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## **I. Northwestern University Equipment Policy Manual**

### **A. Introduction**

Capital equipment is tangible property having an acquisition value of \$5,000 or more and a useful life expectancy of one year or more. Fabricated equipment, which has an aggregate cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life expectancy of one year or more, is considered capital equipment. Repairs, maintenance parts or components, warranty costs, maintenance contracts or annual software licensing fees are not considered capital equipment and will be expensed. The Accounting Services Department (ASD) maintains the University's inventory of capital equipment. Each school, department, center, or other administrative unit within the University is responsible for safeguarding, maintaining and utilizing all equipment it acquires, either through purchase, gift or fabrication.

By its acceptance of Government contracts and grants, Northwestern University is obligated to identify all government-titled property as it is acquired, keep specific inventory records and establish controls for the usage, maintenance and disposition of equipment and material. For specific policies and procedures regarding government-titled property, see section IV, pages 10-15.

Through its property control coordinator, ASD is responsible for tagging (the tag has Northwestern University printed across the top with a unique identification number below; bar code tags were initiated on September 1, 1994) each new piece of capital equipment, however acquired, that has an original cost or setup valuation of \$5,000 or more (including freight/transportation and setup costs), and recording its description, location and accounting information in the computerized database inventory system. In addition, the property control coordinator, with cooperation from representatives of the various schools, departments, centers and administrative units, annually performs a physical inventory (alternating between the Chicago and Evanston campuses) of all university capital equipment to assure the accuracy of the inventory records.

### **B. Purpose**

The University maintains equipment inventory records for several reasons:

- Donors, grantors and benefactors expect the assets they provide will be accounted for, maintained and utilized. The University has a stewardship function.
- Scare resources for facilities must be protected.

- Accounting standards require that the University depreciate its assets for financial reporting purposes. The equipment inventory is necessary to accomplish this task.
- Federal Regulations allow an annual recovery of a portion of the cost of University acquired equipment through the indirect cost rate, if an accurate property control system is in place.

### C. Definitions

1. Capital Equipment: Equipment that costs \$5,000 or more and has a useful life of one year or more.
2. Non-Capital Equipment: Equipment that costs less than \$5,000 or has a useful life of under one year.
3. Property Tags: Capital equipment property tags have a barcode tag with a five digit unique identification number. Non-capital equipment property tags have a unique identification number starting with “NC” and are not barcoded.

## II. Acquisitions

### A. Purchases

The primary source of information for the inventory system is the University’s accounting system. In an average month, 75 asset records, some charged to the various capital equipment objects of expense, are added to the computerized inventory database. For a full listing of capital expense objects, please see chart below. To maintain the integrity and accuracy of the equipment inventory system, it is very important that the distinction between capital and non-capital equipment be understood and used by those departmental staff acquiring equipment of any sort.

For the following categories, purchases of individual items costing \$5,000 or more should be charged to the capital equipment objects of expense. Purchases for \$4,999.99 or less should be charged to the non-capital equipment objects of expense. When buying equipment for under \$5,000 that become part of a fabricated system, specify that it is part of a system on the requisition. This note will facilitate the future inventory and tagging of the fabricated equipment. Please refer to the university’s [fabricated equipment policy](#) for further instructions.

Category	Capital Equipment Objects of Expense	Non-Capital Equipment Objects of Expense	Non-Capital Equipment Objects of Expense
Audio/Visual Equipment	7545		7050
Office Equipment	7550	3540	7010
Scientific Instruments	7560	3560	7020
Computers	7570	3570	7030

Amounts are computed on a per item basis. A purchase of 4 desks at \$2,500 each or \$5,000 total would not be a capital purchase and should be charged to object 3540, but a purchase of one desk for \$5,000 would be a capital purchase and should be charged to object 7550. Title to most equipment acquired using University funds is vested in the University, although title to some equipment acquired using Federal funds may remain with the government. All capital equipment has a minimum useful life of one year or more.

#### **B. Cataloging Equipment**

The property control coordinator catalogs new equipment once a month based on the information in a special monthly budget statement report. This report selects expense transactions that use capital equipment objects of expense and contains purchase order information such as description, location and accounting information.

