

AIR FORCE

COMPTROLLER

THE ULTIMATE FORCE MULTIPLIER

SPRING 2024

DATA IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT!

Reoptimizing the FM Mission with Modern Analytics

02

Charting a New Course:
Data-Driven Transformation in
Air Force Financial Management

09

The FM Field Data Analytics
Steering Group: What Does
it Mean to You?

22

The Financial Management
and Comptroller Fiscal Year
2023 Awards

SAF  FM

VOLUME 57 ISSUE 1



SAF FM
The Ultimate Force Multiplier

In This Issue

The Comptroller's Corner01

Articles

Charting a New Course: Data-Driven Transformation in Air Force Financial Management02

Data Analytics and Governance of the Future: Financial Air and Space Team Resources (FASTR)06

The FM Field Data Analytics Steering Group: What Does it Mean to You?.....09

Success in Spangdahlem: The PayDay Dashboard 12

Tactical Innovation to Serve the DAF Financial Management Strategy 14

Book Review

Recoding America: Why Government Is Failing in the Digital Age and How We Can Do Better 18

From the Desk of...

Ms. Vanessa Sims, SES, SAF/FMB 20

Recognition

Financial Management & Comptroller Fiscal Year 2023 Awards 22

Aces High Awards 28

Promotions & Retirements 30

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Cover Photo: An F-16 Fighting Falcon a part of the Viper Demonstration Team from Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, lines up with a KC-135 Stratotanker to receive fuel Sept. 29, 2022. In an air combat role, the F-16's maneuverability and combat radius until recently have exceeded that of all potential adversary fighter aircraft. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kayla Christenson)

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The *Air Force Comptroller* is an official, non-directive departmental publication distributed three times per year. Its purpose is to provide timely information to Air Force Financial Management and Comptroller personnel relating to mission accomplishment; to assist them in solving problems and improving efficiency of operations; to communicate new developments and techniques; and to stimulate professional thoughts and developments.

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THE COMPTROLLER'S CORNER



Dear FM Team,

As we progress through Fiscal Year 2024, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation for your steadfast dedication to our mission. Despite the myriad of challenges we face, your commitment ensures the continued success of our endeavors. If you haven't already done so, I urge you to watch the insightful Department of the Air Force (DAF) leadership speeches on Great Power Competition (GPC)¹ and review the 24 Key Decisions². GPC marks the next phase of our efforts to counter China and other near-peer adversaries, building upon our existing operational imperatives and modernization initiatives³ within the DAF.

You may be wondering how GPC intersects with our role as Comptrollers and the realm of data analytics. First, there is a direct correlation between the Secretary of the Air Force's (SECAF) GPC guidance and the imperative to enhance our data analytics capabilities. The Secretary emphasizes the importance of data-driven decision-making across various domains, including the evaluation of major exercises, funding allocations for weapons system sustainment, and prioritization of modernization efforts. The establishment of new offices focused on analytically based resourcing decisions underscores the

critical role of data analytics within our FM community. It is essential that we remain at the forefront of this evolution by enhancing our data analytics skill set and translating insights into action.

Second, as we modernize our financial management systems, we will gain access to vast amounts of data at unprecedented speeds. The recently released Commission on Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution³ emphasizes the need for modernized business systems and common data platforms across the Department of Defense. This shift towards centralized data and advanced toolsets necessitates an evolution in our skill sets beyond traditional tools like Excel. We have already witnessed the transformative potential of modern data science tools in our daily work, from enhancing cost estimation accuracy to improving process efficiency. However, there is still much more to be done to fully harness the potential of these tools and integrate them into our workflows.

So, how can you, as members of the FM community, keep pace with these changes? Fortunately, training resources are already available to you, with ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing our data analytic capabilities. The Resource Training Center (RTC) offers a wealth of products focused on analytical data and machine learning to empower our workforce. Additionally, the USAF Digital University⁴ provides accredited training in areas such as big data

analytics, data science, and artificial intelligence. I encourage you to explore and leverage these resources to expand your skill sets.

Furthermore, I encourage you to collaborate with your colleagues and share knowledge and best practices. Many of you, as witnessed during my base visits, are already leading initiatives utilizing data tools, and your innovations are commendable. As General Allvin aptly stated, "The game has changed, the rules have changed, the players have changed... that's what this is about." We must adapt and evolve to meet the challenges of GPC, and data analytics will be a cornerstone of our success. Let's continue to build our skill sets, support each other, and leverage tools and capabilities to deliver superior decision support to our senior leaders.

One Team, One Fight!

Best regards,

Carlos Rodgers

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Financial Management and Comptroller



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<https://www.linkedin.com/company/daffm/>

<https://www.facebook.com/USAFComptroller>

¹ Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition: A Senior Leaders Discussion. Watch, Read: 2024 AFA Warfare Symposium- Air & Space Forces Association

² GPC Glossy Final MG Thurs 1245pm (af.mil)

³ Commission-on-PPBE-Reform-Full-Report_6-March-2024_FINAL.pdf (senate.gov)

⁴ <https://digitalu.af.mil/>



CHARTING A NEW COURSE: DATA-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION IN AIR FORCE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Goal 2 - Objective 2.2

Goal 3 - Objective 3.3

by SSgt Bryan Chappell, AMC and A1C Exzeric Jackson, AETC

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) is undergoing a transformative shift in its approach to financial management (FM) with data analytics becoming the linchpin of its operations. This transition is more than just the adoption of new technologies; it represents a fundamental change in the ethos of financial stewardship within the DAF. By integrating data analytics, the Air Force is transitioning from traditional manual practices to a more dynamic, data-driven framework. This evolution not only enhances financial precision and strategic depth but also aligns with the pressing need for innovation and adaptability in the face of Great Power Competition. The integration of data analytics sheds light on previously obscured financial patterns and trends, enabling better informed decision-making.

Furthermore, the DAF FM sector is embracing a new era where automated processes and user-centric designs are finally taking precedence. This strategic pivot not only streamlines financial operations but also ensures they are user-friendly and aligned with broader mission goals. The move towards automating processes and embracing a data-driven culture reflects the DAF's commitment to efficiency, transparency, and strategic foresight. This commitment is crucial for maintaining agility, accountability, and a competitive edge in the ever-evolving defense landscape, demonstrating a clear dedication to financial management excellence and operational efficiency. The tools highlighted in this article are incredible examples of innovations our FMers are making in the realm of automated data.

Revolutionizing Military Mobility: PCS Automate Unveiled

The Permanent Change of Station (PCS) process, a cornerstone of the military way of life, has historically been fraught with complexities and inefficiencies. The PCS Automate (PCSA) initiative is a pivotal component of the Air Force's strategic vision and represents a transformative shift away from manual, error-prone procedures to a streamlined, automated, and data-driven approach. This transition is not merely operational; it's a fundamental change in the ethos of how the DAF manages the mobility of its personnel. PCSA, showcased at the 2024 FSO Worldwide event, is set to be released in early 2025.

Traditionally, the management of PCS claims was a labor-intensive task, characterized by paper-based workflows, manual data entry, and a high propensity for errors and delays. These inefficiencies not only strained the administrative resources of the FM community but also impacted the service members' experience, often leading to frustration, financial uncertainty, and debts.

The PCSA system revolutionizes this landscape by employing advanced data analytics and automation technologies to streamline the entire PCS process. By integrating financial data from disparate sources into a single, cohesive platform, PCS Automate eliminates redundancies, reduces errors, and significantly accelerates claim processing times. This integration ensures a single source of truth, enhancing data integrity and enabling real-time visibility into the status of PCS claims.

One of the system's most notable features is its automated calculation engine, which precisely determines the entitlements of traveling personnel based on a complex set of rules adhered to the Joint Travel Regulations. This automation mitigates the risk of financial discrepancies and alleviates some of the administrative burden placed on FM technicians, allowing them to focus on strategic tasks and complex case management. The result is a more efficient, transparent, and user-friendly experience for both technicians and service members.

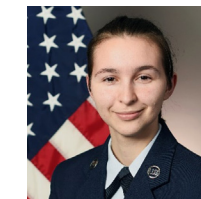
Moreover, PCSA is built on a robust technological foundation, leveraging the Salesforce platform's capabilities to provide a scalable, secure, and flexible solution that can adapt to the evolving needs of the Air Force. This adaptability is crucial in an environment where regulatory changes and operational demands can shift rapidly.

PCSA stands as a groundbreaking advancement, ready to redefine the landscape of military mobility with its precise, efficient, and transparent processes. As we look toward its launch, the Air Force is set to embrace a future where the challenges of PCS are met with innovative solutions, ensuring a smoother, more reliable experience for all. With PCSA, we

are not just anticipating a change; we are stepping into a new era of operational excellence and financial stewardship.

Revolutionizing PCS In-Processing Now: Auto PCS-Tool

The Auto PCS-Tool is an intuitive Excel tool that simplifies the creation of essential documents, conserving valuable time and resources in the process. The tool generates all documentation needed to in-process an Airman by condensing all pertinent information into an intuitive question-answer format.



SrA Destiny Story and A1C Exzeric Jackson showcased the efficacy of the Auto PCS-Tool at the 2024 FSO Worldwide. Their compelling presentation illuminated how the 502d Comptroller Squadron (CPTS) at Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) harnessed the power of the tool to seamlessly in-process over 1,900 Airmen between the months of June and August during peak PCS Season, establishing a new standard of efficiency and precision in the process.



The Auto PCS-Tool transcends mere document generation; it simplifies the timely process of completing the PCS arrival confirmation transactions. Leveraging the information input by the customer, the tool fills in all the necessary data required to complete a SG03 and other related transactions. Automatically generating a DD114, it streamlines these critical tasks, thereby mitigating the risk of errors and expediting processing timelines. Additionally, the tool can create all Defense MilPay Office (DMO) input data for SG03, SB03, SB06, and SC04s. This input data allows a technician to import all transactions from PCS in-processing briefs simultaneously into Web DMO, eliminating the need for manual input. The combination of quicker PCS arrival confirmation transactions and the creation of DMO input data resulted in a dramatic 100% increase in Station Gain (SG) timeliness at JBSA, transforming what was previously a two or three-day process into a same-day process. Consequently, JBSA can seamlessly in-process 100 Airmen a week, ensuring a smoother and more efficient transition for all involved.

The Auto PCS-Tool not only streamlines administrative processes for personnel but also significantly lightens the burden on customers. Customers no longer grapple with confusing paperwork or redundancies, as the tool populates necessary fields based on provided information. This innovation has not gone unnoticed; customers have consistently praised the ease and efficiency of the process, with many describing it as the fastest and easiest



in-processing brief they've ever attended. Such positive feedback has translated into an outstanding 96% satisfaction rate on Interactive Customer Evaluation (I-C-E) surveys, underscoring the exceptional service the JBSA PCS team has provided while deploying this tool.

