



Final Project Report – Category 3 – Hawaii Geographic Information Coordinating Council

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Project Title: Strategic and Business Plan Development for the Hawaii Geographic Information Coordinating Council (HIGICC)

Organization: Hawaii Geographic Information Coordinating Council

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Executive Summary

With input from the Hawaii geospatial community, a unified vision of the role of the Hawaii Geographic Information Coordinating Council (HIGICC) was formulated on the auspicious occasion of its 10th anniversary. The strategic and business planning processes captured the current thoughts and desires of a broad spectrum of participants. Funding provided through the Fifty States CAP 3 process, enabled HIGICC to collect information through online surveys, group interviews, and individual meetings with key stakeholders. The resulting Strategic and Business Plan goals were both internally and externally focused -- internal to strengthen the Board's governance, solidify the Council's finances, and focus the organization's efforts; and external to improve outreach to the geospatial and broader communities, and coordinate data acquisition, development, and synthesis among stakeholders.

The plans were approved by HIGICC's Board and the results shared at a conference jointly sponsored by HIGICC and the Hawaii Congress of Planning Officials (HCPO), "Building Resilient Communities" (<http://resilientcommunitieshawaii.org>). There are many challenges ahead, including coordinating and motivating volunteers, and continuing to reach out to underrepresented segments of the broader geospatial community. But the nature of this community, these islands, is to work together to create better products and services through stronger and more supportive relationships.

Summary of project activities

HIGICC has completed the Fifty States strategic planning process. HIGICC is an all volunteer 501c3 geographic council, with most activities funded by revenue raised through nominal membership fees. The additional funds provided by FGDC's CAP Grant program facilitated HIGICC's planning process, enabling the Council to hire a consultant and to gather information across the state in face-to-face meetings with stakeholders. As a result, significant input was received and incorporated into the plans that will guide the Council's work in the short and long term. In addition, interested organizations and individuals not earlier associated with the traditional geospatial data producers, distributors and consumers are now part of the HIGICC community.

A Steering Committee, formed as a committee of HIGICC's Board of Directors, worked with consultant AppGeo to develop the method of information gathering and a timetable to complete the strategic and business plans. Over the course of two months, the Steering Committee held a series of statewide meetings with stakeholders in the geospatial community – federal, state, county, education and private interests were all represented. In addition, an online survey was posted and individual interviews with key policymakers were conducted.

Four strategic goals were discerned from this input and incorporated into the **Strategic Plan**:

- Ensure that HIGICC completes the Strategic Plan to set an agenda for the next five years that is aligned with the expressed needs of the HIGICC membership and the Hawaii geospatial community.
- Develop an outreach and communications strategy that targets constituencies throughout the state, reaches underserved portions of the community, and increases membership, participation, and collaboration with activities.
- Develop a strategy for assisting data acquisition projects and developing geospatial data standards that cross geographic and administrative boundaries.
- Develop a funding strategy that maintains Council fiscal viability, enhances the ability of HIGICC to apply, compete, receive and administer grants, and expands the Council's ability to identify funding opportunities that support the Council and stakeholders across the state.

In order to successfully achieve these goals, the Board recognized that the general membership would have to take a more active partnership role – the Board alone does not have the resources to plan and execute these strategies. Therefore, the first **Business Plan** in support of the Strategic Plan addresses strengthening the organization of the Board and the Council and gathering those resources necessary to tackle the strategic goals.

Like the Strategic Plan, the Business Plan was developed collaboratively – the Steering Committee enlisted the aid of the rest of the Board and received substantial help from AppGeo in formatting and maintaining a consistent writing style throughout the document. A draft of the plan was also posted on a wiki site, where community input was sought. The Business Plan lays out a committee structure that will enable focusing the energies of the Council, and calls for the participation of non-Board members. The intent is to divide up and spread out the workload, so that Board members will not be overly burdened and more non-Board members will become actively engaged in the work of the Council.

The Board met and discussed the drafts of both the Strategic Plan and the Business Plan at its meeting in July 2009. Discussion continued via email and the plans were formally approved and adopted in July and August, respectively. A summary of the planning process and the goals of the plans were presented in September 2009 to geospatial and planning professionals at a conference jointly sponsored by HIGICC and the Hawaii Congress of Planning Officials (HCPO).

