



Geographic Information Systems

Statement of Direction

The Information Policy Office (IPO) is responsible for developing a state-wide information architecture, selecting appropriate information-related standards and helping state agencies manage their information resources. Geographic information systems (GIS) are important resources to be addressed by the architecture. Guided by the Information Policy Council (IPC) data and standards principles, and advice from IPC and the Information Policy Advisory Task Force, IPO will work closely with Minnesota's GIS communities to create a community-based approach to GIS development.

What is GIS?

GIS includes the data, applications, networks and hardware that together provide a means of relating data to other data based on location. For example, GIS might be used to provide data about roads, population densities and wetlands in relation to a specific area, such as a city or construction site. GIS also has the ability to graphically present data that has a locational relationship. A map is a common GIS presentation format.

GIS is one part of the large information infrastructure that supports the business of government. The infrastructure includes financial, organizational, human resource, natural resource, health and other information systems.

What is our direction?

IPO's long-term goal is to make information readily available to citizens and government workers. To reach our goal, IPO is developing and selecting the policies, guidelines and standards, that collectively form the statewide information architecture. The architecture provides a framework for developing the information infrastructure. GIS is an important part of the information architecture.

Our short-term goal is to ensure that the development of GIS addresses and supports broad state needs. Over the next year IPO will be:

- Encouraging a cooperative community approach to data development;
- Encouraging the development of a GIS board;
- Supporting the production of a statewide base map;
- Supporting the creation of statewide repositories for data, including geographic data;
- Supporting the development of an accessible service center for geographic data; and

- Continuing to research and develop geographic data standards.

What is our strategy?

IPO will work closely with the GIS community to develop a GIS board, through legislation if appropriate. The board will provide leadership and direction for development of GIS capabilities in Minnesota. Executive level managers representing organizations interested in and involved with GIS would be included on the board. Existing GIS committees would serve as advisory bodies. New committees could also be created. IPO will work with state agencies and local governments to support this community approach.

What will the new GIS board do?

The GIS Board will be responsible for:

- Developing guidelines for statewide GIS development;
- Identifying and encouraging strategic GIS development projects;
- Directing the development of a statewide repository for geographic data;
- Directing the production of a statewide base map;
- Overseeing the development of a GIS service center;
- Providing direction for GIS technical organizations and promoting their services;
- Recommending strategies for funding statewide GIS projects;
- Identifying and providing GIS funding sources;
- Ensuring that continuing GIS development conforms to the statewide information architecture; and
- Advising IPO on the development and implementation of GIS standards.

What is the role of standards?

Standards will be essential to the success of the community approach and for the continuing development of a statewide base map and repositories. IPO will work closely with the GIS board to identify and adopt appropriate standards. IPO will adopt standards that support data sharing and application portability. Portability, the ability to move an application to other hardware platforms, and, most importantly, data sharing will be keys to making geographic data accessible and useable.

How will state agencies and local governments be affected?

The new GIS board will need agency and local government support in the form of participation on the board and its subcommittees. Board members will be involved in setting direction for the development of the base map, repositories, standards and the service center. The board and IPO will provide agencies and local government with guidelines and standards as they are developed. Agencies and local governments will need to follow the direction set by the board and IPO as they develop geographic information systems.

What benefits can be expected?

GIS, like other information systems, will be managed across organizational boundaries as a shared statewide resource. It will provide Minnesota citizens with many benefits:

- State citizens, business owners and government employees will have access to detailed, accurate geographic information at a scale appropriate to need;
- Planning for the development of GIS at both the state and local levels will be jointly managed and coordinated;
- GIS will be effectively used to enhance management reporting and facilitate decision making;
- A strategic statewide approach to funding GIS will be developed; and
- Geographic data will be an integral part of the statewide data architecture.

Additional questions or comments?

Please call Sarah Kline-Stensvold at 612-296-5693 with any questions or comments.