

APC Quarterly Newsletter

The USDA Charge Card Service Center (CCSC) APC Quarterly Newsletter provides updates on ongoing initiatives, announces new policies and procedures, and provides a forum for Purchase APCs to share information regarding USDA's Charge Card Program.

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Calendar of Events

March 2013	April 2013	May 2013
8th: Cardholder Suspensions	8th: Cardholder Suspensions	8th: Cardholder Suspensions
11th and 25th: Cardholder Suspension Lifts	11th and 25th: Cardholder Suspension Lifts	9th and 23rd: Cardholder Suspension Lifts
	15th: System User List Report Certification Due to CCSC	27th: Memorial Day Holiday (Govt. Closed)
		31st: LAPC Quarterly Review Checklists Due to APC

Agency of the Quarter

The USDA CCSC is pleased to congratulate the **Agency of the Quarter for Q4 FY12**, [Office of the Inspector General \(OIG\)](#) and Linda Josey (OIG APC) and the **Agency of the Quarter for Q1 FY13**, the [Food Safety and Inspection Service \(FSIS\)](#) and Janet Elm (FSIS APC). These agencies achieved the following outstanding metrics:

Q4 FY12		
Office of Inspector General (OIG)		
	Q3-2012	Q4-2012
Convenience Checks Usage	0.00%	0.00%
Transactions Final Approved within 60 days	99.05%	98.47%
	Q4-2011	Q4-2012
Spend Increase	\$359,635	\$649,924

Q1 FY13		
Food Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS)		
	Q4-2012	Q1-2013
Convenience Checks Usage	0.00%	0.00%
Transactions Final Approved within 60 days	96.00%	99.00%
	Q1-2012	Q1-2013
Spend Increase	\$764,819	\$807,816

The **Q4 FY12 Honorable Mention** agency is the [Marketing and Regulatory Programs \(MRP\)](#) and Estela Diaz (MRP APC) and the **Q1 FY13 Honorable Mention** agency is the [Food and Nutritional Services \(FNS\)](#) and Joseph Rainey (FNS APC). Congratulations!

The CCSC Team would like to thank all charge card program participants for all of your continued hard work, contributions, and accomplishments. If you have any questions, please contact us at ccsc@dm.usda.gov.

Green Purchasing Program (GPP)

As previously communicated, USDA's CCSC is advancing the **Green Purchasing Program (GPP)** to promote and advance former President Bush's [Executive Order 13423](#), *Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management*, and President Obama's [Executive Order 13514](#), *Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance*. In accordance with these Executive Orders USDA and USDA's Purchase Policy, as outlined in both the Agriculture Acquisition Regulation (AGAR) and posted [DR 5013-6](#) (see section 9.g.), bio-preferred products are to be purchased unless certain conditions are met. These conditions are outlined at <http://www.biopreferred.gov>.

The CCSC originally developed and launched the GPP as an effort to enhance the purchasing information reported for USDA's Environmental Management Division. This program now must be implemented as standard policy throughout all USDA Agencies until we have an alternate green purchasing tracking system within Access Online (AXOL). Each of your agencies were previously contacted regarding a start date for the GPP and definitive responses regarding rollout dates were due by August 31, 2012. The goal is to have all agencies throughout USDA to participate in Green Purchasing. The following agencies are currently running the GPP:

- Farm, Foreign Agricultural Service (FFAS)(RMA, FSA-FA, FSA-CE)
- Food Safety and Inspection Services (FFIS)
- Marketing Regulatory Program (MRP)(AMS, APHIS, GIPSA)
- Natural Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Research, Education and Economics (REE)(ARS, NASS)
- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)
- Forest Service (FS)
- Office of General Counsel (OIG)
- Rural Development (RD)



The GPP's goal is to increase "green purchasing" within USDA and to track these transactions within AXOL. Currently, there is no radio button or designated field to track "green purchases" and the CCSC team is working with the U.S. Bank development team to add a radio button to facilitate tracking of "green purchases" within USDA's charge card program. In the meantime, until this technical update is made within AXOL, the GPP Workgroup has decided to utilize the "Agency Specific Data" that is already in the AXOL system. Cardholders are not required to enter any data in this field per the DR 5013-6; however, agencies can require documentation in this field at the agency level.

