

**Panel members: Alan Kowlowitz, Michael Medvesky, Alex Roberts, Wendy Scheening, Giri Kumar Tayi;**  
**Panel discussion moderator: Sharon Dawes, Director, Center for Technology in Government**

Sharon Dawes asked the panel: "When you acquire information from another organization for use by your agency, how do you go about determining its quality and suitability for your use?"

Michael Medvesky said that he would follow the approach that Giri Tayi presented in his session "Data Quality Issues." He would first look at the context, determine why his agency wants this information and what they will use it for. Then he would look at the background of the information, try to find out why the data was collected in the first place. Finally, he would look at data quality issues, and investigate how the collecting agency assessed data quality for its own purposes.

Giri Tayi gave an analogy of a manufacturer going to his supplier to check if the products are fit to his needs. He said that the same relationship needs to exist between the supplier and user of data. Thinking of this analogy can provide a good model to determine if the data is suitable for use. Alan Kowlowitz mentioned that with the use of the Internet, almost all state agencies are in the public access. It would be useful to explain the context of data creation to the population of users. Wendy Scheening added that if you do not know where the data comes from or what its limitations are, it might be misused.

Sharon Dawes then asked the panel "If you had one piece of advice to give to people grappling with data issues, what would it be?"

- Wendy Scheening replied "try, try, try!" She said the move towards standardization is a long, slow, frustrating process and it is often hard to see the payoff at the beginning, but she believes it does pay off in the long run.
- Giri Tayi said that trying to ensure a high level of data quality in organizations is a journey, an ongoing process that requires continuous attention.
- Alan mentioned that issues have to be addressed at all key milestones in a project or system life cycle.
- Alex stressed the critical importance of the staff understanding of the business use of the information, not just its technical characteristics.
- Mike mentioned having a process for building systems that meet the needs of all users.

## Closing

### Sharon Dawes

Sharon Dawes concluded the seminar by summarizing what had been learned during the day. She reiterated that information is cheap, but that relevant information is very expensive and hard to get. The presentation by Giri Tayi explained why this is true and other speakers provided additional information and an experience base of practical examples and lessons. The common thread of the presentations was that dealing with data issues is a journey: you need to be deliberate about the journey; you need to emphasize the business use; look at a variety of uses; and be persistent in pursuing data quality tools.