

CALIFORNIA GIS COUNCIL
ISSUE PAPER – HOW TO IMPROVE COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS

DISCUSSION/DECISION ITEM: What should the California GIS Council (Council) do to improve its effectiveness?

BACKGROUND: The Council has been relatively inactive since its formation on August 13, 2004. While factors like California's continuing fiscal crisis, an unprecedented change in Governors and a major initiative to restructure state government contributed to this situation, Council membership and structure also played a part (see the Council charter at <http://gis.ca.gov/council/documents.epl>).

The time is right for the Council to reevaluate its governance with an eye toward improving its effectiveness. California government agencies are showing signs that they are ready to fully participate in the Council. The new State IT Strategic Plan for California (see www.cio.ca.gov) calls for the appointment of a Deputy Director of Geospatial Information Systems and working with the Council to develop a geospatial information infrastructure for California. There are good opportunities to secure Federal grants to fund state and local GIS initiatives. A partnership involving the State Office of Homeland Security, the Office of Emergency Response and the Resources Agency has just applied for Federal Homeland Security grant dollars to fund a Homeland Security/Emergency Response GIS. We need organization, teamwork and leadership in order to best position state and local government to compete for federal dollars.

The formation and active involvement of regional GIS collaboratives is critical to the success of the Council. It is clear that in many cases the most precise, accurate, complete and up-to-date GIS data is found at the local level. These data, however, are often developed without standards so that they cannot be cost-effectively combined to cover larger areas of importance to regional, state, tribal and federal interests. Also, there are many local governments that lack the resources to develop data for their respective jurisdictions resulting in a patchwork quilt of missing and incomplete data for California. This works to the detriment of efforts to prepare for, respond to and recover from large-scale disasters both natural and human caused. Also, the state and regional governments are hampered in their efforts to plan critical infrastructure and government programs to deliver essential services. This puts life, health, safety, property and the economy at considerable risk.

The Council has yet to determine how best to accommodate the many regional GIS collaboratives while keeping the Council to a manageable size. There are also opportunities to partner with and leverage the good work done by the California Geographical Information Association (CGIA) especially in the areas of outreach and communications. The CGIA has acted, in absence of a fully engaged Council, to facilitate the formation of and communication among these regional groups. However successful the CGIA has been in this regard, it cannot ultimately make up for a lack of action on the part of the State through the Council.

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Council members need to consider:

1. Are the right people at the table (e.g., available, knowledgeable, engaged, and willing and able to commit resources)?
2. How do we maintain momentum between meetings?
3. How do we obtain resources in support of the Council and its initiatives?
4. What are appropriate roles for regional collaboratives, the California Geographic Information Association (CGIA) and the private sector?

Action Items: The Council's voted unanimously to do the following:

1. Form a work group to review Council governance and make recommendations for improvement. Work group recommendations to the Council would be due by the next meeting of the Council for consideration and possible action. Items for consideration by this work group would include:
 - a. How to encourage members to participate
 - b. Changes to the council structure to improve effectiveness
 - c. Formation of an executive team (6 members +/-) for Council leadership and to maintain momentum between Council meetings
 - d. Formation of a policy team to develop strategic direction and policies
 - e. Formation of technical teams to work on council initiatives
 - f. Changes to eligibility for membership for effective Council makeup
 - g. Changes in eligibility for Council Chair
 - h. Criteria for recognition of regional GIS collaboratives
 - i. Appropriate roles for regional GIS collaboratives, the private sector and the CGIA
 - j. How to obtain resources in support of the Council and its initiatives
2. Approve approaching the CGIA to request it act as the communications and outreach arm of the council.
3. Approve approaching the CGIA to request it act as a partner to obtain and administer grants in support of Council activities and initiatives.
4. Appoint a Council member to represent the Council on the CGIA. This person would also participate in CGIA meetings and teleconferences with regional GIS collaboratives and report back to the Council on significant regional GIS activities and initiatives.
5. Commit to meeting every 6 months.