FSA *Now*

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff

Issue I Volume III *January 2004*

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Measure What? FSA's Performance, of Course!

Since FSA is the government's first PBO, we take an enormous amount of pride creating, updating and maintaining our annual performance plan. And why shouldn't we? As a PBO, FSA's goals are to improve services, reduce costs and upgrade its information and student aid delivery systems.

FSA's performance plan is the tool used to evaluate those goals, progress and performance. It's also the tool used to create FSA's annual report for Congress. Additionally, management and employee performance awards are based on our accomplishments determined by the Plan.

The way FSA achieves its goals is in part due to the way we measure and track our successes or failures. This year's two-tiered 2004 Performance Plan, maintained by EPMS' Operational Performance Analysis/Reporting and Internal Review Group managed by Cyndi Reynolds, has 55 action items under operating funds and 19 action items under discretionary funds. That's a total of 74 action items, and within those action items are milestones, making the success measures even more expansive! Each employee should be able to locate the action item(s) that relate to their specific jobs within the plan. And, did you know that the action items within your area could be used in conjunction with your EDPAS criteria?

The performance plan has objectives familiar to most employees. Every item in the plan links to an objective. This is a must. FSA's objectives are: FSA Systems Integration and Technology; Improve Program Integrity; Reduce Cost; Improve Human Capital Management; Improve Products and Services; and Deliver Student Aid Effectively and Accurately.

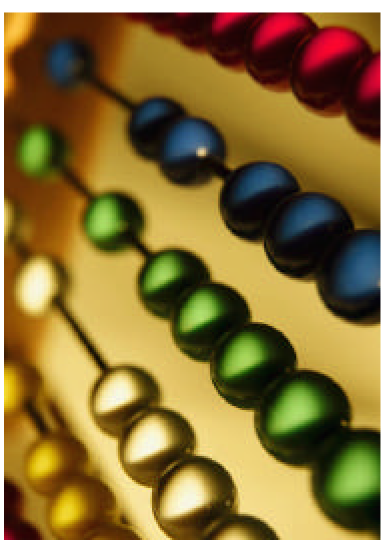
The performance plan also has the same components for each action item. Those components are: Responsible Area; Responsible Person(s); Business Need; Success Measures; and Target Completion Date.

On a bi-weekly basis (as of January 23, 2004), your office's performance plan liaison gathers data from his or her colleagues on the progress made for each action item within their office. The gathered data will either support the measurement or alert management that something is not going quite right. That data is put into EPMS' Project and Performance Measurement System, created and managed by Barry Goldstein, and serves as FSA's official record.

Do you know who your performance plan liaison is? Ask your manager to find out.

If you'd like to speak to a performance plan expert, contact Colleen McGinnis at 202-377-4330.

Bi-Weekly Report as of January 23, 2004



FSA Performance Plan – FY2004

FSA Holiday Activities

FSA headquarters and regional staff members recently celebrated the holiday season and new year with a variety of activities. UCP staff attended a holiday social with Secretary Paige on December 10, and contributed donations to holiday food and coat drives. Meanwhile, Region IV staff members participated in a holiday toy drive, which resulted in thousands of dollars of toy donations to Toys for Tots. The following are descriptions of some other regional celebrations.

Region VI (Dallas)

"We had our annual, Department-wide Holiday Luncheon on December 19. We sang, enjoyed a lively rendition of "Santa Baby," ate enough food to feed an army and had door prizes for nearly everyone!"

- Aileen Svaty, Region VI Financial Partners Services

The ED Region VI Holiday Luncheon Committee included (left to right): Bobbie Clayton (OCR), Benita Felan (RSA), Dr. Gaye Lang (SRR), Aileen Svaty (FSA), Anna Perez (FSA) and Dura Wilson (SRR).

Region X (Seattle)

"The Seattle Regional Office held our annual Holiday Potluck on December 17. We had lots of wonderful food and some fabulous desserts. We also took the opportunity to celebrate with Mark Hamburg, systems coordinator for the Seattle Case Management Team, the upcoming adoption of his baby daughter on February 4. We rang in the New Year with a week of snow and below freezing temperatures. This was a novelty in Seattle as we rarely get snow and even more rarely have freezing temperatures. Several treacherous commuting days resulted in two delayed arrival days and the office closure on January 6. As a result, we were able to spend the day playing in the snow!"

