

Final Report for Arkansas' Fifty States Initiative Project

Category 3: 2010

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Agreement Number: G09AC00062

Project Title: Framework Data Development Sustainable Funding Plan

Organization: Arkansas Geographic Information Office
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Collaborating Organizations:

Arkansas GIS Users Forum, Alan Price Chair, <http://www.argisusers.org/>

Arkansas Geographic Information Systems Board, Tracy Moy Chair,
<http://www.gis.state.ar.us/GISB/gisb.html>



Arkansas GIS Board

Executive Summary Write a short paragraph (under 250 words) describing the key successes or outcomes of the project.

Project Narrative

The purpose of this project was to develop a strategic business plan for the development and maintenance of statewide framework GIS data in Arkansas. The project involved stakeholder input from all corners of the state. The final deliverable is a written business plan to assist the Arkansas Geographic Information Systems Board (AGISB) and the Arkansas Geographic Information Office (AGIO) in meeting its legislative mandate to develop a coordinated GIS for the State. The plan was formally adopted by the AGISB on March 3, 2010. The plan is the playbook Arkansas' GIS community intends to use over the next five years.

Summary of Project Activities

In the fall of 2009, five workshops convened statewide and GIS stakeholders provided feedback that helped prioritize the needs of Arkansas' GIS community. The following summarizes the highlight activities to date:

Request for Qualifications to select a qualified consulting firm were received on May 26, 2009.

The project evaluation team consisting of the Chairs of the Board and Forum, and a representative from the AGIO completed evaluations on June 3, 2009, and Applied Geographics was notified.

A professional services contract approval is required by the State Legislature. The approval was completed by the state legislature on July 2, 2009.

A project kickoff meeting with the leadership team convened on July 21 & 22 to outline details, plan tasks, and begin drafting the plan.

A project website was created at <http://www.gis.arkansas.gov/BusinessPlan.html>. (Note, the Web address for the business plan has since changed.)

The original project plan called for five regional workshops to convene in Hope, Monticello, Jonesboro, and Little Rock, with a final meeting to run concurrently with the Arkansas GIS Users Forum Conference at Eureka Springs in October, 2009, where the draft plan would be unveiled. However, team members agreed this would not allow an opportunity for western Arkansas stakeholders to inform the plan. As a result an additional workshop was added in Fort Smith. To offset the expense, the Arkansas GIS Users Forum agreed to sponsor the Little Rock workshop where the team anticipated the highest attendance.

Project Kickoff Team Members at right: Michael Turner, Applied Geographics (foreground), Bill Sneed, Arkansas' USGS Liaison, Alan Price, Chair of Arkansas GIS Users Forum, Tracy Moy, Chair of Arkansas GIS Board



Workshop locations, dates and attendance figures, were:

Jonesboro, August 17, 2009 – 29 attendees*

Little Rock, August 19, 2009 – 60 attendees

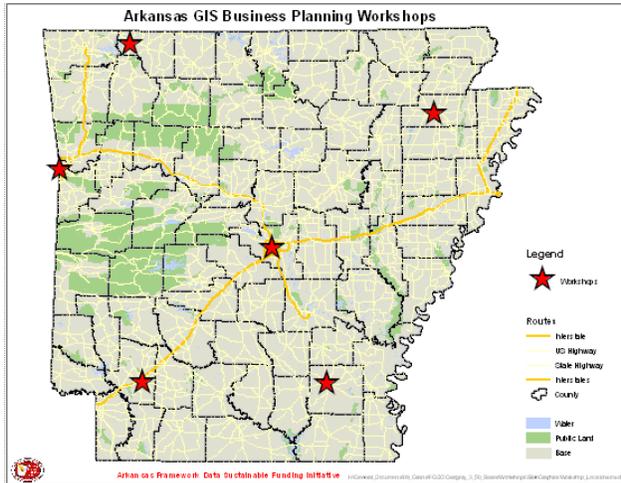
Monticello, August 31, 2009 – 19 attendees
At right are participants at the Monticello workshop. Dr. Rob Kissell, State GIS Board Member (center).

Fort Smith, September 1, 2009 – 37 attendees

Hope, September 2, 2009 – 22 attendees
At right are participants in Hope, Arkansas. Howard County Assessor Debbie Teague (center, in blue).



* Note, project team member attendance was only counted once, for Jonesboro, even though the project team attended all workshops.



Key statewide leaders were scheduled as guest lunch speakers for each workshop. The guest speakers were:

Hope – Jon Chadwell, Director, Newport Arkansas Economic Development Commission

Little Rock – Honorable Shane Broadway, State Senator

Monticello – Honorable Jimmy Jeffress, State Senator

Fort Smith – Honorable Stephanie Malone, State House of Representatives

Hope – Honorable Steve Harrelson, State House of Representatives pictured below speaking at the Hope Workshop.



Key Stakeholder Interviews

Over the course of the project, the project team conducted 17 interviews with key leaders and decision makers within the current administration, county government and other organizations that represent geospatial stakeholders or implement geospatial technologies. The list below catalogs the interviews that were conducted.

Randy Zook, Arkansas Chamber of Commerce
Butch Calhoun, Arkansas Rural Services
Don Zimmerman, Arkansas Municipal League
Maria Haley, Arkansas Economic Development Commission
Eddie Jones, Arkansas Counties Association
Richard Davies, Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism
Lee Ann Kizzar, Arkansas Assessor's Association
Debbie Asbury, Arkansas Assessment Coordination
Dr. Thomas Kimbrell, Arkansas Department of Education
Bill Stovall, Office of the Speaker of the House
Mike Stormes, State Budget Director
Senator John Paul Capps
Jon Moran, Governor Beebe's Office
Representative Kathy Webb
Kathryn Hazelett, Governor Beebe's Office (since departed)
Jimmy Hart, Conway County Judge
Emily Jordan-Cox, Governor Beebe's Office



Key stakeholder interview with Debbie Asbury,
Director of the Arkansas Assessment Coordination Department.



