

**2006 National Spatial Data Infrastructure
Cooperative Agreement Program
Program Announcement 06HQPA0007**

Category #3 – Fifty States Initiative – Strategic and Business Plans

**Agreement Number #06HQAG0101
Interim Report**

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Project Narrative

Summary of Project Activities:

In March 2005, the Louisiana Geographic Information Systems Council (LGISC) created a committee to devise a state strategic plan for geospatial development. The Council recognized that a committee charged with creating a state plan should include existing members of the GIS Council as well as representatives from various state agencies that are familiar with state policy and planning issues. In addition, members of the private sector, universities and the federal government were included. A group of approximately 33 individuals was assembled into a committee for the task. The Committee divided the group into seven subcommittees, which dealt with a variety of issues such as organizational challenges, funding geospatial development, taking an enterprise approach, etc.

In early 2006, the GIS Council requested that the Committee incorporate the existing Louisiana Strategic Planning Initiative within the National States Geographic Information Systems (NSGIC) template. The Committee has completed the final draft, which will be reviewed by the entire GIS Council at their September 2006 meeting

The Louisiana Geographic Information Center (LAGIC) the state's primary contact for geospatial information is also the state point of contact for the Louisiana GIS Strategic Plan. LAGIC provided ongoing logistical support for the Strategic Plan Initiative. During this time LAGIC was also providing logistical support to the state to assist in Hurricane Katrina and Rita response and recovery efforts.

In the aftermath of the natural disasters that struck Louisiana in the summer and fall of 1995, it was clear that the state needed a method for improving data coordination, distribution and exchange between the state and utility companies. Specifically, the state needed to know the location and operational status of the states private utility infrastructure. In its FGDC Grant proposal, LAGIC outlined a plan to strengthen state GIS coordination by expanding contacts with utility companies that have not traditionally been a contributing partner in the state geospatial community. LAGIC proposed a series of geospatial data workshops in the two cities hardest hit by the 1995 hurricanes, New Orleans and Lake Charles. The workshops would provide an opportunity to introduce the private companies to the wealth of public geospatial data that is available for their use and to educate the state on the concerns of private industry in regards to sharing commercial data.

Key Accomplishments:

- LAGIC has successfully completed two of the four proposed workshops, one in Lake Charles and one in New Orleans.
- Interviews and a data survey have been conducted between LAGIC and the states largest utility, Entergy, regarding Entergy's geospatial needs and their data sharing concerns.

- Initial discussions have taken place between LAGIC and two city owned utilities in Louisiana coastal areas, Lafayette and Houma.
- LAGIC has coordinated workshop announcements with the local state chapter of the Geospatial Industries Technology Association (GITA).

Changes in Statewide Coordination:

In response to the critical unmet data needs of state and federal agencies, apparent after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Louisiana GIS Council opened its membership to a greater variety of organizations. Legislation passed in a Special Session in January of 2006, allowed any entity to apply for membership provided that they were not currently being represented by a member agency and that they would like to make a contribution to state geospatial coordination. The first entity to apply was the Louisiana Society of Professional Surveyors who became members in April of 2006. Recently, USGS has applied for membership in LGISC, which will be discussed at the October Council meeting.

Inclusiveness:

Recent legislative changes will allow a wide variety of agencies to apply for membership in the Louisiana GIS Council (see **Changes in Statewide Coordination**).

Lessons Learned:

One of our early successes was to realize that the utility companies were unaware of some of the data layers created by the state that were extremely useful in updating their own data sets; digital orthoimagery, elevation data, new roads etc. We also realized that although utility companies consider some of their data proprietary there are many data sets that they are willing to share.

Our greatest disappointment was to discover the lack of communication between our utility companies and the local governments in their service area. This may provide an opportunity for LAGIC to play the role of an “honest broker” in creating a mechanism for the sharing of information between the two.

Next Steps

- We have scheduled two more geospatial data workshops in the fall in conjunction with our local chapter of GITA. One will take place in New Orleans on October 20th and the other in Lake Charles in early November.
- We will invite the states largest utility company to make a presentation on their use of geospatial data, to the state GIS Council in November. We have extended an invitation to one of the large municipal utilities to present at our state GIS Conference.
- Our initial survey questionnaire will be modified based on our test questions, and e-mailed to the GIS coordinators we have identified.

- We will meet with our state Public Service Commission to share our findings and identify any potential legislative changes that might facilitate additional data sharing.

Assistance

We would like to follow up our state strategic plan with a Business Plan. We would welcome suggestions from other states on how they have developed their plans. If any state has developed an RFP that they would be willing to share, that would be helpful. If other states would be willing to share their lessons learned that would be useful as well.

Attachments

I will forward the Louisiana Strategic Plan on to FGDC as soon as the plan, is approved by the Louisiana GIS Council. Approval of the plan should occur at the October GIS Council meeting.

Feedback on Cooperative Agreements Program

Strengths and Weaknesses:

The main strength of the program is that FGDC is willing to fund GIS Coordination efforts. These coordination efforts are essential to data sharing efforts but are generally under appreciated by state administrators and therefore under funded. If there is a weakness to the program it is that it is not funded adequately enough to reach all those that could benefit from the assistance

Making a Difference:

The CAP Program has allowed Louisiana to provide statewide outreach to a variety of organizations that are creating geospatial data.

Assistance:

The assistance was sufficient for the tasks that we defined in the proposal. The effectiveness of the assistance will be determined by the data sharing agreements we are able to create from these efforts.

Program Management Concerns:

The grant management requirements are appropriate for the level of funding.

Do differently?

I would have acted more quickly in enlisting the cooperation of the utility companies while the effects of the hurricanes were fresh in everyone's mind. The window of opportunity was shorter than we imagined.