

GTAC Working Group Response to Commissioner Goulet's request for discussion of a state GIO position
October 11, 2018

What benefits would there be to having a Geographic Information Officer in the state?

Some of the responses started with what a GIO could do:

- Develop guidance for software licensing and procurement
- Develop guidance for statewide data development, analysis, accessibility and reports
- Identify best practices for sharing GIS resources and information, both within the state and in other states
- Coordinate opportunities for training, workshops, and other learning experiences to benefit NH's GIS practitioners
- Be a source of information on GIS resources to state and local government
- Keep apprised of federal funding opportunities and coordinate state and regional proposals as appropriate
- Improve public access to GIS information

Benefits therefore would be:

- Speeding up progress set underway by the GIS Committee and the GTAC
- Identifying opportunities for implementation of GIS technology by agencies looking to establish a program
- Promoting frequent and proactive communications inside state government and with other constituents
- Putting a "face" to GIS in the state – being a visible advocate; providing leadership for change
- Pursuing opportunities for cost savings and improved access to software and data sharing
- Reducing redundancy of efforts
- Providing additional financial resources and/or data assets to the state in support of current and future geospatial applications
- Supporting continued professional and workforce development efforts
- Serving the general public in areas such as the economic growth, public health and safety, and interaction with the environment

Why might we not want to establish a GIO position?

- Could divert funds from other, higher priority items
- When codified into a position, it might turn into another layer of bureaucracy for the GIS practitioners to work with
- Could introduce risk to established business practices and requirements of GIS organizations
- Having a GIO as the "face" of GIS might lead to biases towards singular business practices that may not meet the various business needs of GIS organizations.
- Perhaps not really a full-time job

What would be the appropriate place for a GIO position?

Responses included:

1. House within DoIT, but accountable to the GIS Committee
2. Consider assigning part-time GIO responsibilities at the DoIT deputy commissioner or divisional director level, to be cost-shared by all agencies through class 27.
3. Instead of creating a GIO position, continue current structure of GIS Committee, GTAC, and GTAC Working Group (see following paragraphs).

Several members of the GTAC Working Group feel that the new structure of the GIS Committee, GTAC, and GTAC Working Group is already showing a marked improvement in terms of advancing the coordination of GIS activities in the state, and that while the benefits of the GIO function, as listed above, are all valid and desirable, they can better be achieved for the time being using the committee structure that is currently in place. This would allow for the continuation of the collaborative method of GIS planning and execution that is now successfully underway, as exemplified by projects such as SADES, the upcoming aerial imagery acquisition plan, and the planned agency map viewer evaluation, while avoiding the creation of an office that might create an additional layer of bureaucracy slowing progress.

Members of the Working Group thus recommend that its composition be codified into a 7-person committee, answerable to both the GTAC and the GIS Committee (as it is currently functioning, in fact), that would continue to further the GIS coordination activities as outlined above. This would then allow the money that would have gone to a new GIO position to instead be used to leverage increased functional development of transferable GIS methods and models, and improve the development of GRANIT as New Hampshire's GIS clearinghouse. The GIS Committee could review the success of the Working Group model after a two-year period and re-consider at that time whether an official funded GIO position is warranted.

The seven-person Working Group would consist of representatives from the following agencies:

- DOT (State agency – large)
- DOS (State agency – large)
- DES (State agency – large)
- F&G (State agency – medium)
- OSI (State agency – small)
- NHRPC (Regional & municipal agencies)
- GRANIT (Education and public)

Conclusion

While members of the Working Group agree that the benefits that would accrue through the coordination activities of a GIO are real and desirable, there are differing thoughts over whether those benefits in the short-term are best acquired through an individual GIO position or through continued collaboration within the current GTAC Working Group structure. Until there is agreement that a funded GIO position is the best way forward, it is advisable that the current structure remain in place at this time.