

Minnesota Governor's Council on Geographic Information

Communication Plan¹

Version 1.1, June 8, 2005

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¹ This document is the work of many people, especially members of the Outreach Committee. The overall structure, including specific types of tables, came from material supplied by Jeanne Landkamer, MetroGIS Communications Editor. Additional input was provided by Dave Verhasselt, Ramsey County Communications Manager.

I. Introduction

A Communication Plan exists to help an organization communicate with outside audiences. Some of the reasons for the Governor's Council on Geographic Information to communicate are listed below.

1. Keep stakeholders informed about Council activities.
2. Provide ongoing project updates.
3. Distribute major reports and findings.
4. Convert GIS users to approved standards.
5. Educate people about the benefits of GIS.
6. Make people aware of the Council and the impact it is having.
7. Solicit and acquire input relating to Council activities.
8. Understand the needs of the Minnesota GIS community.
9. Provide sound policy advice to state and federal government.
10. Promote programs that the Council thinks are critical to sound GIS development.
11. Promote the use of GIS in meeting objectives of key stakeholders in local and State government.

This communication plan is meant as a guide for the Governor's Council on Geographic Information. It describes the audiences that should be hearing from the council and ways to reach them. Conversely, it talks about ways for getting feedback on those messages as well as hearing fresh communication from key audiences. The Council has a wealth of ways to communicate with its audiences, each with its own costs, strengths, and weaknesses. Those resources are described in Section II. Section III outlines regular communication activities used by the Council and presents an *order form* to generate special actions.

II. Strategies and Resources

A. Sample Messages

Good messages can be summarized in a few words. Here are examples of a few key messages, things that could be repeated in any communication. Of course, specialized messages need to be crafted for special issues, but shortened messages like these will always have more impact. And, of course, all messages should be adapted to their specific audience.

1. GIS' many benefits outweigh the cost of investment.
2. The Minnesota Governor's Council on Geographic Information is helping the state make good decisions about GIS.
3. Data standards and data documentation are critical to ensure maximum benefits from investments in data.
4. Minnesota, as a state, has a stake in the geographic information activities and needs of its local government.
5. There exists a list of priority information needs for the state. At the top of that list are soils and parcels.
6. Geographic information collected as part of day-to-day administrative work can be very useful in management and policy decisions.
7. Local government wants to develop its GIS capabilities but looks to the state for guidelines and leadership.
8. Data partnerships are most productive that recognize the needs and resources of all levels of government: state, federal, and local.
9. With good communication and planning, data developed in a single division can serve the needs of those across the department, as well as those in other departments and other levels of government.
10. Messages related to a specific product or activity.
11. The application of GIS can result in a more effective solution and come at a lower cost.

B. Audiences

The Governor’s Council on Geographic Information has numerous audiences that it needs to reach. A list of some of the key ones follows in this table. Each audience is listed by name and described in terms of its technical expertise and its relationship to the Council. Some of the audiences are marked with an asterisk (*). These groups are considered partners with each having a liaison or formal ex officio member on the Council.

The last column describes what kind of response the Council might expect from each group. Three levels of response are possible: understanding, acceptance (understanding + buy-in), and action (understanding + buy-in + action response). In each case, we list the normal desired situation, then add detail about what might be expected.

Audience	Nature	Response
GIS Community*	Savvy in the technology. Expects Council to deliver needed data and standards. Contacted through the Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium.	Action. We want them to be continuously aware of our activities, ready to provide feedback, implement standards. Sometimes we would like them to contact policy-makers.
AMC* (Assoc. of Minnesota Counties), LMC* (League of MN Cities) MACO (MN Assoc. of County Officials)	Aware of technology, interested in serving the needs of their constituents, worry about state control.	Acceptance. We want them to be aware of the benefits of the technology to their constituents. For any legislative initiatives, we’d like their support.
Surveyors	Represented by two groups, both caring about parcels – one of our highest priorities: MN Assoc. of County Surveyors and MN Society of Professional Surveyors.	Action. We need their support for modernizing land records. We need their input in developing accuracy guidelines appropriate to land value.
Other organizations representing local government	Various organizations representing smaller segments of local government; i.e., other types of government or single occupation type.	Understanding. Hope for general awareness of technology. May need close connection on specific activities.
Local government officials	Vaguely aware of GIS technology, yet major potential users.	Understanding. We’d like them to know about GIS and the Council – as good things.
IT Professionals – IT Directors (State and local)	While responsible for deploying the “best” technologies for their organizations, GIS most often is not one of them because of ownership (e.g., Surveyor’s Office), lack of knowledge, and lack of time and money.	Action. We want them to include GIS as a key technology in their planning process to result in the broad application of GIS and necessary infrastructure across their organization.
IT Professionals – support and development	Savvy in technology but not necessarily in GIS technology. Turf may be “threatened” somewhat by the GIS techs. Most often, do not have a directive from above to support GIS applications.	Action. We want GIS applications and infrastructure to be a part of their job description, which would require close communications with GIS technicians on GIS support and planning activities.

