

Lines of Business

LOB #99:

DEPARTMENT SUPERVISION AND FISCAL CONTROL

Purpose

LOB #99, Department Supervision and Fiscal Control, is headed by the department director who provides oversight and management of all DTA programs. This LOB reflects the DTA director's constitutional duties as the County Assessor and Tax Collector, responsible for ensuring proper administration and adjudication of all local assessment and tax collection matters. Governed by state and County codes, the director's final determination in tax matters can only be appealed to the Fairfax County Circuit Court, and in some instances to the Virginia Department of Taxation, or to the Virginia Department of Veterans' Affairs. In pursuing DTA's vision of "Generating Revenue Fairly", this LOB is concerned with promoting an efficient and effective tax system that focuses on accurately applying the law, following fair professional standards and maximizing collections. The department was recently awarded the Certificate of Excellence in Assessment Administration (CEAA) by the International Association of Assessing Officers, demonstrating the department's commitment to best practices in assessment administration and delivering high quality customer service.

Additionally, staff assigned to this LOB administer the DTA budget, the State Compensation Board budget, personnel, and payroll/procurement functions.

Description

Oversight, fiscal administration, personnel management, and leadership are the underlying duties within LOB #99, Department Supervision and Fiscal Control. Service is provided directly by the DTA director and other staff assigned to the Department Supervision division. As noted previously, this LOB reflects the director's constitutional duties as the County Assessor and Tax Collector. This represents approximately \$3 billion in General Fund revenue per year. This LOB also provides direct constituent services, staff support and programmatic, policy and legislative analysis to the Board of Supervisors and senior County management. The Director also oversees DTA's revenue forecasting duties in support of the County Executive's budget development and monitoring. From an internal services perspective, this LOB handles all budgetary, procurement/payroll and personnel requirements for the department.

LOB #99, Department Supervision and Fiscal Control, is the driving force behind DTA's service delivery. DTA places great emphasis on providing quality customer service in all aspects of operations. This LOB also takes the lead in promoting e-commerce throughout the other DTA LOBs in order to increase transparency and empower the public in conducting tax business online.

Department of Tax Administration

Benefits

DTA was created by the Board of Supervisors in 1995 by merging the Office of Assessments with the Revenue Collection arm of the Department of Finance. This was done in response to citizen complaints about being bounced around between multiple tax agencies with different agendas. The merger created a “One Stop Shopping” experience where citizens could address all of their tax issues. The success of DTA has seen a tremendous improvement in customer service, communication, responsiveness and agility in support of County taxpayers. The agency focuses on cross-training and empowerment to meet taxpayer needs. LOB #99, Department Supervision and Fiscal Control, provides direct oversight and leadership in marshalling and reallocating departmental resources as needed in order to meet shifting workload demands. Department leadership developed the award-winning Smiles program which radically improved service delivery to thousands of taxpayers each year in the payment of car taxes.

This LOB provides services directly to Fairfax County taxpayers, businesses and prospective businesses, the Board of Supervisors, and senior County management. Compliance reports are also provided to the state as required by law. The community’s ability to conveniently access resources online, over the phone or through email, helps promote the County vision element of Connecting People and Places. Being able to conveniently and securely access information 24 x 7 and conduct business in an efficient manner is of paramount importance to Fairfax County residents. DTA’s ability to provide this service is of great value to the community. Furthermore, providing first-rate customer service while ensuring the accurate assessment, billing, and collection of taxes embodies the County vision element of Exercising Corporate Stewardship. Exercising Corporate Stewardship in revenue oversight and administration is particularly critical inasmuch as the department is responsible for assessing, billing, collecting and accounting for more than 80 percent of all General Fund revenue.

In addition, this LOB provides critical internal services (budget, payroll, State Compensation Board, procurement, and personnel management) to the entire department required for ongoing day-to-day functioning in service to the public.

Mandates

This LOB is fully mandated and reflects the director’s mandated constitutional duties as the County Assessor and Tax Collector. Sources of mandate are Article X of the Virginia Constitution, Virginia Code § 46.2-752, Virginia Code § 58.1-30 through § 58.1-39, and Virginia Code § 15.2. The Director of DTA oversees all ad valorem assessment and all property tax collection programs governed by state and County law. The Director adjudicates taxpayer appeals concerning both assessments and collections. An appointed administrator, this position otherwise serves in the equivalent role of the Constitutional Office of Commissioner of the Revenue; and, for tax collection purposes, serves as Tax Collector analogous to the Constitutional Office of Treasurer (Virginia Code §§ 58.1-3100 and 58.1-3123; and Virginia Code § 15.2-823). Given these Constitutional duties, 81 percent of the Director’s salary is reimbursed to the County’s General Fund by the State Compensation Board.

