John Verwiel: Well, hopefully you guys aren’t in the basement. This is John Verwiel. Next slide. So I just want to kick off our—mentioned about our FY 24 budget execution. Right now we’re engaged with about 60 stations to pull back prior year funding to build up our management reserve and also because of looming shutdown potential, we’re trying to have the funds available at central office so we can operate longer after the shutdown date. As you know, the CR expires very soon on November 17th, and I just understand representative Johnson has been nominated and got the votes to be the next speaker that just came through, which is great. But they got a lot of work to do.

So what we’re doing is prior year pullback is due on the 27th, that’s on Friday. And we send out a call to everybody that tells us how much we’d like to pull back, keeping your two percent and telling us which programs to pull it back from. We could’ve done this unilaterally, but we wanted your take on it because of some actions we might not have known about that are in play that would prevent rejects, so we kind of needed your help. But I could have pulled it back unilaterally, but that would have caused potential rejects, and we don’t like that. Please cease doing cost transfers. There was a reference previous memo Matt Bern sent out that tells everyone not to do these cost transfers to reduce your prior year. We don’t want to do that. We want you to try to execute and send back what we’re telling you in the green column on that spreadsheet I sent out.

And again, in case there’s a government shutdown, this allows us to pay maybe one or two pay periods pass the shutdown date so that we can continue operations without being furloughed. And this is important for everybody involved in ORD, because we don’t have an advanced appropriation like the medical centers. We’re a two-year appropriation and unfortunately we are subject to the CRs, as you know, and to the potential government shutdown. And this is going to be a challenging year as everybody knows. Next year in fiscal year ‘25 next year is going to be an even more challenging year with the potential of some decreased budget, but more to follow on that.

But just want to mention, I want to thank everyone for prior year. I know it’s the 25th of October already, but I want to thank everyone for helping us close out last year’s budget on 9/30. It came down to the wire, but we were able to execute for the prior year. Prior year only about 250 bucks. So that was pretty good. Two hundred and fifty dollars roughly. So that was very good. And our carryover amount was right around 82,000,000, which was a decrease of around 8 million from that prior year. So we’re doing very well and we these particular training events that we’re doing like today is all for your benefit and to make you guys better at what you do in the field.

What I would encourage every station is to contact your fiscal office, have a good relationship with their fiscal office. And I know there’s turnover, but even if there is, you need to work with somebody in that budget office who can help you with your cost transfers going forward and with your contracting office to make sure that you know who to speak to if you need a contract. And I know we ask a lot of you. Right now we’re in the season of reporting for artists. That’s another thing I’d like to ping or just mention that we want to make sure you get that task completed on time so that we can ensure your station gets as much bare dollars as possible. And that’s actually a line item and it’s sent on the MCASH report annually to your station from the VISNs. And with that, I’m just going to stop and turn it back over to Jason for the intros, and I thank you.

Jason Berlow: Thanks, John. Yeah, we just wanted to provide you all with that for this critical update because I know that’s what you’re thinking about today. So today the presenters are going to be myself just from the beginning and then Kari. Kari Points from Iowa City and Diane Murphy a budget analyst on our ORD finance team here. And Kari has a lot of experience in financial management from all our time in Iowa City and Diane has also a vast wealth of experience from all this because she worked in the fiscal of Augusta, GA VMAC before she joined our team. So here you’ll see we’ll do the introduction policy and then how to understand and utilize UDO Reports. How to locate and view purchase orders and obligation numbers. Navigating IPPS and then utilizing open document reports in VSSC. And that section, I think I believe Kari is going to do a live demo. Are we still planning to do a live demo, Kari.

Kari Points: Yes, we are.

Jason Berlow: So I would recommend while you’re waiting to open that link that we sent in the e-mail yesterday and I’ll pop it in the chat after I talk. But this training is really, really important. Next slide. So that’s my daughter, Ella. You might have seen her at the \_\_\_\_\_ [00:06:34] conference here. She’s just bigger now. She loves phones. These kids are obsessed with phones now even under two. So just try and paying attention and minimize the teams because this is a really important training and a really important issue. Next slide.

So the reason this is really important is because when we obligate funding, we need to ensure that we’re complying with the VA financial policy and the overall intent of the appropriation. We did the appropriations last training back in February and some of you have taken the courses that we’ve been offering. But it’s really important that when we create an obligation that the obligation is for the amounts, and the need is for a necessary expense and a bona fide need in carrying out medical research. We’re not in the business of just—we’re in the business of performing medical research.

