

"FASST" Folks Deliver Results

Defense Contract Management District East's Primary Mission is Helping People

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When asked what best describes a member of the Defense Contract Management District East (DCMDE) Functional and Systems Support Team (FASST), Bart Hogan, a Boston FASST member, responded with a riddle. "What has 62 legs and travels in the air at 600 miles per hour? The FASST on TDY."

FASST folks lead the district in miles traveled. Position descriptions require 60 percent travel, but it's not uncommon for travel to significantly exceed that percentage. Being away from home is a way of life for many members, who participate in a wide variety of meetings, Information Resource Management (IRM)

application testing, and subsequent deployment and training efforts.

As DCMC progressed through early stages of development in the early '90s, an overwhelming need for functional specialists proficient in automated applications was identified. However, it proved challenging to divert enough personnel from the district and Contract Administration Offices (CAO) to support all the efforts under way, particularly since many assignments required extended travel.

The command decided to address this issue by establishing the FASST in July 1995. Danny Schuster, the district's FASST lead, said, "Our initial charter

leaned heavily on the concept of supporting our primary IRM system — Mechanization of Contract Administration Services (MOCAS) — but that quickly changed." Schuster explained that FASST members found themselves playing a key role in the migration from legacy mainframe applications such as MOCAS to client/server applications such as Alerts and the Shared Data Warehouse (SDW)."

Consisting of 36 members, the district's FASST is made up of four multi-functional teams located in Atlanta, led by Kathy Jenkins; Boston, led by Bart Hogan; Cleveland, led by Fred Sinur; and Philadelphia, led by Lillian Leone. Tom Endler, officially a member of the

Hood is an Air Force veteran currently working as a public affairs specialist for the Defense Contract Management District East. A highlight of his career was working for Channel five, the ABC news affiliate in Boston.

Boston team, is duty stationed, and supports the DCMC test lab, in Manassas, Va. From clerical or procurement-technician-support roles to specialists in contracts, production, property, quality assurance, and computers, the FASST is prepared to deal with any contingency. The West district has similar teams in Los Angeles and Chicago.

District employees have interacted with FASST personnel for one or more of DCMC's corporate IRM applications. Schuster said, "The FASST's primary mission, despite all the technospeak in our charter, boils down to one thing, helping people. We are responsible for representing and insuring proper coverage of all functional elements during development and deployment of IRM systems in DCMC."

Schuster said the extreme pressure to field these applications sometimes puts FASST members between a rock and a hard place as they try to insure people's needs are met in the district, while still meeting budget, schedule, and technological constraints imposed by DCMC and other higher-level DoD offices.

"Our biggest customer is the person in the field trying to get his or her job done in the most efficient manner. To accomplish that we are continuously interacting with the Defense Finance Accounting Service, DCMC Headquarters, our central design activity, developers, and buying-command personnel. It isn't always easy, and we are not always as successful as we would like to be, but I believe people in the district know we are doing all we can to help."

Members frequently participate in policy-issue development on DoD or DCMC working integrated process teams, process action teams, and other groups. Demands on their time by so many diverse groups leave little time for anything else.

Typical FASST involvement in new applications includes participation in functional development requirements, application testing, and training during and after deployment.

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During post-deployment, the FASST supports functional users by serving as the focal point for questions, application problems, and training. Members often provide data required by DCMC Headquarters and the district for use in making command decisions on policy and personnel issues.

With the current emphasis on moving into a paperless environment, completion of development and deployment of Alerts Phase II and Electronic Document Workflow (EDW) are the FASST's current priorities.

Beginning in January, 11 FASST members, led by Bart Hogan, will devote most

of their time to EDW deployment. These people will assist the contractor in all classroom-training phases and will become the first line of defense for the district. At the same time, six to 10 other FASST members will conduct final testing of Alerts Phase II for three to four weeks in Columbus, Ohio. These team members will support other applications when possible.

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What does the future hold? Members will have their hands full supporting a variety of projects. Development and deployment of EDW and Alerts Phase II, each impacting thousands of people in the DCMDE/DCMC workforce, along with the migration to SPS, will consume most of the FASST's time during the next one to two years.

"There is a demand for support that exceeds our on-board strength, and we must continue to support legacy systems, such as MOCAS, until they are replaced," Schuster said. "We will, out of necessity continue to rely on support from the field in application testing and deployment. CAO assistance over the years is a major reason for the successes we have had. The 'real world' perspective these folks bring to application development can never be replaced and cannot be underestimated."

Schuster said no matter what we do, there are difficult and challenging times ahead. He's convinced that DCMC cannot continue to function effectively without increased performance from ever-more efficient IRM-corporate applications. "The very reason the FASST exists is to help make that happen and we will do everything in our power to make these efforts a success for everyone."