Key accomplishments for the Strategic and Business Planning process included:

1. Formation of Steering Committee as sub-committee of the HIGICC Board of Directors.
2. Understanding and using the grant administration sites to draw down the CAP funding.
3. Migration of the HIGICC email and contact database to the Wild Apricot contact management software that has enabled general and targeted email outreach across the State of Hawaii as well as a better member and event management.
4. Selection of Applied Geographics, Inc. as consultant on the project.
5. Creation, deployment and analysis of an on-line survey with 112 respondents.
6. Five Strategic Planning information gathering meetings were held the last week of August and first week of September, 2008. Eighty-five people attended the 2 meetings in Honolulu and 1 each on Kauai, Maui and the Island of Hawaii.
7. Individual interviews with significant stakeholders, including representatives from the State, Counties, and the University of Hawaii.
8. Hosting the draft Strategic Plan on a Wiki site for input from the Board, HIGICC membership and the geospatial community
9. Review, approval and publication of the Strategic Plan.
10. Development of the Business Plan, focused on goals described in the Strategic Plan.
11. Hosting the draft Business Plan on a Wiki site with input from the Board, membership and the community.
12. Review, approval and publication of the Business Plan.
13. Presentation of the Strategic and Business Plans at the 2009 Hawaii GIS conference (www.resilientcommunitieshawaii.org).

How inclusive is the HIGICC effort? What have we done to bring new stakeholder groups or organizations into statewide coordination?

HIGICC made every attempt to be as inclusive as possible. In addition to numerous emails from the contact management database, personal phone calls were made to a number of key stakeholders and collaborative organizations to be sure they could participate. We made sure that there were many opportunities for input, including the surveys and meetings as well as advertised opportunities to review and comment on the draft Strategic and Business Plans. That being said, the survey and meetings pointed out that while over 400 people

were contacted to participate, there are still stakeholders that have not been reached. HIGICC and the Steering Committee are contacting numerous individuals and organizations to expand the contact database and ensure communication in the future. While never excluded, feedback during the plan demonstrated the need to reach out more to the academic community and particularly to K-12 teachers, to smaller community organizations, as well as to the business community and to professionals in related disciplines (e.g., planners and surveyors). As a lesson, HIGICC recommends that FGDC encourage all new Fifty States CAP recipients to focus very early on an outreach and communication plan. And as a result of greater outreach, the HIGICC contact database now contains close to 500 entries.

How has (or will) statewide coordination change as a result of this project?

This project demonstrated the ongoing relevance of HIGICC. In particular, it showed how HIGICC can bring geospatial education, activities and services to underserved sectors of the community while also providing needed coordination for the more traditional developers, distributors and consumers of geospatial data. In addition, HIGICC is now no longer seen as an Oahu-only activity, which is reflected in the most recent Board elections. There are now representatives from 3 of the counties, with involvement from the 4th. In addition, the current vice president is from Maui.

In addition, HIGICC and the community have been strengthened by more clearly understanding the roles of the Counties and the State in geospatial data coordination. For most activities the Counties and State maintain their autonomy. The Council fills a need in shepherding projects and activities outside of the governmental scope. These include pursuing and administering grants, addressing cross boundary issues and encouraging participation from members in the community in developing geographic skills in the population. The strategic and business planning process has captured the current thinking about the role of HIGICC in promoting and enhancing geospatial technologies, data and relationships in the 50th State.

What practices or activities led to success? What practices or activities have not?

The practice or activities that led to success include:

- Continual outreach to the community
- Hiring a consultant who knew the purpose and process, was skilled at guiding the meetings and interviews and had experience in analyzing the information collected from participants.
- Establishing a calendar of events and sticking to it.
- Focusing on how HIGICC can provide better service to the community. Not focusing on the issues that are already led by other organizations, such as the State of Hawaii.
- Participating in the NSGIC midyear meetings in Annapolis.

The practices or activities that possibly limited success were:

- Our dependence on volunteers to complete writing assignments, when real life competes.
- Expecting that the schedule of activities could be met when other priorities get in the way.

Next Steps

With the completion of the Strategic and Business Plans, the next steps that challenge the Council are (1) outreach to the community; (2) implementing the priority tasks and (3) sustaining the interest of both the Board and the community; and (4) maintaining the momentum begun in the planning process.

The Business Plan calls for creating standing committees made up of both Board members and non-Board members, with responsibility for addressing broad issues that impact governance and are strategically important:

- Finance Committee responsible for budgeting, fiscal accountability, funding sources, and managing the scholarship program;
- Policy and Compliance Committee responsible for reviewing the bylaws and policies, and for monitoring legislation that may impact and be of interest to the geospatial community;
- Membership Committee responsible for retaining current members and soliciting new memberships;
- Education and Outreach Committee responsible for professional development and networking activities that reach out to membership (e.g., Luncheon Speaker Series, conferences), as well as educational and informational activities that reach out to the community at large (e.g., GIS Day, curriculum development);
- Information Technology Committee responsible for investigating and recommending technologies that may benefit the work of the Council;
- Data Inventory and Assessment Committee responsible for facilitating data acquisition, developing and promoting data standards, and facilitating data distribution.

