Jason Berlow: He just hit the record button. Okay, so I just want to talk again about that survey at the end. We look at them for each training and we look at the individual comments, specifically where additional different types of trainings are requested. So, please fill those out because we're tracking that. It's how we're tracking of all training, the overall satisfaction rating with the trainings.

Today, we're going to be talking about understanding the flow of obligations and transactions. So, basically, we're going to take you on a little trip for an obligation, and show you the whole process for everything you need to know about an obligation or how it's created, to the types of obligations, the common types here, the common financial reports that we have, and then understand the tracking requirements for open obligations, UDOs, which is very important but it's also something that can be kind of a pain. So, we want to make it easier for you, so you have the language and the knowledge when you talk with your fiscal, and then some UDO helpful information.

So, I will be presenting the first part, and then Kari is going to present the second type. And then Diane Murphy will be presenting the last part. Some of you might have met Diane Murphy before, but she joined the ORD Office of Finance over a year ago now. She comes from the Augusta VMAAC where she was the budget supervisor, so she's very familiar with how the fiscal and the FMS operates at the station level, and she's been a great resource. If you work with HSR and defunding, you've probably worked with Diane because that's her primary responsibility at the HSR&D budget portfolio. As always, we'll have question and answer at the end. If you have questions beyond the scope of this training, please feel free to ask those too.

Understanding the Flow of Funding and Obligations. With most things VA, I always call VA a bit of a menagerie with the finance and how confusing things could be especially with some of our antiquated financial systems. I'm assuming this scenario here from the Imitation Game, where they're trying to figure out how to manage obligations and understand all that. So, hopefully, we'll help you get there a little more organized with it.

One thing we really want to flag here is to understand the resources available and the policies. And if you haven't, and we can send those out later, but the VA Financial Policy Manual is available on the VA website and it has a number of chapters and all sorts or things about how to manage obligations 2237, 1358, etc., all sorts of things, appropriations law. I just want to flag, it's important when you want to understand the obligations to look at these policies.

The obligation policy states that appropriated funds will be obligated consistently with fiscal restrictions on federal spending. VA may obligate and expend appropriations only for specific purposes for which the appropriation was made within time limits applicable for the appropriation. So, just to flag, next month, we'll be doing a training on appropriations law where we'll be talking more about those specific items. So, we can put that ahead of that training. So, we must ensure the funds will be able to cover the obligation expenditure prior to entering into agreement. So, that means prior approval. You can read a lot more about this in the Financial Policy Manual. But an obligation is an estimated amount when the exact amount cannot be determined. So, if you have an obligation for a hundred dollars, which is your estimate, and then the actual expenditure or what you spend or what you write the check for is seventy-five dollars, there has to be a process to make that adjustment.

Obligations must be consistent with the separation of duties of the following: Purchases of goods and services are to be initiated by request or who is authorized to request purchases of goods and services. And then the approval for goods and services will be made by a person who has been authorized for that responsibility. I'm sure you've all heard about the Anti-deficiency Act and we'll include that in appropriations law training, but it requires us to use federal funding in an appropriate manner that matches our appropriations language.

Understanding the flow of funding and obligation. It's really important when we do this to understand the line of accounting of the transaction. First, we have the station number which is your three-digit code for your station. The 127 is the station for ORD central office, so that's our station number. So, this records what station the transaction occurred at or the obligation. The budget here is very important. The first two digits are the beginning of the period of availability of the appropriation and the last two are the end, and then the fund. We generally work with research appropriations, so you'll see 0161A1, but you might to see 0161R1, or if it's query funding, you might see 0160 or 0152. So, this records the funding when appropriation occurs. A is direct and R is reversible for the fund. And then you have the ACC which denotes that FCP or ACC where the funds will be utilized to help track the funding. The Cost Center denotes who is purchasing the goods and services. The last one is the Budget Object Class which is very important for how we classify the types of goods and services purchased. And that gets reported to the department, to OMB and to Congress, and our budget justification to explain what exactly we are buying. Is it payroll? Well, not for obligations. Is it contracts? Supplies? Equipment, etc.?

Section two. Kari, I believe this is your slide, or I can take this slide.

Parker: Kari, you're on mute if you are talking.

Jason Berlow: Maybe she slipped away. I'll take this slide.

So, the common obligation types are below. IFCAP makes transaction which is reflected on the running balance. So, we have the 2237, which are for contracts. Those go through a contracting officer, and really important, we've referenced the VA Financial Policy Manual chapters. So, 2237 must be processed by contracting ahead of an obligation number assigned prior to obtaining the service or receiving a good, then recorded in the VistA if kept. Then we have Inter-personnel Agreements or so sorry, 1358s which are usually for inter-personnel agreements or IAAs. Those won't require a contracting officer. It will be submitted directly to fiscal service. And then, here's your reference for the financial policy.

I think Kari's having technical difficulties, Parker. Do you want to message her in the team's chat we have going?

Parker: Yeah, will do.

Jason Berlow: All right, cool. And then, government purchase guides for supplies and services below the micro-purchase threshold. So, that's generally below three thousand dollars. And there's a bunch of policies on that in the financial policy manual.

So, going to the next slide. So, Diane, until Kari comes back, do you want to take these slides? Because I think you will be better suited to present this.