We’re not in the business of spending all the money—spending all our money. Spending all our money, \_\_\_\_\_ [00:07:35] as much as possible if you’re making obligations that might be more than required is not in the best interest of the veterans we serve. Because it means that later the funds won’t be available, and I’ll present that in the next slide. And when we do these carryover drills, et cetera, like John was talking about, they’re for a reason. Because we’re here and already finance responsible for managing the funding and the appropriation.

So if there’s excess funding carryover, that’s our responsibility to determine how to handle. And that funding will get used for additional requirements to help serve the field. So that money we’re pulling back, or those obligations we obligated that might come later, those funds are going to come back to the field the following year for a new requirement or a new project or something. So it’s really important that we be diligent about that. So \_\_\_\_\_ [00:08:42]. Next slide please.

So the research stations—this is from the VA financial policy on obligations. And this is kind of the background for why we’re having this training and then in upcoming slides, Diane and Kari are going to show you the mechanics of this. But I’m trying to demonstrate why we do this. Research station, you’re required to form reconciliations of open obligation and record adjustments necessary, so the obligation expenditure amounts are accurately reported. And this is not something unique to VA. When I worked at TSA when I was a financial specialist, we did this too, because it’s always important to review quarterly obligations, open obligations to determine that they’re valid. And the amount is still accurate so it could be obligated, and the funds can be used for another purpose.

So if you see appendix X, this is the requirement for VHA. And the data calls you probably get from your station fiscals on this matter also. And here it’s Station 127 and ORD. We had to do this too. So when we have obligations, our fiscal which is the VHA CFO and then we report up to the Dean which is the education discovery. We get these data calls too and we respond them too. So everything that we’re requiring you to do, we also do as just good stewards of taxpayer funds. So let me show you the impact of why if we’re not diligent about this, what it creates. Next slide please.

So closing our purchase orders and 1358s in a timely manner negatively impacts the research mission for the table \_\_\_\_\_ [00:10:18]. Funds and orders from expired years can no longer be used for new requirements. So right now as you see in the yellow there we had 54,000,000 dollars in available balances from prior years that we cannot provide because those are expired accounts and only available for prior year adjustments. And then at the same time, we have 85.1 million dollars in open orders that exist in the research appropriation. So the most important thing is you’ll see that, We have 35 million dollars in open orders from FY ’23. So that’s a very high amount. And that suggests that these orders are being reviewed poorly to deobligate when necessary.

So that 35 million dollars there you see in ’22, ‘23 is no longer available for new obligations. So stations obligated these funds prior to 9/30/2023, and that funding whether it be for the estimate was higher than expected or whatnot, Those funds are no longer available for us. So they may be deobligated later and you’ll see the balances will creep up in the yellow column. But they won’t be available for new obligations. So that means, what can we do about this? This is what we didn’t do. What can we do now? What we can do now is look at the quarterly, manage this process quarterly with what Diane and Kari are going to discuss to be able to better track these obligations. Because we’ve given multiple trainings about it and provided information about the FY ’25, ‘24 budget and how much it’s lower.

So think about what we could do with 35,000,000 more dollars right now that we can’t. So that’s why we really want your participation because these funds, when we do these processes and pull back the funds, they do come back to the field. Ninety percent of the funds that we allocate go to our operational units, which we call Investigator Science Research Merit review. ISRM, which is the BL RND, CSRD, HSRD, and CSRD, and then enterprise optimization now which is every PNCSP. So all those funds come back to the field. But we need to get better at managing that funding in the field as part of our finance initiative that we’ve discussed. So that’s my spiel. So now we’re going to move to the next slide and Diane or Kari is going to present.

Diane Murphy: Good afternoon everybody. My name is Diane Murphy and we’re going to look at your UDOs. Some of you may be receiving monthly from your fiscal office a document that they call your UDO, Undelivered Orders, where they require for you to respond back to them. So we’re going to go over this a little bit. Thanks, Kari. Helpful information for the UDO’S and IPPS. So when you see on a UDO on your report, you’ll see a trans code, a TC and you’re going to see under that column MOs for Miscellaneous Orders. SOs for Service Orders. You’ll see an RT or an RR that identifies a Receiving Report, or an AR could be your Accrual. So your things to help identify your orders as your miscellaneous orders, those should be orders where you’re receiving merchandise. Things that are going to come through the warehouse where they’re going to do a receiving report. Your service orders can be either your 1358 or it can also be a 2237 for a service contract or just for a one-time service, either one. Next slide, Kari.