Revolutionizing Evacuation Management: PCS Genius



PCS Genius, developed by SSgt Bryan Chappell from the 6th CPTS at MacDill Air Force Base (AFB), is an innovative python application designed to streamline the PCS and evacuation processes within the Air Force. Operating on a dynamic questionnaire, it adapts the questions and terminology

based on its interaction with the user, aiming to guide customers through the voucher filing process efficiently and effortlessly. The application's strength lies in its user-friendly interface, which simplifies the completion of all necessary documentation, ensuring accuracy and alleviating the administrative burden on comptroller technicians.

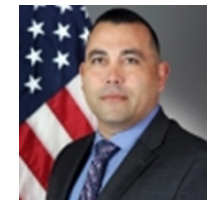
The effectiveness of PCS Genius became particularly evident during natural disaster events at MacDill AFB. Before the introduction of PCS Genius, the base faced significant challenges during Hurricane Ian, relying on manual processes for filing evacuation vouchers. This method proved to be

inefficient, requiring the full capacity of the squadron's manpower with 40 troops working two shifts. The manual system led to a high error rate, with 90% of vouchers completed being incorrect, resulting in a laborious process taking five months to finish all vouchers.

In stark contrast, PCS Genius was deployed during Hurricane Idalia, transforming the experience dramatically. The need for manual processing was virtually eliminated, reducing the manpower requirement to just three technicians working a single shift. The error rate was reduced to 3% from the previous 90%. The application not only expedited the processing of vouchers but also ensured that all corrections and payments were completed within a month after the evacuation. The application received overwhelming positive feedback from both the customers of MacDill AFB and the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center (AFIMSC) Travel Pay Processing Center.

The deployment of PCS Genius at MacDill AFB showcased its potential to significantly enhance the efficiency of evacuation processes. Its success story proves the value of integrating smart technology solutions to improve operational outcomes and user experiences in high-pressure scenarios.

Enhancing Financial Insight: The Role of the AFIMSC Dashboard in Air Force FM



The AFIMSC Dashboard represents a significant leap forward in the realm of FM within the DAF. Developed and maintained by Mr. Omar Massoud from AFIMSC FMF Innovations (FMFI) Team, this innovative tool epitomizes the strategic application of data analytics to enhance decision-making and operational efficiency across DAF/FM.

Central to the dashboard's design is its ability to aggregate and synthesize data from multiple Air Force systems, providing a comprehensive, real-time overview of financial metrics and management indicators. This consolidation of data facilitates a streamlined analysis process and enhances the accuracy and reliability of the financial information presented. By offering a unified view of key financial data, the AFIMSC FMF Dashboard serves as a critical decision-support tool, aiding the strategic allocation of resources and the effective management of financial operations.

Under Mr. Massoud's leadership, the dashboard evolved into an essential component of the FM toolkit, renowned for its user-friendly interface and the actionable insights it delivers. The dashboard's real-time analytics capability allows FM professionals to monitor financial trends, identify anomalies, and respond proactively to potential issues, thereby fostering a more agile and responsive FM environment.

One of the standout functions of the AFIMSC FMF Dashboard is its role in enhancing collaboration and communication among various FM entities. By providing a common platform for financial data, it facilitates a more coordinated approach to financial management, enabling different departments and units to work together more effectively to resolve complex financial issues. This collaborative aspect of the dashboard has been instrumental in improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Air Force's financial operations.

The impact of the AFIMSC FMF Dashboard extends beyond mere data aggregation and analysis. It has been a catalyst for significant operational improvements, such as the noted reduction in Case Management System case backlogs by 40% across the Air Force, showcasing the tangible benefits of leveraging data for strategic decision-making. Furthermore, the dashboard's capabilities in tracking and analyzing financial trends have been vital in enhancing budgetary planning and execution, ultimately leading to more informed and strategic fiscal management within the DAF.

Looking ahead, Mr. Massoud is focused on expanding the dashboard's functionality to integrate data from additional systems, aiming to create an even more comprehensive and insightful financial management tool. The goal is to further enhance the decision-making process, improve transparency, and support the strategic objectives of the Air Force's FM sector.

Strategic Implications and Future Outlook

The strategic implications of PCS Automate, the Auto PCS-Tool, PCS Genius, and the AFIMSC Dashboard are profound, signifying a pivotal shift in the Air Force's approach to FM. These initiatives align with the broader goals of enhancing operational efficiency, transparency, and strategic decision-making within the DAF. Integrating advanced data analytics, automation, and user-centered design into FM processes, the Air Force is streamlining operations and paving the way for future innovations.

Looking ahead, the continued development and integration of these data-driven and automated solutions are expected to further revolutionize the FM sector. Technologies like those mentioned in this article will enable the Air Force to swiftly adapt to changing financial landscapes, predict and mitigate risks more effectively, and strategically allocate resources and manpower. The future capabilities for some of these tools includes expanding these systems to incorporate predictive analytics and artificial intelligence, enhancing their capability to provide foresight, strategic guidance, and technical expertise.

As these initiatives evolve, they will play a crucial role in supporting the Air Force's mission readiness and strategic objectives. The focus on data-driven decision-making, automation, and enhancing customer satisfaction ensures that the Air Force remains agile, resilient, and financially astute in an increasingly complex and dynamic Great Power Competition.



PCS Genius first page, a simplistic approach to a complicated process.

AFIMSC Dashboard, created and managed by Mr. Omar Massoud.

About the Authors:

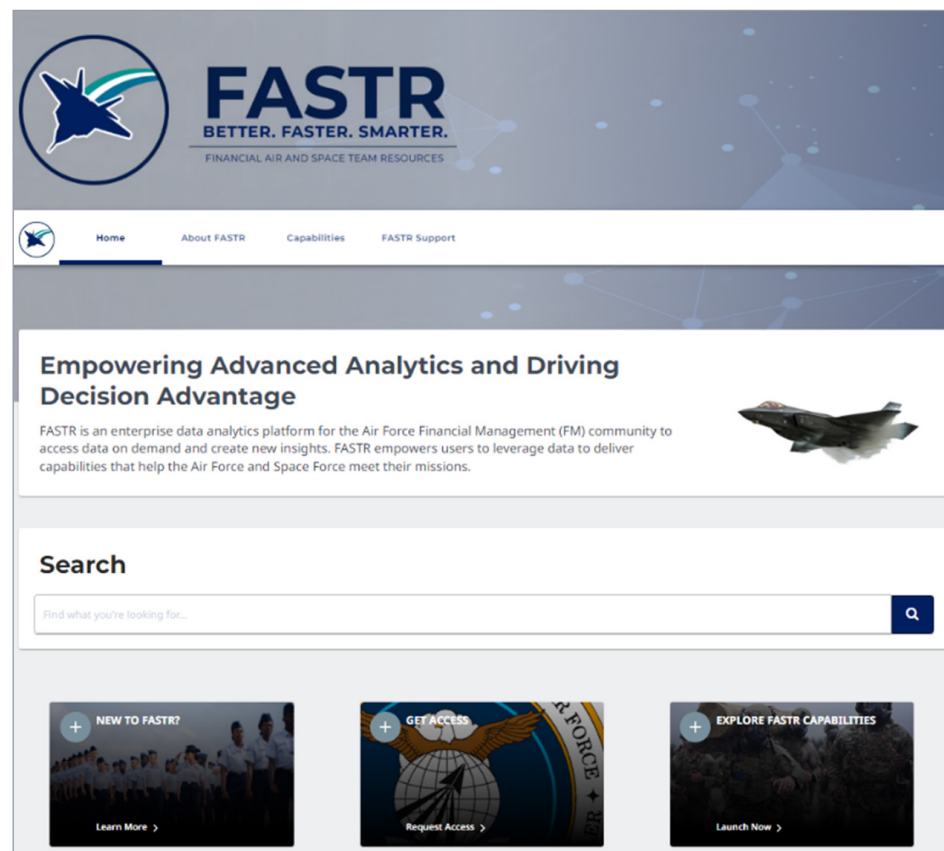
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DATA ANALYTICS AND GOVERNANCE OF THE FUTURE: FINANCIAL AIR AND SPACE TEAM RESOURCES (FASTR)

Goal 2 - Objective 2.2 and 2.3

by Capt Carter McElhany, SAF/FMF



FASTR Home Page.

Financial Air and Space Team Resources (FASTR) is the Air Force Financial Management Community Space on the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) platform: Advana. Advana is a combination of “Advancing Analytics” and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Platform, and it was created to facilitate the financial statement audit. It evolved into a data ecosystem where DoD Services can establish and create their own Community Spaces. Community Spaces are customized environments designed to meet the specific needs of an organization or service. These spaces empower communities to manage their own data, control access, and create focused analytical solutions. Community Spaces, such as FASTR, leverage established processes, shared services, licenses, tools, and infrastructure provided by OSD’s Advana. FASTR is currently under development to address the data requirements of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Financial Management and Comptroller’s (SAF/FM) users, aiming to serve as an enterprise solution housing the Air Force’s financial management data and analytics.

As the Air Force shifts toward Great Power Competition, the need for financial managers to deliver quality decision support will remain in demand. Air Force financial experts will be called upon to maximize resources and act as a force multiplier for leadership’s priorities. Data analytics is often treated as a catch all solution for decision making. However, the key to effective data analytics is the quality of the data. Financial Analysts are eager for new automations and business intelligence, and what lies beneath this information—the data acquisition, ingestion, and transformation—is often invisible but profoundly impactful. Akin to the foundation of a building, the backend data is the part that supports everything else. Bad data produces erroneous analysis, which in turn leads to misinformed decisions. This is where Data Governance becomes essential; Data Governance is the process by which the Air Force manages the availability, quality, and reliability of its data.

FASTR is a key component of SAF/FM efforts to consolidate the Air Force’s financial data into a governed central location. FASTR aims to bolster confidence in the Air Force’s financial data. This consistency empowers decision makers and facilitates accurate analysis, essential for the Air Force’s mission and adaptation to Great Power Competition. When the Air Force’s innovative and skillful Airmen have access to good data, it enables a deeper understanding of finances, streamlines task efficiency, and leads to fresh insights.

