

A Report by a Panel of the

**NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

for the Field Directorate of the Bureau of the Census

JULY 2002

**THE FIELD DIRECTORATE
OF THE
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS**



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FOREWORD

With Census 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau completed its most thorough count of the nation's population and began looking ahead for new methods or management initiatives to improve its operations. As part of its ongoing efforts, the Bureau's Field Directorate asked the National Academy of Public Administration for assistance.

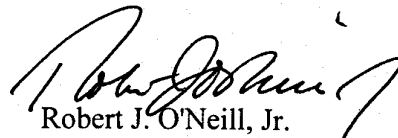
Perhaps the most critical management challenge facing the Directorate is its ability to absorb the increased workload associated with the planned nationwide implementation of the American Community Survey (ACS) in 2003. In addition to this immediate challenge, the Directorate also faces increasing data collection costs due to demographic, attitudinal, and economic changes in the U.S. population; ongoing technological changes affecting data collection and dissemination; continued budgetary pressures; and an impending "brain drain" as its experienced workers and managers approach retirement.

Although most federal agencies will experience a similar retirement wave, its impact on the Field Directorate could be more severe. Few other agencies are as production-oriented, and the Directorate's experienced work force has relied as much on relationships as work processes to meet past data collection and dissemination objectives. It may no longer have this luxury.

The Census Bureau's presidentially mandated restructuring efforts have begun to address succession planning issues. Consequently, the Field Directorate must move quickly to identify and place individuals who can succeed existing managers. Selecting a Field Division Chief, after a five-year vacancy, is an excellent first step in that process.

The Panel recognizes that many of these management challenges are not new, but they appear to be intensifying and clearly complicate the critical challenge of ACS implementation. In this report, the Panel offers high priority recommendations to clarify the roles of the regions and the new Field Division Chief; enhance the analytic capacity of Field Directorate headquarters and regional offices; and improve existing management processes to provide a greater role for the regions. Taking these actions will increase the Directorate's ability to meet its many challenges and will be consistent with the President Management Agenda's renewed emphasis on restructuring and streamlining federal government operations.

I want to thank the Academy Panel that directed and guided this study for its insights and expertise. Also, I extend my appreciation to the project team for its hard work, and to the Census officials for their excellent cooperation.



Robert J. O'Neill, Jr.
President

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Field Directorate is the Census Bureau's principal operating arm, responsible for the collection and dissemination of data for decennial censuses and for a wide variety of surveys conducted during decennial and intercensal years (i.e., those years between decennial censuses). The Census Bureau conducts non-decennial surveys using its own funds and those received on a reimbursable basis, primarily for other federal agencies. These economic and demographic surveys are a major source of work and funding for the Bureau and the Field Directorate during intercensal years. Presently, the largest and most visible one is the Current Population Survey, a monthly demographic survey of about 70,000 households, conducted for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To review and improve operations, the Field Directorate periodically conducts a self-assessment of its activities. The Field Directorate asked the Academy to assist its internal self-assessment efforts by independently reviewing three broad areas:

- the mission and organization of the Field Directorate
- the adequacy of management systems and business practices in establishing accountability and helping fulfill Field Directorate missions
- the effectiveness and efficiency of the Field Directorate's operations and performance, including use of feedback and performance measures

The study included the Directorate's headquarters and regional functions, but did not include the National Processing Center or operations related to the decennial census.

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Census Bureau is initiating a new survey that will increase its workload and management challenges. The American Community Survey (ACS) will sample 3 million households annually when fully implemented nationwide in 2003. The Bureau plans to replace the decennial census long form (completed by one in six decennial households) with the ACS.

The Bureau is testing ACS in 1,239 counties, a massive planning and testing effort for a number of program divisions, and all three major divisions within the Field Directorate—the National Processing Center, the Technologies Management Office, and the Field Division. For the Field Division's regional offices (ROs), there are major logistical efforts underway to hire and train as many as 40 percent more field interviewers by January 2003. This increase in the RO interviewer workforce is only one effect, albeit the most direct and obvious, that ACS is likely to have on the Directorate. The Academy believes that ACS will create new demands on and pose significant challenges for management and leadership throughout the Directorate.

BUILDING ON CURRENT STRENGTHS

The Field Directorate, particularly its regional staff, is broadly recognized as a critical core competency throughout the Census Bureau. Top management at the Bureau values highly the regions' "can do" approach to data collection and recognizes how much that approach contributed to the success of the recently completed 2000 census. The Academy's review affirmed these Directorate strengths, but also revealed emerging management challenges that will require strong Directorate leadership supported by an effective organizational structure and management systems to continue providing quality data at the right time for the best value. These challenges emanate from continued demographic, attitudinal, and economic changes in the U.S population, ongoing technological changes affecting data collection and dissemination, an aging Bureau workforce, increasing budgetary pressures, and the impending extension of the ACS nationwide.

The Academy Panel believes the Directorate can build on its strengths to respond to these expected challenges by:

- establishing a better-aligned and fully integrated organization
- enhancing its capacity to look to the future
- extending and strengthening current management systems and processes

The above themes emerged throughout the Academy's review of Directorate operations, which involved examining:

- leadership and management
- operations and procedures
- preparation for the future
- structure and administration

In each of these four areas, the Panel recommends ways to help the Directorate better align and fully integrate its current organizational structure, enhance its planning and ability to address future issues, and strengthen existing management processes and systems. The Panel believes that the Field Directorate must better position itself to handle the management challenges posed by ACS. Consequently, the Panel's recommendations aim to enhance the Directorate's ability to respond to these imminent ACS challenges, as well as others expected in the future.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The Academy Panel has carefully examined a number of Field Directorate leadership and management issues related to the role of the regions, the Field Division Chief (FDC), the amount of flexibility provided regional directors, and the need for effective regional input and feedback on various policy and budget issues.

There is no formal statement pertaining to the role of the regions and their related responsibilities, but there are some common understandings, such as collecting data and building

the infrastructure for each decennial census. There are strongly held and very different views, however, about regional roles that extend “beyond” data collection. These views range from greater involvement in policy and operational decisions to simply responding to direction from headquarters program divisions. The Panel believes that the Census Bureau would benefit from specific discussion of the RO role and communicating the extent to which the role goes beyond data collection.

The FDC is an important position in managing the activities of the Field Division. That position was vacant from 1996 until Spring 2002, even though it is crucial to overseeing the administrative and operational aspects of current survey work and the 12 Regional Directors (RDs). A new FDC was appointed in April 2002 and has the dual role of managing the Field Division’s headquarters operations and directing the RDs. The Panel believes the FDC should operate as a bridge between headquarters and field staff, facilitating two-way communication, not as a filter, screening information flow to control the resolution of operational issues affecting all regional offices.

Although headquarters establishes survey performance standards, sample designs and overall survey budgets, the RDs have the flexibility to operate quite independently in managing their offices within those boundaries. This flexibility can be advantageous when it leads to successful experimentation, such as the varied approaches to developing and using partnership organizations during Census 2000. Conversely, it can be detrimental if it encourages circumvention of Directorate lines of authority or results in inconsistent or conflicting operations. The Panel does not want to discourage creativity in seeking flexible operational solutions; however, it believes it is important to establish and maintain consistent policies and performance standards.

In addition to establishing an appropriate balance between flexible and consistent regional operations, the Directorate also needs to ensure that valuable regional input is available in a timely manner on decisions affecting regional policy and operations. The Panel has several recommendations for helping the new FDC become an effective bridge between the regions and headquarters staff in the Directorate and the rest of the Bureau.

To strengthen and improve management and leadership, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

- **issue a policy statement clarifying that the regions have a role in such areas as community relationships—the partnership function—and data dissemination.**
- **issue a policy statement that defines how the new Field Division Chief would:**
 - **oversee and coordinate regional offices,**
 - **provide leadership to determine and implement policy,**
 - **take the lead on coordinating challenges and proposed solutions to ensure that change takes place when it is needed,**
 - **identify those who must take action and clearly define the actions for issues beyond Field Directorate resolution, and**

- **represent the regions in planning, policy, and operational decisions within and outside the Directorate.**
- **build on the Directorate’s approach to sharing best practices so that practices deemed preeminent may become the basis for achieving greater success in other regions.**
- **issue a policy statement with guidelines to identify areas in which Regional Directors can be expected to operate primarily independently and those in which they should look to the Field Directorate for guidance.**
- **take the initiative in providing more Regional Director input into a range of Census Bureau processes or decisions, with the Field Division Chief leading the effort to bring Regional Director perspectives to all relevant headquarters issues.**
- **work with program divisions to create regular opportunities for some or all of the Regional Directors to meet with program staff. One option would be adding time to meetings or scheduling sessions with small groups of Regional Directors when they are in town for other matters. Another option would be to schedule a formal “Austin-like” retreat at least once annually.**
- **ensure that Regional Directors are placed on Bureau electronic e-mail lists, thus giving them information at the same time as the Directorate rather than receiving nearly all communication through the Field Directorate. This would enhance the Regional Directors’ sense of participation in the Bureau’s management team.**
- **explore using the Bureau Intranet as a place to post information, draft policy statements, and ask questions, so that Regional Directors and their senior staff could provide feedback as the Directorate or program divisions make decisions that will affect the regions.**

Defining and communicating the roles of the RDs and the new FDC will better align the organizations within the Directorate and should improve communications among Directorate organizations and between the Directorate and the rest of the Bureau. Ensuring RD’s have access to and participate in those management decision processes affecting their operations will enhance the Directorate’s role in those policy deliberations.

OPERATIONS AND PROCESSES

The Academy examined a range of operational and process issues pertaining to the development of individual survey budgets, and the need for overall regional budgets, capital replacement plans, and technology enhancements.

The operational area where more regional input would be most beneficial is in the development of individual survey budgets. The Demographic Surveys Division develops these budgets using operational survey cost estimates provided by the Field Division's Surveys Office. These estimates are based on historical cost models, with little review or direct input from the regions. The Academy Panel believes ROs need to develop their own operational cost estimates to help validate the historical cost models. This is especially important when new surveys are introduced, such as ACS. Here, regional validation is essential to ensure that cost estimates are realistic and reliable.

On a related budget matter, the regions do not develop an aggregate RO budget. Headquarters staff allocate resources to the regions on an individual survey basis, and current financial and program performance monitoring systems are designed to track individual survey costs and progress. The Panel believes that the development and periodic review of consolidated RO budgets would provide the Field Directorate and the Census Bureau with valuable information for evaluating the overall budgetary performance of each region.

On a more narrow budget-related matter, the Technologies Management Office (TMO) currently develops laptop replacement plans using a four-year cycle. This represents a good start toward a consistent, financially sound replacement planning process, but needs to be extended to all capital assets. Developing appropriate capital costs for the purpose of including them in the operational costs assessed survey sponsors would be consistent with proposals contained in the *Budget Cost and Performance Integration Act of 2002*, a legislative proposal accompanying the President's 2003 budget.

Finally, the Bureau and the Directorate have employed new technology in a number of areas to improve data collection activities and better manage collection costs. These actions are all commendable, but more effective use of the Bureau's Intranet and more complete access to its e-mail system could further improve communications and information sharing within the Field Directorate.

To strengthen existing management systems and processes, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

- **develop a formal review process to obtain regional office input and feedback on operational costs and workload assumptions early on, when the Field Division and the program divisions begin to develop survey budgets.**
- **require the regional offices to develop regional cost estimates for future surveys, and review these estimates with the Field Division headquarters staff when preparing the Field Division's survey cost estimates for the Demographic Survey Division starting in Fiscal Year 2004.**
- **restructure current regional office staffing to include a position performing a range of analytical functions in support of regional operations and performance evaluations needs, including the development and review of specific regional survey costs.**

- **establish a centrally managed equipment replacement policy and require that survey reimbursements bear their share of replacement costs.**
- **develop proposals that would allow the Census Bureau to provide Bureau e-mail system access to field representatives and senior field representatives, and more effectively use the Bureau's Intranet as a better source of information for communicating priority messages.**

In addition, the Panel recommends that the Census Bureau's Office of Budget staff:

- **develop consolidated regional office budgets and provide periodic analyses of spending relative to approved budgets for review by the Regional Directors, the Field Division Chief, the Associate Director for Field Operations, and the Bureau's CFO.**

These recommendations should strengthen existing management systems by securing more effective RO participation and encouraging more immediate and direct feedback among all Field Directorate organizations. They should also enhance the Directorate's ability to look to the future.

PREPARING FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Adequately preparing for the future has become increasingly important with the introduction of ACS. The Census Bureau will need good plans and performance measures as well as staff and leaders who are equipped to meet the challenges they will face.

The increasing importance of ACS to the Bureau's and Field Directorate's operations reinforces the need for increased RO involvement in the Bureau's strategic planning processes. Currently, the ROs have little direct involvement in the Bureau's strategic planning process; Field Directorate headquarters staff address field issues and concerns. However, the Academy Panel believes this will no longer be sufficient for developing feasible plans and realistic performance measures for ACS and other programs dependent upon RO assistance.

With respect to the workforce, while the Bureau has a cadre of experienced staff, significant turnover is expected in the next five years as staff retire. This will increase the need for effective career development training and succession planning to ensure new leadership is available and has the needed skills. The Bureau's discussion of workforce planning in its *Restructuring Plan* relates its mission to human capital needs, but only on an aggregate level. The Directorate needs to apply these aggregate principles to its own workforce and its unique career development, training, and succession planning needs.

Many Bureau staff believe that the partnership programs used during the 2000 census were effective in meeting a number of challenges presented by the decennial census. The Bureau plans to retain a reduced partnership program during the intercensal years. The Panel believes an

effective regional partnership program could help address some of the challenges expected from the expansion of ACS nationwide and the increasingly difficult conditions facing RO data-gathering activities. The Directorate could use some of the enhanced analytical capability recommended by the Panel to evaluate the impact of partnership programs on response rates and other survey performance measures. The Directorate also needs to analyze the alternatives for managing expected ACS workload increases within available resources.

To increase its capacity to deal with future management challenges, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

- **lead the effort to develop a Directorate strategic planning process that produces operational action plans, with a feedback loop containing performance measures that relates activities to goals.**
- **designate the Field Division Chief as the focal point for providing regional input to the Census Bureau's strategic planning process, and establish a means to make Regional Directors partners in the Bureau strategic planning process.**
- **develop a coordinated approach to workforce planning throughout the Directorate, building on Bureauwide competency assessments and the *Restructuring Plan*.**
- **develop training priorities for the Field Directorate as a whole, with substantial input from the Field Division Chief and Regional Directors.**
- **develop individual development plans for staff so that the Directorate has better information on the skills that staff need to develop for their work and career advancement and whether the training provided matches staff needs and aspirations.**
- **initiate an aggressive strategy to define resource needs for nonsurvey training for Field Directorate staff, and present these spending requests to the Principal Associate Director/Chief Financial Officer.**
- **initiate a succession planning effort to identify and train staff so they have the technical and management leadership skills that the Directorate needs as the expected large proportion of staff begin to retire.**

The Panel recommends that the Principal Associate Director/Chief Financial Officer:

- **work within the Census Bureau to ensure equitable funding for Field Directorate staff development training drawn from working capital funds, and earmark a portion of these funds for regional office staff training.**

The Panel also recommends that the Field Directorate:

- **study lessons learned from the American Community Survey testing conducted to date to determine the potential impact of full American Community Survey implementation on Field Directorate, especially regional, operations.**
- **assess regional office resource levels (such as budget, staffing, travel funds, and administrative support) needed for the increased American Community Survey workload. Be prepared to respond before full implementation to ensure that the regional offices have adequate resources, especially supervisory staff, to oversee the growth in the number of interviewers.**
- **determine the appropriate staff and funding levels for the vital partnership function. As a part of this determination, seek input from the Regional Directors on additional work likely needed to secure the appropriate response rate and the level of resources essential for an adequate partnership effort given full American Community Survey implementation.**
- **examine, or ask another Census Bureau Directorate to examine, the correlation between specific amounts of outreach and response rates for the American Community Survey and other surveys.**

The management challenges facing the Directorate force it to strengthen its forward-looking capacity. This includes strengthening strategic and workforce planning, and securing more RO involvement in Directorate planning and budgeting activities. These Panel recommendations should help the Directorate develop effective strategic and workforce planning processes that will address its internal training, evaluation, and planning needs and enhance its ability to effect similar Bureauwide needs.

FIELD DIRECTORATE STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION

While this study was underway, the Associate Director for Field Operations asked the Panel to review the Field Directorate organizational structure and consider some alternatives that would help it more efficiently fulfill its missions and be responsive to the *President's Management Agenda*. His specific questions were:

- Should an administrative organization be included within or outside Field Division Headquarters?
- Should the Partnership and Data Service Program branch at headquarters remain independent of Field Division Headquarters, be merged into the Field Division Headquarters organization, or be merged into another headquarters organization?
- Should the Field Training and Career Development Office (FTCDO) at headquarters remain independent, be merged with the Field Division Headquarters organization, or be merged into another headquarters organization?
- Should the “research arm” of Field Division Headquarters remain a part of the Field Division Headquarters organization, be established as an independent organization, or be merged into another headquarters organization?

- Since the Field Division is by far its largest customer, should the TMO remain as a separate division or be merged into the Field Division Headquarters organization?

The Directorate has three separate offices currently providing administrative services. The Panel believes that consolidating all Directorate administrative services within a single office would take advantage of economies of scale in providing common services and eliminating costly duplication. It would also be responsive to the *President's Management Agenda*.

Although there is now only a single Partnership and Data Services Office, its location has changed a number of times as its mission has evolved. Given its obvious regional and local orientation, the Panel believes an intercensal partnership program is appropriately located within the Directorate. Retaining its current high-level location should help provide public support and interest as ACS expands across the United States.

The FTCDO was designed to provide opportunities for learning and professional staff development for all Directorate staff. It has had a special role in grooming future leaders. The Panel believes that retaining this function at the Directorate level will reaffirm the importance of these functions for all of its staff.

Conversely, the Panel does not believe that the current placement of Evaluation and Research within the Censuses Office of the Field Division adequately reflects the breadth of its work. Moving the entire research arm to report directly to either the new FDC or the Associate Director for Field Operations should ensure more effective use of analytical resources within the Directorate.

The Panel notes that both the FTCDO and the research functions address Directorate organizational effectiveness issues. Consolidating these forward looking functions within a new Office of Organizational Effectiveness reporting to the Associate Director could strengthen the Directorate's strategic planning, workforce planning, and evaluation and research activities. This new, consolidated office would be the focal point for identifying necessary changes, evaluating alternative recommendations for change, and following up on recommended changes to improve Field Directorate operations. It would also be consistent with the principles to guide government management reform identified in the *President's Management Agenda*.

Finally, the growth, size and current location (reporting to the Associate Director for Field Operations) of TMO reflect the impact of rapid technological change at the Census Bureau and in the daily activities of the Directorate. The Panel believes that future technological change will likely reinforce the need for a separate information technology operation within the Field Directorate.

To better align and integrate the Field Directorate organizational structure, the Panel recommends that:

- the Field Directorate consolidate administrative services in headquarters, under an Administration Office that reports directly to the Associate Director for Field Operations.
- the partnership function continue to report to the Associate Director for Field Operations to emphasize its importance and priority for successful survey operations, particularly a nationwide American Community Survey.
- the Technologies Management Office remain a separate division within the Field Directorate, reporting directly to the Associate Director.
- the Field Training and Career Development Office continue to report to the Associate Director for Field Operations to reinforce the Field Directorate's strong commitment to employee training and development.
- the Evaluation and Research Office be elevated within the Field Directorate and report to the new Field Division Chief or to the Associate Director, depending upon the focus of future evaluation activities.
- the Field Directorate emphasize the importance of anticipating and efficiently managing change by creating a new Office of Organizational Effectiveness to manage the Directorate's research, evaluation, strategic planning, workforce planning, and training functions.

These Panel recommendations will better align the current Directorate organizational structure to meet the future management challenges from implementing ACS nationwide and other expected changes. They will also enhance the Directorate's ability to look to the future.

CONCLUSION

The Field Directorate is well positioned with the regions' "can do" attitude on data collection operations, and the successful track record for the latest decennial census, to continue as a critical core competency for the Census Bureau. But it must build on that strength to address future management challenges, especially the imminent challenges posed by the planned nationwide implementation of ACS in 2003. The Academy Panel recommendations will help the Directorate accomplish this by establishing a better aligned and fully integrated organization, enhancing its capacity to look to the future, expanding regional participation, and extending staff access to strengthen current management systems and processes.

In reviewing its complete set of recommendations, the Panel identified three specific groups that the Field Directorate should give the highest priority to implement. The first group of top

priority recommendations would be to clarify and communicate the role of the regions and the role of the Field Division Chief in Field Directorate and Census Bureau operations and activities. These clarified roles must be communicated to all elements within the Bureau, not just within the Field Directorate, to eliminate the disparate views that currently exist and to obtain more effective communication and feedback on data collection and other operational issues.