So again, what is the UDO, your undelivered orders? It’s going to be all of your open orders. And an open order is going to be any obligation, whether it’s a 2237 or a 1358. This does not include purchase card orders. So you will not see purchase card orders on this report. But it’s going to be any order that has been obligated. Which means it has gone through the whole process and has made its way to accounting or fiscal where they have then committed those funds in the financial management system that you hear called FMS. So it could be that you just obligated it yesterday and it’s perfectly okay for it to be open. But again, this report will show you every single order that is open. And that you’re required to review this report and respond monthly to fiscal as to the status of that report.

When I was at the station so many times, I would hear people at the service say, well, I responded to this last month and it’s the same status. So why are they bothering me? Well, it is a requirement. It’s a financial requirement that this report be looked at every month by the services for fiscal to respond to annotate that you have reviewed this, and you have provided a response. So again, they’re just doing their job also with meeting their requirements to have a monthly report. And so they’re not doing it just to bug you or to cause you extra work. It should be to help you so that you stay on top of your orders and what’s going on.

And we have here the link where you can go to VSSC if you’re not getting this report from fiscal. Or if you just want to look at it yourself, you can use this link and Kari is going to actually demonstrate this later. Next slide. So this is just an example for how if you’re getting the report from your fiscal department, it may look something like this. Again, in that first column there you got the TC, the Trans Code. So your MO is for your miscellaneous orders. Your SO are for your service orders. It’s going to show your open amount that is still remaining on that order. Your vendor name. Look at your end date to show when that order ended. When that period of service ended.

And the last activity. \_\_\_\_\_ [00:16:55] the date of that last activity on that first line that we’re looking at right here, we can see that that order closed on September 30th, 2020, and yet it still has 9,087 dollars on it. And the last time that there was ever any activity was back in August 27, 2021. So when you see these, these require your action, which it may be working with your contracting officer. Each station unfortunately has different requirements as to how you need to submit things to your logistics or contracting officer. But you would have to work with them to be able to close that out if it’s a contract. This one probably is a 1358 here, and so it could be that you just need to do a decrease or maybe you need to contact the vendor to say, hello. This invoice has not been paid yet and work with the vendor. So there’s different things for each one. Next slide.

So again, with the UDO again, it is every single open order that you have. So it may only be one day old, or it could be years old. So things for you to pay close attention to when you’re looking at the UDO is again, your end date. When did that order, when did that period of service end? And if it has ended within 30 to 60 days of that end date, you should definitely be giving that as your highest priority as to trying to look at them. What’s the problem with it? Why is there still a balance there? Has the receiving report been submit it on everything? And we’re going to kind of look at how you can determine that in a couple of more slides.

The days open column that’ll let you know how many days you have gone past the end date. So you don’t want to have orders past 90 days if all possible. Now there are exceptions where you can where you’re still waiting on the vendor to submit, and you should be working with the vendor. Or other adjustments. Waiting on the universities to submit their invoices. But the best bet is to try to make sure that you’re closing these orders before they get 90 days past their end date. And that last activity date is also good to look at because then you can see nothing’s happened on a certain order, the one we looked at, this previous slide had been no activity for over a year on that order. Even passed from when it had ended.

So those kind of let you know what’s happening with that order and things that you need to look at. Again, comment here also looking at when you talk to the vendor, sometimes you’ll have vendors that are submitting their invoices, but maybe they’re not putting the correct PO number on the invoices. So that’s a suggestion there to the vendor is making sure they’re submitting their invoices correctly. Checking with the warehouse, making sure the warehouse is processing your receiving reports. Next slide. So when you get this report, how do you locate what that PO number is and what it is that you’re actually looking at with that order? So we’re going to kind of show you some examples on that. Next slide.

So a couple of things. One, we’re going to look at your running balance. You can get a PO number off of your running balance if you have submitted a 2237 to be obligated or a 1358, maybe accounting is not good about notifying back to you as to what your PO number is for that obligation. So you can go to your running balance and find out what your obligation numbers are for the transactions that you’re hitting. So in VISTA you can either go to your control point clerk menu or the officials menu. Go to display control point activity and running balances.

Or as most of you probably know, you can and avoid doing all of those steps and just do the up carrot which is shift six and type in running balances and it should bring you directly to that menu option. So when you get to that menu, then you’re going to put it in the fiscal year that you’re wanting to look at. What quarter. And then the fund control point and make sure you say no to your summary balance there, because if you say yes, then it’s just going to give you the bottom line of your dollars and we want to look at your activity, so next slide.

So then when you get to your running balance—the little columns didn’t keep their shape here. Sorry about that. But if you put in a 2237, you know that your transaction number is built in with different items. So the first three numbers are your station and then the next two numbers are the fiscal year of the funds that you’re using. The next number is the quarter. So you want to pay attention to the quarter. Kari, can you put a cursor over the quarter? I’m not sure—yeah. Go down to where it has—sorry, go back. On the far-left side when you’re looking at your transaction, you got the FYQ and your sequence number.

