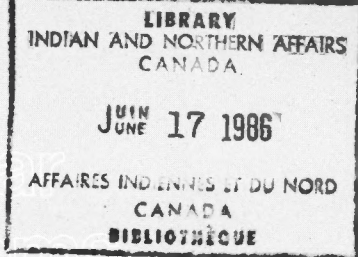


Quasar
Systems
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AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
INFORMATION SYSTEMS
NATIONAL OVERVIEW

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AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
INFORMATION SYSTEMS
NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Prepared for:

The Program Evaluation Branch
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

1980 September

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OUR FILE: P-0579-C

1980 September 29

Mr. Alan Gratias,
Director,
Program Evaluation Branch,
Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development,
10 Wellington Street,
Hull, Quebec.

Dear Mr. Gratias:

We are pleased to submit our report entitled "An Assessment of Social Assistance Information Systems-National Overview". In this report we present a summary of our findings, conclusions and opportunities for improvement in the regional information systems. In addition, we have recommended an approach to the evaluation in the remaining regions and prepared an implementation plan for the long term improvement opportunities.

The objective of this overview is to facilitate the development of the most effective work plan in each of the remaining regions. Also, it will assist in the development of an overall strategy for the development of new systems in the long term.

If there are any questions regarding this report or our study generally, we would be pleased to discuss them with you at your convenience.

Yours truly,



Ronald H. Nordin,
Principal.

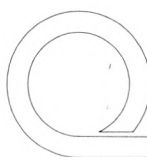
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 1979, Quasar Systems Ltd. undertook to assess the information systems supporting the social assistance program in the regional offices of the Department. This review was one of five components of a national review of the social assistance program. The other four components are (1) an operations review, (2) a study of developmental applications of social assistance, (3) case studies of selected bands, and (4) a review of federal-provincial relationships in each region. As an integral part of the overall review of the program, our component focuses on the assessment of mechanisms in place to record, process and report information to operations and management. The primary objective was to determine the adequacy of the information systems to respond to the requirement for operational control and the management of the program. Both clerical and computerized components of the information system were reviewed.

This report presents an overview of the findings in the five regions reviewed to date. These regions are; British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec, and the Atlantic.

Several regions have made recent improvements in their information systems or are in the process of developing improvements. However, several operational problems continue to exist in most regions. The most notable exception to the generalized statement of problems is Manitoba, where a great deal of effort has been concentrated on the manual sub-system. The problem areas which most regions face are generalized as follows:

1. The reporting practices are inconsistent among the administrative units within regions.
2. The accuracy and completeness of management information is not verified on a regular basis.
3. Information is not provided to managers in a timely manner.
4. The interface with Supply & Services Canada is cumbersome and time-consuming.
5. The use of the computer system presents many operational difficulties.
6. Band records for monitoring and controlling their reimbursements from the Department are inadequate.



With respect to the needs of operations management, the regional systems were found to be generally inadequate. Information was not provided in sufficient detail, nor was it in a classification structure which would be useful to the managers of the social assistance program.

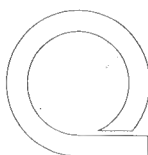
Opportunities for improvement in the system in both the short term and the long term are fully developed and presented in this report. To date, the recommendations to regions have focused on the need to develop and implement the short term improvement opportunities. Essentially, these recommendations point toward the standardization of reporting practices and enhancement of control procedures. They are summarized as follows:

1. Define and document standard reporting practices for all administrative units in the region.
2. Develop control procedures to ensure the accurate and complete processing and reporting of social assistance information to management.
3. Develop control and follow-up procedures to ensure the timely preparation of information for program management.

The information system evaluation in the remaining regions should be tailored to address specific problem areas which have not been covered by this report. The review in the Ontario region should focus on the relationships among the province, National Health & Welfare and the Department in support of the information system. An evaluation work plan has been prepared and is included as an Appendix to this report. In Saskatchewan and the Yukon, it is recommended that regional representatives identify particular concerns with the information system which have not been documented. A work plan will be developed which addresses only those additional areas of concern.

With respect to the long term improvement opportunities, Quasar recommends that:

1. The Department undertake the lead role in the development of an information system which addresses clearly the information needs of each level in the Department and the bands and tribal councils. The system planning should recognize and facilitate the continuing trend toward increased band and



tribal council responsibilities in the delivery of the social assistance program. This approach will necessitate substantial participation of representatives of the native community in the planning and development phases of the work.

2. The social assistance computer system should be "scaled-down" to meet only the current regional needs. This review has identified that only two regions continue to use the system. Their needs should be established by regional managers after close examination of use on a report by report basis.
3. The reporting standards and procedures for verifying the accuracy and completeness of information should be fully developed and approved before the interim manual system is implemented. These basic elements of control must be fully established in each region in order to ensure that the information on the new reports can be used with confidence.

An implementation plan has been developed and is included with this report to support these recommendations.



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I INTRODUCTION

In June 1979, Quasar Systems Ltd. undertook to assess the information systems supporting the social assistance program in the regional offices of the Department. This review was one of five components of a national review of the social assistance program. The other four components are 1) an operations review, 2) a study of developmental applications of social assistance, 3) case studies of selected bands, and 4) a review of federal provincial relationships in each region. As an integral part of the overall review of the social assistance program, our review component focuses on assessment of the mechanisms in place to record, process and report operational and management information. The primary objective is to determine the adequacy of the information systems to respond to the requirements for operational control and the management of the program activities. Both clerical and computerized components of the information system were to be reviewed.

This report presents an overview of findings in the five regions reviewed to date. These regions are identified as follows:

British Columbia,
Alberta,
Manitoba,
Quebec, and
Atlantic.

The objective of preparing the overview is to facilitate the development of most effective work plan in each of the remaining regions by giving them an insight into the findings to date. Also, this report presents an overall strategy for the development of new systems in the long term. A plan of action is recommended and major issues and obstacles to development are identified. There has been a considerable amount of consistency in the regional findings. Hence, it is felt that the plan will adequately reflect the general needs of all regions. However, the finalization of the plan will be dependent upon the concurrence of the remaining regions.

Study Objectives

The specific objectives of this component of the review are identified as follows:

- * Review and document the information system in each region at an overview level.



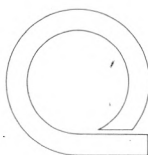
- * Assess the systems operationally and functionally. The operational assessment is to determine the extent of problems or weaknesses related to the operation of the current system. The functional assessment is to determine the degree to which the system is meeting the region's requirements and expectations. It can be considered to be an assessment of the usefulness of the information provided by the system.
- * Identify opportunities for short term improvements to maximize the benefit of the current information systems in each region, where such opportunities exist.
- * Make recommendations for an improved system at a national level. Such recommendations must be consistent with the needs of all regions and Ottawa.

Methodology

Each region was reviewed independently. The results of the reviews was documented in individual reports. Preliminary interviews were conducted with senior regional and district staff and a data collection strategy for each study was developed. The strategy included an identification of interviewees at the regional and district levels, and at selected band administrative offices. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted with each identified staff member. All appropriate documentation, sample forms and reports were collected.

The information gathered during this task was analysed in such a manner as to identify major system functions, information flow, and operational controls. Also, the current requirements of the information system were identified. With this base of information, the system was assessed operationally and functionally.

Since only selected districts and bands in each region were reviewed, this study does not represent a comprehensive review of individual offices. The system description and assessment findings are generalized. It is thought that they relate to most bands and districts.



II INFORMATION SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

This section presents an overview of the administration for program delivery and it describes the current information systems which support regional operations and management. The figures provided on budgets and caseload are approximations for the purpose of comparing volume of activity among administrative arrangements.

Overview of Program Delivery Administration

The information systems should be viewed within the context of the overall administrative structure for delivering social assistance. There are three basic arrangements. They are identified as follows:

1. Band administered,
2. Departmentally administered,
3. Provincially administered.

Each of the arrangements is discussed in the following paragraphs.

1. Band Administered

For the purposes of this review, the term "band administered" is considered to include all variations of band administration where the bulk of the administration is carried on outside of the Department. Therefore, this category includes bands which are under a tribal council administration, bands which are jointly administered with either the Department or a tribal council, and bands which administer the program directly from their own council offices. Under this arrangement, the processing of applications and the delivery of payments are the responsibility of the band administration.

