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SOE ADMINISTRATION FOR CENTRALLY DEVELOPED SYSTEMS

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1. GENERAL

1.01

The responsibility for the definition and administration of the Standard Operating Environments (SOEs) for centrally developed systems (CDSs) has been assigned to the Information Systems Rules Panel (ISRP). This section will define the SOE concept, describe the SOE decision-making process, and list the composition and responsibilities of the Information Systems Rules Panel and its associated support organizations. The development and maintenance of procedures which describe how the organization's task shall be accomplished are delegated to the participants. These procedures are not described here.

1.02

This section has been revised to reflect the changes in the ISRP as a result of divestiture. It supersedes previous issues in their entirety.

1.03

This section is issued as a guideline for use by the developers and users of centrally developed systems.

2. STANDARD OPERATING ENVIRONMENTS

2.01

Standard Operation Environments function as an interface between the users of centrally developed systems and the designers of the systems. They specify the minimal set of vendor products (e.g., operating systems, data base management systems, utilities) which must be in place in the customer's location, usually the Bell Operating Companies/Information Distribution Companies (OTCs/IDCs), to allow centrally developed systems to function. Therefore, all CDS developers must verify that their programs are compatible with the currently supported set of SOE products, and every user must ensure that this environment is provided for the processing of CDSs. Without these controls, all CDS developers could potentially select their own supporting "SOE" vendor products which could cause the OTCs/IDCs to purchase and maintain multiple vendor products with the same function. In addition to the increased cost of these additional software products, significant personnel and hardware costs would also be incurred to support the various vendor products.

2.02

The contents of the specific SOEs required for the processing of centrally developed systems are described in other practices in the 007 series.

3. SOE DECISION PROCESS

3.01

The activities involved at the central development locations to generate information for an SOE decision for each vendor product are as follows:

(a) Vendor announces future availability of the product, typically an enhanced version of an existing product. At this time, the vendor also normally announces the date when support will be discontinued for the existing product.

(b) Plans are formulated for computer center installation of the product for SOE testing.

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(c) Vendor product becomes available; it is then installed at the computer centers used by the CDS organizations.

(d) CDS compatibility testing is performed.

(e) Any applicable new functions provided by the vendor product are analyzed by CDS developers and/or their computer centers.

From these activities the quality of the vendor product (i.e., does it do what the vendor advertised and is it a stable product) and the compatibility of the product with each CDS will be determined.

3.02

Concurrent with the activities at the central development locations, the following two additional activities occur which affect the decision to make the SOE upgrade and the timing of the upgrade.

(a) OTC/IDC ongoing analysis of the vendor product and its impact and value in their environments. Depending upon timeframes involved, OTC/IDC analysis may include installation and testing of the vendor product at OTC/IDC sites. These evolving views are reflected in the SOE decision process through input from technical meetings and ISRP related surveys.

(b) The primary objective of the CDS development groups is to provide application enhancements to the OTCs/IDCs through previously scheduled releases. In addition, the CDS development groups have to verify that these product releases are compatible with currently supported SOE vendor products. It is, therefore, a requirement that CDS product releases be coordinated with SOE upgrades. This is complicated by two situations:

1) SOE product vendors determine their schedules based upon their own plans. Both the knowledge of their schedules, which could be used for early SOE planning, and the availability of an actual product for testing may not coincide well with CDS application release planning activities.

2) Each CDS area determines its own release schedule, which is not necessarily coordinated with similar schedules for the other CDSs.

3.03

The SOE decision-making process thus revolves around three major factors, all of which are identified through an iterative and interactive sharing process involving all the OTCs/IDCs, CDS developers, CDS central computer centers, and SOE product vendors:

(a) Vendor product upgrade value relative to what it adds to the OTC/IDC (through additional CDS capabilities allowed by the product and/or local consideration such as operations or local OTC/IDC applications).

(b) CDS compatibility with the vendor product version.

(c) Timeframe acceptable for making the SOE upgrade, given vendor support dates, CDS release schedules, ad OTC/IDC need and resource availability for support of the upgrade.

4. INFORMATION SYSTEMS RULES PANEL

4.01

The Information Systems Rules Panel (ISRP) is the intercompany organization charged with the definition and administration of the SOEs. Figure 1 shows the framework of the ISRP and its associated support organizations which together coordinate the SOE decision-making process and administer the

SOEs.

4.02

The ISRP members shall serve for a period to be determined by the appointing organization. These members, which are normally fourth level managers, are as follows:

(a) One voting member will be appointed by the Region. These representatives are normally from the Region or OTC/IDC information systems technical support organizations. Annually, one of the voting representatives will be elected to serve as the ISRP chair.

