

Final Report – New York State

Fifty States Initiative: Business Plan Development & Implementation

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Project Title:

Business Plan Development for Centralized Access to Consistent Cadastral GIS Data for New York State

Organization:

New York State Office of Cyber Security

(Formerly the New York State Office of Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure Coordination)

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Executive Summary

In 2008, New York State completed a comprehensive Strategic Plan that set a vision and priorities to advance New York State's geospatial development for the next five years. The goal of the 2010 NSDI CAP grant award was to begin addressing the Strategic Plan's highest priority recommendation – to formally pursue a program to develop a statewide parcel data layer.

CAP grant funds were used to develop a business plan that lays out the steps needed to reach this goal and includes a business case that supports state and local government investments in implementing these recommendations. The project involved four primary tasks:

- Retaining the services of a professional consultant team to assist with developing the business plan;
- Creation, data collection, review, and analysis of a parcel inventory survey;
- Information gathering through individual interview sessions and correspondence with key stakeholders, meetings with professional state associations; and
- Development of the business plan, which included several in-depth discussions with and input from the NYS GIS Coordinating Body.

Information gathering sessions successfully reached key stakeholders and garnered valuable input and diverse opinions from those who *create* parcel data in the assessment and real property tax offices and from parcel data *users* at the regional, state, and national levels of government. Their input helped to identify the existing challenges that have so far prevented universal sharing of parcel data in New York State. The business plan provides strategies to successfully overcome these challenges and documents the benefits of a publically-accessible statewide parcel data set across all levels of governments. Also included is an implementation plan that focuses on practical and achievable first steps that can be pursued during the first two years of the program. Implementation would be incremental, initially engaging those counties who are willing to share their data now or in the near term. This approach would provide proof of concept, yield quick results, and generate the collaboration needed to carry the program forward towards voluntary participation by all counties in New York State.

Project Narrative

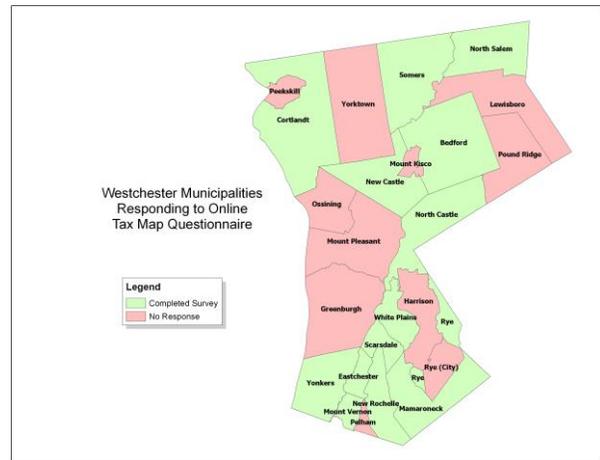
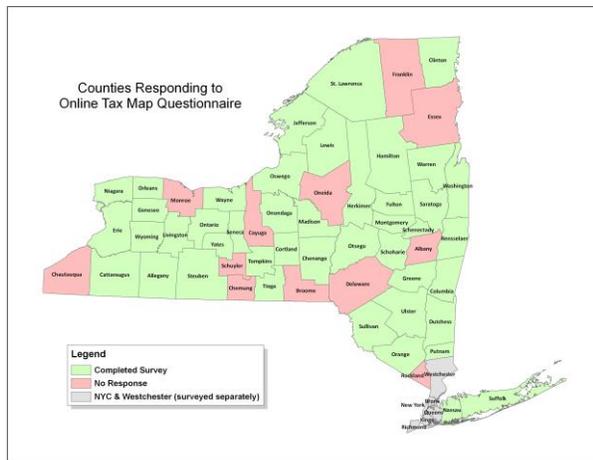
Summary of project activities

The Office of Cyber Security (OCS) launched the project in March 2010 at the New York State GIS Coordinating Body (Coordinating Body) meeting. Project objectives were laid out and 11 members/work group chairs volunteered for a subcommittee tasked with creating the scope of services to procure professional consultant services to help develop the business plan. While the procurement process was underway, OCS reached out to the New York State Office of Real Property Tax Services (ORPTS) and offered to partner with and assist ORPTS on the annual update of their Digital Tax Map Status Data report. This annual report provides a current snapshot of digital parcel data in New York State (NYS) in the format of a parcel data inventory that includes data format, quality, public/government availability, and distribution methods. OCS converted ORPTS' original paper-based questionnaire to digital format, added a few questions to further clarify the current status of digital tax map data and distribution methods, and in mid-July, posted the questionnaire as an on-line survey. In parallel, OCS also began compiling a list of web links to online parcel data sets, parcel data viewers, consumable parcel web services, and other web sites from which parcel data can be ordered or obtained.

