

Montana State Library

GIS Coordination Strategic Planning

Non-Technical Stakeholder Workshop Summary



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Workshop Overview

As part of developing a strategic plan for the Montana State Library GIS office, Applied Geographics, Inc. (AppGeo) facilitated an online (Zoom) workshop on July 29, 2021 from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm (MT). The overall goal of the workshop was to engage MSL stakeholders in the strategic planning process and collect input on key questions.

This workshop, which was one of two such events, was aimed at engaging non-technical stakeholders. A total of 46 people participated in the workshop including the AppGeo and Montana State Library (MSL) project team members. The full list of participants can be found in the project's Teams directory at General > 1_Information Gathering > Workshops > Workshop 2 - Non-technical > [20210729_Participants with Breakout Rooms.xlsx](#).

The workshop agenda was based upon several considerations and sources including the online stakeholder survey, Erin Fashoway (Montana State GIS Coordinator), Jennie Stapp (Montana State Librarian) and the strategic planning project team. AppGeo also drew upon previous experience to craft the workshop agenda.

The discussion explored perspectives and ideas centered around three core questions (see below). The workshop began with a brief orientation on strategic planning and its importance. Summaries of several online survey questions were used to offer background and to get participants thinking at an appropriate level.

After the introduction, participants, MSL project team members, and AppGeo staff were segregated into four virtual breakout rooms:

1. State Agency participants (aside from natural resource agencies)
2. Local Government/Private participants
3. State Agency participants focused on natural resources
4. Federal participants

Each breakout room discussed the same question for 10 minutes and then a group spokesperson presented a summary from their room to all participants in a general session. The process was repeated for each of the three questions.

Breakout room assignments can be viewed in the participants report found in the project's Team directory at General > 1_Information Gathering > Workshops > Workshop 2 - Non-technical > [20210729_Participants with Breakout Rooms.xlsx](#).

The introductory slides are in the project's Team directory at General > 1_Information Gathering > Workshops > Workshop 2 - Non-technical > [Stakeholder Workshop 2 MSL GIS Strategic Plan - July 2021.pdf](#).

The workshop was recorded and will be placed in the same Team's workshop directory.

Workshop Questions and Discussion Summaries

Breakout Question 1: MSL Geospatial Mission and Role

How well do you understand the mission of MSL’s geospatial program and the role of the State GIS Coordinator within it?

Do you feel you have a voice in setting priorities and offering feedback to MSL (e.g through the Land Plan process)?

Question 1 Group Discussion Summary:

Breakout Group	Major Themes
State (aside from natural resources agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There was strong consensus across the group that the mission of the MSL was unclear. ● Depending on the organization and the level of engagement, knowledge of MSL’s offerings varied. For example MDT rarely taps into MSL resources and instead uses their own GIS resources. ● Group reiterated the desire for the MSL to increase communication and coordination with state agencies.
Local Government / Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding of MSL’s mission, role, and priorities varied across the group. ● Group members who had worked with MSL and MLIAC were more familiar with the MSL missions and roles. These participants had participated in setting priorities and had a pretty good understanding of the role of MSL. ● Group members who had not participated in the past said they were unfamiliar with priorities ● Funding, especially for rural counties, was identified as a challenge to statewide, consistent, GIS ● “One foot in, one foot out” - the role of the MSL in advancing standards was not clear to some participants. Example of this is NG911 - does MSL set standards? Recommend standards? ● Spokesperson also said that it was not clear to him what MSL place is within Montana state government’s overall strategic plan and agency configuration. Is it the lead GIS agency? A resource for those other agencies? How does geospatial fit within Montana’s data creation and usage goals? ● From a public information perspective, the MSL website is incredibly useful - but at least one journalist did not know there was a governance structure and process behind all of it.

