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Final report

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Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
Florida Institute of Government at Florida State University (FIOG)
Florida Legislature Office of Economic & Demographic Research (FLEG)
Florida Local Government Information Systems Association (FLGISAs)
Florida Resources and Environmental Analysis Center at Florida State University (FREAC)
Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
Geoplan Center at University of Florida (GEOPLAN)
Leon County, Florida
National Forests of Florida (NFF)
Seven Hills Regional User Group for GIS (SHRUG)
Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)
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Executive Summary

The key outcome of this project was the production of Florida's Strategic Plan for Statewide Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Coordination (available online at http://www.floridadisaster.org/gis/capgrant/Documents/FL_Strategic_Plan_GIS_Coordination.pdf). It was identified by the project steering committee that this roadmap for political champions and decision makers was the best goal achievable at this time. Additionally, the project cemented stakeholders to continue and expand informal coordination activities until the time that it is seen fit by executive or legislative mandate that a state geospatial programs office and/or coordination council be created.

Project Narrative

The unprecedented hurricane seasons of 2004 and 2005 brought to light the unequal access to and usage of geospatial technologies within Florida. Those events also accentuated many of the quality, interoperability, and accessibility issues associated with Florida's geographic data: inconsistency from location to location; duplication across many levels of government; and all too frequently a lack of availability when needed.

From this realization arose a groundswell of support for improved GIS coordination. In response to that, a small group of GIS managers and professionals initiated a project to develop a strategic plan. Building on the successes of regional user groups and past efforts to coalesce Florida's GIS assets, the group formed a steering committee. This group included representatives from federal, state, regional, county, and city governments, as well as representatives from the private sector and the university community. The steering committee applied for and was awarded a 2007 NSDI Cooperative Agreement Program (CAP) Category 3: Strategic and Business Plan Development in Support of the NSDI Future Directions Fifty States Initiative.

The grant application and award identified the following scope for this strategic plan:

"Define and identify steps to implement new mechanisms for interagency, statewide geospatial coordination within Florida. Through a series of facilitated meetings, and employing the services of a hired, professional consultant, stakeholders will explore the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) nine recommended coordination criteria, codifying those that may already be achieved, and identifying additional criteria to achieve. The result of this project will use NSGIC templates to produce a strategic plan to find the means, appoint authorities, and obtain funding and executive support to accomplish further coordination between state government, local government, federal government, tribal government, education and private stakeholders within Florida's geospatial community."

The Florida Division of Emergency Management served as the institutional home for this project, providing the chair of the committee, attending required meetings, financial support for weekly conference calls, and facilities for the majority of the steering committee meetings. FDEM also dedicated a portion of its website for the distribution of current project information and documents: <http://www.floridadisaster.org/gis/capgrant>.

The Florida Institute of Government's GIS Services Group developed marketing material focused on building GIS community awareness, represented the needs of evolving communities

in Florida, and provided GIS based support. Their Training Services group assisted with event support, email communications to stakeholders, and other administrative functions.

Fugro EarthData, Inc. was selected through a request for proposal process to provide subject matter expertise, project facilitation, data collection and analysis, and initial strategic plan document creation services.

The steering committee followed a standard strategic planning methodology that included a project initiation process, information gathering, and stakeholder outreach. Strategizing and planning followed methodologies as presented in the NSGIC strategic planning template available through that organization's web site.

- **520+** stakeholders were provided information about this plan at regional GIS user group meetings
- **150+** stakeholders attended one of the three half-day regional workshops
- **309** stakeholders participated in an online survey

Identifying and reaching out to Florida's diverse GIS stakeholder community was critical to the strategic planning process. During this outreach the steering committee educated stakeholders about the need for coordination and gathered as much input as possible. The outreach process was designed to encourage broad participation. Nearly 1,000 GIS professionals participated in activities related to the plan.

