

Theresa Pardo, Project Director, Center for Technology in Government

Theresa welcomed everyone to the first of the seminar series based on the results of the Using Information in Government Program. She noted that the purpose of the Using Information in Government program is the management of information that has value to government agencies and which is often expensive and difficult to acquire. The objective of the seminar series is to share the lessons learned during Using Information in Government with program and IT managers in various levels of government. She gave a brief overview of the seminars. The first seminar deals with identifying and overcoming various data issues. The next seminar, "Information Use Tools and Skill Sets" which will be held on May 4, 1999, will address public managers' needs as information users. The third seminar, "What Rules Govern the Use of Information?" on October 5, 1999 will deal with policy issues in the field of information sharing. The final seminar, in January 2000, will be a capstone event that will address the full set of lessons learned throughout the two years of the Using Information in Government program.

Theresa provided the background of the Using Information In Government Program. She discussed the issues that public managers face in using government information to do their jobs. The information use issues identified were: (1) a lack of incentive to share information; (2) a lack of understanding of the value of integrating data and using it to support decision making and planning; (3) a lack of understanding of the technical, human, and organizational requirements; and (4) a lack of understanding of the real potential of the technology.

Theresa reviewed the objectives of the Using Information in Government program:

- To recommend policies or policy templates to guide public officials in their use of government information;
- To develop and assess data standards, inventories, and quality assurance tools;
- To develop and assess cost-benefit models and other measures of information value;
- To assess the cost-effectiveness of various technical tools and techniques;
- To develop collaborative and collective resources for data users.

The proposed practical products that will be generated from the program are: (1) practical guidelines for developing an IT business case, (2) the seminar series, (3) a cost performance model for projects that focus on information sharing, and (4) case studies based on the agency projects conducted over the full two-year period. In addition, the Center for Technology in Government will provide feedback to the Office for Technology (OFT) regarding the NYS Information and Technology Policies that are applied in these projects. Theresa also presented a synopsis of the three agency projects completed during the first year of the UIG program: the Office of State Comptroller, Division of Municipal affairs; the Central New York Psychiatric Center; and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Division of Audit and Quality Control, Bureau of Shelter Services.

Finally, Theresa provided a few insights regarding dealing with data in the public sector. Data quality issues are a major and ongoing concern, which occupy 80% of efforts to use data. Data standards are also key to sharing data across agencies and for integrating data from multiple sources. There are a variety of tools to support efforts to address issues with existing data sources. She mentioned that many efforts to bring together disparate data sources to form new information resources have been successful, but that the road is fraught with risk. Finally, she said that preservation issues must be considered when systems are planned.