

The Budget Formulation and Execution Line of Business Newsletter

Volume IV, Issue 1

“ Federal Budgeting--The Road Ahead”

Winter 2010

The Budget Formulation and Execution Line of Business (BFELoB) is a collaborative initiative of Federal agencies to improve all aspects of Federal Budgeting including Agency Budget Systems, Analytics, Collaboration, Data Collection and Tracking, Document Publication, Human Capital, and Knowledge Management. Under the auspices of the Budget Officers Advisory Council (BOAC), a BFELoB Task Force of agency representatives meets regularly to formulate plans, review activities, discuss issues, and share ideas for new opportunities. For general information on the BFELoB, visit our public website at www.bfelob.gov. For detailed information on BFELoB activities including Task Force meetings, visit our secure website on the MAX Federal Community at: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/GAE> (login required, registration requires a Federal agency email address).

The BFELoB also manages workgroups that explore specific aspects of Federal Budgeting and how they could benefit from improved processes and tools. These groups also then guide the BFELoB’s activities in developing common solutions. Key to the success of these groups is the participation of agency budget professionals from across the Federal Government. We would like to encourage anyone interested in collaborating with budget professionals across the Federal community to join us in making a difference as a workgroup leader or participant in the activity areas that matter to you. Please keep this in mind as you read through the descriptions in this newsletter. Contact us at budgetlob@ed.gov to discuss more, or go to the workgroup sign-up pages accessible via the BFELoB secure website.

The BFELoB has developed a diverse array of Tools and Services over the past three years that are designed specifically for the benefit of the Federal budgeting community. Built through the insights and hard work of your agency colleagues, these tools and services are in use now by many Federal agencies to improve and streamline their budget processes and systems. Nevertheless, we have only just scratched the surface of the potential for applying them to make a difference. This newsletter is devoted to furthering that objective. We have been building a budgeting ‘field of dreams’ - will you come?

Managing Partner Message

In 2010, the Budget Formulation and Execution Line of Business (BFELoB) continued to help Federal budget analysts with tools and techniques. These benefits resulted from the group collaboration that saved money and piloted new ways of doing business that some individual agencies could not have done independently. In addition to the growing use of the MAX Federal Community (<https://max.omb.gov/community/>), other benefits have come in the various human capital exercises—we have offered numerous training and development opportunities at no cost to agencies. Another product this year is the first-in-government use of easier log-on procedures for accessing a Government website using your “PIV card”. I know that computer security is important, but I also know that any shortcuts for getting to our applications will mean more time on actual budget tasks. And if there are other ways that we can make your budget life easier, let us know via the MAX site or contact us at budgetlog@ed.gov.

Tom Skelly, Department of Education
Managing Partner
Budget Formulation and Execution Line of Business

Tools to Improve Agency Budget Processes

Budget Capabilities Self Assessment Tool (BC SAT): The BC SAT provides agency budget managers and their staff with a simple survey-like method to assess and gain perspective on how their current operations and processes compare against *best practices* across budgeting capability categories including Budget Processes, Staffing Capacity, Technology and Budget Products. Managers can then strategically focus improvement efforts based upon results of the self assessment. This material is being updated to include resources that might assist an agency, related to each capability. The Tool is available on the MAX Federal Community at: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/KIGjGw>

Budget Formulation and Execution Process Maps: The BFELoB, working with the FMLoB, developed process maps that represent the federal budget formulation and execution processes. Training courses based on these have been developed (see the Human Capital section of the newsletter for details). The Process Maps are available at:

Budget Formulation: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/yQCOEw>,
Budget Execution: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/EgAFaw>.

Budget Systems/Interfaces

Budget Systems Decision Matrix: The Decision Matrix is a comprehensive assessment of nine government and commercial automated budget formulation/execution systems. These systems were objectively rated for their effectiveness and completeness against a compendium of budgeting capabilities. Information about the system's development, technical aspects, cost, and availability is also provided. The assessments can be used as a starting point for agencies interested in acquiring improved automated budgeting tools. An update to the Decision Matrix will be published this winter. The Decision Matrix is available on the MAX Federal Community at: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/3wGtCw>