FASTR Vision:

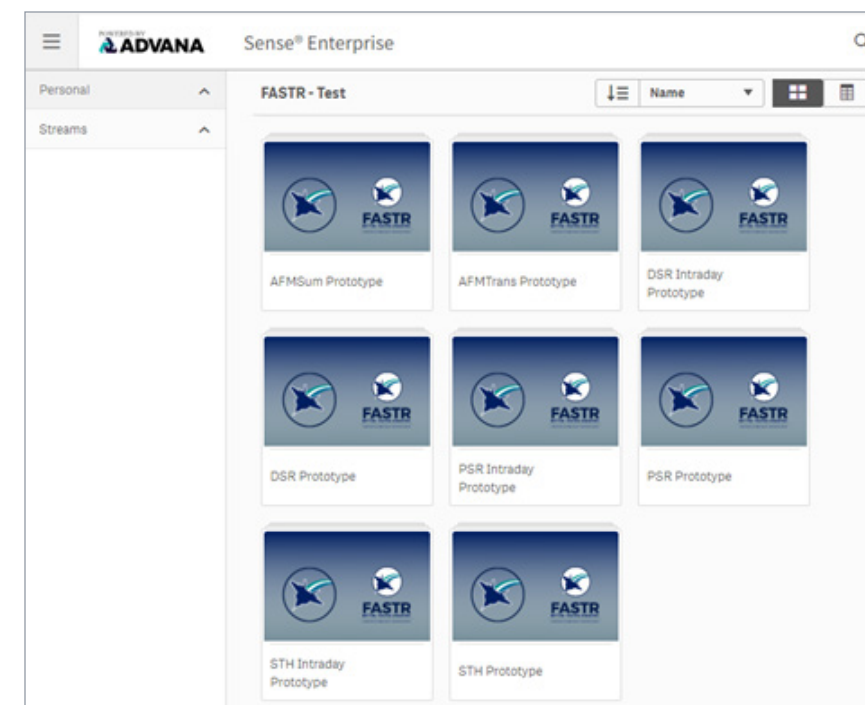
Transform SAF/FM through BETTER fiscally informed decision-making, with FASTER and enhanced mission precision, using SMARTER enterprise data and analytics.

FASTR Mission:

Employ streamlined and automated advanced data analytics through a unified data model for enhancing accountability and delivering rapid and accurate actionable insights to Airmen and Guardians.

FASTR offers users the capability to consume, curate, and discover data across various functional communities. Air Force Finance Leadership will have the authority to govern FM data, develop analytic tools, and consolidate information into a trusted enterprise solution accessible to all Air Force members.

FASTR supports **Goal #2** of the **Department of the Air Force’s Financial Management Strategic Plan: harnessing technology, standardized processes, and data analytics to enhance accountability.** In alignment with the strategic plan, FASTR plays a pivotal role in driving informed decision-making and improving accountability. Over the past few years, the SAF/FMFS Chief Data Office (CDO) has assisted in development of Advana FASTR through the following activities:



FASTR Reports in Testing.

- 2021, SAF/FM selected Advana as its data analytics platform
- 2022, FASTR began acquiring Financial and Financial Feeder Systems to complete Universe of Transaction (UoT) reconciliations by Fiscal Year (FY) 2026
- 2023, FASTR was tasked with integrating the capabilities of the Commanders Resource Integration System (CRIS) into its environment. The replication of CRIS’s reporting capabilities within FASTR is scheduled to be completed in FY 2026

The ongoing effort involves directly acquiring data from the same fifteen systems that feed information to CRIS. Furthermore, FASTR is creating a user-friendly experience that allows analysts to access, filter, export, and interact with Air Force data. FASTR will receive this data with the same frequency as CRIS, ensuring

users have access to current information. To date, FASTR has successfully acquired data for four of the fifteen systems. As a result, SAF/FMFS has developed prototypes of the following legacy reports: Selective Transaction History (STH), Program Summary Record (PSR), Document Summary Record (DSR), Automated Funds Management (AFM), and Enterprise Funds Distribution (EFD) within the Advana FASTR platform. These visualizations enable users to access their financial data in a manner similar to what they receive from CRIS, leveraging a Business Intelligence (BI) tool. With BI applications, users can custom query the data, utilizing a combination of search parameters, filters, and dynamic data selection. Financial managers will also have the ability to download or export their data. The goal is to implement a technology that has the potential to meet current FM needs and support future FM analytic requirements. Users can expect access to production versions of these reports in FY 2026.

Due to its transformative impact, FASTR has garnered the attention of financial managers and distinguished itself from other finance systems. Drawing from my experience as an Education With Industry Fellow at Microsoft from 2022 to 2023, I gained insights into how corporate America leverages data and pioneers industry-leading technology. Our existing financial management systems and data environment are inadequate in providing the enterprise platform required by the Air Force. The data is fragmented and lacks the essential governance to bring consistency out of chaos. Our financial information does not exist in an authoritative Single Source of Truth (SSoT). We have many data sources spread across various systems and platforms that are not integrated together. It requires significant effort to aggregate our data into useful reports, and when accomplished, our reports lack consistency. To effectively leverage new technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Air Force requires an enterprise platform that consolidates its data. Advana and FASTR offer substantial potential to revolutionize Air Force Finance by centralizing our data onto a single platform.

How will FASTR deliver what the Department of the Air Force needs? FASTR's foundation is rooted in a meticulous approach—it is being built from scratch, with a strong emphasis on audit and data governance principles. Addressing our data challenges demands this methodical approach. We require a platform capable of addressing enterprise-level data challenges. While the Air Force has developed valuable tools, dashboards, and processes, it is important to recognize that they were designed to address specific challenges. Our current digital ecosystem was not intended to serve as an enterprise data solution for the Air Force, and it lacks the capability to adapt and address future challenges at the Department of Defense (DoD) level.

The advantage of a DoD-wide platform lies in preventing data silos within services. Advana, with its 55,000 users across 10 community spaces, is on a trajectory to become a DoD enterprise level platform. As professionals in the Financial Management career field, we should care about FASTR because Advana possesses the infrastructure and momentum to transform FASTR into a true one-stop shop for reliable and credible financial data. A SSoT is crucial for the Air Force because it provides an authoritative reference point for all functional areas in Finance. Having a unified and consistent source enables better decision-making, streamlined processes, and improved efficiency across the entire organization.

Our journey toward data excellence continues with FASTR. It will not be all things to all people; there will need to be room for innovation and space for the strengths of current processes to continue to pay dividends to the Air Force. Advana introduces a much-needed platform—one that holds new potential within Air Force Finance and can help unlock the merits of AI. It bridges gaps that previously existed, empowering us to provide better decision support to our leaders and war fighters.

For those interested in learning more about FASTR and staying up-to-date with its progress, follow these links: FASTR (af.mil) or ADVANA | FASTR (data.mil). You can reach out to the product owners Meher (Bob) Dasika, CDO, SAF/FMI and Jaydeep Patel, Data Management Specialist, SAF/FMI. You can also seek out our presentation at the upcoming 2024 American Society of Military Comptrollers (ASMC) Professional Development Institute (PDI).



About the Author:

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THE FM FIELD DATA ANALYTICS STEERING GROUP

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

Goal 1 - Objective 1.1

Goal 2 - Objective 2.2

by Mr. Steven Cox, Ms. Teresa Frank, AFMC, and Col Tammy Culley, ANG

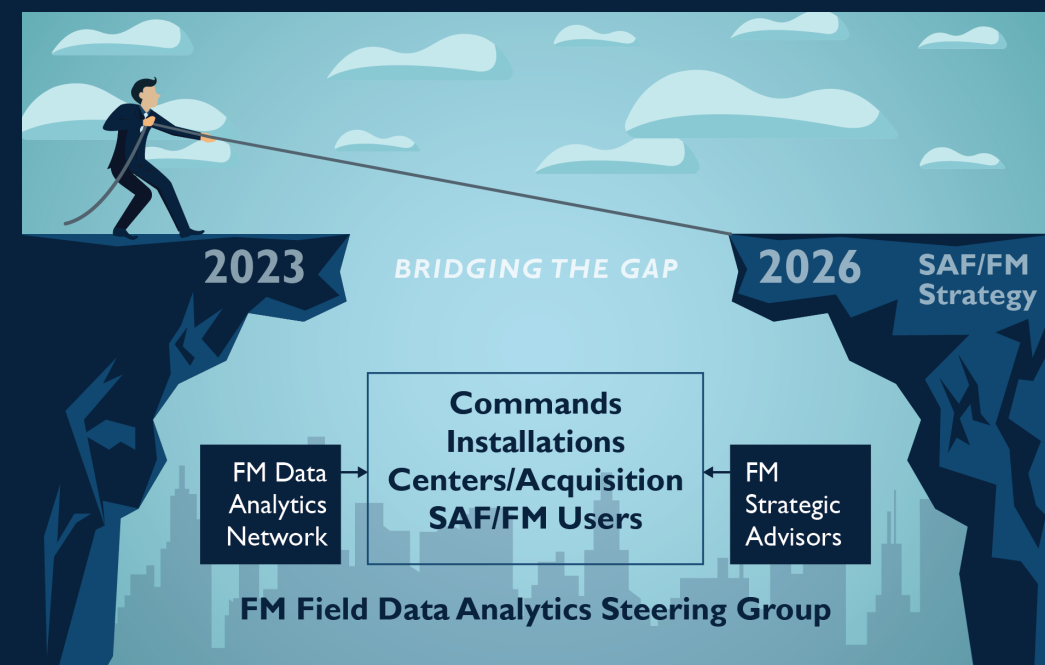
Are YOU Ready?

The pace of innovation across the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Financial Management (FM) community is forever increasing with the goal of enhancing the core analytical capabilities of the DAF/FM enterprise. FM professionals are continually building better tools to automate FM processes, advance our data analytics, and streamline FM operations. At the same time, your Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Financial Management and Comptroller (SAF/FM) team is working with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) OUSD(C) and other functional communities to develop analytical tools that draw from single, authoritative sources to drive accuracy and consistency in our analytical products.

Unfortunately, all this innovation across multiple data analytics efforts creates a standardization challenge across the FM community. When multiple effective, yet unique, analytical tools are developed and implemented within pockets of our FM community, it creates a re-learning challenge for our workforce every time personnel transfers from one FM organization to another. In some cases, our multiple tools also drive re-learning challenges for our customer base, as they're required to utilize different FM tools at each base. These multiple, competing approaches can also drive duplicative spending, as seen when an organization branches out on its own to develop a new analytical capability because

it is unaware of the multiple effective tools already in existence that may very well meet its needs.

Over the years, our SAF/FM Chief Information Officer (CIO) has taken on this challenge; however, the lack of broad representation from across our DAF/FM community has limited the effectiveness of the integration effort. To strengthen the SAF/FM CIO's efforts, the DAF/FM Board of Directors approved the stand-up of a 'Financial Management Field Data Analytics (DA) Steering Group' in October 2023. This steering group is a Total-Force initiative and will include representation across all echelons of our FM workforce, including wing-level, Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center, Centers, Major Commands, Field Commands, and SAF/FM.





