

FGDC / NSDI 2006 Cooperative Agreements Program

Category 3: Fifty States Initiative

Advancing the NSDI in Wyoming: Strategy for Statewide Interagency Coordination of Geospatial Information and Technology

Agreement Number: 06HQAG0095
Final Project Report

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Collaborating Organizations* :

Wyoming Geographic Information Advisory Council (WGIAC): Established by
executive order in 1994, WGIAC membership includes representatives from 25 state,
local and federal agencies operating in Wyoming,
<http://wgiac2.state.wy.us/html/index.asp> (see footnote for new coordination site)

Wyoming I-Team: Created in 2002 as an outgrowth of the Council, the team includes
over 75 individual participants associated with 10 specialty areas,
<http://gis.dot.state.wy.us/iteam/> (see footnote for new coordination site)

Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center (WyGISC): University research
center responsible for much of the technical activities supporting NSDI in Wyoming,
<http://www.wygisc.uwyo.edu>

* These were the collaborating agencies at the time the grant began. Since then, WGIAC has been replaced by the new two-tiered governance system consisting of the Oversight Committee and Technical Advisory Group (<http://cio.state.wy.us/GISCOordination.aspx>; see narrative for details). The I-Team is currently inactive with plans for these activities to be subsumed as a series of committees within the Technical Advisory Group.

INTRODUCTION

This project addressed the need to develop and implement new mechanisms for promoting and supporting interagency geospatial coordination in Wyoming, not only among state agencies but also between state government and local, federal, tribal, and private members of the Wyoming geospatial community. In 2004/2005, the Wyoming Geographic Information Advisory Council developed a set of recommendations for improving statewide geospatial cooperation. Proposed actions included restructuring the council into a two-tiered organization comprised of a five-member Governor-appointed Oversight Committee and a 14-member Technical Advisory Group representing various constituent end-user groups. The plan also called for the establishment of a Geospatial Information Officer position, housed within the Office of the State CIO. Technical services would be provided through contract with the University of Wyoming's Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center. The overarching goal for this CAP project was to leverage past and ongoing geospatial coordination efforts by: (1) refining the council's recommendations into a more formalized Strategic Plan; (2) implementing all non-fiscally constrained components of said strategic plan; and (3) developing a comprehensive Business Plan which articulated the case for both top-down and bottom-up investment in the long-term sustainability of a statewide geospatial coordination program in Wyoming.

SUMMARY OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The 18-month project was initiated in March 2006 with the establishment of a five-member CAP Grant Project Team. Participants served in a voluntary capacity and included representation from state government, local government, and academia, as well as Wyoming's liaison from the USGS / National Geospatial Programs Office. Additional administrative and logistical support was also provided by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO).

The project team manager attended the CAP Grant Category 3 Kick-Off Meeting in Annapolis, MD on March 19, 2006, held in conjunction with the 2006 National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) Mid-Year Meeting.

In April 2006, the project team supported the OCIO in successfully establishing a new, two-tiered coordination structure for geospatial activities through a gubernatorial executive order.

During summer 2006, the project team and the OCIO drafted a scope of work and request for proposals for a consultant to assist in drafting a business plan for funding a state GIS coordinator position and GIS technical services program. The contract was awarded in August 2006 to Applied Geographics, Inc. of Boston, MA and included a sub-award to Flitner Communications of Jackson, WY.

Development of the business plan was conducted between September 2006 and February 2007 and included input from existing planning documents as well as interviews with key state agency heads and elected officials. Parallel to the consultants' efforts, the project team completed an internal update to the state's existing 2004 strategic plan for improving GIS coordination.

In mid-February, the consultants delivered a draft, final business plan and education strategy to the project team. After an internal review by team members and OCIO staff, a final draft of the business plan and education strategy were delivered with the updated strategic plan to the Oversight Committee and Technical Advisory Group, which approved all of the documents at a joint meeting in May 2007.

During summer / fall 2007, remaining grant resources were used to fund development of an initial education/outreach document by Flitner Communications. The eight-page, full-color glossy brochure was created with the purpose of condensing the recommendations of both the revised strategic plan and new business plan to "make the case" for coordination using non-technical and widely beneficial examples. The target audience of the brochure was primarily elected officials and key decision makers in state and local government and the private sector. It was accompanied by an easy-to-update and reproduce "Coordination FAQ" designed to provide responses to more specific

implementation questions, the answers to which may change fairly rapidly given the status of funding efforts, etc. This final product was presented to a joint meeting of the Oversight Committee and Technical Advisory Group in November 2007. An initial printing of 500 copies was paid for the Wyoming Department of Transportation.