The second group of top priority recommendations involves those that enhance the analytical capability of the Field Directorate. The ability to analyze the current situation, decide whether and what changes need be made, and organize resources to accomplish them is essential to current operations and future performance. The Panel's recommendations address this need for strengthening analytical capacity at the headquarters level through the creation of a new, consolidated Office of Organizational Effectiveness, and in the field by providing each RD with an ongoing analytical capability.

The third group of top priority recommendations focuses on improving current management systems and feedback mechanisms to ensure that the enhanced Field Directorate analytical capabilities can be used effectively. It is imperative to have more regional involvement in developing survey budgets, and that involvement should include the development of regional survey cost estimates and explicit feedback on actual regional costs incurred. Field staff know how their data collection costs vary for individual surveys given differences in population demographics, density, accessibility, and other relevant factors. This input needs to be consolidated and incorporated early in the development of individual survey cost estimates and budgets.

The Bureau and Directorate both recognize that changes in U.S. population demographics, attitudes, and economic conditions have increased survey data collection costs. Further, this trend is only accelerating while available budgetary resources tighten and other challenges, particularly the implementation of ACS, increase Directorate resource requirements. Enhancing the Directorate's analytical capabilities, especially in the regions, and improving systems to use that enhanced capability may not change these fundamental pressures on data collection costs. But, these reforms should improve the accuracy of the Directorate's survey collection cost estimates and enhance its ability to develop realistic trade-offs between costs and other survey collection objectives (e.g., response rates). These reforms should also improve the Directorate's, especially the regions', ability to identify, implement, and monitor more efficient procedures for collecting data to help offset the current trend in rising collection costs.

This report has not developed detailed strategies for implementing the Panel's recommendations. Consequently, the report does not provide estimates of the resource implications for implementing the recommendations, since those clearly depend upon the particular implementation strategies or approaches adopted. Nonetheless, the Panel believes that implementing many of its recommendations may require only some temporary additional resources. For example, two of the top three high priority groups of recommendations may not require any permanent increase in budgetary resources for the Field Directorate, once implemented. On the other hand, implementing the recommendations to enhance Field Directorate analytical capabilities may require some additional budgetary resources, particularly for the ROs. Different implementation strategies may be able to minimize these incremental,

long-term costs, but these would involve explicit trade-offs between current activities and the expansion in analytical capacity.

The Panel believes that the long-term improvements in Field Directorate operations and performance are well worth the possible investment in short-term and permanent resources that may be needed to implement its recommendations efficiently. Maintaining and strengthening this critical core competency ought to be a top priority for the Census Bureau. Indeed, if the Field Directorate cannot effectively respond to the future management challenges it faces, the Bureau will be highly unlikely to meet its critical strategic goals and objectives.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Census Bureau is located within the U.S. Department of Commerce. Its mission is “to be the preeminent collector and provider of timely, relevant, and quality data about the people and economy of the United States.” The federal government’s largest statistical agency, its principal activities include data gathering, analysis and dissemination for:

- the decennial census of population and housing
- censuses conducted every five years of manufactures, retail trade, wholesale trade, service industries, finance, insurance, real estate, transportation, communication, utilities, mining, and governments
- approximately 200 surveys each year on various demographic and economic topics, some legislatively mandated and others requested by federal agencies, local governments, or private organizations

In addition, the Census Bureau develops and maintains a comprehensive international demographic and socioeconomic database and conducts research on statistical standards, survey methodology, and interview techniques.

The Census Bureau’s Field Directorate recruits, trains, and deploys thousands of individuals to perform personal and telephone interviews for the current surveys. The Directorate has undertaken a self-assessment of its activities and asked the Academy to assist by independently reviewing three broad topic areas:

- the mission and organization of the Field Directorate
- the adequacy of management systems and business practices in establishing accountability and helping fulfill Field Directorate missions
- the effectiveness and efficiency of the Field Directorate’s operations and performance, including use of feedback and performance measures

The study includes the Directorate’s headquarters and regional functions. It does not include the National Processing Center (NPC) or operations related to the decennial census.

The Field Directorate asked the Academy to provide recommendations for improving the above areas and to identify issues that may require more effort in a follow-up study.

THE ACADEMY

The Academy is a nonprofit institution, established in 1967 and congressionally chartered in 1984 as a source of independent advice and counsel on making government and its programs work better. Academy studies have helped federal, state, and local agencies achieve new levels of effectiveness. The Academy’s unique resource is its membership that is composed of more than 500 Fellows with distinguished backgrounds and diverse experience at every level of

government. The Academy maintains a core professional staff that is augmented by consultants recruited for their superior qualifications to contribute to specific projects. Panels composed of Academy Fellows and other invited experts direct project activities. Appendix A lists the Panel members who directed this study, as well as the participating staff.

CENSUS BUREAU CUSTOMERS AND WORK

Many current surveys—the term used for non-decennial Census Bureau work—are conducted on a reimbursable basis, primarily for government agencies and less frequently for local governments. The five federal agencies—called sponsors—with the largest reimbursable current survey work are:

- the Department of Labor (primarily the Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- the Department of Health and Human Services
- the Department of Justice
- the Department of Education
- the Department of Housing and Urban Development

In addition to these sponsors, the Census Bureau conducts reimbursable survey work for approximately 25 other federal agencies. This work involves demographic and economic surveys, which are a major source of work for the Bureau and its Field Directorate during the intercensal period.¹ Presently, the largest and most visible one is the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly demographic survey of about 70,000 households conducted for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). It is the primary source of information on the labor force characteristics of the U.S. population, including the monthly unemployment statistics. Economic surveys include the Monthly Housing Construction Survey (the source of the monthly housing starts estimates), the Annual Survey of Manufacturers, and the Monthly Retail Trade Survey.

Other surveys are conducted with funds that Congress appropriates directly to the Census Bureau. These include the Survey of Program Dynamics, which collects longitudinal data used to evaluate the welfare reform legislation and its impact on the American people over time. Direct congressional appropriations for current surveys accounted for approximately \$250 million (55 percent) of the Bureau's survey resources in Fiscal Year (FY) 2001, while reimbursements from other sources accounted for \$203 million (45 percent).

IMPLEMENTING THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

In recent decennial censuses, five of every six households were requested to complete the “short form,” and one was asked to complete the “long form.” The latter sought much more detailed socioeconomic data, and is used as the basis to distribute billions of federal dollars.

¹ Years between decennial censuses.

The Census Bureau has proposed that the American Community Survey (ACS) replace the long form in 2010. As time goes by, communities change and decennial census data become increasingly outdated, leading to inefficient federal fund distribution and planning, as both become based on past—not current—conditions.² The President’s FY 2003 budget notes that ACS in 2004 will begin to provide annual community profiles for population areas with more than 65,000 persons. In 2005, ACS will begin to accumulate or average data for smaller population areas to obtain annual estimates that are similar in quality and reliability to those currently available only once every decade.³ The intent is for community leaders and others to have timely information for planning and evaluating public programs for everyone from newborns to the elderly. In addition, regular ACS data would allow more frequent funding and planning adjustments as people move and as economic growth, recession, and recovery roll through different regions and sectors.⁴

The Census Bureau plans to mail 250,000 ACS forms monthly, and then follow up with attempted telephone interviews with non-respondents. It is expected that about 40,000 households will not respond to telephone interviews each month and will need face-to-face interviews. ACS testing is underway in more than 1,200 counties nationwide. In 2003, the Bureau plans to survey every county. This has been a massive planning effort and major logistical efforts are underway for the Field Division’s regional offices to hire and train as many as 40 percent more interviewers by January 2003.

BUREAU ORGANIZATION

The Census Bureau is led by a Director (a political appointee) and a Deputy Director (a career employee). It is organized into two main areas, one headed by the Principal Associate Director for Programs (PAD/P), and the other by the Principal Associate Director/Chief Financial Officer (PAD/CFO). Each Principal Associate Director is responsible for numerous Directorates headed by Associate Directors. The Field Directorate, headed by the Associate Director for Field Operations, is one of three that reports to the PAD/CFO; the other two are Finance and Administration and Information Technology. This Bureau structure, with two Principal Associate Directors reporting to the Deputy Director and the combination of administrative support, IT infrastructure, and field operations under one of them, establishes a relatively low reporting level for the ROs, as further explained in Chapter 2. One rationale for this structure is that, with the frequent turnover of a politically appointed Director of Census, the Deputy Director often serves as the Director for extended periods of time. During those periods, the two Principal Associate Directors function as operating Deputy Directors for programs and support activities, including field operations.

The Associate Director for Communications, a political appointee who oversees the Congressional Affairs and Public Information Offices, reports directly to the Census Bureau Director. The Bureau’s organization is included as Exhibit 1-1 at the end of this chapter.

² Bureau of the Census, *Bureau Restructuring Plan*, 2/15/02 draft, p. 33.

³ Fiscal Year 2003 Budget of the U.S. Government, *Analytical Perspective*, Chapter 12, “Strengthening Federal Statistics, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, p. 261.

⁴ Bureau of the Census, *Bureau Restructuring Plan*, 2/15/02 draft, p. 33.

The Census Bureau’s program divisions are referred to as sponsors of the surveys. The program divisions negotiate with the external sponsors or may themselves be the primary sponsors on behalf of the Bureau. They develop and manage survey budgets, design instruments, devise some interview packages, monitor progress, and compile and analyze results. The Economic Programs Directorate uses field staff for personal interview work for only the housing construction (starts) survey. The rest of the Field Directorate’s non-decennial work comes from the Demographic Programs Directorate. Thus, the various program divisions provide funding and explicit program policy guidance to the Field Directorate for each of the surveys.

The Census Bureau has a total of nearly 6,000 full-time equivalent positions. Broadly, these positions are divided as follows:

- Directorates under the Principal Associate Director for Programs2,430
- Directorates under the Principal Associate Director/Chief Financial Officer
(except for the Field Directorate).....832
- Field Directorate2,429
 - o Associate Director Office.....16
 - o Field Division Headquarters107
 - o RO staff⁵742
 - o TMO.....85
 - o NPC.....1,479
- Office of the Director, including the Communications Directorate206

FIELD DIRECTORATE MISSION AND MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The Field Directorate’s vision statement is *Quality data—at the right time, for the best value*. The Directorate has three major divisions and several smaller organizations. They are the:

- Field Division (a headquarters component and 12 regional offices)
- TMO
- NPC
- Partnership and Data Services
- FTCDO

The Field Directorate organization chart is shown at Exhibit 1-2 at the end of the chapter.

The Field Division directs the collection of national sample survey, census, and other data at the local level. These data are collected through a field organization of ROs in 12 major cities nationwide. The offices employ part-time interviewers who gather data by direct public contact. During decennial censuses, the Division administers temporary regional census centers, district offices, and other local offices.

⁵ There are about 4,000 part-time and intermittent staff, primarily field interviewers. The FTE data for this staff are not separately identified within the RO total.

The TMO works with program divisions to translate surveys into the computer-assisted personal interviews that interviewers have on their laptops. The office provides support for the thousands of laptops that field staff use, maintains the networks and telecommunications systems through which survey data are transferred to a data warehouse, and operates a “remedy” troubleshooting system for interviewers as they conduct surveys on their laptops. During the decennial census, it liaisons with production software contractors and coordinates activities.

The NPC, located in Jeffersonville, Indiana, served as one of the four data capture centers for the 30 million forms generated in Census 2000. This and two other locations also conduct telephone survey work. In addition to conducting computer-assisted telephone interviews, the center performs various processing actions, such as assembling and mailing questionnaires, assembling and shipping supplies and equipment, receiving questionnaires from surveys and large cyclical programs such as the Economic Census, entering and transmitting data from these questionnaires, and managing census and survey records.

The Partnership and Data Services staff educate partners on how to access and use census data; motivate non-traditional data users to use and apply census data; and work collaboratively with local organizations and national affiliates to support RO survey activities, including recruitment, public awareness, and media campaigns. The Data Services function is to ensure that data reach as many potential users as possible. Staff conduct workshops and seminars, make site visits, and maintain formal and informal contacts.

The Partnership Program for Census 2000 was designed to build partnerships at every stage in the process with state, local, and tribal governments, community-based organizations, media, and the private sector. Its goal was to increase awareness of the census and response rates, especially among historically undercounted populations. The program had a national and a regional focus and supported the Census Bureau’s enumerator recruitment effort through contacts with a range of organizations. In the past, the function became dormant between decennial censuses. However, the Census Bureau chose to maintain the function within the Field Directorate, at a much-reduced level of effort, during this period to help it conduct efficient, accurate, and representative current surveys, and avoid having to “start from scratch” with each decennial census.

The FTCDO has four primary functions: determine the core competencies of all job series and forms of worker participation as they relate to data collection; assess staff training needs and develop and/or deliver programs to meet those needs; develop and publish agency standards related to interviewer training and development; and research, develop, and implement alternative systems of training development and delivery to facilitate individual paced instruction and group development. As part of these functions, the Office has created leadership development and management training. Technical training for interviewers is decentralized.

Collectively, the Field Directorate headquarters offices:

- coordinate decennial operations in the 12 regions with the Census Bureau’s decennial program offices

- serve as liaison with program divisions
- advise program divisions on RO time and cost issues for current surveys
- meet with external customers to explain the regional role (an occasional function)
- divide current survey budgets among ROs (other directorates establish sample sizes and geographic coverage)
- provide leadership training and develop new training capabilities, such as video conferencing
- arrange and conduct training for current surveys
- maintain lines of communication among regions and from headquarters to regions.
- transform computer-assisted surveys from paper to laptop versions and work with regional office staff who administer them, including configuring and maintaining the field laptop computers
- oversee the partnership and data services function in ROs

To fulfill their critical operational role, the 12 ROs:

- maintain a physical and human infrastructure such as office space, recruitment, and laptop support for current surveys
- collect data for current surveys (including personnel training and deployment)
- collect data for the ACS and decennial censuses
- maintain relationships with local partners, media, and congressional staffs
- educate local governments and other data users about available census data
- distribute census data to local entities seeking that information
- maintain the address and map system for the region, working closely with the decennial census' Geography Division and its topographically integrated geographic encoding and reference system
- maintain the infrastructure to build up for each decennial census, which for Census 2000 included hiring more than 50,000 people per region, opening and staffing more than 500 temporary offices nationwide, and leading efforts to publicize the census within the region

Each RO staff supervise several hundred current survey interviewers, primarily field representatives (FRs) and senior field representatives (SFRs) working from their homes. They collect household demographic and economic data through individual interviews and transmit the data electronically to the Census Bureau warehouse. There are still a few paper surveys (such as the National Crime Victimization Survey), but Bureau staff expect that all door-to-door work will eventually be done by computer-assisted personal interviews.

FIELD DIRECTORATE SELF ASSESSMENT

In February 1998, the Field Directorate held a retreat in Austin, Texas in anticipation of Census 2000. Program and Field Directorate staff attended the retreat, the goals for which included:

- clarifying the Field Directorate's vision and goals

- building a common understanding of the Field Directorate and its challenges
- improving communication and coordination across the Directorate
- involving everyone, including stakeholders and customers, in planning the future of the Directorate

The retreat goals were based on the results of a Directorate-wide survey process designed to identify the major issues. A senior management planning team identified the top issues to be addressed in the retreat session as human resources, business practices, partnering with customers, improving work through technology, and new business development.

Attendees discussed these issues, offered potential improvements for them, and added a sixth issue: leadership. Common themes discussed were the need for more and broader training and career development; greater field input into survey budget development; improved metrics for project management; and more resources and better training to support technological change.

Following the Austin meeting, these and other issues have been addressed in varied ways. A key mechanism was creating the regional director (RD) advisory role system, also called the “champion” system, through which each of the 12 RDs assumed the lead role for collecting information and devising solutions in assigned areas. This system is discussed in Chapter 2.

A March 2001 RD conference focused on initiating a self-assessment of the Field Division, which was to focus on examining the performance and progress since the Austin retreat. There were six focal points for the self-assessment:

1. Field Division organization
2. using technology wisely
3. using the “field people,” the most prized asset to continuing success
4. competitive agility, staying nimble and maintaining organizational flexibility
5. communications
6. preparing for the 2010 Census

The meeting’s professional facilitator summarized the conference and recommendations. Numerous recommendations related to the topics of this Academy study:

- develop a process to ensure greater interactivity between RDs and headquarters before decisions on surveys are made
- develop a training strategy and assign resources to ensure a sufficient level of technology capacity in the ROs
- develop a resource strategy for allocating technology resources between the field and headquarters
- explore best practices from ROs and transfer to other applicable situations
- fill the Field Division Chief position, and define the duties of management to include planning and succession
- upgrade field pay and training, and provide state-of-the art equipment for field staff
- review current practices and implement actions to ensure that regions get reasonable input into budget development for the funding they are responsible for

- develop a mechanism for moving field staff to headquarters and headquarters staff to the field, without adverse forced moves as in the past
- identify an overall business policy and strategy
- implement a “champion” system among RDs with the task of developing consensus on issues
- keep the regions informed and involved in preparations for the 2010 census.

This Academy report provides additional information to the Directorate, so that it can build on its self-assessment efforts and put a number of suggestions into practice.

METHODOLOGY

The Academy Panel approached the study using the following methodology:

- Interviews were conducted with officials throughout most Field Directorate units, as well as with officials in program and administrative offices in other parts of the Census Bureau. Bureau staff facilitated many of these interviews by establishing briefing sessions for the project team at the start of the study to ensure that the team had a broad familiarity with the Directorate and its relations with other parts of the organization. Interviews also were conducted with officials in three ROs and with one other RD.
- Interviews were conducted with officials in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the General Accounting Office (GAO), and the Commerce Department’s Office of Inspector General (OIG). In addition, officials of selected customer agencies and former Bureau officials were interviewed, as were staff from two other data collection organizations, WESTAT and the National Opinion Research Corporation. Appendix B includes a list of individuals interviewed.
- A review was made of applicable materials, including budgets, strategic and performance plans, annual reports, GAO and OIG reports, organization manuals, documents related to Field Directorate conferences and retreats, and other documents describing Directorate activities.
- Panel meetings provided interaction between the expert Academy Panel and the project staff when establishing the work plan, analyzing data, and developing recommendations. Four Panel meetings were conducted during the study, including three in which Bureau officials participated. Panel meetings were supplemented with several teleconferences to discuss issues between Panel meetings

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

Chapter 2 focuses on the federal regional structure, generally, and then the role of ROs within the Census Bureau, specifically. This includes discussion and recommendations related to the role

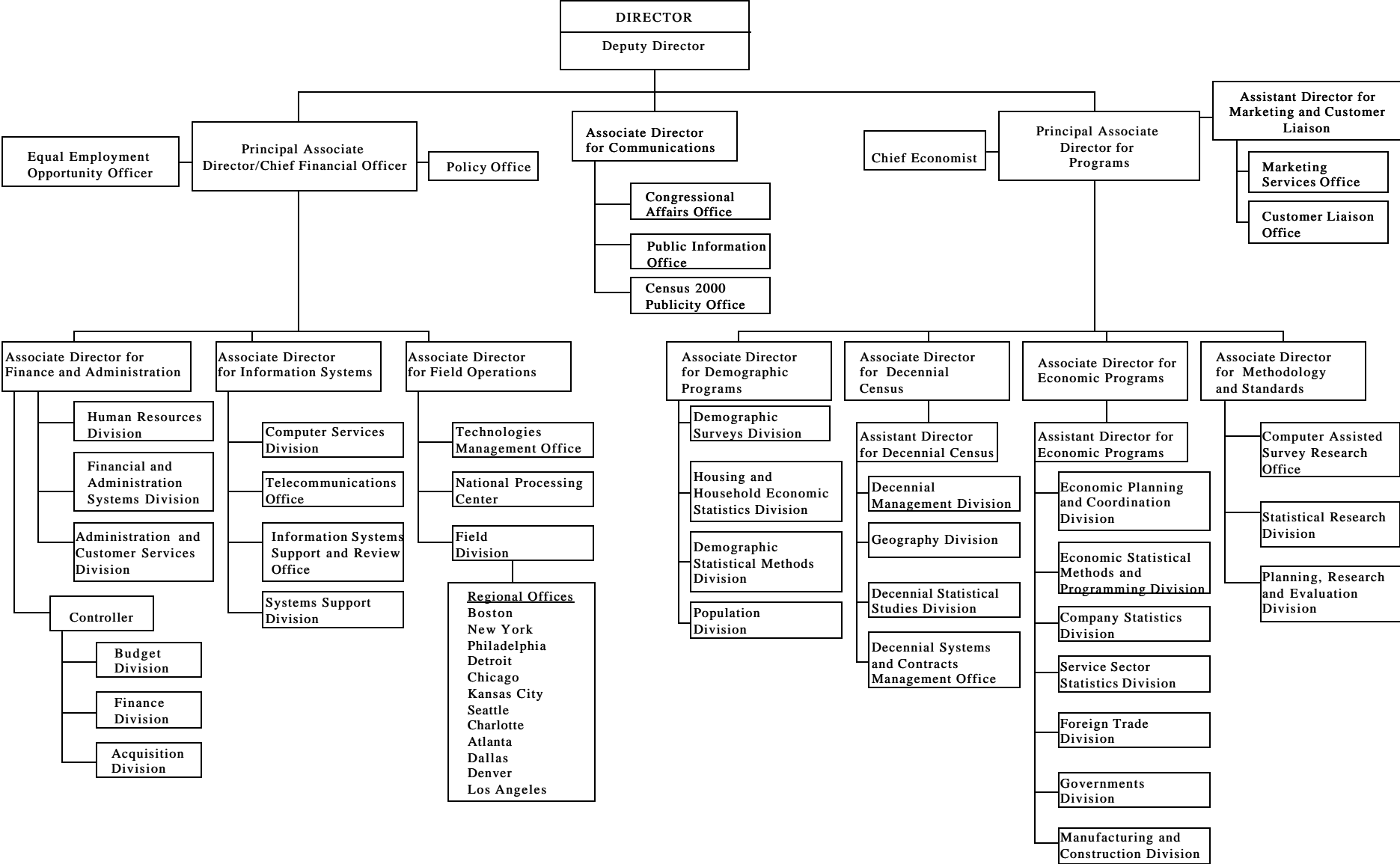
of the Field Division Chief and RDs, the amount of flexibility that the latter have in operating their regions, and the extent to which ROs are brought into policy decisions.

