

UNCLAS STATE 241039  
FROM ICASS SERVICE CENTER DIRECTOR GREG ENGLE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: KICA, AMGT

SUBJECT: ICASS: IT'S 10 O'CLOCK; DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR SERVICE STANDARDS ARE?  
FOR CHIEF OF MISSION, ICASS COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON AND ADMIN COUNSELOR

1. SUMMARY: A PRINCIPAL FEATURE OF THE CUSTOMER-DRIVEN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES (ICASS) SYSTEM IS THE JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE STANDARDS BY CUSTOMER AGENCIES AND THE SERVICE PROVIDER. DOES YOUR POST HAVE SERVICE STANDARDS? ARE THE INDIVIDUALS WHO MUST MEET THE STANDARDS AWARE OF THEM? DO THE ICASS COUNCIL AND SERVICE PROVIDER(S) REVIEW THE STANDARDS AT LEAST ANNUALLY TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE RELEVANT AND ACHIEVABLE? WHO MEASURES THE SERVICE PROVIDER'S PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE STANDARDS? THIS MESSAGE ADDRESSES THESE QUESTIONS AND OTHERS. IT IS NOT/NOT A SURVEY. WE'RE NOT REQUESTING ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS. RATHER, WE DRAW THE SERVICE STANDARDS TO YOUR ATTENTION SO THAT YOU CAN ENSURE THAT YOUR ICASS SYSTEM IS FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS. END SUMMARY.

2. RECENTLY, MEMBERS OF THE ICASS SERVICE CENTER STAFF HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND TWO STATE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER CONFERENCES, A USAID EXECUTIVE OFFICER CONFERENCE, AND THE ICASS BUDGET WORKSHOPS. ON EACH OF THESE OCCASIONS, WE HEARD FROM PARTICIPANTS THAT THE EXISTENCE AND APPLICABILITY OF ICASS SERVICE STANDARDS IS UNEVEN. SOME POSTS ARE WELL AWARE OF THE STANDARDS AND ARE USING THEM. AT OTHERS, NO ONE HAS LOOKED AT THEM FOR A LONG TIME. SEVERAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS ADMITTED THAT THEY HAVE NOT SEEN THE STANDARDS FOR THE POSTS WHERE THEY ARE MANAGING THE PROVISION OF ICASS SERVICES. WE THOUGHT, THEREFORE, THAT A CABLE REMINDING POSTS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE STANDARDS MIGHT BE USEFUL.

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DEVELOPING THE STANDARDS  
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3. TO THE EXTENT THAT POSTS CAN DEVELOP CLEAR, EFFECTIVE SERVICE STANDARDS, THE INTERESTS OF BOTH THE CUSTOMER AND SERVICE PROVIDER ARE SERVED. THE ICASS HANDBOOK (6 FAH-5) NOTES THAT SERVICE STANDARDS SHOULD BE "SMART": SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ACHIEVABLE, RELEVANT/RESULTS ORIENTED, AND TIMELY. IT PROVIDES SAMPLE SERVICE STANDARDS. THESE ARE EXAMPLES ONLY, AND WILL OFTEN NOT FIT THE UNIQUE CONDITIONS AT YOUR POST. THEREFORE, WE DO NOT ADVISE LIFTING THEM LOCK, STOCK AND BARREL FROM THE HANDBOOK.

4. THE HANDBOOK'S GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPING SERVICE STANDARDS IS EXTENSIVE, BUT HEREIN, WE WISH TO DRAW POSTS' ATTENTION TO A FEW POINTS THAT ARE ESPECIALLY WORTHY OF NOTE:

- THE SERVICE STANDARDS ARE DEVELOPED COLLABORATIVELY BY CUSTOMERS (THE ICASS COUNCIL AND ITS CONSTITUENTS) AND THE SERVICE PROVIDER (MOST OFTEN THE STATE ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION).
- THE STANDARDS SHOULD BE REASONABLE, BALANCING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AGAINST AVAILABLE RESOURCES.
- THE ICASS COUNCIL AND THE SERVICE PROVIDER SHOULD REVIEW THE STANDARDS AT LEAST ANNUALLY TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE STILL RELEVANT AND ACHIEVABLE. THE STANDARDS FORM AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE CUSTOMER AGENCIES

AND THE SERVICE PROVIDER, ALONG WITH THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. THEIR REVIEW PROVIDES THE CONTRACTING PARTIES AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE AMENDMENTS BASED ON CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES.