The bands are reimbursed for social assistance expenditures which are made in accordance with the terms approved by the Department. Money is advanced to the bands using one of several different techniques, to ensure that there is always sufficient cash on hand at the band level. It is the band's responsibility to provide sufficient information on expenditures to support their reimbursement claim. This information is provided to the Department on a monthly basis. It is provided in a number of different formats, depending on the individual region. The practice of forwarding the source document such as a budget and decision sheet is common, but it is not consistent throughout the regions. In all regions, some level of detail is provided for each case.



Planning, budgeting and monitoring of operations are responsibilities which are shared between band and tribal councils and the Department.

2. Departmentally Administered

This term refers to all arrangements where applications are processed and payments provided by an office of the Department. Therefore, this includes assistance delivered through service centers, district offices and regional offices. This term also applies to the administrative arrangement for several bands in British Columbia which are under a split administration. Under this arrangement, band welfare offices are supervised by the district office and payments are processed through the Department.

Planning, budgeting and monitoring of operations are Departmental responsibilities which are shared between district and regional offices.

3. Provincially Administered

In most regions, a certain amount of assistance is provided to Indian people living off reserve by Provincial and Municipal governments. The arrangements for reimbursement of the provincial agencies vary from region to region. In most regions, the Department reimburses the provincial agencies for expenditures made in accordance with the terms of the Federal-Provincial agreements. Normally, the expenditures are approved on a basis of a form of billing notice provided to the Department.

Although the processing of applications and payments are handled by the Provincial agencies, the regional offices are responsible for planning and budgeting for this form of delivery. British Columbia is one notable exception to this generalization. There the provincial government handles all off-reserve cases without reimbursement by the Department.

Table 1 shows the approximate proportion of social assistance expenditures which are administered under each of the administrative arrangements. It can be seen that the proportion of social assistance expenditures which are band administered within the five regions is 66%. The Departmentally administered arrangement claims 26%, while the Provincially administered arrangement is only 8%. Each of the five regions reviewed follows this pattern with the exception of Quebec. In Quebec, the ratios between band administered and Departmentally administered are approximately reversed. Also, there are no provincial reimbursements in Quebec.



Table 1: Approximate Proportion of Social Assistance Expenditures by Administrative Arrangement

	BRITISH COLUMBIA	ALBERTA	MANITOBA	QUEBEC	ATLANTIC	TOTAL OVER THE FIVE REGIONS
APPROX. EXPENDITURE LEVELS	\$17M	\$18M	\$23M	\$7M	\$8M	\$73M
Band Administration - Bands - Tribal Councils - Joint	70%	50%	83%	30%	80%	66%
Departmental - Districts - Service - Centers - Split - Region	20%	45%	3%	70%	20%	26%
Provincial * - Province - Municipalities	10%	5%	14%	0	less than 1%	8%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Note that these figures represent only dollars reimbursed by the Department. They do not include provincial expenditures on Indian people for which no claims were made on the Department.

The information flow related to the administrative arrangements is illustrated in Figure 1. The diagram indicates a generalized flow which does not necessarily relate to any individual region. However, in the fundamental relationships, it applies to all regions.

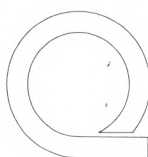
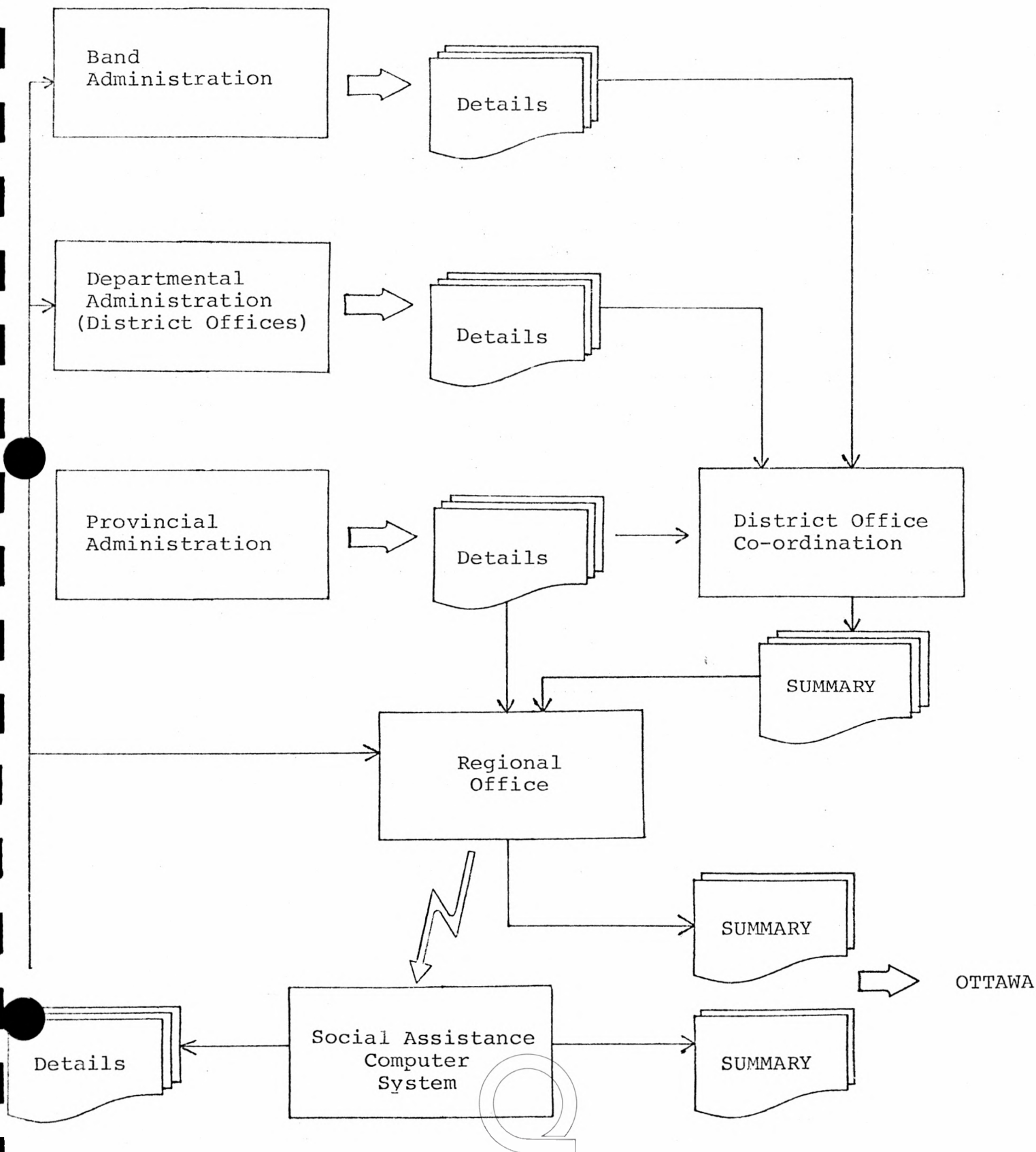


Figure 1: Regional Information Systems (Generalized)



Current Information System

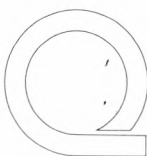
The previous sub-section identified responsibilities and authorities related to the delivery of assistance. This sub-section identifies the basic functions involved in the delivery of social assistance, which apply consistently to all administrative arrangements. A similar structure was presented to each of the other regions. Since the bounds of the "information system" were not pre-determined, a structure was developed which allows us to view the system in its broadest context. In most regions, there is a combination of computerized reporting and manual reporting procedures. Both components are considered to be part of the total information system.

The major functions that the information system supports are program operations and the management of program operations. These functions are discussed at an overview level in order to develop a better understanding of what is required of the information system. This structure will assist in assessing the current information system and planning directions for the future. The operations function includes application processing and the control of payment to recipients. The operations management function includes planning, monitoring and control of the operations. These are the major functions to which the information system is integral. Each function and the portion of the information system which supports the function are described in the following paragraphs.

1. Operations

a. Application Processing

This function involves the qualification of an applicant and the subsequent determination of the terms of his assistance for which he is eligible. This includes the determination of the amount of assistance, period of coverage, the form of assistance (e.g. payment authority slip or cheque) and any other conditions which apply to his assistance. The verification of the eligibility on a continuing basis is also part of this function. The basic forms used in application processing vary from region to region. However, there is generally the equivalent of a Budget Decision sheet and a special needs request form.



b. Payment Control

The purpose of this function is to authorize, prepare and deliver payment to the qualified recipient in accordance with the terms of his eligibility. This function includes, but is not limited to, the following procedures:

- . the issuance of purchase authorities slips,
- . the requisitioning of cheques,
- . the transfer of funds to works programs,
- . authorization of special payments requested by welfare administrators in band and districts,
- . monitoring and controlling the continuing payments of recipients, and
- . the control of the recovery of over-payments.

