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MMARS Policy: Interface
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MMARS Interface Policy

Executive Summary

The Office of the Comptroller supports the use of electronic interfaces from external applications with the Massachusetts Management Accounting and Reporting System (MMARS). There are several types of interfaces supported by CTR. They are:

- Operational interfaces from Statewide systems, such as the Human Resource/Compensation Management System (HR/CMS) and the State Treasurer Systems
- Service delivery interfaces from institutions that provide business services such as Bank Lock Box operations
- Departmental systems that present transactional information.

Transactional and table interfaces with MMARS are bi-directional as required by the user department. For example, inbound departmental interfaces can result in an outbound transactional status return interface to the presenting system that communicates the current status of the transactions received by MMARS.

This policy statement describes the conditions under which a request to establish an interface with MMARS will be considered, the process for requesting an interface and the requirements for maintaining that interface.

Considerations

Authorization

Interface requests will be given consideration if they meet specific requirements. These requirements include:

- There is a demonstrated benefit to the Commonwealth through either resource (financial and or human) savings or increased timeliness and accuracy of the information recorded in MMARS.
- Demonstrated technical capacity to develop, implement and operate the interface
- Financial resource and management commitment to develop and maintain the interface in an on-going business relationship

MMARS is a dynamic system that periodically makes changes to assure the system is using supported vendor versions of software, meet the needs of sound fiscal management, and comply with statutory directives and Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) financial reporting requirements. Upgrades to the underlying software can involve changes to transaction layouts and database structure. Interface requestors must demonstrate a willingness, commitment and capability to modify their operational interfaces in a time frame coincidental with the MMARS changes.

CTR will provide administrative and technical guidance concerning MMARS changes and will assist departments to re-certify their interfaces. Departments who cannot meet the time frames associated with changes to MMARS will have their interface authorization suspended in MMARS until re-certification has

been completed. CTR will provide departments with as much lead time as possible to make these changes. However, there may be times when modifications to either MMARS documents or tables are needed on an emergency basis. In such cases, the CTR business unit and technical staff will work with departments to make the needed changes or develop a satisfactory alternative solution.

Policy

Establishing Interface Processing

A Department that desires to establish an interface from their internal systems to MMARS is required to make a formal request that the interface be approved. The department must provide information regarding the following characteristics of the proposed interface:

- Transaction and or Table content
- Business context of the departmental application presenting the interface data
- Technology foundation of their application
- Estimated volumes
- Frequency of interface activity
- Description of internal application management and resources.

In addition to the above, the department head must certify that the department is prepared to:

- Authorize the expenditure of both human and fiscal resources to develop and maintain an effective interface relationship with MMARS. This authorization must include the commitment to acquire, develop and/or implement software and other technology to meet the requirements of MMARS interfaces.
- Incorporate appropriate interface management and administrative internal controls for the maintenance and operation of the interface.

Following the receipt of the request to implement or modify an interface, CTR will assign business and technical staff to review the request for compliance with stated requirement, conduct review sessions with department staff to discuss intended interface content and make a recommendation to CTR management regarding the acceptability of the interface request.

Once an interface request has been approved, CTR, ITD and department representatives will form a workgroup to design, develop, prepare infrastructure technology and certify interface activities. After the interface has been certified, CTR business and technical staff will coordinate MMARS and ITD security activities to implement interface processing. Changes to the department systems from which data is being sent must be tested and re-certified before files can be sent to production.

Operational Requirements

- MMARS transactional and table interfaces utilize data coded in an Extensible Markup Language (XML). All departmental interface data must be presented in this format.
- Interfacing systems are responsible for initiating the transfer of data between their application and MMARS. MMARS is compliant with the Information Technology Division (ITD) data transfer standard known as Interchange. Interchange is an inter-operability messaging protocol based on the IBM MQ Series technology. ITD operates the Interchange network infrastructure that provides access to the MMARS Interface Load service.
- Departments must develop and maintain the ability to retain back up copies of their interface files. In the event of an Interchange transfer failure, departments may be asked to resubmit their interface files.
- MMARS operates on a standard production schedule that includes a nightly processing cycle. Interface operations are conducted from Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 4:30 pm. Department interfaces received by the MMARS Load service after 4:30 pm and before 7:00 am will be accepted for processing in the next business day.
- Transactional and table status return and payment number return interfaces are created as part of the MMARS nightly processing cycle. Departments choose to receive return files which are transmitted during the nightly cycle processing, usually by 7:00 am. Departments are encouraged

to make provisions to accept return file interfaces without placing their internal processing schedules in jeopardy.

- Departments should use ~~the~~ either MMARS on-line features or the Commonwealth Information Warehouse for information related to the results of transactional and table interface beyond the status information contained in the Status Return interface.

Internal Controls

The processing of all transactions or table updates in MMARS require certification by a department that the entries comply with state finance regulations. In the case of on-line transaction/table processing, the individual's Universal Access Identification (UAID) code and its associated security privileges ensure that department authorization has been granted to the user to perform the activity being processed. Anyone entering the batch information on line must have delegated signatory authority from the department head (DHSA) to authorize financial activity for that department. The Interface Control features of MMARS will prevent certain Interface files from being accepted for processing in MMARS. Interfaces files received via Interchange that are structurally incorrect, inconsistent with stated control totals (number of records and dollar amounts)/or not authorized by CTR will be discarded without further action in MMARS. CTR monitors these incidents and provides advice and counsel to the presenting departments regarding file format, financial controls and/or the process of obtaining authorization for an interface.

Since there is no on-line user interaction during interface presentation, all department interfaces require on-line approval prior to the processing of the interface files in MMARS. The MMARS Interface Load service will only accept interface files from authorized departments. Once an incoming interface has met the file validation process described above, the Interface Control features of MMARS require that a user with appropriate security privileges (DHSA) apply an approval to all incoming interface files **prior** to these interface files being loaded or processed in MMARS. Failure to approve interface activities results in the file being rejected and discarded. Departments are then required to resubmit these interface files for processing.

CTR monitors all interface activity daily. In the event that a department experiences a repeatedly high percentage of either interface control failures or document validation errors once they are loaded to the MMARS document catalogue, CTR will initiate remedial action to assist the department to improve performance. If attempts to correct business or technical problems underlying the high error percentage are unsuccessful, CTR may suspend interface processing until the department has demonstrated an improvement in successful processing.

Information Sources

- Related Procedure – [MMARS Interface Authorization Procedure](#)
- Legal Authority - [M.G.L. c. 7A](#) (Office of the Comptroller); [M.G.L. c. 29](#) (State Finance Law);
- Attachments - None
- Links – [Interchange](#)
- Contacts - [Help Desk](#)

Revisions

- November 1, 2006 – Removed language referencing Knowledge Center and updated relevant links to Mass.gov/osc portal site.
- August 15, 2012 – Removed language referencing CommBridge and replaced with Interchange.