Diane Murphy: Yeah.

Jason Berlow: Okay, thanks.

Diane Murphy: I can go through it, that's fine. So, we're going to discuss about 2237 first. Again, these go through your contracting officer. Sometimes, they may just go to your logistics and not necessarily to contracting. If there maybe an order of that, so one-time order, that's above your credit card limit, that maybe logistics could be placing. So, you may sometimes submit a 2237 just to your logistics officer, your acquisition planner, to help you place orders, but your fund control point clerk enters your 2237 and then it has to be approved by the fund control point official before it leaves your service to go to logistics and/or contracting. Your 2237 can be used to purchase for materials or services, or you may have like an annual contract where you are receiving merchandise or services throughout the year for multiple years. Most of your obligations are going to start with the letter D or either your D may be in the second decision. Each station does things a little bit different, but you have different lettering series that should stand for different things. D is what research uses for the majority of the time. And I think Kari is on. Can you hear me, Kari?

Kari Points: Yes, thank you. Sorry, for technical difficulties. My computer just kicked me out of it. So, thanks for picking that up for me, Diane.

Jason Berlow: And that's an important lesson for it, for our trainings, we need to be nimble and respond to challenges.

Kari Points: Yes, thank you. I guess, I'll just getting on this slide talking about managing obligations, 2237.

Parker: Kari.

Kari Points: Yes?

Parker: Sorry to interrupt. I see in the Q&A a couple of other people had connection issues. So, I don't know if anyone else experiences these across the webinar, it looks like it's maybe Webex or CAG. So, try logging off and logging back in and if not, try using the call-in number.

Kari Points: And I was having trouble getting back in but I was able to do through my browser, that option, and get back in. So, you can try that, that might help too.

So, a 2237, we're talking about 2237s, these are the documents that are initiated that will go to contracting. So, 2237s, just remember those are your obligations that go into contracting. When the 2237 is processed, it is assigned an obligation number and at that time becomes a purchase order. So, when you create that 2237, and it's approved by your approving official and it goes to eCMS, those funds are set aside from your fund control point or what we call those committed funds. But once it's assigned and processed, that becomes fully obligated. And then at that point, invoice payments are submitted through IPPS for the goods and services outlined in the contract, and then the vendor is paid after completion of those items. So, the required steps, you have the fund control point clerk that answers the 2237 and then is approached by a fund control point official. The most common types of obligations are your materials and service contract for these. When it's a 2237, the obligation number for research will begin with a D. So, the first letter does mean something. Fiscal may be doing something different, but it really should be D equals research. And then the three represents the fiscal year of that obligation. So, in this case 2023. Next slide please.

Here are your instructions for a 2237 purchase order. They should be entered timely. And really, everyone knows that contracting takes a while that's not unknown. So, please get these in as early as possible because you need to allow adequate time for that process to happen. You also need to enter the 2237 number using the correct fiscal year and quarter for the delivery date of the good or the beginning of the data services. So, if you're entering now for something that will start in quarter three, let's June 1st, you'd want to be using that quarter on the 2237. You need to be regularly monitoring these transactions with the running balance to until the transaction is completed, and that you're performing followup. Those codes on the running balance are going to tell you where it's at in the process. If it's been committed, if it's been assigned a PO, if it's been obligated, you can follow that along there. If a transaction needed to be cancelled, you need to make sure that you cancel the transaction number because it will stay there, and if you use [Indiscernible 00:14:08] it will keep downloading in, even if it has a zero-dollar amount at that point, you really need to cancel that transaction out. At that point, I'm using the cancel transaction with a permanent number, menu option in IFCAP. Next slide please.

So, the next type of obligation is a 1358. The 1358s we talked about is for IPAs, patient reimbursements, IAAs, and these are a type of obligation that's used to allocate funds for an estimated expense. So, you're going to obligate the 1358 when fiscal obligates that the total dollar amount is immediately withdrawn from the fund control point. And then, whoever is getting that payment will submit the invoices into IPPS for payment. The 1358 can only be used for approved uses that are listed in the Financial Policy Volume 2 Chapter 6, Appendix A. It has a similar process to the 2237 where you're going to have a fund control point clerk and your approving official. It's the most restricted type of obligation that you can use for which is services, and only when a specific authorization exists for that type of obligation. The first two digits of the PO number are flipped from what a 2237 is. So, they should start with the fiscal year, which would be a three in this case, and then D which is research again. Per [Indiscernible 00:15:39] regulations, there's a lot of separation of duties that we're all used to working with. You have your clerk that enters the request, the approving official that then approves that request, you have your fiscal office that's going to obligate it, and they you have a certifying official that certifies the payment. So, you really have all these layers to make sure that everything is accounted for properly. Next slide.

The steps are pretty similar to the 2237 as well as far as to make sure that you enter them timely. The new 1358 and any adjustments, increases or decreases request must be entered within five days of beginning date of service, whether it's going to be a year or quarter, monthly that you're obligating it for. The fiscal year and quarter on the document needs to reflect the beginning date of the services being requested. So, if a prior increase or decrease is being requested, it should be requested in the fourth quarter of the applicable year. So, for example, if your budget increase in FY20 PO and FY21, you should enter that request, and then submit FY20 quarter for transaction.

