

Department of Finance
State Business Systems
Division (SBS)

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From the Project Director's Desk

Thank you for reading the STAARS newsletter. This month's edition includes some of the features you will use regularly in STAARS. There is a wealth of information here that will hopefully pique your interest as you continue to prepare for STAARS implementation. Enjoy!

STAARS Templates Save Time

STAARS has the capacity to be a timesaver for all users, but you may be asking, "Just how in the world is this new software application going to save me time?" Well, STAARS provides you the ability to use templates to reduce the amount of data entry required to process a transaction. Templates provide data entry shortcuts within the system. Templates are best suited for users or groups of users who repeatedly use documents with the same or similar information. The most common are document templates, accounting templates and accounting profiles. Let's touch on document templates first.

Document Templates will be one of the most commonly used templates within STAARS. Most documents can be created as templates to assist in future document creation. Document templates share the same structure and data entry fields as real documents, but STAARS will not process a template. When creating a document template, you enter the data that is relevant for document types that you typically create. Once you have created the template, you use it as the starting point for all similar documents of those types that you create, eliminating the need to enter the same information repeatedly.

For example, if you are a Purchasing user who is charged with the task of frequently ordering office supplies, then you might create a template for a Requisition that contains all of the vendor and accounting information normally used to request these items. When you need to enter a new Requisition (RQS) document for these items, you simply copy the template into a new document. This reduces the amount of data you need to enter to only the relevant commodity and cost information that is specific to that document.

Accounting Templates are another common template in STAARS. The accounting templates differ from document templates as data is inferred after the document has been created, when it is validated. The Accounting Template saves fund and detail accounting information that is required to be entered on the accounting line of documents. Any accounting elements that have already been entered on the document (either through a template or manually) are not overlaid with values from the accounting template that is selected. The Accounting Template only imports values to blank fields.

For example, a department creates an accounting template called 'Utility Bill' for use with payment request authorizations. The accounting template includes the fund, department, appropriation unit, object, and function typically coded when making a utility payment. The user creates a payment request for paying a utility bill, but specifies a different object code than normally used, and different from the object on the accounting template. Applying an accounting template on an accounting line with the object code already specified, the accounting template only brings in the department, fund, appropriation unit, and the function code. The Object Code on the document is not replaced with the Object Code from the accounting template.

Accounting Profiles are closely associated and only used with Accounting Templates. Like Accounting Templates, it provides the ability to save frequently used data for use in subsequent document creation. Specifically, accounting profiles provide the ability to centrally store multiple accounting strings with percentage distributions tied to each. Like Accounting Templates, Accounting Profiles are limited to fund and detail accounting information entered on the accounting line of documents.

Each agency will have the ability to develop their unique Document Templates, Accounting Templates and Accounting Profiles to make your process just a little bit easier and more efficient. Your templates may contain limited amounts of data or as much data as you deem necessary. Templates will save you a lot of time, so use them to your advantage. These are just a couple of the most frequently used templates. In upcoming training courses, you will become well acquainted with using templates.



February Events

February 3, 2015 – Change Management Advisory Team
(CMAT Members Only)

February 4, 2015 – Executive Steering Committee Meeting
(ESC Members Only)

February 12, 2015—STAARS Outreach Meeting

Favorites, Searching and Online Help

Learning a new software application can be challenging and requires patience. In order to jump-start your success navigating within STAARS, there are several features that will assist you in using the application. Three important features that will make it easier for you to navigate STAARS are favorites, searches, and online help.

The Favorites List works similarly to the favorites or bookmark functions in your Web browser. It enables you to navigate to various STAARS pages that you frequently use and have identified as a favorite. You simply open the page that you want added to your Favorites list, right click on the page, click Add to Favorites. You can give a custom name to the page that you are adding to your Favorites list. After selecting OK, your page will be permanently stored in your Favorites list, accessible from the Secondary Navigation Panel.

Searching for documents, inquiries, or reference tables in the STAARS application will be a simple task. There is an array of documents for business functions whereby each document page is assigned a code. Using Accounts Payable (AP) as an example, pages include but are not limited to:

- Commodity Payment Request (PRC)
- General Accounting Expense (GAX)

Documents are viewed and maintained through the Document Catalog, which displays recent activity for documents and provides access to all documents in STAARS.

Inquiry Pages – used to display summary and detailed information from system-maintained tables. Inquiry pages are assigned page codes. Using AP as an example, pages include but are not limited to:

- Cash Balance Detail (CBALDQ)
- Document History Query (DHIST)
- Vendor Invoice Registry (VIR)

Inquiry pages are for reviewing and generally cannot be used to modify data.

Reference Tables - used to store data and can be user-maintained or system-maintained. Using AP as an example, pages include but are not limited to:

- Object (OBJ)
- Event Type (ETYP)
- Payment Control – Vendor/Customer (VCUST).

