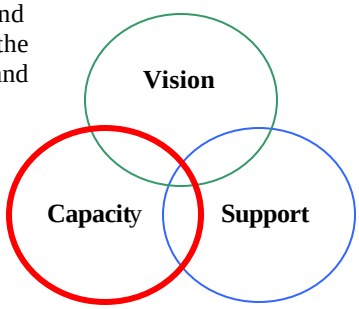
Overview of the Lessons Learned from the NSDI Community Demonstration Projects

A synthesis of the experiences from the NSDI Community Demonstration Projects, and comments from Federal and Local Champions and participating communities, reveal three elements critical to the success of community place-based planning efforts. Each is functionally reliant upon the success of the other elements. Thus weakness in any one element jeopardizes the entire process.

Vision: The process of goal setting and planning that is accomplished within the context of existing social, economic, and environmental constraints.

Capacity: The ability to deliver services or products. Scientific data, analysis, and interpretation of information to underpin the process are important components of Capacity.



Support: Endorsement by community stakeholders for the process in the form of personal engagement and the provision of fiscal and human resources to support the process.

The NSDI Community Demonstration Projects yielded valuable insights on all three elements, but focused on the Capacity to acquire, deliver and use geospatial data and tools in a decision-making process. There are a variety of challenges communities must overcome to develop a spatial data infrastructure that is responsive to decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public at large:

Challenges

Data:
- What do I need?
- Where do I obtain it?
- How do I use it?

Tools:
- What do I need?
- Where do I obtain it?
- How do I use it?

Management:
- How do I finance it?
- How do I staff it?
- How do I build partnerships?

Approaches to addressing the Challenges

Data:
- Continue to develop NSDI data Clearinghouses = Data libraries.
- Commit to Data and Metadata Standards.
- Maintain and build interoperable network among data clearinghouses.
- Document data applications = Data applications library.

Tools:
- Develop and adopt standards for geospatial data tools.
- Develop and adopt incentives to share tools = Tool libraries.
- Develop a network of tool libraries.

Management:
Develop data consortia and partnerships
- Provide means to leverage physical, fiscal, and human resources to acquire, archive, integrate, analyze, and apply geosaptial data.
- Develop incentives to share data, methods, tools through Data and Tool Libraries.
- Test alternative approaches: public, private, mixed.
- Address the needs of communities and their partners.

Examples of some "lessons learned" through the Projects:

- Partnership between Federal agencies and local communities helped to focus the use and application of geospatial data and tools that enable communities to make more informed decisions and provide feedback to Federal agencies on priorities and directions for their information programs and products.
- The use of visualization tools help communities to identify issues, establish goals and objectives, and craft options to address place-based concerns and to support community decision-making and engage decision-makers, stakeholder, and the public.
- Community needs for technical assistance, data analysis, and data clearinghouse operation can be effectively met when communities and the federal agencies partner with the university community and other regional stakeholders.

- Federal grant dollars can provide an effective incentive for communities to embrace NSDI standards and serve as “seed money” for purposes of leveraging financial and technical resources from other sources.
- Identification of a “Federal Champion” for communities or regions can greatly facilitate collaborative partnerships, improve technical assistance, and serve as a knowledgeable guide to federal data and information resources.