#### **C. Tagging Equipment**

The property control coordinator tags new equipment once a month after cataloging the new equipment purchases. It takes approximately one day per month to tag the new equipment on the Chicago campus and approximately one day per month to tag the new equipment on the Evanston campus.

#### **D. Fabricated Equipment**

Fabricated equipment is defined as an item of equipment that is built or assembled from component parts by a PI and/or other sponsored project personnel, an internal shop, or an external shop. When a completed item of fabricated equipment has an aggregate cost of \$5,000 or more AND when that item will be recorded as capital equipment in the University's asset system, the individual component costs associated with the fabrication (regardless of the

individual amounts) will not be assessed the Facilities & Administrative (F&A) rate.

Fabricated equipment should be identified prior to the acquisition of component parts or services related to the fabrication. This identification can be made, initially, in the sponsored project proposal budget or, later, using an OSR-2 form. The PI should detail what item is being fabricated, the materials and/or shop services necessary for the fabrication, and the estimated costs using the fabricated equipment questionnaire & form. Costs that should be budgeted and charged to a sponsored account include materials and supplies necessary for the fabrication as well as any internal or external shop charges. Although project personnel may participate in the fabrication, their salaries will not be exempt from the F&A rate assessment. Only labor costs that are implicit in the internal or external shop rates will be F&A exempt.

Acquisitions related to the (F&A exempt) fabrication should be charged to: 5335 Fabricated Equipment-Work in Progress

Once the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) is aware that fabricated equipment with an aggregate cost of \$5,000 or more needs to be charged to a sponsored account, it will open object 5335 in the financial system. This object is to be used solely for the purpose of accumulating the individual charges associated with this fabricated equipment. Costs charged to object 5335 will not be assessed the F&A rate.

In addition to opening the 5335 expense object, OSR will notify the property control coordinator. The property control coordinator will assign a fabricated inventory number and will provide this number to the PI. This number should be referenced in all acquisitions for the fabrication. When the fabrication is completed, the PI and/or the shop should alert the property control coordinator. Upon notification of completion, an accounting entry will be made to transfer the individual costs to a capital equipment object code. The fabricated item will also be tagged with a property tag number and recorded in the asset system.

If a fabricated equipment item will have an aggregate cost of less than \$5,000, the individual costs for all acquisitions should be budgeted and charged to the appropriate materials and shop object codes. Those object codes will be assessed the F&A rate. Object 5335 should not be used. In this case, an inventory tag number will not be assigned, as the fabricated item will not be recorded in the asset system.

If ownership of the final product is to transfer to the sponsor, the F&A rate exemption does not apply to the individual fabrication costs. In such cases, the

costs associated with the fabrication should be classified under the appropriate materials and shop object codes. Object 5335 should not be used. The F&A rate must be applied to all such costs associated with the fabricated item. Items purchased as part of the fabrication that individually cost \$5,000 or more and would otherwise exist as stand-alone items of capital equipment should be charged to object code 7070-government/sponsor titled capital equipment. The 7070 object code will be subject to F&A charges.

The use of object code 5335 and the applicability of the F&A rate exemption is intended for instances of construction or modification of an item that will operate as a single piece of equipment and where shop services are typically required. This policy is not intended to address instances where components are connected together in a system, such as when individual computers and servers are joined to create a network. Please refer to the [Component System Policy](#) for guidance in these instances. Questions regarding which policy is applicable in a given situation should be directed to the [Office for Sponsored Research](#) or Accounting Services for Research & Sponsored Programs.

#### **E. Component Systems**

A component system is comprised of individual equipment or material items connected together to operate as a system, such as when individual computers and servers are joined together to create a network. Component systems are distinguished from fabricated equipment in that they do not generally require extensive construction or assemblage, as provided by an internal or external shop. For guidance regarding proper treatment of fabricated equipment costs, please refer to the [Fabricated Equipment Policy](#).

When system components are purchased the individual items that cost \$5,000 or more should be treated as capital equipment and exempted from the Facilities & Administrative (F&A) rate assessment. The individual items that cost less than \$5,000 should be treated as capital equipment when: 1) those items could not operate on a stand-alone basis and 2) they will be included on the same purchase requisition as the other system components. Both conditions must be met in order to qualify for F&A rate exemption. If those items less than \$5,000 do not meet these criteria, they should be charged to non-capital expense objects and will be assessed the F&A rate.