Over the past year and a half, the GPP Workgroup developed and implemented a process to support the pilot program that requires our cardholders to perform two steps when procuring green items. The following instructions will assist cardholders with green purchase documentation and proper percentage allocations when a purchase consists of both "green" and "non-green" products:

1. The first step is to identify green products utilizing labels and descriptions. For example, the "Energy Star" label on a printer or laptop designates a certain type of "green" product. In addition, words such as *recyclable*, *recycled content* and *environmentally preferable* are often part of a product item description. Cardholders can refer to Exhibit A-1: Green Purchasing Categories and Labels, on page 4, as a reference tool when evaluating "green" products.
2. The second step is crucial to the success of this pilot program as it depends on user entry of the word "Green" into a specific field within AXOL. The GPP Workgroup requests that cardholders enter the word "Green" in the "Agency Specific Data" field under the "Comments" section of Transaction Management. This documentation will assist the CCSC with a tracking tool and also compliment existing Green Purchasing efforts set forth by the current pilot agencies and offices.

USDA Supports Buying GREEN!

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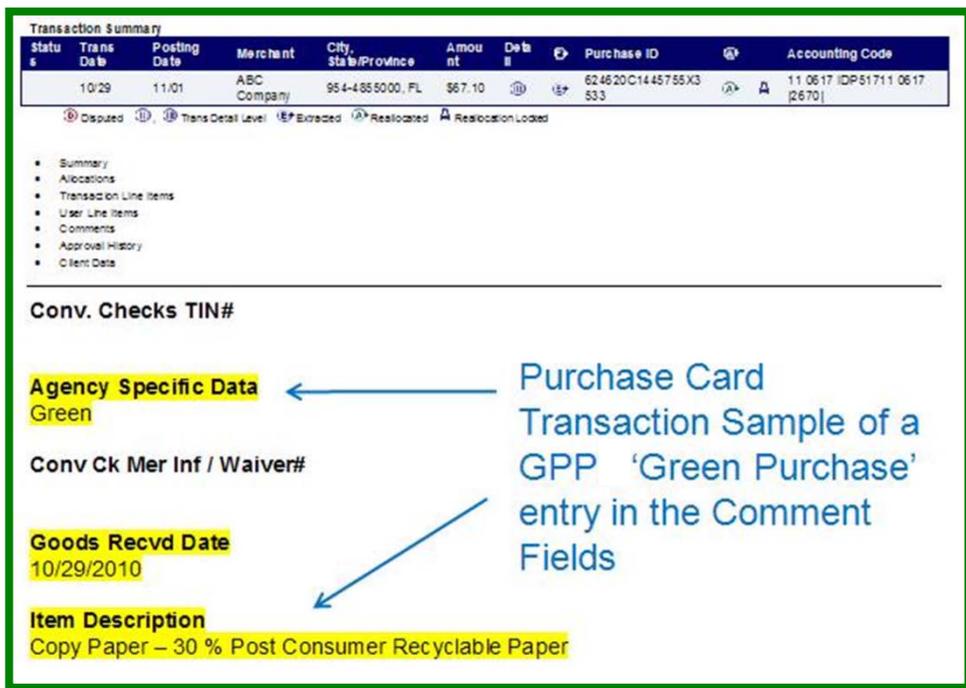


Figure 1. Purchase Card Transaction in AXOL

environmental label and cardholders can utilize this function to locate green products based on an environmental classification.

The GPP is a two-fold incentive program promoting Green Purchasing Categories and Labels (recycled content, energy efficient (ENERGY STAR® labeled, Federal Energy Management Program [FEMP]-designated, and low standby power), biobased, environmentally preferable, Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT), water efficient, non-ozone depleting products, and alternative fuel vehicles and alternative fuels) while incorporating a tracking system within the current reconciliation process.

We have received great feedback so far from APCs, LAPCs, and senior management here at the Department, including accolades from current members of the Green Purchasing Workgroup Team that submits progress reports in areas of Green Reporting and Tracking directly to the Office of Management & Budget (OMB). Please send any questions, comments, suggestions, or ideas about the GPP to the CCSC at ccsc@dm.usda.gov and thank you for **GOING GREEN!**

Figure 1, Purchase Card Transaction in AXOL, and Figure 2, Convenience Check Transaction in AXOL, illustrates where to place the word “Green” in the “Agency Specific Data” field of an AXOL transaction.