The basic control document which is used to prepare cheques and issue purchase authority slips is normally the Budget and Decision sheet. In addition, several regions use form payment control cards which are maintained for each recipient.

2. Operations Management

a. Operations Planning

This function involves the preparation of operational plans for the delivery of social assistance. It addresses all aspects of the operations. A major component is the preparation of program forecasts and budgets.

The type of information system support for this function varies a great deal from region to region. Also, there tends to be variance within regions. Some form of detailed records are maintained in district offices and summary information is normally forwarded from districts to the regional office.

b. Operations Monitoring and Control

This function involves the monitoring of performance with respect to the plans established in the operations planning function. A major component is the monitoring of expenditures relative to the plan throughout the year. In addition, it includes the conduct of program reviews at the district and band



levels to ensure compliance with the regulations and procedures established by the Department. The information needed to support this activity is derived from the same record as that which provides information to the operation planning function.

This function uses information on an on-going basis for monitoring, while the accumulated result over a period of time provides a base of information to support the planning function.

The Computer Component

During 1972, the finance division initiated development of a computerized social assistance information system. Apparently, the system was developed with other users in mind. However, little or no input was requested or received from other divisions within the Department in Ottawa or the regions. Implementation of the system was attempted by all of the regions with the exception of Ontario. From the outset, the implementation process was plagued with problems. The fundamental problem facing each region was its inability to get timely, accurate and complete data from district and band offices. In addition, the procedures for entering and editing data to the computer system were found to be very cumbersome and error-prone.

Concerns about confidentiality of information tended to be very local. Resistance to the use of the system because of fear of violation of confidentiality was noted primarily among bands in certain areas of the Atlantic and British Columbia regions.

In addition to the operational problems, the format of the reports was not completely compatible with the needs of the social assistance program. Attempts were made by the program to initiate modifications to the system. However, modification always required the agreement of the regional finance group and Ottawa. It was found that most of the requested changes could not be made.

With the evaluation of other financial control systems (notably the budgetary control system), the interest in this system as a financial tool faded. Due to the magnitude of the difficulties involved, most regions never achieved a state where the computer system was fully integrated with their operations. As of the time of preparation of this report, only two regions are making use of the system: Alberta and Manitoba.



The Manual Component

The system of forms and procedures for collecting basic information on social assistance varies a great deal from region to region. In one region, the manual systems have developed into a fairly sophisticated reporting system. In most other regions the system is not comprehensive. However, each region has been requested to complete the Summary of Social Assistance form IA1016 for the communication of information to Ottawa. The forms and procedures used internally in the region have been developed at local discretion.

The Resource Commitment

The resource commitment to the operation of the current information system in the five regions is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Resources Committed to the
Current Information System

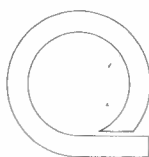
Social Assistance

Computer System

Operating Cost: \$40,000*per year

	British Columbia	Alberta	Manitoba	Quebec	Atlantic
Clerical Staff (in person yrs.)	6	4 (excluding district staff time)	5	5	3
Rental Costs for Local Terminals & related hardware	-	\$6,000/year	\$12,000/year	-	-

* Based on figures provided by the Management System Branch for 1979-80. This figure represents the operating cost for Alberta and Manitoba.



III FINDINGS

The information system was reviewed and assessed from two points of view. First, it was assessed operationally to determine the extent of problems or weaknesses related to the operation of the current system, as it exists in the region. Second, the system was assessed functionally to determine the degree to which it is meeting the regions' requirements and expectations.

Operational Assessment

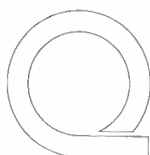
Several regions have made recent improvements in their information systems or are in the process of developing improvements. However, several operational problems continue to exist in most regions. The most notable exception to the generalized statement of problems is Manitoba, where a great deal of effort has been concentrated on the manual sub-system. The problem areas which most regions still face are generalized as follows:

1. The Reporting Practices Are Inconsistent Among The Administrative Units Within Regions.
2. The Accuracy And Completeness Of Management Information Is Not Verified On A Regular Basis.
3. Information Is Not Provided To Managers In A Timely Manner.
4. The Interface With Supply And Services Canada Is Cumbersome And Time Consuming.
5. The Use Of The Computer System Presents Many Operational Difficulties.
6. Band Records For Monitoring And Controlling Their Reimbursements From The Department Are Inadequate.

Each of these major findings is expended upon in the following paragraphs.

1. The Reporting Practices Are Inconsistent Among The Administrative Units Within Regions.

The standards by which information is reported to various levels of management by both computer and manual systems, are not well defined, well communicated or well enforced. The problem areas are identified as follows:

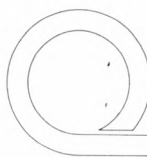


a. Incomplete Definitions of Standard Terminology and Units of Measure.

The standards are weakly defined in two major areas of reporting. The areas are as follows:

Volume of Activity - The bands and district offices in most regions appear to have an understanding of case months which is consistent generally with the guidelines expressed on the reverse side of form IA1016. However, there was a lack of clarity and in some cases variation on understanding noted in two major areas: level of precision, and the counting of case months under special circumstances, such as homemaker allowances, children in the home of relatives (CHIR's) and third party payments resulting from the issue of purchase authority slips. Certain bands and districts were observed to measure case units at a precision level of $\frac{1}{4}$ of a case unit. Others record any occurrence of a payment as a whole case unit. In the latter case, any payment in the month regardless of the period of coverage, would be counted as an entire case month. This would tend to inflate the total case month account for those particular regions, districts and bands. A detailed description of the proper accounting case month under special circumstances was not available in most regions. Individual bands and districts appear to have developed a "working definition". In some regions, the level of expenditures under such special circumstances is relatively high. Most regions have not developed a consistent approach to the measure of volume of activity among all of their districts and bands.

Standard Period for Reporting Purposes - In most regions, there is very little concern over recording expenditures in the proper period. Hence, a strict definition and enforcement of "the proper period" is not in effect. The difference between the period of reporting for statistical purposes and the period of reporting for financial accounting purposes is a distinction which administrators did not seem to be consciously considering. It did not seem to be clearly understood exactly which period should be used for reporting information to management. In the recording of purchase authority slips, for example, one district



office will be recording slips in the period in which the voucher assistance applies. Other districts or bands will be recording vouchers in the period in which the resulting invoice is paid. Frequently, these two periods are different. Also, when information is received late from bands, no adjustments are made to the previous months. The information is simply recorded in the month in which the information was received. Since the standards for reporting period are not enforced, managers using the information cannot rely on a consistent reporting basis.

b. Incomplete Documentation of Procedures to be Followed in Reporting Information.

Most regions have some form of written description of the procedures to be followed for the preparation of forms and reports. However, this documentation is not complete enough to allow the administrators to follow it in a step by step fashion to ensure that all forms are completed accurately and include all of the relevant information in the proper format. In addition, the documentation does not describe adequately the specific purpose and use of the summary information which is reported in each level of management. In one region, standard forms and report formats were unavailable. In that case, individual districts and bands had developed a variety of different forms for the same purpose.

2. The Accuracy and Completeness of Management Information is Not Verified on a Regular Basis.

Management information includes locally designed reports for the district region level, the nationally designed IA1016 form, and summary reports produced by the computer system. The accuracy and completeness of this information is not verified on a regular basis. In fact, the verification would be a very laborious task under the current reporting practices. Generally, these reports derive information from the same source as the payment requisitions. However, the control procedures to ensure that information is derived completely and with the required accuracy, is not in place in most regions. In other words, there is no assurance that every payment of social assistance is properly reflected in the management report.



Summary information reported to management was compared with summary information on social assistance expenditures provided by the system used in Supply and Services Canada. A simple comparison of annual figures showed differences which varied between less than 1% and 41% among individual districts across the country. This finding does not necessarily mean that the results of either mechanism are inaccurate. Information is reported on different bases. Unfortunately, the two systems were not designed for easy reconciliation. They serve different purposes. A simple method of cross-verification was not built in. In fact, it is not even possible to perform a detailed verification of individual transactions at a detailed level. There is no unique reference number linking transactions on the financial reports. Thus, locating corresponding transactions on separate reports is a very difficult process.

