

SUPPLEMENT

FINAL REPORT MEASURING PUBLIC VALUE OF GEOSPATIAL COMMONS: A METROGIS CASE STUDY (JANUARY 17, 2012)

Feedback on Cooperative Agreements Program

What are the CAP Program strengths and weaknesses?

Speaking from the perspective of Cat 5 grant recipient...

Strength: This grant opportunity provides an incentive to conduct research that, in our minds, is critical to realizing the full vision of the NSDI at the local and regional levels. An excerpt from the Executive Summary of our final report:

“A clear understanding of benefit that can be realized through collaborative actions to address shared geospatial needs is critical to realizing the full vision of spatial data infrastructure (SDI) initiatives, such as [MetroGIS](#). One element of this knowledge is to understand how public value is created when public producers of geospatial data openly share their data. Accordingly, the principal reason our team proposed this “Quantify Public Value (QPV)” study was to prototype a method to quantify public value that can be created when geospatial data are shared. And, to do so in a manner in which local government policy makers can easily compare and contrast the costs of supporting their operations with and without participating in a geospatial commons.”

Weakness: The requirement to use a particular methodology (GITA ROI). This concern was partially addressed mid-grant, when we were given permission to pursue a method consistent with our needs. We did the best we could to tackle this important topic within the constraint of our remaining \$32,000 of funding (34% of grant funds -\$17,000 of \$50,000 - was spent to obtain training and attempt to deploy the GITA methodology). I thank the FGDC staff for their flexibility to permit us to define a methodology that works for our needs and for a one-year time extension. I trust our difficult experience, due to circumstances beyond our control, will serve as a consideration in our favor should we decide to seek another CAP grant.

Where does it make a difference?

The CAT 5 grant provides a valuable incentive and catalyst for important research that is difficult to fund with tight operating budgets. Ultimately, it provides knowledge needed to moderate public policy that presents obstacles to wide-spread sharing of geospatial data, information, and related resources.

Was the assistance you received sufficient or effective?

We made substantive progress but more work is required to acquire the ability to quantify value created when a particular interest participates in a geospatial commons. If we had not lost 34% of our available funds (\$17,000 of \$50,000) deploying a methodology, which was required but not appropriate for our needs, we may have been able to close the knowledge gap. Unfortunately, we did not have sufficient knowledge of the GITA ROI method until a

good deal of time and expense had been incurred. On the positive side, our experience documented a use for which the GITA ROI methodology is not intended that may be valuable to others. It also generated substantive qualitative understanding of internal value to Hennepin County as a result of its investment to geo-reference parcel data.

What would you recommend that the FGDC do differently?

- 1) For those who seek future CAT 5 grants and who will utilize the GITA ROI methodology, encourage them to speak with GITA officials, before spending funds on training, to ensure their objective is consistent with the capabilities of the method.
- 2) Consider offering on-going support for grantees as they encounter unanticipated problems or difficulties not covered in the formal training.
- 3) Facilitate networking between same category grant recipients while the study is in process.

Are there factors that are missing or additional needs that should be considered?

We suggest that the FGDC continue to help support research on issues important to realizing the NSDI vision, in particular quantifying the public value creation potential. There is currently too little support for 'research' regarding matters relevant to NSDI challenges, but beyond the scope of government agency's immediate business needs, making local funding a major challenge.

Are there program management concerns that need to be addressed, such as the time frame?

- 1) Please continue to offer the CAT 5 grant opportunity. We suggest that more emphasis be placed on measuring public value creation potential and benefits that can be realized from cross sector partnering/data sharing.
- 2) The time lines and reporting were not an excessive burden. The required quarterly reporting provided us an opportunity to communicate issues in a structure way. The FDGC staff, with whom we worked, did an excellent job listening to our concerns, authorizing a course change and helping us navigate the challenge of rescoping our study mid-course. Our only disappointment regarding the grant itself was that we could not secure reallocation of the \$17,000 lost due to circumstances beyond our control.

If you were to do this again, what would you do differently?

Since the actual workings of the GITA ROI method are copyrighted and not available for review in detail without paying a substantive fee, I'm not sure there is anything that we could have done differently. As a result of our experience, applicants are no longer required to use the GITA ROI method, which will be helpful should we elect to seek funding for a follow-on study.

Respectfully Submitted,

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