This newly established steering group will be the primary advocate for user needs and priorities, responsible for vetting and communicating functional user requirements to appropriate subject matter experts and process owners. The group will also be responsible for capturing, consolidating, and sharing field challenges, as well as evaluating local ideas and solutions for a potential enterprise-wide application. For example, one of the challenges the field identified was navigating the vast number of data analytics training opportunities. This group would assess opportunities, work with existing organizations, and focus on training that is most relevant to advancing our FM data analytics efforts from a field perspective.

The FM Field DA Steering Group held its kick-off meeting in early April. In addition to simply establishing a well-connected set of data analytics voices/advocates across the DAF/FM community, the steering group established the following priorities for FY24:

- Facilitate the flow of data analytics information and activities to create an FM community that is better informed and supportive of DAF/FM's strategic efforts
- Evaluate selected analytic tools and training already in existence across our community that may be candidates for enterprise-wide solutions

But to really assess the value of the new steering group, we must begin putting it to the test against actual analytical tools and efforts. In that light, the steering group has selected the 'ACC Dashboard' as a use-case to test their initial concepts and to provide a contextual framework to assess whether the approach is easily applied and understood. While certainly not the only existing analytical tool that could have served as the initial pilot, the ACC Dashboard gives the steering group a proven tool to evaluate across a broad set of Command needs.

Utilizing the extensive network of analysts brought together by the steering group, they can test the tool's capabilities against varying sets of requirements and perspectives. Ultimately, the evaluation of the ACC Dashboard will lead to a recommendation from the steering group to the appropriate decision authority on whether to include the solution as part of a core, standardized set of solutions for the DAF/FM enterprise. While the steering group is focused on a tool for the initial use case, the scope for subsequent initiatives is wide open (e.g., training, tools, or data).

Raise YOUR Voice

With this broad representation, the FM Field DA Steering Group will be the voice of the user community, raising awareness and understanding of the current and future state with respect to data analytics for the FM enterprise.

By serving as a bridge between the FM Strategic Advisors / Objective Champions and the FM data analytics network, this steering group will also better align user needs and requirements with **people, processes, data, technology, and training**...to better connect users, while ensuring we're all "rowing" in the same direction.

Ultimately, the new steering group is intended to enhance, not replace, the current governance processes serving our data analytics and tool standardization efforts. By capturing perspectives and voices from across the broader community of DAF/FM stakeholders, the steering group has three primary objectives: Translation, Integration, and Focus of DAF/FM's data analytics efforts. The steering group will accomplish its objectives by facilitating the flow of field feedback to and from objective champions, focusing on integration of data analytics (e.g., people, process, data, technology; FM core functions; various echelons), strengthening data analytics integration across strategic objectives, and fostering an FM culture shift to enable change management. They're also taking on a critical role in outreach to the DAF/FM community to better connect stakeholders with the priorities and standard solutions available to meet our data analytics challenges.

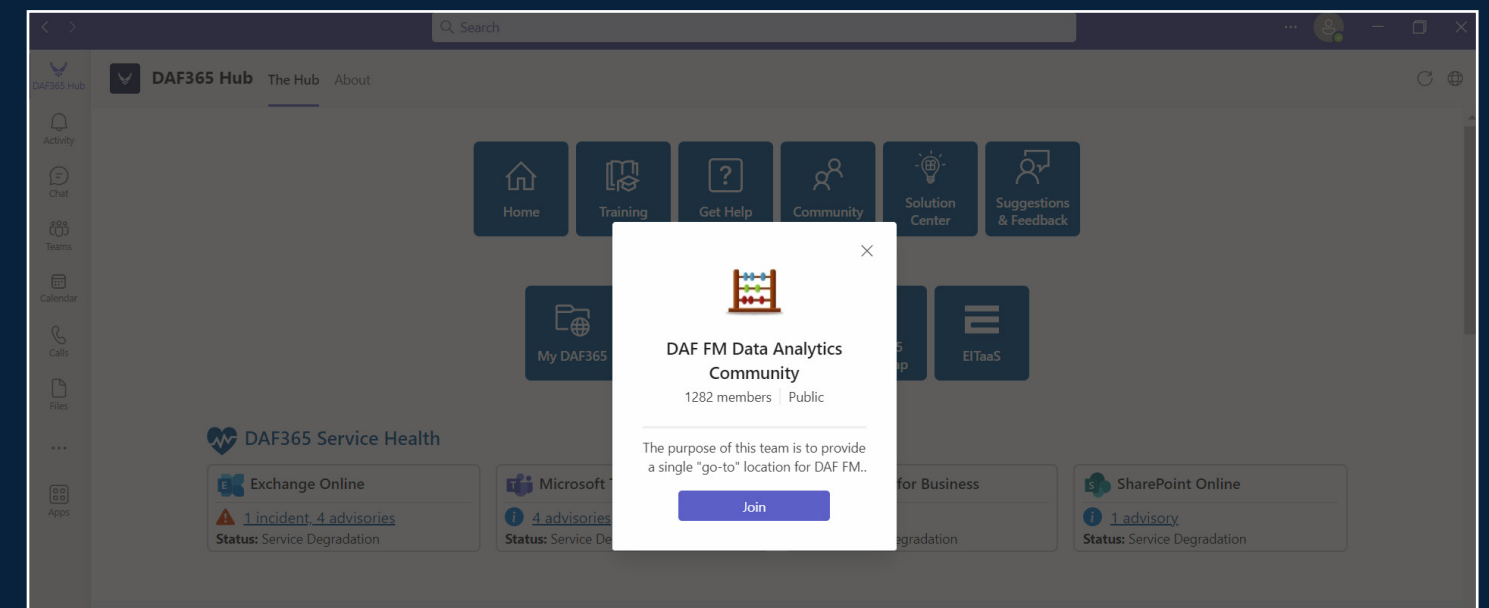
Connect and Get Involved

In addition to enhancing the identification, evaluation, and recommendations of analytical solutions, the FM Field Data Analytics Steering Group will also serve as a centerpiece for communicating data analytics capabilities, priorities, and solutions to the broader FM community. To support that goal, the group established a [DAF FM Data Analytics Online Community Space](#) on Teams, which serves as a virtual space for collaboration. This space is a central location for FM professionals to openly ask questions and seek information/guidance regarding our data analytics efforts. It also serves as a mechanism for the steering group to share information across the enterprise. The Teams space also presents the opportunity for the creation of sub-channels within the space to focus on unique or organizational specific issues.

FM's Data Analytics Network will support the Data Analytics Online Community Space. Made up of FM experts who possess a deeper understanding of the analytical processes and tools, this network will facilitate a hub-and-spokes

approach to achieve the broader communication effort, assisting with the translation of data analytics efforts up, down, and across the FM community. Expected to expand as awareness grows, DA Network representatives will be our central points for policy, training, and general DA support. They will serve as key change agents as we shift our FM culture.

While the FM Field DA Steering Group creation is an important initiative to enhance our data analytics development and implementation, it is only one piece of the broader effort. Achievement of the steering group's vision is dependent on the engagement of the FM community, expanded communication of analytical efforts/tools, and successful integration into the existing structures around data analytics development and governance. This process will take the full commitment of us all ---but the collective gain we can achieve for the DAF FM community is definitely worth it and starts with YOU. We look forward to working together with all of you to further FM's analytical capabilities!



DAF FM Data Analytics Online Community Space on Teams.

About the Authors:

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THE PAYDAY DASHBOARD

Goal 2 - Objective 2.2

Goal 3 - Objective 3.2 and 3.3

by MSgt Alex Westing and 2d Lt Matthew Marks, USAFE

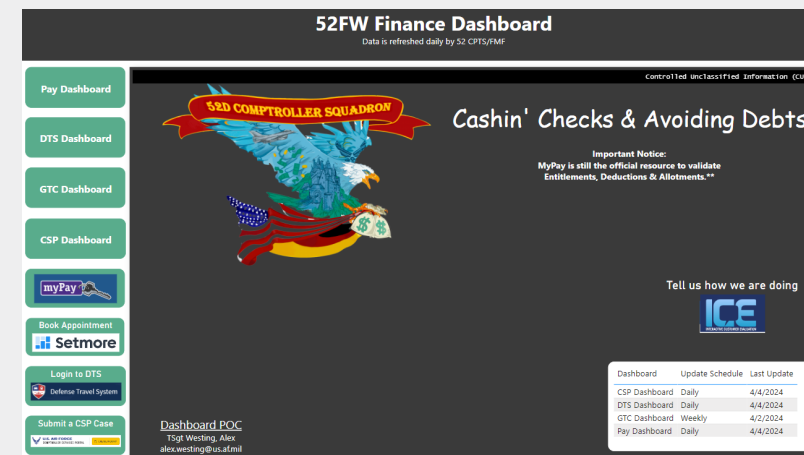
In the fast-paced world of military operations, financial clarity and security are not just conveniences; they are necessities. For Airmen, managing their finances with ease and confidence is crucial. This is where the innovative PayDay dashboard comes into play, revolutionizing the way Airmen interact with their financial data.

For too long, military members have grappled with the complexities of countless systems and hard-to-read Leave and Earning Statements (LES). The lack of transparency and ensuing confusion have left many with more questions than answers. It's a challenge that has persisted, until today. In an era where information is paramount, the new PayDay dashboard emerges as a beacon of innovation. It's a one-stop-shop platform that provides on-demand access to a consolidated, real-time view of all pay, entitlements, travel vouchers, and Government Travel Card transactions. This tool is not just a technical achievement, it is a commitment to real-time transparency and empowerment.

With PayDay, Airmen can finally put to rest any concerns about the accuracy of their pay. This innovative tool ensures that financial updates are not only fast and accurate, but also empower Airmen to plan their future paychecks with confidence. Featuring a user-friendly dashboard, PayDay offers a comprehensive overview of financial data, all within a single, intuitive interface. Airmen can easily access detailed information about their entitlements and monitor potential pay discrepancies through clear status indicators. What sets this dashboard apart is its simplicity, presenting all entitlements, deductions, and allotments in an easily navigable format. Airmen now have the convenience of cross-referencing their LES with projected future paychecks. With access to 51 dynamic data points,

Airmen can meticulously validate components such as Basic Allowance for Housing, Cost of Living Allowances, and Base Pay, empowering them to make informed decisions that directly impact their families. Moreover, PayDay provides a detailed breakdown of Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions, including details on enrollment in the blended retirement system and the corresponding TSP matching amount. Additionally, it highlights deployed entitlements such as combat zone tax exclusion and hostile fire pay, ensuring that members receive their entitled benefits accurately and promptly. In the realm of financial management, early detection is key to avoiding indebtedness. PayDay enables Airmen to promptly identify any outstanding debts, providing detailed explanations for each, thereby equipping them with the tools to address financial challenges proactively. This birds-eye view of their finances is invaluable for Airmen, empowering them to identify and rectify any discrepancies in payments, giving them the confidence and clarity needed to take control of their financial well-being.