Budget Formulation and Execution Manager (BFEM): BFEM is a shared service budget system offering from Treasury which enables agencies to automate the process of formulating their budgets, including the 'push-button' production of formal budget documents such as the OMB Submission and Congressional Justification. Fifteen agencies currently use the system to quickly and inexpensively implement an automated shared solution for manual budget processes; avoid the labor costs associated with manually producing budget documents; share development and administrative costs with other agencies; and share knowledge on difficult budget process and automation issues with other agencies. An associated Performance Measure Manager (PMM) module enables agencies to automate the definition, collection, and reporting of performance information. For more information, visit the BFEM Page on MAX <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/iwM>

Departmental E-Budgeting System (DEBS): The Department of Labor has developed DEBS to support shared service provider clients, providing greater computing capacity and leveraging budget system and budget documentation production capabilities. DEBS began work on a pilot project for the FY 2012 Congressional Budget Justification in the Fall of 2010 which is expected to last through the Secretary's Hearings in March. To learn more, visit the DEBS page in MAX at <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/loBuAw>

MAX A-11 Automated Data Transfer and Rule Validation: With the number of agencies using automated systems to prepare their budgets expanding rapidly, a multi-agency team is working on developing the processes, methodologies and standards that will enable agencies to automatically exchange data with OMB's central MAX A-11 system as well as to incorporate the A-11 budget validation rules used by MAX directly into their systems. The first implementation of the service will be in November 2011 for use in the preparation of the FY 2013 budget. At present, developers at OMB are working on the definition of a format for uploading and intend to make information available on this format in February 2011. Agencies with an interest in automating their budget processes are encouraged to participate in this effort so that their specific requirements are incorporated. For more information or to join the initiative, visit <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/LQw>

Technical Services

Web-based Provisioning and Custom Application Development: The BFELoB has developed a robust secure technology platform to support its government-wide collaboration, data collection and tracking, analytical, and document publication activities, including login provisioning ("authentication" and "authorization"), database, server, and agile application development. This capability is highly extensible and uses a service-oriented-architecture, enabling the BFELoB to offer these technology services to agencies (i.e. *cloud computing*) at a low marginal cost. To facilitate these activities, the BFELoB has arranged a flexible Blanket Purchasing Agreement (BPA). This procurement vehicle is available to all BFELoB member agencies for their technology development activities. For more information, please contact Phil Wenger (pwenger@omb.eop.gov).

Government-wide Segment Reference Architecture: A Budget Segment architecture document is available for Federal budgeting managers. Agencies can use this template to simplify and jump-start their system development and enterprise architecture activities. This template follows the Federal Segment Architecture Methodology (FSAM). More information can be found on the MAX community website at <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/bwAOAg>

Tools for Collaboration and Communications

MAX Federal Community: The MAX Federal Community is a robust Government-wide collaboration and knowledge management tool that is optimized for Federal user requirements, including access controls, integration with desktop office applications, and support for Federal records management and security requirements. Now over 36,000 participants, it is used broadly to share information within and across agencies, as well as fourteen government-wide communities-of-practice (e.g. Budget, Acquisition, E-Government, Financial Management, Grants, Human Capital, Small Agencies, Sustainability, etc.), supporting countless collaborations on diverse topics. Some of these collaborations are open to all users, some to all users within a specific organization, and others with specific access lists controlled by the convener(s). Collaborations can even occur within special *enclaves* that can include non-federal partners. Free training is provided and new capabilities are constantly being developed. For more information see: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/D4AYB>

MAX Online Meetings: The MAX Online Meetings tool provides real-time remote screen sharing of applications that significantly enhance the effectiveness of large conference calls, small group meetings, and even quick telephone interactions. It enables remotely located meeting attendees to be literally 'on the same page' as those attendees physically present. And, since it is a real-time capability, those remote attendees can directly participate in evolving content development - making meetings more dynamic and collaborative. This saves time and money on travel, enables work-at-home/remote-work arrangements to be more effective, and supports continuity of operations when staff cannot come into a physical location due to weather, illness, or other events. Meetings are secure and access can be targeted to any combination of MAX users or groups (intra-agency, inter-agency, and non-federal partners). For additional information: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/IQFWC>

