



## 4. MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND PROCESSES

The mission of SCI management is to provide an integrated set of management control mechanisms required to effectively implement Service Center modernization in accordance with the guidance of the Secretary of Agriculture and the National FAC. Four primary management objectives have been identified in support of this mission:

- ▲ Ensure effective and efficient use of resources.
- ▲ Ensure the reliability of financial and performance reporting.
- ▲ Comply with applicable laws and regulations.
- ▲ Protect the interests of the U.S. Government.

The SCI management mission and objectives require a comprehensive management strategy, with supporting management processes, to ensure the success of the initiative. An organizational structure has been implemented to accommodate the wide scope of implementation activities and the execution of required management functions. Tailored processes have been established to comply with laws and regulations applicable to an IT initiative of this magnitude and to ensure that potential risks are properly managed. Specific management processes have been implemented to control plans, schedules, resources, and the quality associated with the initiative. Additional processes and procedures have been implemented to track and report the status of the initiative to appropriate USDA management and oversight authorities. Detailed processes have been developed to manage resources, acquisitions, and administrative matters involving the SCI. Plans have been developed and are being updated to communicate SCI information to various stakeholder

groups and to ensure that the requisite training is provided.

This section of the Comprehensive Modernization Plan describes both the management strategy and the major processes that will be employed to implement SCI management’s mission objectives.

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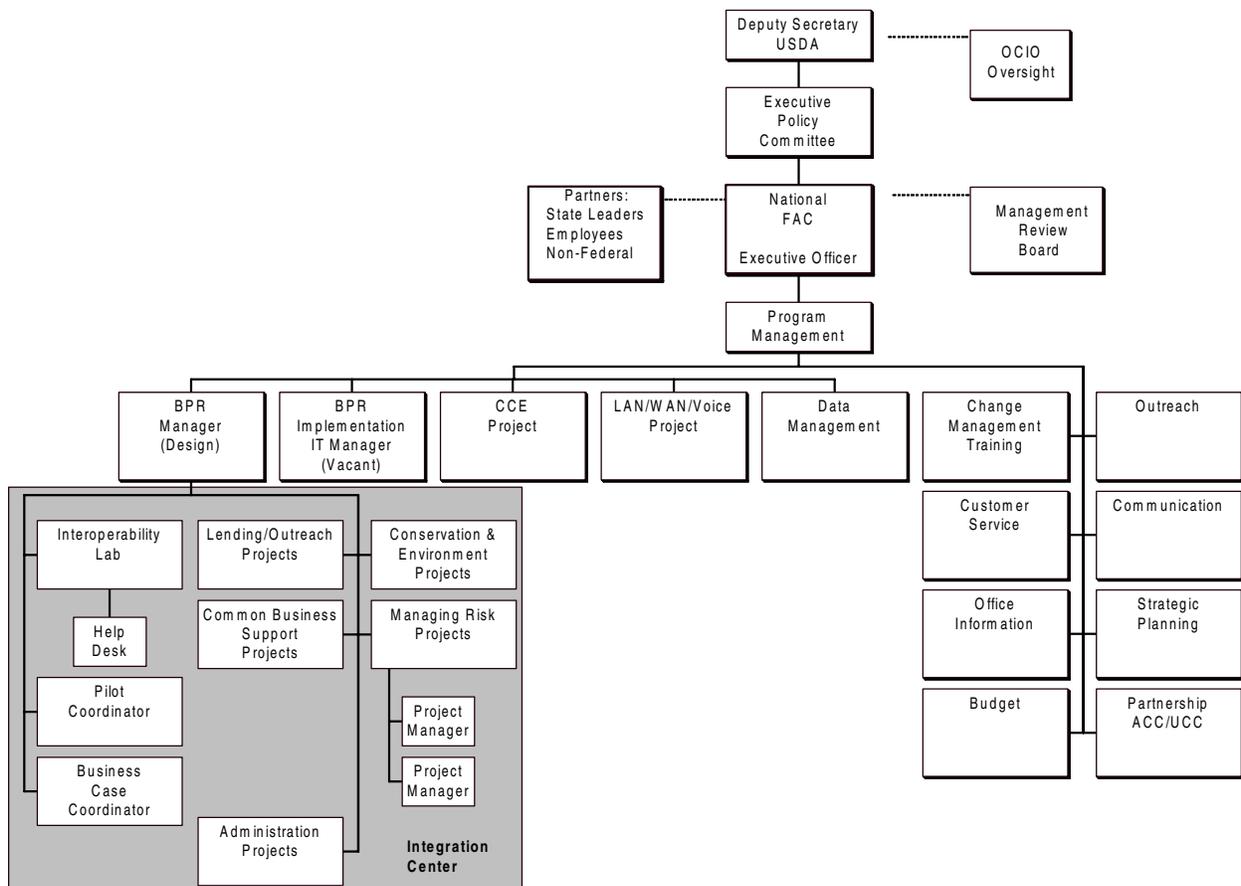
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## 4.1 SCI Organization

### 4.1.1 Introduction

The current management structure of the SCI is shown in **Figure 4.1-1**. It portrays the principal management roles and functions required to conduct the Service Center initiative.

SCI management includes senior-level personnel who provide leadership and guidance, oversight organizations at the Department level, and Team Leaders who direct various initiative implementation projects.



**Figure 4.1-1. Current SCI Organization**

### 4.1.2 Senior Management

Senior management for the SCI includes the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, the Executive Policy Committee (EPC), the National

Food and Agriculture Council (NFAC), the NFAC Executive Officer, and the Management Review Board (MRB). USDA partners provide input to SCI management and feed-



back on implementation activities. The role of each with respect to the SCI is summarized here.

- ▲ The Deputy Secretary of Agriculture is responsible for providing executive-level leadership and guidance for the SCI, and conducts regular reviews of SCI progress.
- ▲ The EPC includes the Under Secretaries for the three primary SCI mission areas: Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, Natural Resources and Environment, and Rural Development, as well as key Department staff office heads such as the CIO, CFO, ASA, and Director, OBPA. This body assists the Deputy Secretary in executive oversight and guidance activities, and participates in SCI progress reviews.
- ▲ The NFAC is designated by the Deputy Secretary as responsible for implementing the SCI. The NFAC consists of the heads of the USDA county-based agencies—the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development. The NFAC chairperson rotates annually between FSA, NRCS, and Rural Development. Ex-officio members of the NFAC include the Chief Information Officer and the Assistant Secretary for Administration.
- ▲ The NFAC Executive Officer is responsible for the day-to-day management and execution of all SCI activities. This role includes developing operating budgets and plans for fund use, as well as the day-to-day oversight of operations, to include fund obligation to meet objectives.
- ▲ The MRB provides guidance and assistance to the SCI for all implementation activities. It consists of the Executive Officer of the National FAC, the partner agency Deputy Administrators/Chiefs for Management, SCI project Executive Spon-

sors, and other personnel as required to support SCI project activities.

- ▲ Partners provide input and regular feedback on SCI implementation activities to senior SCI management. Key partners include USDA State Leaders, employee unions and associations, and numerous other non-Federal entities.

### 4.1.3 SCI Oversight

Department-level oversight for the SCI involves two separate organizations within USDA: the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO); and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Their roles with respect to the SCI are summarized here.

- ▲ The OCIO is responsible for direct Departmental oversight of the SCI. The CIO grants technical approval and waiver authority for the current USDA moratorium on IT procurements, so that the SCI may conduct pre-acquisition studies prior to deploying Information Technology (IT) solutions. Within OCIO, a full-time senior-level executive, the Senior Policy Advisor for Service Center Implementation, has been dedicated to SCI oversight activities. OCIO reviews project proposals and plans, conducts independent verification and validation studies, conducts periodic milestone reviews, and approves IT investments and deployments.
- ▲ The OIG monitors SCI activities to ensure compliance with USDA policies and applicable regulations, and reports its findings directly to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary.

### 4.1.4 Service Center Initiative Management

Thirteen teams were organized to conduct the complex tasks comprising the Service Center initiative. Team formation was based on an



analysis of the scope of work and management functions required to satisfy all goals and objectives identified in the Service Center Strategic Plan. Team Leaders were selected to lead each current SCI implementation. The SCI Team Leaders' primary management roles and functions are summarized in this subsection.

Five teams implement IT solutions for the SCI:

- ▲ **The Business Process Reengineering (BPR) Team.** The BPR Program Manager is responsible for managing SCI enterprise BPR activities, including both BPR design and implementation efforts. The scope of this project includes BPR project design and development, business case development and validation, and pilot testing. The BPR Program Manager is also responsible for managing all activities that take place in the Business Integration Center, an environment where the common computing environment (CCE), data management, LAN/WAN/Voice, and BPR projects integrate business and technical solutions for Service Center program delivery.
- ▲ **The BPR Implementation Team.** The BPR Implementation IT Manager provides project and management support to the IT organizations supporting the BPR Initiative. Key activities include development of the applications architecture and software standards for the BPR implementation effort.
- ▲ **The Common Computing Environment (CCE) Team.** The CCE Team Leader is responsible for coordinating, planning, and managing the CCE Project. The CCE team defines the technical architecture for the CCE and its implementation, ensuring compliance with the policies, standards, and overall data architecture of the department.

- ▲ **The LAN/WAN/Voice Team.** The LAN/WAN/Voice Team is an interagency effort team responsible for implementing a common telecommunications infrastructure in all Service Centers, state offices and other selected offices.
- ▲ **The Data Management Team.** The Data Management Team implements data management and administration policies and standards, develops the enterprise data model, and establishes the overall Service Center data architecture.

Eight other teams support IT modernization through specific projects required for Service Center implementation.