State (natural resources agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not clear to the group as a whole whether MSL is a clearinghouse, an umbrella, or a standalone resource. • “Can’t take advantage of what you are not aware of”: what is being developed and offered changes over time, and one has to invest time in keeping track of, or re-educating oneself about what MSL is doing. • MSL is an important source of authoritative data for natural resource state agencies
Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Federal group was not concerned with MSL’s “mission”. Their focus is more about what projects and data are of mutual interest and offer partnering and collaboration opportunities. • Focused, applied experience led to participants’ knowledge of MSL. • One person said that for his agency (BLM) he is the conduit between the federal level and MSL. This works well and allows his federal agency to use MSL products appropriately; better than having lots of individuals with partial knowledge. • Additional communication from the MSL would be beneficial.

Breakout Question 2: Geospatial Governance

Does your agency / organization have a data governance strategy?

How does the MSL fit into that strategy?

What do you think MSL’s role is, or should be, in data governance for GIS at a statewide level?

Question 2 Group Discussion Summary:

Breakout Group	Major Themes
State (aside from natural resources agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses and administrative boundaries require data standards, and MSL should define and oversee them. • For organizations that are strictly data consumers, the variations in data standards poses integration and data usage challenges. Would be great if data standards were statewide. • Ideally the MSL would provide data governance strategies, and data standards for local agencies to adopt for significant datasets. Using local data can pose a challenge due to the variations in the data format and lack of standard. • Organizations are also aware that in some cases they would need to have their own data governance strategies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The MSL needs to provide metadata for their datasets. There is uncertainty if the MSL data is always up to date. ● Governance needs to be a partnership between local agencies and the MSL. ● MSL can be a partnership and coalition builder between state agencies too.
Local Government / Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MSL should focus on aggregating local data to the state level; would be very valuable for state agencies. ● MSL's role should be to make sure that local agencies are aware of and follow state statute and rules, and MSL standards regarding collection and description of control and cadastral data. ● Would be valuable if the MSL could provide resources on standards for NG911, addressing, etc. ● Moving forward in a collaborative way should be the modus operandi between local efforts and statewide frameworks. For example, work done with Montana Association of Professional Land Surveyors on bringing together survey-quality data and aggregating it at state level. ● Centralizing points of contact for aggregating local data is more than a full-time job. ● MSL does great work accomplishing challenging data management and collaboration between diverse partners. Important not to lose sight of all of MSL's successes. ● As a profession, we should recognize that modern data management, analysis, etc., will present new ideas and topics aside from framework layers ("staying relevant"). Things like diversity, equity, and inclusion are often best approached geospatially; we (and the MSL) should expect to be brought into that sort of topic more and more. ● Tribal perspective (Wally Gladstone) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4 of the 7 Tribal DOTs don't have GIS plans; MSL could help with this - no desire to reinvent the wheel by doing it on their own. ○ Would like to see MSL take on the MT LDPs coordination and share the data as it's collected ○ MSL could set the standards and foundation for data acquisition, update, and management ● Public information perspective: MSL can serve a great function for the public by publicizing data hidden in agencies (already mentioned above) and serving as the "yellow pages" for whom to contact about different kinds of geospatial data, including local information.
State (natural resources agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MSL has been a gentle hand in terms of guidance regarding standards. This has worked well generally. ● Some data does need stronger leadership regarding standards though. Transportation data was cited as an example.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The library has done a good job with many framework datasets in the MSDI - GCDB (CAD NSDI), the LiDAR data collection and creation of funding coalitions that included 3DEP. • “If it ain’t broke don’t fix it”. MSL has done a great job of treading the line between guidance where needed and leadership that sets standards.
Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSL reaches more local users than the Federal agencies are able to. • The MSL is the funnel for input on major data programs (hydro, 3DEP, etc.). • Data in-house is good, but coordination as to where to point to for data might be key to bring in some of those other local users. • If the MSL could point to federal datasets, it would increase the value of the federal datasets. Coordination within the state agencies, at subject matter levels, is very valuable. • MSL does not provide any part of federal data governance strategies, but at a local level that governance is very valuable to federal agencies.

