Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Human Resource / Management Compensation System

Office of the Comptroller
Human Resource Division
Information Technology Division



Inbound Interface Policy

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1. Introduction

The Human Resources Compensation Management System (HR/CMS) is the official payroll system of the Commonwealth. Payroll policy is managed by the Comptroller as authorized in M.G.L. Chapter 7A. HR/CMS was designed to meet the human resource needs of the three branches of government in addition to payroll operations. The development of HR/CMS involved a collaborative effort of the Judiciary, Higher Education and the Administration and Finance departments that manage benefits (GIC) and human resources for Executive departments (HRD).

HR/CMS was implemented in 2000 and the policy has been that no 3rd Party timekeeping system could interface data into the time and labor module of HR/CMS. Since that time, technology and the needs of state government have evolved to the point uploading of data can be considered. This document defines the process for requesting an interface to HR/CMS and also outlines the criteria that will be used to evaluate requests for an inbound interface.

This policy reflects the guiding principles that support interfaces to other enterprise systems, such as MMARS. Departmental interfaces are considered when they are cost-effective, statutorily supported and operationally sound. Interfaces are governed by standards and processes that are standard across all departments and that use ITD vehicles for communication (CommBridge).

This document defines the HR/CMS Interface Policy as well as the process for requesting interfaces. It provides guidance to requesters on the information needed to evaluate Departmental requests. Departments interested in proposing an interface with HR/CMS should review this document carefully and assess whether the proposal meets the criteria. In addition, departments should review the current interface specifications available at (*list the web address where these will reside)* Adherence to the defined process will expedite the evaluation of your request.

The Commonwealth involves a variety of industries and meeting the business needs of such a diverse set of departments is unrealistic with a “one size fits all” system. A number of departments have inquired about the ability to upload data from departmental systems to HR/CMS. This policy aims to balance the statutory requirements for statewide uniformity and consistency with the desire to meet operational and reporting needs efficiently. Consistent with the concept of balance, interface requests that load data to HR/CMS (an alternative to keyboard data entry) will be considered when there is a consistently high volume of data being keyed into multiple systems and where the department has a proven record for managing data quality and correcting problem data in a timely manner.

2. Definition and Characteristics of an Interface

This policy statement defines an "automated" interface as input of time or payment data that involve communication between HR/CMS and another computer system. An interface can load data into HR/CMS from a department's system or extract data from HR/CMS into a department's system (ex, MAGIC, the benefit system of the Group Insurance Commission). The Commonwealth Information Warehouse (CIW) is the mechanism for extracting HR/CMS data into departmental systems. No outbound interfaces will be considered unless the required data is not available in the warehouse or cannot be loaded to the warehouse from HR/CMS.
ITD requires the use of CommBridge, a transport service for information exchange and transactional interoperation among the business applications of Commonwealth departments. Please visit the ITD web site at https://www.mass.gov/topics/executive-office-of-technology-services-and-security for complete information about CommBridge.

3. Interface Policy

3.1 Priorities

The highest HR/CMS priority is to maintain existing interfaces to and from other statewide systems (i.e. systems which maintain data for many or all departments of the Commonwealth). The second priority is to develop additional interfaces for new statewide systems (ex. LCM). The third priority is to expand and maintain interfaces for Department-specific systems. Requests for new Department-specific interfaces will be considered pursuant to these priorities.

3.2 Criteria for Consideration

3.2.1 Basic Considerations

Ongoing operation of an interface requires a significant amount of work by the Department, the Comptroller and ITD. HR/CMS is a dynamic system, which is continually being fine-tuned to meet the evolving and expanding needs of human resource and payroll operations (changes to labor and tax law as well as collectively bargained modifications to compensation and benefit structures). To be successful, interfaces must change along with the core system. Department-specific interfaces are the responsibility of the individual Department and must be maintained by its internal IT staff. HR/CMS changes cannot be delayed or prevented for a Department's convenience or inability to keep pace. To the extent that resources are available to develop and support additional Department interfaces, consideration for accepting new departmental interfaces whenever the interface results in a net efficiency gain such as:

- Significant reduction in human effort, for example duplicate data entry;
- Significant reduction of costs;
- Improved compliance with FLSA standards and reporting to the Federal Government or other regulatory agencies;
- Support of departmental program initiatives.

HR/CMS will consider interface requests which supply the required information and which reflect a detailed analysis of the requesting Department's needs and the ability of HR/CMS to meet these needs. The criteria that will be used by the review team in evaluating requests are outlined below.