In addition to leveraging labels and descriptions to identify green products, the USDA/GSA Advantage website www.usdaadvantage.gsa.gov is another tool that provides cardholders the ability to search for green products. First, access the main page and under the section titled “Special Categories” click **Environmental** and a dialog box appears titled, **Shop for Environmental Items**. Products appear on the page with an



Figure 2. Convenience Check Transaction in AXOL

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Exhibit A-1: Green Purchasing Categories and Labels

Categories

A “green” purchase, as referenced in the [Green Purchasing Affirmative Procurement Program \(GPAPP\)](#), is defined as the purchasing and use of the following:

- Alternative fuel vehicles and alternative fuels
- Environmentally preferable
- Recycled content
- Recycled content Energy efficient (ENERGY STAR® labeled, Federal Energy Management Program [FEMP]-designated, and low standby power)
- Bio-based/BioPreferred
- Non-ozone depleting products
- Water efficient
- Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT)

Labels

The following logos and associated categories assist cardholders with identifying green products:



Bio-based/ BioPreferred



Energy Star Compliant



EPEAT



FEMP Energy Efficient



Recycled Content



Water Efficient Logo-EPA Water Sense Program

Green Purchasing Program Score Card

The CCSC is providing you with a GPP Score Card (refer to figure 3, on page 5) which allows you to view how many green transactions each agency made in Q1 FY13. The score card also compares each agency’s green transaction totals to overall transaction totals for the quarter. The agencies highlighted in green had a variance over 1%.



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Green Purchase Program Score Card, Q1 FY13

Department Name	Agency Name	Agency Number	Total # Transactions	Total \$ Transactions Amount	Total # Green Transactions	Total \$ Green Transactions Amount	% Variance in # Transactions	% Variance \$ Transactions Amount
MRP	AMS	02	6,484	\$1,448,925.58	14	\$2,080.07	0.22%	0.14%
	APHIS	34	28,347	\$7,369,268.41	254	\$52,544.58	0.90%	0.71%
	GIPSA	36	1,304	\$233,014.72	5	\$738.52	0.38%	0.32%
	ARS	03	63,371	\$31,093,375.77	534	\$212,018.38	0.84%	0.68%
	ERS	18	262	\$191,979.24	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
REE	NASS	20	2,006	\$533,860.59	6	\$1,305.44	0.30%	0.24%
	NIFA	22	335	\$123,147.87	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	OS	01	155	\$45,806.76	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	QAO	06	58	\$13,003.61	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	OC	13	163	\$85,355.49	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
DM	OCE	38	65	\$29,664.08	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	NAD	39	194	\$41,739.87	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	OBPA	42	32	\$13,358.55	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	OES	63	40	\$2,742.85	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	OCIO	64	1,156	\$528,118.58	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	HL	72	153	\$57,376.77	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	DA	75	1,018	\$665,631.03	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	OASCR	84	73	\$29,672.47	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	OCFO	90	500	\$234,575.34	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	RMA	08	497	\$74,326.05	4	\$211.52	0.80%	0.28%
FFAS	FAS	10	822	\$276,478.03	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
	FSA FA	57	4,398	\$1,690,680.85	16	\$5,710.29	0.36%	0.34%
	FSA CE	97	17,598	\$2,513,198.47	191	\$29,915.10	1.09%	1.19%
	FS	11	137,390	\$47,856,081.42	234	\$47,662.53	0.17%	0.10%
	OGC	14	503	\$120,512.89	5	\$823.11	0.99%	0.68%
NRCs	NRCs	16	14,796	\$5,407,963.15	472	\$94,114.78	3.19%	1.74%
	RD	07	5,802	\$1,108,654.00	80	\$41,614.67	1.38%	3.75%
FSIS	FSIS	37	2,817	\$1,153,305.01	15	\$3,612.59	0.53%	0.31%
FNS	FNS	30	3,529	\$1,000,652.73	23	\$7,080.86	0.65%	0.71%
OIG	OIG	23	525	\$689,774.79	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
Total			294,393	\$104,632,244.97	1,853	\$499,432.44	0.63%	0.48%

Figure 3. Green Purchase Program Score Card, Q1 FY13

Reminders for LAPC and APC Reviews

This is a reminder that *LAPC Quarterly Review Checklists* for January 1–March 31, 2013, are due to APCs by May 31, 2013. *APC Certification of LAPC Quarterly Reviews* of all *LAPC Quarterly Review Checklists* are due to the CCSC by June 7, 2013.