So when you’re looking there again, that’s your fiscal year. You have the queue for the quarter and then the last four digits are your sequence number. So that builds your transaction number. Again, so you got station, fiscal year, quarter, sequence number. And you can see here at the top line, we did a running balance out of third quarter, but when we’re looking at our transactions, we can see that we have transactions showing here that have a first quarter number. So it could be that you submitted your 2237 or 1358 and in first quarter, but maybe there was a delay, and it didn’t get obligated until a few quarters later. So that gets carried over from quarter to quarter.

And we’ve highlighted here in green, this is where your obligation numbers are. So if you know the transaction number or 2237 or 1358 that you’ve entered, you can come here and look at your running balance at that transaction number and then you are able to identify what the PO number \_\_\_\_\_ [00:24:03] PO number, document ID number, purchase order number, obligation number. So all of those mean the same thing. A couple of other things just pointing out here, on your running balance in the yellow, we’ve highlighted where you have the asterisk that should be over in the fiscal committed amount column. Again, the columns didn’t keep their shape.

But if you have the asterisk where you have two asterisks, you have one in your fiscal committed amount column, and you’ll have the asterisk in your obligated dollar amount column there. When you see those two asterisks, then that lets you know that that transaction is pending action from the service. It could be that the clerk put it in, but the approving official hasn’t approved it yet. Could be that the clerk put it in, and they haven’t completed it to send it to the approving office. Could be that you just started the order and then it’s decided to not place it and you just need to go back to cancel it. But whatever the case may be, when you see those two asterisks there, the stars, that should be something to cause you alert to say, this is pending. Why is this pending? What needs to be done with this?

And then we’ve highlighted in the blue on a couple of these showing where you only have the asterisk, the star in your obligated amount corner. You can see that it has disappeared from the fiscal committed amount column. So what that means is that it has gone out of the service. The clerk has submitted it. The approving official has approved it, and it has moved forward. Whether it has gone to contracting for contracting to work on it, to get it awarded. Or if it’s a 1358, it’s gone to fiscal to the accounting department for them to process the obligation to commit those funds for your 1358.

But that just lets you know they’re still working on it so there’s still activity. This would be something where if you were looking at your pending fiscal actions at the bottom of your running balance or you’re looking at your status of allowance, that fiscal sends over to you, these would be items that would be included in your pending fiscal actions there. Because you’ve approved it, but it hasn’t been completed yet. So we will go on to the next page. Did we skip the slide? Oh, okay. I thought we had a slide before this one. So if you want to—there we go. That’s the one. Okay, it got out of order.

Kari Points: \_\_\_\_\_ [00:27:02] Diane? Okay, I opened up the other one. They got out of order a little bit.

Diane Murphy: They out of order. Okay. So when you have that obligation number and you want to see what it is, you got the PO number, it’s on the report, but you’re like, I don’t remember what this order was for. So let’s go look at your order in VISTA so that you can remind yourself what it’s for. So here again are the VISTA menu options that you can go to get to the purchase order status. Again, you can do the shift six, the up carat and type in purchase order status and go directly to this prompt. And you go in and you put in the fund control point and then you put in the purchase order number. And right here it’s going to give you just a very brief—it’s showing your fund control point and the dollar amount that was obligated. And it shows you that right now that this purchase order status is partial order received. And then you say yes that you want to display this order so you can look at it. Go back to that other slide, Kari.

Right there. Yeah. So this one is a service order that we’re going to look at. So if you’re looking at your UDO report and it’s an SO, it’s going to look similar to this. Up at the top, you have your PO number. That VISTA method of payment, MOP, if it says certified invoice, then that’s going to be an SO. A service order. When that order is obligated, the status of that order goes to transaction complete immediately. It does that for any certified invoice order because there’s no receiving reports. There’s nothing else to be done in VISTA. So as far as VISTA is concerned, they are complete unless you decide to do any kind of amendment later.

You have here no receiving reports because it’s a certified invoice. The service order. So no, receiving reports will be done by the warehouse. Down a little bit lower to your left it shows you your budget fiscal years and your fund control point that was used for this order. On the right-hand side, you’re going to have the name of your purchasing agent there. So that might be helpful when you’re trying to figure out who you need to reach out to get some help with this from contracting. And again, it’s got the total amount of the order there too. So we will go to the next slide.