3. Information is Not Provided to Managers in a Timely Manner.

In order for information to be useful to managers, it must be received on a timely basis. Without exception in the five regions reviewed, the availability of timely information is a significant problem. In most regions, close to 50% of the forms and summary reports are received late on a regular basis. This level of lateness is reported at both the district and region levels. The degree of lateness in reporting information to Ottawa is much greater. The source of the lateness is often, although not always, in the band offices. This particular problem has a "snowballing" effect. Bands may be as little as a few weeks late in filing their forms with the district office. By the time the information reaches Ottawa, it may be months late.

4. The Interface with Supply and Services Canada is Cumbersome and Time Consuming.

For bands in which assistance is administered by the Department, the district offices are normally responsible for the preparation of payment requisition lists for social assistance cheques. With the exception of cheques written on local imprest accounts, cheques are written by Supply and Services Canada. For those district offices which are not located conveniently near an office of SSC, there is long lead time required for the preparation and submission of the requisition list.



Normally, it is at least three weeks in advance of the first day of coverage. This situation was presented as a problem by only two regions. In one region it presented a problem of issuing cheques with out-of-date lists.

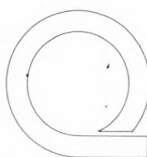
In the other region, the problem was essentially one of a cumbersome clerical process. The lists were sent from the district offices to regional finance, and then on to SSC for cheque writing. The cheques and cheque lists were sent back to the district offices for subsequent distribution to the band offices and finally to the recipients. Due to the considerable frequency of changes, there are many adjustments to make to the returned cheque list before the cheques are actually delivered. Certain cheques will have to be cancelled, and additional cheque requirements must be submitted in a supplementary payment requisition list. It was indicated by that region, that one district averaged 5 or 6 supplementary lists per month. This causes considerable additional clerical overhead and administrative complications.

5. The Use of the Computer System Presents Many Operational Difficulties.

Only two of the five regions reviewed were using the computer system on a regular basis. Both regions had many difficulties with the use of the computer system. Since the usefulness of the information reporting by the computer system is very limited in both regions, it was not the intent of this review to dwell on the less significant operational problems with its use. However, examples are provided in this section in order to provide a more complete picture of information processing difficulties in the regions. The operational difficulties can be broken into three major categories:

Data Entry:

- * The verification of the completeness and accuracy of data entered to the computer system is hampered by the lack of an adequate data entry control procedure in the computer system.



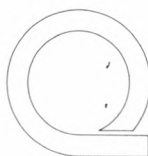
- * In one region, the data was entered directly from budget and decision sheets. However, these forms were not formatted for this use, making data entry more time-consuming and error-prone. In the other region, data from the budget and decision sheets was re-coded onto input sheets for entry to the computer terminal. This additional transcribing step increases the risk of error or loss of data.

Data Control Within the System:

- * The control on the cancellation of recipient records was very weak. The determination of the recipient records which are to be cancelled from the computer system is controlled manually rather than through any control mechanisms built into the computer system. This causes considerable additional clerical effort each month to sort through the budget and decision sheets and identify recipients with a current expiry date. Also, there is an increased risk of error because of the inherent error rate in searching through a file clerically.
- * There is weak control of the maintenance of permanent records on the computer. The input of interim assistance payment transactions to the computer system will have the effect of deleting the permanent client record unless they are identified before data entry and coded with a special input format. The control over this identification is completely clerical and tends to be cumbersome and error prone.

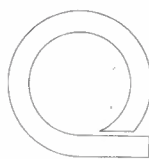
Data Reporting:

- * There is excessive use of special transaction codes on the computer report which tend to be difficult for managers and administrators to interpret.
- * The procedure for the validation of data entered to the computer requires as many as four different computer reports.
- * The categorization of expenditures available from the computer system was found to be inappropriate for the needs of most program managers.



6. Band Records for Monitoring and Controlling Their Reimbursements From the Department are Inadequate.

It was pointed out earlier in the report that approximately 66% of the expenditures were under the band administration. Many of these bands experience difficulties at year end which result from discrepancies between the amount which they have spent on social assistance and the amount which has been acclaimed, approved and paid by the Department. The procedures in place at the band level for reconciling these amounts on an on-going basis were inadequate in several of the bands visited. In order for band administrators to monitor and control their social assistance reimbursements, there must be proper records which allow monthly conciliation of amounts spent with amounts claimed to the Department, proved by the Department, and received by the band. Discrepancies among any of these figures must be properly recorded and explained in a reconciliation log.



Functional Assessment

In order to assess the effectiveness of the information system, criteria must be established against which to measure performance. The requirements of the system in each region were not formally defined. Therefore, a general statement of requirements was developed using the structure presented in the previous section. This results in two categories of requirements; operations and operations management. They are identified as follows:

Operations Requirements;

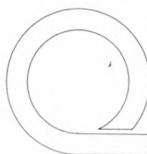
1. To edit, record and maintain sufficient data on each qualified recipient to support program operations.
2. To maintain sufficient data of each recipient to requisition assistance payments on a continuing basis. The details of cheques issued should be maintained for enquiry and control purposes. In addition, sufficient information should be maintained to control purchase authority issue, transfer of funds to WOP and BWP, over payment recovery and any other special cases of fund disbursement.

Operations Management Requirements;

1. To provide timely, accurate program activity information to support operations planning and resource allocation.
2. To provide timely, accurate information of sufficient detail to support operations monitoring and control. Information must be made available on an on-going basis throughout the year.

In most regions, the requirements presented as operations requirements are being met with the limitations which were outlined in the operational assessment. Therefore, the functional assessment focuses on the degree to which the system is meeting the operations management requirements.

The current computer system and the manual systems in place in most regions have not been meeting the requirements of operations management adequately. The findings with respect to each identified requirements are discussed in the following paragraphs.



Operations Management Requirement No. 1 - To Provide Timely, Accurate Program Activity Information to Support Operations Planning and Resource Allocation.

There are two general areas in which more detailed information is required from the system:

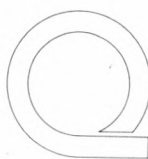
1. The level of detail provided on expenditures and case load -

There are a number of distinctly different categories in assistance which are considered independently in program planning. The current system provides reports which give composite figures, combining basic social assistance with several special categories of assistance. The format is incompatible with the requirements of program forecasting and the level of detail is insufficient to give a detailed picture of the social assistance expenditure patterns. In order to plan the program and present more confident budget estimates and forecasts, expenditure summaries must be reported in more appropriate categories.

The complete definition of additional requirements is not within the scope of this preliminary investigation. However, there is a consensus on the direction which should be taken. The system should provide more comprehensive sub-categories in both the basic and special expenditure categories. It must allow for the accumulation of expenditure dollars and related units of volume by the sub-categories. This information will allow managers to ascertain more clearly the changes in expenditures and volume related to specific sub-categories of expenditure. Expenditures which should be considered for sub-category status include the following:

- . children in the home of relatives (or the regional equivalent)
- . general third party care to adults (e.g. residential treatment centres for alcoholism)
- . support of recipient funerals
- . funds transferred to work opportunity programs or band work processes
- . travel

Some regions have information by most of these categories already. However, there is very little consistency among regions.



2. Level of detail provided on the profile of the recipient population -

Comprehensive information on the profile of the recipient population is not available from either the manual or computerized reporting mechanism. Information on the characteristics of the population being served by the program would provide a clearer "picture" of the client group.

This may require better linking of information between social assistance programs and other closely related programs of child care and adult care. In addition, it is important to monitor changes in the population profile which may impact the cost of providing assistance. Examples of the kinds of characteristics which could be monitored are as follows:

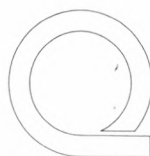
- . the employability of the recipients,
- . age of the recipients,
- . marital status,
- . number of dependent children over 18 years of age,
- . employment skills,
- . education level of recipients.

Operations Management Requirement No. 2 - To Provide Timely, Accurate Information of Sufficient Detail to Support Operations Monitoring and Control.

