

FAST TEAM INITIATIVES SAVE COUNTY TIME AND MONEY

“Changes to improve productivity, streamline operations and save taxpayers more than \$110,000 annually,” says Molinaro

Poughkeepsie, NY.... Dutchess County Government continues to be aggressive in its efforts to find cost savings and improve efficiency in all areas of county government. As he outlined in his State of the County Address, Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro formed the Fiscal Accountability and Strategy Team (FAST) to work with fiscal staff in county departments to find cost savings and efficiencies in county government within the limited resources available. Two FAST initiatives - limiting contract originals and digitizing Account Payable invoices - are expected to save Dutchess County more than \$110,000 annually.

“We continue to scrutinize every dollar we spend and service we provide - evaluating how and why we do it – so we realize savings and enhance efficiencies in order to transform county government, seek to close a gap of up to \$40 million in the development of the 2013 budget and ‘right-size’ our government,” said County Executive Molinaro.

According to Budget Director Valerie Sommerville, the collaborative efforts of the FAST team and county departments to identify and implement cost reductions and achieve additional efficiencies are projected to achieve more than \$2 million in savings for 2012. Savings have come from reductions across various operational lines, maximization of grant funding and state aid, additional vacancy savings, and new initiatives underway by the FAST Team such as the Account Payable (A/P) invoice digitization and the reduction of contract originals.

A/P invoice digitization

Historically, county departments have been required to process the A/P invoice transaction electronically in the County’s financial system, send the original hard copy invoice to the Comptroller’s Office and keep a copy to file at the department. Under the direction of the Comptroller’s Office, working in partnership with the Office of Computer Information Systems and the Department of Finance, several county departments are piloting a new process where the invoice is scanned and attached electronically. This new process saves time, paper and space. Using the 20,000 invoices processed in 2011 as a base figure, it is expected the County will save more than \$80,000 annually when all departments adopt the new procedures before the end of the year.

Dutchess County Comptroller and FAST Team member Jim Coughlan said, "I'm very pleased with the progress of the county departments' transition from our historical procedure to the electronic submission. Currently, about half of the departments are now enrolled in the digitalized process. We are on track to convert all departments by late fall. The feedback from departments has been very positive, helping to improve efficiency with the reduction of time-consuming clerical tasks."

Reduction in contract originals

The County has also reduced the number of contract originals it creates for the approximately 1,400 new and amended contracts that are processed annually. Past contract procedures dictated five original copies of every contract must be created and signed by the County Executive. Original contracts were distributed to the responsible department, the contract provider, the Department of Finance, the Comptroller's Office and the County Attorney's Office. Under the new system, only two original contracts are created and are distributed to the contract provider and the County Attorney's Office. Contracts are available electronically for review by the individual department, Finance Dept and Comptroller's Office. The system is expected to save approximately \$25,000 annually.

"These changes add up to critical tax dollar savings, but of equal importance, these allow our employees to be more efficient with their time," said County Executive Molinaro. "These are just a few among other changes we are making throughout county government to improve productivity and streamline operations."

Savings estimates for both the A/P digitized invoices and the reduced contract originals are based on industry standards for costs related to copying, filing and retrieving invoices.

These procedural change initiatives have been made possible through the work of the Office of Computer Information Systems (OCIS). Upgrades to the County's fiber network and central storage in recent years have made the transmission of digital images and additional electronic storage volume possible without risk to the County's overall system. Over the coming year the County plans to improve and expand its electronic document management and workflow capabilities. This will be made possible through an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) solution that will improve staff efficiencies, provide cost savings and ultimately reduce reliance on the County's Records Center facility. Electronic Content Management (ECM) refers to the strategies, methods and tools used to capture, store, preserve, retrieve, collaborate and share content and documents as related to organization-wide processes. The County's ECM will be used to manage information, provide improved inter-agency collaboration and workflow for a broad range of documents and related data.