

CHAPTER 9. PROVIDING DATA STEWARDSHIP

GOAL: Ensure that financial data captured and reported is accurate, accessible, timely, and useable for decisionmaking and activity monitoring.

Data stewardship is the process of managing information necessary to support program and financial managers, and ensuring that data captured and reported is accurate, accessible, timely, and useable for decision-making and activity monitoring. The objective of data stewardship policy is to address data collection synchronization, reduced data redundancy, data accessibility, data availability, and data flexibility in a systematic manner. Effective data stewardship requires that (1) definitions clearly describe requirements and characteristics of data to be maintained in financial management systems; (2) data be created, recorded and reported in compliance with definitions; (3) feedback is provided when data are inadequate to meet user needs for information; and (4) data assurance provides attestation to, or comments on, the integrity of the information within the system.

The Office of Financial Management (PFM) provides overall coordination of data stewardship functions for financial data in the Department. The data stewardship function involves two levels of activities: (1) participation in governmentwide financial data standard setting and (2) Department of the Interior financial data setting in coordination with the bureau finance operations.

The Office of Financial Management has assigned one staff person to focus on data stewardship functions, participate in governmentwide financial data standard setting activities, and coordinate with the Standard Accounting Classification Advisory Team (SACAT) on setting standards for financial data for use throughout the Department. The Office of Financial Management data steward monitors the departmentwide data definition process, monitors data creation and compliance processes, ensures data usage relies on information derived from data consistent with intended definition, and that adjustments are made to data definitions when data are inadequate to meet user needs. This function also coordinates departmental financial data definitions with the two key governmentwide financial data standard setting groups, the Financial Management Service's Standard General Ledger (SGL) Board and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

To coordinate the establishment and implementation of financial data standards in the Department, the bureaus and the Office of Financial Management chartered the SACAT under the leadership of the Finance Officers' Partnership to establish and maintain a common approach among the bureaus for addressing SGL issues that relate to accounting policy and procedures, reporting requirements, internal controls, and SGL maintenance. The Office of Financial Management data stewardship person is a member of the SACAT.

FY 1999 Accomplishments

- Participated in the Standard General Ledger Board and Issue Resolution Committee to ensure that the Department's position is fairly presented and defended.
- Participated in the governmentwide Elimination Entries Working Group to develop strategies and procedures to be applied by all Departments to identify and prepare proper intra-Department elimination accounting entries for the governmentwide consolidated financial statements.
- Worked with OMB and Treasury to test the FACTS II data model.
- Participated in the SACAT to ensure that the bureaus' data structure is consistent with the governmentwide data model.
- Prepared the FY 1998 departmental consolidated financial statements based on the revised SGL account structure.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Ongoing Activities

- The Department will determine how to best use the reporting process to support performance reporting under the GPRA and the preparation of the annual Accountability Report.

FY 2000 Planned Activities

- Develop a data integrity management control review.
- The SACAT will work closely with the Decision Support System/Executive Information System (DSS/EIS) Team to ensure that pertinent information is delivered to executives for decision-making purposes.
- Coordinate, on a departmentwide basis, critical definitions for financial data necessary for reporting to OMB, the Department of the Treasury, and for departmentwide decision-making and management. This effort will work through the SACAT.

FY 2001 and Beyond Planned Activities

- Establish feedback procedures on data definition, and usage to identify and resolve data definition issues relating to bureau, Department, or Federal government user requirements.
- Develop standards for transaction level interfaces.
- Determine how the information technology and user communities can best coordinate their efforts to standardize data requirements.