Recommendation from the EFS Systems Architecture Committee

Recommendation Number: 7
Name: EFS Approval Processes
Date: 4/5/12

Recommendation

The EFS Functional Steering Committee should quickly assess whether the EFS upgrade can deliver approval processes that solve existing problems and adhere to the principles below. While no system will deliver everything to everyone, we believe the EFS upgrade must, at a minimum, restore pre-EFS approval routing functionality. If this cannot be accomplished within EFS to the satisfaction of the user community, a front-end system should be developed and implemented in conjunction with the EFS upgrade. This critical decision should be one of the first functionality decisions of the EFS upgrade project.

Rationale

Forms Nirvana was sunset when EFS was implemented, and with its elimination department users lost flexibility that was important for efficient transaction routing and processing. Our focus is on regaining this lost functionality, not on whether it is delivered via EFS or a front-end system. The upcoming EFS upgrade is expected to provide new approval routing flexibility, and more needs to be learned in the coming months about this enhanced functionality before a decision should be made regarding EFS's ability or inability to meet users' approval process needs. This recommendation identifies lost functionality, current approval process problems and guiding principles to inform the decision process.

Lost Functionality and Problems

- Inconsistency between modules leads to confusion about how each document type (e.g. requisitions, vouchers, journal entries) routes and the appropriate path for approving/denying/returning a document.

- Approval thresholds are inconsistent across modules; requisitions, for example, are automatically system-approved if < $100, yet all p-card transactions must be approved, regardless of dollar amount.

- Approval routing is rigid. Preparers lost the ability to choose, by transaction, a specific approver from a list of authorized approvers.

- In modules where documents route to primary approvers first, the waiting period for the bounce to the backup is sometimes too short and sometimes too long.

- There is not an efficient mechanism for forced re-routing of documents.

- There is not an effective emergency approval process.

- In large Deptids, the approval volume for the primary approver can be overwhelming. In some cases, Deptids are requested <u>solely</u> to allow the approval workload to be spread over multiple people.

- EFS allows only one primary approver for all document types; because of the significant training commitment to gain access to EFS, this primary approver is often a financial person. We lost the ability to route approvals to non-financial users. Now, to obtain the programmatic, operational, or scientific perspective of management, manual offline processes are needed.

- Approver comments do not always stay attached to transactions, which leads to additional work when a transaction is returned to a preparer merely to add a comment.

- Maintaining the list of approvers and alternate approvers for the many Deptids, document types and dollar thresholds is cumbersome, as are the ARF forms when changes are necessary.

The problems identified above lead to inefficient work, re-work, errors, and processing delays. These poor outcomes can be alleviated by redesigning the approval processes in accordance with the following principles.

Guiding Principles
- Each document type's approval process should be optimized to balance consistency across modules with its unique characteristics. Approval routing does not need to be identical in each module, because some document types appropriately require different routing processes.

- Given the emphasis on operational efficiency and risk calibration, approval thresholds should be set at a dollar amount that minimizes non-value added effort for low risk activities; this threshold should be uniformly established for similar document types.

- The system needs to facilitate approvals by non-financial users, and preparers need flexibility to route documents to more than one approver per Deptid/document type. Approvers (primary and alternate) need access to all documents they are authorized to approve.

- RRCs need the ability to re-route documents to accommodate vacations, illnesses, and human and system errors.

- Approvers need the ability to permanently attach comments to a transaction, and those comments must be readily accessible to anyone researching that transaction.

- The process of assigning and maintaining approver responsibilities should be simplified and decentralized.

Workload impact for departments (high, medium, low):
Number of departments affected by this recommendation: **High**
Amount of workload reduced if these recommendations are implemented: **High**

Vote Summary

Name	Representing	Vote
Wendy Berkowitz	University Services	Yes
Gina Danyluk	AHC	Yes
Karen Dewanz	CFANS	Yes
Sarah Goulet	Veterinary Medicine	Yes
Jill Merriam	SVP Acad Affairs/Provost	Yes
Anne Mockovak	Medical School	Yes
Dave Pappone	CSE	Yes
Tom Quinn	U Stores	Yes
Michelle Wills	Carlson School	Yes