- ▲ **The Change Management and Training Team** develops and manages national training programs for common Service Center training needs to assist employees in adapting to changing roles and relationships, and to improve customer service.
- ▲ **The Customer Service Team** identifies customer needs and expectations, develops standards for program and quality service delivery, and measures customer satisfaction with Service Center program and service delivery performance.
- ▲ **The Outreach Team** supports the planning and implementation of specific recommendations by the USDA Civil Rights Action Team; National Commission on Small Farms; and Section 2501(g) of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990, to ensure that all customers have equal access to USDA programs.
- ▲ **The Partnership Team** coordinates activities of the Union Coordination Council (UCC), the Association Coordination Council (ACC), and the State Leadership Council (SLC). The team provides these councils with information on NFAC activities, gathers their feedback, and pro-



vides their perspective on Service Centers to the NFAC and senior USDA management.

- ▲ **The Office Information Team** manages and reports office information in support of the office consolidation effort.
- ▲ **The Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement Team** develops and updates the SCI Strategic Plan and annual performance plans. It also monitors performance and develops annual SCI performance reports.
- ▲ **The Budget Team** is responsible for financial planning, budgeting, and the execution of the SCI budget. Specific activities include budget formulation; budget justification to USDA, OMB, and Congress; and budget execution tracking.
- ▲ **The Communications Team** is responsible for communicating accurate and timely NFAC information to internal and external SCI stakeholders.

#### 4.1.5 Program Management Office (PMO)

The PMO provides program management support to the Executive Officer of the National FAC and his Deputy. The PMO's primary responsibilities include:

- ▲ Ensuring integration of SCI project activities.
- ▲ Maintaining the SCI Modernization Plan.
- ▲ Supporting management of SCI schedules.
- ▲ Supporting management of SCI resources.
- ▲ Supporting management of quality performance.
- ▲ Supporting reporting requirements.
- ▲ Supporting administrative management activities.
- ▲ Conducting Program Management Reviews (PMR).
- ▲ Preparing briefings and reports.
- ▲ Tracking project resources—people, cost, schedules, equipment, facilities.

- ▲ Publishing SCI directives.
- ▲ Supporting programming and budgeting tasks.

PMO also provides operational support to the Office Information and Strategic Planning Teams. The Office Information team maintains the Office Information Profile (OIP) database for USDA offices, and provides both public and private access to it via the Internet. Initially designed to track Service Centers only, the OIP has been expanded to track many other types of USDA field offices. PMO supports major reviews of USDA office plans and status, and also supports required correspondence between the National FAC and State FACs concerning changes in office status and related office issues.

For the Strategic Planning Team, the PMO assists in developing SCI objectives and performance measures, conducting performance monitoring, and preparing required SCI performance documentation.

#### 4.1.6 Integration with the Support Services Bureau (SSB)

The SCI organization is designed to provide flexibility to meet a range of implementation requirements. The current SCI organization is likely to change in fiscal year 2000 as the SSB is created through an administrative convergence initiative that will affect the Service Center partner agencies. The SSB will combine the current administrative and IT functions of the Service Center partner agencies as shown in **Figure 4.1-2**. The SSB will be responsible for ensuring state Administrative Support Units provide Service Center employees with required administrative support in the functional areas.

fiscal year 2000 funding for the SCI will be provided through the SSB, and some SCI project activities are likely to transition to the

SSB as part of the convergence process. SCI leaders have already begun to discuss the transition of mature projects and IT functions to the SSB with SSB interim leadership. The SCI organization will be adjusted to ensure management control is maintained effectively during and after the SSB transition.

*appropriation does not fund and prohibits the creation of the SSB. The Secretary of Agriculture is working vigorously to gain congressional support for the SSB. Meanwhile the department must operate without a bureau that was to work closely with the SCI, especially in deploying and maintaining IT systems. Action is underway by the NFAC to develop a white paper explaining how the SCI will operate without the SSB.*

### Support for the SSB

*SCI supports the establishment of the SSB. However, the fiscal year 2000 Agriculture*

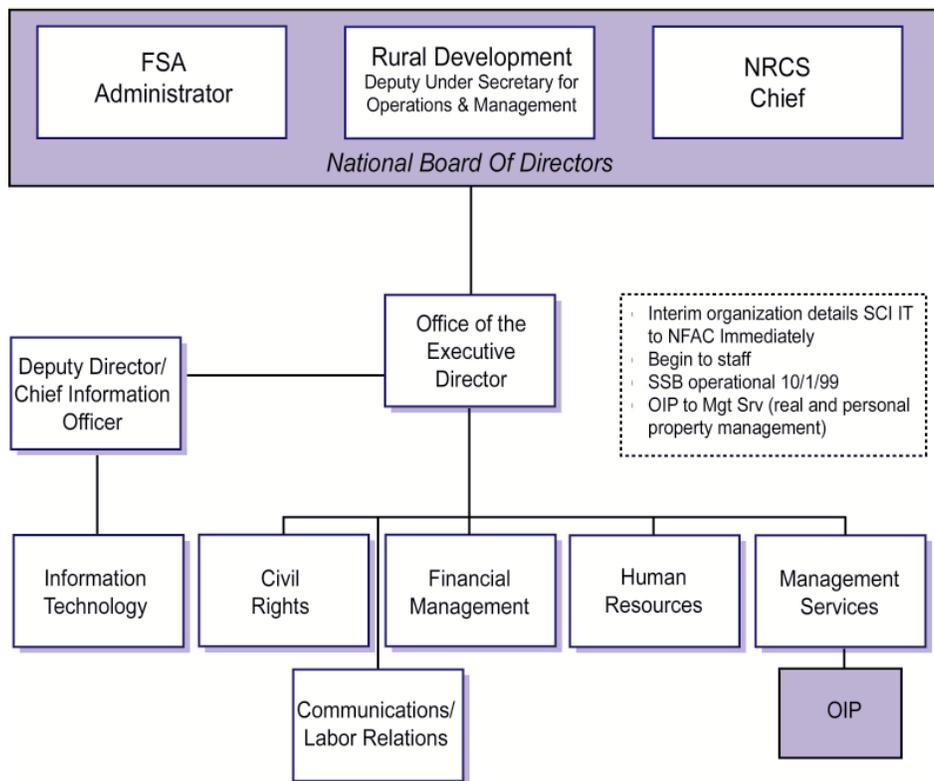


Figure 4.1-2. Support Services Bureau

### 4.1.7 Management Initiatives

*As a result of a joint USDA/OMB Working Group, several proposals for strengthening modernization activities in USDA were developed, briefed to, and approved by the Deputy Secretary. The actions to address those proposals are highlighted in bold and italicized throughout this Plan. Several of the*

*proposals extend beyond the direct preview of the SCI and affect the entire USDA modernization effort. Actions to address these proposals are referred to as Management Initiatives and are explained here.*



#### 4.1.7.1 Modernization Management Entity

*During the past several years, the SCI has made significant progress in reengineering business processes, pilot testing new program delivery methods, and deploying major phases of the LAN/WAN/Voice and CCE systems as part of the emerging Service Center technical architecture. Despite this progress, USDA recognizes there are management issues to be resolved in order to ensure an integrated approach to modernization that achieves desired results as quickly and efficiently as possible. USDA planned to make major adjustments in its management approach to administration with the anticipated establishment of the SSB in October 1999. However, with current appropriations language prohibiting establishment of the SSB in 1999, plans for modernization management will have to be revised to accommodate that prohibition.*

*As part of recent discussions with OMB to improve this modernization initiative, USDA agreed to establish a permanent entity to plan and coordinate modernization activities including IT, BPR, and related support elements. Both USDA and OMB agreed that this management entity for modernization must have strong links to program delivery leaders, policy makers, and the SSB, when established. The principal issues that must be addressed in developing this new management entity include:*

- ▲ *Management accountability for implementing all aspects of modernization activities and whether such activities produce required results.*
- ▲ *Clear lines of authority and responsibility for modernization management.*
- ▲ *Alignment of SCI plans and objectives with USDA strategic plans and objectives.*

- ▲ *Decision processes and entities that support USDA's modernization requirements in a timely manner.*
- ▲ *Mechanisms designed to resolve quickly any conflicts between modernization imperatives and Service Center agency priorities.*
- ▲ *A funding approach that will permit modernization to move forward rapidly while providing adequate support for Service Center agencies to accomplish ongoing missions.*
- ▲ *An integrated IT management organization to support the emerging SCI technical architecture in the areas of common standards, procedures, tools, development environment, operations, and maintenance.*
- ▲ *A BPR management organization to facilitate cross-functional reengineering activities across agency boundaries.*

*USDA has already started to evaluate alternative organizational approaches for improving the management of current modernization initiatives. The commitment to establish a new modernization management entity will be implemented on the following schedule:*

- ▲ *November 1999—SCI provides modernization management alternatives and recommended solutions to senior Department leadership for review. USDA Modernization Management Working Group will be formed to provide organizational recommendation to the Deputy Secretary.*
- ▲ *December 1999—USDA Modernization Management Working Group provides organization decision memorandum to the Deputy Secretary.*
- ▲ *January 2000—Deputy Secretary decision and announcement of new USDA modernization management structure.*



#### 4.1.7.2 Federalization of County FSA Employees

*In keeping with USDA's commitment to fair and equitable employment practices and outreach to potentially disadvantaged customers, the department established a Civil Rights Action Team in 1997 to thoroughly audit its program delivery and employment practices from a Civil Rights standpoint. In addition to auditing past reports and recommendations, the team traveled to 12 separate representative areas of the United States to conduct listening sessions with USDA employees and customers.*

