



The ICASS Gazette

Volume 1, Issue 1

Winter Edition

January 29, 2009

The New ICASS Gazette

This is the first issue of the "ICASS Gazette" – part of a new effort to reach the broad ICASS community, keeping readers informed of "hot topics" and major issues. The articles will be short and to the point, providing necessary links to more detailed explanations. The Gazette will be published quarterly and emailed to Management Officers, ICASS Council Chairs, Financial Management Officers and members of the Washington ICASS Interagency Working Group and the Interagency Executive Board. Please share this publication with your staff and colleagues and give us your feedback via ICASSSERVICECENTER@state.gov.

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Senator Hillary Clinton sworn in as the 67th Secretary of State January 2009

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Currently online thru February 10, 2009 – see link to survey:

<http://www.icass.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&id=8667d544-22f2-4803-a48b-6df96fd8eacf>

It's ba-a-ack. The fifth annual ICASS customer satisfaction survey was launched on January 20. Everyone overseas receiving ICASS services should take the survey. Make sure your voice is heard. Council members, encourage all your agency's people...and don't forget family members...to take it. Management officers, urge all your constituents to take it. It's easy to do, as it's on the web at the above link.



The survey kicks off that part of the ICASS cycle that focuses on performance. It ends with the delivery of the consensus memo from the ICASS Council Chair to the DCM evaluating the management section's performance for the past year. What to write about? Hey, how about the survey results? The memo can serve to underscore messages being delivered via the survey results...messages of praise as well as those highlighting problems.



Whether you're in management, or a customer, the survey is a rich source of information. What's that saying? "Criticism is a free consultation." Have you ever looked at the scores and the comments together for a given service? Do the comments track with the scores? Are there recurring themes from one year to the next, even now in the fifth year as turnover has happened among customers at post? And don't forget about the importance of managing expectations. Naomi Karten says it well at <http://www.nkarten.com/mce.html>

Good Bye LANSPFMS! Hello, PSU?



LANSPFMS is going the way of the Dodo. What is it? A large flightless bird, now ex....oh, you mean LANSPFMS.

It's a financial feeder system used at some posts. Enough said...you know it if you use it. If its demise leaves you without a reliable way to submit vouchers, have you considered the services of the Post Support Unit (PSU) managed by GFS in Charleston and Bangkok?

The PSU can set up an agreement with you to process obligations and/or vouchers for your post. Contact them at

GFS Post Support Unit (PSU)
Gwen Sawyer - sawyerga@state.gov
Tel: (843) 308-5278; IVG: 3-5278
Fax: (843) 746-0653

But if you do, remember...those are still shared costs. Obligate the PSU agreement in the cost center...6221 Accounts & Records, 6223 Vouchering, or 6225 Lite Financial Management...related to the services you get. The workload is still your workload, identified to customer agencies...you're just using an offshore mechanism to process it.

Hey, and even if you've never heard of LANwhutchamacallit, the PSU is a great mechanism to help posts avoid cost increases, handle temporary increases in workloads/backlogs or even reduce costs. But if you replace that retired Voucher Examiner with a PSU agreement, don't forget: ICASS is about sharing.



ICASS AWARDS

- Recognize Talent and Achievement

The annual awards cable will be issued soon, reminding posts to submit nominations for outstanding ICASS leadership and service. The top award carries a \$10,000 prize and seeks to recognize an individual (or a small group) for achievement in meeting ICASS objectives for cost containment and innovation in service delivery. Both customers and service providers, including Americans and LE Staff, are eligible for this prestigious award. Posts are also reminded that nominations for ICASS Recognition Awards, carrying a prize of up to \$1000, can be submitted at any time throughout the year. These awards recognize

exceptional performance in any ICASS-related activity. Watch for the cable or visit the ICASS website at www.icass.gov and nominate deserving individuals from your post!



SCORECARD

- It's that time of year again!

Entering the second year of the ICASS scorecard, the focus will remain on improving data integrity and ensuring that posts' budgets are accurate and internally consistent. This year's scorecard includes four new items that relate to recent changes in Chapter 340 of the ICASS Handbook (see <http://www.icass.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4TG4> for details). The preliminary review of the FY09 budgets was conducted in Bangkok under the direction of ISC Reimbursements Team Leader Trish Garate, members of her staff, and a team of experienced LE Staff from around the globe. Preliminary scores and feedback have been sent to posts, providing ample time to make corrections and enable all posts to earn an "A" on their final budget. Make the grade and help your bureau win the coveted "CFO Cup"!