And then here this is kind of an example of a miscellaneous order. Again, at the top or left, you have your purchase order number, your method of payment, this invoice receiving report. So any orders that have that method of payment will be an MO on your UDO. In the top right, you have the status of the order. So this order here says partial order received. So there has been a receiving report, but not everything has been received in. And then right below that, it’s going to show you the number of receiving reports and the date of the last one.

So if you happen to have an order that is coming in very slowly and you’re getting multiple received reports, you could have ten receiving reports, 20, however many, but it would show you how many has been done there. And again at the bottom portions, we can see what budget fiscal years you used and what fund control point you used, your purchasing agent name, and the total amount of the order. If there had been any amendments, that total would update to include the amounts of any amendments that have been done to that order. Next slide.

So now we looked, and we saw that we had only had one receiving report done on this order. So how do we know what’s not been received in in the warehouse? Sometimes we get items received in and they come directly to research, and they bypassed going through the warehouse. So you can look here at the bottom portion of the order, and you can look at your lines and you can see where with line one, we had an order of quantity of two. We were ordering two of these items. But we can see down just a couple of lines it says, quantity previously received one. And then your partial number of your receiving report. Line two, there was one item ordered and one has been received. So line two is complete. You’ve got everything that you ordered. And then in line three, there was one item ordered, but nothing has been received on this one yet.

So if you were to determine, hey, I’ve received everything on this order already. Then you would want to contact your warehouse and say, hey, I need you to receive one more item on line one and I need you to receive the item in on line three, so that that receiving report can be processed and show that this order has been completed. Go to the next slide. I’m sorry. Go back up real quick, Kari just to make another point. And Kari is going to go over this more in the IPPS area. But it’s very important that these receiving reports get done in a most timely manner. Because on a miscellaneous order, anything that’s an MO order, when the vendor submits the invoice, then it has to match up to a receiving report to be paid. You don’t certify invoices for MO orders. So your receiving report is letting the system know, letting IPPS know that you have received those items and it’s okay for them to pay that invoice. Alright, next screen.

So also on your UDOs you have the 1358. And so again, you may not remember what your 1358 was for. You probably do multiple 1358s throughout the year and keeping them identified by the obligation number may not be quite that easy. So here you can go to your display print 1358 menu option in VISTA. You’re going to want to do a standard output here and then select—type in your obligation number and then you can go and say no to the description field and no to the daily records. Because most likely you’re not using those functions. That’s more for other services, not for us. But if you have questions on that, you can come back to me about it. Next slide.

So this is an example, sorry this one was added last minute and so I didn’t get to put the little arrows to point in there. But at the top, you can see your transaction number from where you entered to 1358. Down a little bit below to the right, you have the obligation number there. And then you have your—at the bottom, another at the service start date and your service end date. So that lets you know what that period of service is for this 1358 here. And hit enter. And then you’re going to have your purpose there too. So it’s going to tell you what this 1358 was for.

And then down below that you have your estimated obligation recap. And that’s going to show you every transaction that has been entered for that obligation number. So here we can see the original obligation was done and it was for 63,024 dollars. There was an increase done in June for 2,500 dollars bringing the total of that 1358 to 65,524. And then in September, a decrease was done for 325 dollars and twenty-five cents leaving the amount of that 1358 to be a total of 65,198.75. So this is just information that you can look at to help you decide what actions you need to take if you have an open 1358. Next slide. Alright, and now I’ll turn it to Kari.

Kari Points: Yes, thank you, Diane. So I want to talk first about navigating IPPS and certifying payments. This section is extremely critical if you’re a certifying official. I know we all have our different levels of duties to make sure we have separation. So first of all, you all should be familiar with IPPS. Especially like I said, if you’re certifying official. Well, you may not know—we hear quite a bit that there’s not training available for the field. And IPPS does actually have training. So if you get to this main page and you want to freshen up or you’re new in your role, go ahead and click here and you’re going to get a whole list of optional trainings for you.

There are some fiscals that provide training in order to get access to IPPS, but I know that’s not the case everywhere. So if you do want to get some good training in, there’s the iFAMS one up here. Frequently asked questions. But then there’s also the clerk and certifying official. So we pointed out a couple main ones here to utilize. So that’s just another tool that’s available to you that I wasn’t even aware of. I never had clicked there before in the past. So just kind of making you aware of that. So here’s an example in IPPS. So this is a service order. So a service order is going to come to you for a payment. On some sites of this 2,500 dollars or less. You may not see those, but others, they will come to you to certify. That’s kind of site dependent.