Much of the same information as described in the previous operations management requirement are also needed on an on-going basis to support operations monitoring and control. This information is required in two different reporting bases:

- i) by period of coverage of social assistance, and
- ii) by financial period

Reporting by the period of coverage provides management information which reflects activity in the month in which the assistance replies. Reporting by the financial period provides information to monitor actual expenditures against the budget. In reports prepared on the basis, expenditures would have to be categorized in the manner consistent with the financial account classifications. Also, such categorization would facilitate reconciliation with the departmental financial systems. To perform comprehensive monitoring of operations, more detailed and timely information by both reporting bases must be available.



IV CONCLUSIONS

What are the causes of the problems with the Information System? The problem observed in the information system cannot be related solely to the system itself. Many of the problems are related to the general difficulties in the management and operation of the program. Problems of this nature were investigated and analysed in the operations review component of the social assistance program evaluation. A full discussion of these problems is contained in the report on that component prepared by P.S. Ross & Partners*.

Notwithstanding this conclusion, it is our opinion that considerable progress could be made by directing effort toward improving the information system and the related roles and responsibilities.

The factors that have contributed directly to the problems currently in the information system are summarized in the following points:

1. Lack of Comprehensive National Guidelines and Direction.

Historically, there has been an insufficient level of national coordination and direction. This point has been recognized and is being addressed by a very competent staff who were appointed during the term of this study.

2. Lack of Clear Definition and Enforcement of Regional Standards.

To some extent, regions have been hampered by a lack of national direction. However, even standards which are within the regional jurisdiction have not been clearly defined or enforced.

* A STUDY TO EXAMINE THE ADMINISTRATIVE ELEMENTS AND RELATED POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY COMPONENTS OF THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM - AN OVERVIEW OF FIVE REGIONS, A report prepared on five regions: Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba, Atlantic. The report was prepared in September 1980.

3. Frustration and Disillusionment with an Unsuccessful Attempt at Computerization.

This reaction to the social assistance computer system has cost the Department something in terms of its credibility in the development of effect and useful information system. A misconception that will have to be overcome is that computerization per se is a frustrating and disappointing experience.

4. Lack of Procedural Definition and Staff Training.

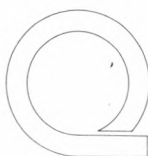
Most of the staff involved in the administration of the program have social work rather than administrative backgrounds. In this kind of environment, careful and detailed definition and documentation of procedures, followed by a comprehensive training program is absolutely necessary to prepare staff for administration roles.

5. There is a Growing Paper Burden on a Limited Staff Resource.

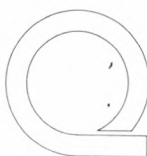
This situation is general to both government and business. The implication for system designers is that more efficient ways of handling the administrative burden will have to be developed. In most regions the person years have tended to be reduced in the last few years, contributing to this problem.

The impact of these problems on the management and operations of the social assistance program is significant. The problems are very fundamental and the impact is summarized as follows:

- . There is very little consistent, meaningful information available at national office. Without this information, Ottawa is limited to a minor role in operations planning, monitoring and control. This limitation is particularly evident when Ottawa is asked to explain trends in main estimates and supplementaries among regions.
- . Regional management is greatly hampered by a lack of timely relevant information. They are forced, in many cases, to rely on direct enquiry to the district office for each piece of required information.



- . The districts have a heavy administrative load related to statistical and financial record keeping. Yet, much of the effort preparation supports an information system which provides very little benefit to the districts.
- . Many of the bands are confused over the purpose of use of the information system and their particular role in supporting the system.



V OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Opportunities for improving the social assistance information system have been developed for each region. These improvement opportunities were classified as either short term or long term. The major criterion for distinguishing between the categories is that short term opportunities are those which may be initiated unilaterally by a region at its own discretion. Long term improvement opportunities are those which should be initiated by Ottawa and developed by each region within a national framework.

Short Term Improvement Opportunities

The objective in the development of short term improvement opportunities was the maximization of the usefulness of the current information systems in each region. This was to be achieved primarily through clarification of certain reporting standards and procedures and the establishment of appropriate control mechanisms to ensure the accuracy, completeness and timeliness of information reporting to program management. These points are explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

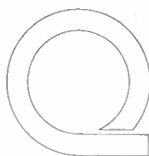
1. Definition and documentation of standard reporting practices for all administrative units in the region.

The complete definition of standard reporting practices in the region requires participation and concurrence by Ottawa. The social development group in Ottawa has developed a draft set of standard reporting practices for discussion with regional offices. During this process, standard terminology and reporting practices should be developed within each region. The policies, standards and detailed procedures related to the information system must be clarified and documented in a manner similar to the "Regulations and Procedures" manuals in each region.

Because of the long term impact of these definitions, input should be sought from Bands before the standards are finalized.

2. Development of control procedures to ensure accurate and complete processing and reporting of social assistance information to management.

The lack of verification of the accuracy and completeness of information reported to management is a major problem. Information with a high risk of error is being provided to managers for comparison and decision making purposes. The accuracy and completeness of information should be verified



through proper reconciliation with the financial information. This would involve comparing the dollar amounts reported by both systems to detect significant errors related to expenditures or case volumes. The amounts reported by each system will not necessarily be equal, however, the differences should be explained and recorded. The expenditure amounts reported on the computer and manual social assistance system should be cross checked regularly with the reports produced by the Supply and Services Canada computer system. More comprehensive accounting should be performed for the differences which are detected.

The level of precision with which the forms are reconciled will have to be established during the detailed definition of this procedure. There will be practical trade-offs which will have to be made when the complexity of reconciliation is further quantified. The major burden of the reconciliation will fall on the district levels, although the regional level would be responsible for overall coordination and control.

3. Development of control and follow-up procedures to ensure the timely preparation of information for program management.

The current level of lateness in information reported to program management erodes the usefulness of the information. The cut-off times are documented, however, they are not enforced. The current guidelines should be confirmed with bands and districts in order to ensure that they are reasonable. Once confirmed, an effective follow-up procedure should be established in order to achieve maximum adherence to the time-table.

Long Term Improvement Opportunities

We assume that the need for a national information system to support the social assistance program will continue regardless of shifts in the delivery responsibilities from the Department to bands and tribal councils. This is based on the premise that the bands will be obliged to continue to provide information to support their expenditures on social assistance under the same general guidelines as those which apply to the Department. The basic functions of operations and operations management, as outlined in Section II, are consistent regardless of the organizational unit which is assigned the responsibilities.



The objective is to turn a collection of largely autonomous local practices into a highly integrated information system. This system will:

- i) Provide meaningful consolidated information to bands, districts, regions and Ottawa, and
- ii) Allow sufficient flexibility within regions to accommodate minor differences in program delivery regulations which vary somewhat from region to region.

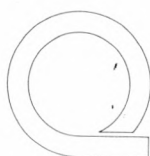
Is There a Need for a New Information System?

Yes. The information flow from bands through the regional administration to Ottawa should be examined in detail and modified in the light of the newly prepared, national guidelines entitled Operating Guidelines for Social Assistance Program, and in light of the shortcomings identified during this national social assistance program review. This process should begin with a development of a clear definition of the management system and the identification of the information required to support management.

The feasibility of developing and using a new computer system to achieve these requirements can be determined only after the information requirements are more fully documented and confirmed. Once this has been done, alternatives should be developed and analyzed with particular attention paid to the operational feasibility. The computer processing alternatives should be analyzed within the context of the entire information system, including both clerical operations and computer processing. The operational feasibility is of particular concern because of the diversity among organizational units playing a part in the system and the variation in their levels of administrative expertise.

In general, the effective use of automation could offer the program managers a number of advantages. Among them are the following:

- * The new system could be integrated fully with the departmental financial systems. This would provide accurate information to managers and facilitate the use of the information for planning purposes.



- * The system could be developed within the larger context of "information system for social programs". Although the social assistance program is a very large component, other programs may be accommodated within the system with very little additional effort.
- * The requirement for more information and control can be blended with the need to preserve the individual recipients' right to privacy and confidentiality. This would be achieved by controlling the access to computer files of detailed recipient information. In this manner, unauthorized individuals would be unable to gain access to a recipient's file.
- * Operational efficiencies could be achieved by having the payment data entered to the computer system as close to the source of the data as possible. Essentially, this means recording data on an electronic medium at the district or service center level. In certain cases, it may be possible to enter information at the band or tribal council level. In this manner, the risk of inaccuracies or loss of data is minimized and efficiency with which subsequent processing can take place is increased.
- * Considerably enhanced information can be provided to program managers with a minor increase in the level of clerical overhead required to develop the information.

What are the Considerations in the Environment around the Information System?