*When the team had finished its work, it had developed a large number of recommendations, which were incorporated into a USDA action plan for implementation. Recommendation number 17 stated in part, "Modernize the FSA State and county committee system by converting non-Federal FSA positions, including county executive directors, to Federal Status..." The associated portion of the action plan directed that the 1998 USDA proposed legislative package include amending the 1935 Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to make all FSA county positions Federal positions. The driving factor in the recommendation was to ensure that all levels of the USDA could be held accountable to the same Federal standards for equitable and fair employment and opportunity to receive USDA services. This would eliminate de-facto variations of standards experienced at different local county levels, particularly in regards to loan application programs.*

*The legislative package was developed, including the recommended language to Federalize county FSA employees, and provided to Congress by the Department. Representative Eva Lee Clayton (D-North Carolina) sponsored the legislative proposal in the*

*House of Representatives during the 1998 congressional session; however, despite her best efforts and the support of the Secretary of Agriculture, the measure was not passed.*

*Efforts are currently underway within the SCI to include the proposal in USDA's legislative package to be included in the fiscal year 2001 Presidents Budget Submission. Additionally, there may be opportunities to insert this legislative initiative earlier if congressional supplemental funding actions occur during fiscal year 2000. Milestones for this effort included:*

- ▲ *Labor-management working group will support development of legislative proposal.*
- ▲ *Proposed legislative language to OBPA by December 15, 1999.*
- ▲ *OBPA integration of the proposal into the total USDA legislative package.*
- ▲ *Proposal included with the USDA fiscal year 2000 Presidents Budget Submission.*

*The SCI will benefit from favorable consideration in that uniform Federal staffing rules and procedures will support a consolidated Service Center approach to providing customer service while reflecting a more representative and diverse workforce reflective of the total customer population served.*

#### 4.1.7.3 Funding

*The realization of improved customer services as outlined in the Service Center Vision requires investments in modernization as outlined in this plan. However, the resource requirements for maintaining the capability to meet currently intensifying program delivery needs without major deterioration in customer service have made it difficult to allocate adequate resources for these investments. Major benefits will occur only after a lag time and if sufficient investment is*



*achieved to permit retirement of expensive-to-operate legacy systems and replacement with modernized systems and processes. Therefore, the management plan for modernization makes provisions for priority setting and strategic focus of investments to maximize the payoff from available budgetary resources.*

*The provisions for identification of strategic office locations for investments, and the provisions for assessment of priority setting for BPR and data acquisition and other components of the plan, recognize the reality of limited budget resources.*

*The commitment of the Department and the Service Center partner agencies to the SCI modernization plan and to its implementation will demonstrate to Congress, the OMB, clients, and other interested parties that funds provided for investment in Service Center modernization will be managed well and will be justified based on the opportunities to achieve major improvements in customer service and improved efficiency. Key efforts include:*

- ▲ *Working with OMB to develop approaches that will secure adequate resources to maintain the momentum of modernization activities in fiscal year 2000.*
- ▲ *Working with OMB to develop a long-term budget strategy (2001-2005) that provides resources for modernization and execution of agency missions.*

#### 4.1.7.4 Reinvention Labs

##### *Alternative County Office Structures and Program Delivery*

*The partner agencies involved in the provision of USDA customer services at the county level have long been committed to providing quality service at a reasonable cost*

*to the nation's taxpayers. In this decade, such commitment has included a number of self-generated improvement initiatives at the grassroots level as well as department and agency headquarters. The initial effort to collocate partner agency county-based service offices began in 1994, and, in the past 5 years, resulted in combining more than 3,700 separate county based offices into 2,700 offices providing the same basic agency services on a collocated basis. Subsequently, the Service Center "Leading Edge" initiative brought together a representative number of employees at the Service Center level to identify and recommend ways services to customers could be made more efficient and effective. In addition to the improvements recommended for adoption, this group identified a number of regulatory and institutional barriers to implementing other wide-ranging improvements. These barriers were categorized and prioritized for action. Based on recommendations from this process, USDA initiated a Service Center BPR project in 1998. There are currently more than 20 individual projects in development, with 10 in the pilot-study phase. These projects run the gamut of Service Center core business processes, as well as the supporting office automation and telecommunications infrastructure and associated data. A fully operational Business Integration Center is in place at USDA's Beltsville, Maryland office, composed of business case teams, a fully functional interoperability laboratory equipped with both legacy and current Service Center automation infrastructure, a data management team, and the automation infrastructure deployment teams. The Business Integration Center provides a synergistic environment where the individual pieces of the improvement efforts are brought together to move the SCI closer towards the Secretary of Agriculture's vision of a dynamic "one-stop" USDA customer service entity that provides outstanding service at a reasonable cost.*



*The USDA Service Center Modernization Initiative therefore provides a construct for developing and testing a variety of approaches to providing USDA partner agency services in county-based offices. Many of the innovative program delivery concepts will inevitably require revisions to the current structure to best capitalize on proposed revisions to procedures. In order to facilitate such innovations, an environment supportive to change must be fostered. Institutional barriers to change must be identified and overcome, whether based on procedure or statute. Required legislative changes must be addressed in concert with the fiscal year 2001 budget, and target specific areas where a law or statute can be modified or suspended for a period of time to allow for the conduct of additional pilot testing and valid comparison of alternatives.*

*The legislative cycle requires adherence to a rigid schedule in order to identify, propose, and package legislative proposals for congressional action. An approach that prioritizes efforts to a limited number of high pay-off changes will usually be more successful than attempts to move a large number of proposals through the process. Milestones for the legislative change effort include:*

- ▲ Identify and prioritize legislative proposals to eliminate or suspend statutory barriers to changes by January 2000*
- ▲ Provide proposal package to USDA Office of Budget and Program for integration into the overall USDA legislative proposal.*

*Not all impediments to experimentation and innovation are found in law or statute. Internal USDA rules, regulations, and operating procedures also must be addressed. Fortunately, the ongoing effort of Vice-President Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing*

*Government (NPR) provides support for innovation and change throughout the Federal Government. NPR has developed procedures departments can use to assist in developing and testing different approaches to providing Government services. Two of the most helpful are 1) establishing Reinvention Labs and 2) streamlining the approval of waivers to internal rules. Both of these processes are available within USDA, and are discussed in further detail here.*

*Reinvention Labs are designated by organizational senior management and empower employees to take radical steps to test and prototype innovative ways and means to deliver government services. The concept was initiated in April 1993, and by early 1998 had grown to 325 separate activities designated as Reinvention Labs within their respective agencies or departments. There are already a number of USDA organizations designated as Reinvention Labs with a proven track record of successful innovation. County-based service offices may immediately seek similar status to support efforts for reinvention in their own service delivery procedures. A specific example of an innovative Service Center concept that would lend itself to the Reinvention Lab process is the USDA's employee union and association's Service Center Optimization concept whereby the "one-stop" customer service provided by a county-based Service Center could be extended to include other government services beyond USDA's. The benefits of becoming a Reinvention Lab include the legitimization of efforts to innovate and the accompanying leverage to overcome innate barriers and organizational resistance to change that more often than not choke innovation in a bureaucratic mass of rules and inertia. Within the Reinvention Labs, the major drive for innovation tends to come from the employees of the organization itself, as a formal, supportive climate is fos-*



*tered and experienced personnel are empowered and encouraged to develop and implement new ways of better providing services. Milestones for Reinvention Lab implementation include:*

- ▲ *Service Center Initiative Team decision to seek Reinvention Lab status for all Service Centers or for a limited number of Service Centers piloting specific projects in November 1999.*
- ▲ *Initiation of the formal request to the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture for Reinvention Lab status by December 1999.*

*In April 1998, President Clinton reinforced the Reinvention Lab effort by releasing a Memorandum for the heads of executive departments and agencies directing them to establish streamlined processes for acting on their employee requests for waivers of their internal rules. His intent was to support innovation by allowing departments and agencies to suspend non-statutory-based procedural rules standing in the way of implementing positive changes. Since then, a number of Federal departments and agencies have responded with formal processes for rapidly acting on employee requests for waivers to internal rules. A number of significant internal-based barriers to Service Center “one-stop” operations have been identified in both the “Leading Edge” initiative and the BPR projects. For example, a specific partner-agency rule restricts customer information data sharing to solely that agency. Waiver of that rule would allow the other partner agencies to share in the customer information already developed by that agency. Milestones for the USDA internal rule waiver process include:*

- ▲ *Submission of a USDA internal rule waiver process by November 1999.*

- ▲ *Initiation of Service Center requests for USDA agency or Departmental internal rule waivers by January 2000.*
- ▲ *Completed action on Service Center requests for internal rule waivers by February 2000.*

*Legislative change initiatives, Reinvention Lab Status, and the internal rule waiver process form a mutually complimentary triad of support for developing, testing, and implementing faster, better, and cheaper means of meeting the county-based office service missions. They do not merely foster change for the sake of change, but allow for the demonstration of best-case alternatives that may be implemented rapidly.*

## 4.2 Risk Management

### 4.2.1 SCI Risks

Risks associated with the SCI have been identified through many sources—internally as a function of project planning and execution tasks, and externally through General Accounting Office (GAO) reports and numerous Department-level study groups and analyses. **Section 1** of this plan discussed the current business environment, including the interdepartmental studies that identified major risk areas. **Section 1** also recommended solutions to mitigate the risks. The management recommendations of the PwC county-based study and the recommendations of Administrative Convergence, the Civil Rights Action Team, and the National Commission on Small Farms include actions to mitigate risks that have a bearing on the SCI.

