

Wendy Scheening, Manager of Data Processing Technical Services, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Wendy Scheening gave a presentation on New York State's efforts to establish common data standards. First she stated that information is an asset which allows us to make more informed decisions to provide better governance. However, it is important to know that not all data is an asset. Indeed, not all data leads to information, not all data is useful, and information overload can be harmful. It is important to discern what is relevant among the huge amount of data and information available. She insisted that only "good" data is an asset. She defined "good" data as having the following characteristics: (1) specific business relevance; (2) common understanding between business partners and agreement on how the data is collected; (3) concise semantic definition; (4) completeness (e.g. an empty field might be confusing); (5) appropriate values (e.g. the date 9999 can be confusing as 9 is often used for missing values); and (6) leading to information and knowledge.

Wendy then presented reasons why standards are useful. First, they help create "good data" as they increase consistency and improve validity. For example, they reduce the questions one may have on how the information was collected. Second, they facilitate the use of data, by allowing data sharing, for example. Third, they foster a common understanding among business partners and promote semantic clarity.

Some additional reasons why standards are beneficial are:

- Standards facilitate communications between government agencies by having common data definitions for electronic data interchange and/or shared databases.
- They improve management decisions by simplifying the integration required to bring a variety of data sources together.
- They enable the integration of systems by enabling agencies to co-develop and reuse databases and programming modules that support common cross-agency functions.

Wendy presented a few practical examples concerning semantic clarity, common coded values (ex: county code), data matching, year 2000, multi-partner data exchange, and joint application development.

Finally, she gave a few characteristics of data standards:

- Data standards consist of a dictionary framework and preferred standards,
- They accommodate data exchange and storage,
- They allow a variety of data designs and structures,
- They are non-proprietary, and they are an evolving project.

She concluded by saying that statewide data standards are good for New York. She also provided a set of references for more in-depth information about data standards:

Office for Technology Web Site:

<http://www.irm.state.ny.us/>

ICEDP Web Site

<http://www.icedp.org/>

NYS Forum for Information Resource Management

<http://www.nysfirm.org/>