There are a number of elements of the environment in which the information system operates which will require careful attention during the planning phase of the new system. These elements are identified and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Lack of Clarity in Program Structure - The environment in which the information system must be defined is very complex. A matrix management structure governs the relationship between the various levels of management in the Department. This relationship is further complicated by the interface between bands and the Department in the delivery of the services. In this kind of environment, there must be a clear statement of program rules and objectives and defined standards of service. This statement has been somewhat weak in the past, however, it is being addressed in a rigorous manner by the social development group in Ottawa. The success of information systems development will depend largely on the success of this exercise.



Lack of Administrative Skills and Experience in Local Offices - The bulk of administrative work is handled by social workers with limited administrative experience. Adequate documentation and training programs are essential to the success of the information system.

Regional Variation in Program Delivery Guidelines - Although most regions follow essentially the same guidelines for the delivery of social assistance, they are intended to reflect the provincial programs. Thus, there are a number of delivery parameters which vary, such as rate schedules and some details of eligibility criteria.

Interface with Other Programs and Agencies - In the execution of its responsibilities, the social assistance program interacts with many other programs both inside and outside of the Department. Thus, in determining the information needs of the social assistance program, careful attention will have to be paid to the nature and quantity of information required for these interactions. Within the Department, there is a particularly close interface with finance on forecasting, budgeting and monitoring of expenditures. Also, there is a considerable interaction among all the programs related to the support of Indian communities. External to the Department, the program interacts with other departments in the federal government, the provincial government, and some foreign social agencies (on an infrequent basis). These interactions are depicted in Figure 2.

Misconceptions About the Use of Computers - Certain Indian communities perceive any use of computerization to be a threat to the privacy of their information. In order to utilize computer processing successfully, it will have to be explained and perhaps demonstrated that the Department will pay particular attention to the development of adequate security and privacy controls in the development of a computer system.

Also, there is a perception among many local staff in both band and Departmental offices that computerization is equivalent to more control over program delivery. This perception is based on a common approach to new systems whereby tighter control mechanisms are introduced at the same time as computerization. Indeed, certain control mechanisms are facilitated by the use of computer. However, the point should be made to the staff that increased control over accuracy, completeness and timeliness is a requirement which must be satisfied regardless of the introduction of computer support.



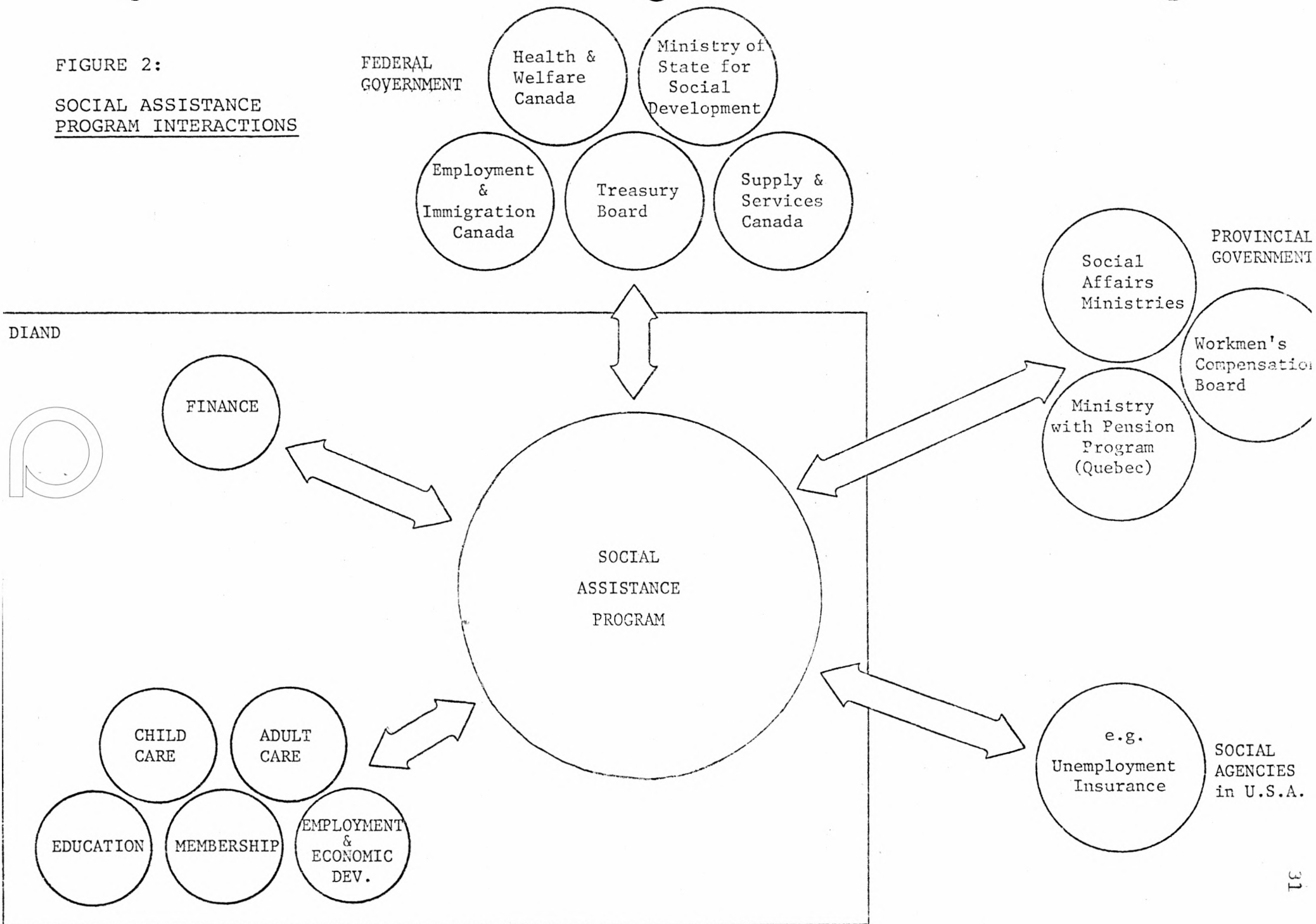
Current and Future Relationships to Bands and Tribal Councils -
Among the five regions already reviewed, band administration accounts for approximately 66% of social assistance expenditures. The trend, which is fastened by Departmental policy, is toward further autonomy in local band government. This trend will have a significant impact on the nature of information required by each level in the delivery hierarchy.

Current and Future Use of Data Processing Facilities in Bands - As bands gain experience in the administration of their programs, their sophistication in the use of administrative tools increases. Many of the bands are using McBee One-Wright systems. Some bands are using data processing for their basic accounting and financial activities (both inhouse and service bureau approaches). A few of these bands are planning to expand the use of data processing to include the social assistance program.

One can assume that the trend toward automation at the band level will continue as the bands experience increased local autonomy. In fact, there is a good possibility that the current rate of change will increase as other trends in the environment are felt. The steadily decreasing cost of equipment combined with an increasing emphasis on education and training of native people are two such trends.



FIGURE 2:
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM INTERACTIONS



VI RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are divided into three parts: a summary of recommendations for regions reviewed, recommended action for remaining regions, and recommended action for Ottawa.

They are discussed under their respective headings in the following paragraphs.

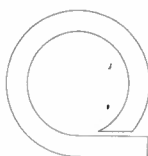
Summary of Recommendations for Regions Reviewed

To-date, the recommendations have focused on the need to develop and implement the short term improvement opportunities. Essentially, these recommendations have pointed toward the standardization of reporting practices and enhancement of control procedures. Using the captions presented in the previous section, the recommendations are summarized as follows;

1. Define and document standard reporting practices for all administrative units in the region.
2. Develop control procedures to ensure the accurate and complete processing and reporting of social assistance information to management.
3. Develop control and follow-up procedures to ensure the timely preparation of information for program management.

It was recommended that a coordinator be identified in each region who will be responsible for coordinating the design, development, implementation and on-going monitoring of improvements in the region. A structured approach was recommended for the development of improved procedures. The Departmental standard specified in the 'System Life Cycle' document was recommended. The total manpower resource for short term improvements was estimated to be four to eight man-months, depending on the region.

It was suggested that the definition of improvements for the long term should begin with the establishment of a national structure in which the needs of the individual regions can be accommodated. Therefore, initiation of work on improvement opportunities which were classified as long term should be delayed until the remaining regions are assessed to ensure the development of improved systems which are consistent with the needs of all regions and Ottawa.