Audience	Nature	Response
Governor	We are authorized by the governor and have an obligation to advise him/her. Usual approach would be through Commissioner of Administration.	Action. We contact the Governor when extraordinary issues arise, to which we want a gubernatorial response. Our annual report supplies general understanding and acceptance.
Legislature*	Aware of the technology, but not the variety of uses.	Acceptance. Need them to know and respect Council. Council's home in executive branch precludes stronger connection.
State Agencies	Top officials are not fully aware of GIS – either by their agency or by related local governments (e.g., Education's understanding of local school use).	Action. This is the best way to get legislative programs initiated, given that we are in the executive branch and our membership includes many agency personnel.
Office of Enterprise Technology*	Includes <i>Minnesota Enterprise Technical Architecture Review Board</i> which is responsible for overseeing the process for review and approval of state standards.	Action. Approve state standards.
Homeland Security and Emergency Management Community	Focused on their business requirements, generally unaware of the potential of GIS to assist.	Action. Understand potential of GIS and work closely with state and local GIS professionals.
FGDC / OMB	Federal agencies charged with coordination. Savvy with the technology. These organizations coordinate federal geospatial activities.	Acceptance. Minnesota was one of the first <i>cooperating</i> states. We need them to pay attention to our local needs and use their understanding to affect agency programs.
Federal Agencies	Aware of technology. Mostly interested in their own needs for data, not the needs of state or local users.	Acceptance. Listen to and respect our opinion on their policy matters.
Members of Congress	Technology largely unknown. Ready to listen to needs of constituents.	Acceptance. Listen to and respect our opinion on policy matters.
NSGIC – National States Geographic Information Council	Savvy with the technology. Representatives from ~40 state GIS Councils. Annual and mid-year meeting, listserv for state representatives.	Action. At this point, NSGIC is a vehicle for communicating information across states. It could be a strong body for communicating state concerns to the federal government.
General public	Not aware of the technology, but vaguely aware of some applications.	Understanding. Need more events and stories in the media to help them be aware of GI technology and its applications.

C. External Communication Vehicles

These vehicles are options that have been used or discussed in the past and are available as needed. Some, like the brochure and council meetings, are always available; others require significant effort to create and distribute. The tables below describe many characteristics of each vehicle. These are intended to help people understand which vehicle might be most useful in a given situation. Other vehicles could be considered.

1. Outgoing Communication

Vehicle	Description	Audience Size	Frequency	Cost of Preparation	Lead Time to Prepare	Strengths and Weaknesses	Feedback Mechanism
Council Brochure	Tri-fold size; body describes GIS; inserts cover Council and its activities.	Conference attendees, interested parties	Update annually, especially annual accomplishments	Expensive to print. Ranges from \$500 to \$2,000.	4-6 weeks	Serves as a background press packet. Insert format is costly.	Contacts included in brochure.
Annual Report	Tri-fold summary of last year's accomplishments and planned activities for coming year.	Conference attendees, interested parties	Annually	None, given that this information is already written for the Annual Report to the Governor.	4-6 weeks	Nice summary of current activities. Contains little background information on the Council.	Contacts included in brochure, including names of current members.
Fact Sheet	1-page description of a Council initiative; stand-alone or brochure insert.	Varies by size of audience	As needed	Defining key points, editing.	3 weeks	Provides key points in an accessible form. Hard to define key points; rarely used.	Immediate feedback from presentation; contact info provided.
Report	Publication of results from a Council committee or workgroup.	Varies by readership	As needed	Preparation, editing, printing. Costly to produce.	6-12 weeks	Contains information valuable to GIS community. Sporadic; preparation is difficult, editing resources unknown. Printed copies costly to produce.	Contact information provided in report.