As previously communicated, *LAPC Quarterly Review Checklists* should be collected and kept by the APCs. The checklist should *not* be sent to the CCSC; only the certification form that all LAPC checklists were received by the APC should be sent to the CCSC. The form must be signed by the APC and dated to be deemed as valid.

The CCSC has the responsibility at the departmental level to ensure that the agencies are performing the required management and oversight; therefore, the APCs are to complete and sign the *APC Certification of LAPC Quarterly Review* form to certify that they have received all of the *LAPC Quarterly Review Checklist*. You can access the fillable *LAPC Quarterly Review Checklist* forms on the CCSC web site:

PDF: http://www.dm.usda.gov/procurement/ccsc/LAPCQuarterlyReviewChecklist_20100810.pdf

Word: http://www.dm.usda.gov/procurement/ccsc/LAPCQuarterlyReviewChecklist_20100810.doc

The *LAPC Quarterly Review Checklist* and the *APC Certification of LAPC Quarterly Review* form are completed quarterly, according to the following timeline:

Quarter Reviewed	For the Months of	Due Date to APC	Due Date to the CCSC
Q1 FY13	October – December	February 28	March 7, 2013
Q2 FY13	January – March	May 31	June 7, 2013
Q3 FY13	April – June	August 30	September 9, 2013
Q4 FY13	July – September	November 29	December 6, 2013

The review should include approximately 25% of the LAPCs’ cardholders each quarter, and as a result, the review should cover 100% of the LAPCs’ cardholders by the end of the year. This review does not mean you must look at physical documentation from every cardholder within that 25% of cardholders you review each quarter. There should be at least some physical review of documentation done of the reviewed cardholders each quarter in the form of scanned, faxed, or original receipts, purchase orders, or other like documentation.

As a closing reminder to any APCs who have not e-mailed their *APC Certification of LAPC Quarterly Review* forms to the CCSC yet, please do so as soon as possible. And if you have any further questions on this process please e-mail the CCSC at ccsc@dm.usda.gov.



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GSA SmartPay® Smart Bulletin

In a CCSC e-mail sent January 25, 2013, the [GSA Smart Bulletin No. 017](#) was attached describing new merchant surcharges all government agencies should be aware of (also, see bulletin text in shaded box). Please reference the bulletin for further clarification, and if necessary please follow up with the GSA on any additional questions. The [SmartPay® Surcharges and Other Fees](#) page provides additional information regarding frequently asked surcharge related questions.

January 17, 2013

U.S. General Services Administration
Federal Acquisition Service
SMART Bulletin No. 017

Brands (VISA/MasterCard) to Permit Merchant Surcharges

EFFECTIVE DATE:

This Smart Bulletin becomes effective upon issuance and shall remain in force until modified or rescinded.

INTRODUCTION:

This bulletin addresses surcharges that are now allowable by merchants when accepting GSA SmartPay® and other charge/credit cards.

BUSINESS LINE(S) AFFECTED:

Purchase, Travel, Fleet and Integrated

SUMMARY:

Surcharges are fees that a retailer adds to the cost of a purchase when a customer uses a charge/credit card. As a result of the settlement between a class of retailers and the brands, on January 27, 2013, merchants in the United States and U.S. Territories will be permitted to impose a surcharge on cardholders when a charge/credit card is used.

It is important to note that not all merchants will impose a surcharge. In addition, some states have laws which do not allow or limit surcharges. As of January 16, 2013 the following states do not allow or limit surcharges: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma and Texas. Cardholders who receive a surcharge or a check out fee in any of the above mentioned states should report the merchant to the state attorney general's office.

Surcharges **may not** be added to debit, prepaid or cash purchases and cardholders are required to be notified in advance of making the purchase if a merchant will impose a surcharge. Merchants must also include the surcharge fee on any receipt(s) provided to the cardholder.

