

**Report to the Geographic Information Coordinating Council
By the Local Government Committee**

Subcommittee Report: Incentives for Adhering to Standards

Background

The NC Geographic Information Coordinating Council (GICC) established the Public/Private Partnership Working Group to identify mutual benefits and possible structures for creating public and private partnerships to progress the vision of NC One Map as a resource of contiguous, current and available digital data for North Carolina. The Working Group's final report detailed 9 findings and 8 recommendations for achieving this vision.

One recommendation is to "provide incentives for local governments to adhere to standards adopted by the GICC."

In February 2008 the GICC endorsed the report and asked the Local Government Committee to explore this recommendation and identify incentives for local government to adopt standards that promote the common good.

Issue

The GICC wants all local governments to adhere to the standards adopted by that body. What incentives might encourage more local governments to follow these standards? How should standards be communicated to local governments?

What are the benefits to local governments in using standards?

The main benefit is that everyone would be basically working with the same format or "template." Sharing data between government units will be more efficient. Data downloadable from NC OneMap with standard attributes will relieve data distribution pressures on local governments. With data that fits together from across the state, larger pictures and conclusions could be drawn that are very difficult or impossible to see now. This standards-based approach allows for "boilerplating" of metadata as well.

In the event of emergencies, citizens will benefit from government agencies and first responders having consistent, standardized data across jurisdictions. Better data will shorten response times with reduced loss of life and property.

What are the benefits to others in the GIS community?

The biggest benefit to others is a dependable, high level of data consistency. With a larger picture available, regional, state and/or national entities not only would be data users, but might provide financial assistance for local projects of interest. In that event local government would no longer have to pay the entire costs (time, design, money) for data creation.

What are the challenges / barriers to local government in adhering to standards?

The biggest challenge is the budget limitation in local government. Smaller agencies may not have the staff or resources to make sure that their data is in compliance. They may also not have the knowledge. In medium to large local government organizations, the decision-making authority over the data may not be in the GIS unit but scattered in many departments. Multiple individuals within one organization may have to be contacted and convinced through a buy-in process before they accept a data standard (*money, people, time*).

Incentives for Local Governments

1. Workshops or other educational opportunities to transfer knowledge needed to do the job. At these regional workshops, participants would work with their data. Personnel from NC OneMap or CGIA would conduct sessions to teach counties how to comply with the standards.
2. Hotline to NC OneMap or CGIA to get direct assistance with any technical problems local governments are having in complying with the standards.
3. Monetary incentives, such as grants and/or more cost-share opportunities.

Recommendations

(1) Education and Outreach. First, local governments need to know about the GICC standards as they are adopted, and where to find them. Outreach is essential through postings on multiple list serves and websites; and working with regional GIS affiliated groups and organizations. Presentations at conferences and association meetings are additional options.

(2) Models. If there is a local government currently adhering to a standard, it could be used as a model for the rest of the state. Their experience with implementation, the benefits and issues would be of interest to others. Documentation, such as a “How-to” book or project management guide from a successful organization, would be helpful to other local governments.

(3) Top-Down and/or Key Contact. Each governmental agency is different in how they organize their GIS. Some have GIS in IT, some in Planning, and some in Tax. Most local governments do not have a “GIS Department” that handles everything in their jurisdiction. More likely GIS is located within several departments, each of which creates data. If so, it may be difficult to reach every department to make sure they are in compliance. The best approach may be from the top-down using organizations such as the Association of County Commissioners and the League of Municipalities and other similar organizations as an educating forum to pass the standards from the County and City managers down to the departmental level. The other approach might be to have one point of contact per agency/government that is responsible for publicizing the standards and promoting adherence within the organization.

Subcommittee:

Kathryn Brewer, Lucy Cardwell, Amy Durden (chair), Jason Mann