Vehicle	Description	Audience Size	Frequency	Cost of Preparation	Lead Time to Prepare	Strengths and Weaknesses	Feedback Mechanism
Website	Internet address for Council information.	Unknown	Continuously	Staff time to update and insert material.	1 week	Wide variety of current information; our main audience familiar with media. Need to monitor and keep information fresh.	Includes contact information (could include comment page).
GIS/LIS Newsletter articles	2-3 paragraph articles in state GIS/LIS Newsletter.	~1000	4 times / year	Staff and committee time writing articles.	8-20 weeks	Reaches statewide GIS audience. Passive.	Contact information provided.
GIS/LIS e-announcement	1 paragraph items.	~1000	Monthly	None.	3 days	Reaches GIS community quickly and proactively. Issues sometimes hidden if list of topics is long.	Contact information provided.
Council email	List of individuals interested in Council, maintained by staff.	200	Sporadic	Preparation time.	2 days	Reaches people who care about the Council. Misses others who are not subscribed.	Contact information provided.
Articles in newsletters of relevant organizations	GIS-related article (see section C).	~10,000	Monthly	Preparation time.	6-12 weeks	Reaches public officials and interested stakeholders. Not used frequently.	Contact information provided.
Booth at GIS/LIS conference	Booth in exhibit hall with Council publications; member present.	500 attendees	Annually	Staff time and booth expense. Organizing, transport, setup.	3-4 weeks	Contact with GIS users across state. Often low interest in our booth.	Direct feedback.
Booth at relevant conference	Same as GIS/LIS conference. Could include AMC, LMC, MACO, etc. (see section C).	Varies	1-2 times per year for each organization	Staff time and booth expense. Organizing, transport, setup.	3-4 months	Reach stakeholders and tell them about Council activities. Rarely done; need to arrange for volunteers to attend meeting.	Direct feedback.

Vehicle	Description	Audience Size	Frequency	Cost of Preparation	Lead Time to Prepare	Strengths and Weaknesses	Feedback Mechanism
Paper or panel at GIS/LIS conference	Oral report on Council research or activity.	50-100	Annually	Volunteer time for preparation.	4 months	Shows Council work to the group who cares most. Volume has varied over the years.	Direct feedback.
Presentation at other local conference	Overview of Council or report on specific activity (see section C).	Varies	1-2 times per year for each organization	Preparation effort.	9 months	Reach policy makers and interested stakeholders. Need to propose session far in advance; rarely done.	Direct feedback.
Stakeholder meetings; e.g., IT directors, agency directors	Explain how GIS can promote stakeholder goals.	5-30	As needed	Time to make contact and prepare for meeting.	2 weeks	Shows direct GIS value in support of stakeholder goals. Need to solicit meetings.	Immediate from meeting. Contact information provided.
Press release or story	GIS story for the popular press, print or electronic.	x00,000	As needed	Develop a good story, contact media.	1 week	Reaches wide audience. Information might be ignored.	Indirect feedback loop.
GIS Day	Help LMIC organize an event. Staff Council booth at the event.	Hundreds	Annually	Staff time to organize, Council members to invite their legislators.	3-4 months	Reaches many school children and some key legislative staff people. Relatively low participation by legislators.	Direct feedback.
Council Meetings	Bi-monthly meetings are open to the public.	6-40	Bi-monthly	Staff time for support. Have good presentation. Distribute notices.	6 weeks	Many people attend when presentation has broad interest and is advertised widely. Most Metro meetings have had low attendance.	Direct feedback.

Vehicle	Description	Audience Size	Frequency	Cost of Preparation	Lead Time to Prepare	Strengths and Weaknesses	Feedback Mechanism
AMC / LMC representatives on Council	City and county reps provide feedback to these organizations.	2 boards	Monthly	Extra work for these two representatives.	6 weeks	Formal tie to significant organizations. Not clear if the plan is working.	Unknown.
Letters of support	Formal letters sent to comment on federal (or other) initiatives.	Selected agency and members of congress.	As needed	Preparation time. Council approval.	1-4 weeks	Gives us a presence in national policy issues. Needs Department of Administration approval; not clear about impact.	Signed by Council chair.
Strategic Plan (organizational component)	<i>Minnesota Spatial Data Infrastructure:</i> Overall scheme of how the state and local government could best promote the use of GIS in real world applications.	Numerous IT policy makers in local and state government; e.g., MNCITLA ²	Annual update?	Presentation preparation and attendance.	2 months	Provides a coherent, strategic vision for the state, one that matches the administration's vision for IT. State ambivalent about new initiatives. State's vision does not necessarily match local government's vision.	Immediate from any meetings and funding proposals.
Strategic Plan (data component)	<i>I-Plans:</i> Nascent set of plans to address key data needs in the state.	Dozens of stakeholders on data teams, hundreds interested in results	Annual update?	Significant work by each data committee. Some cost for staff support.	12 months for updating	Brings together all stakeholders and makes a coherent statement about the roles of different groups to meet the need. Not clear all stakeholders will commit.	Need strong response from stakeholders.

² Minnesota County Information Technology Leadership Association (MNCITLA) is an association for information technology decision makers within Minnesota county government with the goal of establishing communication pathways for use by members, state agencies and other appropriate partners.