The most significant risks associated with the SCI involve the development of reengineered business processes and enabling information technology to provide a modern, integrated business environment that is responsive to customers’ needs. The SCI must implement a

phased approach to IT modernization that mitigates risk in conformance with Clinger-Cohen and OMB’s Raines Rules for IT modernization. In addition, the SCI must avoid operational, cost, and schedule risks throughout development activities. Operational risk is associated with the development of solutions that fail because they are not properly integrated or do not support Service Center business processes and concepts of operation. Cost risk involves failure to manage developmental activities so that solutions conform to budgetary constraints. Schedule risk involves failure to manage activities within established time constraints.

The SCI has a comprehensive approach to risk management. The approach involves designing the initiative’s management structure to avoid risks, developing management processes that ensure SCI risk areas are regularly reviewed and assessed, and implementing procedures designed to track and mitigate risks during the course of implementation activities. The SCI has taken many steps to avoid or mitigate risks associated with the initiative. These include creation of the SCI project life-

cycle model for project reviews and assessments, the Business Integration Center and BPR pilot testing program, and the Business Case validation procedure.

### 4.2.2 Project Lifecycle Review Process

Figure 4.2-1 shows the SCI’s project lifecycle review process, which ensures successful integration and risk mitigation for the individual BPR projects. It depicts the major project phases and processes that have been established to control development, pilot testing, and project implementation. The lifecycle review processes ensure that individual project risks are understood and systematically addressed throughout the development cycle. The lifecycle helps avoid risks by ensuring that projects are clearly defined and scoped, and undergo a consistent series of steps for development, prototype testing, and implementation. Each major phase concludes with a project review to ensure that risks are defined and mitigated to the maximum extent possible. This review process is used for SCI project phases up to the national deployment decision.

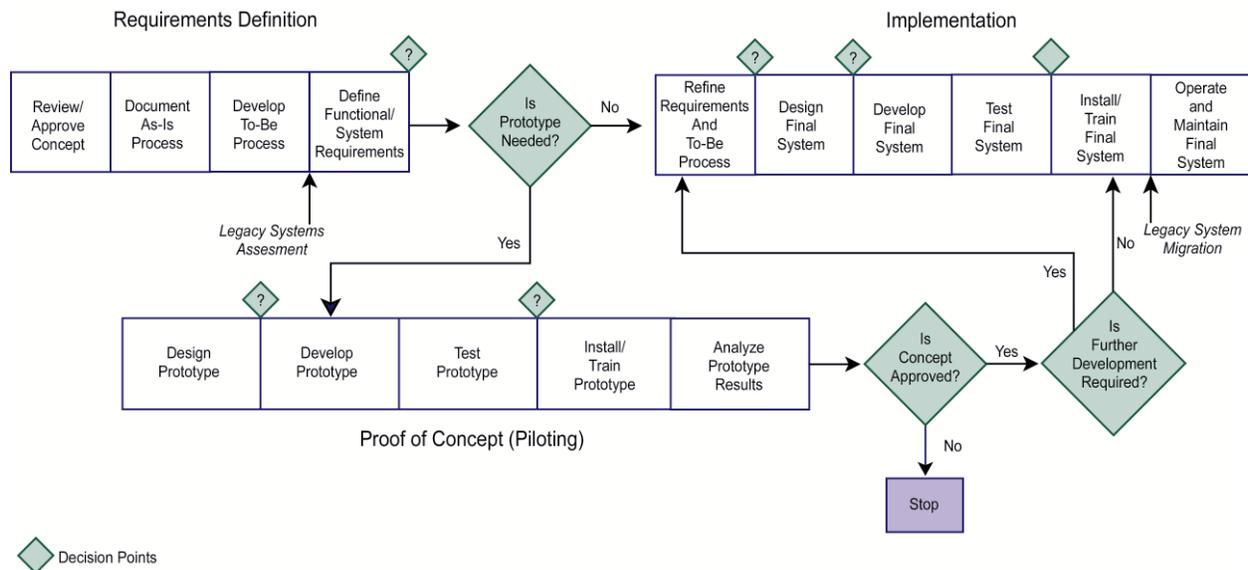
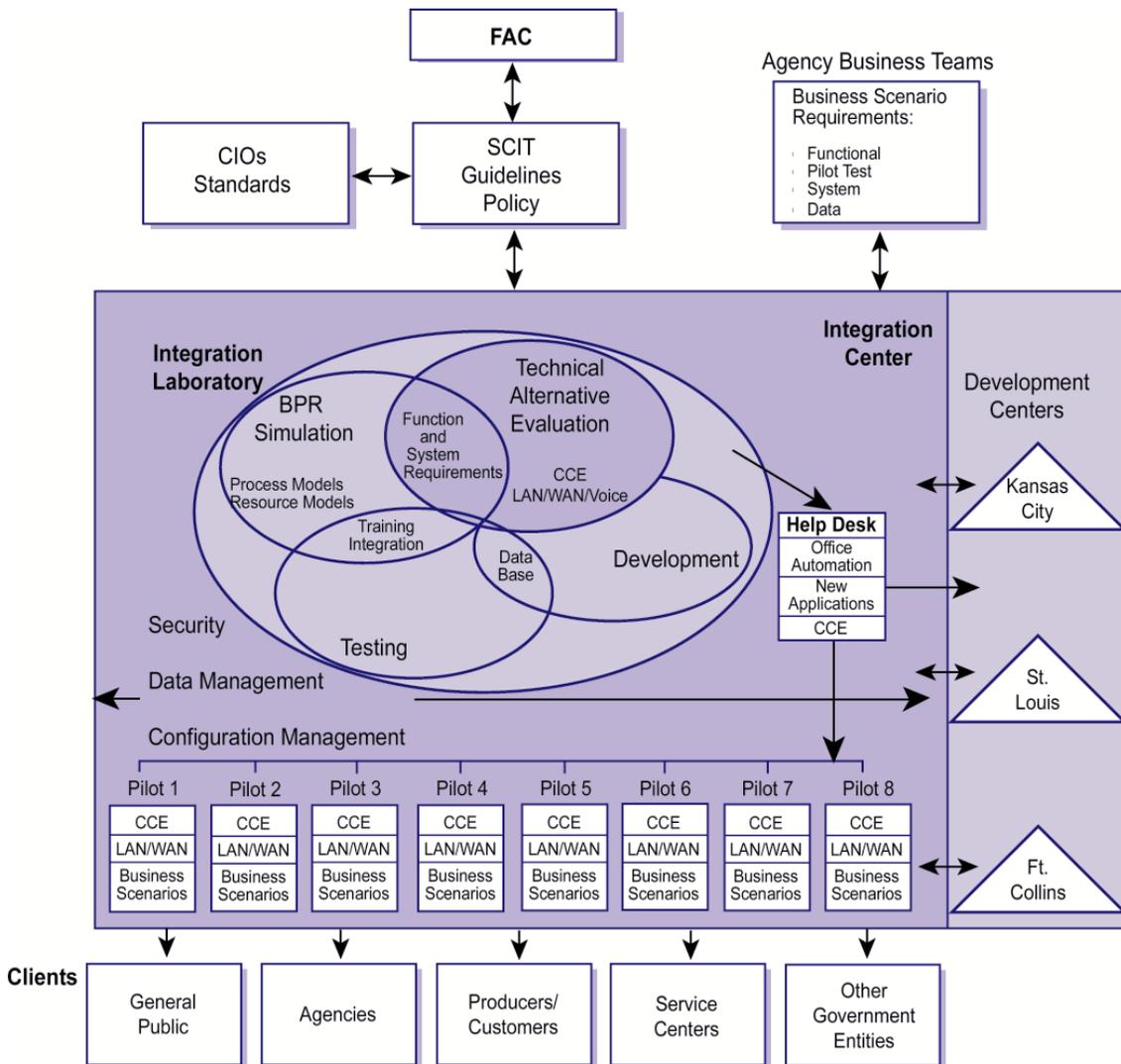


Figure 4.2-1. USDA SCI Project Lifecycle Model

During the requirements definition phase, risk is a key criterion used to determine the nature and extent of prototype testing required to mitigate risk prior to nationwide implementation. Prototype testing addresses both operational and cost risk by providing data to support whether or not the project provides anticipated benefits and process savings at reasonable investment levels. Process steps for implementation ensure that projects are optimized prior to nationwide deployment.

### 4.2.3 Integration Center Process

The key challenge of SCI implementation projects is to ensure the proper integration of business and technical elements so that solutions meet SCI objectives. In an effort to mitigate the operational risk associated with SCI projects, a Business Integration Center was established to provide the necessary framework to ensure projects are properly integrated and fully support Service Center business processes and concepts of operation. **Figure 4.2-2** provides a conceptual view of the Integration Center.

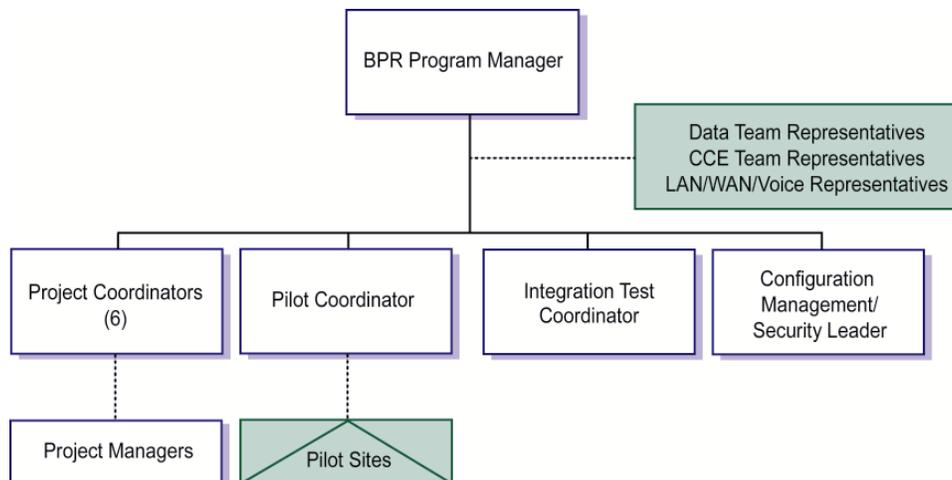


**Figure 4.2-2. Integration Center (Conceptual View)**

The Business Integration Center is an environment where the CCE, Data Management, LAN/WAN/Voice, and BPR Teams work together in a shared space. Primary activities include project definition and development, and testing and evaluation. New business processes are developed and tested with respect to the emerging technical architecture to mitigate developmental risks. The environment ensures that data management, configuration management, and security issues are addressed for each project. In addition, emerging solutions are tested in the Interoperability Lab prior to deployment at pilot test sites.