#### **F. Transfers into Northwestern University from Other Universities**

Occasionally, when a faculty member transfers to the University from another institution, he or she will bring equipment. In such cases, the new faculty member's department should send a list of those items having an estimated fair

market value of at least \$5,000 to the Property Control Coordinator. The list should include the description, purchase date, original cost and new location along with any other pertinent information for each transferred item. The Accounting Services Department will use this information to update the equipment inventory and tag the equipment, if necessary.

### **G. Donated Equipment**

When a unit of the University receives a donated piece of capital equipment the Office of Alumni Relations & Development (ext. 7-2003) should be notified so that the equipment will be properly valued and a University gift receipt issued. DSO will issue a gift receipt to the donor and also prepare a gifts-in-kind transmittal form providing necessary information for the ASD to enter the donated equipment into the inventory system.

### **H. Non-Capital Equipment Inventory by Departments**

The University's main equipment inventory covers all capital equipment with a minimum cost of \$5,000 and a useful life of one year or more. The vast majority of computers cost under \$5,000 and are not included in NU's inventory. Since all departments are required to keep inventories of non-capital equipment (costing under \$5,000), the University is providing inventory tags, training and an Excel template to track department equipment. The departments will provide their own labor to set-up and maintain their inventories.

### **I. Leased Equipment**

Leased equipment is not owned by the University and is not included in the University's equipment inventory.

## **III. Dispositions**

### **A. Equipment Disposal Forms**

Northwestern University members are required to fill out an equipment disposal form when they dispose of capital equipment from the University. The forms can be filled out on-line on the University's [equipment inventory website](http://www.northwestern.edu/equipment-inventory/) at [www.northwestern.edu/equipment-inventory/](http://www.northwestern.edu/equipment-inventory/). The information in the form is emailed to the Equipment Inventory Coordinator who then uses the information to manually update the equipment inventory database. Disposed equipment can be sold, stolen, traded-in, scrapped, donated, returned to vendor, destroyed, transferred out, cannibalized, recycled, or posted on the surplus property exchange web page. The following procedures should also be followed regarding the disposal of equipment from the University.

**Equipment Acquired Using Federal Funds:** Before sale, trade-in, scrapping or transferring of any capital equipment acquired using sponsored project funds can occur, Accounting Services for Research and Sponsored Programs (ASRSP), ext. 1-3385, should be consulted so that all necessary forms are prepared and clearances obtained. It is crucial the above mentioned process begin immediately so the dean, chairman, or unit manager is informed instantly, so as to not delay the disposal.

**Equipment Acquired Any Other Way:** When the sale, trade-in, scrapping or transferring of any capital equipment acquired any other way occurs, the administrative unit overseeing the equipment should notify the Property Control Coordinator in ASD by filling out an equipment notification form located at <http://www.northwestern.edu/equipment-inventory/formdisp.html> on the web. The notification should describe the equipment, including the tag number, the disposal date and explain the method of disposition of the equipment. In addition, the administrative unit should keep on file the written approval of the dean, chairperson or unit manager for the action. Equipment inventory records will be adjusted based upon the information included in the equipment notification form. To ensure proper accounting of an equipment sale or trade-in, provide back-up documentation showing the amount of sale or trade-in to Robert Glick , Equipment Inventory Coordinator (fax: 7-7261).

**Accounting for the Proceeds of Disposition:** After the necessary approvals are obtained for the disposition of any capital equipment acquired as outlined above, any proceeds should be credited to the proper revenue source. Use the appropriate revenue source within the Fund, Area and Organization that was originally charged for the acquisition of the equipment. If the original acquiring account has been closed, use the department's appropriated budget account to record the credit from the proceeds of the disposition.

If the disposition is intra-University, an Intra-institutional Voucher (IV) or Request for Accounting Correction (RAC), if a sponsored account is involved, should be prepared showing the Fund, Area, Organization and Object to be charged (the Buyer) and the Fund, Area, Organization and Revenue Source or Expense Object of the selling unit. Enter the proceeds of the disposition and include a full explanation as well as appropriate approval signatures from both the buyer and seller units.

If the disposition is made outside the University, the check for the proceeds should be made payable to Northwestern University and forwarded with a full explanation, including approvals and the Fund, Area, Organization and Revenue Source or Expense Object to the Bursar for deposit.