At the top of each STAARS page is the option to enter search criteria. You can simply enter your search criteria and select Search. The Search functionality is provided on many pages throughout STAARS, and supports the following techniques:

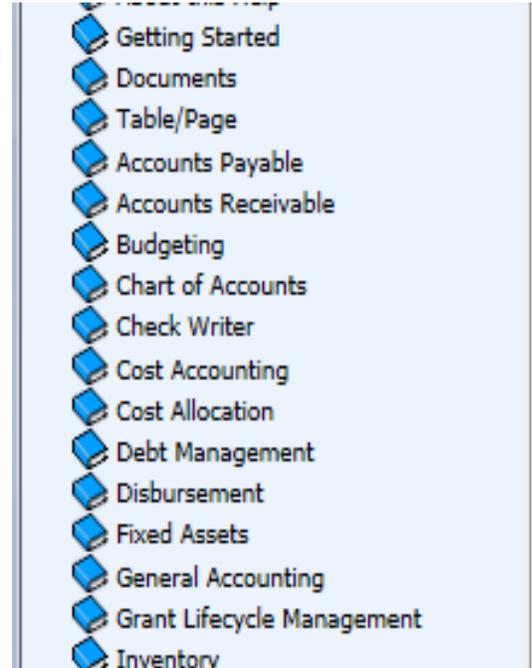
- Type in what you are searching for in upper or lower case. The text will automatically be converted to upper case by the application.
- Commas can be used to provide multiple search criteria.
- Wildcard characters can be used to assist with searching:
 - asterisk (*) - For example, you can type *budget* in the Description field on Page Search and all pages that have Budget in their Description will be returned.
 - colon (:) - For example, type 1/1/2004 : 1/15/2004 to view all documents created on or after 1/1/2004 and on or before 1/15/2004.
 - greater than sign (>) - For example, type >1/14/2002 in the Create Date field to view all documents created after January 14, 2002.
 - greater than or equal to sign (>=) - For example, type >=1/14/2002 in the Create Date field to view all documents created on or after January 14, 2002.
 - less than sign (<) - For example, type <1/14/2002 in the Create Date field to view all documents created before January 14, 2002.
 - less than or equal to sign (<=) - For example, type <=1000 in the Available Cash Balance search field on the Cash Balance table to view all funds that have an available cash balance less than or equal to \$1000.00.

STAARS online help will provide simple to follow instructions that will guide you through any areas where you require assistance. Simply select the APP Help option at the top of each page and search for the area where you require assistance.

This online help system offers the following types of information:

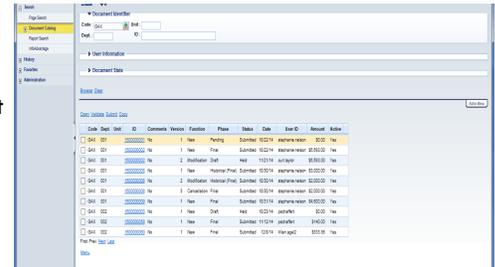
- General information about STAARS.
- Specific information about individual business areas in STAARS.
- Descriptions of individual pages and fields.
- Step-by-step instructions for the most commonly used tasks.
- A glossary of terms.

As you can see, STAARS has many features that will help you learn about the application and assist you with everyday tasks such as saving documents to favorites, searching for documents, and using online help.



Documents, Inquiries, and Tables

Have you ever submitted documents only to have them returned due to an error? Well, STAARS takes the guess work out of the picture. When you select the Submit button, STAARS verifies the business rules. If the document does not pass all the business rules, the document remains in Draft phase and a corresponding error message displays. This allows you to correct the error before submitting. If no errors are detected, the document is forwarded through the predefined workflow approval process and it updates the appropriate table automatically. You will use the following STAARS application pages to complete your task:



Date	Dept	Unit	IC	Comments	Version	Enabled	Phase	Status	Date	Date	Amount	Action
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Posted	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		2	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Header Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		2	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes
10/20/2014	00000000	00	00		1	Yes	Final	Submitted	10/20/2014	10/20/2014	0.00	Yes

- **Documents** – Documents are used to record financial events (i.e., Journal Voucher). Documents are viewed and maintained through the Document Catalog, which displays recent activity for documents and provides access to all documents in the system. The Document Catalog is similar to a large filing cabinet and serves as the repository for all STAARS documents. Once a document is created in STAARS, the document and any attachments are saved forever.
- **Inquiries** – Inquiries are used to display summary and detailed information from system-maintained tables. These pages are for viewing and generally cannot be used to modify data. For example you can use the Inquiry pages to check the status of a Receivable.
- **Reference Tables** – Reference Tables are user-maintained tables that can be updated by users who have appropriate security authorization, and system-maintained tables that are updated by the system through document updates or offline processes.

Once your document is finalized, you can copy pertinent information into a new Document Type in the same transaction chain. For example, you need to authorize payment for an existing Purchase Order (PO). Open the existing Purchase Order (PO) and select the **Copy Forward** button. STAARS automatically generates a Payment Request (PR) with all of the Purchase Order's pertinent information, from the Vendor Code down to the amount of payment into the generated Payment Request document and liquidates the Purchase Order.

