



DAILY ENVIRONMENT



General Policy

Advocacy Group Data Submitted to Agencies Must Meet OMB Requirements, Official Says

Trade associations, advocacy groups, and other organizations that submit information to federal agencies for possible official use must meet information quality guidelines issued by the Office of Management and Budget, a senior OMB official said March 7.

Contractors who are hired to prepare information for federal agencies also must be sure their material meets the OMB's standards, said John D. Graham, head of OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs.

Graham spoke at a luncheon hosted by the National Economists Club, a professional association.

Some people have misunderstood the guidelines and assume they apply only to federal agencies, Graham said, referring to guidelines OMB issued Jan. 3 (9 DEN B-1, 01/14/02).

Because the guidelines apply to any information disseminated by federal agencies, outside parties that provide the government with information they hope the agencies will cite or otherwise use will have to be sure their material meets the objectivity, reproducibility, and other standards detailed in the guidelines, Graham said.

Burden of Proof on Complainant. Asked how OMB will enforce its guidelines, Graham said that will be the responsibility of the agencies themselves.

According to the guidelines, individuals and organizations that claim an agency is disseminating incorrect information have the right to ask the division that is distributing the material to correct it.

If the division fails to do so, a different part of the agency—an office that was not involved in the original request to revise the information—is supposed to hear the complainant's appeal, Graham said.

"The guidelines put the burden of proof on the person making the complaint," Graham said. The individuals or organizations that assert an agency is disseminating material that does not meet OMB's guidelines must be able to prove their claims, he said.

Agencies are to make public by April 1 a draft report describing how they will implement OMB's guidance.

By PAT PHIBBS