- Departments must have data processing support and adequate computer resources to develop and maintain electronic interfaces.
- Departments must have a process in place to ensure accurate data.
- Departments are responsible for reconciling their system and/or records with HR/CMS data, which is the system of record for the Commonwealth.
- Departmental costs for development and maintenance for any electronic interface will be the department's responsibility (including any expenses charged back by ITD to support the operation of the other system and the interface).
- Developmental costs incurred by ITD on behalf of the department may, in some cases, be waived. In addition, there are associated costs that are carried by the Office of the Comptroller, which may also be waived.
- Departments must have a significant volume of transactions on a bi-weekly basis.
- All interfaces MUST be in the formats required by HR/CMS.
- All data elements normally required for HR/CMS processing must be furnished in the interface.
- Data elements extraneous to HR/CMS are prohibited.
- Departments must have an internal Disaster Recovery plan.
- Any interface request that disrupts payroll processing or that interferes with timely and accurate input of time or financial data will not be approved.
- Departments must commit to maintaining a comprehensive, working knowledge of the HR/CMS and State's official policies and procedures governing human resources and payroll data.
- Requests for extract files will only be considered where a department has demonstrated that it has analyzed the Information Warehouse and has determined that current files and planned additional files (or additions to files) cannot meet its requirements.

These criteria highlight the types of issues that the review team will consider in evaluating all requests for new interfaces to HR/CMS. These criteria must be reviewed along with the priorities outlined above to assess whether the proposed interface will be approved. As indicated above, statewide systems and existing interfaces are the highest priorities.

3.2.2. Auditability/Financial Accountability Considerations

A major consideration in developing and maintaining an interface is the potential to have an impact on timeliness, accuracy and completeness of payroll and financial data and, therefore, the auditability of the system. Interface requests will be subject to an internal control audit and/or assessment prior to and/or following implementation as well as annually during the State Single Audit.

> **Please note:** Department Heads are reminded of the state finance law that all transactions entered into the accounting system must be properly authorized under the authority of the Department Head, as evidenced by the Department internal control plan. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the Department Head to reconcile and resolve any discrepancies in a local department database to the Commonwealth's official time reporting and payroll records in HR/CMS.

4. Request Procedures

4.1 Basic Process

Interface requests submitted to the HR/CMS Executive Team (via the Office of the Comptroller). A joint CTR/HRD/ITD team to assess appropriateness to policy, feasibility and scope, as well as ranking within the statewide priorities will review requests, supported by the data outlined in section 4.3. The review committee will make a decision and a course of action and target date will be defined. It is possible that Department-specific interfaces will be feasible but will not be scheduled until resources can be made available. A formal response to the Department's request will be sent within 30 days of receipt of the complete package. Departments needing information as to the status of an interface request may contact the Payroll Unit at the Office of the Comptroller.

4.2 Informal Consultation Prior to a Request

CTR/HRD/ITD encourage departments considering an interface to HR/CMS to discuss the potential request with CTR/HRD/ITD prior to submitting an official interface request letter. Staff resources from each department are available to provide informal consultations to department staff in order to clarify items such as interface policy, procedure, feasibility, resources, costs and timing. Requests for informal interface consultation should be made to the CTR's Payroll Unit. Informal interface consultation is an addition to, not a replacement for, the written proposal specified in Section 4.3.

4.3 Information Required to Support an Interface Request

Interface requests require submission of a written proposal that specifies detailed information to be used by the HR/CMS Executive Team to ascertain whether the interface merits further consideration. The HR/CMS Executive Team will review the proposal before meeting with Department personnel to discuss building the interface. A Department interface proposal should include, but is not limited to, the following items:

4.3.1 DEPARTMENT-DEFINED NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Definition of the interface
- Frequency of the interface
- Timing Requirements
- Volume of Data
- Hardware Environment
- Description of Technical Staff Resources
- Declaration of Department's long-term commitment to:
  - Pay for the costs associated with development and long-term maintenance of the interface and,
  - Preserve a comprehensive, working knowledge of the state's human resource and payroll system, policies and procedures
- Demonstrated ability to maintain the interface
- Estimated/desired interface start date

4.4 Example Generic Interface Request Letter:

DEPARTMENT'S LETTERHEAD

TO: Manager, CTR Payroll Bureau
Office of the Comptroller
One Ashburton Place, 9th floor
Boston, MA 02108

CC: Director Enterprise Systems Services
Department Payroll Director
ITD HRP Unit
HRD