But if you go to my work, you’re going to have the priority list, and then under 2500 invoices to view those. You want to take note of the age of the invoice. If they’ve been sitting here for a while, somebody may—fiscal reach out to you. But you want to make sure you process these because they do start accruing interest actually if you let them go for too long. So you want to come in here when you get the notification from IPPS that there’s an invoice. Come in here, look at your work list and if the invoice is accurate, you’ve reviewed it, go ahead, and certify it and clean it up. Clean up your list.

If the invoice is not accurate, there’s an issue with it, reject the invoice so that it’s not sitting here aging. And then explain in your reason. There’s options for why you’re rejecting the invoice. Put what the reason is and send it back to the vendor. I usually follow up with the vendor just let them know, hey, we’re refusing this invoice for such and such reason. Please correct and resubmit. So that way they’re not just sitting here building up for you and really just take note of that age and don’t let them go for too long.

So when you’re reviewing invoices, if it’s a 1358 and the end date has passed, you verify that all your services have been completed and paid for that performance period. you can go ahead and certify those invoices. 1358s may require adjustments, so if there is a decrease after you pay the invoice, you need to decrease it because there’s funds leftover after the final invoice. Or maybe it’s the other way that the salary cost, the IPA came in a little bit higher or something like that that you didn’t quite do the right amount and you increase it. You need to do those final adjustments to close out the loop. And that’s done in VISTA. So you can go ahead and enter the adjustment after you pay that final invoice. Or if you need to increase it before you pay that final invoice and make sure that it’s for—that that 1358 is zeroed out so it doesn’t continue to show up on your UVOs.

Now if it’s an invoice for a contract, those are done a little bit different. You can’t just go in and do an adjustment. So if it increase or decrease needs to be done once you receive that invoice and you reviewed it, you need to reach out to contracting. A modification needs to be done to that contract to deobligate it out. So those are a little bit tougher to do. You’ll need to contact the contracting agent and submit a modification in for us to do any amendments to the dollar amount for those 2237s. The 1358s are definitely a little bit easier to do with being able to do the adjustments in VISTA.

So here’s an example of a MO. So the MOs are those supply orders. So those contracts that have gone on for equipment or supplies, they’re going to be a receiving report. So MOs do not come to you to certify. However, you should be checking on them so that there doesn’t become an issue. Let’s say the vendor submitted an invoice and it’s sitting there, but you haven’t received the item in yet. It’s going to start building those days that we don’t want to see. In the case here, this is the opposite. The receiving report has been uploaded, but if you can look at the top part, there’s no invoices.

So in this case you want to reach out to the vendor and say, hey, we received the item. It’s time for you to submit that invoice so we can get this closed out and get you paid. So those are the two types of things. So you still have to watch those even though they don’t come to you to certify for payment, because they do still will build up either way and they can’t be closed out. It won’t show up on your UDOs until they’re final. So again, you don’t have to certify them because it’s going to match the invoice to the receiving report to close it out. So when you’re reviewing the purchase order in VISTA/IFCAP, you want to make sure when you do those received reports, have all the items been received? Has the receiving work been processed for all your line items?

And if all of the invoices have been received, you can have the invoices submitted for each of those items. And again, you do not have to certify those. So you do want to review the invoices to confirm the vendor is billing the correct amount. Again, it’s matched throughout the system, but you can kind of help out the vendor if the line item doesn’t match. You can work with them on that. And then there may be amendment to the purchase order if something doesn’t reflect the line items from the contract. Because you want those line items from the contract to match what they’re invoicing for in the receiving report. And that’s something that’s checked within the system.

The other tool that I think is really, really helpful for everyone, this isn’t just if you’re a certified official, is to go into IPPS and go to Station Inquiry. You can find out a lot of good information in the Station Inquiry. The two that I use the most are the invoice status. So if I want to know if I have received all the invoices I’m inspecting, I can go there to history of invoices. And it also gives the electronic payment date. So sometimes I’ll get a request from a vendor, hey, I sent this invoice. We haven’t been paid yet.

I can go in then and look at that invoice and say, you need to check. We’re showing the payment was certified on this day. Or it’s coming. It’s scheduled for this date. So that’s a really useful tool. Obligation history will also tell you the dollar amount left on any. So if you have certified IPAs and you got the last invoice, but you’re not sure the remaining amount, you can click on obligation history. Enter that PO and it’ll tell you the amount. It’ll tell you the starting amount, the amount you’ve been invoiced for, and the remaining amount on that PO. So those are very useful in IPPS.

So now we’re going to get to utilizing the open documents report in the VSSC. So you can track your open obligations through the VSSC. It’s a very useful report and I really particularly pay attention to it when you’re getting close to the end of the year. Because I want to make sure that I’m looking at any funds that might be expiring and make sure that the obligations are done prior to that expiration. So last fiscal year in ’22, ‘23 was coming up, I was pulling the UDO report or the open up documents reported in VSSC constantly making sure that we were clearing the invoices and any requests for deobligations were done. And that can be either contracts or your 1358s. Because I want to make sure that all of those got closed out prior to the funds expiring.

