FAQs

How will IRIS affect me?
During our initial outreach to all State employees last month, this question came up time and again. So, how will IRIS affect you? It depends. IRIS is a computer program that has accounting and procurement functions within the same system. It also has human resource (HR) and payroll functions. Depending on your job, IRIS may significantly impact your daily work, or you may only be affected indirectly. IRIS is also being implemented in phases, which means you may not feel the effects for another couple of years. Still, as IRIS is a statewide effort, we’re trying to make sure all State employees are at least aware of it.

Those working in finance and procurement will see significant changes to their day-to-day work when those modules go live in July 2014. Other employees may be affected sooner through training, with LearnAlaska, IRIS’ online learning management system, scheduled to go live this summer. LearnAlaska provides registration for training courses and tracks and analyzes training. Initially, LearnAlaska will only be used for classes offered through the Department of Administration’s Division of Personnel and Labor Relations and Division of Finance. After the initial launch, use of LearnAlaska will be offered to other departments, which, depending upon what training you require, may affect you.

In January 2016, the IRIS HR and payroll functions will go live. Some of the details for this have yet to be defined, however there will be some features that will affect all employees. For example, all employees will have access to the Employee Self Service portal to access employment and pay history.

For more FAQs visit: http://doa.alaska.gov/dof/iris/faq.html.

With the Envision Phase of the IRIS Project complete, the Team is excited to begin the Build Phase. The Build Phase is when all the blueprints and designs of Envision are constructed for Go Live on July 1, 2014. As we enter the Build Phase, the IRIS Team will meet with each department to introduce the implementation plan, referred to as the GO Plan, and discuss the activities that require their input. The GO Plan is a framework for organizing the work associated with implementing IRIS in an SOA department. The key elements of the plan are a list of tasks to complete, a repository of tools and templates, a dedicated communication channel between each department and the central project, and a method for tracking progress in completing the tasks. Each department will receive a GO Plan binder and have a dedicated liaison from the IRIS Team who will be the primary contact point between the department and the IRIS Team. The IRIS liaison will then work closely with the department’s Readiness Lead, who will be the primary contact on the department side.

Departments will be introduced to their liaison at the GO Plan meeting and some implementation activities may begin immediately! The GO Plan contains important information needed for departments to understand the activities ahead of us and will guide the departments through the Build Phase over the next year. The initial outreach will be followed up by two more efforts, building on the information in Outreach 1. The GO Plan materials are available on the IRIS Project’s SharePoint site and will be updated as necessary. We look forward to GOing forward with each department!

Meet the IRIS Liaisons

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Diebels</td>
<td>Corrections, Public Safety, and Military &amp; Veterans’ Affairs</td>
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<td>Brian Donohoe</td>
<td>Fish &amp; Game, Environmental Conservation, and Natural Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan England</td>
<td>Administration, Revenue and Commerce, Community &amp; Economic Development</td>
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<td>Fred Fisher</td>
<td>Health &amp; Social Services</td>
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<td>Marian Sweet</td>
<td>Transportation and Public Facilities</td>
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<td>Nena Thomas</td>
<td>Governor’s Office, Legislature and Court System</td>
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<td>Courtney Wilkins</td>
<td>Education and Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education</td>
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Update on IRIS Lab Sessions

We are over halfway through the IRIS lab sessions, and response so far has been great. People are happy for the hands-on time navigating the system and getting an idea of what kind of functionality IRIS will bring to the State of Alaska. There's been a lot of interest in seeing the procurement side of IRIS, since SOA doesn't currently have a state-wide process for procurement. Participants are also asking lots of great questions and while we are not able to answer all of them during the sessions, we are following up to ensure their questions do get answered. Answers to some of the more specific questions will be addressed in coming months as we work through the actual configuration of IRIS. In the meantime the IRIS Project FAQs webpage (http://doa.alaska.gov/dof/iris/faq.html) will be updated with more questions and answers as the labs continue.

Feedback we’ve received:

- “That was actually fun!” said one lab participant.
- “There will be a learning curve but it looks easier to use than AKSAS,” was heard after the introduction to the system.
- Another response said, “I really took more away from this session than I expected to – thank you!”

Recap of IRIS Outreach Campaign to All SOA Employees

First off, a big thank you to the 1,008 State employees (or 17.86%) who responded to our survey last month! We sincerely appreciate your constructive criticisms, suggestions and encouragement as we work with departments to configure IRIS for the State of Alaska.

Last month’s outreach campaign marks the first of several efforts to engage all SOA employees. The purpose of the survey was threefold. To see: (1) if state employees, regardless of whether they are directly or indirectly affected by IRIS, are aware of it; (2) if SOA employees are aware of IRIS’ benefits; and (3) whether they are aware of how to get more information about IRIS.

The survey also gave employees the opportunity to anonymously provide feedback about what is working well and where the project team can make improvements. Nearly 60% of the responses indicated that employees are aware of IRIS and know where to get more information, while 58% indicated that they were unaware of the benefits IRIS will bring to the State of Alaska. As the first major outreach effort to all SOA employees, it is understandable that the majority of employees are unaware of the benefits at this point.

Clearly communicating the benefits will be a priority for our next outreach campaign scheduled for Fall 2013.

In addition to the rated responses, approximately 50% of survey participants provided feedback to the open-ended questions. In reviewing the responses, we found several themes. Some of the major themes were: requests for clearer communication, concerns about the scope and schedule for implementation, questions regarding all aspects of training, and questions about specific capabilities in IRIS. Responses also showed both excitement and concern about having such an integrated system.

Again, we thank those State employees who participated in the survey. Your comments and concerns will definitely be taken into account moving forward with IRIS.

Meet Susan: I joined the IRIS project team a year ago after serving as the Finance Officer for the Department of Health and Social Services. I relocated to Juneau from Las Vegas, Nevada after my husband retired from the United States Air Force. Having previously lived in Alaska, it felt like home. During my twenty-four years as a military spouse, I had the unique experience of living in different states and countries. The best part of military life was making life-long friends located all over the world. I earned my Bachelors of Accounting from the University of Alaska Anchorage. I am delighted to be part of the IRIS team during this exciting time of transition for the State. In my spare time I enjoy being outside, gardening, boating, fishing, reading, and cooking.

Meet Courtney: I have lived most of my life in Alaska, leaving to attend high school in Oregon and Washington. After high school I served 5 years with the military, mostly focused on recruiting efforts and homeland security missions. I then earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Journalism with an emphasis in Public Relations and a minor in Political Science from California State University Chico. After graduation, I knew I wanted to return to Alaska. I worked with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE); first serving as a Customer Service Agent, then as a Procedures and Policy Specialist, and finally as a Quality Assurance Analyst. I joined the IRIS Project in August 2012 as a Business Analyst. The IRIS Project is an exciting and dynamic place to work, I feel so grateful to be part of such a dedicated team doing such great work for the state. In my free time I enjoy being outside, gardening, boating, fishing, reading, and cooking.

Team Member Spotlight: Over the next few months we will feature the IRIS Liaisons who have not previously been introduced through the Team Member Spotlight. This month, meet Courtney Wilkins & Susan England.