

**FINAL REPORT**  
**Fifty States Initiative Project**  
**2011 Category 4 – Business Plan Development and Implementation**

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**Agreement Number:** G11AC20048

**Project title:** Business Plan Development for Statewide Parcel Integration for Minnesota

**Final Report**

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**Collaborating Organizations:** Minnesota State Government Council, Statewide Geospatial Advisory Council, and Digital Cadastral Data Committee. In addition, guidance was provided by the following organizations that formed the project steering committee:

Digital Cadastral Data Committee - Curt Carlson  
Crow Wing County - Doug Hansen  
University of Minnesota – Brad Henry  
MetroGIS - Randy Johnson replaced by Mark Kotz  
MN Department of Transportation - Rick Morey  
Beltrami County - Jane Mueller  
MN Department of Natural Resources - Bart Richardson  
Clay County and City of Moorhead - Mark Sloan  
Minnesota County GIS Association - Jeff Storlie  
Rice County – Michelle Trager  
USGS – Ron Wencil

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This project produced a detailed [Business Plan](#) for acquiring, integrating, managing and providing access to accurate, current and consistent parcel data (both digital spatial and attribute) for the entire State of Minnesota, based on maintained and authoritative county sources.

Development of a statewide parcel dataset is considered a high priority for Minnesota stakeholders. While several programs exist to collect and distribute parcel data within regional groups or single state agencies, a comprehensive process for combining parcel data statewide has never been established. This Business Plan puts forth an approach for constructing a statewide parcel data layer building upon past

investments recognizing most Minnesota counties maintain some digital spatial parcel data and all counties maintain descriptive attribute parcel data. The plan includes strategies to address varied circumstances among Minnesota's 87 counties including: available data, data formats, technologies, resources, distribution/redistribution and cost recovery policies, and liability concerns. These circumstances are documented in the Business Plan's [appendices](#) and addressed with suggested tactics contained in the implementation section. The Business Plan recognizes impediments exist that will require time, education, communication, and innovative approaches to resolve to achieve the goal of attaining at least 90% statewide parcel data integration within five years.

The next step is to generate a tactical plan over the next few months' which would include: development of a "standardized" license agreement and disclaimer statement, identification of a parcel data transfer framework, coordination with a Revenue Department parcel project, as well as some aggregation of county parcel data on a regional basis.

## **PROJECT NARRATIVE**

The project Team believes this project accomplished its goal of developing a viable Business Plan that can guide Minnesota in developing and sustaining a statewide parcel data layer. Unlike a strategic plan that focuses on the "what", this plan identifies the "how", "when", "how much" and "who" components of activities to develop and maintain a statewide Minnesota parcel data layer.

### **Background**

Multiple State of Minnesota agencies and many other governmental and non-governmental entities have business needs for standardized spatial and attribute data about parcels within the state. Unfortunately, no statewide program for acquiring and managing parcel data exists. Establishing such a program has been an identified priority for the state for more than a decade. This *Business Plan* builds upon work dating back to the mid1990s, including:

- [2003 Cadastral Implementation Plan](#) developed as part of the Governor's Council on Geographic Information's effort to build out the NSDI framework data layers for Minnesota.
- [2004 strategic plan](#) for an integrated Minnesota Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI) that supports the National SDI and a vision for integrated parcel data for the nation.
- [MetroGIS strategy for sharing parcel data](#) within the seven county Twin City area.
- Strategies suggested by Minnesota's [Digital Cadastral Data Committee](#).
- Work done by several State agencies --Transportation, Natural Resources and Education, which have each secured limited access to parcel data from a number of counties to meet their individual business needs, but which have not established formal or sustainable processes supporting statewide integration and public availability of the data.

### **Project Activities**

This project consisted of several activities that collected information; documented varied county environments; identified potential stakeholder benefits; suggested a general technical architecture; researched parcel aggregation efforts of the MetroGIS, a few state agencies and a few other states; proposed an implementation plan with a five year schedule; noted issues and concerns; as well as quantified State resources needed for implementation.

