county of ventura

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SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO THE 1996-97 VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY FIRST FINAL REPORT, MARCH 24, 1997

As requested, here are the Information Systems Department's responses to the recommendations as listed in the 1996-97 Ventura County Grand Jury's First Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The Board of Supervisors/CAO should provide the funding required to retrofit the Data Center in order to position itself to accommodate the modernization program. Furthermore, the funding source for the five-year technology plan should be identified for the out-years so that the county and ISD can focus on the goals as set forth by the ITC.

RESPONSE:

We agree that funding should be provided toward the continual upgrading of the County's Data Center and other infrastructure. ISD, in its presentation of the Interim Five-Year Projection for Technology Expenditures to the Information Technology Committee (ITC) at its January 1996 meeting, included its five-year plan for the continued upgrading of its data center and its telecommunications infrastructure. That plan, as discussed, reviewed and approved by the Chief Administrative Office (CAO), indicated that ISD's depreciation schedule, anticipated revenue, projected retained earnings, and projected cash flow were sufficient to internally fund the necessary upgrading of the technological infrastructure for the projected five-year period.

ISD currently has implemented and supports systems ranging from mainframe legacy systems to client-server applications which use and embrace the very latest in information technology.

The acquisition and use of technology is based on the requirements of the individual departments. Affordable newer technologies are implemented and used when it is to the County's strategic advantage to do so.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

We do feel it is important to ensure employees use standard procedures in doing their jobs and arm them with the proper training. In addition to offering training courses, the county should conduct specialized, in-house technology training for new software systems and job related tasks. We proposed the in-house training be provided by either ISD or computer user's group (DISAC).

RESPONSE:

Both the CAO and ISD agree that it is important to ensure that employees use standard procedures in doing their business and that they are properly trained. One of the early actions of the ITC was the promulgation of the series of policies which included an outline of the County standard architecture and the accepted standards for equipment and software in use by the County departments. Those standards are used by the Human Resources Department (HRD) as the basis for developing department training programs by Computerfocus, the County's current contract vendor for providing technical training.

As we responded to the 1995-96 Grand Jury Final Report, the Auditor's Countywide review of personal computers, and the Final Report of the 1994-95 Grand Jury, the CAO, ISD and HRD agreed that the HRD was better suited to coordinate, administer and conduct the required departmental training. ISD, however, can provide technical guidance to the HRD in the development of appropriate training classes as well as provide instructors in training users in the latest or newer technologies. ISD will continue to provide user-specific and County standard-specific training to users when required or requested.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Several agencies are inundated with data and the demand for data. The county should look into a document imaging system which will store and retrieve data in an efficient manner. In today's current state-of-art technology, nobody likes to get information tomorrow. Information must be provided "on-line", if not at "real-time". To provide

for the creation and the maintenance of information to be made "on-line", the CAO should identify a county Data Base Administrator. This person would coordinate the design and implementation of a financial/personnel, land base/GIS, medical, and social service databases.

The county should replace its inventory of computer terminals with PC workstations and run terminal emulation program on these PC.

RESPONSE:

We disagree in part with this recommendation because it seems to imply that a document imaging system will provide the answer for the demand for data and for the need for on-line, real-time systems. ISD's response to users' needs and requirements has always been to find the best and most cost-effective combination of equipment and software necessary to do the job required by the department while keeping in mind how that particular system must relate to and integrate with other systems in use in the County. ISD already services and maintains many on-line, real-time systems for our major user departments, many of which are integrated and have data-bases shared by multiple agencies. As indicated in our response to Recommendation #1, we provide a range of services extending from legacy systems to the very latest of technologies.

The recent evolution of our departmental organization led to the establishment of an Application Development Division in 1995 which is responsible for the development of departmental and Countywide systems in the client-server environment. Standards and guidelines for the development of client-server systems and their attendant data-bases have been in use in ISD since 1996 and have received wide distribution to the technical employees in the various user departments. These standards apply to all new system development efforts within ISD.

Also, in response to the recommendation that the County should replace its inventory of computer terminals with PC workstations and run terminal emulation programs on these PCs, ISD has historically used this very approach of replacing computer terminals with PC workstations when it has proved to be a valid and cost effective solution to either upgrading equipment or a particular system.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Each agency in the county should strive to develop/generate their own expertise to interface at a technical level with ISD in information technology. These technological teams would be more pro-active rather than responsive to information technology

issues in meeting and optimizing inter-department requirements. Immediate attention be devoted to the year 2000 re-programming effort.

RESPONSE:

ISD agrees that each department or agency should develop or generate its own expertise to interface on a technical level with us. Many departments already agree with this concept and approach, which is reflected in the evolution and growth of Office Systems Coordinator positions within the departments over the past ten years.
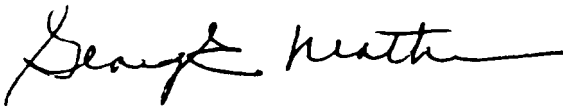
RECOMMENDATION 5:

An audit of information technology systems should be made annually by the Audit and Controller Department. Special emphasis should be on computer security, back-up systems, data privacy, hardware and software systems in use.

RESPONSE:

ISD agrees that an audit of information technology systems should be made annually by the Auditor-Controller Department. In fact, the Auditor-Controller, through its use of the external audit, has the external independent auditor review ISD's operations on an annual basis. These audits in recent years have focused on the general direction of information systems, disaster recovery, backup, and computer security. ISD, on an annual basis, has responded and reacted to the findings and recommendations made by the outside auditors.

Respectfully submitted,

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Information Systems Department

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