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USING THE STANDARDS  
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5. ICASS SERVICE STANDARDS ARE MEANINGLESS UNLESS THEY ARE APPLIED. THAT MEANS EDUCATING ALL MEMBERS OF THE SERVICE PROVIDER STAFF AS TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE STANDARDS AND COUNSELING INDIVIDUAL STAFF MEMBERS WITH REGARD TO THEIR PERSONAL ROLE IN MEETING THEM. IT ALSO MEANS EDUCATING CUSTOMERS SO THAT THEY KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE WAY OF SERVICE. IF AN ICASS COUNCIL HAS AGREED WITH THE SERVICE PROVIDER ON A STANDARD OF SERVICE AT A SPECIFIC LEVEL, THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUENTS ARE JUSTIFIED IN EXPECTING TO RECEIVE THAT LEVEL OF SERVICE. THEY SHOULD NOT BE DISAPPOINTED, HOWEVER, WHEN THE SERVICE PROVIDER DOES NOT OFFER SERVICE THAT EXCEEDS THAT LEVEL.

6. THE SERVICE STANDARDS PROVIDE A USEFUL TOOL FOR CUSTOMERS TO ASSESS THE SERVICE PROVIDER'S PERFORMANCE, AND SHOULD FORM THE BASIS FOR THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT WHICH THE ICASS COUNCIL PREPARES ON THE SERVICE PROVIDER. BEYOND THAT, THE SERVICE PROVIDER CAN USE THE STANDARDS TO MEASURE THE PERFORMANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF MEMBERS. IDEALLY, THE STANDARDS WILL NOT ONLY ENSURE SOME MINIMALLY ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE, BUT WILL PROVIDE THE IMPETUS FOR BOOSTING AN INDIVIDUAL'S OR A SECTION'S PERFORMANCE TO EVEN HIGHER LEVELS.

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BEST PRACTICES  
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7. POSTS HAVE DEVELOPED VARIOUS MEANS OF IMPLEMENTING THEIR SERVICE STANDARDS. AT ONE POST IN AFRICA, THE SERVICE STANDARDS ARE POSTED IN A GLASS FRAME IN THE SECTION PROVIDING THAT SERVICE. ALSO IN THE FRAME ARE PICTURES OF THE EMPLOYEES (AMERICAN AND FOREIGN NATIONAL) RESPONSIBLE FOR MEETING THE STANDARDS. THE PICTURED EMPLOYEES UNDERSTAND THEIR DUTIES VIS-A-VIS THE STANDARDS. A TELEPHONE NUMBER IS PROVIDED SHOULD CUSTOMERS WISH TO CALL IN THEIR COMMENTS ON THE SECTION'S PERFORMANCE.

8. IF YOU SEND THE ICASS SERVICE CENTER YOUR POST'S SERVICE STANDARD BEST PRACTICES, WE WILL INCLUDE THEM IN BEST PRACTICE MESSAGES WHICH WE PERIODICALLY SEND SO THAT OTHER POSTS CAN BENEFIT FROM YOUR POST'S EXPERIENCE.

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HERE TO HELP  
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9. THE ICASS SERVICE CENTER STANDS READY TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE STANDARDS. PLEASE CONTACT OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE TEAM (BARBARA HAZELETT, LIZ CEMAL, OR FELIPE CRUZ) BY E-MAIL OR CABLE WITH YOUR QUESTIONS. THE RELEVANT ISC SERVICE STANDARD COMMITS US TO AT LEAST AN INTERIM REPLY WITHINTHREE WORKING DAYS.

PICKERING