Each team has Integration Center representatives who focus both on individual project roles, and contribute to the integration process for all IT project elements. The goal is to seamlessly integrate these various efforts so that field implementation is successful.

An Integration Team uses the established project lifecycle process to manage BPR projects at the Business Integration Center. The Integration Team is chaired by the BPR Program Manager, and consists of the CCE Team Leader, LAN/WAN/Voice Team Leader, Service Center Data Team Leader, and the applicable Project Coordinator, Project Sponsor, business representative(s), and specific Project Manager. This team is responsible for determining whether a proposed project can be integrated. If it can be, the team determines the project's integration points. During the project lifecycle, the team reviews the project at the specified integration points. In addition to meeting to consider specific projects, the permanent members of the Integration Team confer weekly so that all Integration Center members will be kept abreast of program developments. The overall organization of the Integration Team is shown in **Figure 4.2-3**.



**Figure 4.2-3. Integration Team Organization**

## 4.2.4 Interoperability Lab Risk Mitigation

### 4.2.4.1 Overview

An Interoperability Lab is located within the Integration Center. It prepares prototype ap-

plications for pilot site Service Centers through testing activities. The test environment recreates a pilot site's technical environment and applications must pass stringent tests before site deployment. The Interoperability Lab provides a mechanism to



integrate business activities across projects, enable business processes through an integrated technical architecture, and minimize the impact of integration on the Service Center sites. The Interoperability Lab achieves these objectives through four major activity areas:

- ▲ Interoperability testing of BPR projects.
- ▲ Interoperability testing of legacy applications.
- ▲ Configuration management and deployment.
- ▲ Security.

Testing in the Interoperability Lab assesses application performance to ensure all requirements are met. Conflict and throughput analyses are conducted to ensure that the application can successfully co-exist with other SCI applications on the CCE test suite and operate properly within the technical architecture. Interoperability testing provides some insurance against stovepipe applications by encouraging an enterprise approach, reuse, and system and data sharing. Testing of early applications has:

- ▲ Coordinated the use of a common customer database for pilot testing projects.
- ▲ Prevented overwriting of system “.dll” files.
- ▲ Forced a common disk and data structure.
- ▲ Increased security on project databases.
- ▲ Reduced impact of piloting on ongoing Service Center activities.

#### 4.2.4.2 Risk Mitigation—Legacy Testing in the Interoperability Lab

A major potential risk area for SCI involves the integration of legacy systems with the CCE. Connectivity of legacy systems is essential to ensure that current applications can be accessed through the CCE and properly integrated into the SCI’s emergent technical architecture. The Interoperability Lab plays a

major role in developing and testing solutions for achieving legacy systems connectivity with the CCE and SCI technical architecture. Legacy connectivity options are currently being tested. Lab personnel are working actively with software vendors to allow access to legacy platforms to reduce the duplication of effort at pilot sites and to assist new applications in sharing and reusing existing data.

An added benefit of legacy testing activities is the elimination of duplicate tools or programs in use across the Service Center agencies. A variety of current network software is being replaced by a single solution for all agency users. The Lab also supports common e-mail implementation at the pilot sites.

#### 4.2.4.3 Testing Methodology

The two primary objectives of legacy application interoperability testing are: (1) find a method to provide access to the legacy systems from the new environment, and (2) test existing applications for their impact on new applications in the CCE environment.

The method used to conduct these tests is similar to that used to test new applications. The main difference is that many existing or legacy applications were designed for a DOS or 16-bit environment, instead of the 32-bit CCE environment. Also, many existing software programs do not operate as “cleanly”—inefficiently using memory, etc.—and should be run in an isolated environment on the new platform. The testing methodology includes the following steps:

- ▲ Establish a clean test environment.
- ▲ Install the application.
- ▲ Analyze the impact of the new application on the environment (using automated tools).
- ▲ Report findings to the requesting party and update the status of approved software.



Pilot sites were asked to identify which legacy applications they would like to run in the new environment. Priorities were requested and a master prioritized list was created. The site is responsible for providing a copy of the software to be tested.

In addition to testing applications, the Lab is also responsible for:

- ▲ Configuration management.
- ▲ Security.
- ▲ Second-tier help desk support.
- ▲ Technical in-house support for users and systems.
- ▲ Technical coordination across projects.

#### 4.2.5 Pilot Testing

Pilot testing provides the opportunity to demonstrate how well a BPR project can work in an operational environment, as opposed to a lab setting. Pilot testing not only provides the vehicle to gather data for the BPR project's Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) and business case, but also is itself a risk mitigation mechanism. Problems can be identified and fixed before national deployment, which is less costly than fixing problems after national deployment has already occurred. Nine Service Centers and five state offices have been selected as pilot sites for SCI activities. This structure allows applications to be tested in several different sites, which increases confidence in results and allows test data to be extrapolated to a broader spectrum of the USDA field structure.

#### 4.2.6 Business Case Process

Each individual project must be justified before USDA commits the resources necessary to complete full development and nationwide deployment. The project business case will be considered as part of project reviews conducted by USDA management. Project re-

views will be performed following pilot testing. The review will decide whether the project should be continued into full development and national deployment, modified, or discontinued. In addition to determining ROI, each project's business case will be used to evaluate project risk and lifecycle costs.

- ▲ Customer Benefits—includes operational savings such as reduced fertilizer costs, time savings applying for program participation, and savings on trips to Service Centers.
- ▲ Process Savings—primarily relating to time savings of Service Center staff resulting from increased operational efficiency.
- ▲ Lifecycle Costs—includes projected cost for personnel, equipment, software, travel, contract services, supplies, and other miscellaneous resources necessary for project development, deployment, operations, and maintenance.
- ▲ Project Risk—the major risks to be addressed involve the dependency of each project on funding, pilot site technology, data, and timely completion of other BPR projects.

The SCI-wide business case, published in 1997, will be updated periodically as necessary based on the number of projects pilot-tested.

#### 4.2.7 Risk Review and Assessment

Beyond the processes discussed thus far, a number of specific procedures have been implemented to ensure that SCI risks are identified as early as possible, prioritized in terms of impact, and mitigated to the maximum extent possible. SCI is identifying risk not only through external "looks" but also through regular management reviews—held weekly for IT projects and monthly for other SCI



projects. A standard agenda item for all management reviews requires Team Leaders to identify risks, estimate the probability of occurrence and potential impact, develop mitigation and contingency plans, and brief management on status and potential solutions. Regular risk reviews allow management time to develop and implement solutions to avoid risks or reduce their impact substantially. The SCI PMO is responsible for monitoring all risk items and tracking follow-up actions to closure.

### 4.3 Management Controls

This subsection describes initiative-wide management processes that have been developed to provide management control for SCI activities. Included are processes for managing schedules, resources, quality, and reporting.

#### 4.3.1 SCI Modernization Plan

The comprehensive Modernization Plan encompasses the entire Service Center Initiative. It describes the current environment, provides the Service Center vision and concept of operations, describes implementation plans, and describes the management strategy for the initiative. In addition to these four main sections and the appendices, it references the full library of SCI documents listed in the Documentation Roadmap, and contains current program and project plans. It is both a living document and a historical reference.

Most SCI historical documents are kept in USDA's PMO (hard copy) and on the shared LANs (electronic form). Many of the documents, strategies, plans, and subordinate plans are posted or will be posted to the SCI web site.

##### 4.3.1.1 Managing the Plan

The comprehensive Modernization Plan is the capstone document for managing the SCI. It

describes the major phases of modernization and the outcomes that will be achieved in each phase. Although some of the appendices and reference documents are historical and static in nature, most require periodic updating to maintain currency. Performance plans, implementation strategies, and the various program and project plans will be updated to reflect the latest status for SCI objectives and schedules.

The SCI goals, objectives, and performance measures outlined in this plan will be used by SCI management and oversight personnel to assess progress toward achieving objectives and to manage the future course of the initiative. Risks, costs, and performance objectives for each major SCI project will be developed and documented. Project results will be measured against specified performance measures at key milestones to reassess risks and compare actual costs and performance with objectives. Performance feedback will be used to adjust future plans, allocate resources, update schedules, and refine management procedures. Project priorities will be adjusted, based on performance results, to provide a maximum return on the Service Center investment.

##### 4.3.1.2 Updating the Plan

Changes to individual project plans and milestone dates are expected to occur throughout the year, and will be formally updated on a monthly basis. Key milestone dates are subject to change as approved by the SCI Program Manager. Because the comprehensive Modernization Plan reflects broad objectives of the SCI, it will be reviewed and formally updated on an annual basis following the close of the Fiscal Year.