## **B. Biennial Physical Equipment Reinventory**

The equipment inventory coordinator physically examines every piece of equipment in the inventory on a biennial basis (Chicago campus in the even-numbered fiscal years and the Evanston campus in the odd-numbered fiscal years). The Medical School and the Engineering School are reinventoried by department and the rest of the University is reinventoried by building. The Chicago campus is reinventoried starting with the largest department in the Medical School as measured by the quantity of equipment listed in the inventory. The property control coordinator may be assisted by individuals from each department, or research lab to track equipment in each area. Any changes in location including disposition of the equipment are keyed into the inventory database. The reinventory date is also updated for each equipment record representing the day that equipment was physically examined.

### C. Insurance

The University maintains a combination of self insurance and outside insurance which will provide for the expenses of repair or replacement of University equipment which is lost or damaged. This program reimburses the actual department expense to repair or replace such equipment, subject to a deductible of 10% of the expense with a minimum deductible of \$500.00 (\$1,000 for electronics) in each loss except for normal wear and tear and other common insurance exclusions such as war and nuclear contamination.

No deductible will be charged for theft losses where equipment has been taken and there is evidence of forced entry to the premises or secured storage cabinets. All other theft losses and losses from other causes will be subject to a 10% deductible based upon the cost of replacement or a minimum of \$500.00 in each loss (\$1,000.00 for electronics), whichever is greater. It is important to note that manufacturers of security devices, such as cables, may provide a limited rebate in the event their devices are defeated during a theft. Departments who opt to use such devices are solely responsible for collecting any and all such rebates from the security device manufacturers. All thefts from vehicles are subject to the above deductibles.

For a department to be eligible for reimbursement for equipment loss or damage, the following steps are required:

- The loss must be reported promptly to the Office of Risk Management using the **University's claim form**. You will need **Adobe Acrobat Reader** to open this form. Or you can obtain this form by calling Risk Management at 847-491-4334 or by logging on to their website at [www.northwestern.edu/risk/prop.htm](http://www.northwestern.edu/risk/prop.htm). Reporting a loss and completing the claim form are departmental responsibilities. ***No claim will be accepted unless reported within 60 days of the loss.***

- Theft losses must also be promptly reported to the University Police Department so that an investigation of the loss can be conducted.
- The lost or damaged equipment must be repaired or replaced by the department before any reimbursement to the department can be made. It is the department's responsibility to furnish copies of original invoices and/or purchase orders for both the original equipment which was lost or damaged and for replacement equipment.
- Written documentation and/or damaged items may be required for review prior to the settlement of the claim. Failure to provide documentation or damaged items may void the claim.

Fine arts, rare books, musical instruments, and other objects of exceptional value must be provided for specially. These objects can be covered in a special form of insurance that requires full details such as values, descriptions, etc. for coverage. For further information regarding coverage of this type, please contact this office.

It is important to note that insurance provided by the University covers University owned property only. Property owned by Faculty, Staff, and Students must be covered by the owners of the property. The University is not responsible for property it does not own.

#### **D. Security**

Our (Risk Management) experience is that many equipment losses are due to theft, often without any signs of forced entry or removal. Installation of theft prevention devices is strongly encouraged. Certain manufacturers of such devices, such as Anchor Pad, Inc., provide equipment replacement guarantees that will eliminate (insurance) deductibles for departments who use their products. Facilities Management can install theft prevention devices at departmental request with a modest cost to the requesting department. For further information about these devices call Facilities Management at (847) 491-5201.

### **IV. Policies and Procedures for Government-Titled Equipment**

#### **A. Responsibilities**

The establishment and control of grants and contracts is maintained by two offices within Northwestern University. The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) is responsible for assistance in identifying potential sponsors, developing and submitting proposals, completing agreements, accepting or transferring awards, establishing project accounts, post-award management of accounts, identifying contracts with government-titled property, and other research administration matters.

Accounting Services for Research and Sponsored Programs (ASRSP) is responsible for all financial matters relating to grant and contract administration. This includes preparing financial reports, invoicing and collection of receivable accounts, property reports and equipment inventories. ASRSP is also responsible for compliance with the equipment regulations of specific grants and contracts. Equipment is controlled and inventoried by the ASRSP Property Manager and the University Property Control Coordinator (PCC). The University PCC records and maintains all equipment in the institution. The ASRSP Property Manager is responsible for reviewing equipment purchases made with sponsored project funds.

