

Iowa Department of Human Rights
Input from employees on State Government Efficiency

Mary Bowser—Budget Analyst, Central Administration

I would like to see the state review the acceptance of electronic invoices from sub grantees. This would reduce amount of time for claims processing.

A significant amount of time is used to process travel claims containing receipts for meals. I'd like to see a study to determine if there is a savings generated when comparing a reimbursement of a flat rate per meal verses the additional processing cost to the state for the submitter's time, claims process and approver, additional use of resources such as paper, tape, and storage of that paper for 10 years. For one claim it is not a lot of time but multiply the cost times the amount of travel claims with meal reimbursement the cost becomes more significant. There are significantly more issues that come up related to meals than other items on requests for travel reimbursement.

Michael Adams—Accountant II, Central Administration

As a long-term employee of the State of Iowa, I have seen many changes over the years. One of those changes is a large reduction in employees to carry out the work of government. These changes have required employees—who I believe have stepped up to the task—to work more efficiently and effectively to provide greater levels of service demanded by the Citizens of Iowa. However, as there have been these reductions in force enterprise wide, there has been a proliferation of staffing increases in certain areas.

When the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) was created in July 2003, the purpose was that of not spending dollars on administration that "could be better spent providing services that directly affect Iowans." Legislation was created that would consolidate the Human Resources, General Services, Information Technology and State Accounting services into one department.

Since that time, it seems that layer upon layer of management has been created in DAS. Just recently a new "Central Purchasing Enterprise" was created. This required the creation or upgrading of several positions. From reviewing the job classifications of those associated, it appears most of the people are classified in very high paying positions. While creating an enterprise to handle purchasing may be more effective, and I do not confirm nor deny that, the management structure created appears to be more expensive than before. A Chief Operating Officer is a very high paid position. As far as I am aware this position did not exist prior to the creation of the Enterprise.

Another example is in the area of the I3 System (Enterprise Resource Planning System)—the state accounting system—seems to have a large staff of persons to—as their website states—"strive to provide a stable, reliable, and accurate system through implementing improvements, upgrades and the development of tracking and monitoring tools". It does not seem that such a large team of persons—who are mostly all highly compensated—should be necessary.

State agencies are being forced to use services of DAS, except for "marketplace" services (human resources training, conference planning, labor/management facilitation, motor pool vehicles, repairs, printing, graphic design, a variety of technology services including mainframe services, networking and e-government solutions). Quoting from the DAS website marketplace services are "Funding" marketplace services are discretionary services funded by payments made from an agency that decides to use the services". Other services deemed "Utility Services" or "Leadership Services" are funded by payments made by agencies using the services and/or a General Fund appropriation. Utility and Leadership services are costs forced upon the agencies, even though there is customer council input, and DAS can build empires as large as they chooses.

It seems that DAS leadership could be trimmed and made more in line with appropriate levels of management. There seems to be more management than is necessary.

Each day I drive my own personal vehicle to and from work. When I travel I take a State Vehicle—if available. I am very conscious and careful when driving a State Car. I have noticed that there seem to be a lot of persons who commute to and from work in State Vehicles. I have noticed—for example—unmarked State Highway Patrol cars that commute on a regular basis to somewhere on the Capitol Complex. The cost of keeping a patrol vehicle on the road (gas, maintenance, insurance, etc.) is a costly expenditure that could be avoided. If the person is domiciled in Des Moines, and they go there to work every day, why should the taxpayer pay for their commute? State rules state that if you commute in a state vehicle you must pay a commuting charge. Do these people pay that? I do not discount the fact that an employee may—from time to time or on occasion—need a state vehicle outside their normal business hours, but to provide it on a daily basis “just in case” seems unnecessary.

Marcia Thompson-Administrative Assistant, Division of Community Action Agencies

The entry doors on the North, East and West sides of the Lucas Building are double. If a mechanism could be installed on those doors so that the outside doors shut prior to the inside door being opened, we could alleviate a lot of heat/cooling loss to the building. Currently people use the automatic door opener from the outside then the next automatic door opener on the inside door causing four doors to be open at the same time and it does take a rather long period of time to shut.

Kristen Corey—Program Planning, Offices of Status of Asian & Pacific Islanders and Status of Women, Division of Community Advocacy & Services

The only suggestion I have is for our training and technology budget – sometimes in-person training is cheaper and more efficient than online training. It would be nice to be able to draw funds from that budget to do in-person training as well as online training, instead of just online training.