Two, regular monitoring. So, you should be reviewing the obligations and payments against that 1358 regularly to ensure that they appropriately align with the payments that are being processed and the agreement that was in place for that. So, for example, if an IPA is going to terminate early, you'd want to make sure you decrease that obligation out to return the amount of funding back to the investigator. So, make sure you're staying up on those adjustments. If a significant surplus or deficit is identified, the increase or decrease should be entered immediately to make sure that their [Indiscernible 00:17:24] is aligned still with the agreement that is in place. If a transaction is not needed, you want to make sure that you properly cancel it using that same IFCAP, VistA menu option, cancel transaction with a permanent number. And then you'll see this can be only completed when the asterisk is showing in the committed amount and obligation amount columns in your running balance. Next slide.

Certifying officials. These are individuals that are going to be approving those invoices against your 2237s and 1358 transactions. These must be done in order to ensure funding levels are adequate for the entire time period covered by the obligation. So, if you get an invoice in, if the certifying official is going to review it to make sure it matches the agreement and it's okay for payment, but also, we need to make sure that the funding is there. So, if the invoice, and there's a deficit or surplus that's identified based on the invoice and it should be there. Maybe they asked to invoice for more or less than what is needed and that's why you need to work it out with the vendor. But if it is identified at that point that a deficit or surplus is identified, then you need to submit an increase or decrease for that obligation. So, if it's a 2237, you enter those en force and it's a modification to the contracting office to increase or decrease that obligation or if it's a 1358, if entered into IFCAP and obligated by your fiscal office, that adjustment. Next slide.

The final obligation type we're going to talk about is the government purchase part. This is a purchasing tool that you should be familiar with that is similar to how you use your personal credit card with a lot more regulations in place for it though. It is used to commit funds from a fund control point for an estimated expense. So, when you make a purchase that cost is committed and up to the fund control points. It's going to show up on the committed column in FMS and then VistA. The order is now obligated until the vendor charges for the goods and services, and everything is reconciled and completed at that point that you've received the item. Orders are salvaged by the purchase card holder and then approved by whoever your approving official or alternate approving official that is designated to approve those items. These are the most flexible type of obligations and can be used for materials and services. Once a card holder enters and applies their electronic signature to a purchase card order, it remains in a committed status like I said until the charge from the vendor is received and reconciled.

So, it's really important to understand when your orders are committed versus obligated and what that means. Especially when you start talking prior year dollars. Where is the transaction at and monitoring those. Can we get them obligated and reconciled as quickly as possible once those items are in. Obligation numbers contain letters. An example here is the D65555. In these cases, the number six represents a fiscal year. So, that second number, you know, whatever fiscal gives you for assigned number, the second number is the fiscal year of the obligation. And again, in this case D equals research. But not all stations use the D for purchase card orders, so you may have different system at your site based on how your fiscal has set those up. Next slide please.

The steps are here, it's the same. You want to enter them timely, monitoring them, and properly cancel. So, you need to enter a new detailed purchase card order and apply your electronic signature code within one business day of the procurement. You need to make sure to ensure funds are available before contacting the vendor. They'll make sure you have a process with your purchase card technicians that they know that there's funds available and how they can purchase for the investigators. Order is placed without the available funds go against the Anti-deficiency Act role.

VHA Handbook 1730.01 requires all purchase card orders to be completed and closed within 30 days. The delivery date, you want to make sure you're following up and ensuring that those too are timely. You work with the vendors, some vendors, you're struggling to get them to do those charges. But it's really important to stay up on and that get those closed out in a timely fashion. Again, if a transaction is not needed, you need to make sure that you do that final step to cancel it out. Otherwise, it's going to tie up those funds that can be used for other items because it'll sit there, and they're committed and impact that. To cancel the purchase card, IFCAP option is amendment to purchase card order authority E. So, this can only be completed too if there's no receiving the report. So, if you have received an item in, then you can't just cancel it out. You're going to have to reconcile that. Next slide please.

You can request from your local office through whatever process they have designated. You can request inquiries from the original thirty five hundred dollar supply or twenty five hundred dollar services to the ten thousand dollar limit. Now, the service limit cannot be increased from the twenty five hundred dollars unless it needs the exemption under the Fair Labor Standards Act. There is a link in the slide here. If you go to it, there is a professional exemption and what standards need to be met to allow you to go up to ten thousand dollars for a service order. You can request a memo from the government purchase card program that includes a justification, signatories on it so your service chief of budget just takes them to the station CFO. Once it's all approved, then your purchase card coordinators should go ahead and increase your limit. This is up to your facility though, so hopefully, you're able to get this, but it does have to be approved locally. Next slide.

So, delinquent unauthorized commitment. These are things that we definitely want to stay away from. So, a delinquent obligation is when an individual who has the purchasing authority prepares goods or services but just not record the expense within that one business day. These delinquent obligations require approval from fiscal, logistics, and the medical sector documented on the memo prior to the obligation. So, it's really important to make sure that you get those expenses recorded within that one business day of that procurement.

