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CTAS News and More

By Rebecca Otto, State Auditor

Happy summer! The dust of the legislative session has now settled, and there is good news for many of our voluntary CTAS users. After a lot of the hard work put in by MAT staff and CTAS users contacting their lawmakers, the CTAS legislation passed. The Legislation provides the financing mechanism for the CTAS rewrite/upgrade to keep CTAS going for years to come. This column explains the next steps of the CTAS rewrite and also shares some other exciting news.

The CTAS legislation allows for the OSA to charge a one-time user fee to those entities who want to voluntarily use CTAS to maintain their financial records. The Legislation also requires the state to set up a Special Revenue Fund for CTAS in the State's accounting system. This Special Revenue Fund dedicates the CTAS user fees to be used to update and maintain the CTAS software over time. The OSA will also be able to carry the revenue forward from year to year until the Fund is depleted.

A Partnership

The members of MAT, the League of Minnesota Cities, and the Minnesota Association of Small Cities who use CTAS will be partners in this rewrite/update process. We have compiled lists of CTAS users who have volunteered to serve on a CTAS Working Group, a CTAS User Testing Group, and a group to interview potential vendors who will complete the rewrite.

It is important to note that we will work to keep the look and feel of the current CTAS program. The rewrite is mostly to change the platform of the CTAS software. This will allow it to continue functioning on the new operating systems of today's computers.

The Next Steps

So, when undertaking a big important project, you need a plan. Below is a timeline with key dates for the upgrade and release of CTAS. *Some dates may need to be adjusted based on the selected vendor's schedule and contract detail.*

- July 1, 2013 – OSA can begin to collect user fees (\$300)
- October 1, 2013 – RFP posted by OSA
- October 31, 2013 – Vendor selected
- December 16, 2013 – Deadline for user fees
- January 2, 2014 – Vendor begins work (if enough revenue has been collected to cover upgrade)
- February - June – User testing occurs as sections are written
- July 15, 2014 – Final testing/corrections
- August - November, 2014 – OSA provides trainings/ educational materials/ updated user manual on updated version of CTAS
- December 15, 2014 – CTAS delivered to subscribers

By the time this edition of the MAT newspaper is published, the OSA will have sent out a CTAS survey to current users and potential users. We also plan on convening the CTAS Working Group in early August. The group will review the survey responses and help identify and prioritize features and/or enhancements that might make CTAS more user-friendly for future users.

To keep you up to date on the CTAS upgrade, we have created a way for you to sign up to receive special e-mails that will give you more regular updates on the progress of this project. You can sign up to at:

<http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/ctasrewriteupdate.aspx>.

We are also going to create a special page on the OSA website that will chronicle the update. Additionally, we will be communicating through CTAS News and Notes, the quarterly CTAS newsletter, and through the MAT newspaper.

When and How Do We Pay the User Fee?

If your township wants to continue using CTAS or would like to begin using CTAS, your user fee is due December 16, 2013. We have to pre-fund the rewrite per the special legislation. If we do not collect enough revenue to cover the upgrade, all user fees will be refunded.

Payments should be mailed to the OSA with the Order Form, which can be found on our website at www.osa.state.mn.us. Once there, find the “For Local Officials” menu at the top of the page and click on “CTAS (City and Town Accounting System)”. The link to the Order Form is at the top of that page.

If you are interested in being a User Tester, there is still time to sign up. As a user tester, you will test the different sections of CTAS as they are developed by the vendor and identify any issues for the vendor to fix. User testers will be able to test the program from home. If you’re interested in being a user tester, please contact Jim Levi at 651-297-3683 or Jim.Levi@osa.state.mn.us.

Welcome to the New GID Director!

I am very pleased to announce that Kathy Docter, CPA, CFE is the new Division Director of GID in the OSA. Ms. Docter brings 25 years of experience to her new position, having worked in both the Audit and Legal/SI Divisions throughout those 25 years. Ms. Docter has solid experience working with and using CTAS, and she is very excited about the CTAS update project! She is a perfect fit for the Division, and is a delight to work with. We are so lucky to have her in this position. Please give her a warm welcome. She looks forward to working with all of you!