- Susan Bowder, Region X area case director

Region II (New York)

"All of the New York Financial Partners staff and members of the Case Management staff attended the Christmas show at Radio City Music Hall. It was a nice break away from reality with dancing bears and wooden sodiers and a very touching live nativity scene. It also provided a chance for staff members to stregenthen our team building by having an activity attended by both groups. " (Below: Region II staff members at Radio City Music Hall)

- Ann Maria Fusco, Region II Financial Partners Services director

FSAnet Security Center Provides "One-Stop" Shopping

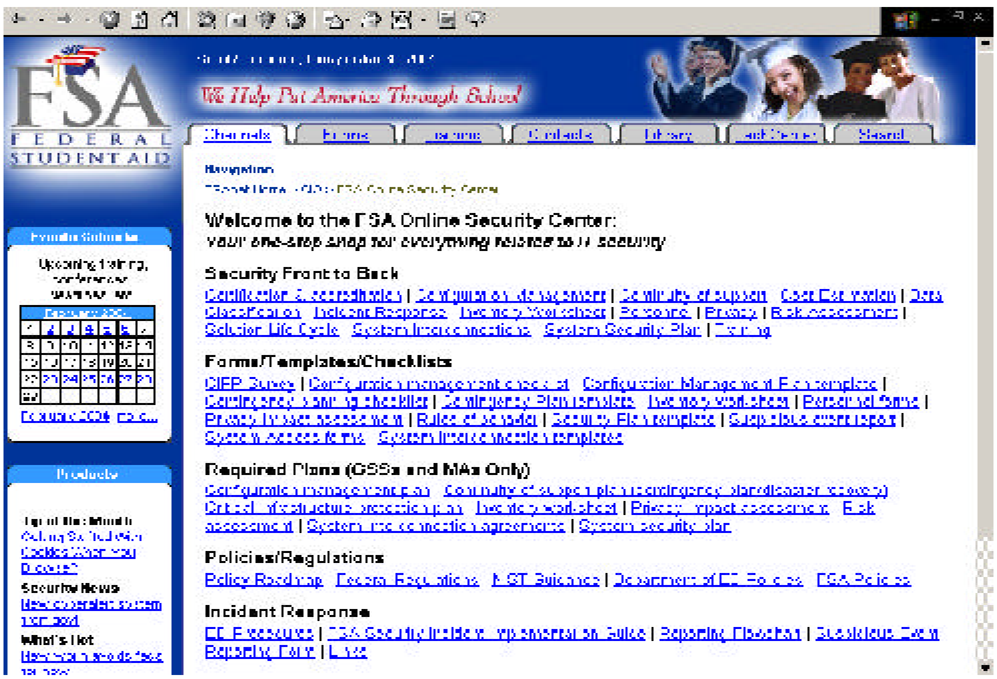
The FSA Security and Privacy Team created a new online tool for FSAnet. The Online Security Center (OSC) provides a single, centralized intranet location for IT security-related policies, procedures, training manuals, references and news. While the target audience of the site is system security officers (SSOs), it is a great resource for anyone in FSA who wants to learn more about computer and information security.

OSC includes information created specifically for SSOs. New features include employee/contractor security checklists, federal regulations, NIST guidance and security tips. The Front to Back section is grouped by the primary issues affecting security officers. Each section includes a description of the topic; relevant government policies, procedures and regulations; and links to additional resources, such as white papers and Web sites.

OSC replaces the existing FSAnet CIO IT Security Web site and can be found at http://fsanet.ed.gov/cio/products/it_security_portal. The Online Security Center is an ongoing project, with content continually being updated and changed as needed. If you have any questions or suggested additions, please e-mail Bob Ingwalson at robert.ingwalson@ed.gov or Jill Mossman at jill.mossman@ed.gov.

To access the Online Security Center, go to the FSAnet homepage, click on the "Tech Center" tab at the top, then "Online Security Center."

The Online Security Center's homepage on FSAnet.



Region IV "Collections Challenge"

A change in the wage garnishment laws now requires defaulted borrowers who have exhausted other available avenues of repayment to have 15 percent of their wages garnished, versus the previous rate of ten percent. This garnishment affects tens of thousands of borrowers. To effectively implement the change and validate the new garnishment orders, the Atlanta regional office embarked on a "Collections Challenge." Staff members who processed the largest number of complete and accurate validation orders in a two-day period received an award. The awards ranged from time off to gift cards provided by the managers. As a result, in a mere two days, Region IV Collections staff members successfully validated over 7,000 orders at a rate of 600 per hour.

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FSA Now is a monthly newsletter for FSA staff available on FSAnet. To share feedback or contribute ideas, e-mail FSA Communcations.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FSA Featured in *Greentree Gazette*

The Greentree Gazette featuring FSA is available on FSAnet.