In addition to PayDay, at Spangdahlem Air Base, we've developed a robust Government Travel Card management program that seamlessly integrates with the dashboard. This groundbreaking initiative empowers commanders to access vital financial data within their units, fostering improved oversight and decision-making. By integrating PayDay with the Government Travel Card program and addressing outstanding Defense Travel System (DTS) travel vouchers, commanders are better equipped to manage their unit's readiness and financial well-being effectively. The dashboard serves as a central hub, enabling Agency Program Coordinators to swiftly navigate their hierarchy and identify members with delinquencies, streamlining administrative processes. In just two weeks, our analysis of over 4.5K



PayDay Dashboard Homepage.

accounts has resulted in an impressive 81% reduction in delinquencies, underscoring the efficacy of these initiatives. This proactive approach has positioned the 52nd Fighter Wing to earn an additional \$1M in rebates, showcasing the tangible benefits of our integrated systems and proactive management strategies.

Historically, the Defense Travel System's complex routing process has frustrated users and led to dissatisfaction with local base finance offices. However, PayDay revolutionizes this experience by seamlessly integrating the live status of authorizations and vouchers. Within the dashboard, users can easily track their progress, identify the current and upcoming routing steps, review amounts, and confirm travel dates through a comprehensive data chart. Airmen benefit from dedicated status indicators, allowing them to swiftly reconcile their vouchers, with detailed explanations provided for over 27 common reasons for DTS voucher rejection.

Our product is poised for enterprise adaptation, with plans to eventually replace the LES. While there are numerous features to integrate, three stand out: the Leave Dashboard, Historical Data, and a Regulation Repository. The most intricate of these upcoming features is the historical data subsection, offering a month-by-month breakdown of all finance-related activities. This feature provides users with a detailed record of each transaction affecting their pay within a given month. The regulation repository feature will provide users with quick access to regulatory guidance on pay issues, minimizing reliance on subjective interpretations. Finally, the Leave Dashboard, inspired by LeaveWeb, is being seamlessly integrated into PayDay, offering users a comprehensive approach to viewing their leave alongside their financial information.

We all know that the security of our financial data is paramount, and PayDay has been built with this in mind. The implementation of Row Level Security (RLS) is a critical component that ensures data privacy and protection. By linking access to the individual's official e-mail address, PayDay guarantees that only authorized users can view their financial information, thereby preventing any unauthorized access.

When developing this tool, it was immediately identified that there needed to be a balance between transparency and security. The goal was to give Airmen as much access as possible to their pay data. To accomplish this, we needed to implement RLS. This was a challenge at first because an identifier was needed to relate users across dozens of reports involving pay data. After a few weeks of trial-and-error, the RLS was effectively implemented, identifying users by their official e-mail address. When a user enters PayDay, they are automatically brought to just their data. With RLS, there is no ability for a user to see someone else's pay data.

In conclusion, PayDay is a shining example of how technology can be harnessed to serve the needs of our service members. It addresses the critical need for financial transparency and security, providing Airmen with the tools they need to succeed. As the Air Force moves forward, PayDay will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in shaping the future of military finance, ensuring that our Airmen have the support they need to thrive both in service and in life. Every day is PayDay!

Currently, PayDay is only available for Active Duty Military in the Department of the Air Force, and is not the official source of Entitlements, Deductions & Allotments. Please review your official pay system.

About the Authors:

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TACTICAL INNOVATION TO SERVE THE DAF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Goal 2 - Objective 2.2 and 2.3

by Capt Jimmy Manuel and Maj Kevin Dwyer, AETC

Today's Department of the Air Force (DAF) Financial Managers (FMers) are positioned to be a critical strategic enabler to meet tomorrow's Air Force and Space Force needs. We can deliver value through accurate and timely information to our leaders and supporting customers, beginning at the base level. Currently, most of our digital tools are developed or "homegrown" by each base to fill critical gaps in our current FM systems to organize and execute their daily missions. The DAF Financial Management (FM) Strategic Plan calls us to standardize and support our digital tools to reduce non-value-added complexity and reach optimal performance. At the Resource Training Center (RTC), we are working shoulder to shoulder with FMers in the field to do just this. However, there is one important question that we must ask of our FM career field if we are to achieve enduring success, one very important missing piece...how do we standardize across the FM enterprise in a cohesive and long-lasting way?

We adopt technology governance to primarily focus on the **sustainment** of digital tools. In other words, establish an organization, or Center of Excellence (CoE), dedicated to maintaining and improving all tools which are used in Comptroller Squadron operations to fill the critical gaps from FM systems. Without a fulltime sustainment team, the portfolio of innovative tools will either break, become obsolete, or only be used by a few squadrons. Without a digital sustainment plan, the foundation for FM to digitally transform and measure progression will be swept away, returning squadrons to the technological starting line. This article walks through what it takes to create and develop innovative tools, and it will explore the need for FM to implement a dedicated team to sustain these tools based on the software development process coined "DevOps".

What is Digital Innovation?

Digital innovation is the strategic practice of implementing modern technology to solve business problems. This is enabled by a deep understanding of the technical aspects of business operations and the capabilities of modern technology. Business operations improvements typically result in increased efficiency and a reduction in production costs. Whereas if technology improves, the capabilities of "X", "Y", or "Z" hardware/software shift the frontier of what is possible. As the frontier expands, the strategic question becomes whether the business is adapting or modernizing quickly enough to keep up with the shift. The key here is understanding the capabilities provided by different technologies and then applying that knowledge to your business to design digital solutions. To be clear, financial managers are not creating new coding languages or developing new hardware akin to what comes out of Silicon Valley. Rather, if one understands both camps they can act as an architect or project-lead to design scalable, innovative solutions.

An even more important question is whether the technology is available on the DAF network. As technology boundaries continue to expand and improve on the DAF network, a new realm of possibility becomes available for FM Airmen and Guardians to build solutions that solve their use cases. Truly, developing innovative solutions requires abundant education and work experience. For instance, it takes thousands of hours to develop the necessary business and technological skills to frame, design, and create a minimally viable product or prototype. In fact, according to Malcolm Gladwell in his renowned book *Outliers*, he claims that 10,000 hours of practice is required to master a skill. If we acknowledge this critical barrier to entry and apply it to developing new digital tools, the pool of candidates becomes very small, very quickly.

Yet, ironically, as a career field we have no problem creating digital tools. For example, FM Airmen are using Microsoft Power Platform technologies and other data platforms (i.e., COGNOS) to build bespoke reporting solutions. There are Airmen at many bases who have already mastered the business and technology concepts necessary to develop solutions that benefit their individual squadrons. These solutions can change how FM does business in the future as an enterprise, and one could argue that this shift has already started. Take some of the Resource Training Center (RTC) innovations for example, whose staff only has base level experience:

Practical Squadron Solutions	Strategic Impact	Technologies	DAF FM Strategic Plan (Objective/ Outcome)
DTS/FAMS Bot	Solved a 10-year DAF material weakness, ensures DTS matches appointed/approved permissions in FAMS.	RPA	Objective 2.2: Manual processes eliminated through use of automation, standard tools and Robotic Process Automation.
FMF Critical Task List	First FMF enterprise-wide reporting solution with user inputs for daily technician work. Uses multiple technologies to create a new architecture.	Excel (VBA + Macros), PowerBI, Coud, RPA, SharePoint	Objective 2.2: Manual processes eliminated through use of automation, standard tools and Robotic Process Automation.
GPC Log	Standardizes the financial reporting of the GPC Log with automatic calculations and built in error handling. Combat significant cause of fallout or lost purchasing power. A proactive management tool in execution year.	Advanced Formulas (Future- PowerBI, SharePoint)	Objective 3.1: Enterprise-wide standardization of budget and decision-support processes and tools.
Product Search Screen	Tailored FM "search engine" to standardize the self-search training experience. Leverage over 32K metatags to refine your search.	Power Apps, SharePoint, Metadata	Objective 1.1: Relevant Training and competency development.
Commander Access Guide Tool	Codifying the QA rules to significantly increase compliance with FIAR standards. Automates the extraction of data from 11 systems, transforming raw, disjointed data into contextualised reports for CC decision support.	Excel (VBA + Macros)	Objective 2.2: Manual processes eliminated through use of automation, standard tools and Robotic Process Automation.

Each of the RTC innovations listed above requires some level of technological sustainment to ensure the tool refreshes with the latest data, stays compliant with the policies, and realizes incremental improvements and features from end-users. Furthermore, each tool uses different and/or multiple technologies to deliver value. This sustainment model requires the RTC to work with multiple organizations, primarily Digital Management Automation System (DMAS), Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center, and other subject matter experts, to ensure an ad hoc sustainment team is loosely in place to keep the solutions viable for squadrons to use in daily operations.

What happens to these digital solutions if the teams stop sustaining them? Does each squadron have a person who understands the business and technological capabilities of FM to sustain and fix any problems that arise? Does each base have the knowledge, skills, and bandwidth to support tool maintenance and repair? What happens when that Airmen PCS's or retires? The mission doesn't stop, but the digital tools that squadrons rely upon are now broken without a dedicated sustainment team. Each squadron will have to figure out how to deal with this impact to mitigate the risks to their mission. Finally, and perhaps the most significant negative impact, the squadron returns to the technology starting line. Understanding how to solve the sustainment problem requires us to look at a software development process called DevOps.



Applying DevOps Principles to FM

According to IBM, “DevOps outlines a software development process and an organizational culture shift that speeds the delivery of higher quality software by automating and integrating the efforts of development and IT operations teams – two groups that traditionally practiced separately from each other, or in silos.” Let’s break this down further. “Dev” stands for Development and “Ops” stands for IT Operations. Each team performs different functions to deliver successful software to clients, but they share the same goals, ownership, and value streams. The Dev team is responsible for developing or creating the software from scratch based on customer requirements. Once the Dev team delivers a final product, they hand off the digital solution (software) to the Ops team who is then responsible for sustaining the solution. They ensure it is 100% ready (no bugs or broken) for customers to use. This is the general concept of operations that tech companies follow to deliver products to the market.

So, how should we apply DevOps principles to the FM career field to achieve the second goal of the FM strategic plan: Harness Technology, Standardized Processes and Data Analytics to Enhance Accountability? We must assess who in the career field is best equipped to perform each function of DevOps functions. The goal is to create the best digital tools and scale them up to work for all Comptroller Squadrons in executing their daily missions.