An unauthorized commitment is when an individual places an order with a vendor that exceeds whatever their purchasing authority is. Maybe it's a higher dollar amount or it's not a type of good or service that they should be procuring or maybe they don't even have the authority to purchase government fund. So, unauthorized commitments require ratification for payment. It's a lengthy process. If it's not completed, the individual who made the procurement is liable to [Indiscernible 00:24:49] government. So, in sample of an unauthorized commitment would be let's say you have an investigator, something goes down in their lab. They call a service person in and then they just send you an invoice. Well, that investigator does not have the authority to purchase on behalf of the government. Before they call in that service agreement, they need to contact the procurement technician to get approval to go ahead and do that. So, that's just one example when you get into trouble with an unauthorized commitment. And then, there's an example there. Sample tool for helping with education VA fiscal regulations. Just kind of reminds you and PIs what they can and can't do, and how they always need to get approval prior to committing the government to anything. Next slide please.

Common Fiscal Reports. We have Clippy here on the page, always makes me smile. Go to next slide please. So, the next two slides are going to be a whole list of VSSC reports that are really useful to you, and the links are there. And so, if I may make a suggestion, if you have not gotten into the VSSC, it is read only and everyone has access. So, click on the links and play around with it. Trying it with tools and reports can help you. We've gone through a lot of these in previous trainings. I believe an announcement has gone out that on February 1st, we're going to actually do a VSSC Office Hour where we'll just pull it up and you can ask questions on what the reports can do, what you might want to know about the VSSC, and really just do a live demonstration on what your needs might be on these programs. But you can get into the FTEEs, which is like your undelivered reports, your open documents. There's just a lot of reports that are good that you can get through the VSSC.

There's a couple of reports here that you cannot. For example, the paid reports. You have to be able to get that from your fiscal office, your payroll. Otherwise, if you have [Indiscernible 00:26:55] download that exactly. The F850 and F851, these are your undelivered orders report. You should be getting these from fiscal on a monthly basis, asking you to give the status of the undelivered orders. It's really important that you follow up with your fiscal and provide them with that information on when they sent it to you. I believe you usually have up to 14 days to respond on those UDOs once they come to you. If you're curious at any time, you can also go into the VSSC, to the links here and do open documents only. And that's going to identify your purchase orders that happen to basically have a [Indiscernible 00:27:32] or open orders, and they go back through all the fiscal years. So, if you have a contract from several years ago that you never submitted a modification to de-obligate, and there's funds remaining there, it's going to show up on that open document report, and you really need to work to close all those out. Next slide please.

Again, here are some other reports that you can get through this alternate VSSC, the monthly detailed accounting transactions are there, which shows all the transactions per specific month by your general ledger. You have F20s. We talked about a lot which show you your daily activity by your ACC codes that you can pull. There's also the F830. It shows all expenses and payments which have been processed. And F887 obligation part which shows all the obligations that have been processed in FMS. So, like I said, we're going through these in a couple of weeks in detail and I'm kind of showing you how useful the VSSC can be for you. Next slide please.

So, here's an example of an F20 report. This is just such an important report to look at, what's hitting your fund control points, and you can pull the report for months going back and pull up through a certain time period. So, here the fiscal year has been selected as 2022. The VISN 7 is for Augusta. We want to look at the 0161A1 funds, we're looking at our research appropriation, and we want to look at the whole year here. So, you can put in whatever timeframe that you want to look at. So, let's say you're behind on your salaries and you want to look at your pay period from a month ago. You can put in just those states that that pay period would've hit and it will show you the report for there. Once you've done that, you hit view report and the next slide will show you what it looks like.

So, a couple of key things are highlighted here in yellow. The document ID shows you the transaction type. So, you can see there's accrual that I've hit here. EWs which are your cost transfers. Your ETs, your credit card orders. It types a document that might hit your fund control point over that period. The other column that's highlighted it's your obligation adjustment amount. So, what happened to the fund control point when that transaction hit. It's the document in that column. The other one that is not highlighted but it is an important tool is the fourth column over, it's by fiscal year. So, you can see that there are two fiscal years labeled there, 21 and 22, and you can now know that this transition hit prior year or current year transaction. So, that column is also very useful. Next slide please.

And then the IPPS. We've talked about this invoice payments. So, whoever your certifying official is, they'll certify payments in IPPS. Zoning in on here is the training piece of this. So, if you want to get familiar with IPPS, there's a lot of training that's available by clicking on that link right there when you go to the home page of IPPS. And then in the next slide, we'll show you all the trainings that are available to you. And then there's the whole training and video, and then also a clerk and certifying official guide that you can use to reference if you are going to be working in IPPS. I think that's it for section 3. Let's go to the next slide. I'm going to turn it over to Diane for the next couple of sections.

Diane Murphy: All right. Good afternoon, everybody. So, we're going to go ahead and jump into this. And start trying to show you some information to help you work with your UDO and to understand what's being asked of you for this. So, we'll go to the next slide.

So, like Kari mentioned earlier, your UDO is sent to you from your finance office every month, and it's showing your open obligations. That's showing any obligations that still have funds still available on that, and your research office, you are responsible for responding back. You need to review these obligations every month. A big thing that I used to hear all the time from the stations when I was at a station is the complaint of, I just responded to that last month, why do I have to continue to respond to that? And that VA financial policy manual there is the reason why because it is a requirement for every month for your accounting office to send this report to you, and they are required to get a response back from each service within the 14 days to show that you have reviewed it and what the status of each of these orders are for. We'll go to the next slide.