## **B. Acquisition of Government Property**

Authority for Government Property acquisition shall be determined by ASRSP before acquisition. The ASRSP Property Manager shall insure that specific approval, as required by each contract or grant, is on hand for all property purchases. Screening of Automated Equipment with an acquisition cost of more than \$25,000 will require DD Form 1851. All other DIPEC and NASA screening for equipment costing more than \$10,000 will use DD Form 1419.

### **1. Contractor Purchased Property**

After approval has been obtained, the Project Director shall initiate an official University requisition for the equipment. The requisition shall be reviewed and approved by the following:

- the responsible individual(s) in the department and dean's office, who determines that the acquisition of the item complies with University policy, and that the item is necessary to the research under the project.
- the ASRSP office, which verifies whether approvals are on hand and acquisition is not contrary to Government agency policy. ASRSP also checks the availability of funds and the period of the project in question.

The approved requisition is used by the Purchasing Department as the basis of an official University Purchase Order. If the order is over \$5,000, the Purchasing Department seeks at least three bids, where possible, and selects the lowest bidder. Where item quality is an important factor, vendor selection is made from only those vendors able to meet quality specifications. Where a manufacturer has established exclusive regional distributorships for products, the University's order shall be placed with that distributor.

### **2. Government-furnished Property**

Excess Personal Property from DOD or GSA lists shall be frozen by the Project Director or Business Official, and a DD Form 1149 or SF122 prepared

to include a description of the items, condition code, model number, Federal, National or DOD stock number, quantity, acquisition cost, and any other required information. A technical statement shall be submitted to justify the use of the item in support of the research contract or grant.

The Contracting Officer shall review the form, and determine that the following statements are included and are appropriate:

- the item will enhance the research at no additional cost
- the property is required and authorized by applicable military service/Defense Agency regulations
- Northwestern University certifies that it is unwilling and financially unable to acquire the item with its own resources.

The certification shall be signed by the appropriate official of the University.

### **C. Receipts for Government Property**

A receiving copy of the official purchase order is sent to the Project Director. Upon delivery of the property, the Project Director or representative indicates the quantities received, their condition if damaged, the date received, and any back-ordered items. The receiving copy is signed and forwarded to the Accounts Payable department, where it serves as the authority for payment to the vendor when matched with a proper invoice. It is then filed with the disbursement voucher. The receiving copy and the disbursement voucher constitute the University's official record of the receipt and payment for the property.

Property furnished by the Government, including excess property, is shipped to the using department, inspected, and receipted for them on a copy of a SF122 Transfer Order or a DD1149 Invoice/Shipping document. This document is filed by the ASRSP Property Manager and is the University's official record of Government-furnished property.

### **D. Costing of Government Property**

The Property Administrator shall record acquisition costs for property as being the purchase price net of any discounts, plus the transportation charges if charged to the contract. In the case of Government-furnished property, the cost recorded shall be that provided on the official transfer document or later acquired from the transferring party. Transportation and installation costs will not be considered as part of the price for Government-furnished property.

Except for items fabricated for research and development purposes, the cost of a fabricated item will be determined in accordance with the University's accepted accounting procedures. The cost of an item fabricated for a research

and development contract shall be established by the engineering estimate of the Project Director.

## E. Reports

The ASRSP Property Manager shall submit reports as required according to government regulations and contract and grant requirements.

**Financial Reporting.** The ASRSP Property Manager shall report by contract annually on DD1662 or NASA 1018 the dollar value of Government property held for each agency. DOE contracts require semiannual reporting of government-titled property on DOE Form F4300.3.

**DIPEC Report.** Acquisitions and deletions of Industrial Plant Equipment (IPE) shall be reported to the Contracting Officer on DD1342.

**Physical Inventories.** As required by the contract, the results of a physical inventory shall be reported and reconciled with current property records.

## F. Definitions

**Accessory Item.** An item which facilitates or enhances the operation of plant equipment, but which is not essential to its purpose (FAR 45.501)

**Auxiliary Item.** An item required to operate the basic unit of equipment (FAR 45.501)

**Award.** A legal document, such as grant or contract from external sponsoring agencies, which provides support.

**Capital Equipment.** An article of non-expendable, tangible property having a useful life of one year or more and a minimum acquisition cost of \$5,000 per unit.