In summary, the enterprise can harness multiple technologies and digital tools by crowdsourcing the Dev from Airmen in the Comptroller Squadrons, and then centralizing the Ops with a dedicated sustainment team. This would unleash the power of Airmen to explore, test, and tinker with different technologies to develop digital tools to solve their use cases. Establishing a multi-discipline technology and business sustainment team would enable the proliferation of standardized digital tools and business practices. Finally, this DevOps model would also enable standardized training on the portfolio of sustained tools while creating the foundation to quickly iterate on delivering future improvements or emerging needs.

The Role of Governance in Innovation and Technology for Comptroller Squadrons

The strategic question is where to apply governance to maximize the development of digital solutions so that Comptroller Squadrons naturally adopt and use them in their daily operations. The FM enterprise has talented individuals who are already developing innovative solutions and tools. So, what is missing to implement this great progress and digital transformation throughout the enterprise? Governance that establishes an enterprise commitment to sustaining these tools.

The focus should be less concerned with what digital solutions are being created. Do not restrict Airmen working to solve operational problems through digital innovation. We do not need more red tape or bureaucracy. Instead, governance should focus on determining the next steps when a new digital innovation is created: how do we scale the solution for all squadrons from a technological standpoint, who and which team(s) to assign sustainment management, whether the solution replaces anything already in the portfolio or is an opportunity to improve an existing feature, and how does it impact squadron operations or a customer’s experience with FM?

Governance should focus on the ownership and procedures of sustaining the portfolio of digital tools. Without sustainment there is no way to implement standardized digital tools across the enterprise. An “Ops” team that successfully sustains the tools, keeping tool uptime and availability to 95% or greater sends the strategic signal to squadrons and leadership that these tools can be trusted and counted upon for their Airmen to use. A centralized

sustainment team reorganizes the operating model to align policy, procedures, and training with operations and mission execution. This operating model only works if squadrons naturally adopt these tools and are not forced. Day-to-day squadron operations require these tools to be available and work 99% of the time to ensure they can conduct their business. If the tools are “buggy”, inconsistently available, or do not meet their requirements, they cannot execute their tasks and mission.

Proposal

Why are we innovating and developing new tools if we do not have an enterprise plan to sustain them? Cool, you made something great and your squadron uses it daily. Now what? What happens when that green suiter moves? Or when that cornerstone civilian retires or takes a new job? Will the tool live on and continue to be used in squadron operations? We need a fully dedicated financial management sustainment team that is inherently governmental with the right technology skills and FM business acumen. Developing the right team with the right skills will be difficult and may require unordinary methods.

The Dev teams are the Airmen in the Comptroller Squadrons and are the closest to the tactical and technical problems of the career field. It is important to understand the reason why Airmen are creating solutions and tools at their squadron level. Simply put, there are known gaps in our FM systems, and this work is needed to execute the mission. Airmen are creating tools to fill these gaps or disconnects between our systems and daily operations. They understand FM business from a very different lens and are the perfect candidates to solicit use cases and define requirements to build digital tools.

The RTC has a long track record of developing and creating solutions for Comptroller Squadrons. What these innovations are really doing, are changing the effectiveness and efficiency of squadron work. In other words, the new tools are expanding the frontiers of what is possible to accomplish within a normal workweek. This is how RTC executes tactical innovation to serve the strategic FM plan. If FM commits to a dedicated sustainment team, we will discover a newfound ability to measure digital transformation progress to include making work better for all 70+ Comptroller Squadrons. I believe the RTC should focus its efforts on the development functions of innovative digital solutions. Our Education With Industry (EWI) experience and 45+ years of Comptroller Squadron experience give us a significant advantage to internally develop solutions and tools that squadrons want to adopt.

Conversely, the Ops team must be a multi-disciplined team solely dedicated to sustaining the portfolio of digital tools. Sustainment cannot be an additional duty. The team must understand not only the FM business from the squadron

point of view, but also have the technology skills to change the tools directly. The portfolio of innovative solutions will use multiple technologies, so the team must have a well-rounded mastery of many technology skills. Additionally, the team must have a mechanism to collect feedback throughout the entire DevOps lifecycle to ensure all end-user requirements are met to deliver a tool that is desired for use in daily squadron operations. I believe adding the sustainment mission to the RTC would consume all our bandwidth to continue pushing the innovation and technology boundaries. Therefore, I would propose an effort to stand up a unit whose only mission is to sustain the portfolio of digital tools that Comptroller Squadrons could use.

Governance should focus on the ownership and procedures of sustaining the portfolio of digital tools. Without sustainment there is no way to implement standardized digital tools across the enterprise. An “Ops” team that successfully sustains the tools, keeping tool uptime and availability to 95% or greater sends the strategic signal to squadrons and leadership that these tools can be trusted and counted upon for their Airmen to use. A centralized sustainment team reorganizes the operating model to align policy, procedures, and training with operations and mission execution. This operating model works with squadrons naturally adopting these tools (not forced) because they truly work. Day-to-day squadron operations require these tools to be available and work with a high degree of confidence to ensure they can conduct their business every time. If the tools are “buggy”, inconsistently available, or do not meet their requirements, they cannot execute their tasks and mission, the confidence in the tool is degraded and naturally, the Airmen will stop using them.

The important point to make is not that my proposal is the only way to secure Airmen’s technological advancements but rather to start the conversation on how to build on our hard-won successes, making them enduring by starting the DevOps model to ensure we provide the Airmen the best tools to support Airmen.

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RECODING AMERICA: WHY GOVERNMENT IS FAILING IN THE DIGITAL AGE AND HOW WE CAN DO BETTER

by Jennifer Pahlka: reviewed by CMSgt David Graham, AFMC

A few months ago, my previous commander, Maj Joe Regan, shot me a text recommending I read *Recoding America: Why Government Is Failing in the Digital Age and How We Can Do Better* by Jennifer Pahlka. Two days later, General Duke Richardson, AFMC/CC, suggested the HQ staff read the same book. Then, Honorable Jones made the same recommendation to our FM leaders at a Financial Management Executive Session. Given these major endorsements, I of course took the time to read the book and am very glad that I did!

Jennifer Pahlka presents an easy-to-follow set of short stories in her book *Recoding America* by exploring technology and human nature, offering a fresh perspective on how leaders can navigate the challenges of leveraging digital technology. In this thought-provoking book, Pahlka digs into the impact of technology on our daily lives and presents a roadmap for the future, emphasizing the need to strike a balance between human values, natural tendencies, and technological advancement.

Recoding America is structured around the central theme of recoding but does not dive into the technical details of computer programming. Instead, Pahlka argues that we must reevaluate our approach to technology and redefine our relationships with people and technology. By examining the consequences of rapid technological development, she carefully explores the necessity for a humanistic approach to leveraging digital technologies while safeguarding our values and preserving our humanity.



The book referenced several governmental programs and procedures that reminded me of the struggles many of us see as Financial Managers; subsequently driving thought toward areas for improvement. Our Air Force has always been at the forefront of technological innovation with the systematic use of data analytics and digital material management. However, Pahlka offers complementary perspectives on leveraging digital skills while remembering that our customers are people and that humans are more important than hardware. Some themes from the book include:

Technical Innovation	Data-Driven Decision Making	Ethical and Responsible Spending	Cost Reduction Through Streamlining	Human Expertise and Oversight
Embracing technology when preparing financial software, data analytics, automation, budgeting, financial reporting, and auditing processes can administratively reduce overhead, minimize errors, and allocate resources more effectively. However, we must remember the humanistic aspects of our users and customers. Technology should add value, not create additional burden.	Financial Management can harness the power of data analytics to gain insights into customer concerns and spending patterns, help identify cost-saving opportunities, and optimize budget allocation. The ability to easily discern the story behind data, and quickly provide sound decision support to commanders and customers is what makes using data valuable.	The book underscores the ethical considerations of technological decisions through transparency and accountability. By maintaining high ethical conduct, fiscal responsibility standards, and auditability, we can build trust with customers and taxpayers, demonstrating that our practices align with public values and Congressional intent.	Pahlka encourages continuous reevaluation of practices, to identify areas where costs and redundancies can be cut or eliminated. For example, we must replace outdated manual processes with more efficient, intuitive, and easy-to-understand automated systems to save time and money so our Air Force can best meet warfighter needs.	The book also suggests maintaining the critical balance between technology, human skills, and culture. While embracing technology, we must continue to invest in the training and development of our personnel. Experienced and valued financial professionals are crucial in ensuring the technology is effective and that financial decisions align with strategic goals.

Jennifer Pahlka's *Recoding America* is an insightful book that will drive every Financial Manager to relook at our existing processes and encourage the action we need to meet the expectations our customers deserve. I am confident that, like me, each reader will immediately find themselves in the center of each short story of this book and find inspiration to impact the changes our Air Force needs. The success of our Air Force will continue to demand leaps in data and technology, but these concepts must be balanced with the ideas of people, processes, and culture to meet the effectiveness our nation demands.

About the Author:

Chief David Graham is the Chief Enlisted Manager for HQ AFMC FM located at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio.



FROM THE DESK OF MS. VANESSA SIMS, SES, SAF/FMB



Greetings from Washington! It is an exciting time to be a part of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and a Financial Manager (FMer). Why? Because both the Department and Financial Management (FM) are laser-focused on the strategic change necessary to, “reoptimize for Great Power Competition” and to fulfill the DAF/FM mission to, “provide fiscally responsible resource management, auditable and timely financial services, and actionable decision support to deliver air and space capabilities for our nation.” If there is one thing I know from serving alongside FMers for the past 21 years, it is that they are excellent at leading the way in innovation and strategic change. To that end, I am incredibly proud of the work that the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Financial Management and Comptroller, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget (SAF/FMB) is doing to champion Objective 3.1 of the FM strategic plan:

Objective 3.1	Desired Outcomes	
Build Defendable Budgets, Reduce Execution Variances, and Drive Standardization	Optimized utilization of budget resources to meet mission demands	Modernized budget formulation tools and improved justification book
	Enhanced Congressional awareness of DAF requirements and DAF understanding of Congressional perspectives	Enterprise-wide standardization of budget and decision-support processes and tools

Since the inception of the FM strategic plan, the SAF/FMB team, with the incredible support of surrounding communities, has made considerable progress in accomplishing the milestones necessary to obtain the Objective 3.1 goals, designed to improve defensible budgets, reduce execution variances, and drive standardization of budget processes and mechanisms. In a little under a year, we have completed 34% of our goals for the five-year plan. We put **data in the driver's seat** when we developed automated military pay reconciliation processes, Air Force forensic analysis tools to combat canceling year funds, and tools to track Silver Flag training, completed analysis for indirect cost structures and new missions for Space supporting functions, and rolled out virtual contingency training.