Recommended Action for Remaining Regions

Information system reviews in the remaining regions should be tailored to address specific problem areas which have not been covered already in this report.

With respect to each region, the following recommendations are made:

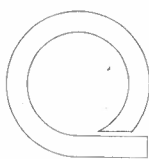
Ontario

In Ontario, there is an agreement with the province whereby the provincial Ministry of Social Affairs plays a prominent role in the delivery of assistance to native people. This creates an atypical environment in which the information system must operate. Therefore, the review in this region should focus on the relationships among the province, National Health and Welfare and the Department in the support of an information system.

Regional representatives have been interviewed, and a work plan has been prepared. It is recommended that this plan be adopted. A copy is included with this report as Appendix I.

Saskatchewan and the Yukon

In these regions, it is anticipated that the problems will be similar to the regions which are already completed. After the presentation of the overview report in each region, it is recommended that regional representatives identify particular concerns with the information system which have not been documented. A work plan should be developed by the consultant in cooperation with the regional representative which addresses only those additional areas of concern.



Recommended Action for Ottawa

Quasar recommends that:

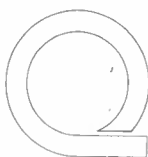
1. The Department undertake the lead role in the development of an information system which addresses clearly the information needs of each level in the Department and the bands and tribal councils. The system planning should recognize and facilitate the continuing trend toward increased band and tribal council responsibilities in the delivery of the social assistance program. This approach will necessitate substantial participation of representatives of the native community in the planning and development phases of the work.
2. The social assistance computer system should be "scaled-down" to meet only the current regional needs. This review has identified that only two regions continue to use the system. Their needs should be established by regional managers after a close examination of use on a report by report basis.
3. The reporting standards and procedures for verifying the accuracy and completeness of information should be fully developed and approved before the interim manual system is implemented. These basic elements of control must be fully established in each region in order to ensure that the information on the new reports can be used with confidence.

Recommended Approach

The objective of the project should be the development of a centrally coordinated and controlled information system, while allowing sufficient flexibility within regions to accommodate differences in program delivery regulations and local management information requirements. The approach that we recommend to achieving such a system involves three basic components;

1. National Planning,
2. Regional Development,
3. Band Participation.

Each of these components is elaborated as follows:



1. National Planning;

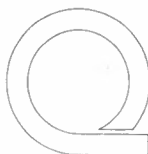
- * In order to achieve a situation where the local systems are highly integrated, consistent policies, procedures and standards for reporting must be established at the national level. The implementation of such standards will require the commitment of senior management in the program.
- * The information requirements of program management in Ottawa must be clearly established.
- * Guidelines should be developed to control system development in the regions.
- * Ottawa should take a lead role in the initiation and the coordination of the development of new systems.
- * A Project Review Committee (PRC) should be established with the appropriate representation.

2. Regional Development;

- * Information systems should be developed on a region by region basis within the national guidelines.
- * The full participation of regional staff should be ensured during the definition of requirements and the development of supporting clerical procedures.
- * A regional coordinator should be appointed. The coordinator should also be a member of the Project Review Committee.

3. Band Participation;

- * A large and increasing share of the program delivery responsibilities rest with band and tribal councils. Thus, they are significant participants in program delivery. The information system must be compatible with their operational needs and should meet their growing requirement for management information. A representative of the band administration should be appointed to coordinate the involvement of bands.



This approach can be translated into six practical steps as follows:

1. Initiate, plan and control project from Ottawa.
2. Select a pilot region for initial systems development.
3. Work closely with region and band representatives to define and develop a system around their needs. Generalize the processing logic where possible.
4. Implement system in this region and conduct a post-implementation evaluation.
5. Circulate results of evaluation to other regions.
6. Implement system in other regions, modifying it as requested by regional and band representatives.

The terms of reference for this work, including a work plan, timing and resource estimates is included in Appendix II.

Benefits of an Improved System

The benefits of an improved information system have been categorized into four areas as follows:

1. Management:

More complete, accurate information would be available in Ottawa, at each level in the regional administration, and in band and tribal council offices. This information will allow managers and supervisors to plan the program more confidently to monitor the delivery more effectively. Also, it will provide information for more selective operational audits of the delivery at district and band levels.

2. Operational:

The collection, recording and subsequent reconciliation of data would be simplified greatly to reduce the level of operational frustration and total manpower requirement. An effective information system simplifies routine clerical work and assists administrators in their work. The verification of data and generation of routing reports carry on in the background, allowing social workers to get on with their first priorities.



3. Interface with Other Agencies:

The availability of timely, accurate information on social assistance would ease the administrative burden and enhance the program's credibility with other groups both internal and external to the Department.

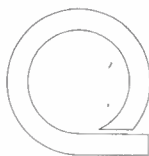
4. Accountability:

Funds for the program are taken from the federal treasury. With the increasing concern of Treasury Board and the government generally over accountability for funds, it will be very important to ensure the availability of accurate information which adequately describes the manner in which the social assistance funds are expended.



APPENDIX I

ONTARIO REGION
EVALUATION WORK PLAN



1980 February 20

Our File: 10579

Steering Committee,
Social Assistance Program Evaluation,
Ontario Region.

Reference: Information Systems Assessment

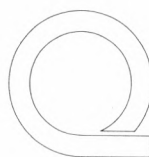
We are pleased to submit, for your consideration, our proposed terms of reference for review of the information systems supporting the social assistance program in the Ontario Region.

The primary objective of our review is to determine the adequacy of the information system to respond to the region's needs of operations control and management of the program activities. As an integral part of the overall review of the social assistance program, our component focuses on the assessment of the mechanisms in place to record, process and report on financial and management information. Both clerical and computerized components of the information system will be reviewed. An important element of the overall system which will be examined is its facility to control the recording and processing of data to ensure that the information produced is timely, complete, accurate and relevant for the use for which it is intended.

The objectives of the evaluation are twofold:

1. To identify opportunities for short term improvements to maximize the benefit of the current information system, where such opportunities exist, and
2. To contribute to the review at a national level which will form recommendations of a longer term nature which are consistent with the needs of all regions and Ottawa.

Preliminary interviews were held with senior regional management on February 18th in Toronto. During these interviews several regional concerns were identified. Among the concerns were the following:



1980 February 20

- * Incompleteness of detailed expenditure information provided to the regional office;
- * Unreliable accuracy of the limited information which does reach regional office;
- * Inconsistencies between the classification of expenditure details provided to the regional office and the classification expected by Ottawa for regional comparisons.

The assessment of systems in this region will identify, in a comprehensive manner, the major problem areas in the current procedures and recommend action needed to improve the situation.

Since the information system relies heavily on input from sources outside the department, the investigation will have to extend beyond the department to certain external agencies. The interviews which will be necessary for the review include the following:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. | Regional Office; | representatives of both program and finance. |
| 2. | A Selected District Office; | representatives of both program and finance. |
| 3. | Provincial Office; | province staff responsible for information processing related to expenditures covered under the 1965 Agreement, and staff responsible for coordination with DIAND. |
| 4. | National Health & Welfare; | the federal representative of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP). |

The criteria for selection of a district office should be primarily its ability to demonstrate the reporting procedures related to the various administrative arrangements. Lakehead district office

Q

1980 February 20

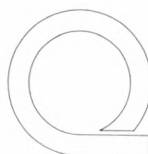
was suggested during the preliminary interviews since it has a variety of provincial arrangements and also the departmentally administered arrangement. To the extent that the review requires cooperation from parties outside the department, we will be relying heavily upon the Ontario regional office to secure and coordinate the interviews.

Our work plan for this assessment is attached to this letter. The data collection phase of the review should involve approximately five days in the region. The current plan for initiation of the data collection phase of the work is near the end of April. The schedule for interviewing will be developed with you several weeks in advance of the field work.

We look forward to working closely with you on this important review.

Yours truly,

Ronald H. Nordin,
Senior Consultant.



ATTACHMENT I

WORK PLAN FOR THE ASSESSMENT
OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN THE
ONTARIO REGION

The major tasks involved in the review of the information system are summarized as follows:

1. Evaluation Initiation

This task involves the development of detailed data collection activities for the Ontario region. Interviewees will be identified and arrangements made through the regional steering committee for the timing and location of interviews. The data collection strategy will be reviewed with the committee prior to conducting regional interviews.