Human Capital and Training Tools

Budget Career Road Map: The BFELoB has developed a "Budget Career Road Map", a set of Core Competencies, Key Behaviors, and Proficiency Levels for budget professionals. This roadmap is helpful in assessing an individual's skills and gaps, as well as developing plans for targeted growth. The Budget Career Road Map was published in May 2010 and is available for use on the MAX community site: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/UICOH>

Budget Formulation and Execution Computer-based Training Modules: Based upon the budget formulation and execution process maps, these are web-based, self-paced, multi-media training courses for beginning or mid-level budget analysts intended to provide a basic understanding of budget formulation and execution. The courses cover government-wide processes and documents associated with budget formulation and execution. These training modules are available at:

Budget Execution: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/KYHUHQ>

Budget Formulation: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/bwTDI>

Budget Training and Leadership Development: From its start, the BFELoB has developed and presented a wide variety of training opportunities for the government-wide budget community. Attendees at these training sessions have totaled almost 4,000. The courses cover all aspects of the budget discipline and range from introductory and advanced topics to leadership classes. The BFELoB-sponsored training courses are free of charge to agency staff. Subject Matter Experts from various agencies provide the trainings, and many classes are presented both in-class and online. In November 2010, the BFELoB is introducing two new budget training series. These include budget brownbags, a series that explores each of the six technical competencies spelled out in Budget Career Road Map, as well as a series of facilitated discussions built around the basic budget processes described in the Budget Formulation and Budget Execution training modules. Course offerings and registration information can be found on the MAX community website: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/RQE>

Tools for Collection and Publication of Information

MAX Collect: MAX Collect is a revolutionary capability for the rapid collection and compiling of information from multiple sources - replacing the typical labor intensive process of manually compiling e-mailed word documents and spreadsheets. It enables the rapid structuring (within hours) of a custom tailored web-based data exercise that can collect textual and numeric data, both unstructured and formatted, from tens or even hundreds of sources. Where needed, information can be managed using a staged workflow review and sign-off process. Providers and reviewers can be any combination of intra-agency, inter-agency, and (where appropriate) non-federal MAX users. As information is collected it is automatically compiled and published real-time using MAX Publication Services, with structured numeric data dynamically displayed using MAX Analytics (see below).

MAX Publication Services: MAX Publication Services can be used to publish complex documents that are fully indexed and include an automatically paginated and hyperlinked table of contents, as well as any number of cross-categorization indices (also hyper-linked). It is fully integrated into MAX Collect, and can be incorporated into other applications as a service. Publication formats include PDF, Word, Excel, and HTML.

MAX Analytics: MAX Analytics provides Business Intelligence (BI), reporting, and other data manipulation capabilities for analyzing and displaying structured data, including dynamic, real-time full-color dashboards, charts and graphs, complex reports, 'data cubes', and Excel spreadsheets with drill-down capability. These visualizations can be presented directly in the MAX Federal Community, enabling integrated 'one-stop' information sharing and knowledge management. It uses a collection of "best of breed" open source and open standard applications that integrate with other MAX applications (and eventually non-MAX applications) to provide full featured capabilities at extremely low cost.

For additional information on all these capabilities visit: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/ZQ8>

Policy Lead Message

Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2010 issue of Budget Solutions - the newsletter of the BFELoB. I hope you will agree with me as you scan through the list of tools and capabilities highlighted this year that the BFELoB is doing some amazing things.

Together we have accomplished much -- transforming Federal Budgeting through improved communications, rich collaborative and information sharing communities, and dynamic automated data collection and publishing capabilities that are replacing the old email collection/compile-all-night paradigm with instant document publishing and real-time analytical reporting. We have also compiled an unprecedented understanding of Federal budget formulation and execution processes, best practices, and proficiencies in easy-to-use formats that any budget office and individual can use to self-assess and improve.

In addition, many of the tools we've developed have been widely recognized for their excellence, leading to their adoption far beyond the budgeting community where they are improving performance, saving money, and creating synergies in ways we never anticipated. As you read this newsletter, I encourage you to take a fresh look at these tools and capabilities and think about how you can use them to make a difference in your own effectiveness and that of your organization. These capabilities are now proven with countless success stories. There is a clear difference between the "old-fashioned" way of doing things and what can now be accomplished using these new tools. You and your agency colleagues have created them. Now you owe it to yourself and your organization to take the next step and give them a try.

Andy Schoenbach
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