In 2024, we will double down on our progress for Objective 3.1, and I encourage you to read the FM strategic plan and get involved... this is your FM of the future! Over the remainder of this year, we will focus on our 2024 goals in three fundamental areas: Canceling Funds, Budget Process Improvement, and Standardization of Budget Tools and Processes. First, our canceling funds team has been hard at work and, by the end of August, will have completed three Rapid Improvement Events (RIEs)—MOCAS contracts, Non-MOCAS contracts, and MIPRs (Direct Buyer Side)—examining root causes of canceling year funds and establishing plans of action ensuring we optimize DAF resources. The MORDS RIE is still in the planning stages with completion date to be determined.

Second, our budget process improvement team is making significant progress in working through each of the four

main budget formulation processes: POM, BES, PBD/PDM, and PB. To simplify the effort, the team is looking at these processes within a single appropriation, starting with O&M, expecting that lessons learned in one appropriation will eliminate the learning curve on subsequent appropriations. The team is currently working through identification of enhancements to increase accuracy and efficiency in generating O&M budget products. One of the ancillary benefits we're seeing from this work is the breaking down of silos, internally and externally, to FMB. We're hearing what's frustrating our budget analysts, gaining insights from partner communities (e.g. A8), and listening to what improvements we need to focus on to build the strongest budget formulation products. As this effort progresses, we will continue to update the FM community on the progress and planned process changes.

Finally, to standardize our budget tools and to continue **reoptimizing the FM mission with data analytics**, we will be concentrating on the further development of the Financial Air and Space Team Resources (FASTR) community space, designated to implement a single enterprise data management, governance, and analytical solution. The FASTR community space work this year will continue developing applications and dashboards for nine analytical areas using over 15 data sources within Advana for the O&M, Procurement, and RDT&E appropriations.

The work will establish the business rules, reports, and applications to be produced in FASTR, and we look forward to streamlining data analytics within FM. Rolling reports and application delivery are slated to begin in May of 2024 with Budget reports and then expand through the summer.

As you work to transform FM and fulfill the mission of delivering air and space capabilities for our nation, I encourage you to stay well-versed in the strategic direction the DAF is heading so that we deliver on target. By now, I hope you have heard of and studied the Operational Imperatives (OIs) designated to fill key capability gaps the DAF needs, to deter conflict and project power against our pacing challenge. The global landscape is more complex than ever, and the United States is facing a time of significant shift in the strategic environment. To prepare our USAF and USSF for this landscape, the DAF is also Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition. This effort aims to address our current force and how we stay competitive. As we reoptimize to ensure we have the best United States Air and Space Forces we have ever had, please acquaint yourself with these concepts so that your work continues to move us in the right direction. Change requires teamwork and collaboration, and I have full confidence our FM community will embrace it and lead the way.

Keep leading the way...thank you for your professionalism, dedication, and excellence in serving our nation!

Where to Learn More:

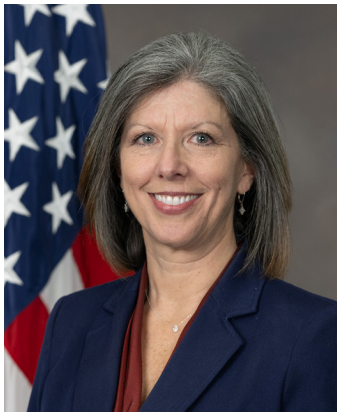
- FM Strategic Plan: <https://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/About-Us/FM-Strategic-Plan/>
- Operational Imperatives: https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2023SAF/OPERATIONAL_IMPARITIVES_INFOGRAPHIC.pdf
- Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition: <https://www.af.mil/reoptimization-for-great-power-competition/>

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Ms. Vanessa Sims is the Department of the Air Force Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget located at the Pentagon, Washington D.C.



Financial Management & Comptroller FISCAL YEAR 2023 AWARDS



The Robert D. Stuart Award for Excellence in Financial Management

Ms. Teresa L. Frank
HQ AFMC/FMC
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, OH (AFMC)



The James E. Short Award Outstanding Contribution to Mentorship and Career Development

Ms. Teresa R. Bickett
SAF/FMB
Pentagon, Washington (SAF)



The Major General Frank R. Faykes Financial Management and Comptroller of the Year

Major Christopher L. O'Dell
81 CPTS
Keesler Air Force Base, MS (AETC)



The Chief Master Sergeant Larry P. Gonzales Superintendent of the Year

SMSgt Lynnette N. Banks
375 CPTS/FMD
Scott AFB, IL (AMC)



The Excellence in Cost Analysis Award

Mr. Carlos F. Zerpa
SAF/FMCS (AFCAA)
Pentagon, Washington (SAF)



Financial Management Officer of the Year

Captain Alyssa C. Loss
48th Comptroller Squadron/FMA
RAF Lakenheath, AE (USAFE)



Financial Management Civilian of the Year (GS-09 and above)

Ms. Tara L. Kammerer
28 CPTS/FMA
Ellsworth Air Force Base, SD (AFGSC)



Financial Management Civilian of the Year (GS-08 and below)

Mr. Dale T. Black
11 CPTS/FMA
Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, Washington (AFDW)



Financial Management Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year

Master Sergeant Nickolas B. Fisher
502 CPTS/FM
JBSA Lackland, TX (AETC)



Financial Management Noncommissioned Officer of the Year

Staff Sergeant Kayla L. Ludwigsen
39 CPTS/FMA
Incirlik Air Force Base, AE (USAFE)



FY2023 AWARD RECIPIENTS



Financial Management
Airman of the Year



Acquisition
Cost Analyst
of the Year

Senior Airman Destiny R. Story

502 CPTS/FMF
Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, TX (AETC)

Mr. Shenendoah Hoefflerle

SAF/FMCY
Pentagon, Washington (SAF)



Non-Acquisition
Cost Analyst of the Year



Outstanding
Contribution
to Financial
Management and
Comptroller -
Officer
(MAJCOM/FOA/
DRU Level)

Mr. Evan J. Mallard

AFIMSC/FMC
San Antonio, TX (AFMC)

Lieutenant Colonel Luke M. Kaspari

ACC/FM
Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA (ACC)



Outstanding
Contribution
to Financial
Management and
Comptroller -
Enlisted
(MAJCOM/FOA/
DRU Level)



Outstanding
Contribution
to Financial
Management and
Comptroller -
Civilian
(MAJCOM/FOA/
DRU Level)

Master Sergeant Kon W. Lee

AFPC/DPMLA
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, TX (AFPC)

Ms. Tia L. Maldonado

HQ AFDW/FM
Joint Base Andrews, MD (AFDW)

FY2023 AWARD RECIPIENTS



Outstanding
Contribution
to Financial
Management and
Comptroller -
Officer
(SAF/AFCAA/Air
Staff Level)



Outstanding
Contribution
to Financial
Management and
Comptroller -
Civilian
(SAF/AFCAA/Air
Staff Level)

Major Tiffanie L. Katz

SAF/FMBP
Pentagon, Washington (SAF)

Ms. Kara L. Fast

SAF/FMB
Pentagon, Washington (SAF)



Resource Advisor
of the Year -
MAJCOM/FOA/
DRU Level



Resource Advisor
of the Year -
Installation Level

Ms. Pamela F. Sutton

ACC/IASF
Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA (ACC)

Staff Sergeant Madison L. Lemaire

88 CPTS/FMF
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, OH (AFMC)



Educator
of the Year



Author
of the Year

Major Kevin M. Dwyer

Ira C. Eaker Center for Leadership Development
Maxwell Air Force Base, AL (AETC)

Major Joseph P. Regan

I SOCPTS/CC
Hurlburt Field Air Force Base, FL (AFSOC)



**Financial Analysis
Office of the Year**

**The Major General
Alfred K. Flowers
Comptroller
Organization of
the Year**

**The General Larry O.
Spencer Special Acts and
Services Award
*Resourcing NATOS Worst
Natural Disaster***

39 CPTS

Incirlik Air Force Base, AE (USAFE)



Financial Operation Office of the Year

502 CPTS/FMF

Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, TX (AETC)

Special Acts and Services Award

Typhoon Mawar Support and Recovery

AFIMSC/RM
Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, TX

36th Comptroller Squadron

PACAF
Andersen Air Force Base, AP

POM25 Special Interest Items Team

SAF/FMCE
Pentagon, Washington

HQ AETC/FM

Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, TX

House Hunters Working Group

27 SOCPTS
Cannon Air Force Base, NM

**USAFE-AFRICA/FM Ukraine Supplemental
Execution Team**

USAFE
Ramstein Air Force Base, AE

**DAF Post Pay Review Team/Pay Integrity
Information Act Team**

SAF/FMF
Pentagon, Washington

CONGRATULATIONS!



WINNER OF THE BEST ARTICLE: FALL 2023

**This is NOT My First Language: The Deployment Experience That
Gave Us a New (Joint) Language**

by Lt Col Leria Diaz, Capt Garrett Bauer, and MSgt Justin Limos

ACES HIGH AWARDS



SrA Blessing Baysah

352d Special Operations Wing, RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom

Senior Airman Blessing Baysah is a Budget Analyst assigned to the 352d Special Operations Wing (SOW), RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom. She was born in Monrovia, Liberia and moved to Virginia Beach,

where she graduated from high school with over 200 hours of volunteer service. In 2018, she joined the Air Force and received her first duty assignment to the 45th Comptroller Squadron at Patrick SFB in Florida. Her first position was in the Financial Services Office, where she stepped into a noncommissioned officer vacancy, leading the Special Actions team and supporting 6K members, employees, and 54 Geographically Separated Units. As the Delta Staff Emergency Management representative, she ensured the safety of 3.6K personnel, earning squadron Airman of the Quarter. While leading the debt management program, she played a vital role in USSF's \$10M delinquency reduction, earning the Space Systems Command Financial Management (FM) Flight of the Year in 2022. Additionally, during this assignment, she devoted 500 hours volunteering in the children's ministry at her church.

SrA Baysah's next assignment led her to AFSOC, where she adapted quickly as a Budget Analyst with the 352d SOW, overseeing a \$29M budget across six squadrons and providing regulatory guidance for Air Force and AFSOC funds execution. She supported diverse missions and ensured successful real-world operations throughout four COCOMs. Additionally, she aided with the SOW transition to the COMAFSOC's A-Staff priority, ensuring better interoperability with joint partners. Her superior performance led to her recognition as Special Staff Airman of the Quarter and Staff Team of the Quarter wins. Senior Airman Baysah's accomplishments throughout her career and her desire to always excel above the rest make her **ACES HIGH!**



TSgt Lazaro L. Lazabal Sr

HQ USAFA Finance Office, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado

TSgt Lazaro Lazabal is the noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) of Financial Operations at the HQ United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), Colorado. He began his career at Joint

Base Charleston, South Carolina, serving as a customer service technician. While there, he deployed in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, mobilizing six times as a paying agent across AFRICOM and EUCOM, securing over \$300K for special operations and replenishing 16 U.S. embassies.