##### 4.3.1.3 Performance Measures

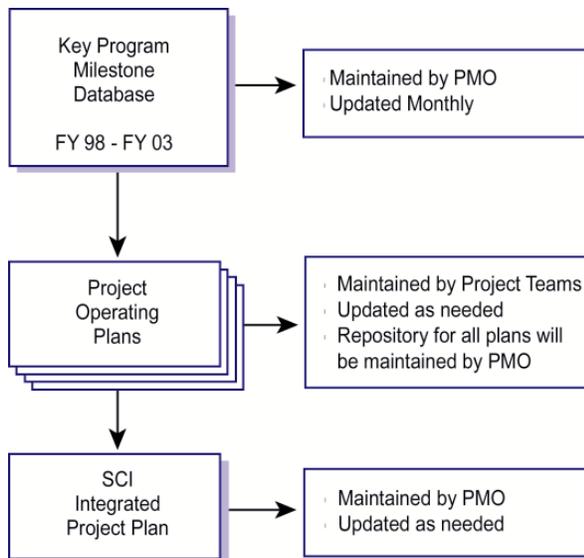
SCI requirements are carefully managed from a program perspective to ensure that all project plans are consistent with the GPRA, the

objectives identified in the Service Center Strategic Plan (referenced in **Appendix L**), and the performance goals identified in the SCI Annual Performance Plan (referenced in **Appendix L**). Implementation plans are developed in response to specific objectives in the Strategic Plan to ensure that only those tasks required to implement strategic objectives are performed.

Performance measures, reflecting an annual increment of the Strategic Plan, are developed for the Annual Performance Plan and are used to assess progress for the SCI Annual Performance Report to OMB and Congress.

### 4.3.2 Project Plans

The SCI planning process has been designed to accommodate the need for SCI schedule data for management and reporting purposes. The current planning process is summarized in **Figure 4.3-1**.



**Figure 4.3-1. Current Planning Process**

A database of key milestones supporting the SCI comprehensive Modernization Plan through fiscal year 2003 has been developed. This database provides a high-level view of the major tasks that will be undertaken in each

modernization phase. It also supports long-term planning needs as well as management and reporting requirements involving the overall progress of the initiative. The database is maintained by PMO and updated monthly based on changes in key milestone dates.

The key milestone database is supported by SCI Team project operating plans, which provide detailed tasks and schedules required for the day-to-day management of project activities. BPR also maintains an integrated project plan for all its activities. These plans are developed, maintained, and updated during the normal course of project operations. Microsoft Project 98 is the project management tool being used by the SCI to track project resources and schedules. Various plans can be linked, filtered, or customized to provide SCI managers with a variety of project data. A repository of these plans is maintained by PMO and updated periodically throughout the year.

An Integrated Program Plan (IPP) for the SCI is also maintained by PMO. It is used to identify and track dependencies between projects, and to understand the critical path to achieve established milestones for the initiative as a whole. The IPP supports near-term management decisions on schedule and resource allocation issues, and highlights schedule risks over the short term. This plan is updated when scheduled dates for critical SCI tasks change.

### 4.3.3 Quality Control

As implementation projects mature, additional SCI processes to manage project quality will be implemented. Deployment of reengineered business processes and applications with enabling IT systems will require attention to the quality of products delivered to the field. This effort will ensure that SCI projects meet applicable quality standards and measures, and results that do not meet quality standards are flagged for management attention and action. Quality management processes will also en-

sure that SCI resources are being invested prudently. Specific performance indicators and guidelines will be developed to assess project quality during each phase of performance. In addition, periodic reviews of project performance will be conducted as milestones are achieved. These reviews will assess the quality of results and determine whether or not the development of corrective actions is required. At a minimum, these reviews will be conducted at major milestone decision points in the project's lifecycle (see **Figure 4.2-1**). Quality performance reports will be prepared to document project results, assess performance across the initiative, and determine where efforts to improve quality should be directed.

Quality management efforts will be oriented primarily toward customer service and the IT elements of the initiative, including the CCE, LAN/WAN/Voice, Data Management, and BPR implementation projects. Implementation of quality management processes will involve the following steps:

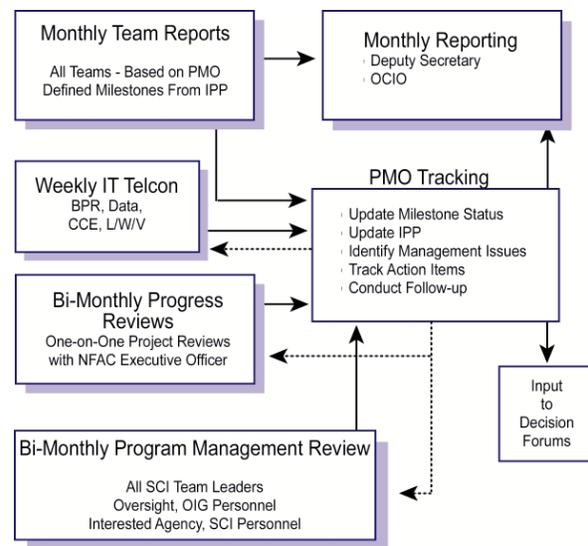
- ▲ Develop and document quality standards and performance indicators for SCI projects tailored to specific SCI implementation objectives.
- ▲ Document standards and performance indicators applicable to each SCI project.
- ▲ Conduct regular reviews of project performance based on established standards and indicators.
- ▲ Report project performance information as part of overall project review and assessment activities.
- ▲ Develop quality assurance procedures to ensure that plans and schedules provide quality management activities.
- ▲ Update performance standards and indicators as required to support future SCI project activities.

SCI quality management processes are scheduled to be developed during the latter half of fiscal year 1999, and implementation is scheduled for early fiscal year 2000. Management requirements for implementing these measures are being examined.

## 4.3.4 Reports and Reviews

### 4.3.4.1 Project Tracking

A customized set of processes to track project status and schedules has been developed for the SCI. Four primary tracking mechanisms, including reports and reviews, are employed to provide management with a variety of project data. These mechanisms are portrayed in **Figure 4.3-2**.



**Figure 4.3-2. Project Tracking Mechanisms**

### 4.3.4.2 Monthly Team Reporting

Team Leaders provide PMO with a monthly report, due the third business day of the following month, that describes project status relative to existing milestone dates. The milestones for reporting are specified for each team by PMO on the basis of the current IPP. Potential schedule delays and their causes are described, along with recommendations to



mitigate or avoid the delays. Monthly reports also include data on personnel and financial status. The financial report is due on the tenth business day of the following month. These monthly reports serve as the primary basis for developing monthly SCI reports for OCIO oversight personnel and USDA management.

#### 4.3.4.3 Management Reviews

To accommodate the rapid progression of IT projects and to provide management with feedback at frequent intervals, a weekly IT teleconference is held for the BPR, LAN/WAN/Voice, CCE, and Data Management Teams. An agenda is prepared in advance so that participants can focus on critical issues, as defined by the Team Leaders and the NFAC Executive Officer.

Every other month, the NFAC Executive Officer meets one-on-one with all Team Leaders to conduct an in-depth review of project status and progress. In preparation, Team Leaders are required to update their detailed project plans, report the current project financial status, and identify and justify new resource requirements. These sessions include PMO representation to ensure that project management personnel are aware of current project status and any issues that must be addressed.

Every other month (when one-on-one reviews are not held), a full Program Management Review is held for all SCI Teams, SCI oversight personnel, and interested USDA partner agency personnel. This forum is designed to provide attendees with a comprehensive review of the status of the initiative as a whole. All Team Leaders present a project briefing that includes:

- ▲ Milestone status over the next six months.
- ▲ Key accomplishments over the past two months.
- ▲ Major plans for the next two months.

- ▲ Financial status.
- ▲ High-risk areas.
- ▲ Issues requiring resolution.

These sessions are designed to disseminate SCI status to interested parties, raise issues of interest across the initiative, and identify issues that require additional management attention. Because it is not a decision forum, follow-up meetings are held to resolve any issues that arise.

The PMO is responsible for arranging and conducting all project reviews and tracking action items. Based on the forums described, PMO updates the status of the milestone database and the IPP, identifies issues and action items that must be tracked, and prepares for necessary follow-up activities.

In addition, the OCIO conducts periodic reviews of SCI projects and utilizes outside contractors to validate key technical aspects of the initiative.

### 4.4 Management Processes

This subsection describes processes that have been developed for management of the SCI. It includes processes for resource management involving personnel, finances, and contracts. It also discusses management processes for SCI acquisitions. Additionally, it addresses processes for administrative management of SCI property, records, and correspondence.

#### BPR Project Prioritization, Approval, and Review

***BPR projects are submitted to and approved by the MRB. The MRB initially approved 17 BPR projects. Subsequent to these initial projects, the MRB approved additional projects that have been brought forth by the SC agencies. Beginning in fiscal year 2000 a more rigorous process was established. Proj-***



*ects are now grouped into Core Business Areas (Lending, Managing Risk, Conservation and Environment, Community Development and Outreach, Administration, and Common Business Processes. Cross-agency sponsors have been established for these core business areas. These sponsors are charged with reengineering the entire business area end-to-end. Based on this end-to-end review and the direction they establish, sponsors select the areas of the business to reengineer in each fiscal year. The priorities established by these core business area sponsors are brought before the MRB for approval in September, for the next fiscal year. Approval is by majority vote of the MRB members present. The MRB uses an established set of criteria to evaluate individual projects. Criteria include benefit to the SC agencies, commitment of agency staff to complete the reengineering, fit with the SC Modernization Plan vision and objectives, etc. Additional projects are brought to the MRB throughout the year. These projects are evaluated and approved by the MRB using the same set of criteria. In addition, OCIO review and approval of BPR projects will be conducted in accordance with established procedures prior to funding and beginning any work.*

*Once projects are approved, BPR project sponsors report progress to the MRB on a quarterly basis. The MRB approves continued funding for projects based on progress reported at the quarterly review. The MRB also makes recommendations on changes to projects during these reviews. Approval or disapproval for continued funding and changes to projects are made by majority vote of the members present.*

#### **4.4.1 Resource Management**

Resource management is critical to the successful management of the SCI. It includes the processes required to successfully manage

personnel, fiduciary responsibilities, and contractor support. The SCI must be able to simultaneously manage these three resources and maintain a balance between them. A more detailed description of SCI resources and how they will be managed is provided in subsequent sections.