Chapter 3 focuses on RO operations and processes, specifically looking at their role in developing survey budgets, the impact of ACS on office operations, and how technology could improve current operation procedures. Recommendations are made that would enhance regional input to the survey budget development process.

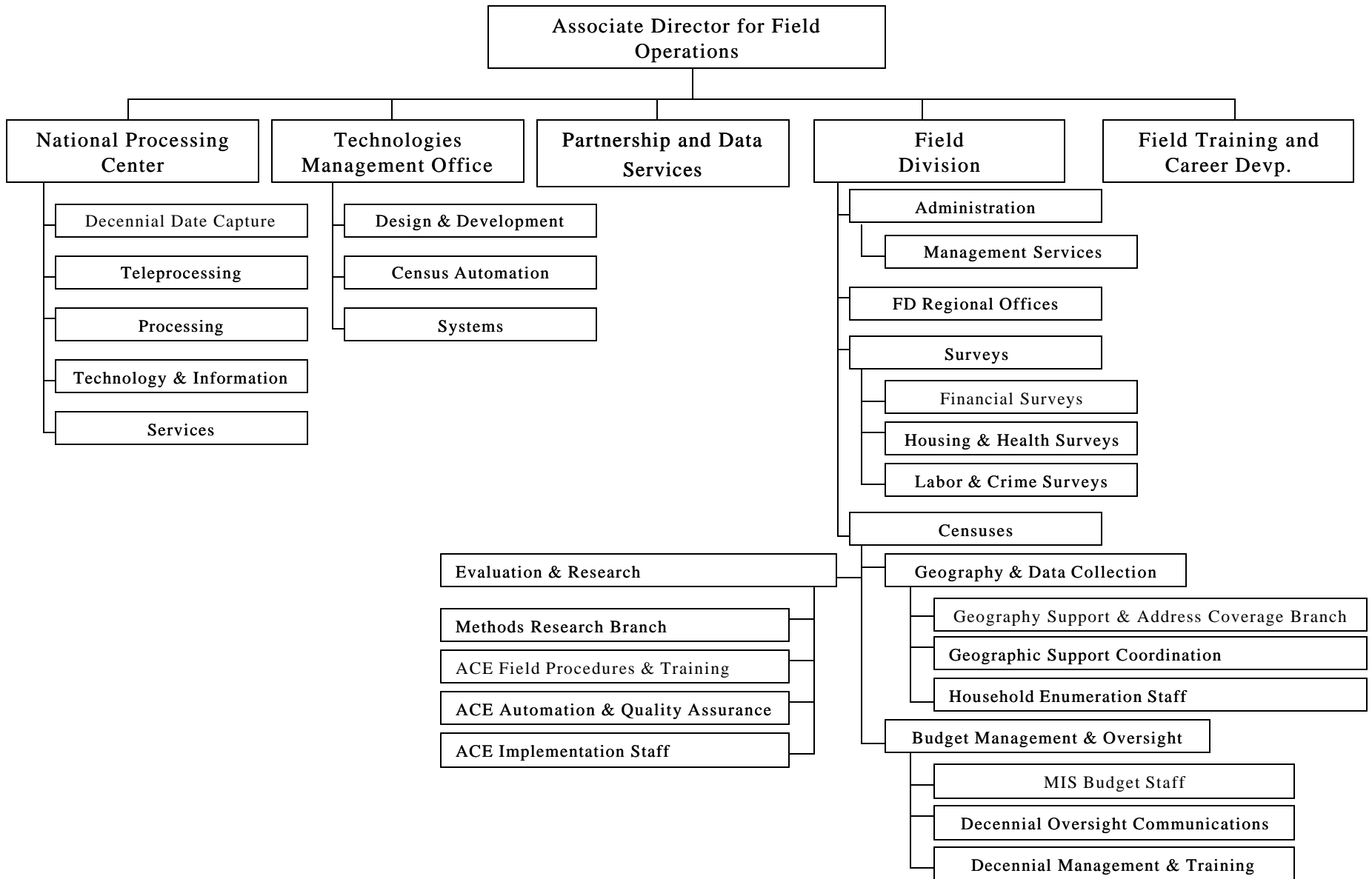
Chapter 4 examines the potential impact of future management challenges that the Field Directorate will face. These include the Census Bureau's strategic and workforce planning (including succession planning and training), and how they are managed within the Directorate. The chapter also considers some of the implications in implementing ACS. It recommends actions for the Directorate, including RDs, in these processes.

Chapter 5 reviews the structure and administration of the Field Directorate's headquarters offices, and contains recommendations to relocate various offices within the Directorate to improve operational effectiveness. These recommendations are made in the context of grouping some functions into an Office of Organizational Effectiveness.

EXHIBIT 1-1. CENSUS BUREAU ORGANIZATION CHART



**EXHIBIT 1-2.
FIELD DIRECTORATE ORGANIZATION CHART**



CHAPTER 2 ROLES AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The Field Directorate's vision statement—*Quality data—at the right time, for the best value*—emerged from the 1998 Management Retreat in Austin, Texas, and has been well publicized since. Rigorous Directorate efforts to complete surveys on time and within budget reflect the vision.

Within the Field Directorate, the decision flow involving regions essentially starts at headquarters. The Directorate sets policy, with leadership and coordination provided by the FDC and implementation leadership provided by the RDs.

This chapter addresses the federal regional structure, generally, and then the role of the Census Bureau's ROs specifically. It includes discussion of the role of the FDC and the RDs, the amount of flexibility that the latter have in operating their regions, and the extent to which they are brought into policy decisions.

REGIONAL OFFICES IN THE FEDERAL CONTEXT

Most federal domestic agencies have a presence outside Washington, but how they organize their field structure and the extent to which they delegate authority to the field vary. Some have RDs with broad responsibilities for the full range of department or agency programs, while others have those with little program-related authority. This variety reflects the differences in department and agency mission and programs.

For example, there are some agencies whose programs require little or no field coordination. In the Treasury Department, there are few relationships between the U.S. Mint and the Internal Revenue Service, or between the Financial Management Service and the Secret Service. Similarly, in the Department of Commerce, the Patent Office, Census Bureau, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration deal with few matters of common concern in the field.⁶ The Department of Commerce is among the few (others including Labor, Interior, Justice, and Treasury) that now rely on a bureau field structure. The Department's bureaus often refer to their field offices as regions.

Departments such as Agriculture and Transportation do not have regional directors but have sometimes created a field presence through "Secretary's Representatives." These usually report, actually or nominally, to the Secretary but are given little or no program authority. They often handle interagency and intergovernmental relations and can convene the Field Directors of the program elements. These representatives also may act as the eyes and ears of the Secretary and serve as members of interagency bodies. The effectiveness of this mechanism is unclear, as some agencies have abandoned it.

⁶ Alan Dean, *The Organization and Management of Executive Departments*, revised, March 2001. Available through the National Academy of Public Administration, Washington, DC. Much of the information in this section of the chapter derives from Mr. Dean's work.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development had a traditional regional structure, through which the heads of all major programs reported to an RD. Under each region were a number of field offices. The Department changed to a more stovepiped structure in 1994, through which all program staff in the field reported to the corresponding assistant secretary in headquarters. Concurrently, some of the field offices became centralized points for specific operations, such as processing single-family loans.⁷ The former ROs now have a Secretary's Representative. Although these 10 individuals do not supervise program staff, in reality they do serve some program coordination functions.

There are regions that have operational and oversight functions. The Social Security Administration's 10 Regional Commissioners provide direct program services through their immediate offices, and they also supervise the administration's 1,300 local offices.

RDs are not a prerequisite to decentralized management. Decentralization entails giving field officials the authority to act definitively on matters within their geographic areas, and it is possible to operate a decentralized system through bureaus or program administrations, as seen with the Departments of Transportation or the Treasury. Within Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Coast Guard are among the executive branch's most decentralized organizations. The same has been true of Treasury's Internal Revenue Service. These entities create their own regional systems and delegate legal authority, or redelegate Secretary-derived authority, to their own field officials. Most such units have RDs or similarly designated officials, but they report to the head of the program entity, not to the Office of the Secretary.

Census Bureau ROs have an operational role. Although they interact a great deal with state and local officials, businesses, and many other organizations, the Bureau is not a grant-making organization charged with implementing federal programs at the local level. Its regional staff essentially implement some of the primary functions—data collection and dissemination. In this sense, the regions are more akin to field offices than to departmental regional offices.

The placement of a department or agency's field structure can vary, but the head of the field function reports to the organization head or deputy in most federal organizations. For example, the BLS's Office of Field Operations reports to the Office of the Director, and the Federal Aviation Administration's Assistant Administrator for Region/Center Operations reports to the Office of the Administrator. In the U.S. Customs Service, the Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations reports to the Office of the Commissioner.

Until 1994, the Census Bureau's Associate Director for Field Operations reported to the Deputy Director. In June 1994, the then-acting Director reorganized the Bureau and created the PAD positions, to which all Associate Directors report. Initially, Field Operations reported to the PAD/P. In 1996, Field Operations was moved to report to the PAD/CFO, where it remains today.

⁷ National Academy of Public Administration, *Aligning Resources and Priorities at HUD: Designing a Resource Management System*, Washington, DC: National Academy of Public Administration, October 1999, pp. 9-10.

THE REGIONAL DIRECTORS' FUNCTIONS

RDs are the Census Bureau's face to the communities served. They interact with the media, general public, government officials, and local congressional staff. Internally, they are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their staff complete each survey's interviews on time and within budget. When this is not possible, they identify problems as early as possible and the reasons for them (such as weather or interview delays). In essence, the buck stops with them.

During the 2000 decennial census, RDs were temporarily promoted to Senior Executive Service status. It was the first time this occurred, and was done in lieu of filling the vacant FDC position. RDs have since moved back to the GM-15 level. They continued to report directly to the Associate Director for Field Operations until a permanent SES FDC was appointed in April 2002.

During a decennial census, an RD's role expands greatly, when each region has two offices: a Regional Census Center that oversees dozens of offices and thousands of decennial enumerators, and the RO that carries out continuing survey work. The RD is responsible for both, but often heads the Center and designates another staff member to manage the RO's daily operations. In addition to its expanded supervisory responsibilities and survey work, the RD undertakes partnership outreach and interactions with government bodies and other organizations. These additional activities have proved essential to achieving the goals of enhanced access to traditionally undercounted groups and increased response rates overall.

With the advent of ACS, RD roles between decennial censuses will begin to resemble decennial responsibilities. This mandatory-response survey will replace the long form but not receive the high level of publicity that the decennial census generates. Thus, those to be interviewed will not expect someone with a Census identification and colored bag, nor will news articles or media spots encourage people to cooperate with Bureau staff. The regional outreach role will assume greater importance, and the RD's leadership and visibility throughout the region will rise. Over time, the lack of the long form is expected to somewhat reduce the decennial workload.

RDs are an essential part of the management team within the Directorate. As discussed briefly, each has a designated advisory role (also termed "champion") in one of the following areas and is a back-up in another:

- administration
- Field Directorate reengineering
- geography
- internal and external communications
- logistics
- partnership and data services
- recruiting
- RO office management
- special censuses and populations
- survey operations

- technology systems
- training

RDs identify problems in their areas, elicit input on solutions, and devise alternative strategies to resolve problems. They do so in conjunction with other RDs. The Associate Director for Field Operations receives comments from RDs and factors them into the decision process.

Each region also has significant responsibilities to update the Master Address File and geographic encoding and referencing system databases. For most RDs, this is not an area in which they have personal career experience. The RD is to ensure that their geographers update the Bureau's cartographic data and produce maps for survey work.

RDs play strong roles in many areas. At the March 2001 RD meeting, however, they used the phrase "being at the end of the food chain" to describe their role in many areas that directly affect regional operations. For example, they expressed a need for a process to ensure more meaningful and timely interaction between regions and headquarters before the Field Division makes survey budget decisions. Chapter 3 discusses this issue in greater detail.

STRUCTURE OF A REGIONAL OFFICE

Although each region covers different geographical areas, demographic groups, and economic conditions, all have the same basic structure shown in the organizational chart for the Charlotte Regional Office included as Exhibit 2-1. An RD heads each RO, and has an assistant regional director (ARD, a GS-14 position) to assist in managing the office. RDs may divide duties as they wish between themselves and ARDs, but all ARDs have financial management responsibilities.

ROs have three program coordinators (GS-13 positions) in the regions, except for New York which has four due to the challenges of recruiting and turnover there. Program coordinators manage the day-to-day operations of survey activities, set priorities among alternative resource uses, monitor progress, resolve conflicts over assignments of FRs and SFRs, and serve as the first level supervisor for the SFRs. They also oversee specific current surveys and other select RO functions, such as partnership programs, geography, or recruiting, and supervise the survey supervisors, each of whom is responsible for one of the surveys in a program coordinator's area of responsibility.

Survey supervisors (usually GS-11 or GS-12 positions) oversee specific surveys and monitor the work activity of the FRs and SFRs to ensure the survey is completed on time and within budget. They generally handle more than one survey, but only one at a time. They are the first-level supervisors for the FRs assigned to their survey. Their duties are to:

- train FRs and SFRs on conducting surveys
- manage their survey budgets
- receive and review progress reports on field survey work
- respond to problems that FRs or SFRs encounter
- address complaints from survey respondents

Survey supervisors also oversee quality control by monitoring selected FR or SFR interviews and conducting re-interviews. They have several recruiting duties, as well, such as arranging testing and interviewing sites, helping conduct interviews, calling references, and reviewing the certificates of eligible job candidates.

Further, ROs have an administrative staff that usually report to the ARD. In 2002, each RO had a temporary recruiting specialist to assist in recruiting and hiring additional FRs for the planned ACS expansion.

RO computer specialists support the local area network and all office computer equipment and software. They also maintain the region's telecommunications and audio-visual systems. As laptops are key to complete almost all surveys, the specialists provide continuing technical assistance to FRs and SFRs. They regularly deal with the Directorate's TMO, referring to them laptop issues that cannot be resolved in the region. Special projects are on their agendas more often than not.

This permanent RO structure is retained during the massive ramp up of staff to undertake the decennial census. Permanent RO staff are the cadre for the parallel Regional Census Center created in each region for the operation. Some program coordinators and survey supervisors took temporary promotions to replace staff who moved to the Center, or they shifted there to assume greater supervisory activities. Once the decennial work was completed, these RO staff returned to their previous positions and pay grade. Unlike the post-1990 environment, the Census Bureau was able to avoid post-Census 2000 reductions-in-force of permanent staff; it hired temporary staff on fixed-term appointments and absorbed a small number of staff into the growing current survey workload. Staff do not retain their temporary promotions unless they successfully compete for positions at that grade level.

FRs and SFRs who perform actual survey interviews are not explicitly represented on the RO organizational chart. They work out of their homes, and some are not permanent staff. However, SFRs and some FRs may work on an almost full-time basis for specific, ongoing surveys.

VARIED PERCEPTIONS ON ROLE OF REGIONS

The Census Bureau had five ROs and 68 field offices prior to the 1950s, when they were consolidated into 17 regions. In the early 1960s, the Bureau reduced the number of regions to

12—the 10 standard federal regions⁸ plus Detroit and Charlotte. This structure was based on the Bureau’s workload and the nation’s population dispersion. There is occasional boundary fine-tuning, as when the Bureau, after the 1990 census, moved northern California from the Los Angeles to the Seattle region.

While there are policy manuals, they are sufficiently out-of-date that no one the Academy staff interviewed ever mentioned them as a source of information or background for defining the regional role or functions. While there appears to be no current, formal statement of regional responsibilities, there are some common understandings of roles, such as collecting data and building and leading the infrastructure for each decennial census. However, there are strongly held and disparate views about what roles regions should have “beyond” data collection activities.

One view, shared by the Principal Associate Directors, is that ROs represent the Census Bureau to local entities and should use that relationship to promote a better understanding of the Bureau. The Bureau believes that this will improve access to potential survey respondents, increase interest in Bureau employment, expand the use of survey and census data, and facilitate the periodic, temporary decennial census expansion. As the PAD/P said, “RDs are the face of the Census Bureau to local governments, communities, and people. We depend on them to do more than data collection. They know their communities, have a wide range of contacts, and know how to get local space and cooperation.”

Another view, espoused by some RDs, is that they are key decision-makers for Bureau activities in their regions. This view emphasizes the need to tailor general policies to the unique local conditions in each region to ensure effective program implementation.

A more narrow view, expressed by two senior managers, is that ROs should be strictly limited to data collection, an approach that private sector survey firms follow. However, these firms generally have no role in disseminating the data they collect, have no need to maintain ongoing relationships with state data agencies or local governments, and conduct little work on a nationwide, regular basis. The view that ROs should only have a data collection role is sometimes associated with the belief that regions should do what they are told.

Discussion and Recommendation: Role of the Regions

The growing complexity of the U.S. population and economy poses challenges to data collection and survey work. Some may require non-traditional data collection approaches—partnership work, for example—to maintain reasonable costs while meeting acceptable quality and timeliness performance standards.

Should the RO role be limited to data collection, the Census Bureau would lose some outreach, dissemination, and promotion activities that ROs have undertaken for several years. In addition, it would be difficult for headquarters to carry out all of these responsibilities.

⁸ Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Kansas City, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Seattle.

In the absence of recent policy statements, some aspects of the roles of ROs depend on the opinions and personalities of RDs, their staffs, and even Field Directorate staff in headquarters, to a certain extent. In any decentralized organization, there will be variations in how some tasks are handled. However, there should be some broad levels of effort or standard approaches to tasks in each region. For example, it seems that some ROs pursue partnership relations far more actively than others. Resource limitations aside, the rationale for such variations is not apparent.

Given that opinions diverge on the most appropriate roles for ROs, the Panel believes that the Census Bureau would benefit from an open discussion of the issue, followed by a statement clarifying that the role extends beyond data collection. The Panel suggests that Bureauwide staff be involved in the discussions leading to the Field Directorate's policy statement. This would provide a basis for a better understanding of the RO role within the Bureau and produce a positive impact on long-term staff development. If the regions have responsibilities for maintaining partnerships, for example, senior regional staff skills and training should reflect those responsibilities.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

Issue a policy statement clarifying that the regions have a role in such areas as community relationships—the partnership function—and data dissemination.

Clarifying and publicizing the RO role will more explicitly identify the headquarters' role of setting policies and guiding implementation. This report will later discuss other activities that the ROs should perform. This policy statement also should make clear any additional RO duties. Such clarity becomes even more important as ACS is implemented.

THE PAST AND PLANNED ROLE OF THE FIELD DIVISION CHIEF

The FDC heads the Field Division and supervises the 12 RDs and three Assistant Division Chiefs (ADCs) who are responsible for administration, surveys, and censuses. This key position was vacant from 1996 until April 2002. Between 1996-2002, the RDs reported directly to the Associate Director, though there were a series of acting FDCs.

The August 2001 vacancy announcement for the FDC position stated that its duties were to:

- direct and coordinate key staff in the Division's management activities, which include expanding and contracting the ROs, realigning their boundaries, restructuring them, public relations, budget and staffing, field methods research, serving as liaison with sponsoring divisions or other organizations, and other similar functions necessary to manage ROs
- direct research into and develop field operating policies and techniques in given Census Bureau statistical program requirements
- establish policy and standards to be followed by headquarters and RO staff

- serve as spokesperson for the Bureau when working with other government and private organizations, to negotiate and define conditions for conducting field surveys and demarcating areas of responsibility and authority for joint projects
- collaborate with the chiefs of other divisions, where field work is part of the program

The project team was told that individuals who previously occupied the FDC position full-time operated in a very controlling, hierarchical manner. RDs discussed their concern that this type of style could reappear if the position is filled again. At the March 2001 RD meeting, participants said filling the position should be a priority, but wanted a coordinating, participatory FDC. The PAD/CFO supports that operating style.

In several interviews, headquarters staff indicated that the FDC vacancy meant no one oversaw how RDs ran their regions, which some viewed as a problem. For example, one stated that some regions have worked well with tribal governments through the partnerships program, while other regions have not. Another found two regions less cooperative than others. The implication was that no one ensured that variations or differences existed only when there was a valid reason.