Key stakeholder interview with Eddie Jones, Executive Director of the Arkansas Association of Counties.



Key stakeholder interview with DFA Budget Director Mike Stormes, who has served as Budget Director under four different Governor's.



Key stakeholder interview with Debbie Asbury (left of Michael); Jon Moran, AGIO Liaison, Governor Beebe's Office; and Katherine Hazelett, Policy Advisor, Governor Beebe's Office.

Following the workshops and interviews, the project team developed a slate of findings and recommendations that were then presented to the broader GIS stakeholder community during the 2009 Arkansas GIS User's Forum Conference in Eureka Springs. The goal was to determine whether there was general agreement with the direction the plan was taking and to solicit a last round of input.

Following the GIS User Forum Conference, the Geospatial Strategic Business Plan was drafted.

On March 3rd 2010 the Arkansas GIS Board formally adopted the plan. The adopted plan is located on the Board's Web site at the following link:

http://www.gis.arkansas.gov/Docs/LAW/2010_StrategicBizPlan.pdf

Following the release of this plan, the AGIO worked with Sen. John Paul Capps and Rep. Jon Woods to have the Executive Summary of the plan placed on the agenda of the Legislative Joint Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology (JCACIT) meeting. The committee hearing was held on June 9, 2010 in the State Capitol, where the team presented the plan to JCACIT members. The committee does not approve budget requests from state agencies; however, a number of its members also sit on the Joint Budget Committee that approves budget requests.

The plan was also introduced to the Arkansas Society of Professional Surveyors Board of Directors, who voted to formally endorse the plan on June 4, 2010.



Michael Turner, Applied Geographics with Sen. John Paul Capps, Chair of the General Assembly's Joint Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology

At the same time the agency worked with its policy advisor and liaison in the Governor's Office to schedule a meeting with the Governor Beebe's Chief of Staff to solicit the Governor's support for the plan.

The AGIO has employed a variety of educational and outreach activities through social media, regional user group meetings, and state association meetings aimed at presenting the substance of recommendations and advocating its fruition. The following is a list of meetings where the plan has been showcased thus far in 2010:

- Arkansas GIS Users Forum Spring Meeting
- Arkansas County Assessors Association Summer Conference
- Arkansas Society of Professional Surveyors Board of Directors Meeting
- Northeast Arkansas GIS Users Group
- Western Arkansas GIS Users Group

Next Steps

The agency is in the process of preparing the formal budget request that would go into effect in July 2012. The Arkansas Legislature evaluates the budget request in January of 2011. Current economic forecasts are dim for any expansion in the state budget. Gov. Beebe has already advised agencies of his intent to submit a flat budget across the board. Because Arkansas maintains a balanced budget this means our request for ongoing funding would require a new revenue source or require the reduction of budget from another state service. Neither of these prospects have a strong likelihood of happening. Either of those options would require direct intervention by Governor Beebe. The Governor has been very supportive of the plan but with declining state revenue from the current economic recession could make no promises for funding the plan. In the short term, this request literally relies

on the national economy rebounding, which in turn would positively impact Arkansas' economy, and would lead to a revision in the state's revenue forecast.

The agency, Executive Team and the State GIS Board have great faith in the plan and will continue to promote the benefit of implementing this plan even if it is not funded by the General Assembly in the 2011 legislative session. Because of the wide stakeholder input that was incorporated in the plan, we have direct feedback that demonstrates the greatest needs for framework data. We will advocate the plan over the next legislative cycles until we are successful. For the short term, there is no direct assistance the federal government could provide that would change the reality that our plan hinges on improvements in the economy, or sway the opinion of the Governor and legislature. However, we believe it is vital the FGDC continue to provide cooperative agreement program assistance in this category for future revisions to strategic and business planning activities in the states.

Attachments

[Arkansas Geospatial Strategic Business Plan](#)

[Official Letter of Endorsement from the Arkansas Society of Professional Surveyors](#)

*Additional endorsements are expected, but were not available at the time of the report deadline.

[AGIO Blog Post: Invest \\$15M over 5 years](#)

Feedback on Cooperative Agreements Program

What are the CAP Program strengths and weaknesses?

One strength of the CAP Program is the ease of reporting for each project. CAP only requires an interim report and a final report, whereas other programs often require more frequent reporting, which is time consuming.

Another strength of the program is the use of the DHS Federal Payment Management System, which makes it easier to request and receive interim payments.

Where does it make a difference?

The difference is noted by the convenience of the entire process. Instead of focusing on numerous reports, or spending unnecessary time handling financial distractions, we have been able to focus more on our project, and for that reason, we are extremely pleased with the CAP Program.

Was the assistance you received sufficient or effective?

The assistance we received was both sufficient and effective for our purposes. We feel the requirement to include travel to the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) meeting to network and learn from other CAP recipients was helpful.

What would you recommend that the FGDC do differently?

I do not have any suggestions at this time. It has been a pleasure working with the FGDC on this project.

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

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

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

When we applied for the grant to conduct our Business Planning process there was no way to forecast how the national economy would impact our state revenue. It's tough to say we would do anything different but we feel it should be noted that our timing as it relates to the recession couldn't have been any worse.