Again, the UDO is a combination of your F850 report and your F851 report. They download it on the 1st of the month and prepare that and send that out. Again, the purpose of reviewing these reports is to reconcile with any orders that you have that still have outstanding funds, any kind of balance still on it is to determine why does it still have funds on there. Why do we have funds there that have not been paid out that you have obligated against that. As part of the review, the finance office identifies all of the open obligations, and any obligation that is greater than 90 days, that's past that 90 days or has last activity date of greater than 90 days does affect the financial indicators for the hospital. Next slide please.

And this is a review about the two reports that are used. The F850 report pulls down each open document that has an outstanding balance on that. When the order is initially obligated, then your money has gone into the outstanding line in FMS. And so, that's where this information is pulling from, FMS, and looking at every order that has an outstanding balance. The difference between the 850 and 851, 851 is looking at orders that have what we would call an accrued amount. It could be an order that a receiving report has been processed, so the money is not necessarily outstanding anymore, but it is now on a receiving report but maybe a payment has not processed. Therefore, using the money that has been processed against the receiving report. And so, that's identified on the 851, and also identifying service orders that have been accrued. So, if you have an order that ended on September 30, 2022, the end date has passed, and so then the funds are not considered outstanding anymore. They are now considered outstanding on the accrued amount. And so, that's the difference between the two reports there. We'll go to the next slide.

So, this is an example of one of the reports that we listed earlier that was pulled from VSSC. This is the obligation and accrual review report here. You can see that it's got your document ID in the second column there. It's got your budge fiscal years beginning, that's in the fourth column. Then you have the vendor name and the [Indiscernible 00:35:40] are in there, your cost centers, your BOC. You're going to have-- if you go towards the right side, you can see five columns from the right, you have our outstanding balance that is on those orders. And then it tells you how many days has that document been there without having any activity there. Okay, so we will go to the next slide.

This example here is an example of where accounting has sent the UDO report. And of course, your report may be a little bit different than this document here. It depends on how your accounting office downloads the reports and puts them together before they send it out to you. But it should basically provide the same information. It's going to have your document ID, that's your purchase order number, it's going to have the fund control point, your budget fiscal years, your open amount, your vendor name. It's going to show your beginning and ending date for that order, and how many days it's been open. You can see on this one here that first example, like Kari mentioned earlier, you can have an order open that's multiple years that has been opened. And so, there really needs to be looking into to determine what's going on here. With this example here, these were federal orders that were entered, and we know sometimes, those do take longer than working with a normal commercial vendor. But it is something that you want to keep on top of and be working with your contracting officers and your fiscal department to help resolve closing out these orders in a timely manner. Next slide please.

So, here when you get the report, you'd want to make sure that you review all the orders, and that you are looking as to what the activity has on there. Yes, you are going to have orders listed on your report that are still active. Maybe it doesn't end until September 30, 2023, and that's okay. But it's just letting you know that that order is open. It might be an alert even though it's not to the end date yet. It might determine that you might still need to do some checking into it. But there are different factors here to pay specific attention to, is you're going to look at your end date. Do you have orders that are going to be ending within the next 30 to 60 days? Are my invoices being paid? Are they being invoiced for the correct amount? A good example is if you have a contract where you are paying a vendor every month. Are they invoicing you properly? Should they be invoicing you for maybe a thousand dollars a month, but they're invoicing you for twelve hundred dollars a month or it could be the other way for eight hundred. So, that's something you would want to be keeping up with as to why they are not invoicing you properly. Or have you received the items on this order, but yet the report is not reflecting that payments are being made or that a receiving report has been done. So, these are different things that you can look at to research to make sure that the orders are staying active, that you're keeping up with what's happening, with all the activity of that.

You have the days open column on the UDO report that's going to identify how many days that has gone past, the end date on your order. And when any order goes past those 90 days, then it's considered delinquent, and it affects the financial indicators for your station. And your last activity date, this is a good one to look at, even with your current order. Again, if you have an order that's active but there has not been any activity on it, then you might want to question, why haven't I made any payments on this order yet? We've had it active for four months now, and I know I have received products, or I have received service. Yet, there hasn't been any activity, there's no payment that's happening against this. So, you might have to reach out to your vendor. They could be submitting their invoices but submitting it with the wrong PO number. So, that's always something to watch out for. A good example is we just had one at a CO just last week that we identified where a vendor submitted their invoice but they submitted it with a wrong PO number, and so we had to get in and take actions to let the vendor know that they had submitted it wrong, and what they needed to do to correct it, so that they could start getting paid timely. If you receive items directly in your service, and they do not go through the warehouse, then you need to make sure that you're contacting your warehouse and letting them know to submit the receiving reports. That way, that can be annotated, and invoices can be paid for those items that are received. Next slide.

So, now we're going to go to our UDO helpful information. This looks like a really good customer service group there, all being very friendly. I think I want to go to, where's that, White Lotus that's in the back there. I need to go there and get some relaxation.

Jason Berlow: It's a popular TV show right now. That's season two if anybody's seen it, yeah. It's not what it seems sometimes.

Diane Murphy: Right.

Jason Berlow: But it will be more helpful. Next slide.