(b) A member from the Software Technology and Systems Organization within Bell Communications Research Inc. appointed by the Vice President-Software Technology and Systems. This individual will be a non-voting member who will represent all Bell Communications Research organizations responsible for the maintenance or development of centrally developed systems.

(c) A member from the Computing Technology Support Division appointed by the Assistant Vice President - Computing Systems & Architecture. This individual will be a non-voting member who will act as secretary for the ISRP.

(d) Representatives from other organizations (i.e., AT&T and its affiliates and other vendors) responsible for maintaining, enhancing, or developing information systems for the OTCs/IDCs or Regions may participate as non-voting members at the invitation of the chair based on the active issues. Their participation will be necessary to ensure that all CDS developers are aware of and have input to SOE decisions affecting their systems and impacting their ability to respond to the OTCs/IDCs.

4.03

As the SOE decision-making body, the ISRP is responsible for the following tasks:

(a) Approve all additions, changes, and deletions to the Standard Operating Environments and their associated effective dates.

(b) Approve all standards, guidelines, and procedures related to the processing and development of centrally developed systems.

(c) Determine which projects are subject to the SOEs and which are exempt.

(d) Grant project exceptions, where appropriate, to specific components of the SOE.

(e) Direct compliance reviews and follow-up findings.

(f) Review all funding proposals for work performed in support of the Information Systems Rules Panel and the SOEs.

(g) Monitor the work programs associated with the ISRP and the SOEs. This will include but not be limited to SOE support provided by the ISRP Support Staff, the CDS Task Forces, and the central computer centers.

5. ISRP SUPPORT STAFF

5.01

The ISRP Support Staff is composed of members of Bell Communications Research and report to the ISRP Secretary. The group's responsibilities are as follows:

(a) Assist the ISRP Secretary in the meeting administration including scheduling meetings, preparing agendas, preparing and distributing meeting minutes.

(b) Interface with SOE product vendors on the availability and functionality of new product releases.

(c) Interface with Regions and OTCs/IDCs to determine: their view of the vendor's product, their requirements for the product, and their schedule for upgrading the SOEs.

(d) Interface with computer centers associated with CDS development organizations on the installation and testing of SOE vendor products.

(e) Interface with the CDS development organizations on the applicability of new functions provided by SOE vendor products, CDS compatibility testing, and scheduling SOE upgrades.

(f) Formulate and submit recommendations for SOE upgrades to the ISRP.

(g) Participate in compliance reviews.

(h) Publish and maintain the SOEs and related standards and guidelines.

6. CDS TASK FORCES

6.01

CDS Task Forces are forums sponsored by the ISRP for the detailed lower level SOE coordination across the CDSs. These lower level central bodies may be formed for each SOE to allow the interactive SOE planning necessary in the SOE decision process.

6.02

Each CDS Task Force shall consist of the following members:

(a) Members from all Bell Communications Research central development organizations associated with the SOE.

(b) Members from the central computer centers associated with the SOE.

(c) Members from the ISRP Support Staff who will normally chair the Task Force meetings.

(d) Representatives from other organizations (i.e., AT&T and its affiliates and other vendors) responsible for maintaining, enhancing or developing information systems for the OTCs/IDCs or Regions may participate at the invitation of the chair based on the active issues. These representatives would not be formal CDS Task Force members; however, it is important that CDS developers have input on applicable SOE upgrade recommendations to the ISRP.

(e) SOE product vendors may also participate in the Task Force meetings at the invitation of the chair based on active issues. Vendor participation is frequently required due to the detailed level of SOE product discussions.

6.03

Each CDS Task Force will be responsible for the following activities:

(a) Coordinate and exchange of information on the impact of SOE vendor products on centrally developed applications.

(b) Coordinate and exchange information on application tests of SOE vendor products.

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(c) Coordinate and exchange information on schedules for SOE upgrades.

(d) Develop application standards and perform other activities as directed by the ISRP.

(e) Formulate and submit recommendations for SOE upgrades to the ISRP.

7. COMPUTER CENTER

7.01

The Computer Center is a group from Bell Communications Research, funded by the ISRP to provide technical consultation and support for an SOE. The group's responsibilities are as follows:

(a) Provide ongoing technical consultation and support to the Information Systems Rules Panel and the CDS Task Force related to the specific SOE.

(b) Evaluate new vendor hardware and software products. This includes participation in vendor early test programs and involves installation, new feature evaluation, compatibility testing, and performance analysis. This activity will result in evaluation reports and recommendations to the appropriate CDS Task Force and the ISRP.

