

What is the FMIS helpdesk UNICENTER?

UNICENTER is the FMIS helpdesk facility, which users can access to log problems and seek solutions on FMIS

As the FMIS team moves into providing more support work with the roll out of FMIS coming to an end in November, UNICENTER is currently seen as the lifeline available for users when they need assistance regarding procedures or processes for the various modules, or any other FMIS related issues.



Senior Accountant Roneel Singh resigned on 03/08/07

If the FMIS team cannot resolve an issue and it is application related, the issue will be raised with Infor Global Solutions [Infor] or Software Factory Ltd [SFL] [Infor partner in Fiji]. If the issue is server/network related, it will be transferred to the ITC Services group to be assigned to the appropriate analyst.

There are 3 levels of the structure:-

Advantages of UNICENTER

The main advantage of using UNICENTER is that it records all problems logged by users and corresponding solutions as provided by the FMIS team. When users log their problems using phones or e-mails, this information is not shared with other users of the system who might be facing the same problems or issue. UNICENTER helps all users as it has a knowledge base component, which users can browse to search for possible solutions to their problems. The other advantage is that all logs are monitored and FMIS team will respond to user logs within 24 hours.

Support Structure Diagram

There are super-users for Infor FM in each department where the various applications are implemented. The super-users will be the Level 1 support team and will be the first point of contact for any issues raised. Any issues that cannot be resolved by the super-users will be transferred to the FMIS team, Level 2. The FMIS team is application specific and has a good knowledge of all applications.

Level 1 - represents the key users or the support person within a department.

This will be the super user in each Ministry. They will be supporting all the end-users for any issues or problem they face.

Level 2 - represents the FMIS support group.

When key users from departments cannot solve the problem; it will then be directed to the FMIS support group.

Level 3 - represents Infor Global, ITC and SFL

If the FMIS team cannot resolve an issue and it is application related, the issue would be raised with Infor Global or SFL. If the issue is server/network related, it will be transferred to the ITC group to be assigned to the appropriate analyst.

Procurement Limits Restored

Finance Circular 16/07 dated 19 July 2007 restored to Permanent Secretaries the procurement authority of up to \$20,000. This limit was delegated to them under Section 11 of the Finance Instructions 2005 (FI).

This procurement authority was temporarily reduced to \$5,000 from 17 January via Circular 02/2007 as an interim measure to maintain the sustainability of government finances and to encourage only essential purchases of goods and services.

As government finances are stabilizing and most of the government agencies have now gone 'on-line' with the new financial management information system, it became necessary to restore the \$20,000 procurement limit to facilitate efficient workflow administered at agency level.

Procurements beyond \$20,000 are to be referred to the proper tenders board for approval. According to the circular, all delegation of authorities in regional centers outside the Headquarters, the respective Permanent Secretary must authorize in writing a senior officer to sign Purchase Orders on his behalf and a copy to be sent to Ministry of Finance as unauthorized Purchase Orders will not be honored.

The restoration of this procurement has brought great relief to agencies.

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Where to with these Reforms?

An article by Monovi Amani, School of Accounting and Finance;
Faculty of Business and Economics; University of the South Pacific.

In a recent workshop that I conducted under the auspices of the Finance Management Reform project, a senior government official asked,

“Where are we going with these reforms?” To which I answered, that one of the main objective of the financial management reforms was to enhance accountability. The gaze into oblivion prompted this short article on accountability.

Accountability seems to be the new buzzword in everyone’s vocabulary, and yet, it will be interesting to find out whether everyone understands what it means. The ‘over-use’ may have caused users to impose their own meaning thus creating this lack of focus on what accountability is all about.

Let me start this discussion by saying that accountability is not a simple notion and as I mentioned earlier, it is often not

well understood. In this regard it would be good to start with a broad definition of Accountability.

Accountability can be defined in simple terms as: “A is answerable to B for the responsibility conferred”. Therefore, A is obliged to inform B about A’s (past or future) actions and decisions. A is also obligated to justify these actions and decisions, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconduct.

Let us take Fiji to exemplify the different levels of accountability. In most traditional commonwealth countries, there is the ministerial accountability.

Ministers are individually accountable to Parliament for their own actions and for all aspects of their departments and agencies’ activities. Ministers are also collectively accountable for the decisions taken by the Cabinet. Their officials on the other hand

are accountable to the minister for the operation of their organizations, and not to Parliament. Whilst they traditionally remain anonymous they may however be required to answer to Parliament to explain those operations on behalf of their minister, but they do not answer to Parliament regarding government policy. They are, when required, answerable to Parliament but remain formally accountable to their minister.

While the practice of ministerial accountability has been tested by elements of public service reform over the last number of years, it remains the cornerstone of our democratic parliamentary system. It is within this tradition that our discussions will be based. The main focus of our discussion is not on the ministerial accountability but rather on accountability in a public sector management context.

