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**IDENTIFICATION OF POLICY
GUIDELINES AND ALTERNATIVES
FOR CDIE'S
DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION SERVICES**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Submitted to:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this project is to provide a preliminary review and analysis of selected current development information services and clientele of AID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) and to develop a framework for AID management to use in its development of policy guidelines for information service. CDIE is part of the Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination (PPC). The development information services are provided under the management of the Development Information Division (PPC/CDIE/DI). Two other divisions within CDIE are the Program and Policy Evaluation Division (PPC/CDIE/PPE) and the Evaluation Applications and Statistical Analysis Division (PPC/CDIE/EASA).

This study of CDIE/DI's current development information services includes analyses of its user clientele during FY 84, their respective information needs as expressed by services requested, the volume and types of services provided by the various DI information service points, and current and projected manpower needs and costs for providing these services to the various user groups (Section 2). Issues which affect the development and implementation of CDIE information service policies are identified and discussed within a generalized policy framework (Sections 3 and 5). Organizational alternatives for providing development information services are identified and analyzed (Sections 4 and 6).

Various AID documents supplied background information on the development information service operations of DI and of other related information service activities within AID. This information was supplemented by interviews with DI direct hire staff and with staff of its contract and RSSA (Resources Support Services Agreement) operations. Statistical correlations were obtained from DI's REQUEST database, which provides numerous elements of management information on the users and uses of DI's various development information services. Monthly and annual reports and other sources of data supplemented the computer-generated tables. Current budget data were obtained from the individual service groups.

The seven information service groups under the administration of DI which provide different types and different levels of service are listed below:

- AID Library (RSSA operation);
- Research Service (RSSA operation);
- Utilization Service (RSSA operation);
- Technical Inquiries Service (TIS) (RSSA operation); - *Webmaster*
- AID Document and Information Handling Facility (DIHF) (contract operation);
- AID Branch Library at New State (DI direct hire); and
- DI System Services Staff (direct hire).

As a result of our short-term study of the various DI information service points, our preliminary analyses of the data on estimated expenditure of DI's resources on services to the public* and other requester groups and our identification of the various elements in a framework for development of policy guidelines for information service, we have reached the following conclusions:

- An estimated 13 percent (\$60,000) of DI's manpower costs are expended for service to the public. However, we cannot at this point make recommendations to DI concerning selection of specific policy options for providing service to the public since more detailed data is required on both specific request processing costs and the nature of requests from users.
- Approximately 1.7 FTE are required to support information services to the public; this service currently is divided among 19 positions. Further investigation of the nature of these requests is required before recommendations can be made concerning the levels of skills that are required to support the various aspects of service to the public.

Individuals

*i.e., secondary users, defined as those organizations and individuals having no stated current relationship with AID.

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- A substantial proportion (more than 38 percent) of all requests for DI's information services are requests, primarily from AID/Washington and the AID missions, for document-related services. An estimated 74 percent of these document requests are for non-AID documents, 84 percent of which are obtained by the AID Library via interlibrary loan (ILL). This suggests not only that AID/Washington and mission staff require information beyond AID's own experience, but that ILL services provide a viable alternative to direct purchase and physical storage and maintenance of publications by the AID Library or by other AID offices and staff.
- More than 2,600 external database searches were performed by DI in FY 84 as part of the process in responding to research and reference requests from AID/Washington and mission staff; these data again support the observation that AID staff require access to experience and information resources beyond those existing within the Agency itself. In the event that cost sharing of these services with other AID offices is contemplated, we recommend that DI adapt its current procedures to provide for more detailed recording and analysis of use of these services by various AID offices and missions.
- Examination of average costs per transaction of document-related services (other than ILLs) and of certain research and reference services provided to public users suggests that further study is needed to determine the appropriate skill levels required for processing these requests. It may be more cost-effective to place limits on grade levels of staff who handle these requests, and/or on the amount of time which may be spent processing such requests. However, we also recommend, that before attempting further analyses of manpower costs (which are based on estimates of time to complete requests), that adjustments be made in REQUEST database procedures which would allow DI staff to report processing times of less than one hour. Current cost estimates which are derived from REQUEST database data may, in a few cases, be artificially high, particularly for document-related services which may take less than one hour to complete.
- The data presented in this report are preliminary data on manpower costs and cannot be used as a basis for determining charges for cost recovery for services.
- The REQUEST database could become an even more useful tool for providing management information if all statistics on information service provided by the various DI service points were included in that database and if quality control measures for validating the data were strengthened and performed more frequently. Another improvement to the database would be the re-structuring of selected data elements to provide more specific data on DI-sponsored services/products and more explicit time estimates, as noted above.

- Policy guidelines exist within AID to support charging specific requester groups for AID publications in order to effect recovery of specified costs associated with production of these documents.
- Policy guidelines from OMB and precedents set by information services in other representative government agencies support charging to recover certain direct and indirect costs associated with sale, lease, copying and/or searching of government-developed databases, searching external databases, providing photocopies or access to photocopying facilities, and supplying government-sponsored products/services (e.g., documents, interlibrary loan services). No known precedents have been set to date for charging for either provision of general reference service or for searching online library catalogs, but at least one Federal library (NAL) is actively exploring options in this area.
- DI information service points and other government information services have both formal and informal (i.e., undocumented) policy guidelines related to provision of services/products to non-Agency requesters; most of the libraries and other information services which were contacted during this study provide limited and lower priority service to non-Agency requesters.
- Several existing DI policy statements and operational guidelines require review in terms of (1) compliance with the new AID policy guidelines on charging for AID publications or (2) compatibility with other DI policy statements.

We recommend that DI initiate:

1. A full-scale cost and usage study of services provided by its individual service points in order to obtain more complete data on the nature of the services/products supplied and to identify the specific direct and indirect costs which may be recovered by charging for selected services; we support the DIHF's recommendation that a study of its costs and charges for document/fiche preparation and delivery to requesters is required;
2. A specific study on the nature of requests from the public to determine which types of service could validly be provided by contract or other less costly personnel;
3. A study of the nature of requests for document identification and delivery services and the associated skills that are required for fulfilling these requests;

4. Consideration of the cost-effectiveness of direct international telephone contact with mission requesters in order to resolve questions which may arise related to their service requests; the coordination procedures associated with sending cables appear to involve considerable staff time and also involve time delays in obtaining responses from the mission requesters;
5. Regular input to the REQUEST database of all appropriate service statistics from the various DI service points; appropriate manually-tallied data should be input to the database in batch mode on a monthly basis;
6. An examination of possible minor modifications to the REQUEST database and its data input procedures so that a more complete identification of service requested, product(s) provided and request processing time may be achieved;
7. Review of its existing policy statements for conformity with AID guidelines on charging specific requesters for AID publications/documents and for conformity/compatibility among the policy statements of the various DI service points;
8. Review of its options and determination of its policies related to provision of services/products to the various DI requester groups and to distribution of portions of the Development Information System (DIS); all established policies should be documented in a form which may be made available to non-Agency requesters.