One senior manager outside the Field Directorate said the lack of an FDC meant that the RDs' views on important issues, especially with regard to operational aspects of surveys, were not adequately represented at headquarters. This individual also thought the vacancy meant that operational perspectives were not getting into the census planning processes.

Four RDs had differing opinions on the role of and need for the FDC. One thought the position need not be filled, as the 2000 census took place successfully with the position being vacant. Another thought the position was essential for coordination, and said the "champion" approach for resolving issues is not as effective as it would be when working with an FDC. Still another thought communications problems arose largely due to the vacancy; when filled, the FDC had a good understanding of Field Division work and information flowed better. A fourth RD believed the vacancy has led to a lack of coordination in the Division, and that a new FDC should focus on long-range planning and broad issues, allowing the ADCs to deal with day-to-day activities in headquarters.

Discussion and Recommendation: Role of the Field Division Chief

The Panel believes that the FDC's role is crucial to effect change, oversee administrative and operational aspects of current survey work, coordinate and provide guidance to the 12 ROs, and interact with other Census Bureau organizations. An FDC should have the dual role of managing the Field Division's headquarters operations and providing broad guidance to the RDs through a collegial approach to regional operations.

The FDC could operate as a bridge between headquarters and field staff or as a filter. The Panel believes that the most appropriate role is the former, facilitating two-way communication on issues and actions that affect ROs. However, the FDC's job cannot be all coordination; an FDC must make decisions and provide direction. There are numerous ways that the Field Directorate can effectively integrate a new FDC into daily operations, including:

- defining the role of the FDC and how that individual will oversee regional operations and explicitly communicate that role
- specifying that the FDC will represent the RDs in Census Bureau policy and operational discussions and decisions
- working with program divisions to establish how to involve the FDC in discussions and decisions affecting RO and Field Division workload
- providing communication systems and other formal mechanisms to ensure that the RDs, FDC, and Field Division's ADCs have the opportunity to provide input on Bureau policy and planning decisions
- making clear that the FDC is the "leader" of the regions
- clarifying that the FDC is to increase the quantity and quality of information and coordination among ROs and all other Bureau functions and programs

As the project team conducted interviews and reviewed documents, it became apparent that many solutions have been proposed for challenges or problems raised in RD meetings. Without a permanent FDC, it has been difficult to resolve differences on preferred solutions and to establish responsibility to implement change.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Associate Director for Field Operations issue a policy statement that defines how the new Field Division Chief would:

- **oversee and coordinate regional offices,**
- **provide leadership to determine and implement policy,**
- **take the lead on coordinating challenges and proposed solutions to ensure that change takes place when it is needed,**
- **identify those who must take action and clearly define the actions for issues beyond Field Directorate resolution, and**
- **represent the regions in planning, policy, and operational decisions within and outside the directorate.**

The policy statement should be communicated within the Directorate and throughout the Census Bureau.

Consistent with observed best practices in implementing change effectively, the Panel has suggestions for some near-term actions that the Field Directorate, through the FDC, can pursue:

- Take the lead in developing a capacity plan for each region's absorption of full ACS implementation. An effective plan would address such areas as staffing, budget, administrative support, and technology.
- Develop a management change tracking system so that challenges or complaints can be followed until a solution is devised and implemented.
- Identify innovations and best practices in the ROs and facilitate their application to other ROs.
- Identify and improve areas where coordination is needed between ROs and the program office on planning and budgeting.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR FLEXIBILITY

RDs have a great deal of flexibility in managing their offices, primarily due to the diverse nature of their geographic areas and the population living in them. Although nearly all decisions on current survey methodology are made in headquarters, the RDs decide how to deploy staff and organize a range of activities, including partnership efforts, data dissemination, and media relations.

Previously, there was unproductive competition among regions and insufficient information sharing. For example, a region that found a way to increase a survey response rate would use it to improve its own performance but not share it with other regions. The PAD/CFO said one strength that the current Associate Director for Field Operations brings to the position is his emphasis on fostering an environment to share best practices. This has enabled friendly competition, with regions sharing successful practices.

Autonomy in regional operations is an issue that is raised more among program divisions than Field Directorate staff in headquarters. One senior program manager suggested that the project team “look at how ROs manage themselves versus how headquarters manages them. Each is autonomous, largely independent. From a program division perspective, there needs to be a central control in headquarters that tells them parameters.”

THE CHICAGO “CHANGING GEARS” PLAN

The “Chicago Changing Gears Plan” is one area in the forefront of discussion. To create a system of survey interview boundaries, the Chicago RO overlaid survey workloads and staffing requirements on the boundaries used for the decennial census. The objective was to determine whether geographical areas could serve as consistent survey borders. After some minor changes, the current boundary structure emerged. Within each one, a single SFR administers all survey work. The FRs who actually conduct the interviews are assigned within a boundary and usually work only for one SFR.

The SFR becomes the trainer, motivator, and supervisor for their team, and has input into who should be hired for it. Part of the goal is for SFRs to become acquainted with community and political leaders—even apartment building managers, who can either facilitate or hinder access to survey respondents. SFRs may occasionally go outside their boundary, but this is an exception that must be approved by the RD. SFRs receive a bonus when their team does well, and one showed the project staff a RO newsletter announcing that her team had the best success rate during a one-month period. This was a new way of thinking, SFRs said.

Each survey interview boundary has a partner to pool resources for one-time surveys and cover for each other when someone is on leave or in training. The transition to these new boundaries was not without difficulty, but Chicago staff said the system works well, especially as there is greater flexibility together. Survey supervisors said this method has given them the ability to hold people more accountable, as they themselves are held more accountable.

The Chicago Plan also includes continuous relationships with the complete count committees and increased use of technology, specifically mapping and management information systems, for performance and results monitoring and problem identification. Each region worked with state and local governments, the business community, and nonprofit organizations to create these committees for the 2000 census. These outreach efforts were designed to create a better understanding of the need for greater participation and an increased count.

In April 2001, the Associate Director for Field Operations asked each RD to review Chicago's approach "with a focus upon the implementation of the plan, either directly or with modifications, that would improve current survey performance and/or results within each regional office." Numerous regions have inquired about the success of this effort and some RDs have indicated they may implement it, but not all of them believe it would work for their region. Some thought that the survey interview boundary might be less applicable to more geographically dispersed regions, and others were concerned about priority conflicts between timely and accurate survey completion and partnership commitments. This issue was discussed at a recent RD meeting, but sufficient data were not available to evaluate every advantage and disadvantage. Consequently, the Associate Director for Field Operations directed the Research and Evaluation Group within the Field Division's Decennial Office to evaluate the effectiveness of using the boundary concept and other aspects of the Chicago Plan.

Discussion and Recommendation: Regional Director Flexibility

RDs can operate very independently (outside of survey methods), which can be an advantage when it leads to successful experimentation, as seen with bringing partner organizations together for Census 2000. However, independence can be detrimental when an RD goes to Commerce or congressional staff and circumvents Field Directorate lines of authority. RD independence also can lead to reluctance to evaluate an organizational approach, decide it works well, and apply it across-the-board. Regions may be willing to learn from each other, but they do not expect to be told how to manage most aspects of their operations.

Given that many RDs have extensive Census Bureau experience and know their work and regions well, they certainly would want to function independently in many requests. The lack of a permanent FDC has reinforced this desire. However, an FDC is now in place and there will not always be an experienced RD cadre, as many are eligible to retire.

The Panel does not seek to discourage creativity and flexible operational solutions. Indeed, it would not be appropriate to suggest that an RD seek formal approval before testing every new idea. However, it is important to assess the results of any change strategy that a region may implement. As discussed previously, Directorate components that develop a more effective way of doing something should be assessed so the FDC, with input from RDs, can determine whether other regions should use the same practice. Sharing lessons learned and best practices is beneficial; and a "best" way of doing something should become standard practice.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Associate Director for Field Operations and the Field Division Chief:

- **Build on the Directorate’s approach to sharing best practices so that practices deemed preeminent may become the basis for achieving greater success in other regions.**
- **Issue a policy statement with guidelines to identify areas in which regional directors can be expected to operate primarily independently and those in which they should look to the Field Directorate for guidance.**

The policy statement should include a process to monitor independent actions and maintain RD accountability for performing work.

REGIONAL INPUT AND FEEDBACK ON POLICY ISSUES

For most agencies that have an extensive regional structure, field headquarters staff usually represent the regional perspective in agencywide discussions and policy decisions. The extent to which regional or field staff are directly involved varies.

Examples from Other Federal Entities

The U.S. Coast Guard is developing an integrated business plan that will formalize field-level input into the strategic planning process. It previously included field input into the resource building process, and it will host a three-day conference in 2002 in which headquarters and field planners will discuss strategic-level issues. Together, the attendees will generate a National Strategic Assessment from which they will develop business strategies to address the issues identified. The Coast Guard method is part of the larger Department of Transportation approach that directly involves field staff in major planning and policy issues through meetings and retreats.

At the Social Security Administration, an internal team recently conducted 55 structured employee input sessions. The sessions, which were held in every region and the central office, involved a broad range of employees who shared their views on how the Administration should deal with its external customers in 2010. The Administration also has done planning workshops in some regions that involved field staff.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development uses regional staff input for nearly all policy and practice development, with teams of headquarters and field staff working through an issue. It also has developed extensive communications technology that includes fairly regular interactive videoconferences for staff nationwide. Further, the Department has a “daily message,” so staff get information about a program change, special event, or internal management issue when they turn on their computers daily. The daily message also is used to elicit input from staff across the country.

BLS, which also uses the daily message approach, has four standing committees (economic analysis and information sharing, staff development and training, operations analysis, and collection techniques and capacity building) to develop and revise Bureau policies and procedures in these areas. Each standing committee has headquarters and RO membership to promote communication and information sharing on cross-cutting issues.

Census Bureau Input Approaches

The Census Bureau uses less formal methods to obtain regional input into its policy and management decisions. One senior manager stated that internal communications are weak for the Bureau overall, and that this weakness is even more apparent when the 12 remote locations are included.

RD involvement was reported to be extensive when planning Census 2000, though some of those interviewed said this was partially due to the absence of an FDC. How Census Bureau leadership will incorporate RD input into 2010 planning is unclear. One RD noted that regions had been regularly consulted during Census 2000, but were not now on anyone's radar. "If we aren't asked, we don't even know what they are not talking to us about," the RD said.

RD perspectives vary, and appear to be influenced by their tenure with the Census Bureau and the extent to which they are informally consulted on issues. One remembered the headquarters setting the agenda for all RO operations, and characterized the interactions as much more consultative today. Several RO staff said more consultation is needed because there is much less rotation among offices, meaning field headquarters staff have less experience in ROs.

An acting FDC once started a weekly email newsletter to each RO, in which he described upcoming work, problems with surveys underway, and general office news. It was the RDs' responsibility to respond to issues raised in the newsletter.

Discussing the level of RO input with program staff, several of those interviewed thought the responsibility to obtain such input was with Field Division headquarters staff. Program staff were not sure that Division staff always brought the regions into decisions early or often enough. These clearly involve judgment calls, and opinions vary. As the project team discussed regional involvement in ACS planning, many instances arose where at least one RD had input, while others were not involved. For example, regions did not have input in developing ACS' 2002 operating budget, but they provided input on such issues as recruiting costs and RO infrastructure needs. It was through RD suggestions at a mid-2001 meeting that the Census Bureau decided to fund recruiter contract positions in each region, so that they could coordinate the major FR recruitment for ACS.

Several senior program staff wanted more opportunities to interact with RDs as a group; they thought the 1998 Austin retreat had been an excellent opportunity to do this. They did not view the regular RD meetings as good venues for interaction, since there was little chance to exchange ideas; program staff who are invited generally make brief presentations. As one senior manager noted, the meeting agenda is full and designed for senior Field Directorate staff, not for substantive program/field interchange.

Discussion and Recommendations: Regional Director Input and Feedback on Policy Issues

RD opinions are valued, with headquarters staff referring to RDs as savvy managers and seasoned veterans who always get the job done. RDs interviewed did not want to be involved in decisions that have little impact on the regions, such as techniques to address sampling design problems or survey reports. They did want to have input on policies and decisions that affect how their staff are deployed. How best to achieve this valuable input appears to be the challenge.

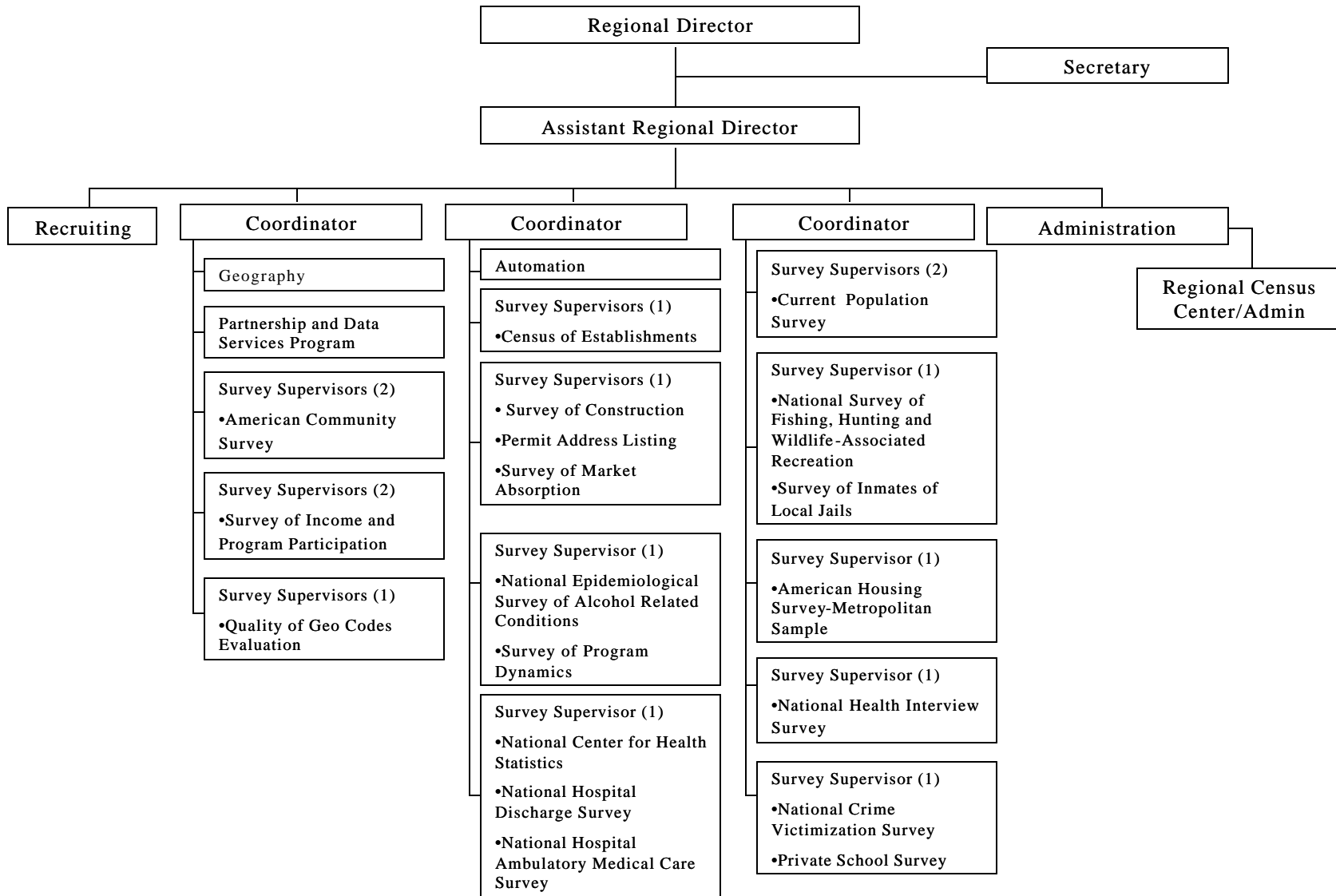
Regional input and communication may be improved with the permanent FDC. The Field Directorate would have the opportunity to play a stronger regional advocacy role, and pursue ways to assert regional viewpoints through a presence in headquarters policy meetings involving the Directorate and program divisions. This would require a strong, daily, and consistent effort. However, this is not only an issue of regional advocacy. The FDC will be in a position to set the tone and establish practices for ensuring that decisions having regional input are implemented.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

- **Take the initiative in providing more Regional Director input into a range of Census Bureau processes and decisions, with the Field Division Chief leading the effort to bring the Regional Director perspectives to all relevant headquarters issues.**
- **Work with program divisions to create regular opportunities for some or all of the Regional Directors to meet with program staff. One option would be adding time to meetings or scheduling sessions with small groups of Regional Directors when they are in town for other matters. Another option would be to schedule a formal “Austin-like” retreat at least once annually.**
- **Ensure that Regional Directors are placed on Bureau electronic e-mail lists, thus giving them information at the same time as the Directorate, rather than receiving nearly all communication through the Field Directorate. This would enhance the Regional Directors’ sense of participation in the Bureau’s management team.**
- **Explore using the Bureau’s Intranet as a place to post information, draft policy statements, and ask questions, so that Regional Directors and senior staff could provide feedback as the Directorate or program divisions make decisions that will affect the regions.**

Greater RD involvement entails not only a mind-set change, but better use of technology through conference calls, video conferencing, and Intranet or Internet-based meetings. Regularly scheduled RD meetings, in which program divisions would be involved more fully on inter-Directorate communications issues, would be another means of securing direct RD input in the policy development and survey design processes. Such input and the strong role of the FDC should enable the Field Directorate to have a greater policy role within the Census Bureau.

**EXHIBIT 2-1
CHARLOTTE REGIONAL OFFICE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



CHAPTER 3

FIELD DIRECTORATE OPERATIONS AND PROCEDURES

Competent, well-motivated staff and a streamlined and efficient organizational structure are two critical prerequisites to effective program implementation. However, accessible and relevant management information and control systems also are needed for staff to achieve their program implementation objectives. This chapter focuses on how the Field Directorate uses these systems to:

- estimate field operating costs for individual surveys and monitor operating costs and performance relative to approved survey budgets
- develop RO budgets and evaluate RO aggregate financial performance relative to approved budget totals
- plan for furniture, equipment, and other major capital asset replacement
- use technology effectively to improve communication within the field

These systems provide data and other information to the RO staffs, program divisions, and Field Directorate staff at the headquarters level. This chapter assesses how well these systems support current field operations in collecting and disseminating survey and other census data, and whether they can meet future field operations needs.

The planned expansion of ACS will impose new challenges on field operations and the management systems supporting them. This chapter will identify the ACS' expected impact on the:

- current systems used to develop and monitor implementation of individual survey budgets and the RO role in those processes
- total budgetary resources provided to the ROs and their use of those resources
- need for additional analytical capability within the ROs
- current use of technology to ensure effective field communications

Strengthening the current Field Directorate management systems, especially the ROs' role in using them, would improve the quality of information within those systems. It also would enhance the Field Directorate's ability to develop and implement contingency plans for unexpected changes, especially related to ACS funding issues. It would also expand opportunities for obtaining and providing feedback among all the Field Directorate organizations and for monitoring progress in implementing desired changes.

DEVELOPING SURVEY BUDGETS

The Demographic Survey Division (DSD) develops budgets and program requirements for each demographic survey. To ensure that a survey is completed accurately, on time, and within the available resources, DSD relies on Field Directorate input to estimate expected field costs, monitor the actual costs, and track established performance measures.

When developing survey cost estimates, DSD works primarily with the Surveys Office within the Field Division at the headquarters level. As the Office is the main point of contact between the 12 ROs and the program divisions, the Field Directorate believes that it is in the best position to provide DSD with complete and consistent estimates of expected costs. About two to three years ago, DSD had tried to work directly with individual ROs to develop the field operational cost estimates, but DSD was dissatisfied with the results.⁹ The Division requires only an aggregate, national field cost estimate for each survey, and it prefers to have the Field Division's headquarters office provide it.

The Surveys Office does not explicitly request that ROs supply them with independent cost estimates. Instead, it estimates initial field operational costs using an aggregate costing methodology based on historical costs from each region. The Office has developed an historical cost database for fieldwork on a range of surveys. Field Division staff believe these historical costs are reasonable assuming their relative stability over time and across regions, and no significant changes in survey coverage, sampling design, or regional operations. At the same time, historical costs are less reliable for new survey activity, major changes in existing surveys, or in cases of significant regional operational changes.

The Academy team visited several regions where managers believed that historical cost data sometimes did not reflect actual total costs. If the budget did not adequately cover RO staff time (as opposed to FR and SFR time), the survey supervisor and program coordinator would spend additional unpaid hours on the project. Thus, the survey expenditures data would not necessarily capture this time, and the next period's budget estimate would be based on incorrect assumptions. RO staff said this became a self-perpetuating problem. Conversely, ROs that exceeded their budget for direct costs (such as FR time) obtained the requisite funds to finish the survey and received a larger budget the next year.