The January 2004 cover of Greentree Gazette with Terri Shaw and FSA's senior leaders.

FSA Spring Conference

The Spring Conference is quickly approaching. FSA is hosting its Annual Spring Conference on March 29 - 31, 2004, at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers in New York City. In conjunction with the Conference, FSA will host a Direct Loan Workshop on March 28, and a Career College Workshop on April 1. The Software Developers Conference will be held the afternoon of March 31. The FSA attendance deadline is February 6.

The following is a link to the Conference Web site, http://edeworkshop.ncspearson.com/Spring.htm. If you have any questions, contact Susan Thares at 202-377-4307.

GAO High-Risk List

In November 2003, GAO initiated a study of FSA's progress in addressing several areas related to its high-risk designation and FSA's role as a PBO. In December 2003 and January 2004, preliminary meetings were held with GAO to review FSA's progress and identify plans for continued improvements in: financial management and internal controls; systems integration; program integrity; default prevention and management; PBO accountability; human capital management; and MIT monitoring. The briefings clearly demonstrated FSA's accomplishments and its commitment to sustaining and continuing to assess and manage the risk in the programs. GAO has notified FSA that they plan to complete their data collection by March 12, and a decision is expected by the end of the year.

Linda Paulsen reviews FSA's 2004 performance for FSA Now following a recent GAO High-Risk List meeting.

ED Communications Luncheon

Secretary Paige's January monthly luncheon with ED staff included members of the internal communications team. He used the lunch to conduct a mini focus group to gather new ideas about how the Department might reach more teachers with information about NCLB. Anne Radice, the Secretary's chief of staff, also attended and will be planning a series of follow-up meetings to build upon ideas raised during the luncheon.

FSA's Chris Greene (third from left) attended the communications luncheon with Secretary Paige.

*My*FSA

FSA *Now* talked to new ASEDS Deputy General Manager Katie Crowley

Q: Describe your role at FSA.

A: I am the Deputy General Manager for Application, School Eligibility and Delivery Services (ASEDS). Since this is a new position, we are doing quite a bit of "defining as we go." I would say I focus in two key areas: (1) general support for Kay Jacks in the operations of ASEDS and (2) special projects as necessary to support directors and business managers within the ASEDS business units. In addition to these responsibilities, I also assist with the overall integration activities occurring across the enterprise. Toward this end, I support Jeanne Saunders, who leads the Business and Technology Integration Group, in planning as well as participating in FSA's major business initiatives (for example: Data Strategy, FEBI and Trading Partner Management).

Q: What do you like most about your job so far?

A: That one is easy. I love working with the people here. It was the biggest driver in deciding to take the position with FSA. I think it must be incredibly rare to have a group of people who know so much, care so much and still have fun running an operation of this magnitude.

Q: What are your personal and/or professional goals at FSA?

A: My goals at FSA are to contribute to helping the organization in both day-to-day operations and longer-term integration and to grow professionally. This is an amazing opportunity for me to be a part of organizational planning and implementation at a level and breadth I have never experienced, and I know I will learn many, many things along the way.

Personally, I am also very interested in the policy cycle that guides the student aid programs and look forward to involvement with our Policy Liaison and Operations group, OPE and other groups helping to review and influence this policy.

Q: What are the biggest changes you face in Application, School Eligibility and Delivery Services?

A: Our biggest change in ASEDS is becoming ASEDS. The reorganization and establishment of the new ASEDS Channel combined groups from the previous Students and Schools Channels. We are still working through some of the related planning, such as standard leadership meetings, to allow us to operate as a seamless unit and gain the benefits of the alignment without creating too many layers that may inhibit rapid decisions and actions.

Q: Tell us about your previous professional experience. How will these experiences influence your work at FSA?

A: For the majority of my professional career, I consulted with colleges and universities, specifically related to student services and Title IV delivery. I worked with over 50 different schools, assisting them with the challenge of meeting their student service objectives while maintaining compliance in the student aid programs. More recently, I worked with FSA's Integration Partner. Initially on Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) and then as part of the leadership team focused on integration. I hope both of these experiences will influence my work at FSA – from understanding our partners' roles in the delivery of student aid and the challenges they face to understanding the processes and systems in place at FSA to support our role.

Q: What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

A: Although I have lived here for about ten years, I still really enjoy exploring DC – whether visiting a museum or just walking around downtown. I am also a travel nut and explore areas well outside of DC as much as I can. I would say my primary activity is just spending time with friends. After many years of constant business travel, I value and try to always take advantage of being able to spend time with the people in my life.