We will examine accountability as it applies to the management and delivery of government programs in our next edition.

2008 Budget Strategy

Cabinet, in its meeting on 19 June 2007 agreed to the 2008 Budget Strategy. The strategy was issued via Finance Circular 13/2007 including broad guiding principles that will form the 2008 Budget.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. a net deficit of 1.5 percent of GDP for 2008 equivalent to \$80.4million;
2. a debt to GDP ratio of 52.1%;
3. an operating-capital expenditure ratio of 80%:20%;
4. procedural changes to the budget process; and
5. the 2008 Budget timelines.

Fiscal Framework and Measures

The circular stated that for the medium term, government aims to continue on the path of fiscal consolidation to ensure a sustained financially stable economy that promotes economic growth and boost investments. Fiscal consolidation is also necessary to further reduce the net deficit levels to achieve the targeted debt to GDP projection of 45% in the medium term.

In line with the fiscal consolidation approach, government will commit to

efficiency and effectiveness through:

- (i) better managing the growth in government spending;
- (ii) increased revenue collections, focusing on enhancing the taxation system; and
- (iii) stringent management of debt and deficit levels focusing on developing the domestic capital markets.

For 2008, government spending priorities will focus on Health, Education, Tourism, Law & Order, Poverty Alleviation, Investment, Infrastructure, Resource-Based and Export oriented sectors.

Key to improving these measures are the adoption of the accountability objective of the Financial Management Reform.

Accountability mechanisms like Performance Budgeting and Portfolio Performance Statements, the Annual

Corporate Planning process will be further refined for clearer linkages between intended outcomes, core outputs and the allocated resources.

The total baseline budget stood at \$1.464m against the expenditure limit of \$1.634.4m. The total room available for additional expenditure therefore is \$170m.

Of this \$170.4m, additional room for operating expenditure is \$20m and capital expenditure is \$151m.

Tentative Budget Timelines

Early August – Consultations between Ministry of Finance with senior officials of agencies

End of August – Consultations with the Cabinet Sub-Committee on the Budget

Mid September – Ministerial Level consultations with CSB

Early October – Tabling of the 2008 Budget Estimates to Cabinet

June – December – Development of the 2008 Portfolio Performance Statements (PPS)

Mid Year Fiscal Statement

To strengthen the accountability of government and of state entities, Part 7 of the Act outlines the reporting requirements that apply to each of three levels: Whole of Government Reporting, Budget Sector Reporting and Off budget Reporting.

On Whole of Government Reporting, each year, the Minister for Finance must table three reports in Parliament. They are the quarterly appropriation statements; a mid year fiscal statement and an annual report. This article focuses on the Mid Year Fiscal Statement.

The Permanent Secretary for Finance is responsible to the Minister for Finance in the preparation of the Mid Year Fiscal

Statement. The statement is prepared for the first six months of government's financial year, which extends from 1st January to 30th June.

By law, the mid year fiscal statement must be tabled in the House of Representatives two months after the reporting period, simply before end of August of every year.

The statement includes the expenditure information in the quarterly appropriation statement, as well as:

- the actual revenue and budget result for the half-year;
- a comparison of the actual revenue and budget result with the previous half-year; and

- the projected revenue and budget result for the full-year.

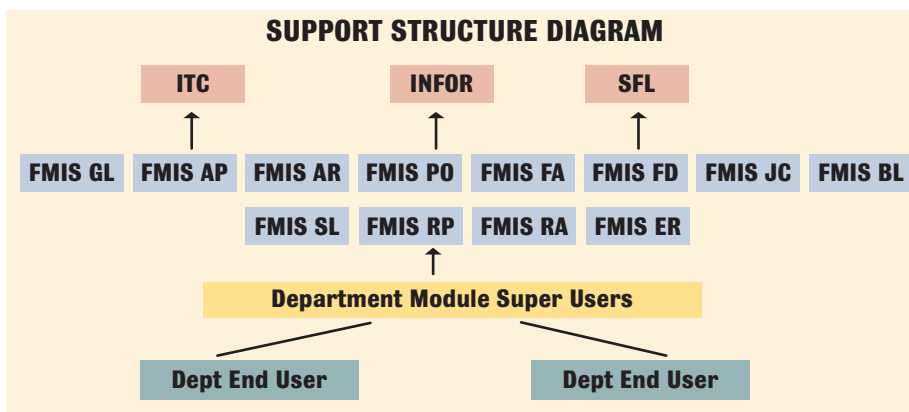
A template was prepared by the FMR Project Office to guide officials with the compilation of the mid year fiscal report.

This report provides an opportunity for government to fine tune its budget to accommodate any revision in revenue forecasts and any urgent and unavoidable new/additional expenditure priorities.

Under the FMR, the regular and timely reporting on performance intends to serve as both an essential management control and as an effective accountability mechanism.

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How do you log issues?

