

States are seeking to preserve high public trust in funding

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WASHINGTON — Faced with a relentless budget squeeze, state government agencies are seeking and finding better ways to protect public coffers.

This was the consensus of Clyde Christofferson, of the Council of

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State Government, following messages heard at four recent regional conferences.

The themes at the four regional conferences evidenced top level commitment from Maine to California, said Christofferson.

Tom McBride, former inspector general at the Department of Labor,

outlined the views in the Chicago regional conference.

He said first there must be a commitment at the top. Governors and legislative leadership must be firmly behind the program.

Second, there must be coordination. No single policy maker or program manager can do the job alone.

Third, a program cannot be comprehensive unless it contains a full range of specific attributes.

Finally, a long-term success requires a recognition that the special problems and strategies for dealing with them are certain to change.

He noted cooperation among different agencies and levels of government is an integral part of many of the best practices presented.

McBride summarized a comprehensive approach: controls — the fundamentals of management; procedures to identify problems, administrative soft spots and priorities; and effective use of technology.

McBride said productivity, innovation and prevention are important. Costs and benefits must be measured of programs and social programs. Finally, there must be feedback — another thread in the coordination theme — and follow through from the investigative and prosecutorial phase to correction and prevention.