. In addition, individuals involved in creating and disseminating the userids/passwords, were not made aware of the process that had been defined and agreed upon until late in the process.

Once userids/passwords were being developed and issued, FMS requested daily updates on specifically which users had been issued userids and which users were still waiting for userids/passwords. Due to an oversight by one of the individuals creating userids/passwords at the Virtual Data Center, an email was sent to the FMS Security Officer listing all users with their userids and passwords. The individual that sent this email apparently forgot to delete the columns of his spreadsheet containing the userid and passwords prior to sending out his status update.

During the process of communicating userids and passwords to users (via telephone), the VDC staff provided one GA user with the userids and passwords for multiple users at that GA site. This was not part of the security process and should not have occurred. These userids/passwords were immediately changed and communicated directly to the users with no security breach.

RESPONSE:
Although procedures for issuing and disseminating userids/passwords were developed, along with an SLA documenting the timeframe associated with issuing and disseminating userids/passwords, additional planning is required when large quantities of userids/passwords are requested at one time.
This should include re-deploying additional resources to meet the high demand if necessary. Additional effort must also be taken to ensure everyone involved in the process is identified early and provided with the necessary information and procedures. When unique requests are made that exceed what is documented and agreed to in the SLA, additional agreements and plans must be developed to meet these requirements. In addition, more frequent communication should take place to follow the status of the process.

The FMS team developed a security access request form to be used by GAs to request FMS access and documented the procedures to be used to process these forms. In addition, more detailed procedures were developed to track the status of userid requests. User access request forms for external users affected by Phase III will be developed and approved well in advance of need.

Several discussions have taken place with the staff at the VDC and commitments were made concerning the new processes that will be used to create and issue userids/passwords, including meeting high volume requests. These plans should meet the requirement. In addition, more advance notice will be provided for large volume requests.

Given that the FMS user community will grow considerably by expanding to schools and lenders, these issues will become even more critical during Phase III. These issues must be and have been addressed.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- ✓ Ensure that all parties involved have sufficient processes and access forms in place well in advance of need.
- ✓ Ensure newly defined business processes address surges in request activity.
- ✓ Ensure there are communication channels in place to inform all parties of new and/or changes in business processes.

System Access

ISSUE:
Detailed set-up and installation instructions were prepared to document all steps required to access the FMS application. Given there are various configurations that can be used to access FMS, these detailed installation instructions addressed all options available for the GAs to use to access the system. These installation procedures were tested to verify the accuracy of the steps and ease of readability and understanding of the instructions. In addition, all issues and limitations concerning the Virtual Private Network (VPN) software were documented and specific recommendations were made to deal with each issue.

These detailed set-up and installation instructions were provided to the single technical resource identified for each GA by the GA. However, the lists provided by the Financial Partners did not always identify the correct technical resource.

The timeframe required for all GAs to access the system was much longer than expected. Given that each connection option was tested (and thus the timeframe and effort required to connect was known), we were quite surprised to see how long it took all GAs get connected. The primary reason for a number of GAs' difficulty in connecting was their firewall. This longer than expected timeframe to connect does not include the delay in getting userids issued. Even once userids were issued, the timeframe to connect was still longer than expected.

RESPONSE:
There are several actions that could have been taken to speed the connection process. These actions include:

1. Although technical resources were provided for each GA, the project team should have verified the 'appropriate' technical resource was identified. In some cases, the CEO of the GA was identified as the technical resource for the GA.
2. The project team should have worked directly with the 'appropriate' technical resource for each GA from the start. The first person at each GA to get involved in set-up should have been the technical resource, not end-users. However, some GAs indicated they did not have dedicated technical resources.
3. The project team could have conducted one VPN set-up and configuration training session (via conference call) for all technical resources and held additional group sessions if needed.
4. There was a typo in the URL included in the VPN Set-up and Configuration updates sent out.

