Agreements Services Center- Quarterly Meeting Notes 11/13/19

GAO Workforce Training Initiative - Dawn Halvorson

- In 2018, The Gov't Accountability Office (GAO) conducted an audit on the federal grants workforce to see what level of training people that administer and oversee grants received
- For the audit, GAO selected a few of the big granting departments within the USDA: Health and Human Services, Department of Education, Forest Service, NIFA, and Rural Development.
- GAO reviewed gov't regulations on grants, compared the agencies' grants training against what they determined were best practices, and interviewed officials involved with grants at these departments.
- The Audit had 5 recommendations. One pertained to the USDA, it said the Secretary of USDA should establish a process to monitor and evaluate USDA's grants training at the central office level.
- GAO expects that USDA will have a method for identifying all employees working on grants across the agencies and have oversight procedures to evaluate the quality of our training efforts.
- OCFO put together members of all of the USDA grant making Agencies to discuss the audit recommendation and how it would be implemented in the Department.
- A Departmental Regulation which describes the requirements of the Agencies in draft format and should be approved and finalized by the end of November.
- The purpose of the Departmental Regulation is to establish a process to define the grants workforce, centrally monitor and evaluate grants training at USDA.
- **There are 2 Tiers of Training Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier I is OMB Grants 101**
- The training is designed to provide Federal officials a basic knowledge on grants and cooperative agreements.
- The training will be assigned in AgLearn. The training is broken into 3 courses and consist of 5 modules.
- Those directly involved in executing grants the most will get the most training. The Training will be a one-time requirement with potential refresher training after that.
- Tier 2 is technical mandatory Agency Specific Training. APHIS will be responsible for developing and maintaining training that is specific to their programs. **This the part that will take place over the next 2 – 3 years once the DR is in place.**
- In the coming weeks, more information will be sent out to those affected.

eFG updates – emergency fix and new releases (PEGA upgrade) - Christina Klaus

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- o Emergency Fix – To develop validations on all five FMMI accounting elements. Right now the system only validates three, and if you have multiple lines of accounting with similar elements it may cause an error on claims that indicate "duplicate lines of accounting". The fix will be released into production 11/29/19.
    - ▪ The interim fix for this issue was distributed to the agreements community on 10/23/19 with a link to the updated FPC form that contains formulas to identify potential duplicates and allows for correction before they are entered into eFG.
  - o Opportunity – Duplicate Federal Contacts Error
    - ▪ Escalated to high priority
  - o Opportunity – Add/Delete Distribution List Contacts
    - ▪ Fix was implemented last Friday. Only for new opportunities not existing drafts.
  - o GAO Reassigning documents – Known issue, high priority fix is being worked on.
  - o Printing Issue – Known issue since upgrade, high priority fix is being worked on.
    - ▪ Some of the issue has to do with the users having many different versions of Internet Explorer. Makes the fix more complex.
- • Some helpful reminders regarding eFG:
  - o Before we can delete a user in FMMI, we not only need to make sure they are not listed on any active agreements, we also need to see if there are any pending claims or amendments in workflow with their contact information. If there are pending claim or amendments in workflow, they need to be pushed through the process to completion by an active user before you can delete the old user from the agreement and FMMI.
  - o When updating/changing budget line items (e.g. net zero change), we also need to make sure there are no pending claims or amendments that will be affected by the changing of budget line items. If there are pending items, they need to be pushed through workflow to completion before the budget line items can be changed/updated.

Manual updates listed on website – Christina Klaus

- • Working on a directive that will allow us to update chapters more quickly with less administrative process.
- • We are working on posting manual chapters in draft until the directive is complete and we can mark the drafts final.
- • Please use our website for the most current and updated manual chapters. The updated chapters will be noted in red font and although they say draft they are the most current.

MOU/PLG Project – Eileen Berke

- The MOU project with the Program Leader's Group ended September 30, 2019. With the support of the agreements community and project policy setting group, we were able to update ACMS to more accurately capture our current MOU universe. ASC will be periodically obtaining a report of MOUs set to expire in the next 60 days. We will send this report out to the agreements community for the process to begin to update any MOUs that need to continue. The policy changes that resulted from the project and are in our current MOU chapter include:

  - Before entering into any new MOUs, Program Managers need to check with their Grants Specialists to ensure we don't currently have a MOU in existence with that entity for a similar purpose. GS' can run a simple ACMS report to see what is in existence.
  - 7600As can be used as MOUs in some cases, especially during emergency response efforts with other federal agencies. Use of the 7600A as a MOU is covered in the MOU chapter.
  - MOUS that expire or are no longer valid should be marked inactive in ACMS.
  - *Instructions for running MOU reports to come separately.*

General T&Cs – Eileen Berke

- The October 9, 2018 version of the General Terms and Conditions for APHIS Cooperative Agreements and Grants is still in effect with no updates.

G-Invoicing - Christina Cannon and Emily Brown

- G-invoicing is a data exchange platform for Interagency Agreements common to ALL Federal Agencies. Treasury was tasked with making a common platform for IAA processing- G-invoicing. Agreements between USDA Agencies will NOT be in G-Invoicing for now. The original thought is that Intra IAAs will be in eFG but that is still up for discussion.
- Within APHIS, we are beginning to get into the system, learning and testing it- but have not transitioned over to fully using it yet. We do know that there will be a new 7600A&B format- Once this is fully in place, ASC will be able to relay more information and guidance about the forms. This will be mandatory for all Federal Agencies by June 2021. We will be putting together user role lists for APHIS as we continue to move closer to the implementation date. Please look out for further information to come.