When a problem is encountered, the user has several ways to raise the issue:

1. Log the issue directly into Service Desk via the online web application.
 - End user to log the issue directly through the Unicenter Service desk located in the GOVNET web site. (Users need to have GOVNET username and password to be able to log in issues here).
 - User must select the correct request area e.g. Application: InforFM. General Ledger if it is regarding GL and the correct request group, i.e. the department support group which will be identified by the first three letters.
 - End user to describe clearly in details the problem encountered with the application screen name. Can also add

attachment if using other program to detail the problem.

2. Call the key user, who will open the issue.
 - Key user from the department to log in the issue through the Unicenter Service desk describing the problem in details using the end user name.
 - Key users who is also the department analyst, will have to assign the issue to the support group of their department or to FMIS or ITC if they cannot solve the problem.
 - Always login the issue even if the problem can be solved through a phone call.
 - Always give the Call Request (CR) number to end-user after raising the issue.

3. Call the central government support desk to raise the issue.
 - If the key user is not at work, end user can call ITC support desk to log in the issue on their behalf.
 - ITC to raise the issue by choosing the correct request area and request group.
 - ITC to give the Call Request (CR) number to end user after raising the issue.

Searching for a solution on the knowledge base

Before opening an issue, the end-user should search within Unicenter Service Desk for known problems and solutions by entering keywords to check the knowledge base if solutions to similar problems are present.

To search for a solution, use the following steps.

- Click on the box in the 'Search for a Solution' section of the screen and type the keyword for your search.
- Click on the 'go' icon to the right of the box to begin the search. The results will be displayed
- If a match for your problem is displayed, click on the 'link' to the document and the document will be displayed with instructions on how to proceed.

Important to Note: UNICENTER is the FMIS users' helpdesk facility and users should log their issues through the UNICENTER help desk.

Trading And Manufacturing Accounts

Whilst no entity is immune to an economic slump, steps are being pursued with emphasis on the curtailing of costs in the management of Governments investments.

A sector of Government currently under the attention of the Asset Management Unit of the Ministry of Finance is the Trading and Manufacturing Accounts (TMA's).

TMA's were initially formed to operate on a semi commercial basis using a revolving fund concept whereby a cyclical nature of cashflow is adopted; financing the provision of goods and/or services via sales proceeds.

For any enterprise operating via a revolving fund, there is a need to track payments and lodgements with the respective bank records. *One of the biggest challenges that the unit is facing is the non-compliance and non-submission of TMA monthly Bank*



Irimaia Rokosawa Acting Senior Accountant, TMA

Reconciliation Statements. This record verifies that proper book keeping of TMA's is maintained.

Compliance towards the approved Bank Reconciliation Statement format stated in the Financial Instruction 2005 (amended in the Financial Circular 01/2007) will ensure that funds drawn from the Operating Fund Account are appropriated/budgeted items and funds drawn from the TMA Bank Account are TMA related.

Recovery of Arrears of Revenue

The Finance Ministry made a call for concerted effort to recover 50% of arrears owed to government by 30th September 2007.

The call was made in the wake of past unfavorable audit reports of uncollectible arrears of revenue. As at 30th March 2007, the total revenue amount owed to government stood at \$241.1million. Out of this amount, 23% is reported to be over five years old, which will be considered for write off after all practical and cost effective recovery efforts have been reasonably exhausted.

Accounting Heads are responsible for the prompt collection of arrears of revenue. The recovery action is necessary to allow the Finance Ministry to reflect the true and accurate position of government finance for 2007 but more importantly to give more flexibility to Government in terms of optimum resource allocation.

If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude'. -Colin Powell

Financial Analysis Course

The Finance Ministry wishes to acknowledge the commendable attendance on the Financial Management Reform (FMR) Analysis and Interpretation of Financial Reports two-day workshop that was held at the University of the South Pacific (USP) from Thursday 19 – Friday 20 July 2007.

As part of the FMR program for 2007, the workshop was specifically designed to continue with Government's drive for greater accountability. In this regard the course was focused on utilizing financial reports generated and other agency data collected as tools for decision-making, planning and control.

The workshop was officially opened by the now Acting Deputy Secretary for National Planning, Mr. Marika Luveniyali. In his opening address, Mr. Luveniyali said that the introduction of new reporting formats under the FMR require a development of new practical skills for analyzing and interpreting public sector financial reports for accountants and particularly management for quick snappy decisions to benefit the agency and government as a whole.

Mr. Luveniyali said that all training programs offered by the FMR therefore, aim to address these areas and ensure that government officials can both understand

the nature of the new requirements of the reform and can put them into practice.

Mr. Luveniyali further encouraged participants to strive to attain further qualification from other institutions for professional and personal development.

According to the course provider, USP, the level of dialogue, discussion and questions raised in the workshop, was indicative of the level of interest in the topics and issues raised.

USP concluded that the course was accepted as a success and a very valuable one indeed for the participants and the reform program.



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