Per Visa and MasterCard guidance, there is a limit to the allowable surcharge amounts. These limits vary by brand and by merchant discount rate. Information on surcharge limitations for Visa and MasterCard can be found at:

<http://www.mastercard.us/merchants/support/surcharge-rules.html>

http://usa.visa.com/personal/using_visacards/checkout_fees/index.html

ACTION:

A/OPCs should ensure cardholders and other charge card management personnel are aware of the possibility of surcharges when making purchases using credit/charge cards. If a merchant is imposing a surcharge, the cardholder may choose to consider another merchant that offers the same or similar item(s) to avoid paying the surcharge.

David J. Shea
Director
Office of Charge Card Management

If you have any questions or comments regarding this Smart Bulletin, please contact the Office of Charge Card Management at 703-605-2808 or at gsa_SmartPay@gsa.gov.

Dates for Purchase Cardholder Account Suspensions and Suspension Lifts

On September 10, 2012, the **PCard-12-2012: New Dates for Purchase Cardholder Account Suspension and Suspension Lifts for FY13** notification was e-mailed to Purchase Coordinators outlining the new dates for suspension and suspension lifts for FY13. If you have any questions on this process, please e-mail the CCSC at ccsc@dm.usda.gov.

Purchase Cardholder Suspension Dates (Note: Suspensions occur once a month)	Suspension Lift Dates (Note: Lifts on "suspended" accounts occur twice a month)
April 8, 2013	April 9 and 23, 2013
May 8, 2013	May 9 and 23, 2013
June 10, 2013	June 11 and 25, 2013
July 8, 2013	July 9 and 23, 2013
August 8, 2013	August 9 and 23, 2013
September 9, 2013	September 10 and 24, 2013
October 8, 2013	October 9 and 23, 2013

Convenience Check Score Card

As a reminder and in accordance with the AGAR ADVISORY No. 52, agencies and cardholders may not use convenience checks for purchases or payments unless there is an applicable electronic funds waiver number that allows such use. Refer to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 208—Management of Federal Agency Disbursements, Section 208.4 Waivers (31 CFR 208.4) for details on the waivers.

Agencies are expected to significantly reduce, and to eventually eliminate, the use of convenience checks. Agencies are also expected to sharply reduce their number of authorized check writers and check stock, eventually eliminating this duty altogether.

APCs/LAPCs shall advise their cardholders that convenience checks may not be used to make purchases or payments absent an applicable waiver. LAPCs must review cardholders' authorization to have checks and shall cancel check-writing authorizations of cardholders who do not purchase supplies or services in the scope of authorized agency waivers. They must also collect, record, and destroy unneeded blank check stocks. APCs/LAPCs shall develop procedures to eliminate convenience checks pursuant to AGAR Advisory No. 52. Agencies shall continue to explore alternative payment methods for categories of transactions covered by waivers.

In addition, the CCSC provides you with monthly convenience checks metrics by Agency (refer to figures 4-7, on pages 9-11). The CCSC will use these statistics to track and monitor the checks usage to ensure that the annual reduction goal of 30% is being met.



USDA Convenience checks must have an applicable "DCIA Waiver for Convenience Checks" number that allows use and corresponds to the purchase.



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Convenience Check Score Card