Diane Murphy: So, this is a little bit of information. When you're looking at your UDO report, or if you pull down the reports from VSSC for your open orders, you're going to see in there, the MO, SO, you may see an RT, or an AR there as your document type. And so, we're going to talk a little bit about what these are, and what's the difference between these. So, an MO is what fiscal calls a miscellaneous order. And if you are looking at VistA which we are going to look at couple of screenshots here in a little bit, the method of payment is selected as an invoice receiving report. So, on your MO orders, the warehouse must process receiving reports on these orders. And again, if the item didn't come through the warehouse, you need to notify the warehouse to process the receiving report. So, on MOs, you don't have to go into IPPS to certify the invoice because what IPPS does is they match the invoices directly to your receiving reports to make the payments. So, this is why it's very important to keep up with this, to let the warehouse know to process the receiving report if the items came directly to you because the vendor cannot get paid until that receiving report has been done for payment to happen.

The next type of orders is an SO for your service orders. So, your 1358s are SOs and also, you're going to have 2237s as SOs, and those would be your method of payment of certified invoice. So, on these orders, when the vendor submits the invoice into IPPS, any invoices over twenty-five hundred dollars must be certified by your certifying official in IPPS. If the invoice is below twenty-five hundred dollars, then if there are funds available on that order, then IPPS will process the payment automatically. But don't be comfortable with that. The example I mentioned just a little while ago that we had in central office where the vendor referenced the wrong PO number. Well, then the invoice was only eight hundred and twenty five dollars. So, IPPS paid that invoice off of the incorrect order. Because there was money there, so that's all it looked at as they looked at the PO number and there was money there, and so IPPS matched it together and processed the payment. So, then we had to go and identify and take steps to work to transfer that cost from that invoice to the correct PO number. There in turn the other order would get their funds back from making there. So, even when you know that IPPS is going to automatically make the payments, you'd still want to track them. You want to make sure that the vendor is invoicing properly, they're using the correct PO number, they're invoicing for the correct dollar amount. So, don't just overlook those even though IPPS will process those.

And then you have the receiving reports which can be an RR or an RT. Most of them are going to be RTs that you're going to see. Again, when the vendor submits the invoice, they will match up to the RTs that have already been processed by your warehouse to make those payments. And those receiving reports are processed against your MO documents, your invoice receiving report type documents.

And then your accrual, the AR. This happens directly in FMS when there are any outstanding funds remaining on an order past the end date of the SO order. So, this is an accounting function. It processes automatically in FMS where it will show that these funds are accrual. So, you still can make payments against those AR funds, but it's just in a different general ledger now, which is something that accounting tracks. You don't have to really worry about the general ledgers and everything, but just kind of letting you know a little bit about why that happens. But it is possible to have one purchase order that has an SO amount and an AR amount on your UDO. Just briefly, that happens because usually, after the order has ended and funds have gone to the accrued amount, the AR amount, that maybe an amendment was done afterwards to increase the order, and a lot of times those funds will stay in the SO amount there. Next slide.

So, how do you know what your purchase order number is? Most of the time in your services, you go in and submit your 2237 or you submit your 1358, and you have a transaction number. So, we're going to go and try to figure out what your purchase order is because sometimes contracting and/or accounting fiscal may not provide that information back to you. So, we're going to see how you can find out that information on your own. So, we're going to go and look at your running balance. These are the steps in VistA, we're in VistA now. So, you can go to your control point clerk menu or the official's menu, do your display control point activity menu, and then go to your running balances or most of you probably know if you're familiar with VistA, you can always do the up caret running balances and jump directly to that menu option. You're going to select your fiscal year, your quarter, and then put in the fund control point that your order was placed out of. And then do no for summary balances here. Next slide.

So, now we're looking at the top portion of your running balance. And so if you have your transaction number from when you submitted it, then you can look here. So, the far-left side of the running balance here at the very top, we got the FYQ, SEQ number there. So, that FY is your fiscal year. The Q is your quarter, and then the sequence number, the last four digits is the transaction number. So, you can see down at the bottom we have an example here, when we're looking at that very first slide, that transaction number would've been 509-22-1-2132 and then the transaction number 0009. So, if you have your transaction number, you can go to your running balance and look in the third column that says the obligation number, and that's going to let you know what your purchase order number is. So, this is useful when you're talking back to your vendors, when you're working on your UDO, you're able to look at the UDO and determine which transaction did I submit for this, and what is this for.

The next column, the TXN column is just a very brief description of the activity. OBL is an obligation. The CEI is the ceiling, that's a budget function where they're putting funds into your fund control point, or they could also be removing funds from your fund control point. You got the CAN which is for a transaction that has been cancelled. ADJ is for adjustment. This can be done to whether you have done an adjustment to one of your obligations, you may see that, or it could be something that budget has done themselves there. So, that could be done at different areas. The OBL, we had talked about earlier, that's where you have your purchase order number.

The next column is your date, that's the date of the transaction. A lot of times if you do an amendment to your purchase card order, or do an amendment to a 1358 later on, even though it's an adjustment, a lot of times it's going to show the original date of the obligation, not necessarily the date you did the adjustment.