The outreach began in the Fall of 2007, with educational sessions at each of the Florida's three major regional GIS conferences. These sessions served to educate stakeholders about the GIS strategic planning process and coordination goals, as well as to address questions and concerns about this initiative. Over 520 professionals attended these sessions. The three conferences were:

Central Florida GIS Workshop (CFGIS), Orlando, September 2007

South Florida GIS Expo, West Palm Beach, October 2007

Seven Hills Regional User Group (SHRUG) Tallahassee, November 2007

After this initial outreach, more in-depth outreach was conducted. This included three half-day regional strategic workshops, held in North, Central and South Florida, where more than 150 stakeholders participated. Extensive one-on-one interviews with a sampling of key stakeholders selected by the steering committee allowed for discussions of GIS coordination issues with upper-level decision makers. In addition 309 individuals responded to an in-depth online survey. The highlights of these in-depth outreach activities are summarized in the data summary document available from the project website.

Three half-day regional strategic planning workshops offered direct interaction with GIS stakeholders and leadership. Invitation distribution – through traditional public postings and significant email campaigns—reached high-level members of such trade associations and organizations as the Florida League of Cities, the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida Association of Property Appraisers, Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA), the Florida chapter of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS), and the Florida Association of Cadastral Mappers.

Open invitations encouraged stakeholder attendance and the workshop format focused on soliciting opinions and ideas. The “distribution of organization representation” for these workshops aligns with the online survey respondents. Over 150 attendees participated in one of the three sessions.

Regional Workshop Locations:

North Florida	Tallahassee	December 4, 2007
South Florida	Plantation	December 10, 2007
Central Florida	Orlando	December 11, 2007

The steering committee identified key stakeholder organizations for in-depth interviews. Organizations that participated in the interviews included city governments, county governments, regional governments, state agencies, federal agencies, and universities.

In order to tap into the broadest input from the largest group possible, an on-line survey was made available. The availability of this on-line survey was publicized at all stakeholder events, through e-mail notices from professional organizations to their membership, and with a link on the project website.

A diverse stakeholder population responded to the survey with approximately equal percentages from state and county government agencies followed by city and regional entities.

There was strong participation from private firms—a positive sign that the private sector has an interest in GIS coordination activities. Responses show that private firms will ultimately be supportive of state leadership.

A data summary for the outreach activities is available at
http://www.floridadisaster.org/gis/capgrant/documents/Data_Collection_Summary_FINAL_010408.pdf.

Next Steps

The next step for this project is for the steering committee to continue working together to see that the key recommendations of the strategic plan are implemented. To accomplish this, an outreach subcommittee has formed focusing on expanding informational material for the plan, obtaining endorsements, and pursuing political champions. Additionally, the steering committee has continued to work on coordination and collaborative activities, like a recent GIS Data Discovery workshop held at the State Emergency Operation Center and recent Metadata Standards training across the state.

Attachments

Attachment 1 - Florida's Strategic Plan for Statewide Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Coordination

Attachment 2 - Data Summary

Feedback on Cooperative Agreements Program

Our experience with the CAP program was very positive. The exposure at NSGIC conferences to the wealth of information to assist with strategic planning was very helpful.

Next Steps

1. Using the existing executive summary as a starting place, develop a 2-page (or so) synopsis of the strategic plan and the key recommendations and summarizing return-on-investment.
2. Obtain endorsements of the strategic plan from the following entities:
 - State CIO Council
 - WMD Governing Boards
 - State Agencies
 - FLURISA
 - FGDC
 - USGS
3. Pursue political champions.
4. See that a committee or task force is created by executive order and without specific statutory enactment to investigate how to achieve the key recommendations of the strategic plan. This objective is necessary to see to it that coordination is achieved during the adoption phase of the key recommendations.
5. Plan for moving forward with Business Plan development. This item will be looked at later this fall – if some political headway has been accomplished, and we get traction on an executive or legislative mandated geospatial programs office or council, then the business plan should be structured around that. If November comes around, and we don't have that, then we need to start thinking about a business plan around a volunteer GIS Council.
6. Adapt existing return on investment materials into a Florida-specific package.
7. Create return on investment for coordination into a Florida-specific package.