##### **4.4.1.1 Personnel Management**

Because the SCI is a multi-agency initiative, which has grown greatly in size and scope over the past year, personnel resources have been assigned by agency, as appropriate, to meet specific needs. Positions have been filled using a combination of assignments, details, and additional duties as assigned. The Executive Officer, Deputy, a Director, and two executive assistants are assigned by their respective agencies to support the activities of the NFAC. The remaining 20+ positions are filled by temporary assignments created by reimbursable agreements, multi-year details, and personnel serving in part-time roles. As a result, tracking and reviewing personnel requirements is an involved process.

Either the Executive Officer or the Deputy evaluates full-time project personnel. All other personnel working more than 25 percent of the time receive inputs to their personnel evaluation based on their SCI performance. The Deputy manages other personnel actions such as approval of time and attendance, leave approval, and awards. The Deputy's Executive Assistant maintains an office personnel file for all those working full-time on the SCI project.

As the size and scope of this effort continues to evolve, personnel will be detailed from the partner agencies to support specific projects. There are two ways staff requirements are filled with detailed personnel. First, the SCI Project Manager creates a position description, and the Executive Officer asks an agency to fill the position. Second, an agency "spon-



sors” a specific project and offers to meet staff year requirements with details from that agency. Generally, when the project is complete, the detailed person will return to work in their respective agency.

#### 4.4.1.2 Financial Management

Financial management is another vital resource management area. It is the arena in which SCI financial requirements are forecast and the budget is determined. The level-of-effort for SCI activities is based on anticipated workload. Currently, SCI is working on the basis of a five-year plan.

In January of each year, SCI re-evaluates the Five-Year Plan and provides the five-year financial plan to USDA’s Information Technology Investment Portfolio System (ITIPS). This document is divided first into the five (after 1999, four) major SCI areas: CCE; Base Data Acquisition (BDA); BPR; LAN/WAN/Voice; and SCI Change Management, Customer Service, and Program Management (SCI CM/CS/PM). The document splits each of the five plan years into Budget Object Class (BOC) and Program Segments, which have associated performance measures.

In June of each year, SCI uses the first program year segment from the Five-Year Plan as the basis to develop the President’s Budget (PRESBUD). PRESBUD is structured using the format provided by the Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA), and coordinated with the SSB. Draft copies of Explanatory Notes, a Performance Plan, and an Information Technology Procurement Plan are also developed to support the budget. Current Departmental waivers are examined to determine whether new waivers need to be developed for the new budget year. PRESBUD is submitted to OBPA in July, with a draft of the explanatory notes and performance plan. After OBPA submits those plans to OMB in the early fall,

comments and recommended changes are generally received by late November each year. Changes are then coordinated and the budget is resubmitted through OBPA to OMB.

After the budget is presented to Congress and the appropriation bill is passed, the precise funding amount for the year is determined. The Capital Investment Plan is then updated and submitted to OPBA. Based on the appropriation, the Annual Performance Plan is adjusted to reflect the actual amount allocated to the SCI. The IT Procurement Plan is then updated to reflect the appropriation. Finally, the plan is submitted through the SSB to OCIO and OMB for approval.

The Executive Officer has delegated the authority to obligate funds to the Project Leaders of CCE, BDA, and BPR. These organizations receive an allocation in the beginning of the year, and are required to submit regular financial reports to the SCI Budget Officer. Monthly financial reports are submitted to the Executive Officer and OCIO in accordance with SCI procedures and TA/Waiver Authority given by the CIO. These monthly financial reports are used to compare actual expenditures against allocations. This information provides the basis to track end-of-year spending and performance. In addition, the following year’s objectives can be modified based on the ability to meet goals and/or performance measures for the year. For example, if the SCI is unable to implement all hardware purchased during the fiscal year, and they had projected that they would, then they may need to increase the workforce to meet the deadline, or they may decide to shift the remaining implementation to the following fiscal year. Each alternative will impact the financial management of the effort; thus, it needs to be documented.



At the end of the year, the SCI Budget Officer prepares the annual Financial Close Out report. Performance results also are analyzed for all SCI projects. An Annual Performance Report is prepared and submitted to OBPA in accordance with the fiscal year Financial Closeout Memorandum of Instruction (MOI), generally by October 15th.

#### 4.4.1.3 Contract Management

Given the special business and technical needs of the SCI, contractor support is required for many aspects of the initiative. The SCI strives to use existing government procurement vehicles to include Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPA) to provide the best use of funds. To minimize the management effort, the SCI is downsizing the management of contractor support to one tier. The SCI will have one contractor as a central point of contact for all contractor support. The Budget Officer will track each contract's expenditure of funds and deliverables to ensure the contractor is meeting all obligations within budget restrictions.

### 4.4.2 Acquisition Management

#### 4.4.2.1 TA and Waiver Process

The USDA IT Moratorium policy places a restriction on IT procurements, to include hardware, software, and services. The moratorium requires that no funds be made available to acquire new information technology systems or significant upgrades without approval of OCIO. The USDA moratorium was codified in Fiscal Year 1998 Public Law (P.L. 105-86). All acquisitions \$25,000 or more require the

submission of a waiver, which must be approved by OCIO, with concurrence from the Executive Information Technology Investment Review Board (EITIRB).

The moratorium applies to all IT acquisitions over \$25,000, including orders against existing contracts and GSA Schedules, except for:

- ▲ Renewals of existing contracts for mission-critical maintenance and leases, if optional enhancements and/or upgrades that cost more than \$25,000 are not involved.
- ▲ IT acquisitions by organizations other than USDA agencies that are funded by USDA grants.

If the procurement is telecommunications-related and is not covered under the LAN/WAN/Voice waiver, the organization must obtain a waiver regardless of cost.

The OCIO must approve waivers, and the EITIRB must approve acquisition program funding before waiver submission. Waivers from Service Center agencies must be submitted to the Department CIO from the Agency Administrator for each Service Center agency, and must include documentation that the waiver was approved through the Clearinghouse review process. Waiver requests, on average, take approximately 5 months to complete. The minimum time expected is one to three months, with a maximum of eight months. The current waiver approval process is depicted in **Figure 4.4-1**.

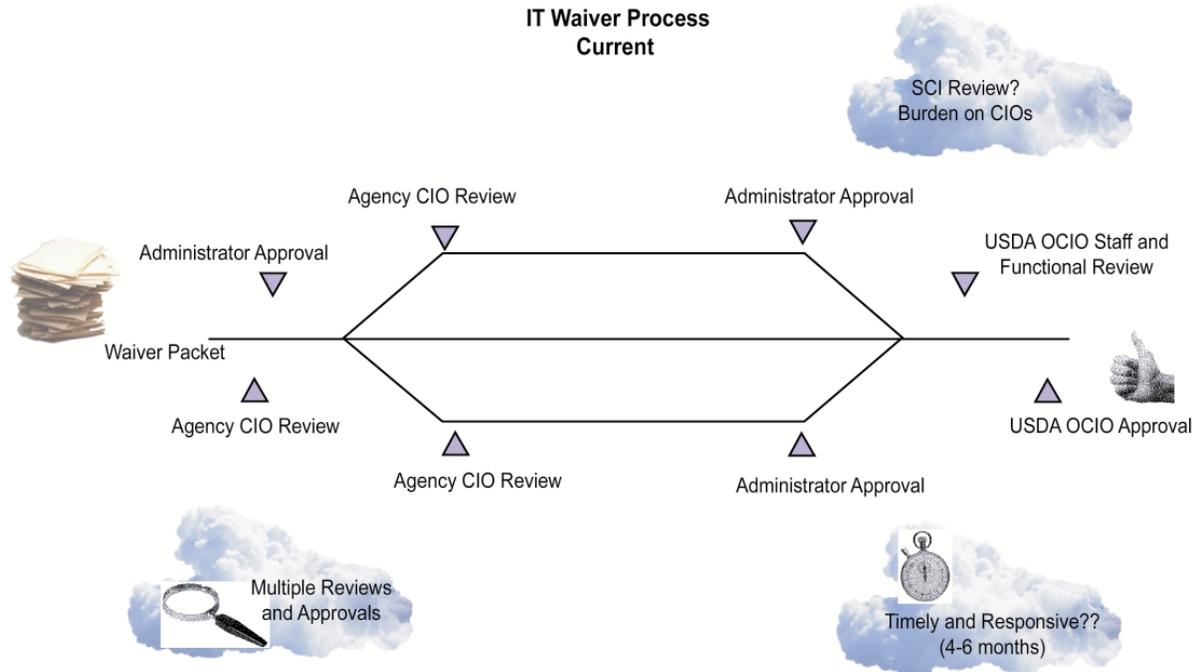


Figure 4.4-1. IT Waiver Process (Current)

Development and approval of information technology waivers must meet numerous requirements to ensure that procurements meet the Department’s strategic objectives. The process steps include not only the development of a detailed waiver packet, but also numerous reviews and approvals before submission to the Department OCIO. The process includes reviews and approvals by all Service Center agency CIOs and Administrators. Additionally, the OCIO ensures waivers are reviewed regarding Year 2000 (Y2K), functional, and CCE issues as appropriate.