The Survey Office's individual branches consult with regions on historical workload assumptions underlying specific survey cost estimates, yet there is no set protocol. Without a formal process for providing input on these cost estimates, the regions believe they are largely handed and expected to follow a "budget" or staff allocation for each survey, developed independently by headquarters staff. Regions may get a survey budget a few weeks prior to starting interviews, but the overall amount is fixed. They only can argue for an incremental increase. Some RDs and their staffs believe a more effective mechanism would allow regions to participate much earlier in the development of survey budgets, so they can comment on factors or special concerns that affect their workload and staffing needs, such as changes in the distribution of "difficult or inaccessible interviews."

Discussion and Recommendation: Developing Survey Budgets

Given that Field Directorate costs are a major component of survey budgets, its input and feedback are critical to secure appropriate funding levels from sponsors and ensure that operating costs remain within approved levels. Using historical cost models for initial operational cost

⁹ DSD said individual regional costs estimates directly supplied by the regions had substantially exceeded historical costs and were well beyond levels that it believed could be justified and obtained from the sponsoring agencies.

estimates is a standard practice in many federal agencies. However, these models should be reviewed periodically, with workload assumptions and critical inputs revalidated, updated, or revised as necessary. Regional validation of national cost models is essential when work conditions, survey populations, geographical distances, and per-household-survey costs vary substantially among field units or regions. Regional input also becomes critical when making major changes to existing surveys or introducing major new ones, such as the ACS.

Developing realistic cost estimates for the ACS will pose some unique challenges for the Field Division. The survey is now underway in 1,239 counties, which contain the bulk of the population to be surveyed nationally. However, the current costs may not accurately reflect future costs incurred when the Census Bureau extends ACS to all U.S. counties in 2003. A large proportion of the additional counties will be more rural, with more dispersed populations; these conditions can increase per household interview costs.

Exclusively relying on historical costs can produce some perverse financial incentives, as well. As these costs reflect past operational practices, they do not penalize for prior inefficiencies so long as the higher costs had previously occurred. Likewise, there is little incentive or reward for improved performance, since the next year's historical cost will reflect the current, more efficient level of performance.

The Field Division would benefit from a more formal process for reviewing and validating current cost models used to provide estimates of survey operational costs to DSD on individual surveys. The current informal consultations have worked satisfactorily for ongoing and stable surveys that have cost trends projected using simple extrapolation techniques. However, ACS' scope and scale likely will impose greater analytical demands and require more explicit regional review to validate and update regional workload and cost data. Given the importance of successfully implementing ACS, there must be a formal, well-defined process to secure RO input during the early development of individual survey budgets.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Field Division:

Develop a formal review process to obtain regional office input and feedback on operational costs and workload assumptions early on, when the Field Division and program divisions begin to develop survey budgets.

To overcome past problems in securing regional input during development of individual survey budgets, this formal review process should have explicit deadlines for responses. Regional and headquarters responsibilities should be clearly defined and fully explained. It also may be beneficial to have a dispute resolution process.

For ROs to participate effectively in this process, they will need additional analytical capability to develop their own regional survey cost estimates, compare them with alternatives, and justify the efficiency of current staffing assignments. The following sections discuss these needs.

DEVELOPING REGIONAL SURVEY COST ESTIMATES

To build the historical databases used for initial survey budget estimates, Division staff collect data from several sources. The Commerce Administrative Management System supplies official accounting data on expenditures by object class such as travel, supplies, personnel compensation, and equipment at a national level for individual surveys. The National Finance Center supplies payroll costs per individual employee by pay period. The Field Representative Earnings Data system, installed on FR and SFR laptops, supplies daily information on hours, miles, and other reimbursable costs. Although FRs and SFRs should update these data every day, the transmissions are not automated, making daily updates incomplete. Consequently, some Census Bureau staff have questioned the timeliness and accuracy of the data.

Field Division staff at the headquarters level developed the Cost and Response Management Network (CARMN), a financial management information system, to consolidate data and provide daily survey cost and progress reports¹⁰ on individual surveys. It was designed to meet the need for consolidated, daily information on survey costs and progress, responding to cost overrun issues on a survey several years ago. These daily reports can be aggregated into daily and monthly RO summary reports on all regional survey work. Authorized users can access the CARMN system on the Census Bureau Intranet.

The CARMN system is still evolving. Some regional staff have been trained to use it, but capability remains uneven. Some RO staff continue to rely on their own individual tracking systems. Field Division staff at headquarters appear to be the predominant CARMN users. Surveys Office staff use CARMN to monitor progress on their surveys and update historical cost databases. Budget staff in the Administration Office manage CARMN, use it to monitor field division costs, and reconcile its data with official census accounting data. Nonetheless, some Field Division and RO staff said some CARMN cost data are not fully reliable; they believed certain data are prepared differently—monthly versus pay period.

Discussion and Recommendation: Developing Regional Survey Cost Estimates

Despite some weaknesses that are being addressed, the CARMN system meets numerous headquarters information needs. Yet, CARMN remains basically a headquarters-oriented accounting system. It was not designed to meet RO needs for an analytical system to evaluate cost and performance effects of specific operational alternatives, including varying survey case assignment workloads among FRs and SFRs and adjustments in survey techniques, such as more telephone follow-up. RO analytical staff may use CARMN in developing regional survey cost data elements for a regional historical cost database that provides realistic regional cost estimates for individual survey budgets.

There are several benefits to having RO staff develop their own regional survey cost estimates. First, it should increase regional use of the CARMN data and monitoring system, thereby

¹⁰ CARMN uses data from the Regional Office Survey Control Operations to supply survey progress information. FRs and SFRs submit these data daily through their laptops. The data track the work status on the specific survey case workload assigned to each FR or SFR. These transmissions are automated and thus provide more reliable daily status reports.

becoming a fully successful Field Division monitoring system. This will not occur until all ROs and Survey Office branch chiefs voluntarily switch from their own individual monitoring systems to CARMN. Second, it should ensure active regional participation in the formal survey budget review process as previously recommended. Third, it should increase regional awareness of the impact that critical workload factors have on survey costs. Finally, it is a necessary first step toward a decentralized regional pricing system for survey work. If successful, ROs could ultimately develop regional prices for meeting specific survey requirements, and permit more explicit trade-offs between costs and key survey performance measures—including response rates, timeliness, and depth of coverage—when developing individual survey budgets.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

Require the regional offices to develop regional cost estimates for future surveys, and review these estimates with the Field Division headquarters staff when preparing the Field Division’s survey cost estimates for the Demographic Survey Division starting in FY 2004.

REGIONAL OFFICE ANALYTICAL CAPABILITY

Regional staff are recognized as a core competency for undertaking survey and data gathering activities. The Census Bureau’s top leadership greatly respects and values the RO “can do” attitude and effective operational focus. Although RO staff collect the survey data, however, they do not evaluate them or their collection costs, beyond monitoring expenditures to ensure they remain within allocated totals. Program divisions and the Field Division perform these more formal evaluative functions.

The standard regional staffing structure lacks any analysis, research, and evaluation positions to support regional program operations or financial and budget management activities. Field Directorate staff reported that some RO staff were trained to operate newly installed financial and program performance monitoring systems. Yet, this training was system-specific, and no general analytical training has been given to regional staff, nor has an RO position been established to provide general analytical support.

Program staff were concerned that Field Directorate staff, especially ROs, could not explain operational or financial problems identified in periodic progress or performance reports. This lack of analytical capability also may be responsible for the low RO response rate to Field Division Surveys Office efforts to obtain regional comments on a proposed 2002 survey budget allocation. Only two regions responded, both of which had staff recently reassigned to it from one of the Field Division Surveys Office branches. They understood the requisite analysis.

Discussion and Recommendation: Regional Office Analytical Capability

Operations is the strength of the regional staff, but some ability to analyze operations would enable ROs to develop, review, and evaluate their own regional survey costs, and participate

more effectively in the development of the Field Division's survey cost estimates. RO effectiveness could be enhanced through a range of analytical activities, including:

- analyzing regional survey cost estimates
- assessing options to revise resource mixes for surveys
- evaluating performance on individual surveys
- explaining performance problems and successes
- identifying and analyzing operational improvements

ACS' upcoming nationwide implementation increases the need for additional analytical capability at the regional level. Regional differences in geography, population, ethnicity, acceptance of governmental surveys, and their effects on ACS costs and performance measures will become more apparent and important. Regional analysis of disparate operating conditions could provide a more accurate understanding of their impact on regional ACS costs and other performance measures. This information also would help the Field Directorate and the Census Bureau develop contingency plans for ACS, should future funding not meet initially proposed levels.

This type of regional analysis of elements increasing regional survey data collection costs will also help the Directorate and Bureau address the challenge of maintaining their high survey collection performance measures in the face of rising data collection costs and tightening budgets. While the regions may inherently understand the unique conditions they face that affect their collection costs, they are unable to assess whether these conditions impose the same cost impacts on all surveys they undertake without some analytical capability. Likewise, the regions cannot evaluate how proposed changes may increase their operational efficiency and lower collection costs or restrain future cost increases. Without some regional analytical capability, the Directorate is less able to respond effectively to the challenges posed by rising data collection costs.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

Restructure current Regional Office staffing to include a position for performing a range of analytical functions in support of regional operations and performance evaluation needs, including the development and review of specific regional survey costs.

Additional analytical skills could be obtained through regional staff training. In other cases, they may be acquired through new hires to either fill vacancies or augment current staff. Substituting an existing resource for this new resource can reduce the net incremental costs of acquiring this additional capability. Since there was no indication that ROs were overstaffed, successful implementation of this recommendation may require some additional, permanent resources.

REGIONAL OFFICE BUDGETS

ROs do not have a single budget. The Field Division's Administrative Office and the Census Bureau's Office of the Comptroller develop the annual Bureau budget, but rarely develop specific RO budgets at that time.¹¹ Those interviewed indicated that multiple funding sources used to support regional operations are one reason for this.

ROs receive funds from several major sources:

- survey sponsor reimbursement funds, the principal funding source for direct survey costs and program overhead costs
- direct Census Bureau appropriations for salaries and expenses and periodic censuses and programs. These funds support some RO geography and central support activities, as well as ACS data collection costs.
- Bureau working capital funds, which support some general overhead costs, including information technology equipment replacement

RDs have no discretionary authority to reallocate resources among the various surveys. The ROs receive staffing authorizations for the survey work assigned for that year, and some overhead funding for top regional management positions—the RD, ARD, and the program coordinators. But, they do not receive discretionary RO funding. Thus, RDs cannot adjust the resource mix if one survey needs more than another. Nor are they expected to develop a regional budget or manage within one. They are, however, expected to manage their staff resources within the staffing authorizations provided.

At least three senior Census Bureau managers involved with budgeting believe that the current process decentralizes budget execution as far as possible. This is because individual survey contracts provide much of the Field Directorate's annual funding and must be used only for expenses incurred for that individual survey. Field Division staff stated that it is more efficient to manage each survey budget nationally. This ensures compliance with GAO financial accounting requirements and allows the Field Division Surveys Office to reallocate surplus survey contract funds among regions to meet unplanned shortages elsewhere for the same survey. Some other agencies with similar legal situations provide their regions with certain flexibility to shift funds between projects, subject to strict limitations and oversight.

The Field Division lead ADC for surveys is the Census Bureau official accountable for spending allotted funds for particular surveys. Thus, RDs operate under headquarters plans and priorities, since the ultimate responsibility for budget execution rests with Field Division at the headquarters level. Although Field Division headquarters staff track regional differences in costs and performance for individual surveys, they do not appear to produce consolidated RO budgets to evaluate overall aggregate financial performance for specific regions. Nor are they asked to do so.

¹¹ Regional office budgets may be a more important concern in developing decennial census budget estimates. However, the project team did not explore the decennial budget development process.

Several RDs expressed frustration with the lack of an overall RO budget and their limited ability to reassign staff work to address unexpected problems or changing conditions. Although regional administrative staff said current reliance on headquarters for other resource needs works well for them, some RDs preferred having greater authority to manage an office budget, even if dollar resources are limited by survey.

Discussion and Recommendation: Regional Office Budgets

Although the 12 ROs have the same basic structure, total costs per region will vary depending upon differences in workload volume (number of surveys undertaken), geography, demographic characteristics, population density and accessibility, relative skill levels of regional staff, including FRs and SFRs, relative operating efficiency of individual regions, and many other factors. Since these regional variations are not necessarily uniform for all the individual surveys undertaken, survey-by-survey comparisons of regional performance may mask critical regional differences in costs, operational efficiency, and performance. The Panel believes periodically reviewing consolidated RO budgets would provide useful information to evaluate overall RO financial performance. Given multiple funding sources and the increasing importance of ACS in RO operations, a consolidated budget could be an important measure of future financial performance. The Census Bureau's current financial accounting and management information systems appear capable of supporting regional budgets that may be differentiated by funding source, such as individual surveys or overhead.

Also, changes in consolidated RO spending will help headquarters and regional staff determine whether perceived spending problems are intensifying or improving. Reviewing consolidated RO budgets will help indicate whether relative spending patterns during intercensal periods continue during the more intense decennial years.

The Panel supports Census Bureau efforts to decentralize some budget execution activities to address specific concerns about excessive paperwork and delay in procuring minor office equipment. The Panel also recognizes that shifting to a more decentralized budgeting system for the ROs requires a carefully planned and coordinated transition from the current system, as well as proven analytical capability at the regional level.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Census Bureau's Office of Budget staff:

Develop consolidated regional office budgets and provide periodic analyses of spending relative to approved budgets for review by the Regional Directors, the Field Division Chief, the Associate Director for Field Operations, and the Bureau's CFO.

REPLACEMENT PLANNING FOR EQUIPMENT AND OTHER CAPITAL ITEMS

The Census Bureau's central working capital fund finances specific overhead activities on a Bureauwide basis. In addition, the Field Division uses program overhead funds, estimated as a fixed percentage of direct costs for individual surveys, to support training, general management

positions within field headquarters and the regions, and other field overhead expenses. They are not used for planned Directorate or RO capital equipment replacement.

Regions use laptops from the 2000 Census operation, having acquired them after completing the decennial census fieldwork. TMO then adapted them for the current survey work. Though there has been no formal replacement plans for the laptops, TMO staff said they are now preparing such plans based on a four-year replacement cycle. They have asked the program divisions to accumulate 25 percent of the replacement costs each year. DSD has a sinking fund for this purpose. However, it is not clear how this will be applied at an individual RO once an aggregate replacement plan is developed.

Meanwhile, there is no replacement program for other business and office equipment. ROs use surplus furniture from the Regional Census Center and local decennial offices to replace worn furniture in their facilities. This use of surplus furniture is appropriate and should be a part of any replacement program, but it is not a substitute for an explicit plan.

Discussion and Recommendation: Regional Office Capital Equipment Replacement Plans

TMO's move toward a four-year laptop replacement cycle is a step in the right direction. However, the implicit 10-year replacement cycle for acquiring other equipment after a census does not reflect a realistic strategy or sound financial planning. Further, it understates the actual costs of performing annual survey operations as it uses decennial census resources to subsidize some of the capital costs.

The inadequate equipment replacement planning, especially for information technology equipment, is a Bureauwide problem. As the Bureau sets its own equipment replacement policy, however, other issues arise regarding how much flexibility RDs should have when following the policy, and how replacements would be funded.

One alternative is to follow a strict, centrally managed replacement policy. Under this approach, one office within the Bureau would develop the replacement plan and provide the necessary replacement equipment. RDs would have little involvement in developing the plan or replacing equipment. The responsible office would meet the RO replacement needs directly and would provide additional "emergency" replacement equipment that ROs request. Presumably, the Census Bureau's general appropriation—not reimbursements for surveys—would fund a centrally managed replacement plan. This alternative appears consistent with current policy, once replacement plans are developed and approved.

A second alternative is to rely on a centrally managed replacement policy, but require that survey reimbursements fund their share of replacement costs. As with the previous alternative, one office would be primarily responsible for managing the replacement plan and securing all necessary funding, including survey reimbursement funds. This office would implement the approved plan using a standard depreciation rate and providing it to the program divisions to include in the overhead factors applied to cost estimates for individual surveys. ROs would have little involvement in this process, and RDs would have no flexibility to make capital/labor trade-offs when undertaking surveys.

A third alternative would be to include equipment depreciation explicitly within the overall RO budget. While a designated office would provide initial equipment replacement estimates to include in RO budget development, the RDs or the FDC could have some flexibility to delay or speed up equipment replacement during a given year to help resolve some spending or operational problems. Survey funding would again be expected to meet its estimated share of replacement costs.

The Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

Establish a centrally managed equipment replacement policy and require that survey reimbursements bear their share of replacement costs.

This recommendation, the second alternative on replacement funding for capital items discussed above, is consistent with the *President's Management Agenda*, as set forth in a legislative proposal accompanying the Fiscal Year 2003 President's Budget.¹² The third alternative also requires that survey reimbursements fund their share of equipment replacement costs, consistent with the President's Management Agenda. However, it would require the adoption of a decentralized RO budgeting system that is not recommended at this time.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE FIELD COMMUNICATIONS

The Census Bureau and its Field Directorate have employed new technology in several areas to improve data collection activities and better manage collection costs. Only the Crime and Victims Survey still uses paper collection techniques. Although the Bureau would like to base the survey on computer assisted personal interviews, the Bureau of Justice Statistics believes the paper method provides sufficient information and it does not have the funds for a conversion. The NPC uses computer assisted telephone interviews to conduct its telephone survey activities. As the computer assisted personal and telephone interview software incorporates electronic edit checks to reduce data transmission errors, these techniques have improved survey accuracy and reduced data processing time.

Technology also has helped internal communications within the Census Bureau and Field Directorate. The extensive use of e-mail and development of the Bureau Intranet have facilitated communication among employees at headquarters and the regions. As noted in Chapter 2, an acting FDC sent weekly electronic newsletter to the RDs informing them about emerging field operational issues.

¹²The proposed *Budget Cost and Performance Integration Act of 2002*, Title IV would establish Capital Acquisition Funds for all CFO agencies to finance all agency capital projects and, as noted in sec 402 (c) (4), "shall charge each capital user account an annual capital usage charge. The annual capital usage charge. ...shall be equal to the capital user account's pro rata share of the principal and interest owed for that year by the Capital Acquisition Fund on the notes or other obligations issued to finance each capital asset being used."

The Bureau's Intranet also has the capability of providing "chat room" facilities for staff to share ideas, papers, and other items of interest, using "Sametime" software associated with Lotus Notes. The project team was unable to determine how formally and extensively this "Sametime" capability has been used by Census staff.

FRs and SFRs cannot access the Census Bureau's e-mail system. They can send e-mail regarding an individual survey, but the technology is imbedded in the survey itself rather than a general program. They constantly communicate by phone to resolve interview issues or discuss issues with RO staff. However, an SFR or survey supervisor cannot send e-mail updates to all staff working on a survey. Further, most RO staff do not have voice mail boxes, though many do have Bureau-assigned cell phones.

Discussion and Recommendation: Use of Technology to Improve Communications

Using the Census Bureau's Intranet more effectively could improve communication and information sharing within the Field Directorate. One issue with electronic communications vehicles is sorting through the massive information flow to identify priority messages. User-friendly, automatic interfaces can alert readers to priority messages and information items, thus reducing overall search time.

Other departments and agencies have experimented with daily messages or news highlights summaries that appear when users first access their computers each day. Adapting this approach to the Census Bureau Intranet would address some regional concerns about the difficulty in focusing on priority items.

An e-mail message can quickly convey information on an issue or resolve a problem. It may not replace personal communication, but it permits staff to use this most timely means to transmit information.

The Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

Develop proposals that would allow the Census Bureau to provide Bureau e-mail system access to field representatives and senior field representatives, and more effectively use the Bureau's Intranet as a better source of information for communicating priority messages.

CHAPTER 4

PLANNING FOR A CHANGING AND GROWING DIRECTORATE

The RO of the future will encounter greater data-gathering challenges as the population grows more diverse in languages and ethnic groups and as survey questions deal with more complex and personal issues. To meet the challenges, the Directorate will need a workforce composed of people with the right skills, in the right places, and with the best tools to do their jobs.

This chapter discusses the need for increased RO involvement in the strategic planning process, which the Panel sees as key to the Field Directorate adapting to the future challenges. Flowing from strategic planning is workforce planning, especially with regard to training and succession. Although these processes are important at any time, they are even more so given the changes underway in the ROs to prepare for and implement ACS.

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THE BUREAU, AND THE DIRECTORATE

Strategic planning is essential for any public or private organization. By focusing on an organization's priorities, senior managers are better able to organize the resources to get the work done. Federal departments and agencies are at different places on the strategic planning continuum. Due to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA),¹³ however, they all are moving to develop strategic plans that drive down to program operations and define performance targets to measure results. OMB requires that agencies communicate their goals and objectives throughout their organizations and assign accountability to managers and staff to achieve them.¹⁴

As discussed in Chapter 2, many federal agencies actively involve their regional and field offices in strategic and operational planning. Not all started the process this way. The Department of Transportation's first strategic plan did not involve the field or customers, and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary said they wanted future plans to do so. Thus, the Department composed a team of people from every agency and brought in field directors for a two-day retreat. They started with headquarters career staff, then involved political appointees, and proceeded to the field. They first included SES and GS-15 level staff and now include other managers.