The next column is your committed amount there. I highlighted the little asterisk in green next to there. So, when you're looking at your running balances, and if you see that little asterisk next to your dollar amount in the committed amount column, then that's going to let you know that something needs to happen from the service. It could be that you've started, maybe the clerk has started entering a 2237 or 1358, but they haven't completed it yet. So, something needs to be done. It could be that the clerk has completed it and sent it to the approving official, but the approving official hasn't approved it yet. [Indiscernible 00:51:32] completed something and they've sent it to their approving official to go back and look at their running balance a couple of days later to make sure that the approving official has approved it, but as long as the asterisk is there in the committed side, it's an action that the service needs to take. It could be that you need to cancel the order, maybe you've decided you don't want it anymore, but it's definitely something to pay attention to, to make sure that you know what's happening with that.

The next column is the control point balance. Once, the control point official approves it or if it's a purchase card order, and the card holder has signed it, it will deduct from your control point balance column. The next column is the obligated amount column. I have highlighted that one there also because that let's you know that somebody is working on it. On the first line that we have there for the D27200, we can see that there's not an asterisk next to the committed amount column. So, that meant, the service, the approving official has approved it, and it has gone further. Whether it's going to contracting for them to work up, a contract, or an order if it's a 1358 and it has gone over to your accounting department and it's in their hands now. But they have not completed their process with it but you know that it's not in your hands anymore when that committed amount column, the asterisk, is gone. And then you have the fiscal unobligated balance on the end, and that let's you know once they obligate it, it will deduct from that side. If it's a 2237, or a 1358, they will deduct from that side. Next slide please.

So, now you got the purchase order number. But you don't remember what that was for. So, we're going to go and look to see what your order actually is. So, here you can go to your control point clerk menu or official's menu again. Display control point activity menu and then go to your purchase order status menu option. And you go in, you put in your fund control point, and then you put that purchase order number. And it's going to come in, it's going to give you what the status of that order is and then it's going to ask you if you wan to display it, and we're going to say yes. Next slide.

This is a snapshot of an order, and I want to point out a couple of things. So, at the very top left, there's your purchase order number that you selected. Right below that, you're going to see the MOP, which stands for your method of payment. And that's what we were talking about earlier. This is an invoice receiving report method of payment. So, this method of payment is going to create an MO obligation, and that's what you see on your UDO report. You'll see that MO there. With this method of payment, this let's you know that you have to have receiving reports processed, so that payments could be made. At the very top on the right side, we have the status. This one's partial order received. Right below that it shows that there has been one receiving report and the date of that receiving report was done on June 23rd, 22nd. It will show you if there's like ten receiving reports. It will give you that number of ten and it will show you the date of when the last receiving report was processed. Going down just a little bit below, you're going to see on the left hand side, the budget fiscal years. This was done in 22, 23 funds, and it hands you fund control point. Towards the right side, you have the purchasing agent and the date that it was obligated, and the total amount of the order. And if there have been amendments to the order, that amount right there will reflect any amendments that have been processed. Next slide please.

And here, we're looking at an SO order. And again, you have the same information here. The left hand side, you have the method of payment as certified invoice. So, this is going to create your SO document that you see on your UDO. So, you're not going to get receiving reports on an SO, on a certified invoice. And as soon as accounting obligates the order, the status automatically says, "transaction complete." It doesn't mean that all the payments have been made, it's just that the order has been obligated, and as far as this step is concerned, there's nothing else that needs to be done to the order. You will not have any receiving reports processed in there. The only thing that might change would be if you have to do an amendment. Again, you have in the same places on the bottom left. You have that shows your budget fiscal years and your fund control point, and on the right-hand side, you have the contracting purchasing agent's name, and then you have the dollar amount of the order which would include any amendments there. If there were amendments that had been done on the SO or the MO, your status would also reflect that. So, it might say "transaction complete" and in parentheses, amended. But it would let you know if an amendment had been done and that status on the top. Next slide please.

All right, so now we're open for questions.

Parker: Folks, just a reminder, you can enter them in the Q&A box just address it to all panelists please. Can you all see?

Jason Berlow: I'll take this one, iFAMS. Yes, there's a whole VHA implementation team for iFAMS. iFAMS is now alive with the National Cemetery Administration in some headquarter offices. And we've met with the iFAMS implementers about how to apply for research. I think the current schedule is for some of iFAMS to be implemented. I think this will be implemented by VISNs starting FY25. So, we do have some time. But if there's interest in that, we could probably put that in the training and give some more information on iFAMS.

Kari Points: I think I can take this one if you want.

Jason Berlow: Go for it.

Kari Points: Okay. Can we start obligating funds without 90 days before contract ends, so that the end user can spend those funds in more efficient ways?

So, if you have a contract and you and the vendor both are in agreement that you're not going to utilize all the funds, that can be a modification to the contract. So, you can submit a modification to decrease the amount of contract if signed by a vendor, signed by the contracting officer. And then those funds can be de-obligated back to you, so that the PI can still spend them. So, you can that at any time they're contracted. You know that they're not going to utilize all the funds and the vender is in agreement about that. You don't need to wait until the end of the contract to submit those. If it's where you're de-obligated at the end of the contracting you need a way like if in final payment, if you don't know the exact dollar amount that kind of thing, then that becomes a more of an issue of wait until the final invoice payment is done and everyone in agreement that it should be closed out and de-obligated. That would be one way to do it ahead of time is through that modification.