In order to provide input to this project and optimize grant funding, MnGeo contracted with Pro-West & Associates in June 2011, to contact Minnesota's counties and compile baseline information about their parcel data programs. Phone interviews acquired information for all 87 Minnesota counties. In addition to helping set the stage for the Business Plan generation effort, survey questions addressed a number of key issues and collected information including:

- County GIS contact information
- Information about county digital spatial data
- Catalogued tabular property tax and appraisal systems being used and the vendors supporting them
- County data sharing policies, practices and charges
- Available county parcel data
- Existing county technologies and staffing resources

This survey information is contained in Appendix Two and Six of the Business Plan.

Project initiation, originally planned for July 1, 2011, was delayed by a budget impasse in the Minnesota Legislature that resulted in a state shutdown for most of July, followed by a delay in legislative approval to spend grant funds that extended through August. In August MnGeo organized the Project Steering Committee and drafted a project timeline.

To assist with the project, MnGeo acquired a vendor through a formal bid process. Beginning in September 2011, MnGeo worked with the Project Steering Committee to develop a statement of work, review responses and generate a work order. [Pro-West & Associates](#) teamed with [Applied Geographics](#) were hired to generate the Business Plan. Pro-West has over 20 years experience working with Minnesota Counties including a number of smaller rural ones, as well as working with a few state agencies on geospatial projects. Their extensive Minnesota knowledge was complemented by Applied Geographics, who developed the business plan template for CAP grant projects and has worked in a number of other states.

The June 2011 survey of the 87 counties collected information focusing on the "supplier" aspect of parcel data sharing. A web based survey conducted in March 2012 collected information from over 250 respondents concentrating on the "consumer" point of view. Results from this survey can be found in Appendix Three of the Business Plan and included:

- Identification of organizations and offices within them that are acquiring and/or desiring parcel data
- Uses of parcel data
- Desired scale for spatial parcel data
- Type of parcel data desired
- Preferred methods of accessing parcel data
- Impediments in acquiring parcel data

As part of their project work, Pro-West and Applied Geographics reviewed parcel aggregation work done in other states, MetroGIS and selected Minnesota state agencies. This information was included within the Business Plan as examples of successful programs, offers some approach options, and serves to validate information obtained in the project's surveys. The research also identified the benefits of these various programs to their participating states and local governments and helped identify potential benefits for a Minnesota program. These case studies also identified some issues and concerns that will need to be addressed if a Minnesota program is going to be successful.

The information from reviewing MetroGIS and other states parcel aggregation efforts and the two Minnesota surveys was used to develop the program for a half day workshop held in April 2012. The Steering Committee worked with Pro-West to identify groups that should be represented and/or individuals to invite to the workshop, significant areas to be addressed, and worked out the event's program. The workshop was a unique event with 52 folks attending locally and participants at 11 remote locations taking part through video conferencing. The workshop validated information that had been collected in the surveys, determined significance of identified issues, discussed options and identified some potential ways to address sharing and access impediments. Workshop notes can be found in Appendix Four of the Business Plan.

Following the workshop the vendor team reviewed and organized all of the input they had gathered and generated an outline for the Business Plan. MnGeo and the Steering Committee reviewed the outline, asked questions and provided feedback. An initial draft of the Business Plan was provided to MnGeo and the Steering Committee for review and comment at a half day review session. The result of that review was a reorganization of the Business Plan, inclusion of more potential benefits, expansion of the tactics within the implementation section, identification of State resources needed for implementation, expanded information about what is occurring in other states, as well as putting the appendices into a separate document. The audience of the Business Plan, and especially the Executive Summary, was determined to be policy and decision-makers at the State and within counties.

The consultants took a few weeks to restructure the Business Plan and produced a second draft that was a significant rewrite. MnGeo and the Steering Committee reviewed and commented on the second draft. Those comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the plan. The Steering Committee and MnGeo are pleased with the final product and feel that the Business Plan identified most important issues, suggested solutions to problems and provides a viable plan to work develop and maintain a statewide parcel data layer.

The completed Business Plan is available through the MnGeo website and has been presented at the State's primary GIS conference, at a couple of county office conferences, to the Digital Cadastral Data Committee, as well as to the State Government and Statewide Geospatial Advisory Councils. Most people are complementary of the plan, think it is a good representation of the circumstances within Minnesota's 87 counties, feel the business cases support implementation, and that the plan suggests a viable approach. MnGeo and the community also recognize that there is a lot of work yet to be done to build and sustain a statewide parcel data layer.

