

Operationalizing a Budget

By CPT Patrick M. Dickman and MAJ Garrett C. Chandler

Rapid, accurate, and reportable data are essential for successful organizations. In the Army, there is a high demand for data designed to inform senior leader decision-making. However, overlapping systems of record and translating data between military occupational specialties can disrupt efficiency. While accounting might be the “language of business,” (Stanford Business, 2024), operations are the

and storage locations. When classes of supply are ordered in the Global Combat Support System–Army (GCSS-A),¹ these CFCs associate orders to funded programs in the General Fund Enterprise Business System (GFEBS), obligating the dollars against those requirements. Generally, users in either GFEBS or GCSS-A solicit the systems they primarily use for data with specific variants. This causes errors, diminishes tracking accuracy, and impedes effective data analytics,

small team consisting of brigade leadership, the budget team, and the aviation materiel officer created a CFC-based concept to link Class IX repair parts² orders to specific aircraft associated with the weather event. While maintainers focused on completing inspections of the damage, maintenance managers placed orders in GCSS-A the same way they ordered all other parts; however, they used the custom CFC to separate weather damage-related expenses from routine expenses. This enabled the brigade to seamlessly manage contingency repairs separate from the routine ordering and echelons above brigade to track progress using the CFC as a common variable within the systems of record. Most importantly, it allowed us to calculate the exact cost of repairs using GCSS-A order pricing and enabled rapid prioritized purchase of repair parts as funding became available over time. During weekly operational planning team meetings, leadership at brigade, division, corps, and above could discuss data-driven solutions to logistical problems. This rapid sharing of information allowed the unit to regenerate combat power more than three times faster than projected. All echelons could examine the specific parts and cost required to restore each aircraft throughout the entire process.



Soldiers assigned to the supply support activity team of the 404th Aviation Support Battalion, 4 CAB, 4th Infantry Division, assists a customer with an order. U.S. Army photo by SPC Brenda Salgado.

Army’s language. The use of customer fund codes (CFC) establishes a common language, enabling formations to operationalize financial planning. This improves cost tracking for emergencies and contingencies, enables cost sharing during equipment transfers, and allows units to capture costs for training and operations, supporting future forecasting and auditing.

Customer fund codes are two-digit, alphanumeric tags aligned to unit Department of Defense Activity Address Codes

because these data do not incorporate all the variables in both systems unless deliberately built to do so.

Cost Tracking ✓










Unexpected contingencies disrupt data collection and complicate reporting. Disruptions cause challenges in tracking outbound expenses, complicating routine procurement and accounting. On August 1, 2024, the 4th Combat Aviation Brigade (4 CAB) experienced a weather microburst that damaged two battalions’ worth of aircraft. Within 24 hours, a

Cost Sharing ✓

A constantly changing Army presents unique challenges in accounting, prioritization, and maintenance management. In Fiscal Year (FY) 24 into FY25, 4 CAB received AH-64D Apaches from the 25th CAB. The 25th CAB (Hawaii) experiences challenges with corrosion not found in the dry mountains of Colorado. During the aircraft transfer, 4 CAB utilized another unique CFC to isolate the cost of corrosion-related maintenance from routine maintenance. These data allowed leaders to request additional funding to recoup the corrosion-related maintenance costs. Critically, this allows a commander to proceed with transfers,

¹ “GCSS-Army is the automated web-based information and logistics system of record for Army materiel management” (Department of the Army, 2024, p. 6).

² “Class IX consists of any repair part, subassembly, assembly, or component required in the maintenance or repair of an end item, subassembly, or component. These support the maintenance and repair functions performed throughout the theater on all materiel except medical. Large batteries for vehicles, to include hybridization and charging stations for energy sources, are also included” (Department of the Army, 2024, pp. 4-5).