James Webb, the second Director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), was among the first to stress the need to involve all employees in achieving agency mission. There, employees were schooled in broad agency goals and how their job helped to achieve them. He was visiting an office one day when he met a woman on the cleaning staff.

¹³ The full text of GPRA (P.L. 103-62) is on the Academy web site (www.napawash.org). It is located with the materials of the Academy's Center for Improving Government Performance, which assists federal agencies in GPRA implementation and other performance-based management initiatives and brings together a consortium of individuals from federal departments and agencies to share experiences.

¹⁴ OMB Circular A-11, Part 2, Preparation and Submission of Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, and Annual Program Performance Reports, Section 210.8.

Webb asked what she did for the agency. Her response was, “I’m helping put a man on the moon.” When it passed GPRA, Congress wanted to better correlate planning to performance, and saw relating programs and activities to the agency mission and broad goals as a first step.

Strategic Planning in the Context of GPRA

GPRA set up three requirements for federal departments. The strategic plan, the first requirement, covers at least a five-year period, and is updated every three years at a minimum. The three principal features are a mission statement, a set of strategic goals covering the agency’s major programs and functions that are linked to the program activity structure in the President’s budget, and a description of how the agency intends to achieve the goals.

The annual performance plan is GPRA’s second requirement. Beginning with the FY 1999 budget, executive agencies were to link strategic goals with day-to-day program activities. The principal features of the plan include performance targets for program activities listed in the budget; a summary of resources needed to meet those targets; indicators to be used to measure progress toward meeting strategic goals and annual performance targets; and discussion of how the performance information will be verified.

GPRA’s third requirement is the annual performance report. The report includes a review and discussion of actual performance compared with strategic goals and performance targets established in the agency’s annual performance plan; explanation of why any goals were not met; and plans and schedules for meeting unmet goals or, if the goals were not feasible, the reasons why and recommended actions.

In NASA and Transportation, top management has taken ownership of the GPRA process, using it to plan and manage their organizations for results. In both organizations, the entire leadership structure has become involved in developing the strategic plan and implementing it. Management’s buy-in, developed during the planning process, has carried through to implementation and management.

Transportation’s strategic plan describes how each goal will be accomplished, and how performance measures, indicators, and sources of data will be used to measure achievement. The plan also includes a discussion of corporate management strategies. The Department provides tables that crosswalk major program contributions to its five strategic goals. NASA’s plan includes a section focusing on a strategic management process designed to align all its activities with the plan and its major outcome goals. Performance reporting is directly aligned with goals and objectives to facilitate goal monitoring and management.

BLS also has several program offices that are organized around the surveys they sponsor; these offices have been fairly autonomous. Its strategic plan is one way the Bureau strives to achieve greater program integration. Begun in the mid-1990s, a working group of senior executives developed strategic goals and performance measures; the Associate Commissioner of Field Operations was a team member. Minutes were distributed to other senior managers to make the process more open and invite broader input. Two formal mechanisms are in place to modify the extant strategic plan. A BLS management process includes an annual call for revisions and has a

procedure to resolve differences. Also, the quarterly review and analysis process includes top Bureau staff, including the Associate Commissioner of Field Operations, to review a range of issues concerning the plan and its implementation. Regional commissioners are invited to the latter group when their direct input is needed.

Numerous agencies link their plans with employee performance evaluations, recognition, reward systems, and performance goals. For example, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration created a direct alignment between senior executives' performance and organizational goals by making top managers directly accountable for the goals included in their annual operating plans. As the agency evaluates progress toward organizational and agencywide goals, it also monitors program and individual managers' performance.

Strategic Planning in the Census Bureau

The *Bureau Restructuring Plan*, discusses the Census Bureau's work, strategic plan, and workforce transition project conducted for its headquarters in FY 2001.¹⁵ The Bureau's strategic planning process has not been underway as long as in some other agencies. Furthermore, it is not a department with multiple agencies. The Commerce Department—and thus the Bureau—has been slower than some others to make the annual performance plan, performance measures, and indicators part of routine management. Within the Field Directorate, however, detailed monitoring of survey response rates, costs, and other factors provides comparative regional data to assess performance.

The Census Bureau's plan has four interrelated strategic goals, as well as an "enabling" goal.

1. Provide and improve current measures of the U.S. population, economy, and governments that meet the needs of policy makers, businesses, and the public.
2. Provide the statistical foundation and benchmark measures of the population, economy, and government that meet the needs of policy makers, federal, state and local governmental agencies, businesses, and the public.
3. Reengineer the 2010 decennial census to be more efficient and cost effective, provide richer data, improve coverage, and reduce risk in meeting constitutional and legislative mandates.
4. Provide the mission-critical support for tools and capabilities that improve processes, products, and services for surveys and censuses.
5. Provide a high-quality environment and support system that will allow the programs to optimize their effectiveness, as stated in Goals 1 through 4. (Workforce planning is a critical part of Goal 5.)

The Bureau has 28 primary objectives designed to help fulfill these goals.¹⁶

In 2001, the strategic planning process was used primarily to evaluate FY 2003 budget initiatives. While there are performance measures related to the specific objectives, they are not

¹⁵ Bureau of the Census, *Bureau Restructuring Plan*, prepared in response to OMB Budget Bulletin 01-07, draft dated 2/15/02. pp. 1-5.

¹⁶ *Bureau Restructuring Plan*, draft dated 2/15/02. pp. 2-5.

well publicized, and there was no indication that individual Bureau offices are tracking sets of indicators that relate to the measures. In 2002, top Census Bureau management will use the plan for the same purpose, but staff leading the strategic planning effort will seek to improve the development and use of performance standards, annual performance plans, and performance measures.

Responsibility for managing the plan remains with the Office of the Comptroller, under the PAD/CFO. However, substantive responsibility has shifted to the PAD/P—the strategic planning “champion” for the Bureau—demonstrating that strategic planning is an integral part of Census Bureau work, not a purely administrative task. Top management is concerned that Bureau staff do not understand the four key strategic planning goals or their organization’s role in helping to achieve these goals. However, top management acknowledges that the current plan was not widely distributed; in fact, the current plan is still labeled “draft.” There are efforts to distribute the 2003 plan more broadly.

Strategic Planning in the Field Directorate

The Field Directorate’s role in the strategic planning process has been at the headquarters level. The Associate Director for Field Operations is a member of the Executive Staff, the Census Bureau’s leadership group that formally adopts the plan. Directorate staff also serve on some planning teams. As yet, there have been no sessions to secure RD input.

Of the 28 objectives, none refers to the Field Directorate, and only one Performance Goal under an objective does so. That is objective 4.3 under Goal 4, and it is; “Continue to advance our application of the latest technologies, statistical, and survey methodologies to meet the program area needs.” The performance goal is to; “Apply innovative techniques to the training of field staff to enable them to produce results and collect data that meet the requirements of program sponsors and the needs of data users including policy makers, businesses, and the public.” The performance measure is; “Levels of responses and participation—from a less-willing and less cooperative public—for personal visit data collection for surveys and censuses are maintained.” A footnote in the plan indicates that this initiative is funded through the working capital fund. None of the Field Directorate staff in headquarters or the field mentioned this goal or measure.

The Field Directorate conducts much of its own operational planning to enhance performance and achieve short- and mid-term goals. Because work never stops, such changes as converting surveys from a DOS to a Windows program must be planned with precision. Extensive planning is now underway to prepare for full ACS implementation.

Panel Discussion and Recommendations: Strategic Planning

Census Bureauwide efforts aside, the Field Directorate should develop a more “strategic” planning process of its own, one that uses the GPRA concepts and adapts techniques that other agencies have successfully used to relate planning to performance. An important step at any time, concerted strategic planning is especially essential given ACS implementation.

In addition, it is essential that there be greater RO and RD involvement in the process as they represent a large part of Census Bureau staff, conduct nearly all of its operational work, and are on the front line for upcoming ACS implementation. Their input and feedback will be particularly important during the next strategic planning phase, which will develop performance standards and annual performance plans.

There are several ways to obtain regional input to Census Bureau strategic planning. The Bureau could involve all regions individually, but this would be expensive and take a great deal of premium staff time. Another option would be to assign one person as the focal point between the headquarters strategic planning staff and the RO staff; this would logically be within the Directorate. For the FDC to represent the RDs and their staffs in this headquarters planning process, there must be an effective communication system to secure input and provide feedback.

The FDC should establish a team to develop appropriate regional performance plans and standards and work with the PAD/P and staff in the Office of Information Systems and Support Review to have effective input into the process.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Associate Director for Field Operations:

- **Lead the effort to develop a Directorate strategic planning process that produces operational action plans, with a feedback loop containing performance measures that relates activities to goals.**
- **Designate the Field Division Chief as the focal point for providing regional input to the Census Bureau's strategic planning process, and establish a means to make Regional Directors partners in the strategic planning process.**

Periodic RD meetings are one vehicle to elicit RD input in a group setting, and they provide a good venue for general discussion. Yet, they may not be appropriate as the sole venue to develop input or provide feedback, which requires more of a hands-on working approach. Working with a small group of RDs or interacting with a larger group, using existing technology such as e-mail and video teleconferencing, can accomplish this objective. While the champion process could be used to secure input, strategic planning is a basic management function; as such, overall responsibility should not be assigned to an RD champion.

WORKFORCE PLANNING: THE KEY TO TOMORROW

Workforce planning is the strategic alignment of an organization's human capital with its mission, goals, and operations. It is a methodical process used to analyze the current workforce, determine future workforce needs, establish variances between the present and future, and implement solutions so an organization can achieve its mission and accomplish its work. In the federal government, there is a strong tie between workforce planning and achieving agency goals for developing a diverse workforce.

Workforce planning is one of the most effective tools that federal executives and managers can use to ensure that their strategic plans are successfully developed and implemented. It is especially important because it documents the current workforce in terms of occupational distribution, current and projected attrition during the next five years, and current and future competency requirements resulting from an agency's strategic and annual performance plans.¹⁷ Prior Academy studies examined workforce planning best practices and efforts in a range of federal agencies, including several organizations within the Departments of Energy, Defense, and Agriculture. Among the key findings were that top management must lead a workforce plan's development and implementation; provide clarity about linking workforce and strategic plans; ensure accountability to implement a workforce plan; establish a performance management system that links individual performance to strategic goals and objectives; and coach employees to improve performance to meet those goals.¹⁸

Determining the competencies—knowledge and skills—required for effective job performance is an essential component of the workforce plan. A competency model serves as the basis for decisions about key staff capabilities needed to perform specific work, as well as for recruitment, training design, career development, employee assessment, mentoring, and succession planning.

OMB issued a bulletin on workforce planning and restructuring in May 2001. One of its stated goals was to use workforce planning to help agencies redistribute higher-level positions to front-line, service delivery positions that have citizen interaction.¹⁹ Other requirements were that agencies develop a restructuring plan as part of their FY 2003 budget submissions and annual performance plans. The Census Bureau's *Restructuring Plan* discusses the importance of workforce planning and its relation to the strategic plan. It focuses a great deal on training, including reference to Field Directorate initiatives, but has relatively little on succession planning.

The Department of Health and Human Services developed a departmental workforce planning model that became the basis for action. The Department specified that each unit's workforce plan should document its workforce analysis, competency assessments, gap analysis, and transition planning. These were to relate to staffing requirements contained in budget estimates and to GPRAs goals.²⁰ As an example, the National Institute on Drug Abuse's workforce plan for FY 2002-2003 relates staffing needs directly to its major research areas, estimates its annual staff turnover, and links its recruitment, training, and retention strategies with programs and specific staffing needs.²¹ It is noteworthy that the National Institutes of Health's workforce planning resources include a prominent reference to the Census Bureau's data on labor and population statistics.

¹⁷ National Academy of Public Administration, *Building the Workforce of the Future to Achieve Organizational Success*, December 1999, Washington, DC, p. 8.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. viii-ix.

¹⁹ OMB Bulletin No. 01-07, Workforce Planning & Restructuring, May 8, 2001, p 1.

²⁰ Office of Human Resources, Department of Health and Human Services, *Building Successful Organizations: Workforce Planning in HHS*, November 1999, p. 6-7.

²¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Workforce Plan: FY 2002-2003*, pp. 1 and 4. Available on the Internet at www1.od.nih.gov/ohrm/PROGRAMS/WF-Plng/

The Federal Highway Administration used the 1999 Department of Transportation *Workforce Planning Guide*,²² and developed the Workforce Planning and Professional Development Task Force in 2000. The extensive report defined the elements of workforce planning and how to conduct it, and related planning to specific programs and work. The detailed workforce analysis was designed as a resource to managers throughout the Administration.²³ The task force's methodology included 46 outreach sessions with employees, most of them outside of Washington, DC. The report culminated in 37 action steps that the Administration committed to undertake; the Administrator endorsed all of them and appointed an implementation team from among task force members. The results have included changes in personnel policies, permitting greater flexibility in using recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives. Authority to use these bonuses was specifically delegated to senior field managers.²⁴

In mid-2001, the Census Bureau created the Human Capital Management Council, which was designed to maintain a corporate approach to workforce planning. It presents proposals to the Executive Staff on such topics as investment and development, organizational design, and changing workforce needs. Field Directorate representation includes staff from the Office of Administration and the Censuses Office within the Field Division. There is no training office or RO representation.

At the March 2001 meeting, RDs said they believed that the Field Directorate's management duties should include planning and succession. There are RD champions who handle training and recruiting, but an individual has not yet been given designated responsibility for workforce planning within the Directorate or the RDs.

Discussion and Recommendation: Workforce Planning

Effective workforce planning is the Field Directorate's best tool to ensure that people are in the right place and have the right skills to respond to the changing environment in which survey work is conducted and to absorb the major increases in ACS-associated work. The Census Bureau's *Restructuring Plan* relates its mission to human capital needs on an aggregate level. This is an important first step, but focus and talent are needed to put workforce planning into action at the Directorate level. Although the Bureau devises broad plans, it is Directorate staff who know the work and can substantively plan for the future.

There are solid models for conducting an effective workforce plan. The Panel believes that the Directorate's top leadership, in coordination with the Census Bureau's Office of Human Resources Development, must devote significant effort to assessing its current competencies, analyzing future needs, and determining gaps that need to be filled.

²² U.S. Department of Transportation, *Workforce Planning Guide*, April 1999. The guide contains a model workforce plan and is available at www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/transworkforce/studies.asp

²³ Federal Highway Administration, Workforce Planning and Development Task Force, *Positioning FHWA for the Future*, December 1, 2001. Full report available at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/workforce/index.htm>

²⁴ FHWA Personnel Management Manual, Transmittal 8, July 18, 2001.

Therefore, the Academy Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

Develop a coordinated approach to workforce planning throughout the Directorate, building on Bureauwide competency assessments and the *Restructuring Plan*.

PREPARING MANAGERS FOR TODAY AND LEADERS FOR TOMORROW

Research shows that high-impact companies, public sector agencies, and other institutions attribute much of their front-runner status to recognizing training as key to an effective management strategy.²⁵ Training within an organization is conducted on several levels. Distinctions are made for training that prepares someone to perform a current job or assignment; enhances an employee's broad set of skills/competencies; and develops broad management and leadership abilities.

The locus for the Field Directorate's training work is the FTCDO. Its role in organizational and individual development includes organizational assessments, team building, problem solving, and interpersonal skills development. It also is involved in developing a mentoring and coaching system (with an initial focus on RO employees), an orientation program for Field Directorate-wide employees, and competencies for the Directorate job series.

Training for Survey Work

A Blue Ribbon Task Force on Interviewer Training Design recommended in 1997 that the Directorate design a new curriculum for interviewer training. The goals were to incorporate sound adult learning training methods, and address the increased use of technology in data collection, substantial changes in the national workforce profile, and changes in public response and cooperation with government survey activities. This has been a major project that will continue through FY 2005.

Within the Field Directorate, preparing staff to conduct survey interviews receives heavy emphasis. Interviewers receive regular training, first the basic techniques course and later classroom or self-study courses for each survey. The latter are used more often when individuals have already worked on a survey. New FRs must complete home-based study to gain familiarity with the laptops and basic interview techniques before they have classroom training. Training is supplemented by survey manuals, which provide in-depth background on survey purpose and specific questions. In general, field staff interviewed felt well-prepared to conduct their interviews.

Previously, survey training was centralized within the Field Directorate, but it was decentralized to the survey branches (under the ADC for Surveys) in the Field Division several years ago. All staff interviewed preferred the decentralized method because branch trainers have become familiar with individual surveys. They also can work more directly with Field Division staff who coordinate the survey with the program divisions and ROs. Surveys Office branch staff said they

²⁵ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *A Guide to Strategically Planning Training and Measuring Results*, p. 1 (USOPM, Washington, DC, August 2000).

have more direct control over training resources than when the function was centralized within the Directorate. An advisory training group, composed of training unit representatives throughout the Field Directorate, shares information among the several groups with operational training responsibilities.

Of FTCDO's 14 staff, 12 deal with operational training issues, such as the redesign of interviewer training. They also developed computer-based training for interviewers switching to Windows-based laptop computers. FTCDO may soon begin to develop some additional generic survey training that can be used for numerous surveys. This could reduce the time and expense for individual survey training development.

The Field Directorate has not yet developed a distance learning curriculum. Only four regions, the NPC, and the Census Bureau's telephone center have received definite approval for a distance learning classroom in FY 2002. The other regions await news on new leases. The ultimate goal is to have such classrooms in all ROs, but not to replace self-study for surveys. They more likely would be used for RO staff development or group survey training. The FTCDO would like to offer one of the Census Corporate University courses on refusal avoidance via distance learning, and it is discussing this prospect with the instructor. The long-term goal is to extend the university curriculum to the regions.

Directorate Efforts to More Broadly Meet Training Needs

Individual survey training appears to meet staff needs generally, but an integrated training approach for field staff is a recurring theme within the Field Directorate. One recommendation from the March 2001 RD meeting was that the Census Bureau should develop a training strategy and assign resources to ensure a sufficient level of technology capacity in the ROs. The PAD/CFO would like more consistency for field staff training, essentially giving them training that is available for the rest of the Census Bureau.

FTCDO develops and manages the Leadership Development Program. In late 1997, the Field Directorate took the Office of Personnel Management's "draft" executive core qualifications and asked the RDs and NPC director to identify those that could be the foundation for an executive development program. The Directorate narrowed the list from 27 competencies to ten, concentrating on those that represented the RDs' greatest developmental needs. The Directorate, in consultation with the Census Bureau's Human Resources Division, selected the Federal Executive Institute to conduct the program. The RDs went for two weeks, in August 1998, and again in January 1999. The PAD/CFO and Associate Director for Field Operations attended as regular students, and the then-Deputy Director also participated in the first week.

In late 2001, the headquarters-based ADCs—Field Division and TMO—also attended the Federal Executive Institute. They found the experience so helpful that they requested a program be established for their branch chiefs. Program staff also go to the Center for Executive Leadership, which is separate from the Institute's standard programs. They are generally tailored to cover Census Bureau issues and concerns. Institute programs do not include RO coordinators (GS-13), who have their own "Introduction to Field Leadership" program. It follows the

Institute's competency-based model, and nearly all of its facilitators are from outside the Bureau; Directorate staff indicated that several have national reputations.

Survey supervisors (GS-5 through GS-12) take a course entitled "Introduction to Field Supervision." Several regional staff rated the course as excellent, but said it was not given often enough. In addition to the content, they liked interacting with other RO staff. The project team was told that the course had not been provided for more than 10 years due to a shortage of funds and low post-1990 Bureau turnover. The FTCDO recently redesigned the course, using a private contractor, an advisory board, and field input. The new course is a competency-based, week-long program held at headquarters.

The Field Directorate put the program in place in the late 1990s because regions were about to hire nearly 100 new field survey supervisors to replace those who transferred to the Regional Census Centers for Census 2000. Thus, the program was designed for recent hires with at least three months experience, but a small number of senior people also attended. The Directorate has conducted five "Introduction to Field Supervision" courses since the program was reinstated. In 2002, it plans two short refreshers and two full-week courses. Headquarters personnel recently inquired about something similar for them.

Although courses are in place, there is no clear crosswalk among the courses offered, their frequency, and staff needs. Staff do not develop individual development plans.

Finding the Resources for Training

Access to resources is a key problem in developing a comprehensive program. Census Bureau staff outside the Field Directorate receive Bureau overhead funds from the centralized working capital fund to support most of their training. In addition, some divisions supplement their training funding with additional program overhead funds accessed for individual survey work. DSD is one such division.

The Field Directorate does not receive any working capital fund support for its training activities. Survey reimbursements directly fund survey-related training costs. Program division overhead funds support executive development, general skill enhancement, and all other non-survey specific training. Budget staff within the Office of Administration calculate these funds as a straight percentage of direct field salary costs for individual surveys. The funds—30 percent of direct salary costs—must support training costs as well as all other administrative staff and related costs in the field headquarters units and the ROs.

The Field Directorate's decennial staff manage a USDA Graduate School contract initially intended to provide the School's courses to Directorate employees; regions would participate in its regional courses. Some of these funds have been redirected toward participation in a Census Corporate University's Project Management course, which is essentially available to Directorate headquarters employees. Decennial staff also manage a \$3 million Office of Personnel Management contract that deals with training and training research. Funds have not yet been allocated from this contract.