At Hurlburt Field, FL, he served as NCOIC of Financial Management and as a resource advisor for the 361st Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group. He executed a \$20M Joint threat early warning system enabling tactical system operators to detect threats and safeguard Status of Funds (SOF) and military assets. Additionally, he coordinated a fundraiser delivering food and water to those in need during the aftermath of hurricanes Maria and Michael.

His next assignment was to the National Reconnaissance Office as a budget analyst and advisor to the Special Communications Office, where he managed a \$200M portfolio. He was selected for a \$17.5M contract solicitation, where he analyzed four contract proposals and consolidated nine business support contracts.

TSgt Lazabal is currently assigned to HQ USAFA, leading a team of 13 Airmen supporting 7K personnel. He also directs the sole cadet pay program in the Air Force, supporting over 4K cadets and overseeing the processing of 140K cadet pay transactions per year. Furthermore, he served as additional duty first sergeant, covering 1.5K personnel, and responded to a life-threatening car accident, aiding five cadets. His hard work earned him the 2023 USAFA HQ Staff NCO of the 4th Quarter and NCO of the Year. TSgt Lazabal is without a doubt...**ACES HIGH!**

ACES HIGH AWARDS



SSgt Christian Meza

56th Comptroller Squadron, Luke Air Force Base, Arizona

SSgt Christian Meza is a Financial Compliance Supervisor in the 56th Comptroller Squadron (CPTS) at Luke AFB, AZ. He hails from El Centro, California, and joined the Air Force in August 2017. In January 2020, he volunteered for an OCN

deployment to Al Udeid Air Base, where he earned an Air and Space Achievement Medal for his service.

While assigned to Luke, SSgt Meza revamped the Special Actions team, streamlining processes and validating over \$1.2M in final separation payments. He developed a new strategy for managing the Government Travel Card program that enabled the 56th to receive its first rebate in over two-years, worth \$134K. He kept delinquencies below 2% for five consecutive months. Furthermore, he developed an in-depth guide on Luke's process to track cases, sharing with seven other bases and enabling FM to maintain less than one case over 45 days for nine consecutive months.

SSgt Meza completed three classes for his Financial Management Community College of the Air Force. He utilized this knowledge to improve the FM's internal controls, resulting in a 50% decrease in Case Management System (CMS) cases to correct final payments. A true whole Airman, he prepared 2.5K meals for St. Mary's Food Bank to help families in need in Phoenix and nine adjacent counties. Finally, he assisted veterans in their recovery from physical and emotional trauma by collaborating with the most prominent military gaming organization in America to promote mental acuity, fine motor coordination, and competitive excellence.

SSgt Christian Meza sets an outstanding example for all Air Force members. His superb dedication, invaluable performance, and professionalism truly make him **ACES HIGH!**



SSgt Richard Lopez Reyes

51st Comptroller Squadron, Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea

SSgt Richard Lopez Reyes is a Financial Operations Supervisor assigned to the 51st Comptroller Squadron (CPTS) at Osan AB, Korea. Go-by "Lo-Rey," he began his Air Force career in 2018. Shortly after he arrived at the 51 CPTS, SSgt Lopez was selected to

be the team lead of PACAF's busiest relocations section.

He hit the ground running, immediately improving the section's performance & accuracy, while enhancing the unit's credibility and solidifying relationships across the installation. Richard implemented a revolutionary digitized in-processing SOP that cut briefing times by 75%, saving 384 man-hours and increased the accompanying military pay transactions timeliness to 99%.

SSgt Lopez Reyes filled the NCOIC position for 30 days, coordinating the Cope Taufan & Cobra Gold personnel deployment functions supporting INDOPACOM. He executed four briefings, sending jets and accompanying personnel out-the-door to build tactical air superiority with 17 nations while reinforcing joint capabilities in hostile military and humanitarian efforts. His leadership was pivotal in the flight, earning the Squadron Team of the Quarter.

Richard's commitment to training and empowering the Relocations team has enabled them to innovate and streamline processes. At this short tour location, he has held eight training sessions to get after travel rejects and strengthen the station gain process while also developing eight Airmen to bulk-up the pool of auditors. These initiatives directly mitigated delays during peak PCS season for 5.6K vouchers totaling \$15.6M, ranking #2 of 91 for processing in the Air Force; this effort earned him the PACAF performer of the month. His community involvement with the Hispanic Osan Latino Association included three base-wide events raising \$1.2K, bridging differences, and highlighting the strength of diversity. SSgt Lopez Reyes is a role model for his peers, exudes excellence in all he does, and is without a doubt **ACES HIGH!**



PROMOTIONS & RETIREMENTS

Promotions

AETC

Shimp, Samuel, Col
AETC/FM/FMA – JBSA Randolph

Woolgar, Michelle, GS-15
AETC/FM/FM – JBSA Randolph

SAF/FM

Baker, Todd, Senior Leader
SAF/FMF – Wright-Patterson AFB

Brown, Gregory, NH-04
FMCT/AFCAA – JB Andrews

Dively, Andrew, NH-04
FMCY/AFCAA – JB Andrews

Kim, Eva, NH-04
FMCY/AFCAA – JB Andrews

Overman, Todd, NH-04
FMCA/AFCAA – JB Andrews

Warner, Sean, NH-04
FMCS/AFCAA – JB Andrews

ACC

Almanzor, Violeta, GS-12
99 CPTS/FMA – Nellis AFB

Barbedo, Tarkha, SMSgt
325 CPTS/SEL – Tyndall AFB

Boyens, David, GS-12
1AF/FM – Tyndall AFB

Cain, Rachel, GS-12
FMA/FMAIE – JB Langley-Eustis

Chavez, GeorgAnn A, GS-12
688 CW/FM – JBSA-Lackland

Garrett, LaQuisha, GS-13
FMA/FMAOS – JB Langley-Eustis

Hawes, Angela, GS-12
FMA/FMAIF – JB Langley-Eustis

Lucio-Stockwell, Brandon, MSgt
319 CPTS/FMQ – Grand Forks AFB

Mansfield, Sheila, Maj
93 AGOW/FM – Moody AFB

Morgan, Daniel, GS-12
1AF/FM – Tyndall AFB

Neal, Richard Jr, TSgt
99 CPTS/FMF – Nellis AFB

Rausch, Zachary, Capt
633 ABW/SARC – JB Langley-Eustis

Steele, Laurie K, GS-12
688 CW/FM – JBSA-Lackland

AETC

De Vazquez Salgado, Luis, SMSgt
14 CPTS/FMD – Columbus AFB

Draper, Nicole, GS-14
AETC/FM/FMAM – JBSA Randolph

Johnson, Royce, MSgt
97 CPTS/FMF – Altus AFB

AFGSC

Daniels, Matthew, Lt Col
377 CPTS/CC – Kirtland AFB

Oladiti, Abbey, SMSgt
2 CPTS/FMD – Barksdale AFB

Small, Stephen, MSgt
2 CPTS/FMA – Barksdale AFB

AMC

Colletti, Vincent, Maj
HQ AMC/FMAO – Scott AFB

Gibbs, Brandon, MSgt
87 CPTS/FMF – JB McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst

Gier, Dustin, GS-12
60 CPTS/FMA – Travis AFB

Lucas, Mason, Capt
628 CPTS/FMA – JB Charleston

Ortiz, Michael, MSgt
89 OG/RA – JB Andrews

Sievers, Michelle, GS-13
HQ AMC/FMFA – Scott AFB

DRUs and FOAs

Logan, Mary, GS-13
AFDW/FM/FMO – JB Andrews

Soto, Ralph, Lt Col
11 CPTS/CC – JB Anacostia-Bolling

PACAF

Hansen, Shawn, Maj
673 CPTS/DO – JB Elmendorf-Richardson

Johnson, Jessica, TSgt
354 CPTS/FMA – Eielson AFB

Vaughan, Janice, SMSgt
374 CPTS/FMD – Yokota AB, Japan

SAF/FM

Knopp, Kory, GS-13
AFFSO/AFDW – Ellsworth AFB

Peoples, James, Lt Col
FMC/FMCC – Arlington, VA

Taylor-Lewis, Erica, GS-13
FMFC-F/AFAFO-F – JB Andrews

Trent, LuAnn, GS-14
FMF/FMFC – JB Andrews

SPOC

Boland, Alan, NH-03
Delta 8/FMA – Schriever SFB

Bray, Brandon, TSgt
21 CPTS/FMA – Peterson SFB

Woodard, Zachary, MSgt
21 CPTS/FMF – Peterson SFB

USAFE-AFAFRICA

Ortega, Jacob, MSgt
48 CPTS/QA – RAF Lakenheath, England

Raynor, Kinsie, MSgt
31 CPTS/QA – Aviano AB, Italy

USNORTHCOM

Balow, Kassie, GS-12
USNORTHCOM/NC J5 – Peterson SFB

Collier, Carol, GS12
USNORTHCOM/J6 – Peterson SFB

Kenward, Melissa, GS-12
USNORTHCOM/J8 – Peterson SFB

Mochowski, Taylor, GS-13
USNORTHCOM/J8 – Peterson SFB

USSOCOM

Melton, Monica, GS-13
USSOCOM/SOFM-BR – Macdill AFB

Sanchez, Holly, GS-14
USSOCOM/SOFM-MT – Macdill AFB

Retirements

SAF/FM

Vogel, Russ, NH-04
FMC/FMCC – Arlington, VA

AMC

Gibbs, Brandon, MSgt
87 CPTS/FMF – JB McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst

Hudgeons, John, MSgt
89 AW/FM – JB Andrews

Killian, James, MSgt
375 CPTS/FMF – Scott AFB

Shanklin, Warrell, SMSgt
436 CPTS/FMD – Dover AFB

DRUs and FOAs

Jackson, JoAnna, SMSgt
HAF/A1PA – JB Andrews

Nichols, Anetta, MSgt
MPEP-Americas – JB Andrews

Peace, Sandra, GS-13
HQ AFDW/FMP – JB Andrews

AETC

Conn, Andrea, MSgt
82 CPTS/FMF – Sheppard AFB

AFGSC

Lilly, James, GS-11
2 CPTS/FMA – Barksdale AFB

AFSOC

Mirro, Deron, GS-12
FM/FMFP – Hurlburt Field

SAF/FM

Orr, Anson, MSgt
FMFC/AFAFO – JB Andrews

Smith, Douglas, GS-13
AFFSO/AFDW – Wright-Patterson AFB

Wilson, Gregory, GS-13
AFFSO/AFDW – Ellsworth AFB

USNORTHCOM

Schmidt, Robert
GS-13; USNORTHCOM/J5 – Peterson SFB



SAF FM
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AIR FORCE
COMPTROLLER