| Class and Symbol | Description and Subclasses |
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| Class I  | Subsistence: Food. A – Nonperishable dehydrated subsistence that requires organized dining facilities. C – Combat rations include meals, ready to eat that require no organized dining facility; used in combat and in-flight environments. Includes gratuitous health and welfare items. R – Refrigerated subsistence. S – Non-refrigerated subsistence (less other subclasses). W – Water. |
| Class II  | General Support Items: Clothing, individual equipment, tentage, organizational tool sets and tool kits, hand tools, maps, administrative and housekeeping supplies. A – Air. B – Ground support material. E – General supplies. F – Clothing and textiles. G – Electronics. M – Weapons. T – Industrial supplies (for example, bearings, block and tackle, cable, chain, wire, rope, screws, bolts, studs, steel rods, plates, and bars). |
| Class III  | Petroleum, Oils, Lubricants: Petroleum (including packaged items), fuels, lubricants, hydraulic and insulating oils, preservatives, liquids and compressed gasses, coolants, deicing and antifreeze compounds, plus components and additives of such products, including coal. A – Air. W – Ground (surface). P – Packaged products. |
| Class IV  | Construction/Barrier: Materials that support fortification, obstacle and barrier construction, and construction material for base development and general engineering. A – Construction. B – Barrier materials. |
| Class V  | Ammunition: Ammunition of all types (including chemical, radiological, and special weapons), bombs, explosives, mines, fuses, detonators, pyrotechnics, missiles, rockets, propellants, and other associated items. A – Air. W – Ground. |
| Class VI  | Personal Demand Items: Nonmilitary sales items. A – Personal demand items not packaged as ration supplement sundry packs. M – Personal and official letter and packaged mail. Does not include items in other classes such as spare parts. P – Ration supplement sundry packs. |
| Class VII  | Major End-Items: A final combination of end-products ready for intended use (for example, launchers, tanks, racks, adapters, pylons, mobile machine shops, and administrative and tracked vehicles). A – Air. B – Ground support material (includes power generators, firefighting, and mapping equipment). D – Administrative and general-purpose vehicles (commercial vehicles used in administrative motor pools). G – Electronics. J – Tanks, racks, adapters, and pylons (United States Air Force only). K – Tactical and special purpose vehicles (includes trucks, truck-tractors, trailers, semi-trailers). L – Missiles. M – Weapons. N – Special weapons. X – Aircraft engines. |
| Class VIII  | Medical Materiel/ Medical Repair A – Medical materiel (including repair parts special to medical items). B – Blood and fluids. |
| Class IX  | Repair Parts (less medical special repair parts): All repair parts and components, including kits, assemblies, material power generators sub-assemblies (repairable and nonrepairable) required for all equipment; dry batteries. A – Air. B – Ground support material, power generators, and bridging, firefighting, and mapping equipment. D – Administrative vehicles (vehicles used in radio administrative motor pools). G – Electronics. K – Tactical vehicles (including trucks, truck-tractors, trailers, semi-trailers). L – Missiles. M – Weapons. N – Special weapons. T – Industrial supplies (for example, bearings, block and tackle, cable, chain, wire, rope, screws, bolts, studs, steel rods, plates, and bars). X – Aircraft engines. |
| Class X CA | Materiel to support nonmilitary programs, such as agriculture and economic development, not included in classes I through IX. |

Classes of supply. Table taken from Army Techniques Publication 4-42.2 (2024).

References:

Department of the Army. (2024, September 18). *Supply support activity operations* (Army Techniques Publication 4-42.2). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN42065-ATP_4-42.2-000-WEB-1.pdf

Stanford Business. (2024, May 29). *Money talks: Understanding the language of business*. <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/money-talks-understanding-language-business>

even if the equipment does not initially meet transfer criteria during joint inspections. These cost sharing arrangements reduce friction between units during equipment transfers, support budget stability, and allow the losing unit to fund repairs without having to perform the maintenance.

Cost Capture ✓

This same concept applies to other significant costs, including combat training center rotations, pre-deployment activities, cyclical gunnery, or range activities. When units task organize for various missions, they align equipment to different supply support activities. When a smaller portion of their unit supports another mission (e.g., an aviation or artillery task force assigned to a ground maneuver brigade), it can be difficult to align funding appropriately from the higher headquarters. Assigning a CFC leaves no doubt as to which mission the requirement supports and achieves data by mission as opposed to unit or equipment type. This enables accurate accounting for missions and training, which improves budgeting and auditing.

Conclusion ✓

Establishing a unique CFC improves cost tracking for specific emergencies or contingencies, enables cost sharing during equipment transfers, and allows units to account for training and operations. This supports rapid data collection that is reportable and auditable, which can enable leaders to make better decisions faster. The ability to analyze historical CFCs will improve financial planning throughout the brigade. Ultimately, something so minor as generating unique CFCs can exponentially improve the quality of decision-making for an organization in a fiscally constrained environment.

Biographies:

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