2. Data Collection

Interviews will be conducted at the region and district levels. In addition, selected interviews will be held with key provincial government staff. All appropriate documentation, sample forms and reports will be collected. The data collected will be sufficient to describe and assess the information system.

3. System Assessment

The data collected during the previous task will be analyzed in such a manner as to identify major system requirements, functions, information flow, performance characteristics and operational controls. The system will also be assessed functionally and operationally. The functional assessment addresses the level to which the system is meeting its current requirements. The operational assessment addresses the efficiency of operation of the information system.

4. Preparation of Findings and Conclusions

The results of the data collection and analysis tasks will be documented in a draft report to the national steering committee. Also, this report will be provided to the regional steering committee for discussion purposes.



5. Regional Presentation

After review and acceptance of the draft report by the committees, the findings and conclusions will be presented to regional management.

6. Preparation of Final Report

Any changes as a result of discussions with the committees will be incorporated into the final report. This report will be delivered to the national steering committee chairman for distribution to the region.

As a result of preliminary discussions with regional representatives, the Data Collection task has been defined in greater detail. This task will involve interviewing financial and program personnel at the regional office, and at a selected district office. The detailed task description is as follows:

Data Collection

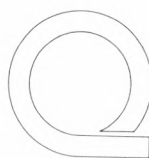
I Regional Office - Toronto

- * Finalize the selection of district and provincial offices for interviewing during this phase.
- * Finalize the coordination of regional, district and provincial visits with respect to individual interviewees and timing.
- * Obtain copies of all regional reports and manuals relating to administrative or information system policies, procedures, organization and control.
- * Review and document the regional component of the procedures and information flow related to different administrative arrangements, including:
 - a) Self-administered bands under the provincial agreement;
 - b) Departmentally administered bands;
 - c) Bands administered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services;
 - d) Bands administered by welfare boards which are provincially approved agencies.
 - e) Off-reserve Indians receiving assistance from the municipalities.
- * Review and document the procedures for the collection, preparation and submission of summary data on social assistance to Ottawa. Identify procedures which ensure the completeness and accuracy of the data submitted.

- * Obtain copies of forms used in each of the procedures identified.
- * Examine procedures for the verification of completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of data handling in each major function.
- * Review and document the procedures for the collection preparation and submission of summary data on social assistance to Ottawa. Identify procedures which ensure the completeness and accuracy of the data submitted.
- * Identify the frequency and volume of enquiries and requests for special statistical compilation made by program management. An example of this kind of request would be a request to determine the impact of a change of rates affecting only a certain segment of the recipient population.
- * Identify requirements for additional information required of the system for management of the program at the regional and district levels.

II District Office

- * Review and document the district office component of the procedures and information flow related to different administrative arrangements, including:
 - a) Self-administered bands under the provincial agreement;
 - b) Departmentally administered bands;
 - c) Bands administered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services;
 - d) Bands administered by welfare boards which are provincially approved agencies;
 - e) Off-reserve Indians receiving assistance from the municipalities.
- * Examine procedures for the verification of completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of data handling in each major step in the information processing.
- * Obtain copies of all forms used for recording, processing, or reporting of data.
- * Identify variations in the recording and processing of social assistance data among bands; for example, the degree of consistency in the recording of categories of special needs.
- * Identify requirements for any additional program or financial information with which to perform program management activities at the district level.



III Offices External to DIAND

- * Review procedures and obtain copies of documents and forms related to the flow of information from bands to provincial offices, within provincial offices and from provincial offices to National Health and Welfare.
- * Determine the contents and location of major files on expenditure details related to Indians.
- * Review the coding and classification structures related to social assistance expenditures.
- * Compare these structures to the departmental standards.
- * Determine the degree of flexibility in reporting information to the department.



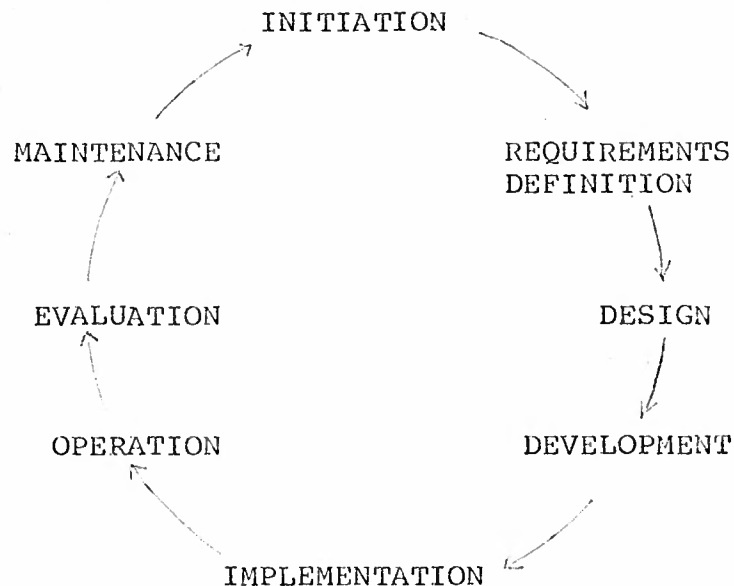
APPENDIX II

IMPLEMENTATION WORK PLAN FOR LONG TERM IMPROVEMENTS



WORK PLAN

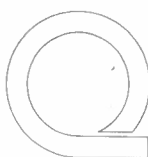
The work plan is based on the approach recommended in Section VI of the report, and the Department's System Life Cycle (SLC) development standards. These standards divide the development process into a number of discreet stages through which every new system development project should flow. The stage which we are in currently is EVALUATION. There are eight stages in the system life cycle. These stages follow logically from one another as shown below:



This study has pointed clearly toward the development of a new system. Leaving aside, the on-going need to maintain the current system, the next logical stage in the development of the system is INITIATION. This evaluation was sufficiently detailed to provide considerable input to initiation, however, the steps in each stage should be considered and satisfied before moving to the next stage.

The standards are maintained and monitored by the Management Systems Branch. Therefore, it is not necessary to repeat them here. The intent of this work plan is to identify the special considerations in the next stage and overall sequence and timing of the remaining stages.

The Initiation stage of the project can begin immediately, and it should address all of the following areas;



INITIATION TASKS

1. Establish Project Responsibilities

The project authorities and responsibilities should be clearly established. Among the assigned responsibilities will be a coordinator in Ottawa and each of the regions. In addition, representatives of the native community in each region will have to be established.

2. Finalize and Approve Policies, Procedures and Standards with Respect to Information Reporting

Considerable work has already been done and is included in the Operating Guidelines for the Social Assistance Program. A draft has been circulated. This work must be finalized, approved and established in each region. It will form the "foundation" upon which the interim manual system and the computerized system will be based.

3. Identify General Functional Requirements for a National Information System

Some of the information required for this exercise can be pulled from the regional evaluation reports. Also, it will require additional involvement from selected regions and Ottawa.

4. Determine the Most Feasible Approach to Automation

A number of alternative approaches to data processing should be evaluated with respect to the cost/benefit, operational feasibility and technical feasibility. Particularly close attention will have to be paid to the operational feasibility as was outlined in Section V. The recommended approach may not involve automation in every region.

5. Prepare a Plan for System Development

A detailed plan and guidelines to be followed in regional system development should be prepared and used to control the project through to completion.

Following the initiation stage, the project should follow the standard SLC stages for the pilot region. Upon successful operation of a system in that region, it can be modified and implemented in the other regions using the same basic documentation and training program as was developed for the pilot.



RESOURCES

The Initiation stage is estimated to require approximately 65 man-days of effort. This estimate is detailed in the following table.

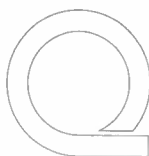
INITIATION TASKS	ESTIMATED MAN-DAYS
1. Establish Project Responsibilities	5
2. Finalize and Approve Policies, Procedures and Standards	15
3. Identify General Functional Requirements for a National Information System	25-35
4. Determine Most Feasible Approach to Automation	15-25
5. Prepare a Plan for System Development	5
TOTAL	65-85

TIMING

Assuming no delay in the start-up of the project, a system could be installed in the pilot region as early as the end of next fiscal year (1981-82).

Assuming minimal modifications are required, the system could be installed in the remaining regions during the following year 1982-83) in a simultaneous fashion.

A Gantt chart showing the timing of all major activities related to the information systems enhancement is shown in Figure 3.



(MAJOR ACTIVITIES)

FIGURE 3: ESTIMATED TIMING

[illegible]