Agency	# Checks FY11	\$ Checks FY11	# Checks FY12	\$ Checks FY12	# Variance FY11-FY12	\$ Variance FY11-FY12	# Checks FY13 YTD	\$ Checks FY13 YTD	# Variance FY12-FY13 YTD	\$ Variance FY12-FY13 YTD
01 - OSEC	3	\$1,748.00	9	\$9,768.80	-200.00%	-458.86%	-	\$0.00	100.00%	100.00%
03 - ARS	5,106	\$9,045,616.00	4,219	\$2,649,376.66	17.37%	13.01%	1,787	\$1,030,558.72	57.64%	61.10%
07 - RD	374	\$117,948.69	155	\$45,178.39	58.56%	61.70%	70	\$14,179.10	54.84%	68.62%
08 - RMA	39	\$13,873.76	27	\$14,936.12	30.77%	-7.56%	9	\$3,791.67	66.67%	74.61%
10 - FAS	297	\$296,509.58	169	\$161,241.85	43.10%	45.62%	47	\$52,227.86	72.19%	67.61%
11 - FS	24,893	\$16,528,679.54	21,982	\$16,106,653.66	11.69%	2.55%	8,379	\$5,764,040.04	61.88%	64.21%
16 - NRCS	3	\$1,278.00	0	\$0.00	100.00%	100.00%	-	\$0.00	0.00%	0.00%
18 - ERS	181	\$85,907.57	74	\$43,675.25	59.12%	49.16%	28	\$10,237.43	62.16%	76.56%
20 - NASS	515	\$139,041.22	435	\$103,142.81	15.53%	25.82%	233	\$52,894.56	46.44%	48.72%
22 - NIFA	1,237	\$757,529.02	327	\$199,272.16	73.57%	73.69%	16	\$6,706.90	95.11%	96.63%
57 - FSA-FA	448	\$149,372.87	327	\$86,791.94	27.01%	41.90%	275	\$93,350.00	15.90%	-7.56%
64 - OIGIO	284	\$18,401.83	214	\$12,896.83	24.65%	29.92%	112	\$7,393.73	47.66%	42.67%
75 - DM	1	\$2,500.00	28	\$14,057.02	-2700.00%	-462.28%	3	\$18,841.77	89.29%	-34.04%
84 - OASCR	0	\$0.00	2	\$330.00	-200.00%	-330.00%	-	\$0.00	100.00%	100.00%
97 - FSA-CE	6,181	\$1,365,754.52	4,412	\$891,841.93	28.62%	34.70%	1,840	\$356,462.47	58.30%	60.03%
Total	39,562	\$22,524,160.60	32,380	\$20,339,163.42	18.15%	9.70%	12,799	\$7,410,684.25	60.47%	63.56%

