

Department of Finance
State Business Systems
Division (SBS)

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From the Project Director's Desk

Alabama's financial and human resource information must be secure at all times and the STAARS security and workflow components are crucial to protecting our state's resource information. STAARS security and workflow provides the mechanisms that protect our information, control access, and ensures all transactions are reviewed and approved by authorized personnel only. After reading the articles in this newsletter, you should have a better understanding of the high level capabilities offered by STAARS security and how it will improve the overall security of Alabama's financial and human resource information.

In addition to securing our data, STAARS provides the foundation for a system of checks and balances limiting the misuse of data and the opportunity for fraud. One example that limits fraud is the recording of all changes that occur and the person that is responsible for the change. It is important to understand that your login ID and password not only authenticates you as a STAARS user, but also links you to all actions you perform in the system. As you will learn by reading the "Specific STAARS Security Concerns for the Individual User" article, it is this user association to all actions including the approval of transactions that gives the reason for not sharing your login credentials under any circumstance.

Newsletter Format Change!

After the April 2015 newsletter, we will be converting the newsletter from its current format to a series of articles that will be published directly to the STAARS website. Once we make this change, we will be publishing articles and sending email notifications as each individual newly published article has been posted. We believe this will improve the quality of the information we provide by removing restrictions caused by the space limitations of a newsletter and enabling us to focus more on content versus newsletter layout.

Workflow in STAARS - Simple, Fast, Efficient!



STAARS workflow provides a simpler, faster, and more efficient way of routing documents for approval. When a document is submitted, the Workflow engine will automatically determine the approvals needed. Since STAARS moves the document electronically from one approver to the next, the wait time to get documents approved and reviewed is decreased significantly. There can be up to fifteen levels of approval. Therefore, all workflow scenarios should be covered. Agencies have the option to configure STAARS to send an approver an email each time they need to approve a document.

As documents are submitted for *approval*, each user in STAARS workflow has a work list, or may receive an email, which informs a user of all documents they are required to review and approve. Once a user approves documents in their work list, it moves on to the next approver, and the document will no longer appear in the user's work list. If there is a delay in the approval process, the "Track Work in Progress" feature shows the status of a document and its pending approvals. This assists with the identification of bottlenecks and facilitates the ability to intervene and expedite the approval of a document.

Also new with STAARS are two types of approvals: sequential and parallel. *Sequential* is the most common and follows a successive approval process; one person approves, then the next, then the next, etc. With *parallel* approvals, approvers can all approve at the same time, and the document will not go to final until after they all approve. This enhances the approval *process* speed and improves the wait time of getting a document approved.

Lastly, one other feature of STAARS is alternate approval assignments. This is where, in the case of an approver's extended absence, approval *authority* can be delegated temporarily for someone else to approve documents while they're out. No waiting on a particular person, no lapse in business, no hold ups!

The System and Security Administration Competency Center team will be configuring central approval rules and agency specific approval rules to meet each of your unique needs. By taking the place of paper approvals, STAARS will save the state time and money. We are confident you'll love how flexible and powerful *workflow* is in STAARS!

March Events

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

March 5, 2015 - STAARS Performance Budgeting and Advantage Budgeting Workshop (ALMs and Budgeting and Accounting Leads Only)

Meet the STAARS System and Security Administration Competency Center Team

The STAARS team responsible for security and workflow is comprised of three individuals. Their task is to provide centralized system administration and security support. This includes defining who can access the system, what data they can access and functions they can perform. They have a broad spectrum of experiences that make them well qualified to contribute as leaders in this effort. Let's meet the System and Security Administration Competency Center team members. Pictured from left to right are: Quayanna Forte, Grant Wallace, and Kristina Merrick.



Kristina Merrick is in charge of the System and Security Administration Competency Center. She has worked for the State of Alabama for 7 ½ years. She is the AIL for the Departments of Public Health, Mental Health, Forensic Science, and Medicaid. In her previous position, she worked for the Department of Corrections as a business manager. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Troy University and an MBA from Auburn University Montgomery. She is the proud mother of 2 teenage daughters, and refers to herself as a "soccer mom."

Grant Wallace is a new State of Alabama employee. He has 4 years of experience as a corporate accountant. Most recently, he was a senior accountant with Enterprise Holdings. He graduated from Auburn University and has completed a second undergraduate and MBA degree at Auburn University Montgomery. He is married and expecting his first child in May.

Quayanna Forte ("Q") has been employed by the State of Alabama for almost 4 years. In her past position, she worked for Retirement Systems of Alabama with a focus on AP. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Alabama State University and an MBA from Troy University. She has recently married, and is a Montgomery native.

The team was asked to respond to the question below:

Security and workflow are important features of STAARS. What do you feel is the most important aspect of security and workflow the agencies need to be aware of as STAARS is implemented?

Kristina: The STAARS system gives all users access, but provides a high level of *security* for each agency. In the area of workflow, many options will be available for agencies needing approval for documents.