For two years, the Field Directorate has allocated only \$15,000 to each region for training, with the funding coming from program division overhead funds. A staff member (such as a program coordinator) coordinates use of the fund, but it is an adjunct duty. One person described the time and effort devoted to this task as limited to administrative duties, such as maintaining information on course availability and helping staff sign up for classes. In FY 2002, each region will receive an additional \$10,000 for training. This was done after the Directorate's headquarters staff were allocated \$400,000 worth from the USDA Graduate School contract. Initially, none of the funds were for regional staff training.

Discussion and Recommendations: Preparing Managers and Leaders

Although workforce planning sets broad parameters for current and future workforce skills, staff development programs take the planning to action. Technical survey training appears well-integrated into the Field Directorate's work, but the Panel believes it is essential for the Directorate to develop integrated training opportunities that are available to staff on a regular basis. The enhanced workforce planning effort will identify needs for the long term, and Directorate staff, especially the RDs, can clearly express immediate needs. Expanded training efforts need not wait for special planning; but, they seem to depend upon additional resources. Although funds may come from different Directorate sources, they must be used as part of an integrated approach to training all Directorate staff.

The Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

- **Develop training priorities for the Field Directorate as a whole, with substantial input from the Field Division Chief and Regional Directors.**
- **Develop Individual Development Plans for staff so that the Directorate has better information on the skills that staff need to develop for their work and career advancement and whether the training provided matches staff needs and aspirations.**
- **Initiate an aggressive strategy to define resource needs for nonsurvey training for Field Directorate staff, and present these spending requests to the Principal Associate Director/Chief Financial Officer.**

The Panel recommends that the Principal Associate Director/Chief Financial Officer:

- **Work within the Census Bureau to ensure equitable funding for Field Directorate staff development training drawn from working capital funds, and earmark a portion of these funds for regional office staff training.**

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession planning is one part of an organization's broader workforce planning agenda. It identifies key talent and leadership needs over time and helps determine how to prepare staff for present and future work responsibilities. Given the federal workforce's expected turnover in the next five years, succession planning should be a key component of all federal workforce plans.

The General Services Administration's *Succession Planning Guide*²⁶ identifies generic and specific skills that its real property workforce will need, and lists federal contacts and web sites with related resource information. Its succession planning effort has included development of core competencies for major segments of its real property workforce.

The Social Security Administration recognized the potential for heightened customer demand for its services and increased retirements among its own workforce; more than half of its workforce will be eligible to retire by 2009. Recognizing that eligibility was not an exact predictor of employee losses, the Administration developed predictions for workforce losses over the next 20 years, partially based on 10 years of historical retirement data and focus groups with recent retirees and those eligible. The latter were done to identify factors that affect retirement decisions. These efforts coincide with its work to identify core staff competencies needed, and to develop automated self-assessment tools for evaluating whether improvements are needed for these competencies. These assessments and related training plans deal largely with current workforce needs, but the Administration is identifying competencies that reflect its future workforce needs in order to recruit and train staff to handle more complex customer needs and new technology tools.²⁷ The Administration also used these retirement data to develop a workforce transition plan to ensure that current and future employees have the skills necessary to continually provide good service to its customers.

The *Bureau Restructuring Plan* notes that succession planning is integrated with the Census Bureau's overall corporate workforce development plan. The short description describes a three-pronged effort: developing a curriculum that builds leadership development into training for professional employees; establishing a formal management and executive development program for current supervisors, managers, and executives; and providing selected individuals with assignments and experiences to enhance their understanding of and experience in the Bureau's strategic interests.

The project team asked several Field Directorate staff if they were aware of a Census Bureau succession planning program. None were. Several other Bureau staff, not all of them in the Directorate, raised succession planning as an important activity; one RO staff member said that in the past there would have been overlap between the individual leaving a job and the replacement.

²⁶ General Services Administration, *Succession Planning Guide*, FY 2001, pp 4-5 and 10-12.

²⁷ Cynthia Fagnoni, GAO, Statement before the Subcommittees on Social Security and Human Resources of the House Committee on Ways and Means, February 10, 2000, pp. 17-18.

Panel Discussion and Recommendation: Succession Planning

The Census Bureau has a cadre of experienced staff, but there likely will be significant turnover in the next five years as staff retire. When the project team asked for information on overall Bureauwide succession planning, it was clear that efforts were underway. However, information had not filtered down to any employees interviewed for this study.

Bureauwide planning would take place outside the Field Directorate to ensure people are prepared for assuming new positions. However, the Directorate may have challenges that other parts of the Census Bureau do not have, given that its staff are located across the nation and do very different work from those in headquarters. For example, one Bureau competency describes skills needed for a math-stat position. Yet, an RO math-stat survey supervisor primarily uses resource and people management skills, while program division math-stat staff are more likely to deal with technical issues.

Workforce and succession planning are broad issues for which the Field Directorate should look to the Census Bureau's Office of Human Resource Development for guidance. However, descriptions of these planning efforts are broad, and do not appear linked to field staff or those in other portions of the Bureau. The plan is still in draft form.

Field Directorate staff at headquarters and in the regions know the work and the skills needed. They can take the initiative in several areas related to succession planning. The Census Bureau may have an overall perspective, but individual units need to hone in on their people and specific succession planning needs.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

Initiate a succession planning effort to identify and train staff so they have the technical and management leadership skills that the Directorate needs as the expected large proportion of staff begin to retire.

The Field Directorate could begin to implement such a plan by:

1. identifying positions whose incumbents are eligible to retire in the next five years
2. creating a plan to identify and develop a specified number of people to become regional computer specialists, senior administrative staff, survey supervisors, program coordinators, assistant RDs, and RDs over the next five years
3. eliciting input from key regional staff regarding the most important sets of skills they need to perform their jobs well
4. using RO staff individual development plans so their needs and goals can be incorporated into the Directorate's broader succession planning efforts

REGIONAL ROLE FOR THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The RO is the last step in the ACS process, which begins with potential respondent mailings. If an individual does not respond by mail, an NPC calling center attempts a telephone interview. If this fails, an RO will attempt a personal interview with a household member. When an RO is brought into the ACS process, a potential respondent already has declined twice or has been impossible to contact. The ACS questions are more personal than those on some other surveys. This can make these interviews harder to secure and complete. However, because the administration plans that ACS will replace the long form in serving as the basis for billions of dollars of federal fund distribution, full and accurate completion is vital. The Census Bureau is trying to anticipate how technical and administrative systems must change to effectively implement ACS nationwide and maintain high response rates.

Some ACS ramifications are operational, such as the increase in field interviews conducted each month and the related need to have more field staff. Consequently, the Census Bureau estimates that field interviewing staff could double during the next five years for ACS, CPS expansion, and other current survey work. One RO visited expected FRs to increase by 40 percent before January 2003 to handle ACS alone.

As one Associate Director said, everyone in the federal government faces human capital issues. At the Census Bureau, there is a large gap between senior and junior staff, especially in statistical and information technology areas, and it is a challenge to recruit and retain talent. He characterized it as a big budget issue, especially with ACS getting underway.

The Census Bureau recognizes these challenges especially given a 25 percent annual turnover in field interview staff. It is working with Congress to amend the demonstration authority in existing legislation to lift limitations on certain benefits and workforce rules. It hopes to develop a comprehensive, community-based pay system, and to increase temporary and intermittent employees' participation in the federal benefits system.

In the meantime, RO staff are gearing up to recruit hundreds of new interviewers by October 2002, so that they can be trained and ready to begin ACS work in January 2003. Each region has a temporary, contract recruiter, but much of the work will fall on RO staff who will identify and select candidates. Survey supervisors described a protracted process to get new survey interviewing staff on board, differing greatly from the streamlined process used to hire decennial enumerators. However, they recognize that the processes must be more complex as the Census Bureau is trying to hire longer-term employees. In addition, FRs must meet standard federal hiring criteria—such as citizenship—which enumerators are not required to meet.

The Academy project team asked about span-of-control issues related to supervising so many additional interviewers. For example, can a survey supervisor oversee 40 FRs as easily as twenty? RO staff expressed concern, and some cited the need for at least one more survey supervisor or more clerical support. They did not see the need for another program coordinator.

In addition to operational accommodations, a requisite increase in community involvement is needed if ACS is to achieve adequate response rates. The regional role in educating the public

about ACS will be similar to that of the census, except for missing the extensive national publicity or advertising, and with a much-reduced partnership staff. In addition, there will not be the approximately 500 local census offices located throughout the nation. The focus of these local offices has been data collection, but their presence in the community has enhanced public awareness of the need to respond.

Some RDs and staff told the project team that they would like to do substantial partnership work in every state in their regions. Given that RO staff are located in only one city and with a very small partnership staff, they acknowledge that this will be difficult. Currently, the Census Bureau plans to ramp up the partnership effort in fiscal year 2003, in preparation for the 2004 test of Census 2010.

Discussion and Recommendations: Regional Role for ACS

The Panel believes that ACS can be a vehicle to reexamine the Field Directorate's structure, information and management systems, and human capital requirements. Although ACS development is a program responsibility, its successful implementation depends on the Field Directorate, especially its NPC and ROs. There are major questions with regard to recruiting and resource deployment, and broader ones about RO structure and the capacity to manage this major workload increase.

The Panel believes that ACS must be a success in its first year of full implementation. It has created a human capital crunch for the Census Bureau. This will be most evident in the regions, not only among FRs but those who manage them. The Panel has not assessed the Census Bureau's recruiting and training efforts for ACS, but notes the substantial effort underway to obtain needed survey interviewer staff and have them trained by January 2003. Less clear is how the RDs will be able to manage a staff given so many more interviewers.

A reduced partnership function is to exist for the intercensal period (for the first time), but it is not clear if the resources currently available are sufficient for the sustained level of effort needed to garner adequate response rates. The Panel realizes that the Field Directorate can only direct resources to an expanded intercensal partnership effort if the Census Bureau allocates them. Given that the Bureau plans to increase partnership funding in FY 2003, some additional resources may go to partnerships in the regions. Because these increased resources are targeted for the 2010 Census, however, it is possible they will not be there in time to assist with full ACS implementation.

The Panel believes that considerably more partnership specialists will be needed for each RO. The number could be different for each region, given geographic and demographic variations. It also believes that a great deal of knowledge exists throughout the Directorate that can form the basis for an informed judgment about the level of effort needed for an effective ACS partnership program.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

- **Study lessons learned from American Community Survey testing conducted to date to determine the potential impact of full American Community Survey implementation on the Directorate, especially regional, operations.**
- **Assess Regional Office resource levels (such as budget, staffing, travel funds, and administrative support) needed for the increased American Community Survey workload. Be prepared to respond prior to full implementation to ensure that the Regional Offices have adequate resources, especially supervisory staff, to oversee the growth in the number of interviewers.**
- **Determine the appropriate staff and funding levels for the vital partnership function. As a part of this determination, seek input from the regional directors on the additional work likely needed to secure the appropriate response rate and level of resources essential for an adequate partnership effort given full American Community Survey implementation.**
- **Examine, or ask another Census Bureau Directorate to examine, the correlation between specific amounts of outreach and response rates for American Community Survey and other survey rates.**

CHAPTER 5

FIELD DIRECTORATE STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION

As the Census Bureau's principal data collection arm, the Field Directorate conducts data collection and dissemination (done largely through its ROs) that are fundamental to achieving the Bureau's mission. Although these activities have remained relatively stable, the Directorate's organizational structure has evolved over time, primarily its headquarters units. This evolution has reflected technological changes in data collection and new functions to facilitate basic collection and dissemination activities. The current organizational structure for the Field Directorate's major components, shown in Chapter 1, has been in effect since the late 1990s.

Previous chapters reviewed the roles of several major Field Directorate components and the management systems used to achieve critical missions. This chapter builds upon that discussion and the Panel recommendations and identifies alternatives to the current organizational structure that would enhance the Directorate's capability to fulfill its core missions. OMB called on major federal departments and agencies to undertake such a review as part of the President's management reforms to be included in the FY 2003 Budget.²⁸

The *President's Management Agenda* has identified three principles to guide government management reform. They state that government should be:

- citizen-centered, not bureaucracy-centered
- results-oriented
- market-based, actively promoting innovation through competition²⁹

To make government more citizen-centered, agencies are called upon to reduce the number of layers in their organizations and focus more of their resources on front-line, service-delivery operations. OMB directed agencies to prepare their workforce analyses and restructuring plans in a manner consistent with this citizen-centered organizing principle.

HEADQUARTERS ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

After this study began, the Associate Director for Field Operations raised specific organizational questions for the project team to address. These issues are relevant to the Administration's principles to guide management reform. This chapter provides the Panel's recommendations on them. The specific organizational questions are:

- Should an administrative organization be included within or outside Field Division headquarters?

²⁸ OMB Bulletin No. 01-07 on workforce planning and restructuring, issued May 8, 2001

²⁹ *President's Management Agenda*, FY 2002, p. 4

- Should the Partnership and Data Service staff at headquarters remain independent of Field Division headquarters, be merged into that organization, or be merged into another headquarters organization?
- Given that the Field Division is its largest customer, should TMO remain as a separate division or be merged into the Field Division headquarters organization?
- Should the FTCDO remain independent, be merged with the Field Division headquarters organization, or be merged into another headquarters organization?
- Should the “research arm” of Field Division headquarters remain a part of that organization, be established as an independent organization, or be merged into another headquarters organization?

EVOLVING HEADQUARTERS STRUCTURES

Chapter 1 described the major functions of the three major divisions and two small independent offices within the Field Directorate’s current structure. (See Exhibit 5-1 at the end of this chapter.) Chapter 2 described the major structural elements that are common to all 12 regions. Although the number of ROs and their structures have remained relatively stable since 1968, the Field Directorate headquarters structure has been more volatile due partially to technological changes. For example, computer assisted telephone and personal interviews led the Directorate to create a separate TMO. In other instances, specific successes or demands led to new organizational structures. Prime examples are the office for partnerships and the permanent structure that prepares for and manages decennial census-related activities³⁰ during the intercensal period.

NPC aside, the Field Division is the largest Field Directorate division; it includes the regions and several headquarters branches. The latter provide technical and programmatic support for the other units or serve as intermediaries between RO staff—including the FRs and SFRs—and program divisions that contract with the Directorate for data collection services. The Division has three lead ADCs for surveys, censuses, and administration. The staff of the ADC for surveys mediate issues, resources, and other policy concerns between the ROs and the DSD. The Surveys Office’s three branches, which reflect the kinds of surveys managed, include financial surveys, housing and health surveys, and labor and crime surveys.

For these surveys, the branches undertake numerous activities. They:

- meet with program staff and external customers—such as BLS or the Department of Housing and Urban Development—to discuss an upcoming survey
- provide the Census Bureau’s program divisions with cost estimates for field work
- allocate survey budgets among the 12 ROs
- obtain RO comments on the portion of the survey budget proposed for them
- develop training materials and conduct RO supervisor training for each survey

³⁰ These decennial census activities were not a part of the Academy review, although some examination of these functions was necessary to understand other Directorate operations.

- coordinate nearly all survey-related communication between program divisions and RO and field staff
- monitor regional performance and provide daily or weekly progress reports to the ROs and the relevant program division
- resolve problems nationally and regionally

The lead ADC for Censuses was initially created as a temporary position before Census 2000, but made permanent after the census was completed. This office will help provide continuous Field Directorate involvement in planning and testing for Census 2010. In addition, it will oversee ACS implementation and provide a location for the Directorate's continuing geography responsibilities and liaison with the ROs.

A number of the specific headquarters organizational questions the Associate Director raised focus on the newly emerging units within the Directorate headquarters.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Administrative services include a full range of activities, such as budgeting, payroll and bill processing, personnel, procurement, space acquisition, and other contracting services. At least three Field Directorate offices provide some of these administrative services for different organizations within the Directorate, and sometimes for other organizations, including the ROs. These three offices in particular include:

- the Field Division's Administration Office
- the Censuses Group's Budget Management and Oversight Office
- a separate administrative group within the NPC

The Administration Office provides guidance and procedures for the ROs, the Surveys Office, the two independent offices reporting to the Associate Director for Field Operations, and the Associate Director's office. In some cases, these services are provided in conjunction with other headquarters administrative offices, such as the Census Bureau's Human Resources Division. For example, the Administration Office is the focal point for RO human resources issues, while it works directly with the Human Resources Division to process personnel-related work for staff below GS-13. Personnel processing for higher positions goes through the Administration Office to ensure that the Associate Director has an opportunity to review management appointments.

Historically, the Field Directorate established a separate, temporary office to provide administrative services for staff hired to perform the decennial census. As these staff are temporary and paid on a weekly basis, there is a separate payroll system for the roughly 500,000 census enumerators and other temporary staff. This office also plans, procures, and staffs the Regional Census Centers, as well as the more than 500 temporary local decennial census offices. The administrative office disbanded as decennial activities wound down. However, the Budget Management and Oversight Office under the lead ADC for Censuses now provides some

administrative and budgeting services for decennial activities during the intercensal period, including some administrative and budgeting support for ACS.³¹

Although the project team did not review NPC activities, interviews elsewhere indicated that the NPC has independent hiring authority and performs budgeting, personnel processing, and other administrative services for itself and the three telephone centers it supervises.

In addition, TMO prepares its own budget and provides some technical support activities, such as procuring and managing laptops and other equipment for other Field Directorate divisions. However, the Administration Office provides most other TMO administrative support, including budget clerical support and oversight of budget activities.

Discussion and Recommendation: Administrative Services

ROs appear satisfied with the administrative support that the Administration Office provides. However, there is growing concern about having this support provided by staff in different offices, particularly in the new office under the ADC for Censuses. RO staff have found it confusing to receive different guidance and reporting instructions on similar administrative issues from multiple offices. The potential for confusion and conflict likely will increase as ACS is implemented nationwide. Consolidating Field Division administrative services within its Administration Office would overcome this potential problem.

As the same time, the Field Division's Administration Office already provides some administrative support for the Directorate beyond the Field Division. This raises the broader issue of whether all administrative functions within the Directorate should be consolidated into one office. This would produce economies of scale, support the efficient provision of costly specialized services in very technical areas, provide back-up support to ensure greater availability of services, eliminate confusion and costly duplication, and establish clear and direct accountability for service delivery. Consolidating administrative functions also would be consistent with the delayering and restructuring objectives of the *President's Management Agenda*.

The Panel recommends that the Field Directorate:

Consolidate administrative services in headquarters under an Administration Office that reports directly to the Associate Director for Field Operations.

This proposed consolidation should not preclude separate administrative support systems to service the extensive use of temporary staff for decennial censuses. Further analysis of NPC operations and its independent administrative activities is needed to determine whether NPC has any unique needs that would best be served through continued independent administrative operations.

³¹ The project staff encountered some conflicting views on the extent of the administrative services provided by this office relative to the Administration Office for ACS and other decennial activities.

PARTNERSHIP AND DATA SERVICES STAFF

With nine staff members, the Partnership and Data Services staff are a small, separate group within the Field Directorate that reports directly to the Associate Director. The staff's work has changed as their mission has evolved. There always has been a data dissemination function in the ROs, but that information services program has evolved primarily from responding to specific data requests to a more proactive function working with state data centers, educating local governments and nonprofit organizations in accessing data, and responding to individual requests. In addition, one or two different groups within the Census Bureau previously distributed national census data. Much of that activity now has been automated, made available through the Bureau web site, and managed primarily by the Marketing and Customer Liaison Office (MCLO) under the Principal Associate Director for Programs.

The Census Bureau saw numerous advantages to building strong partnerships during Census 2000. Among them were:

- better access to previously isolated and historically undercounted population groups
- greater willingness to respond to questions, once the need for and use of those data were better understood
- easier recruitment of enumerators and other data collectors, especially those from isolated or historically undercounted population groups
- ease in gaining cooperation from the respondents to facilitate enumeration
- higher response rates across a range of groups

The 1990 census entailed an extensive outreach effort, which ended as the census concluded. The data services component was retained and housed initially within the Geography Branch under the lead ADC for Censuses. Information Services staff distributed census data to the regions and answered questions. In 1996, as planning for Census 2000 intensified, the staff were merged into a new Partnership Branch also located in the Field Directorate's Field Division.

Census 2000 placed partnership functions in several Census Bureau offices, depending on the type of activity. The ROs substantially expanded their partnership and data dissemination staffs to develop local partnerships with a range of governmental, business, community, and religious groups. The latter provide many services to traditionally undercounted groups. The Partnership Branch within the Field Division was combined with another Partnership Branch that had been within the Decennial Management Division and elevated to a separate office reporting to the Associate Director for Field Operations.

The Bureau's Customer Liaison Office, which reports to the Assistant Director for MCLO, developed some national partnerships, including those with labor unions and other state-oriented entities. Staff in the Communications Directorate's Census 2000 Public Information Office cultivated partnerships with other national entities, especially the media and other major interest groups, such as the NAACP and the Urban League, and coordinated these national efforts with the paid advertising program.