Parker: I see some more coming in. Give us one sec.

Jason Berlow: Regarding the FY23 appropriation. You should've received an AACS, where we get what's called an automatic 30-day apportionment for the funding through the end of this month. So, we're still waiting on our full-year funding from what's called an apportionment, which is how OMB provides the budget authority. So, once we receive that, then we'll be loading the remainder of the funding at AACS. So, that's the status with that. Okay, I think that's for Diane or Kari.

Diane Murphy: I can answer this one. So, the financial services, FSC, requests that if a vendor submits an invoice under the wrong PO number that you reject the invoice and put in there, there's a place to put comments where you can put down there that it's a wrong PO number and annotate the correct PO number, so that is sent back to the vendor. The reason why they ask you to do that is because then you're not taking on the additional opportunity that interest might have to be paid out to that vendor. So, they want the vendor to resubmit the invoice with the correct PO number so that the timeline starts when they've resubmitted the correct one and not to the dates of the old one.

Kari Points: And if you accidentally went ahead and certified it which I think this may be asking that too, you can work with your fiscal office to move the funds to the correct PO number. So, if you went ahead and certified the payment on the wrong PO number, you need to move it. They can transfer those that payment to the correct one if that happens. Think of a next question.

Also, I've noticed in the past, some stations put a great deal of money in contracts but only use a fraction of it. Instead of putting exaggerated amounts, [Indiscernible 01:02:46] of how much was used for the contract. So, there's all this massive amounts of money due to money being...

I guess, you should not be doing an exaggerated amounts in your contracts. Your contracts should be on realistic amounts that you will be using. So, I'm not sure what [Indiscernible 01:03:06] exaggerated amounts. Do you want to go ahead, Diane? You can go ahead.

Diane Murphy: Yeah, because I have actually had this happen before. Because sometimes contracting will obligate and order a contract for an exaggerated amount even though you have said that you can't use it, they still do it for a larger amount. And again, it's going to be working with your contracting officer to work that out. What we did in the past where this happened with us was that we had to show contracting history, so that we can show for the last three years, this is what's been obligated. This is only what we are using, and after showing them historical information to show that they were over exaggerating the amounts when they obligated it, then in turn contracting then decreased our current year order to make it more manageable as to what we have. But a lot of that is just dependent on your contracting officer, and how they will work with you on that.

Jason Berlow: One more comment on the last question. It's also very important that you contracted that, on those obligations, because what will happen is we've seen a station will have an obligation, for example, last year in 21-22 funding and the obligation remains. But then once the next fiscal year starts and that obligation amount decreases, and the funds are now expired, the funds are no longer available for use for new obligations, so the money's lost. So, that's why it's really important to create accurate estimates. Next question. All right, Diane or Kari.

Kari Points: [Indiscernible 01:05:19] just for those that called in, any advice on how to have vendors submit regularly and timely in IPPS? Our affiliate is infamous for not bothering to bill unless we beg them to do so.

Yeah, this is a problem everywhere, [Indiscernible 01:05:33]. It's amazing how many times you have to beg vendors to let you pay them. Why can't they just submit an invoice. We've had, at my station, we're very fortunate our affiliate bills us right away. It's been set up with grant accounting. It's one individual responsible for it that monitors it. Somehow you have to get that communication with your affiliates. Who is responsible for it? What department? And how you might be able to work with them, you're setting up a schedule or something, just how much of a problem this is. I don't know, Diane, do you have anything to add to that? It's not an easy solution and I know a lot of us struggle, I've had that. You want an equipment order, trying to get them to submit the seller affiliate, but another vendor trying to get those invoices in IPPS. And a lot of it too is working with them, especially if they have staff change over and so it can be difficult to get them set up in Tungsten. I know we've had a lot of struggles with that, just really working with the help desk and trying to help them [Indiscernible 01:06:36] as much as possible to get those in because sometimes they do submit, and they don't know that they've been rejected and you never see them. So, just kind of trying to problem solve those issues too.

Diane Murphy: You've said it all. This is all mainly communication. Trying to have good communication with everybody.

Kari Points: How many days before interest starts accruing in IPPS for an unpaid invoice?

Diane Murphy: So, part of that depends on how the order was set up originally. If it's a net 30 days or a net 40 days, so the days start the date that the vendor submits the invoice in IPPS. Like I've mentioned before, if they submitted it with a wrong PO number, reject it so that they have to resubmit it properly and then that time starts over again as soon as that invoice is received in IPPS.

Parker: And that's the last one.

Diane Murphy: Great! So, just one more thing talking about interests, I'll add in there. So, if you do pay interest, it does not hit your obligation. It comes directly out of your fund control point. So, you would see a VS document on the second portion of your running balance, the FMS portion, a VS document would be interest but it also could be discount. Maybe the vendor offered a discount, and you might see that VS document actually giving funds back to your fund control point. And we did after the questions slide, we had a couple of other slides. So, just some general information document types and links to a lot of the policies that we talked about.

Jason Berlow: Thank you, everyone.

Kari Points: Thanks everyone!

Parker: Thank you to the presenters and thanks to all the audience for being here. As Tony and Jason mentioned up top, we do look at that post webinar service. So, if you all could just take a minute to fill that out, we would greatly appreciate it, and everyone have a great afternoon.