The fiscal administration and personnel management responsibilities of this LOB are done in compliance with County personnel regulations, procedural memorandums, financial reporting requirements, and generally accepted accounting practices.

Department of Tax Administration

Trends and Challenges

Doing “more with less” while upholding a high standard of customer service is a strategic challenge faced by all DTA LOB initiatives. In recent years, the changes in demographics have challenged staff to become exceptionally efficient in serving a diverse community. Since FY 2013, Fairfax County has experienced a significant population growth in citizens over the age of 65. In addition to the growth in the senior population, citizens who are foreign born and/or speak a language other than English at home, now make up a larger segment of the County population. Retaining transparency and explaining complicated tax processes in simple terms is challenging.

The urbanization of the County also poses challenges to staff. With the development of the Route 28 corridor, further urbanization of Tyson’s Corner, Reston Town Center, Springfield Mall, Mosaic District, and the expansion of the Metro rail in Fairfax County, comes additional workload and responsibilities. More commercial buildings, additional retail structures, as well as residential dwelling units must be appraised, billed and taxes collected. Expanded business presence in these areas also dictates the need for business tax reviews to ensure all businesses are licensed and paying the appropriate taxes. Under current budget and staffing levels, the challenge of meeting statutory workload requirements and deadlines as well as the expectations of the constituency for quality customer service remains.

The application of new technologies and service delivery methods has aided DTA in keeping pace with the ever-changing landscape of citizens and development. The tremendous growth in the use of technology has resulted in significant efficiencies for both the public and DTA staff. Service trends remain focused on technology which promotes convenience, security, and ease of customer transactions. DTA remains focused on the technological environment, to ensure the most suitable and user-friendly technology is available to the public. A good example of this is the partnership between DTA and the Department of Information Technology (DIT) in launching the new secure web portal, [MyFairfax](#), in FY 2016. However, the use of technology comes with its own funding challenges as DTA absorbs the cost of licensing fees, maintenance contracts, updated software versions, and new innovative products.

Succession planning will also continue to be a challenge facing DTA for the next several years. Fortunately, each division within DTA is currently led by very capable and experienced experts in their operations who are working to train others in the department.

Department of Tax Administration

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #99: Department Supervision and Fiscal Control			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$424,603	\$436,594	\$453,226
Operating Expenses	48,399	50,016	44,439
Total Expenditures	\$473,002	\$486,610	\$497,665
General Fund Revenue	\$139,270	\$138,217	\$138,576
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$333,732	\$348,393	\$359,089
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	5 / 5	5 / 5	5 / 5
Total Positions	5 / 5	5 / 5	5 / 5

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Requests/Inquiries (emails, letters, forms)	166,244	187,175	185,868	187,000	187,000
E-Commerce Transactions	407,256	420,509	438,848	461,000	485,000
Average customer rating of DTA service (4.0 scale)	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.0

The metrics for this LOB indicate that the front-line taxpayer service to citizens is being effectively administered. Information inquiries and requests for assistance from the public continue to rise. This increase over time is primarily due to the increased use of email. E-commerce transactions continue to trend upward as more and more citizens use electronic devices to conduct their business transactions online. As technology continues to evolve and additional devices and apps which facilitate e-commerce are developed, this number should continue to grow. Being able to serve the public through e-commerce, online transactions, and electronic correspondence, has helped DTA remain efficient during times of shrinking budgets and reduced staffing levels. DTA's customer service rating at our cashier counters is one indication of a high level of efficiency and customer satisfaction among those surveyed.

Customer Service initiatives have included the ability to conduct numerous online transactions, use of Quick Response (QR) Codes for mobile phone apps, use of electronic notebooks in support of the Board of Equalization, and most recently the development with DIT of a new secure web portal, MyFairfax. MyFairfax allows citizens to create a secure user ID and password in order to link their tax accounts into a single profile and enable them to see not only their assessment data but historical payment information as well. The portal also allows them to make appropriate account changes or to pay accounts. This latest application was launched in FY 2016 and is accessible at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dta. In future phases, DTA hopes to also provide secure access to individual dog license records and parking ticket records. More importantly, the portal positions DTA to begin offering electronic billing in late FY 2016 or early FY 2017.

While DTA is currently the only agency offering portal access, DIT plans to widely expand the functionality to include other agencies and programs as well.