### Success Factors

There are a number of factors that contributed to the success of this project including:

- Representative Stakeholder Input: Throughout this project the MnGeo project team, the consultants and Steering Committee attempted to identify and communicated with groups and individuals that represented the Minnesota parcel data stakeholder community. As can be seen from the organizations represented on the Steering Committee, respondents to the surveys and workshop participants, a very broad group of individuals provided input.
- Active Steering Committee: The dedicated, actively involved and representative Project Steering Committee ensured that the Business Plan identified impediments coupled with suggested solutions, was readable by decision makers, identified benefits, and included viable implementation tactics. They also helped identify stakeholders and with communications.
- Quality Consultant: The consulting team MnGeo utilized had the experience, knowledge and credibility to ensure development of a good plan.

- Active Project Participation: MnGeo staff was actively engaged in all aspects of this project. This helped ensure continuity, quality, completeness, communications and engagement of stakeholders.
- Communications: Keeping the statewide community informed through the project website, project updates, news articles and presentations has kept stakeholders engaged and allowed additional input and feedback as well as fostered support.
- On-going Input: During the project and now after completion of the Business Plan the MnGeo project team has received questions, comments and concerns about the plan and various implementation tactics. Hearing and understanding stakeholder concerns allows us to quantify and address them as we move forward. Without the plan we may not have learned of these concerns or understood potential adverse impacts and had the opportunity to address them. We hope that stakeholders will continue to identify issues, help address impediments and partner with us as we move forward.

Another indication that this project was a success is that a couple of groups working on other MSDI data layers are considering development of a business plan as a possible strategy in their efforts to build and/or sustain their data layers.

## Next Steps

The generation of the Business Plan and its appendices is a major step forward in Minnesota's quest to complete this highly desired statewide foundational MSDI data layer and to make it available as part of the NSDI. This Business Plan lays out a five year plan with numerous tactics. Subsequent activity will be dependent on resource availability at the State and within counties. A recent MnGeo survey of project priorities, identified development of the parcel data layer as falling midway among seven high priority projects. MnGeo management has decided to allocate staff resources to moving this effort forward. Some of the next steps will include:

- Presentations to various groups to acquire additional input, support and participation.
- On-going communication with stakeholder groups and individuals within counties and in State agencies.
- Development of a license agreement for the State, as a single entity/enterprise, with counties; working with the State's Attorney General's Office and the MN County Attorney Association.
- Development of a "disclaimer statement" for use by the state and its counties to help address liability and data quality concerns.
- Acquire legislation to eliminate costs to governmental entities for acquiring geospatial data from other governmental entities and to eliminate liability for data shared at no cost.
- Define a parcel data exchange guide or framework. A [draft proposal](#)<sup>1</sup> has been generated and has been posted for comment.
- One or more small pilot projects
- Work with the Minnesota Department of Revenue to determine how their project to collect parcel data from counties for State oversight of property taxes and our effort may complement each other.

## Statewide Coordination

This project incorporated extensive input and participation by many individuals and groups around the state. Their input helped shape the proposed implementation plan and informed the project team of issues that will need to be addressed if we are to succeed. Acquiring parcel data

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/committee/standards/parcel\\_attrib/parcel\\_attrib.html](http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/committee/standards/parcel_attrib/parcel_attrib.html)

statewide will require coordination with numerous offices and their staff in all 87 counties as well as some regional organizations. On-going coordination and communications will be required to build then sustain a statewide parcel data layer.

## Attachments

Attachment 1 – *Business Plan for Statewide Parcel Data Integration*, dated September 28, 2012

And can be found at:

[http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/coord/parcel\\_business\\_plan/MN\\_Parcel\\_Business\\_Plan\\_Final.pdf](http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/coord/parcel_business_plan/MN_Parcel_Business_Plan_Final.pdf)

Attachment 2 – *Statewide Parcel Business Plan Appendices*

And can be found at:

[http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/coord/parcel\\_business\\_plan/Statewide\\_Parcel\\_Data\\_Plan\\_Appendices.pdf](http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/coord/parcel_business_plan/Statewide_Parcel_Data_Plan_Appendices.pdf)