Grant: The data within STAARS will be protected in many ways, including utilization of organizational and UI field security. Agencies should, and will, feel confident that the System and Security Administration Competency Center is properly securing agency information based upon all necessary requirements.

Quayanna: Security and workflow are separate entities in STAARS, and it will be necessary to understand how both areas work. The agencies will have a lot of control and flexibility at their fingertips. In addition they will have a chance to automate, update, and simplify some current processes. I want to encourage the agencies to be open to change and accept the change.

Security in STAARS: How it All Works

Security is a major component of any software system and STAARS has been developed with this in mind, giving the state a robust and flexible security solution. This article covers some of the security features contained in STAARS, along with information needed by the System and Security Administration Competency Center.

In general, all secured items, such as pages and documents, are known as "application resources" in STAARS. If certain resources are secured and authorized access similarly, they are placed into "groups". *Access* to these resource groups is controlled by security roles, which are assigned to STAARS users. Security roles are defined for a group of users with similar functional tasks and associated access requirements. Examples of these include: system administrators, accounts payable managers, and procurement officers. Based on the roles that are assigned, STAARS users are provided access to certain resource groups with associated specific actions they will be permitted to perform (read-only vs. update, etc.).

Security in STAARS: How It All Works (Continued from Page 2)

A second security feature is organizational security, which will prevent users from viewing the resources (pages, documents, etc.) of other organizational units. When a new user is created, they are assigned a “home” organization, which is typically the user’s agency. STAARS users can also be granted access to what STAARS refers to as “foreign” organizations. This will allow the user to view resources related to assigned “home” and “foreign” organizations. Access to “home” and “foreign” organizations will only be granted if necessary to perform job duties.

Another security component, Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP), will simplify user’s access to STAARS. LDAP serves as a central authentication mechanism that permits the use of local network authentication in STAARS. For the user, this means they will have the single login credentials to log into their local network and STAARS. In STAARS, you will be using your STAARS user ID and network password for access. This means one less password to remember!



We are confident the STAARS security model will meet our security requirements and prove beneficial for your agency. If you have any questions or concerns, contact your agency’s Security Lead.

Specific STAARS Security Concerns for the Individual User

One major question that the STAARS team has encountered so far is, “Who else can see our information?” The obvious primary security concern for agencies has been the issue of other agencies viewing our agency’s information. Each department’s accounting information entered into STAARS will be restricted from being viewed by other agencies. This is maintained through organizational security as explained in the “Security in STAARS: How It All Works” article in this newsletter. Anyone assigned to a specific agency will only be able to view information from that agency. Each user will be assigned a home organization and if needed a foreign organization. Central departments such as State Purchasing and the Comptroller’s Office will not have organizational security turned on and will be able to access all departments.

Not only will specific areas be secured but also specific information. No longer will taxpayer identification numbers, bank account numbers, and social security numbers be displayed for everyone to view, these fields will be masked with asterisks using user interface field security. Only authorized users will be able to view this data, keeping *vulnerability* to unauthorized users to a minimum.



Even with these features configured, security is only as effective as its weakest link. With this being said, it is very important for users to keep their passwords secure.

Your password to STAARS will be the same *password* you use to log into your computer to access your emails and other sensitive information. It is important that your password remains with you and not shared with anyone else. Also, when leaving your desk for any period of time, you should always lock your computer in order to keep others from accessing your work or potentially sensitive information.

Each user contributes to the STAARS system to keep it secure. Thanks for all you do to assist the System and Security Administration Competency Center.

February “Guess Words” Winner!!!

Congratulations to the winner of the February “Guess Words” contest, **Michelle Boshell** from the **Department of Corrections!** She received a \$20.00 gift card to **GiGi’s Cupcakes.**

STAARS Security and Workflow Word Search

The puzzle below contains common terms used in security and workflow. The 12 terms are in a *different font* throughout the newsletter. Find the terms in the newsletter. Locate them in the puzzle, highlight the words, and copy the puzzle into an email and submit to staars@finance.alabama.gov by **5 PM on Friday, March 20**, and if you are the lucky winner, you will receive a \$20 gift card to Subway! One entry per person, please. Winner will be drawn from all correct entries submitted.



SECURITY AND WORKFLOW WORD SEARCH

S E C U R I T Y M J I L C L R
 F X D F N H M A C Z I A V E W
 F I N O Q F G D B P K I Z L A
 N O L O A V U N R Q Y T C L S
 W Z R Q I P K E A T S N X A T
 G G T E D T P Z I A Z E A R R
 Y T I L I B A R E N L U V A A
 Z P N Y D G O Z O D K Q H P A
 I A E R O H N O I V L E I M C
 J S O P T G Q H C N A S K U C
 P S P U D W Q W G S A L T V E
 S W A W O L F K R O W G S U S
 T O P R O C E S S S K M R L S
 F R A Q J F R R F A R C I O X
 X D J R U T S D G E D A G I T



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Do you have a question, suggestion, or concern?

We Welcome Your Feedback!

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