

4.6 DATA MANAGEMENT POLICY

4.6.1 INTRODUCTION

With the advent of cheap hardware and the increased availability of "off the shelf" software to manipulate data, the focus in organizations has shifted from the traditional delivery vehicle (systems) to the fundamental resource (data) to provide management with information that can be quickly compiled from different systems. There are, therefore, two aspects to the data management issue faced by the Department. In the first place, it is necessary for the Department to take urgent steps to issue documentation setting out Departmental procedures, standards and definitions that should be applied to the development and operation of its Informatics systems. Without this documentation, systems will be developed independently of one another and it will be difficult to compile quickly a data base which can be used by senior management for planning, analytical and evaluation purposes. The second issue requiring urgent attention is that of access to data produced from the Department's various systems.

4.6.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Department's Data Management Policy should be as follows:

- (1) To build, control and manage effectively the corporate data resource;
- (2) To ensure the accuracy and consistency of corporate management information;
- (3) To facilitate access and distribution of information to senior management and to other parts of the Department;
- (4) To provide quality information efficiently, quickly and cost effectively.
- (5) To provide eventually a secure environment in which all information processing can be carried out.

4.6.3 PRINCIPLES

The achievement of these objectives requires adherence to these principles:

- (1) Data is a Departmental resource;
- (2) All data elements captured and stored in Departmental systems must conform to Departmental standards;
- (3) Documentation about data elements, data processes, and data definitions must be issued by a single organization assigned that responsibility and must be held in a common location;
- (4) New systems must be developed in conformity with Departmental data standards;
- (5) Users must be consulted as documentation is prepared.

4.6.4 BACKGROUND

It is not the intent of this part of the planning document to suggest that the development of systems within the Department has taken place in the absence of a coherent approach to data. In the past an informal approach to data management has worked satisfactorily. However, this approach is no longer appropriate in the more complicated situation the Department faces as the pervasiveness and reliance on Informatics systems grows.

As noted earlier in this document Departmental management faces new accountability requirements from Parliament and from the Central Agencies. It