This function expedites data entry and simplifies document referencing between documents with a large number of lines.

Meet the STAARS Agency Implementation Leads (AIL's)

The STAARS Project team is working with each state agency to have a successful implementation of STAARS. The Agency Liaison Managers (ALM) will be teamed with an Agency Implementation Lead (AIL) from the STAARS Project team. The AIL will act as a conduit for all implementation activities and communications between the agency teams and the project team. Let's meet the individuals who will be leading this effort. Pictured from left to right are: Back row-Candace Moore, Nicole Skipper; Seated-Kristina Merrick, Glenda Motley, Elizabeth Robison.



Kristina Merrick – Kristina has worked for the State of Alabama for 7 ½ years. Kristina is the Security and Workflow Competency Center Lead as well as an AIL for the Departments of Public Health, Mental Health, Forensic Science, and Medicaid. Prior to joining the STAARS Project team, she worked in the Department of Corrections at Draper Correctional Facility as a Business Manager. She has a vast knowledge of accounts payable, general accounting, and the purchase order system.

Candace Moore – Candace has worked for the State of Alabama for 13 ½ years. Her areas of focus while with the Department of Economic & Community Affairs, where she spent most of her time, were in grants and cost accounting. Candace has recently been promoted to Accounting Manager as the Team Lead for the Agency Implementation Competency Center for the STAARS project. Additionally, Candace is the AIL for Alabama Department of Human Resources, Alabama Emergency Management Agency, Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, and State Military Department.

Glenda Motley – Glenda has worked for the State of Alabama for 13 years. Her first 3 years were with Finance working with the AFNS hotline. The other 10 years were with Department of Transportation performing internal audits and systems accounting. Glenda is the AIL for Department of Transportation, Retirement Systems of Alabama, Department of Revenue, Department of Finance, and the Treasurer's Office.

Elizabeth Robison – Elizabeth has worked for the State of Alabama for 8 years. She has previously worked for State Personnel, the Finance Department, Finance Accounting, and the Comptroller's Office. At Finance Accounting, Elizabeth was involved in auditing Risk Management investing. At the State Comptroller's Office, she was the coordinator for manual agency accounting and has been involved with many areas of accounting including accounts payable and auditing. Elizabeth is the AIL for Department of Corrections, Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Alabama Beverage Control Board, and Department of Environmental Management.

Nicole Skipper – Nicole has worked for the State of Alabama for 12 years. She has previously worked for the Administrative Office of Courts for 4 years on the implementation team for the child support payment system and was responsible for accounting duties of

Meet the STAARS Agency Implementation Leads (AIL's) (continued from page 3)

Administrative Office of Courts bank accounts. She also worked with the Department of Revenue for 8 years performing internal audits to ensure compliance and internal controls. Nicole is the AIL for the Departments of Labor, Rehabilitation Services, Education, and Economic & Community Affairs.

An important question was posed to each of these individuals and their responses are below:

In your role as an ALL, what is the one message you would like to convey to all the state agencies?

Kristina: Have an open mind about the system. It is going to make everything easier. Once fully implemented, the system will provide more information right at your fingertips than you have had in the past.

Candace: The STAARS application will be a very helpful system. It will increase efficiency and reduce wait time for our vendors.

Glenda: It's hard work now getting ready for the application go-live date, but it will be worth it. STAARS will bring a lot of long awaited improvements to how we do work with the state.

Elizabeth: Be patient with the learning process for the new system. The time and effort will pay off once everything is in place.

Nicole: Look above to the STAARS! Although the implementation can be tedious at times, look forward to how STAARS will benefit your agency in many ways such as decreasing length of time to complete daily tasks and reducing errors.

January Newsletter "Guess Words" Puzzle Winner!!!

Congratulations to the winner of the January "Guess Words" Puzzle,
Joseph Osenton from Public Health!
 Joseph received a \$20.00 gift card from Baumhowers!

STAARS Word Puzzle

The solution to this month's puzzle is the theme of this month's newsletter. Follow the directions to solve this puzzle, submit the phrase only to staars@finance.alabama.gov by **5 PM on Thursday, February 19**, and if you are the lucky winner, you will receive a GiGi's Cupcakes gift card! One entry per person, please. Winner will be drawn from all correct entries submitted.

The letters composing the words of the puzzle have a number associated with them. For example, the letter S has been assigned the number 8. Your task is to figure out the corresponding letter/number system to fill in the blanks. We have provided at least 2 letters per word as a starting point. Good luck!

<u>S</u>	<u>T</u>	_____	_____	<u>R</u>	<u>S</u>	_____	_____	<u>T</u>	_____	<u>R</u>	_____	<u>S</u>			
8	7	14	14	9	8			19	18	14	7	6	9	18	8
<u>S</u>	_____	<u>M</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	<u>O</u>	_____	<u>R</u>	_____	<u>O</u>	<u>R</u>	_____	_____
8	22	26	11	25	22	19	2	2	12	6	9	4	12	9	24

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Do you have a question, suggestion, or concern?

We Welcome Your Feedback!

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