The Standing Committees are currently forming with participation required of each Board member in at least one, but not more than three committees. In addition, participation has been solicited across the membership rolls by email solicitations, conference announcements, and individual invitations. The committees have some flexibility in how they approach their respective responsibilities; they will meet initially in early November 2009 to set their goals, milestones, agenda, and timetables within the framework laid out in the Business Plan. Thereafter they will submit reports of their progress to the Board at each regularly scheduled Board meeting.

The planning process itself has already registered successes in reinvigorating the Council in its 10th year, as evidenced by the increased membership and the level of participation in the information gathering process. Another unintended, but desired benefit is dispelling the perception that HIGICC is an Oahu-only organization – three of the eleven Board members this year are from the neighbor islands. In addition, the Business Plan seeks to increase ongoing participation from neighbor island members by utilizing technologies such as video- and web-conferencing and Skype, as well as the more traditional teleconferencing. Board members also plan to travel to the neighbor islands to present updates of the Strategic and Business Plans. And outreach to the geospatial community in general will increase in order to maintain the momentum generated during the planning process. The contact, member, and event management site will be central to that effort and the website will be used as a venue to share information.

How will this project continue into the future and remain viable?

- By developing a well considered outreach strategy.
- By continuing to use the Wild Apricot contact management software for membership and event management.
- By creating opportunities for involvement for all types of interest.
- By sharing information through meetings, publications, events and email about the progress and status of HIGICC initiatives.
- By appealing to both the self interest of participants (professional growth, GISP certification) and the desire to make Hawaii a better place to live.

Where do you need assistance? What type of assistance?

While the Business Plan describes the activities to enhance both internal and external activities, one of the greatest challenges is relying on volunteer participation, particularly at the officer level. To succeed as a Council there is a need for a part time staff person to carry out the organizational activities that become burdensome to current council members who all have day jobs.

The Council also needs training assistance in leadership of committees and running organizations. We are fortunate that HANO, the Hawaii Association of Non-Profit Organizations, has ongoing fee based training on topics such as budgeting, leadership and membership recruitment.

Attachments

The completed and approved Strategic and Business Plans, as well as photographs and documents are available at the HIGICC web site, www.higicc.org.

Feedback on Cooperative Agreements Program

What are the CAP Program strengths and weaknesses?

- Strength - The CAP Program funded an important project that Hawaii and the Council didn't have the ability to finance.
- Strength - The templates were instrumental to our success. They helped explain the process and products to the HIGICC Board and to participants in the planning process.
- Strength - The CAP staff – Gita and Milo – assisted whenever possible or asked.
- Strength – That CAP 3 now links FGDC with the needs of the state or council. HIGICC experienced a disconnect when completing the I-Plan, under the direction of FGDC. Although the I-Plan was an effective effort that brought together Subject Matter Experts in Hawaii, policy changes left the Council's efforts being dismissed at FGDC. CAP 3 brings all councils and FGDC into alignment.
- Strength – Attending the Mid-Year NSGIC conference to in-brief the Principal Investigators on the CAP 3 templates, the process and the products.

Where does it make a difference?

- If the question is “Where does the CAP Program make a difference?” the answer in Hawaii is that the funding allowed HIGICC to bring the geospatial community together for this special project at the Council's 10th anniversary.

Was the assistance we received sufficient or effective?

- The assistance HIGICC received was sufficient to accomplish the tasks at hand. The funds HIGICC received via the CAP 3 program let us do what we could not accomplish on our own – paying for travel, hiring a consultant, using and managing online services. In addition, when we had questions on reporting or project extensions, Gita and Milo provided quick and helpful assistance.

What would we recommend that the FGDC do differently?

- The only change that came up is if the proposal submittal period wasn't so close to the winter holidays.

Are there factors that are missing or additional needs that should be considered?

- Every state or territory has its own unique circumstances, whether composition of the Council, budgets and financial resources, travel requirements, development of a project plan and hiring a contractor.
- Perhaps assistance to councils on developing RFPs to help get the process moving.

Are there program management concerns that need to be addressed, such as the time frame?

- The FGDC CAP program is flexible enough to react to time constraints. HIGICC did apply for one extension, which in retrospect should have been longer. Maintaining an aggressive, funding required and deadline driven project is really the only way to make a project such as this succeed.
- A second program management concern might be helping Councils develop RFPs for hiring a consultant.

If you were to do this again, what would you do differently?

- As described in our mid-year report, having a stronger outreach plan built into the initial proposal would benefit the entire project. It would create greater buy-in for the Council and the community by being explicit about a necessarily aggressive schedule.