**Constructed Equipment.** Electrical, electronic, hydraulic, pneumatic, mechanical, or any other items that are interconnected so as to become a new functional unit that is essential in the performance of some activity.

**Contracting Officer.** That Government individual who is the contact for all reporting for a specific contract or grant.

**Custodial Department.** That department or unit within the University having physical control of equipment.

**Government-titled Property.** Government-furnished or contractor-acquired property that the Government holds title to. Government-furnished property is acquired by the Government and furnished to the University. Contractor-acquired property is purchased by the University with Federal grant or

contract funds for which the award terms specify that the title will vest with the Federal Government.

## **G. Disposition**

At the completion of the project, the ASRSP Property Manager shall report all property for which the University is still accountable and request disposition instructions. As necessary, cases of loss, theft or damage of property shall be reported to the Government Property Administrator. Upon receipt of disposition instructions, the following actions will be taken:

- If the Government retains title: upon receipt of a DD1149 a) comply with shipping or selling instructions, b) forward DD1342 to ONR who will forward to DIPEC if required, c) notify Principal Investigator of procedures, d) have ID tags removed, and e) change property records to indicate disposition.
- If there is a transfer of accountability to another University project: a) request a DD1149 b) sign and return it to the Government Property Administrator, c) forward DD1342 with change of project to DIPEC if required, d) notify Principal Investigator, e) change ID tags if necessary, and f) change property records to reflect transfer.
- If the title is transferred or abandoned to the University: upon receipt of letter from the Government transferring or abandoning title, a) forward DD1342 if required to DIPEC indicating disposition, b) notify Research Services and Principal Investigator, c) have all Government markings and ID tags removed, and d) change property records to reflect relief of accountability.

**Excess and Idle Industrial Plant Equipment (IPE).** The ASRSP Property Manager shall report to the Government Property Administrator any Government property, including IPE, which is excess to the needs of the contract under which it was acquired or which is no longer required for the purposes authorized.

A DD Form 1342 shall be prepared and submitted to DIPEC through the Government Property Administrator. The Property Administrator will assure the proper storage of excess property and idle IPE until DIPEC and the Property Administrator determine its disposition. Upon receipt of disposition instructions the Property Administrator shall comply with shipping instructions, submit a DD1342 indicating disposition, notify the Principal Investigator, have all ID tags and markings removed, and change property records to reflect disposition.

## H. Utilization

The ASRSP Property Manager shall assure that Government Property will be utilized only for those purposes authorized in the contract. The Property Manager will also assure that the property in the possession of subcontractors is utilized only as authorized by the contract. The ASRSP property Manager will immediately notify the contracting officer when usage of an item of property is not justified and is no longer necessary to the contract under which it was acquired.

## I. Records and Physical Inventory of Government-titled Equipment

The University PCC and ASRSP Property Manager conduct biennial inventories of all Government-titled property. This inventory verifies the usage, condition, and location of the equipment. This information is used to update the Government-titled property database which ASRSP maintains.

**1. Usage Codes.** A numeric code established by ASRSP to denote frequency of use.

- 1 - An item which is used continually and never turned off.
- 2 - An item which is used at least once a week.
- 3 - An item which is used at least once a month.
- 4 - An item which is used only two or three times a year.
- 5 - An item which is never used and is considered idle/excess.

**2. Condition Codes.** All items are described as belonging to one of the following categories:

**New.** A recently purchased item, working in perfect condition.

**Excellent.** An item in very good condition without repairs.

**Good.** An item which is usable without repairs.

**Fair.** An item which is usable but worn due to wear and tear; may require repairs in the future.

**Idle/Excess.** An item which is not usable and is considered scrap.

**3. Equipment tagging.** The University Property Control Coordinator assigns and affixes numbered tags to all items of University-owned and Government-titled equipment with a value equal to or greater than \$5,000 (unless the size or nature of the unit makes this impractical). In addition, Government-titled equipment is affixed with a Government tag next to the University tag. Auxiliary items such as monitors and keyboards shall also be individually tagged. This will identify the equipment as Government-titled for future reference by the department and its users.