Once the GA had a userid and password and started trying to get connected, many of the delays were due to one or more of the following:

1. Users/GAs not following the installation instructions.
2. Users/GAs not following one of the recommended configurations. Specifically, several GAs tried to connect to FMS using a proxy server although the original FMS VPN Set-up and Configuration document stated this was not a viable option.
3. Users/GAs not having the required equipment available for the configuration option they selected (i.e. a stand-alone PC for dial-up access using a modem).
4. Users not available or ready to install the VPN software. Some GAs were in the process of relocating of their office and equipment which naturally introduced a delay.

Ultimately, the most appropriate action would have been more pro-active follow-up with each GA earlier in the process to determine what steps (if any) had they taken to get connected and why they were not connected if they weren't connected. Essentially, more proactive and frequent follow-up with each GA and in some cases, prodding to get them started.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- ✓ Ensure the 'appropriate' technical resources are identified to be involved.
- ✓ Work directly with technical resources first to leverage their ability to support their users. Then, if necessary, continue to support end-users in the connection process.
- ✓ Conduct group training (via conference calls) with technical resources.
- ✓ More pro-active follow-up with each GA to ensure the user community is taking the necessary steps required on their part to access the system.

Operation Support

Issues Identified:

No outstanding operations issues are addressed in this document.

Communication

Issues Identified:

User Communication

ISSUE:
FMS users received messages from multiple points of contact early on in the FMS implementation, which lowered the effectiveness of these messages.

RESPONSE:
The contact directly with the GAs by CFO/Mod Partner was a result of discussion with Financial Partners on how best to handle and manage the needs and questions. It was agreed that Mod Partner would draft bulletins for the Financial Partners to distribute. Although communication to GAs did come from multiple sources early on in the process, steps were taken to consolidate message delivery. Specifically, communication messages are now reviewed by the FMS Operations Manager and forwarded to Financial Management for dissemination to GAs.

LESSONS LEARNED:
- ✓ Establish one point of contact for all user communications to specific audiences. Many of the GA communication issues have been resolved since the establishment of a communications control gate and the dissemination of the FMS Hotline number. In the future, a single point of contact should be communicated early on in the process and maintained throughout the effort.
- ✓ Monitor all communications that are provided by groups other than the immediate project team.
- ✓ Because the scope of Phase III is much larger than Phase II, and the communications effort will be much more complex, a communications lead should be appointed exclusively to this effort.
- ✓ A communications matrix should be used and updated frequently to prepare and track the communication effort.

Training

Issues Identified:

User Training

ISSUE:
A perception existed that FMS user training was not conducted in a timely fashion. Additionally, Regional Financial Partners stated that training conducted at headquarters did not apply to their jobs. Additionally, early commitment and responsibility for training activities is needed.

RESPONSE:
Training was conducted in advance of implementation for those individuals involved in testing, which included both GAs and Financial Partners. Delays in making crucial decisions regarding roles and responsibilities made it difficult to target audiences for specific training – role based instead of function based.

Additionally, responsibility for training activities transitioned from SFA University late in the system development cycle. Getting training personnel involved early on in the system design phase will increase time for business expert feedback, assist in the determination of responsibilities and produce more robust training materials.

LESSONS LEARNED:
- ✓ Training designed for a specific audience should only be delivered to that audience.
- ✓ Involve business area experts early on in requirements gathering and training development activities. Although the business experts were involved with final review of materials, early involvement may have created better acceptance.
- ✓ Maintain a more stable project presence of the training and communication team members. High turnover of training team members, particularly management-level personnel, created a lack of business knowledge and a lack of continuity only months prior to training delivery deadlines.

- ✓ Organizational & Human Performance (O&HP) team members need early involvement in requirements gathering and system design activities, which will help bridge knowledge gaps between business experts and system developers. In addition, O&HP members will build business expert and system developer relationships that enable them to design, develop and deliver more robust system designs and training materials.
- ✓ Focus group activities, where business experts are brought into the process early in the requirements gathering phase, should be used so that user input starts early on in the system design phase. This process helps define system responsibilities early on in the design phase.
- ✓ "Formal" User Acceptance Testing (UAT) sessions should be performed. These sessions bring system users in to examine system functionality and recommend changes prior to system implementation, which increases system acceptance and user community buy-in. O&HP team members can use these sessions as a dry run for training materials, and receive suggestions from the UAT participants to improve system design and training materials.