The OCIO is currently revising the waiver procedure for the partner agencies. This revision incorporates new processes that will ensure close control of proposed projects and will reduce the time necessary to obtain approvals. The revised process formally incorporates a review by the Business Integration Center (Business, Data, and Technology) to ensure that IT initiatives are integrated with

ongoing Service Center objectives. Additionally, the revised process is streamlined—it reduces duplicate oversight and reviews, and eliminates the requirement for multiple-agency reviews and approvals. However, it still supports continued collaboration across agencies—agency CIOs are offered the opportunity to participate during the Business Integration Center review period.

As mentioned, the revised waiver process is intended to streamline current processes. Questions concerning the integration and compliance with business, technical, and data architectures will be answered in the Business Integration Center review and recommendation process, as outlined previously. These improvements will greatly reduce the remaining USDA enterprise issues that require OCIO review.



#### 4.4.2.2 Acquisition Strategy

An acquisition strategy for the SCI IT infrastructure is essential to managing the costs and schedule of future deployment activities.

There is tremendous potential to reduce costs and mitigate schedule risk through development of an appropriate SCI acquisition strategy.

As demonstrated through the acquisition of Year 2000 replacement workstations, national acquisitions of CCE components can realize significant cost savings through volume discounts that would not be achieved through individual agency procurements. Current plans call for all CCE acquisitions to be implemented through this national approach. National management of the acquisition and implementation process has proven to be effective in meeting the needs of Service Center agencies. At the same time, specialized and localized needs will continue to require a flexible approach. Individual agency or local acquisitions will have to be accommodated within guidelines established by the CCE project.

The CCE project is evaluating alternative acquisition strategies to determine the most expedient and economical source for CCE components. The intent is to determine requirements and find existing contract vehicles that support those needs. This will eliminate the need for a lengthy Request for Proposal (RFP) process, which typically results in the acquisition of technology that no longer meets business requirements. With technology and business needs changing so quickly, a very flexible acquisition approach is needed, so that adjustments can be made easily.

The CCE Team also is investigating new Seat Management contracts that have been established by other government agencies. Initial information suggests that this approach may

address Service Center agency concerns related to accomplishing the IT support workload with reduced staffing, as well as how to refresh technology in a timely manner without significant capital investments. This approach could allow more time for the reduced government IT staff to work on business area applications, not to fix printers and keyboards.

Leasing also is an option being evaluated by the CCE project team as an alternative to purchasing technology components. When it is cost effective, leasing is an attractive option for acquiring equipment and software that is generally expected to have a lower return on investment than purchasing. In addition, leasing allows the adoption and implementation of components that change rapidly and that would require continued significant investments to maintain. In combination with Seat Management, this approach avoids current Service Center agency obstacles—namely, keeping up with technology developments and leveraging capital investment funding.

Following definition of the CCE technical architecture in the summer of 1999, an acquisition strategy will be developed to mitigate the costs and risks inherent in the CCE large-scale IT acquisition. Manageable deployment increments will be developed, with cost justifications and performance measures documented for each increment. These steps will provide the necessary framework to manage IT deployments in support of the SCI.

#### 4.4.3 Administrative Management

The management of the day-to-day operational activities of the program is supported by three main areas: property, records, and correspondence. These areas allow the successful tracking of SCI activities and property.



#### 4.4.3.1 Property Management

All equipment issued for field use will be controlled by the agency receiving the equipment. That agency will use their established agency procedures to ensure government control and accountability.

Accountability of equipment bought by a SCI team to be issued in the future, is the responsibility of the Project Leader. The Project Leader must establish adequate measures to control the equipment until it is transferred to a field agency.

Equipment used by members of the SCI comes from a combination of the partnership agencies and direct acquisition by the project. The SCI Budget Officer is responsible for all property accountability within SCI. He will maintain the overall property book, direct inventories, and issue sub-hand receipts to the appropriate Project Leader. All procurement requests will be handled through the Budget Office.

#### 4.4.3.2 Records Management

The Deputy Executive Officer maintains official SCI files. Each team is responsible for sending a copy of all project documents to the Deputy's office for inclusion in the file. A standard file list is used to classify the document into a specific folder. This system complies with all departmental instructions.

#### 4.4.3.3 Correspondence Management

All correspondence received by SCI teams will be logged into the SCI Correspondence Tracking System. An action officer will be assigned and a suspense date established.

The Deputy will receive weekly suspense reports to supervise timely responses. If the suspense cannot be met, the action officer will coordinate with the Deputy's office to arrange an extension of the suspense, when possible. The Office of the Deputy Executive Officer will track the correspondence until it is signed, sent, and filed.

Generally, the Executive Officer signs all correspondence external from the SCI. There are specific cases in which the Executive Officer will delegate signature authority.

### 4.5 SCI Communication Plan

An SCI Communications Plan has been developed to provide pertinent SCI information to all stakeholders in a consistent manner. The messages convey SCI goals; implementing strategies; the status of the initiative; benefits to the producers, employees, and taxpayers; and future plans for the SCI. **Figure 4.5-1** provides a summary of the major stakeholders and the primary communications media for each.



Stakeholder	Communications Media
Congress	Annual Report President's Budget Submit Periodic briefs to professional staff members Annual Outreach Report Formal responses to Q&As
OMB/GAO	SCI Strategic Plan Annual Report Annual Performance Report Quarterly Reports Periodic Staff briefs
USDA Leaders	Annual Report Input to Secretary's Briefing book (annually with updates) Quarterly DSA report and briefing Quarterly EITIRB update/brief Quarterly Executive Policy Council Monthly progress report to DSA and OCIO Web sites Annual Outreach Report Service Center Bi-monthly newsletter
State Leaders/SLC	Annual Report Quarterly progress reports Service Center Bi-monthly newsletter Web sites Annual meeting of State Leaders Annual Outreach Report
Service Center Employees	Web sites Service Center Bi-monthly newsletter Service Center Brochure and Publications
Partners/UCC/ACC	Monthly Service Center Report by Partnership Team Quarterly Meetings with ACC/UCC
Service Center Customers	Web site Annual Report to Customers Brochures at Service Centers, malls Newspaper articles

Figure 4.5-1. Available Communications Media

## 4.6 Training

Critical to the success of a major BPR initiative, such as the SCI, is management's ability to communicate its message to employees. Generally, this is accomplished through training, supported by other vehicles, such as reports, briefings, and newsletters. One of SCI's key responsibilities is communicating

both the new way to conduct business in the Service Centers and the use of new computer tools that will be disseminated.

As the SCI continues to mature, a comprehensive training strategy must be developed for all SCI training requirements. Work on this strategy has recently begun, and the results are schedule to be published in the second quarter



of fiscal year 2000. This large and complex training effort will direct and coordinate dedicated resources to sculpting and deploying a coherent and consistent message. Oversight by an executive sponsor group consisting of the partner agency directors of training is being established.

Current Service Center staff training plans, being formulated by the BPR teams, include:

- ▲ Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) computer-based training (CBT) packages on standard office automation software will be provided to recipients of 30,000 new computers by the CCE project.
- ▲ The GIS Team is recommending that GIS training materials be transferred to the states for delivering classroom training to 25,000+ users. The state offices will be given a COTS CBT package and book for the “terms and concepts” training; an updated version of the pilot training materials for instructor-led software training; and training for their designated trainers. Each individual state will determine how to use these materials to best train their Service Center staff.

The overall training strategy will ensure that all training efforts, pilot testing and national deployment, are consistent, efficient, and replicable for all users. This strategy will identify requirements on a comprehensive basis, explore alternative training approaches and media, and identify standards for classroom and computer-based training materials. It will provide a Master Training Plan that is applicable to all SCI training needs. It also will provide the basis to make future training efforts more efficient, economical, and effective.

Initially, the training strategy will identify cross-training needs for each of the Partner Agencies involved in the Service Centers.

This does not include training needed as a result of BPR activities. Interviews will be held with key USDA Service Center personnel to identify their current knowledge/skills/abilities (KSAs). The data collected during this process will be compared to the KSAs required in the reengineered environment. Upon completion of the comparison, the training strategy will identify cross-training needs, as well as the magnitude of effort required to implement the training plan.

In summary, the strategy will address the Service Center training requirements, BPR initiative training requirements, the design (including media selection) and development of training, software deployment and training delivery logistics, an evaluation plan, and a maintenance plan. It will include the following information:

- ▲ Findings from the cross-training needs analysis.
- ▲ Evaluation of media options and recommendations for appropriate solutions based on the USDA environment.
- ▲ Standards for all training and user support materials.
- ▲ Standardized evaluation forms.
- ▲ A baseline master schedule for training delivery through 2007.
- ▲ A realistic software deployment schedule.
- ▲ Training standards, consistency, and objectives.

The plan also will consider the following:

- ▲ An excessive training burden is not placed on Service Center staff.
- ▲ Real cost savings and other benefits.
- ▲ Contingencies for changes to the system, application, or deployment schedules.
- ▲ Consulting with state offices on deployment and delivery options and staffing needs.



The Training Strategy Plan will be a working document. Updates will be conducted as needed based on changes in BPR schedules and new BPR requirements.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This management strategy will provide the basis for all SCI management activities. It addresses the SCI organization, risk management approach, management controls and processes, and the strategies for SCI communications and training.

The organizational structure accommodates the wide scope of implementation activities and management functions that must be executed. The approach to risk management complies with all laws and regulations applicable to an IT initiative of this magnitude, and will ensure that potential risks are properly man-

aged. Management control processes have been implemented to ensure sound management of SCI plans, schedules, resources, and quality results. Detailed processes also have been developed and implemented to manage SCI resources, acquisitions, and administrative matters. Communications and training plans are being implemented and will be updated to support successful implementation of the initiative.

The current strategy and management processes will be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure they are effective in supporting SCI management objectives. Adjustments to existing procedures will be implemented whenever required. A formal review and revision of this strategy will be conducted on an annual basis, when the plan is updated.