Vehicle	Description	Audience Size	Frequency	Cost of Preparation	Lead Time to Prepare	Strengths and Weaknesses	Feedback Mechanism
Strategic Plan (technical component)	Conceptual architectural design (white paper).	State and local government GIS operations	One time (will be followed by more detailed technical documents)	Committee work to develop plan and subsequent documents.	2+ years	Provides a vision for sharing data. Requires different players to desire participation and adopt a common approach.	Comments and action from key agencies.

2. Incoming Communication

Vehicle	Description	Group Size	Frequency	Cost	Lead Time	Strengths & Weaknesses	Feedback
Council meetings	Formal presentations at all meetings. Open mike time at Council meetings, especially the outstate meetings	6-25	bimonthly	Effort by local organizer to recruit speakers	3-4 weeks	Very clear messages from local users. Video conferencing encourages wide participation; not all speakers are prepared to identify their needs.	Direct feedback.
Committees and work groups	Committee meetings encourage wide participation from stakeholder community	5-12	monthly to bimonthly	Chair and staff time to recruit.	1 year or more to start new committee	Gets the best minds working on the most important problems. Some committees have foundered.	Direct feedback.
Surveys	Surveys of GIS community conducted by mail or internet, often with GIS/LIS Consortium	~3000	As needed	Significant resources to create, market, and analyze survey	4-6 months	Helps define user needs, therefore Council agenda. Internet surveys have low response rate.	Results published in <i>GIS/LIS News</i> .
E-Mail or phone	messages to staff	small	sporadic	Staff time and mailing costs.	NA	Supplements other feedback. Not frequent and not systematically forwarded to Council.	Direct feedback.

D. Relevant Organizations

See the Council's *List of Relevant Organizations*.

www.gis.state.mn.us/pdf/list_of_relevant_organizations.pdf

This list is dynamic and so is maintained separately from the Communication Plan itself. Key dates are provided for many of the organizations listed.

For those organizations that formulate a legislative agenda, they usually begin that process at the end of session (May), develop through the Fall, and formalize in mid-November through mid-December.

III. Action

The Outreach Committee and Council staff use the above vehicles to communicate with a variety of audiences. Some of these are regular activities and some require special action.

A. Regular Activities

The following activities occur on a regular basis. Content must be supplied by the Council and its various committees, but the vehicles are available on a regular basis.

- Website updated at least monthly
- Annual report prepared for Fall GIS/LIS conference (brochure)
- Annual Fall GIS/LIS conference booth
- Annual presentation(s) and workshop(s) at GIS/LIS conference
- Quarterly issues of *GIS/LIS News*. This is our most regular publication vehicle; it devotes a special section to the Governor's Council. Special topics should be submitted as they arise. Each issue should list future meeting dates, venues, and meeting topics. The quarterly issues should normally cover the following topics:
 - **February:** Call for commendation nominations
 - **May:** Call for applications for new members; Reminder on commendation
 - **August:** Annual report; Commendation winners
 - **November:** List of new council members; Committee work plans; Call for committee volunteers
- Bi-Monthly meetings
- Annual GIS Day (mid-November)

B. Special Action form

The Communication Request form on the following page (also posted online at http://www.gis.state.mn.us/Policies/request_assistance.html under "Request for speaker, newsletter article, or other form of communication") is intended to help people focus a request to the Outreach Committee of the Governor's Council. Committees or individuals are asked to read the material in this plan, then tell the Outreach Committee who they'd like to contact, why that contact is needed, what vehicle is preferred, and what messages they would like to convey. Further dialog will be necessary, but this form can begin to focus the discussion.

Governor's Council on Geographic Information
Outgoing Communications Menu

Audience:

National

- NSGIC
- Congress
- FGDC
- Agency (specify _____)
- Other (specify _____)

State

- Governor
- Legislature
- Agency (specify _____)
- Enterprise Technology
- AMC
- LMC
- Other (specify _____)

Other

- GIS community
- General public
- Other (specify _____)

Vehicle:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> GIS/LIS News | <input type="checkbox"/> GIS/LIS e-
announcement | <input type="checkbox"/> GIS/LIS conf.
booth | <input type="checkbox"/> GIS/LIS conf.
panel or paper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other newsletter
(specify _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Gov Council
email list | <input type="checkbox"/> Booth at other
conference
(specify _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation at
other conference
(specify _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release | <input type="checkbox"/> GIS Day activity | <input type="checkbox"/> Formal letter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brochure | <input type="checkbox"/> Fact sheet | <input type="checkbox"/> Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Council website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> AMC/LMC
representative | <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder
meeting
(specify _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other
(specify _____) | | | |

Deadline: _____

Purpose: _____

Key Messages:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Responsibilities:

Lead Person: _____ **Committee:** _____

Role: _____

Role for LMIC/Administration: _____

Role for Outreach Committee (e.g., advise/consult, produce/write, edit): _____
