

**Final Report**  
**Fifty States Initiative, Strategic and Business Plan Development**  
**Agreement Number: 07HQAG0036**  
**October 20, 2008**

**Organization:** New York State Office of Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure Coordination (CSCIC)

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**Collaborating Organizations:** NYS GIS Association (NYSGISA)  
US Geological Survey (USGS)

**Project Title:** Engaging the New York State geospatial community in cooperative strategies to maintain and share National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) framework data

**Executive Summary:** From Fall 2007 through Spring 2008, New York State conducted a statewide GIS strategic planning process. This process was overseen by the New York State GIS Coordinating Body (Coordinating Body) and CSCIC, which operates the state's GIS coordination program. This work was funded by a Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Cooperative Assistance Program (CAP) Category 3, Fifty States Initiative grant. The project consisted of 3 phases:

- *Information Gathering*, which included stakeholder workshops
- *Synthesis and Strategizing*, which included deliberations with both the Coordinating Body and CSCIC management aimed at identifying recommendations that would leverage existing strengths and address weaknesses.
- *Plan Authoring and Approval*, which included drafting the Strategic Plan and initiating a consensus-building process through the solicitation and incorporation of broad-based feedback on an initial draft of the plan.

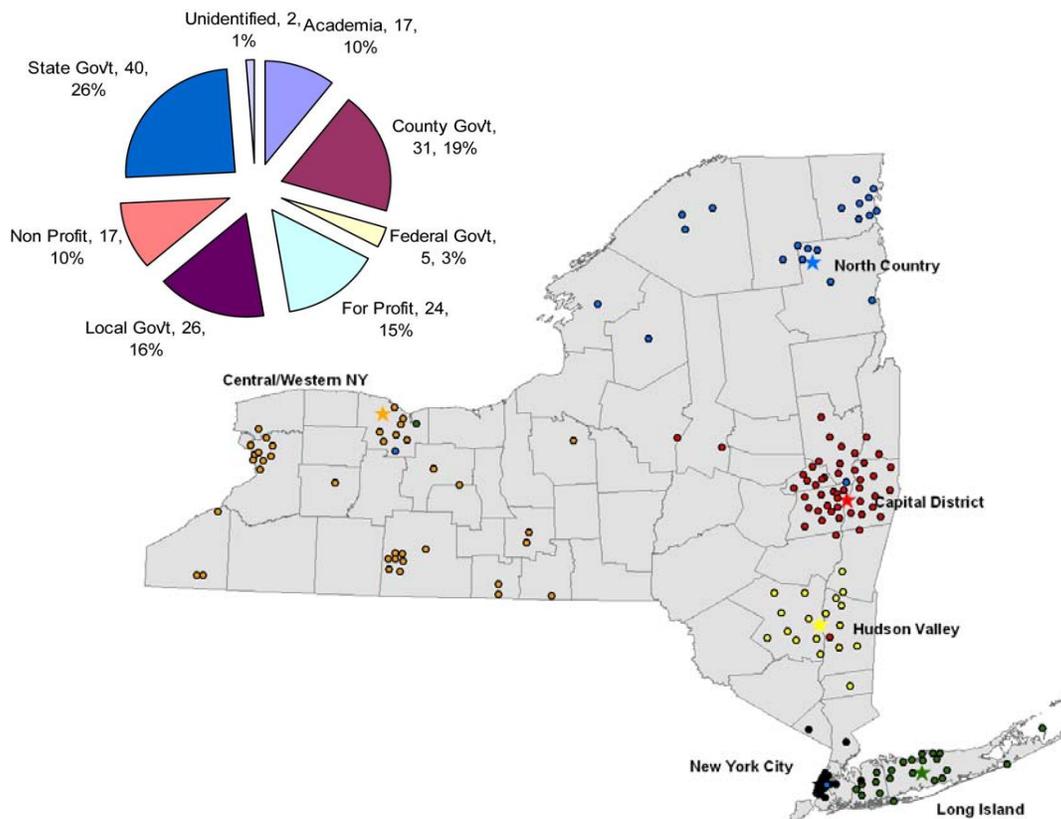
**Project Background/Narrative:** The original strategic/business plan for the New York State GIS Coordination Program was created by the legislatively-enacted Temporary GIS Council in 1996. The Council's final report defined a number of goals and recommendations which have been the basis for the existing State GIS Coordination Program.