Breakout Question 3: Data, Data, Data

This survey question asked stakeholders how the MSL should structure a data clearinghouse to meet the GIS communities highest ranked activity (see table below).

Activity/Potential Activity	Pct. Ranked High
Clearinghouse For All State Agency Data	69%
Publish MSDI Datasets	61%
Coordination of State Agency Geospatial Data Acquisition/Maintenance	61%
Web Services for MSDI Datasets	58%
Completion of All MSDI Datasets	56%
Clearinghouse for County Data	51%
State Geodata Standards Setting	44%
Improve Current Online Maps and Applications	42%
Clearinghouse for Federal Data	35%
Improve Data Update Frequency	35%
GIS Professional Education / Training Center	34%
Add New Online Maps and Applications	31%
Training Center	30%
Licensing Center (Provide access to GIS Software)	25%
Improve Data Issue Reporting	25%
K-12 Education Resource	23%
Publicize Geographic Names Review Processes	10%

Table 1: Results from Stakeholder Survey

We heard from a number of respondents in the survey and first workshop a desire for a data “clearinghouse”. In recent years, the MSL has moved away from storing copies of data in a centralized “clearinghouse” and focused on making authoritative data discoverable through metadata.

What does data “clearinghouse” mean to you today? Do you have a vision for a state clearinghouse? How should it work? Who is the audience?

How could the MSL encourage/inspire/incentivize agencies and local governments to participate in efforts to make authoritative data more discoverable/accessible?

Question 3 Group Discussion Summary:

Breakout Group	Major Themes
State (aside from natural resources agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Authoritative data should be served by one organization and from one location, the MSL. ● The MSL needs to focus on serving widely used and disseminated data, before they start focusing on niche datasets. ● A different vision for a clearinghouse is that the MSL needs to be a pointer to the authoritative source data that is available across the state, as opposed to a data store of all authoritative datasets. The group recognized that broken links can be a problem. ● Even supplemental (unverified data) can be of value. ● It was unclear if the MSL’s role is to track the location of all statewide datasets.
Local Government / Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The definition of a clearinghouse depends upon your needs - there won’t be a single, perfect, kind of clearinghouse. For example, does a clearinghouse support the general public viewing and doing simple studies with geographic data and also support sophisticated GIS professional needs? ● Data housed by the library, and a clearinghouse at the library makes sense because information is stored at a library. The MSL acting as a resource repository makes sense ● MSL needs to identify a federated model that works for local governments. ● There need to be more incentives for local agencies to own their data and see the value. A distributed decentralized approach only works if people see the value and have the desire. ● The group agreed that one single point of contact for data is a good place to start as it provides a more predictable data storing option.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The group noted that sometimes services just don't work for professional needs and one ends up downloading data, going against the clearinghouse idea. ● An incentive for local and even state agencies to make sure they are providing current and quality data to the library is reduction in staff time and avoiding duplication of effort.
<p>State (natural resources agencies)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It would be nice to have feature data services ● Downloading data is still important ● Focused map applications for general public would be good ● Proud of MT clearinghouse, especially compared to other states. ● LiDAR data will be a great addition to the data available ● MSL should contain pointers/links to other state agency data rather than serving as a distribution point for that data ● If one does go with services, don't double-down on work already done by Esri ● Public information perspective: the clearinghouse is already incredibly useful; a guidebook kind of function for other sorts of data holdings would be very useful; recognize that the public has little expertise in, or appetite for, "searching for data"; so this is challenging to MSL because one wants technically excellent data that is readily useful (not just available) to non-technical users.
<p>Federal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MSL should not be a federal data clearinghouse as various agencies have their own clearinghouses. ● The MSL should not store data, but should provide the pointer to federal clearinghouses. ● Data redundancy with clearinghouses is a huge issue. Some agencies will not participate and the data will be redundant. ● Clearinghouses could either provide data for professional and non-technical users, or provide data in a single format for everyone to use.