Now, yes, some of the contracts may not have ended until September 30th, 2023. But then I’m making sure, we’re going to be invoiced for this full amount that we’re going to have. Because that is an open order. They’re going to invoice in October and there’s money left that’s now expired. So I want to get on top of that and make sure that I know the dollar amount that I’m going to be invoiced for and do any adjustments before it expires. So we’ve already mentioned this a 1358 adjustment in VISTA 2237 as a modification request to contracting. So it’s really important to monitor this report. So we will go through that I think on the—yes, on the next slide.

So this section, if you want to come back and reference it, it tells you how to enter the documents. But hopefully all of you have opened the link that was in the chat that Jason put. So I’ll give everyone a second because again, \_\_\_\_\_ [00:45:27] actually a lot when I talk to individuals and I’ll say, oh, did you check the VSSC? And then the response like it is, oh, my fiscal won’t give me access. Or I haven’t heard of the VSSC. So I thought today I would clarify some of those rumors and all the employees actually have access. This is not a restricted website. So everyone can go in and you can check the VSSC. If you go to the homepage of the VSC which is just vssc.med.va.gov and hit okay, there’s a finance section with a lot of useful tools that you can use. If you click on finance, there is a whole list of reports that you can run for your facility.

So today we’re going to talk about the open documents report. So I’m hoping all you have a chance now to open this up. I don’t want to go too fast. So under VISN, select your VISN. And your facility. So I’m going to do Iowa City since that’s my facility here. Select Iowa City. I got the -0161A1 as the appropriations. So everyone select 0161A1. You all just scroll down a little bit and find it. 0161A1. On the next tab, select all. I don’t know why just those couple get selected for me every time. So I go in and I select all. Now the next one is going to be your \_\_\_\_\_ [00:47:07]. How many years back do you have open orders? And that’s what I want everyone to view today is, really how many years back and how much expired funds do you have at your station?

So luckily for me, I checked before this training, and I did stay up on it quite a bit the end of last year because I wanted to make sure we weren’t going to lose any expired funds. And so I have some ‘23 and I have ‘24 open orders, which is what I would expect to see today. Now if you have some going back years and I know that some of you do, because Jason’s first slide showed that. It is really critical for you to look at those and start closing it out. Now is it that the vendor never invoiced you and you’ve been trying really hard to get that invoice? You need to really work with that vendor, get that invoice submitted. Is it that all the invoices have been received and you need to do a deobligation? Then you need to do that. The funds are lost because they are expired when you do that deobligation, it still needs to be done.

And this is going to be really critical when we move over to iFAMS that you have this cleaned up. So whatever you see here, you can run a report by just a year, all of it, whatever you want to view. If you have a really old one, just select that one. Select cost center. Select them all so you can look at all the cost centers. Or maybe you have a center you just want to look at your program. You can just select that cost center as well. And then select the ACC code. And you’re doing good. If you click view report, a list of all your open orders that you have. And some of the critical points I have on this next slide here as well that it’s going to give you that type of document, that code. It’s going to give you the document ID and then the end date. When did that end, and if it’s past the end date, then we should be working to close that out. Either getting that final invoice or deobligating the remaining funds.

And so you can see it here on the screen that I can see if it’s an SO or an MO. So these are all of our end of the year equipment orders sitting here. These other ones are services so contracts. And so if I look at the end dates, some of these because I selected 24 or is it ’23, ‘24 they’re not ended yet. So if you look majority—I have this one September 30th. This is a contract. I want to make sure that I submitted a modification to deallocate the remaining funds. And this is telling me what the remaining amount is.

These other ones aren’t maybe quite yet, but I’m going to start monitoring those and making sure that any of them with the end date that’s already happened that I’m finding out what’s going on with those and trying to close them out. The nice thing too is you can export this to an Excel or a CSV to look at it and save it and make comments and work off of that. So I just wanted to show you all that. Hopefully you’re all looking at yours. There’s not too many surprises and that you put that as a goal over the next however many months to really work and close out those. Because it is really important, and it does need to be done. They’re not going to go away unless you take those actions. And so now I’ll turn it over for questions. Parker, do you need to stop sharing to be able to—

Parker Cunneen: Yeah. I’m not actually seeing any as—

Kari Points: No question. Okay.

Parker Cunneen: But we can give them a moment to do it.

Jason Berlow: \_\_\_\_\_ [00:51:10] any topic.