A key recommendation of the 1996 report was the establishment of a permanent GIS Coordinating Body, which began operating that same year. This Coordinating Body, a collaborative organization now operating under the auspices of CSCIC (proposal originator), coordinates, promotes and facilitates the development, effective use, and sharing of geographic information in New York State. The Coordinating Body, an 18-member group composed of State, Local Government, Not-For-Profit, Private Sector, Utility, Academia, and Federal participants, meets quarterly.

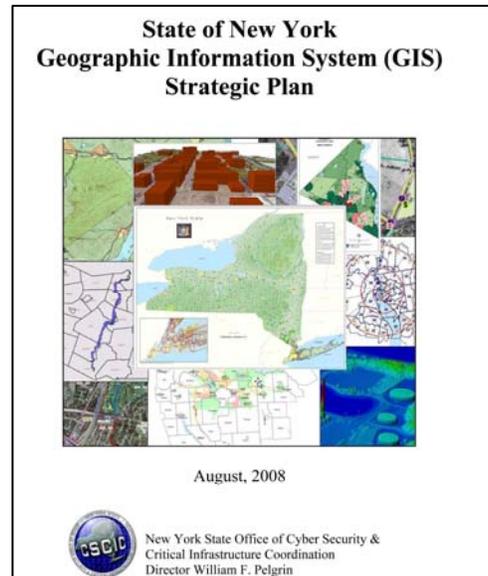
The Coordinating Body also conducts an annual strategic planning session to refresh portions of the existing strategic plan and define priorities for the year ahead. New York State has a mature GIS coordination program, with most of the 9 National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC)-established coordination criteria in place. The 2007 NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program (CAP) Category 3 (50-States Initiative) awarded to CSCIC was thus specifically focused on *strategies to cooperatively maintain and share NSDI framework data*.

**Summary of Project Achievements:** The plan to achieve a more robust State Spatial Data Infrastructure (SSDI) in cooperation with local geospatial community members consisted of 3 steps:

1. A 1-day meeting of CSCIC staff, the Coordinating Body, the NYSGISA, other interested parties, and Applied Geographics (the selected contractor) was held to determine specific issues which required targeted stakeholder input. The stakeholder meeting format was also determined at this meeting.
2. Six regional stakeholder meetings were conducted to seek input and share ideas for developing, maintaining, and sharing SSDI/NSDI framework data layers. The meeting sites and participation are indicated by the graphic below.



3. A strategic plan was written based upon input provided by the geospatial community present at the public meetings. The plan documents priorities, cooperative data maintenance strategies, and is available for reference to all who wish to read, comment, and participate in enacting its' recommendations.



**Findings from Strategic Planning Effort:** Upon completion of the 6 regional meetings, data were summarized in a Discussion Draft. The Coordinating Body reviewed and edited the Discussion Draft prior to posting it for public comments. A total of 160 written comments were received and all were considered in the preparation of the final documented Strategic Plan. The plan contains the following observations.

1. New York has significant geospatial strengths which include:
  - o Mature, statewide GIS coordination program with broad stakeholder support for and engagement in that program
  - o Rich, statewide, core geospatial assets
  - o Widespread public sector data sharing through the data Sharing Cooperative
  - o National leadership for statewide aerial imagery program
  - o National leadership in executing a multi-governmental program for the development and maintenance of streets and address data
  - o Strong geospatial educational programs
2. New York has important geospatial weaknesses that should be addressed:

- Gaps and weaknesses in some key data layers:
  - Elevation: statewide elevation data is inadequate for many required uses such as flood planning, prevention, and response.
  - Parcels: although there is wide availability of county-based parcel information, the data are not consistent and it is very difficult to assemble parcels on a regional or statewide basis, in spite of huge demands for this data set.
  - County and municipal boundaries: are not mapped accurately and this hinders the accuracy of other data layers such as parcels and other administrative boundaries (e.g. school districts)
- The utility of the data sharing cooperative is undermined by significant pockets of dated information and the overall usability of the web-site.
- Local governments require access to non-technical GIS information that would support their efforts to programmatically build GIS capacity. Examples of these types of information that are required includes: return on investment (ROI) case studies and GIS best practices.