(c) Coordinate the activities of CDS Task Force Technical Subcommittees.

(d) Conduct compliance reviews as directed by the ISRP.

8. PROJECT GROUPS

8.01

Each project group responsible for developing a system subject to a specific Standard Operating Environment is responsible for:

(a) Complying with the Standard Operating Environment.

(b) Requesting changes as necessary through the ISRP.

(c) Requesting exceptions by the ISRP.

8.02

All correspondence, including request for changes, exceptions, or clarification of existing standards, should be addressed to the ISRP chair.

9. OTHER AFFECTED GROUPS

9.01

Other affected groups, for example, computer centers and OTC/IDC Support Staff may also request changes or exceptions.

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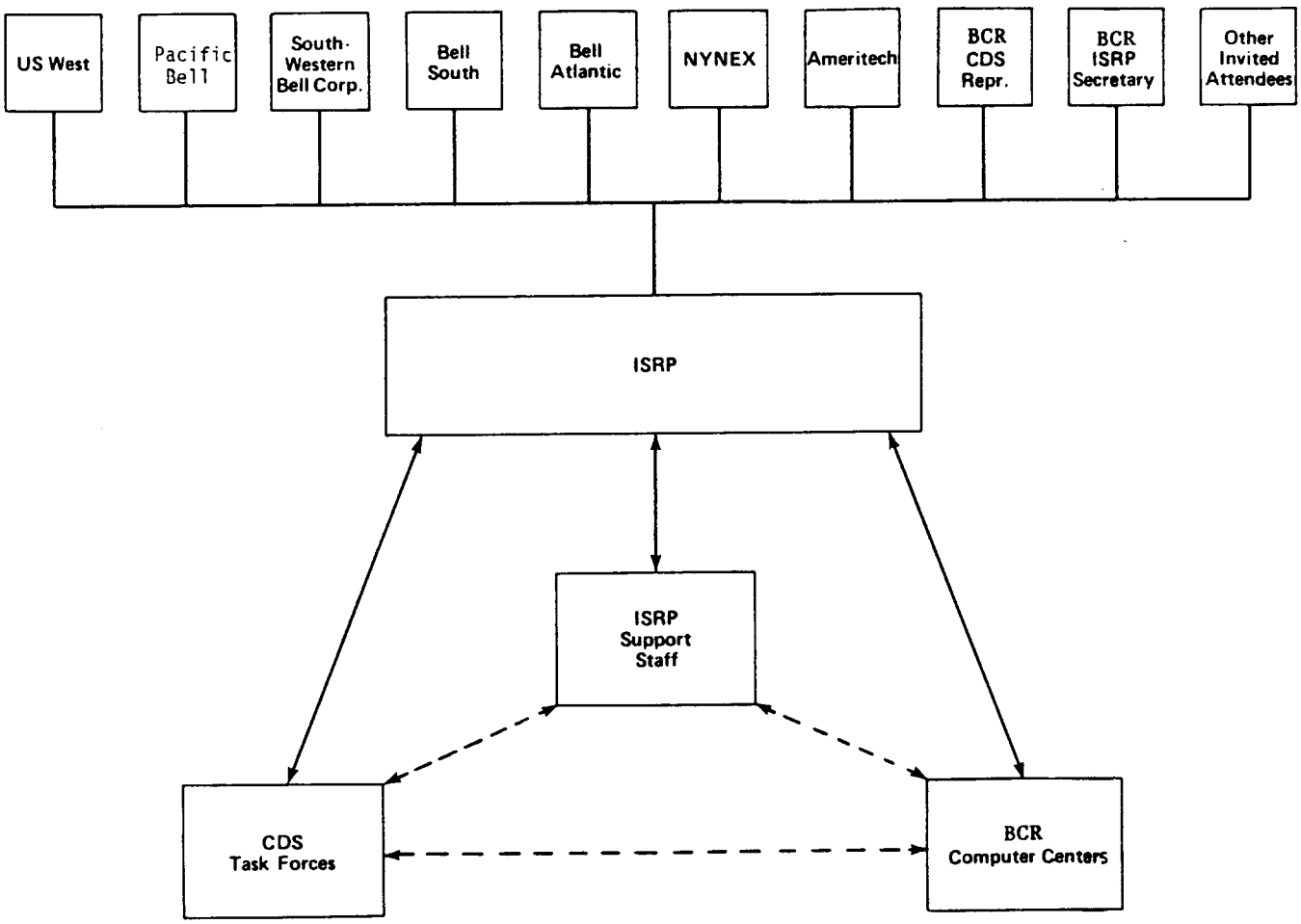
FIGURE 1



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