RESULTS

Key Accomplishments

- **Establishment of a new, two-tiered governance structure for statewide geospatial coordination.** This was accomplished through the issuance of Executive Order 2006-1 by Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal in April 2006. The order rescinded EO 1994-3, which had created the original Wyoming Geographic Information Advisory Council (WGIAC), and replaced it with a five-member, Governor-appointed Oversight Panel and a 14-member Technical Advisory Group. The Oversight Panel will primarily address policy issues related to geospatial data development and sharing, while the Technical Advisory Group will focus on issues related to standards, framework data and clearinghouse functionality. Initial membership and charters for both groups have been finalized. To date, the groups have met jointly on roughly a quarterly basis.
- **Reformatted Strategic Plan.** The CAP grant team successfully completed a revision to the 2004 Wyoming Geographic Information Advisory Council's *Recommendations for Statewide GIS Coordination* document. This document had previously been updated by the Wyoming Office of the Chief Information Officer in 2006. It continues to be the most up-to-date strategic guidance document on GIS in the state and served as the basis for creation of the new GIS Business Plan development effort.
- **GIS Coordinator/Technical Services Business Plan.** The most important element of the CAP grant scope of work was the development of a business plan to support the two primary recommendations of the existing GIS coordination strategic plan: creation of a state GIS coordinator position and establishment of an associated technical services program. As summarized above, this work was accomplished through a contract with Applied Geographics, Inc. with support

from Flitner Communications. In large part, the document followed the template provided by the joint FGDC/NSGIC Fifty States Initiative effort.

- **GIS Coordination Education Strategy Document.** An education strategy document was developed by Flitner Communication to accompany the business plan. It includes strategies for raising awareness and securing buy-in from various targeted stakeholder groups throughout the state

Impacts on Statewide Coordination

The CAP grant activities have had two significant impacts on statewide coordination efforts. First, the new two-tiered coordination structure has provided: (a) a small group of policy-level advocates for better coordination (i.e., the Governor-appointed Oversight Committee); and (b) a restructured technical group that is no longer dominated by state agency representatives and includes equal representation for city government, county government, tribal government, federal agencies, academia and the private sector.

The second major impact on statewide coordination efforts has been the leadership role taken by the OCIO for this issue and its commitment to support efforts to achieve the goals of the coordination strategy.

Implementation of the revised strategic plan and new business plan are just beginning. It's too early in the process to assess whether these efforts will be successful. Most important at this stage is the leadership and support of the OCIO and the ongoing support of one or more "champions" to continue to raise awareness and highlight the important benefits of these efforts.

SUMMARY

Future Steps

Working together, the OCIO, Oversight Committee and Technical Advisory Group will continue to advocate for a statewide GIS coordinator position and a Technical Services Program. The State CIO supports and is directing his Office to facilitate the

efforts of the Oversight Committee and Technical Advisory Group. The Oversight Committee, by charter, is tasked to ensure consistent policies, standards and guidelines, in addition to promoting cooperation among state, federal, local agencies and the private sector. The Technical Advisory Group, by charter, is tasked to help research and develop, then recommend, Policy and Standards to the Oversight Committee. These efforts will be further enhanced by better formalizing the State's relationship with the National Geospatial Programs Office.

Resources Needed

In moving forward with statewide GIS coordination, the Wyoming GIS community will continue to explore opportunities for state legislative funding, in addition to exploring other alternate funding mechanisms. Like other states, Wyoming would benefit from additional federal funding programs to foster and implement coordination efforts.

In terms of non-fiscal resources, Wyoming has benefitted from the report template products made available through the Fifty States Initiative and may benefit in the future from the Fifty States return-on-investment methods as they mature. Other areas of potential benefit include continued training and outreach on NSDI standards for metadata and framework data, as well as best practices for potentially adopting federal geospatial enterprise architecture standards at a state and local level.

CAP Grant Assessment

The CAP Grant provided financial support to Wyoming at a critical time. With the grant, Wyoming was able to revise and re-vitalize its GIS coordination strategic plan and develop a business plan and education strategy for its implementation. Overall, the grant program was extremely helpful and the State of Wyoming would not have been able to accomplish what it did without the Cooperative Agreements Program. While the Grants.Gov application requirements did pose some challenges to the OCIO, the overall process was a valuable learning experience and one which will serve the agency well in pursuing future federal funding opportunities. Administratively, management of the grant

was straightforward and well supported by the FGDC and USGS. The kick-off event was extremely valuable and the FGDC should be encouraged to continue to invest in this part of the CAP process for all grant categories in the future.

Relative to the size of the award, it seems very beneficial that the average grant award has increased over the recent years. While \$50,000 only goes “so far”, it does provide good incentive for applicants to leverage the dollars with either in-kind and/or cash matching funds.

The grant program’s standard one-year time period was a challenge for completing all of deliverables specified within the project scope of work. This became particularly evident when faced with time lags necessary for product review by the Oversight Committee and Technical Advisory Group. Thus, while 90% of the work had been completed in draft form prior to the original one-year end date, an additional six to eight months was necessary to incorporate group feedback, modify draft products and attain final approval. Because an existing coordination structure was intact and two years of prior planning had already taken place before the grant application, the State of Wyoming was well positioned to “hit the ground running” with the CAP grant. Nevertheless, the inevitable delays experienced as part of our planning process indicate that even when states have done considerable work ahead of time, a one–year time period may not be feasible for completing an entire strategic or business plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Digital, PDF-formatted copies of the five documents produced as part of the Wyoming Fifty States Initiative CAP grant project may be accessed from the State of Wyoming CIO’s Office GIS Coordination web page: <http://cio.state.wy.us/GISCoordination.aspx> . They include: (a) Statewide Strategic Plan; (b) Business Plan Exec Summary; (c) Business Plan; (d) Education Strategy; and (e) GIS brochure.