Figure 4. Convenience Check Score Card

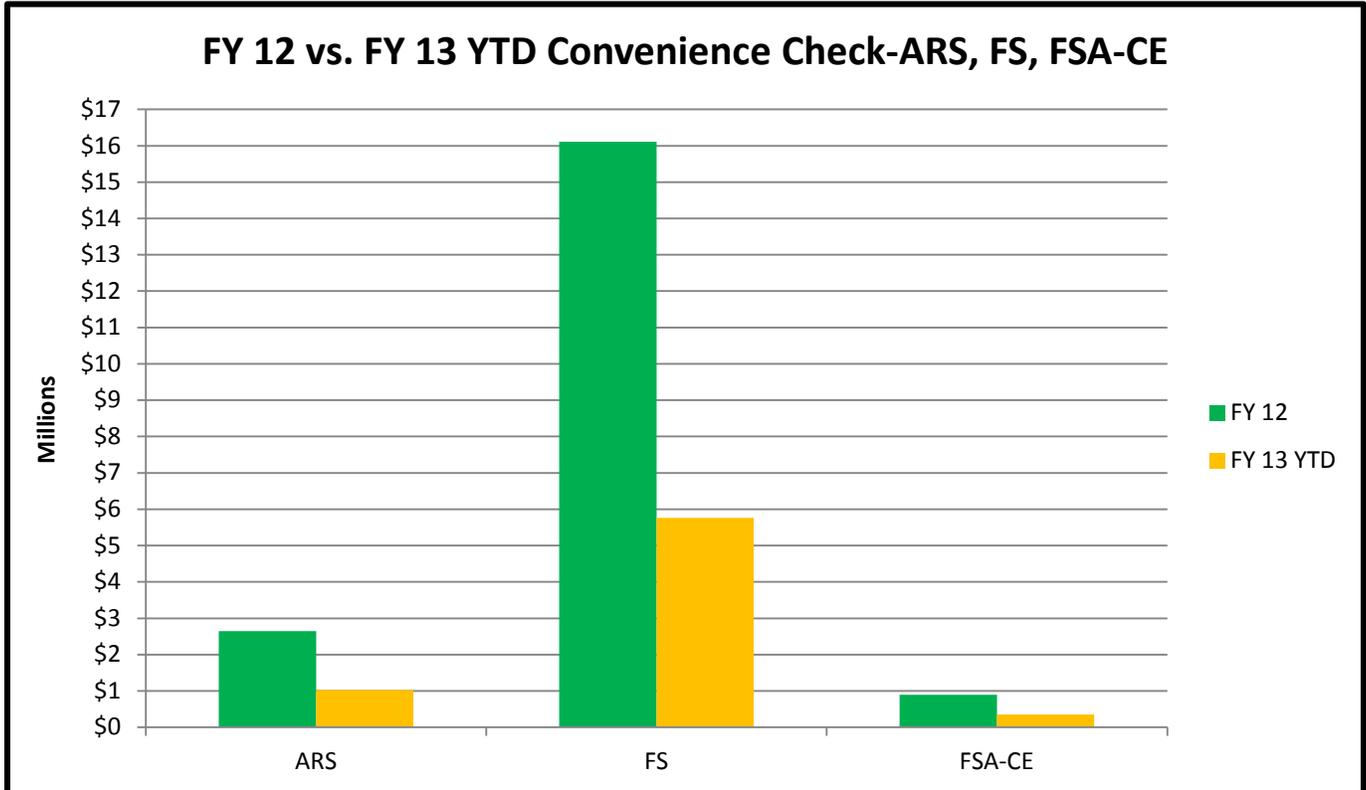


Figure 5. Convenience Check Usage for ARS, FS, and FSA-CE

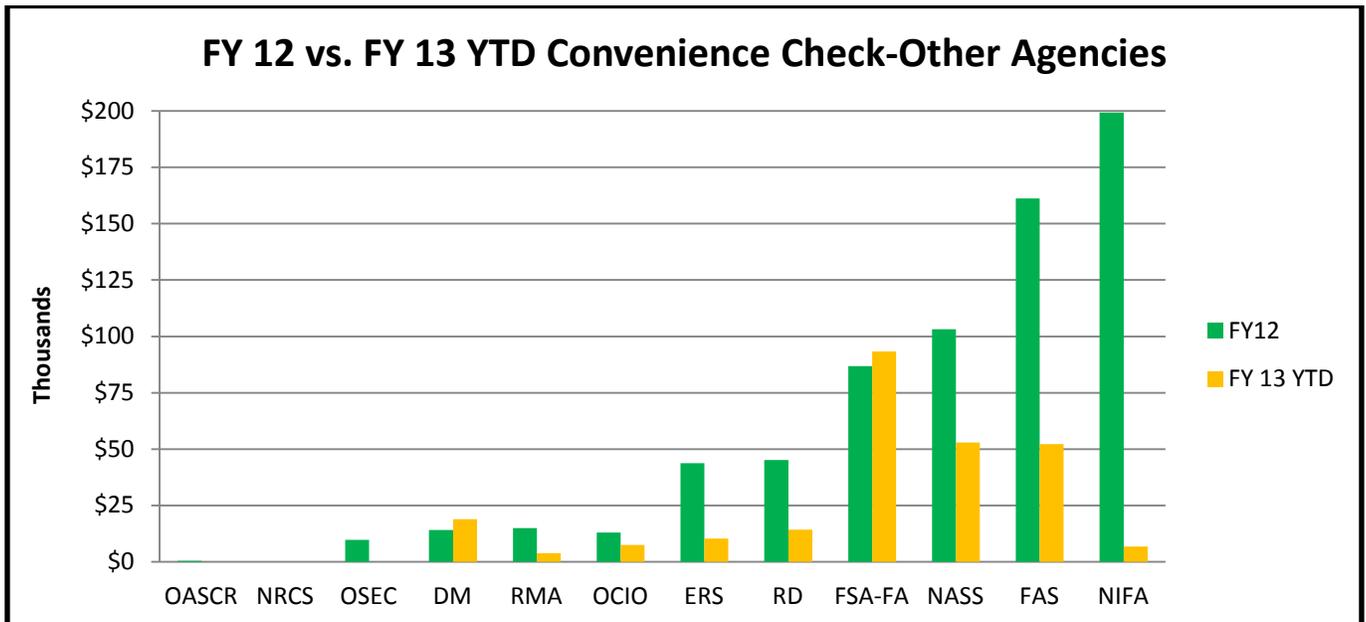


Figure 6. Convenience Check Usage for All Other Agencies

Figure 7, Convenience Check Spending Total for Top Ten Agencies, illustrates how the USDA compares to other Government Agencies for FY12 (courtesy of GSA). The CCSC will continue to assist your agency with efforts to eliminate the use of convenience checks.