FROM: _____(Name)*
_____(Title)
_____(Department)
RE: REQUEST FOR HR/CMS INTERFACE

The attached document outlines a request from *(Department Name)* to *(develop, modify, or cancel)* an interface to HR/CMS. We are proposing a change in current operating practice for the following reasons:

This request addresses the issues outlined in the revised HR/CMS Interface Policy, Section 4.3, dated May 10, 2005. Questions should be directed to:
_____ _____Ext._____
Print Name Title Telephone Number
* This person must be an authorized signatory authority
** If modification or cancellation, include HR/CMS Job name

5. Post Approval Support

Following approval of the interface request, the CTR and ITD (and HRD if appropriate) will assign staff resources to provide guidance and advice to Department personnel during the development, testing and installation of the interface. As part of this support, ITD resources will provide the Department with:

- Data requirements
- Development and production requirements
- Interface Management Subsystem requirements

6. Development & Implementation

6.1. Initial Development and Installation

Once a department starts programming the interface, CTR/HRD/ITD will monitor the progress of the interface with the Department. When programming is completed, the Department will be required to submit "test" files to ITD processing once the interface is successfully tested, it will be installed by ITD. For phased implementations and/or changes in the department systems, interface files must be tested in a test region prior to being implemented in production to assure that they will process successfully. The interface will be placed into the production (batch) cycle. Once the interface is placed in production, it will be managed and monitored by the ITD HR/CMS Support team and maintained by the department.

6.1.1 Interface Production Requirements

Department Interface Contact. The Department must provide a technical contact for the interface to the CTR Bureau of Enterprise Systems and ITD HRP Unit (contact name, work phone, pager, cell phone and home phone, work address) before the interface is placed into the HR/CMS production environment. This contact information should be updated when personnel changes occur.
Scheduling Interface Loads. Once the appropriate frequency of transmittal has been determined, please send the annual schedule of processing dates and times to the HR/CMS support team at ITD. This information will be used to automatically schedule your interface. Please notify the CTR Payroll Unit and ITD HRP if any modifications need to be made to the schedule.
Interface Problem Reporting and Resolution. If your interface generates any unexpected error messages or fails to process on the assigned night, ITD will notify your interface technical contact as soon as the problem is identified. The department will be expected to manually adjust any data needed to support payroll production. ITD and CTR staff will work with the interface technical contact to discover the cause of the difficulty, recommend an appropriate solution and define a manual adjustment process where information must be corrected after the payroll runs. Ongoing problems or failure to clean up data errors will result in the discontinuance of the interface process.

6.2 Monitoring the Performance of the Interface

CTR, ITD and the Department will assess the functional, operational, and systematic aspects of the interface after it has been in Production for a short period of time. All HR/CMS interfaces are verified on a regular basis and any variances between the control statistics and actual load statistics are reported to ITD for further investigation. Department, CTR, and ITD personnel should meet to review the assessment. Agreement must then be reached to take any necessary action to modify the interface.

6.3 Modifications to Accommodate HR/CMS Changes

HR/CMS is a dynamic system that will be enhanced frequently by the vendor and to meet the evolving needs of State Government. Some of the enhancements will inevitably impact Departmental interfaces. ITD HR/CMS support team CTR will be responsible for notifying Departments of any required change. Notification will include a description of the change, the appropriate technical information needed to make the change, the target implementation date, and the name of the CTR contact. Before the Department's interface modifications are put into production the interface must be tested and accepted by ITD/CTR/Department personnel. It is the on-going responsibility of the Department to update their interfaces to keep pace with HR/CMS upgrades and changes. Interfaces that are not so modified will be discontinued.

6.4 Process for Discontinuing an Interface

If for any reason a Department wishes to discontinue an interface HR/CMS, the Department must communicate its intention and reasons to both CTR and ITD as soon as the decision is made via the generic interface request letter provided with this policy document (see 4.3). If the Department wishes to discontinue an interface due to operational or system problems, CTR and/or ITD will review the problems to ascertain if and how they can be resolved so that the interface can operate successfully.

CTR/HRD/ITD may discontinue an interface if a Department cannot modify, in a timely manner, its interfaces as HR/CMS changes are implemented. This relates to interfaces that provide transaction updates to HR/CMS. CTR/HRD/ITD reserve the right, following conversations with the Department, to suspend, revoke or terminate departmental interfaces or take other remedial actions, as relevant if the department is unable or unwilling to correct continual interface errors.