

Agency Guidance for Getting BARS Help

Introduction

BARS is a budgeting tool that is still relatively new and continues to evolve as DBM seeks to improve user experience. As such, we anticipate there will be questions about how the system works, how to execute various work functions, and maybe even encounter a few system bugs.

Overall, DBM asks that agencies with multiple staff using BARS ensure that there is a point person who is the expert for that agency—that person should be the first step in agency questions regarding BARS. While DBM is committed to helping agency users with the system, it is difficult to field a multitude of questions from many users at one agency. Coordinating questions first on the agency side will ensure that DBM has capacity to help all users and will guarantee more consistency in help responses.

Beyond that first step of coordination on the agency side, BARS help topic areas fall into 3 categories. For all of these categories, DBM guarantees that agencies will receive some level of response within one business day, whether it be full resolution or confirmation of receipt if it is a complicated problem that requires further follow-up.

If you are unsure of which category your request falls into, contact your assigned OBA analyst first.

Category 1 - Functional - User Assistance

Functional categories related to carrying out BARS tasks while doing work in BARS. These can include (but are not limited to):

- BARS validation errors - how to read them and resolve them
- Help with SD tabs
- Importing from Excel into BARS
- Understanding BARS Concepts and Functionality
- How to view your work; what is included and what is not
- Steps and stages
- Submitting the budget via Budget Request Submission (BRS) Module
- Accessing Reports and/or Ad Hoc Reports

These tend to be the vast majority of questions, and agency users should contact your assigned OBA analyst via telephone or e-mail. For agencies with first year OBA analysts, agencies will be provided with a secondary BARS expert analyst to copy on any questions.

Category 2 - User or Chart of Account Changes

The Technical Data and Systems Team (TDS) at DBM is in charge of all of the following:

- Approving subprogram and subobject maintenance changes (add/disable/change)
 - Agencies can initiate these processes using the Agency Administration - COA Maintenance functionality in BARS
- Adding, disabling, or changing units, programs, or fund sources
- Add-delete-change access for users via BARS User Access Request Form (must email bars.doit@maryland.gov for this process)

For help with subprogram/subobject maintenance and other chart of account changes, email TDS at oba.tds1@maryland.gov and copy your OBA analyst. Make sure to explain the reasons for the changes in your email. Additional notes:

- DBM will not be approving the *disabling* of chart of account items during budget submission season to reduce the likelihood of data defects in the system
- Agency users should plan for their chart of account changes as early as possible to avoid the potential for them to delay agency budget submission.
- Agencies are asked to submit COA or subobject changes during normal working hours during the week. Submitting them after hours or on weekends, will take longer to process.
- Adding new BARS users or updating user role assignments during the budget request process will be limited to only those users deemed essential.

Category 3 - BARS Application Errors

If you experience an Application Error screen in BARS, contact the BARS IT team. You can do this by emailing bars.doit@maryland.gov and copy oba.tds1@maryland.gov.

- Include "BARS Help: Application Error" in the subject line of your request
- In the email text, include your Agency Name and a detailed description of your support need.
 - Example: I was doing XYZ when I went to submit and received this application error.
- *Note: The more detailed the description is, the quicker your issue will be able to be resolved.*
- Attach a screen shot or example if you are reporting an error message.
- If possible, please also include an adjustment number.