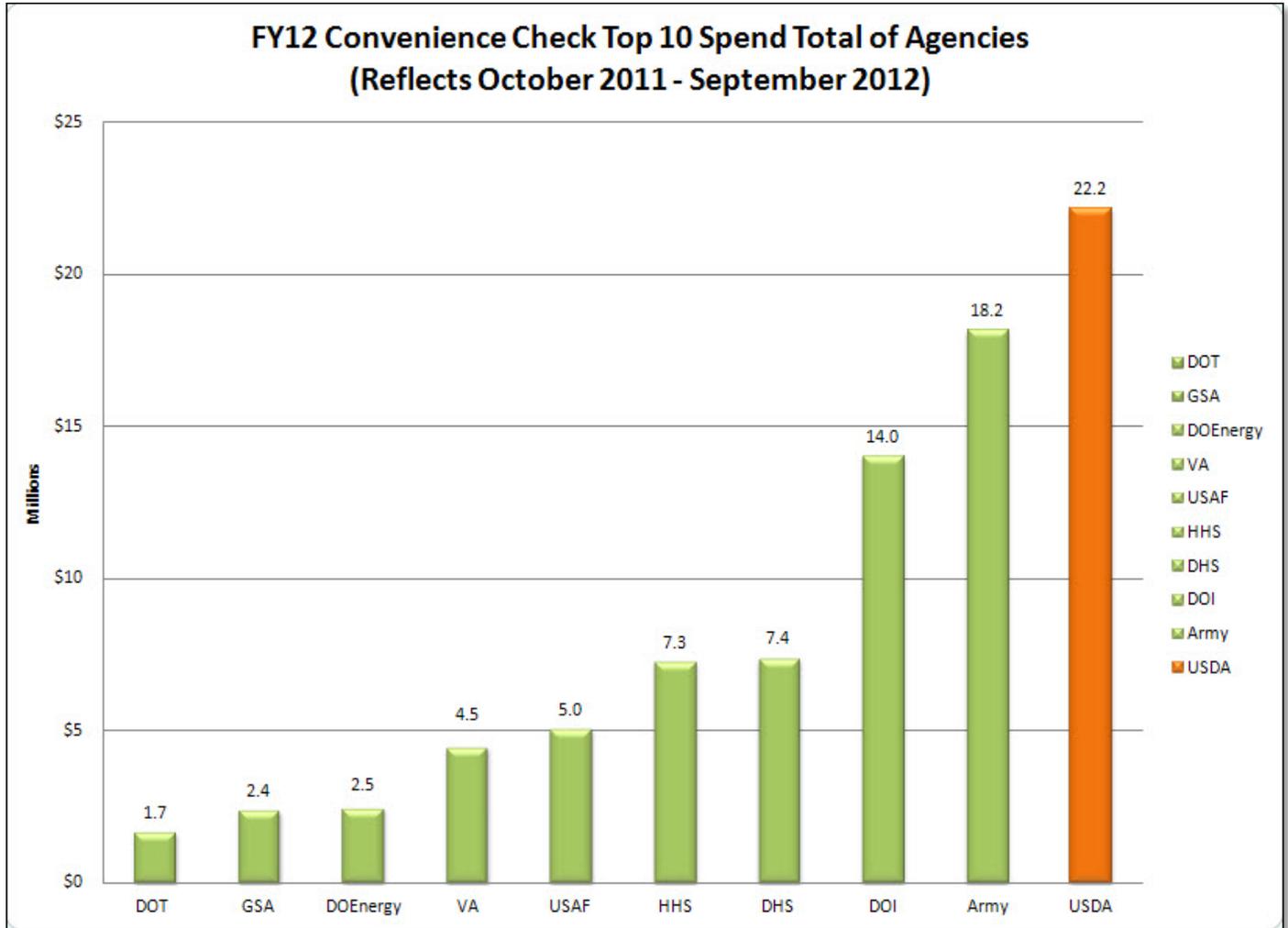


Figure 7. Convenience Check Spending Total for Top Ten Agencies

USDA CCSC Contact Information



The CCSC welcomes your feedback. Please e-mail us at ccsc@dm.usda.gov about ways we can improve the newsletter, with topics you would like included in upcoming newsletters, and or questions. Thank you!