Procurement of the consultant team was completed in late August 2010 and research activities began immediately. Initial responses to the ORPTS survey were reviewed and analyzed for technical and policy

Key accomplishments to date

Outside of New York City (which was surveyed separately), 14 of the 25 city and town assessors in Westchester County (56%) and 44 of the remaining 56 counties (79%) responded to the ORPTS Survey.



ORPTS noted that these response rates are much higher than normal and attributed this success not just to the availability of digital and online versions of the survey, but to OCS and the consultant team's outreach and follow-up phone calls to the non-responders. OCS also provided all survey respondents with an electronic version of their survey. This not only provides respondents with a record of what they submitted but will make submission of the ORPTS annual surveys easier as they will only have to modify the information that changed. ORPTS anticipates future response rates to be close to or even exceed the rates we achieved during this project.

Early in the project, OCS compiled over 200 web links to online parcel data sets, parcel data viewers, consumable parcels web services, and other web sites from which parcel data can be ordered/obtained. This information was put into a spreadsheet and was distributed to NYS agencies through the State Agency Advisory Committee as an interim product to help State agencies quickly locate the parcel data that they need. The spreadsheet, last updated in October 2011, is in the process of being posted on the NYS GIS Clearinghouse for public access.

During the interviews and outreach activities several counties, including New York City, indicated that they would be willing contributors in early efforts to build a statewide parcel data layer. Having a list of willing counties already queued up to work with us will help sell the project to management as agency priorities are reevaluated and staff resources can be reassigned to the project.

How inclusive is your effort? What have you done to bring new stakeholder groups or organizations into statewide coordination?

ORPTS contacted the non-respondent counties and the non-respondent city and town assessors in Westchester County via email at least two times to encourage them to complete the online survey, with phone follow-ups to those having difficulty navigating through the survey or understanding questions. Following ORPTS' second contact, OCS and the consultant team made phone calls to the non-responders that they knew and have had previous successful relationships.

OCS recognized that to be successful in this project, it would be critical to have the support of and input from the NYS Association of County Directors of Real Property Tax Services (Association). Even prior to applying for this NSDI CAP grant, discussions were held with a local Board Director on the Association to

gauge the Association's interest. As we progressed forward, the Board Director was included in all aspects of the project from acting as our primary liaison with the Association, reviewing the grant application, providing a letter of support, participating in Coordinating Body meeting discussions, in-depth interviews, educating Association members about the project, and continuously advocating the project with his peers. OCS and the consultant team participated in the Association's June and October meetings by providing an overview of the project, and solicited their input, concerns, ideas, and strategies for a successful outcome. The Association also reviewed the draft business plan.

Attempts were made to present at the NYS Assessor's Association (NYSAA) September annual meeting through the NYSAA's Education Chair. Although the Education Chair was interested in including our topic in their Emerging Trends tract, it was not approved by the rest of the Education Committee. Once implementation of the business plan begins, we intend to reach out to the NYSAA again and begin educating them about the project's goals and how they will benefit from a statewide parcel data set.

The State Agency Advisory Group was used as an avenue to share information about the project and to collect input from State agencies regarding their parcel data needs and current data collection activities. This group meets quarterly and is well attended by the majority of State agencies that have GIS users.

Our federal government representative on the Coordinating Body assisted in soliciting input from federal agencies in New York State, including review and comment on the draft business plan.

What practices or activities led to success?

Our direct outreach to and communication with County RPTS Directors and New York City agencies responsible for parcel mapping provided valuable insight into the current barriers to data sharing. They also provided thoughtful recommendations and strategies for a successful outcome, including clarity on the level of participation that they could provide. Another successful activity was the special January 2011 Coordinating Body meeting focused exclusively on the Parcel Business Plan. This meeting provided an excellent venue for further exploring the benefits of a statewide parcel data set while also addressing the legitimate concerns of county and local parcel data custodians. Coordinating Body members provided a good cross representation of stakeholders and included those that create and manage parcel data as well as others that have strong needs to consume parcel data. Attendees came prepared to spend the day focusing solely on the Parcel Business Plan and were engaged in several hours of thoughtful in-depth discussions and deliberations. By the end of the meeting, an approach that all stakeholders could support was agreed upon.

What practices or activities have not?

Analysis of the annual ORPTS survey responses found that improvements to the structure of the survey questions would have captured key information and enabled a more thorough data analysis. We also were less successful in engaging ORPTS leadership than desired. ORPTS was reorganized under NYS Department of Taxation and Finance during the project, resulting in leadership and priority changes. Although we met with the new ORPTS leadership and they voiced support for the business plan, they indicated that they would be unlikely to commit resources to implement the plan.