Parker Cunneen: A reminder to folks, the Q&A box can be in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen. I saw one person raise their hand. The best way to get your question is to enter it in that box there.

Jason Berlow: Also in the survey, I did notice that the attendance is a little low today compared to normal. So if you have any feedback about the timing of the of the of the course or the day of the week, obviously we do them later in the afternoon East Coast time so that you’re not trying to join the training at 6:00 AM West Coast Time. But if there’s a day better that might be quieter, let us know. Because the attendance is quite low today. There was about 54 total. So we want to make sure all your message is getting out the best way possible. So please let us know.

Kari Points: So the question on the screen is, how do I get access to the VSSC report? Everyone has access. Everyone does. so all you need to do is click on the link that Jason’s put in the chat. It was also in his. e-mail and it will open up and you should have access. So it’s not anything that you need to request. You do have access to it.

Jason Berlow: So VSSC, it’s a read only system. It’s system access. You just need to be a log on from a VA computer and that’s all you need. So you’re fine. So yeah, it doesn’t require 99—the VA form. The 9957 or whatever. None of that. So that’s why it’s really great, because FMS access is a really cumbersome and tedious and difficult to use. But VSSC is a lot easier to use, so we really recommend you use it. And we have done a lot of trainings on VSSC, so please go back and look back. And we haven’t done a VSSC office hours in some bit. So Kari, maybe we’ll talk offline and get some of those scheduled.

Kari Points: So the question asking is, I have a couple of vendors that are unsuccessful in entering their invoices in IPPS. Is there any way I could do this for them? I have one vendor that hasn’t billed us for over six months. So the invoice needs to be provided by the vendor. There may be a way. I don’t know Diane if you want to see whether you can upload.

Diane Murphy: There’s a way. When you go into IPPS, let’s see would be the easiest way. Let me see if I can get into IPPS real quick.

Kari Points: Yeah, because we just recently had this happen in Iowa City that we learned how to submit for the vendor. However, you do need to get invoiced from the vendor and incur the expenses and all that stuff. So don’t just create one for them and upload it. But if they’re struggling to upload you can. There is a way to do it.

Diane Murphy: And your contracting officer also should be able to provide information to the vendor uploading the invoice. They don’t call it IPPS. I believe it’s called OBTN or something like that for the vendor. It’s a different way that they go in to get into this. And I am not having luck getting into IPPS right now. Let’s see if we pull the slides back up, there’s—Kari, can you pull the slides back up?

Kari Points: Yeah, this one?

Diane Murphy: And go back to the IPPS.

Kari Points: By scanning types. Hopefully it’s—

Diane Murphy: Okay, go to the next slide.

Kari Points: Oh, I lost the slide. \_\_\_\_\_ [00:55:36] show me an IPPS click?

Diane Murphy: Yeah, go there. Okay, go in. Did you hit agree?

Kari Points: Yeah. Yes, it’s spinning. There we go.

Diane Murphy: Online invoice form. So then you go in here and most likely you don’t have a construction, so you’re going to click in the other. And then you go over to the right and select your form type. And most likely you’re going to be down in other also here. And then you go to your PO number, and you would type in your PO number and your invoice date. And you would fill out each of the areas here to go in. And then after you input all the information, then you go to choose file. So you’re going to need to have that invoice saved to your computer so you can go choose file and then download the invoice into IPPS. And then after that it requires you to verify it and everything.

And so whoever asked that question, feel free to reach out to me and I will help walk you through that. But there is a way to do it. But you want to be able to get the vendor to learn how to do it themselves. \_\_\_\_\_ [00:57:12]. If you do a lot of business with them, then they’re going to give you a lot—a bit of work to do. And so something like this is good for when you got a vendor that’s like just using them one time here, one time there. But if they’re a repeat vendor, then I would highly recommend them working with your contracting officer to get into that system. Were there any other questions?

John Verwiel: Thanks so much everyone.

Diane Murphy: That last question, we’re not pulling your funds and that’s up for you to decide once you know those orders have been completed. So again, you have to do your due diligence to find out everything that needs to happen with the order.

Parker Cunneen: Perfect. And that brings us to the top of the hour. I know I see a couple more in there, and we’ll make sure you guys get those copies of the questions. So just want to thank everyone for being here and thank our panelists for the presentation. And as Tony noted, it was a lower-than-normal attendance, so if you do have any colleagues who lost the invite or just didn’t have time to sign up, we will be sending out an e-mail quicker than normal with the recording, so you’ll be able to share that with folks if they were unable to attend today. But just want to thank everybody and have a great afternoon. Bye.