CHAPTER 9. PROVIDING DATA STEWARDSHIP

Data stewardship is the process of managing information necessary to support program and financial managers, and assuring 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 Department has developed a data stewardship function by assigning one individual within PFM to focus on data stewardship functions. That person manages the Department-wide data definition process, monitors data creation and captures 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 assists in coordinating Departmental relations with the Financial Management Service's SGL Board, and the OMB related to financial data definitions.

The Finance Officers' Partnership chartered the Standard Accounting Classification Advisory Team to establish and maintain a common approach among the bureaus for addressing SGL issues involving accounting policy and procedures, reporting requirements, internal controls, and SGL maintenance. The PFM data stewardship person is a member of the SACAT. The following activities were undertaken to enhance data integrity throughout the Department during FY 1998:

- Reviewed and analyzed inter-bureau accounting transactions and formulated elimination entries for the Department's FY 1997 consolidated financial statements.

- Added accounts to the Department's SGL Chart of Accounts to accommodate accounting and reporting requirements for several FASAB standards.

- Ensured that the Department-wide SGL incorporated all of the accounts in the United States Standard General Ledger and enables all of the bureaus to implement the reporting requirements of the FASAB standards.

- Developed additional posting models and FFS and ABACIS tables to accurately record all bureau accounting transactions.

- Six bureaus implemented the revised SGL to be in compliance with the new FASAB and Treasury requirements. The remaining three bureaus will complete their conversion for the beginning of fiscal year 1999.

Planned Actions for 1999

- Prepare the fiscal year 1998 Departmental consolidated financial statements based on the revised SGL account structure.

- Participate 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.

- The Department will work with OMB and Treasury to test a data model (FACTS II) for Federal agencies to report financial and budget data.

- The SACAT will work closely with the Decision Support System/Executive Information System (DSS/EIS) Team to ensure pertinent information is delivered to executives for decision making.

- 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.

Planned Actions for 2000 and Beyond

- Coordinate, on a Department-wide basis, critical definitions for financial data necessary for reporting to OMB, the Department of the Treasury, and for Department-wide decision making and management. This effort will work through the newly formed SACAT.

- 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 a data integrity management control review.

- Develop standards for transaction level interfaces.

- Determine how the information technology and user communities can best coordinate their efforts to standardize data requirements.