Explain how your project has advanced the NSDI

This project supports the vision for the NSDI by creating a process where local, authoritative cadastral data is compiled into a statewide data set that will be publically available and, in turn, can be integrated at a national level. Benefits at the national level will echo those gained at the local and regional levels as the NSDI will reduce duplication of effort and ensure that the best available cadastral information is used in decision making.

Next Steps

The final business plan has been prepared for publication on the NYS GIS Clearinghouse and should be available by mid-December at www.nysgis.state.ny.gov. Also to be posted with the business plan is the inventory of online parcel data sets, parcel data viewers, consumable parcels web services, and other online sources of parcel data. As resources become available, the parcel data inventory will be converted from its current spreadsheet format into a more usable database.

During the project, OCS was reorganized under the State's new Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services and just recently, new executive leadership was appointed. It will be important to brief our new leadership on the importance of this project not just for the agency, but for all State agencies, and the local government emergency response community.

The state's fiscal situation continues to face challenges and OCS lost staff resources during the project due to state workforce downsizing. This has led to competing priorities for the remaining OCS GIS staff resources. Recognizing that no immediate resource relief is forthcoming, OCS cannot yet move fully into the implementation plan. Instead, we will continue to request parcel data from county and local governments through our existing Streets and Address Data Maintenance project. This project already has many established relationships with county real property offices. The project is also expected to rapidly expand their outreach activities in the coming months to address the recently elevated priority of their statewide Address Point build out. Parcel data, being one of the identified sources for addresses, will be obtained during this outreach and it is expected that many counties who previously did not share their parcel data will now provide it. Even if the counties do not allow us to share their parcel data but only use it as a source for addresses, this outreach will at a minimum, allow us to begin building an inventory of parcel data holdings and sharing practices for each county, an initial step identified in the implementation plan.

The Streets and Address Data Maintenance project already executes a Data Usage Agreement with each county that provides data. OCS is currently revising the agreement to allow usage of the data as a publically-accessible statewide parcel data layer. Of note is that the current version of the Data Usage Agreement allows data providers to indicate if OCS can share the data they are providing to other State agencies. OCS is working with the State Agency Advisory Group to determine the most efficient way to notify and distribute parcel data to other State agencies when permission has been given to do so. This will minimize duplicate requests from State agencies to local governments for the same parcel data.

Lastly, it will be important to communicate the availability of parcel data to all stakeholders, whether it is new/updated parcel data posted on the NYS GIS Clearinghouse, parcel data obtained through the Streets and Address Data Maintenance Project that can be shared with other State agencies, or an updated online parcel data inventory. It will also be important to apprise stakeholders on any measurable implementation plan progress through email correspondence and sessions at their annual meetings, such as the NYS Association of County Directors of Real Property Tax Services, NYS Assessor's Association, Association of Counties, Association of Towns, Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials, NYS Association of E911 Coordinators, Regional GIS Groups, and the NYS GIS Conference.

Attachments

Final Business Plan: *Centralized Access to Consistent Cadastral GIS Data for New York State, 2011*

Feedback on the Cooperative Agreements Program

What are the CAP Program strengths and weaknesses?

- CAP grant categories provide a wide range of opportunities which align to states with both mature and emerging programs.
- CAP “seed” funding is essential to having States carry out strategic and business plans. Without the CAP funds, these activities would be unlikely to occur.
- Flexibility shown in the CAP program to provide extensions beyond the original 1-year deadline is appreciated.
- FGDC templates for strategic and business plans are quite valuable and provide consistency from state to state and also simplify the specifications by CAP grantees when contracting for services to assist with the plans.

Where does it make a difference?

New York is probably typical of most, if not all, states in that we do not have sufficient resources to undertake most of the CAP-eligible projects without assistance. Even though the State must find matching resources for the projects, the existence of the CAP program provides the impetus to proceed. This is a key strength of the program and perhaps the most important reason to continue it.

Was the assistance you received sufficient or effective?

Yes.

What would you recommend that the FGDC do differently?

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.

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

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 within any given CAP category. Current CAP categories generally have grants of fixed nominal amounts. This characteristic of the program tends to reward small states and penalize large ones, without any justifiable basis. To cite but one example, the effort (travel, logistics, etc) required in New York to conduct 6 regional stakeholder workshops for the strategic plan development (CAP funded in 2008) is surely greater than the effort needed for a much smaller state, yet grant award amounts are nominally the same.

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?

The one-year time frames for CAP projects are generally reasonable. In our case, the primary reason for needing extensions beyond the one-year deadline relate to the length of time necessary for contract procurements. This typically consumes as much as 6 months and therefore defers the start of the project. FGDC has been very accommodating on granting extensions.