SFA University

ISSUE:
At the outset of Phase II, SFA University was positioned to assume the responsibility of refining and providing the training to the broader user community. The project team was to provide the training materials and conduct the training for certain SFA University instructors in a 'train-the-trainer' fashion.

RESPONSE:
Initial resources identified by SFA University were either unable or unwilling to assume to ownership of the training tasks. SFA University, a relatively new organization, was not positioned to provide the right resources (people, facilities, materials, etc.) for the right amount of time to create syllabi that would provide specific user training curricula.

Additionally, responsibility for user-specific training activities needed to be assumed by key user personnel, as this would be directly impacted by their roles and responsibilities definition work.

LESSONS LEARNED:
- ✓ Training designed for a specific audience should only be delivered to that audience.
- ✓ Broader, overall training should be delivered regularly.
- ✓ Involve business area experts early on in requirements gathering and training development activities.

Oracle Education Training Credits

ISSUE:
At the outset of Phase II, SFA had 200 training credits. Currently there are 31 training credits remaining, which is insufficient for the amount of training that is required. Two credits were used way too early in the implementation for Discover training. Seven credits were lost when they expired because of age. Another 160 training credits were traded to replace the Tutor product that was thrown away.

RESPONSE:
Additional Oracle training credits are required. The Training Plan will include a strategy for taking advantage Oracle Education credits and training. The training credits will be closely monitored by the SFA training team to ensure they are used effectively.

LESSONS LEARNED:
- ✓ Coordinate closely with Oracle Education.
- ✓ Closely monitor expiration dates on training credits.
- ✓ Schedule training to maximize its effectiveness.
- ✓

Oracle's Tutor Product

ISSUE:
SFA purchased the Oracle Tutor Product and mistakenly threw it away because it had not been used. The SFA Project team negotiated with Oracle to get another version of the product, however it was too late to use for Phase II.

RESPONSE:
The SFA Project team should begin using the Tutor Product to document Phase III requirements. This will allow the Test Team to use the Tutor Product to build test cases. It will allow the Training

Team to use the Tutor Product for training. It will also serve as a repository for the Phase III documentation.

LESSONS LEARNED:
- ✓ All software should be under the control of configuration management.
- ✓ Software tools must be used from the beginning to be practicable.

Change Management / Redeployment

Issues Identified:

No outstanding operations issues are addressed in this document.

External Dependencies

Issues Identified:

Department of Education – GL to GL Interface

ISSUE:
The scope and direction of the Phase II work identified and allowed for interface work to provide data back and forth to DoED CFO at an Oracle GL to Oracle GL level. This was addressed, discussed and agreed upon numerous times during the project. As the project was nearing its 'go live' date, DoED CFO's Oracle implementation project informed us that they would not be ready to accommodate that type of interface. Instead, our GL would need to interface to their legacy system, i.e.FARS, creating a change of scope for this project.

RESPONSE:
The change in scope affected the timing, cost and resourcing of the Phase II project. The Phase III project is projected to run without much flexibility in timing, budget or resourcing, and as such, any change of scope of this magnitude will be deemed a showstopper.

LESSONS LEARNED:
- ✓ As both SFA and DoED CFO are conducting financial system implementations, communication and coordination between the project leadership and management needs to be consistent.
- ✓ Fall back plans needs to be defined in the event that external project timelines slip, thereby affecting our projected scope and/or timeframe.

Department of Education - Firewall

ISSUE:
The SFA Project Team is trying to establish a database link between the SFA FMS database and the ED CFO database. ED CIO considers the VDC as outside the ED network. The link is necessary to accomplish budget allocation and account mapping.

RESPONSE:
Since the VDC follows ED security policies and is audited by the ED Inspector General's office we believe ED CIO should consider this as a trusted network. The VDC network that is used by SFA is exclusive for ED use and SFA determines who are authorized users. It is contradictory to have a VDC if it is not trusted.

LESSONS LEARNED:
- ✓ ED CIO and SFA CIO must coordinate their policies