TDY Policy

- It must be on eCC ... and it must be right!

Following IWG and IEB approval of a change in thresholds for use with the ICASS TDY Module (from 30 days/\$2500 to 7 days/\$500), the ISC issued three cables with extensive guidance and instructions on actions post needed to take. All posts must have a policy that outlines post-specific guidelines for TDYers and uses the format provided in 08 State 81046. The policy must be approved by the post Budget Committee and posted on eCC, even if post only charges TDYers for direct costs related to their travel. Posts may not invoice TDYers under the ICASS TDY module until an approved policy is posted on eCC. The TDY cables are posted on the ICASS website at www.icass.gov. Send any questions or requests for assistance to ICASSSERVICECENTER@state.gov.



Data Validation and CMI

- It's the future!

The past year brought many changes to ICASS with the issuance of several new chapters of the ICASS Handbook. These changes bring more standardization and transparency to the ICASS process and seek to simplify managing and budgeting in ICASS. This year's budget workshops focused on these changes and emphasized the need for all posts to implement them consistently. Consequently, one of the ISC's objectives for FY09 will focus on data validation to ensure that posts understand and appropriately apply the changes in their budget. The ISC will be reviewing all initial budgets to ensure these changes have been implemented and will provide feedback to posts in time for changes to be made in the final budget. Full implementation of these changes is one of the cornerstones of the Department of State's Collaborative Management Initiative (CMI). Standardized ICASS data will allow the service provider to analyze this information, establish metrics and make better resource decisions. The CMI will provide posts a new management toolbox for improving ICASS services.



Detailed ICASS Data For You

Starting in September 2004, with GAO's observation that ICASS "lacks indicators to gauge progress", and its recommendation to "reengineer processes and seek innovative managerial approaches", a lot has happened. ICASS has been "PARTed", the customer satisfaction survey has been institutionalized, and not least among these efforts, CMI has been launched. A consistent refrain of management reform advocates relates to the use of information to guide decision-making. To that end, please know that a wealth of ICASS information related to your post, and comparative information between your post and others, is available on the ICASS web-site at <http://www.icass.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=JF43>

Please take a look. If you need help to interpret what you're seeing, contact ICASSServiceCenter@state.gov.

INFORMATIVE LINKS

ICASS Service Center: www.icass.gov
M/PRI: <http://mpri.m.state.gov/>
STATE News: www.state.gov
WHITE HOUSE News: www.whitehouse.gov
CMI: <http://m.state.sbu/sites/pri/cmi/default.aspx>

ACRONYMS

ICASS: Int'l Cooperative Administrative Support Services
CMI: Collaborative Management Initiative
M/PRI: Mgt Policy, Rightsizing and Innovation
IWG: Interagency Working Group
IEB: Interagency Executive Board



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WHA MANAGEMENT OFFICER/COUNSELOR & ICASS COUNCIL CHAIR WORKSHOP

PLACE FT. LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA
DATE: MARCH 3-6, 2009
POC: ICASS Travel Coordinator – Susie Phillips
– phillipssk@state.gov

Announcement cable: STATE 005794

Extended Deadline for Response: FEBRUARY 4, 2009

Look for further details in early February 09

POST SPECIFIC TRAINING –

COMING TO YOUR AREA IN 2009

Zagreb – January 20
Almaty – January 20
Astana – January 26
N'djamena – February 2
Abidjan – February 9
Copenhagen – February 17
Cairo – February 22
Algiers – February 14
Rabat – February 23
Ankara – February 23
Bucharest – March 2
Abu Dhabi – March 8
Beirut – March 16
Khartoum/Juba – March 15
Mexico – March 23
Bratislava – March 23
Belgrade – March 30
Dar es Salaam - April 20
Monrovia – April 27
Berlin/Frankfurt – May 11
The Hague – May 26
Podgorica – Being Scheduled
Nassau – Being Scheduled