**Recommendations:** In order to leverage the strengths, address gaps and weaknesses, and to further extend New York's geospatial capabilities, the following programmatic goals are recommended.

1. Continue to provide national leadership in the development and maintenance of the state's core, basemap layers of streets, addresses, and orthoimagery
2. Strengthen the existing Data Sharing Cooperative
  - Through more active database stewardship
  - By improving the utility and usability of the web-site
  - By encouraging further participation and potentially broader membership
3. Further focus CSCIC's statewide GIS coordination role by:
  - Continuing to foster local government GIS capacity building efforts
  - By re-branding the statewide coordination elements for the overall CSCIC program
  - Further developing a statewide GIS enterprise architecture and web services delivery platform
  - Augmenting and strengthening existing GIS standards setting work
  - Expanding the number of end-user oriented data products that are provided

4. Formally pursue a program to improve the quality of statewide elevation data
5. Strengthen and expand the existing statewide orthoimagery program to include a wider variety of products such as elevation and oblique imagery
6. Formally pursue a program to develop a statewide parcel data layer including active outreach and coordination with the Office of real Property Services (ORPS)
7. Develop a plan for systematically improving the accuracy of the state's administrative boundary data (i.e. county and local government boundaries) including outreach and coordination with the Department of State
8. To the extent possible, continue to align geospatial programs to gubernatorial priorities

**Next Steps:** The plan has been published on the State GIS Clearinghouse website (<http://www.nysgis.state.ny.us/coordinationprogram/straplan/>) and presented at the NYS GIS Conference. A supply of the plans has also been printed in color and bound, with copies provided to members of the GIS Coordinating Body and other key stakeholders for their use in advocating for the recommendations in the plan.

Although the state's fiscal situation is now in a period of distress, CSCIC will watch for opportunities to promote/advance elements of the plan when they are relevant to other program proposals or activities.

Business plans for elements of the plan will also be pursued. The purpose of business plans is to provide detailed costs, benefits, and project plans needed to implement specific recommendations in the strategic plan. Modest additional assistance from FGDC may be needed to procure contractor assistance with development of business plans.

**Attachments:**

- State of New York Geographic Information System (GIS) Strategic Plan, August 2008

**Feedback on the Cooperative Agreements Program:**

- Grants.gov support staff-persons are friendly and very helpful. Program timelines are justifiable yet the ability to "extend" is appreciated. Reports are justifiable. Monetary amounts are reasonable.
- The "grants.gov" process can be daunting, sometimes resulting in mis-submittals, or errors which are not clearly explained.
- CAP grant categories provide a wide range of opportunities which align to states with both mature and emerging programs.

- Consider adding a “wild card” category which makes possible an inventive proposal that does not fit the other, more standard categories. Proposals should be NSDI-supportive, of course, but there is surely room for an “outside-the-box” idea.
- Restricting grantees from re-applying in the same category for 3 years creates a system based upon consolation rather than merit. A good proposal is a good proposal and those who can articulate sound reasoning, need, and value should not lose-out (up front) to other proposals (states) that, by virtue of past failure or prior absence from the process, now hold higher ground.
- The Fifty States Initiative should recognize that some states, including New York, have substantially more complex coordination requirements than many smaller states and may therefore need greater funding assistance with business plan development and other coordination activities. Such follow-on grants could be conditioned upon completion/publication of a strategic plan and a minimum scorecard on the NSGIC coordination criteria.