Many census partnership activities ended with Census 2000, but the Census Bureau chose to retain a partnership program at a reduced funding level during the intercensal period. This decision was based on strong recommendations from the RDs, who supported the use of those resources for current survey activities and did not want to start from scratch for Census 2010. Regional staff in the ROs thought continued work with local governments, organizations, and media would make it easier for them to secure current survey interviews. Some would like to see continued paid advertising so that potential respondents would know that the Bureau does work beyond the decennial census.

Discussion and Recommendation: Partnerships and Data Services Staff

The Panel believes an intercensal partnership program is appropriately located within the Field Directorate, given its obvious regional and local orientation. This should help to provide public support and interest as ACS expands to every county. One could make the case for having that office report to the FDC, since most intercensal partnership work focuses on supporting local partnership activities designed to improve survey response rates, lower costs, and promote ACS awareness.

Yet, a stronger case could be made for retaining the office in its current location, reporting directly to the Associate Director. This would demonstrate that the intercensal partnership program can support RO operations, especially ACS activities. It also would avoid overburdening the FDC with additional management responsibilities. Most importantly, the current location would maintain an appropriately high level of attention and help ensure that partnership activities are fully coordinated among divisions outside the Directorate with related programs.

Successful ACS implementation will involve every major Field Directorate component and require effective, coordinated use of all Directorate and other Census Bureau resources, including intercensal partnership resources.

The Panel recommends that:

The partnership function continue to report to the Associate Director for Field Operations to emphasize its importance and priority for successful survey operations, particularly a nationwide American Community Survey.

THE TECHNOLOGIES MANAGEMENT OFFICE

TMO's growth, size, and location reflect the impact of rapid technological change. During the early 1990s, TMO was a part of the Administration Office, but it was separated from the Field Division in 1994 and established as an independent division reporting directly to the Associate Director. There now are about 150 staff in TMO, about the same size as the Field Division headquarters components, and its organizational structure is evolving. TMO's major responsibilities include:

- software support for the computer assisted telephone and personal interview operations
- software development for specific survey instruments
- information technology systems support for the entire field Directorate, including database and systems maintenance, the local area network for field and ROs, and a technical assistance center
- laptop and desktop PC management and replacement

Although the Field Division and ROs remain TMO's major customers, the office provides similar support to all Field Directorate entities and outside divisions. NPC receives major computer assisted telephone interview and other systems support for its telephone centers and other data processing activities. Project team interviews did not reveal any dissatisfaction or concerns about TMO's current location.

Discussion and Recommendation: Technologies Management Office

There are several important reasons to retain TMO's current structure, and not relocate it under the Field Division. First, its sheer size would impose a major burden on the new FDC. Second, the FDC's attention would be diverted from broader Division issues to more technical issues. Third, TMO has highly technical functions in an evolving field, adding yet another skill requirement to the FDC position, one that was not in the job announcement. Further, future technological change will likely reinforce the need for a separate information technology operation within the Field Directorate.

Therefore, the Panel recommends that:

The Technologies Management Office remain a separate division within the Field Directorate, reporting directly to the Associate Director.

LOCATION OF THE FIELD TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Prior to 1997, the training function was a single branch within the Field Division and geared toward headquarters staff; there was no training for regional staff beyond specific survey training. The Field Directorate created FTCDO in 1997 to provide Field Directorate staff with opportunities for learning and professional development. The FTCDO Director reports to the Associate Director for Field Operations.

FTCDO has three functions:

- developing data collection training (12 staff)
- conducting the Leadership Development Program, a one-week, mandatory program for senior management staff (1 staff member)
- providing distance learning development (1 staff member)

Given the Field Directorate's mission, it is not surprising that FTCDO allocates the vast majority of its resources to preparing content for and overseeing general interviewer training. FTCDO staff coordinate these activities with Field Division staff in the Surveys Office, and with the ROs that provide the FRs' technical training for individual surveys. FTCDO staff plan to develop a common, basic training syllabus for all FRs to reduce duplicative interviewer training and ensure Directorate-wide consistency in the use of effective interview techniques.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Field Directorate staff appear to have fewer career development and general skills-enhancing opportunities than other Census Bureau staff, primarily due to differences in funding sources. The Bureau's working capital funds currently do not support non-survey field training for Directorate staff as they do for other Bureau staff. FTCDO programs attempt to meet the Directorate staff's career development and general skills training needs, but they must compete with other survey training needs for limited survey funds.

Panel Discussion and Recommendation: Field Training and Career Development Office

Training is a key function in any organization. The question posed to the Panel was whether FTCDO should continue to report to the Associate Director, be transferred under the Field Division, or move to another headquarters organization.

The Panel believes that the Field Directorate can secure more tailored service by retaining survey training. This function is directly related to the Directorate's mission, and field work is different from headquarters work. As noted above, FTCDO has devoted the bulk of its resources and activity to such training. If the Bureau were to centralize career development and other general training—and develop a service-oriented mechanism to distribute training equitably among its divisions—this function could be consolidated. From the Directorate's perspective, a major advantage would be a potential increase in staff training funding, as working capital funds would be available to support non-survey field training. On the other hand, the major workforce and succession planning issues discussed in Chapter 4 would be more effectively resolved if the function were retained within the Directorate.

Relocating FTCDO under the Field Division would facilitate consolidation of training activities for the largest number of Field Directorate's staff: the Division's headquarters and regional staffs. However, non-operational training, training design, and career development training are very different from technical survey training. The need for career development, general skills enhancement, and other general management training exists for all Directorate components, not just Division staff. The Associate Director for Field Operations has appropriately focused on, and must continue to address, the Directorate staff's training needs and career development, especially when grooming future leaders.

Retaining the FTCDO function at the Associate Director level would ensure a continued high level, Directorate-wide focus, and send the message that training and career development are top Directorate priorities. It also would avoid potential funding conflicts that would occur if the function were moved to the Field Division; survey training priorities could work against broader Field Directorate training priorities. In addition, maintaining the current location would help

implement the Panel's recommendations in Chapter 4 on enhanced career development training and effective succession planning.

The Panel recommends that:

The Career Development and Training function continue to report to the Associate Director for Field Operations to reinforce the Field Directorate's strong commitment to employee training and development.

THE DIRECTORATE EVALUATION AND RESEARCH GROUP

The ADC for Evaluation and Research (E&R) reports to the lead ADC for Censuses. The E&R group currently includes four branches:

- Methods Research
- ACE (Accuracy and Coverage) Field Procedures and Training
- ACE Automation and Quality Assurance
- ACE Implementation

Notwithstanding its reporting structure and current branch composition, the group's research activities include issues for the Censuses and Surveys Offices. One of its major tasks is to perform research on the interviewer workforce, including performance measurement, turnover, and interviewer and enumerator selection criteria. The group also is involved in program training support, field training program evaluations, and quality control issues.

E&R staff have done projects for all parts of the Directorate, including ones that the Associate Director requests. For example, the group worked on a major 1995 field reorganization study. More recently, the Associate Director requested that E&R begin a formal evaluation of the Chicago RO's survey interview boundary method for organizing FRs and SFRs.

Discussion and Recommendation: Evaluation and Research Group

The Panel believes that the current placement of E&R does not reflect the breadth of its work. Moving E&R under the FDC or Associate Director for Field Operations would more consistently reflect its current mission and ensure an appropriate prioritization of research and evaluation projects. Moving the group to the FDC would help allow for more effective use of analytical resources within that division, particularly in the ROs. E&R's analytical capability would provide a valuable tool for the FDC when identifying areas where additional analysis would be useful, and it would help the new FDC to develop and evaluate alternatives for improving field operations in critical areas. This change also would be consistent with the earlier recommendation to provide additional financial management and analytical capability within ROs.

These benefits would remain in place if E&R were to report to the Associate Director. However, this higher level reporting relationship would imply a broader analytic and evaluation mission for

E&R. Such a broader scope may be particularly important when implementing ACS. NPC and the ROs have critical data collection functions under ACS; evaluating the effectiveness of their operations and interactions will be needed to ensure successful implementation within the resources available.

The Panel recommends that:

The Evaluation and Research Group be elevated within the Field Directorate and report to the new Field Division Chief or to the Associate Director, depending upon the focus of future evaluation activities.

Although the Panel shares the Administration's concerns about delayering and restructuring, the need for an effective, high-level focus on E&R activities within the Field Directorate and Field Division is an important consideration. The next section addresses another option for achieving organizational restructuring and delayering objectives simultaneously.

ADDITIONAL CONSOLIDATION OPTION

The Panel recommendations on headquarters organizational structure issues support the consolidation of Directorate administrative services within the Office of Administration. However, these recommendations would not reduce the number of offices that directly report to the Associate Director, shown in Exhibit 5-1 at the end of this chapter; instead, they would add the consolidated Office of Administration and possibly the Evaluation and Research Group. As discussed above, the Panel believes there are sound management reasons for having the career development and training and the E&R functions report directly to the Associate Director for Field Operations.

The resulting Field Directorate organizational structure of three major divisions—the Field Division, NPC, and TMO—and three or four independent offices—Administration, FTCDO, Partnership and Data Services, and possibly E&R—appears consistent with the scope of current Directorate responsibilities and activities. Nonetheless, the Panel believes that some additional restructuring would be responsive to the objectives in OMB's Bulletin 01-07 and realize the program and management advantages contained in the Panel's previous recommendations.

Office of Organizational Effectiveness

A number of previous Panel recommendations have focused on the need to strengthen the Field Directorate's planning, analytical, and training functions. Other recommendations have emphasized the need for the Directorate not only to anticipate change and evaluate potential solutions better, but also to implement recommended solutions more effectively. The Panel believes that these concerns could be most effectively addressed by consolidating within one office the processes for identifying issues, developing solutions, preparing staff to perform in new ways, and monitoring the implementation of recommended solutions. All of these are geared toward making an organization the best it can be.

Creating an Office of Organizational Effectiveness within the Field Directorate, reporting directly to the Associate Director, would be fully consistent with the citizen-centered principle for organizing government identified in the *President's Management Agenda* and reaffirmed in the OMB Bulletin on workforce planning and restructuring. Specifically, it would improve the Directorate's ability to:

- integrate the enhanced RO analytical capability and elevated E&R headquarters office recommended by the Panel, as well as the ROs' expanded role in strategic planning and additional workforce planning activities in the FTCDO
- coordinate staff training and development plans with changing resource requirements as workforce and strategic planning become more integral functions within the Bureau and the Directorate
- implement organizational or operational recommendations emanating from past Directorate reassessments, by having one senior office director responsible for managing change

Managing the organizational change process is a critical responsibility for federal leaders. The Department of Veterans Affairs defines organizational change as “any action or set of actions resulting in a shift in direction or process that affects the way an organization works. Change can be deliberate and planned by leaders within...or can originate outside the organization (i.e., budget cuts by Congress) and be beyond control.”³² Essentially, the Office of Organizational Effectiveness would have the tools to take the lead in this area for the Directorate. Given the issues that the *Bureau Restructuring Plan* addresses, many of them critical to Directorate functions, the Directorate will need a consolidated, organized approach to anticipating and managing change.

The Panel recommends that:

The Field Directorate emphasize the importance of effectively anticipating and efficiently managing change by creating an Office of Organizational Effectiveness to manage the Directorate's research, evaluation, strategic planning, workforce planning, and training functions.

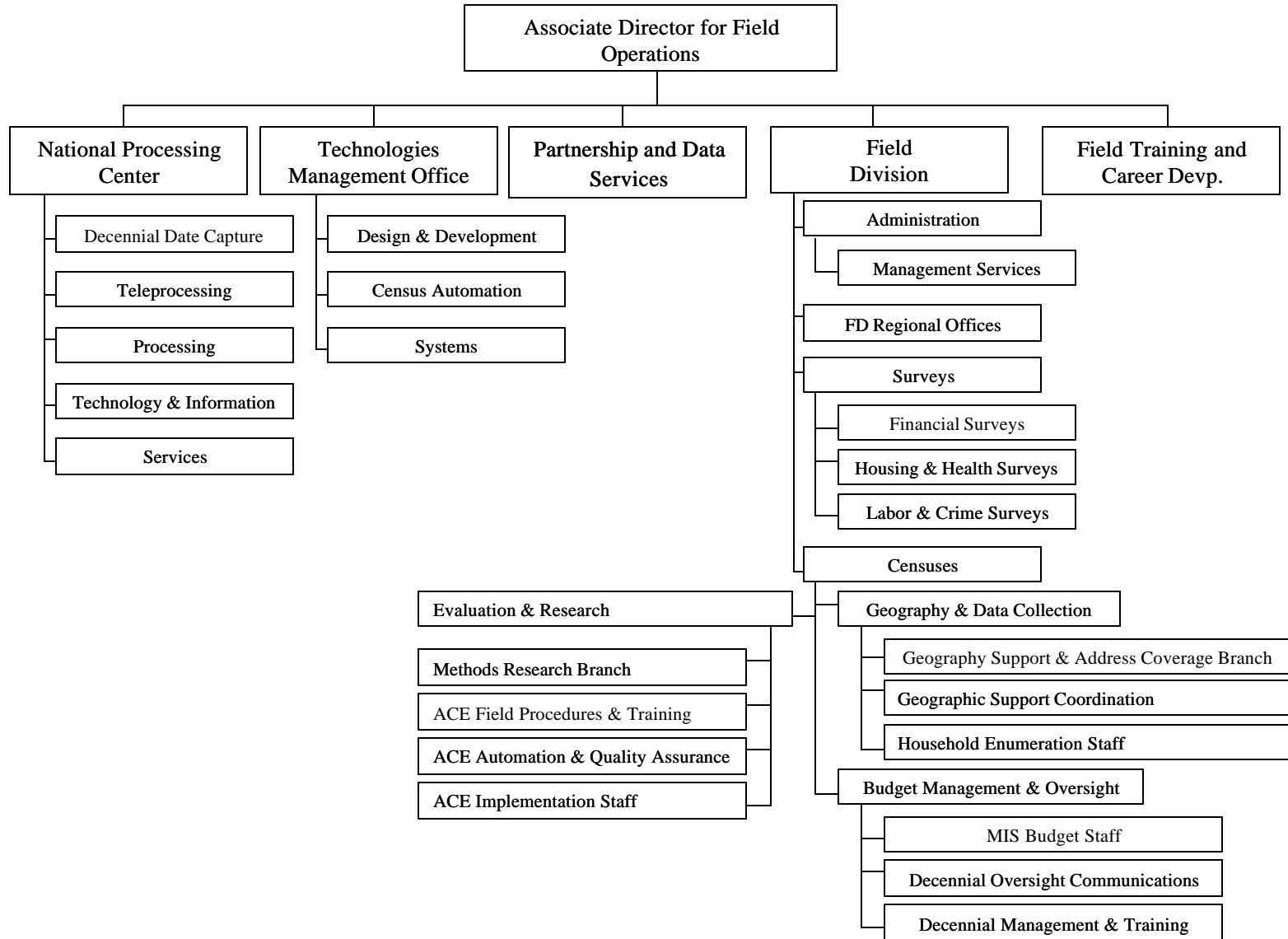
The Panel's proposed organizational structure for the Field Directorate is shown in Exhibit 5-2 at the end of this chapter. There would be three divisions and three separate offices—the Partnership and Data Services Office, the consolidated Administration Office and the new Office of Organizational Effectiveness—reporting to the Associate Director for Field Operations. The Panel believes that this structure provides better support for the Directorate's current missions and greater flexibility to accommodate future changes and management challenges that the ACS expansion and technological changes are likely to impose.

The Panel recognizes the Directorate's resource and management challenges, especially as the Bureau implements ACS. Even though this proposed consolidation of existing offices might not require any additional, permanent resources, it will require management attention, and impose

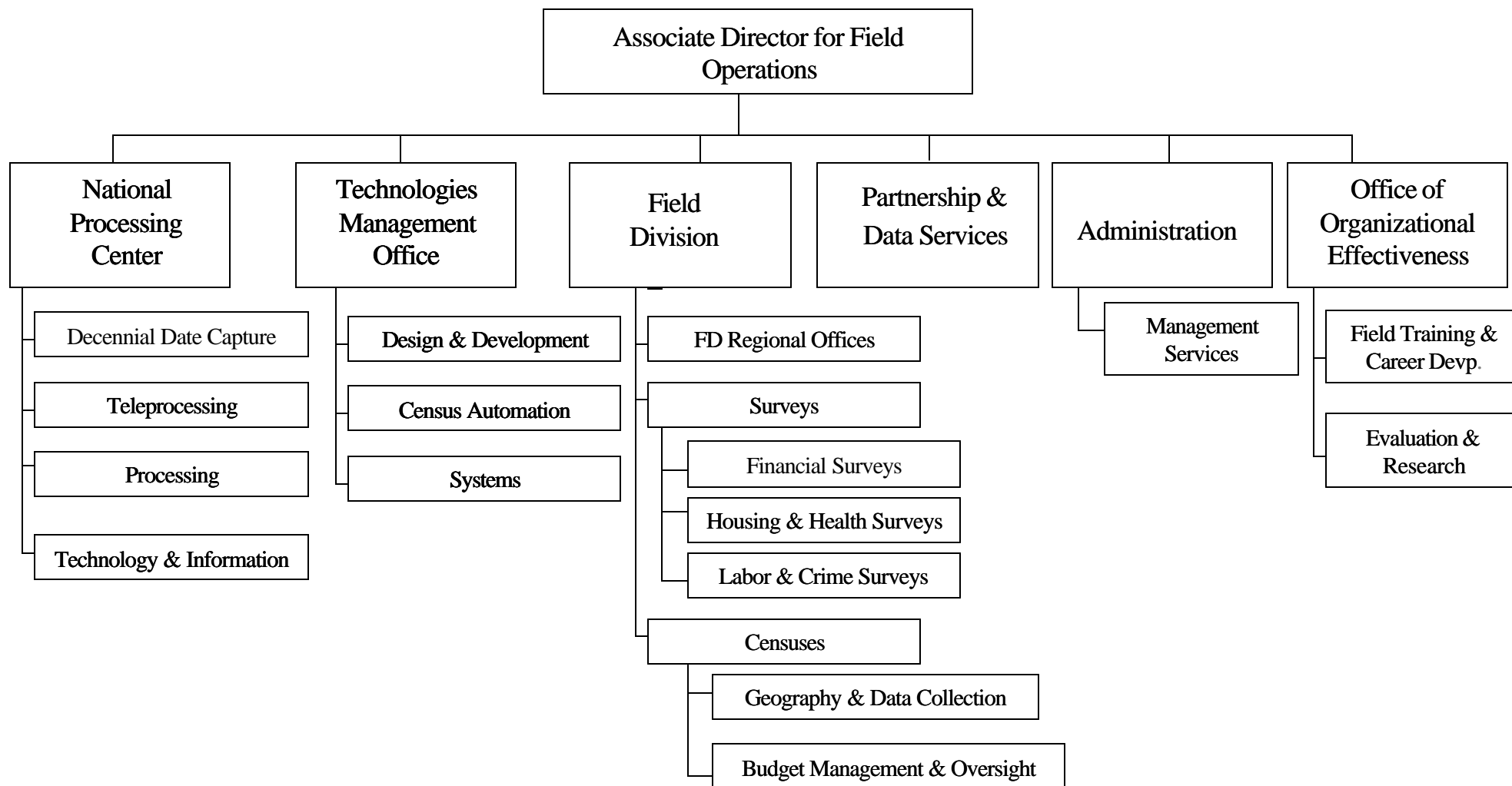
³² Department of Veterans Affairs, *Organizational Change Primer*, p. 1. Prepared by VA's Management Decision and Research Center, Office of Research and Development.

some short-term, transitional costs. Nonetheless, the Panel is convinced that this organizational change will improve the ability of the Directorate to implement ACS successfully and to explore the potential advantages a successful ACS will provide for other data-gathering activities. In sum, this investment in future capability appears to be well worth the likely short-term transitional costs.

**EXHIBIT 5-1.
FIELD DIRECTORATE ORGANIZATION CHART**



**EXHIBIT 5-2.
PANEL RECOMMENDATION FOR FIELD DIRECTORATE ORGANIZATION**



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ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------------|--|
| ACE | Accuracy and Coverage |
| ACS | American Community Survey |
| ADC | Assistant Division Chief |
| ARD | Assistant Regional Director |
| BLS | Bureau of Labor Statistics |
| CARMN | Cost and Management Reporting Network |
| CPS | Current Population Survey |
| DSD | Demographic Surveys Division |
| E&R | Evaluation and Research |
| FDC | Field Division Chief |
| FR | Field Representative |
| FTCDO | Field Training and Career Development Office |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| GAO | General Accounting Office |
| GPRA | Government Performance and Results Act |
| MCLO | Marketing and Consumer Liaison Office |
| NASA | National Aeronautics and Space Administration |
| NPC | National Processing Center |
| OMB | Office of Management and Budget |
| PAD/CFO | Principal Associate Director/Chief Financial Officer |
| PAD/P | Principal Associate Director for Programs |
| RD | Regional Director |
| RO | Regional Office |
| SFR | Senior Field Representative |
| TMO | Technologies Management Office |
| WCF | Working Capital Fund |

