

# Advancing Statewide Spatial Data Infrastructures in Support of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI)

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## Ensuring the Success of Your Project

### Before You Start

- 1) Be sure there is a **real business need**. You're competing for scarce resources and you must uphold the public's trust.
- 2) Recruit the **right group of stakeholders** to work with you. You need effective "change agents" that have lots of energy. Match managers to management issues and technical staff to technical issues, while realizing that some cross-fertilization is normally required for any endeavor.
- 3) Be sure that you have **executive buy-in** for this effort. They may not support even the most logical and compelling conclusions if they don't perceive the need for your solution.

### During the Process

- 1) **Good communications** are critical to your success.
- 2) Try to facilitate meeting logistics so they are **equitable to all participants**. Look for technology solutions such as WebEx™ or video conferencing that will allow your participants to work from their own office when needed.
- 3) **Manage the personalities and skills** of your working group to take advantage of, and recognize their strengths and weaknesses.
- 4) Develop solutions through a **consensus-based process**. Don't force untenable compromises or let your

working group members begin to view the process as "winning" or "losing."

- 5) Work to create an environment of **mutual respect** that fosters participation by all working group members.
- 6) Write your plans with **focus, brevity and clarity**. Management will reward you for taking this simple step.
- 7) **Use conservative estimates** in all financial areas. Management can recognize efforts to improperly "tweak" the numbers.

### After Completing the Planning Effort

After completing strategic or business plans, many managers expect to receive attention and funding for the simple reason that they have a plan in place. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The real work begins after completion of the planning process and you won't get attention, or funding, unless you aggressively market and pursue implementation of your plans.

- 1) After the "group think" is over, **evaluate whether or not you created a realistic and workable solution** for the problem that you identified in your planning process. You should have done this in the planning process, but if you didn't, ask the group to take another look and refine the plan.
- 2) Make sure that you can **articulate the compelling reasons** why your project must be funded. If you can't, who will?
- 3) You must **repeatedly ask** (within the limits of good taste) for the funding, staff

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and other resources that are needed to implement your plan and objectives.

4) The **right people must always remember** what you asked them to do. You have to simplify your message and make sure it is concise and clear.

5) All of your stakeholder groups need to **ask for the same thing**. If they don't, you're destined to fail.

6) You have to deliver a **consistent message about solving problems** that will be remembered. When elected officials and executives think about how to solve their problems, will they remember your solutions?

7) You need to be **"right" and ready to make your case** whenever the opportunity arises. Make sure there are no "holes" or inconsistencies in your plan that will reduce your credibility. Always carry your plans and marketing materials and be prepared to give a 15 second to 10 minute summary of the plans.

8) You should be **reasonable and ready to make the right compromises**. Always anticipate where negotiations on program features, budget or other resources will go, and be prepared with intelligent compromises based on facts (or consensus with your stakeholders) that you have already assembled.

9) **Be prepared to take the "other guy's" money** when they slip-up. It's a cutthroat world and like it, or not, you are competing for limited resources. When someone else fails to deliver on a grant or to get their paperwork in on time, be prepared to step in and take their funding to accomplish your goals.

10) **Understand your "friends" and your "enemies"** in the process. When

you take the time to know what motivates the other guy, you will be in a much better position to reach consensus on the tough issues. The key is listening to what they say and understanding their position even when you don't agree with it.

11) **Don't despair or allow negative attitudes** to convince you that something can't be done. Assuming that your planning efforts have created a realistic solution, you should simply ignore negative comments and early failures. Most strategic objectives take years to implement unless you are just plain lucky, or they were born from executive interest and have immediate political support. **Be patient**.

12) Be "guilty" of making an **honest effort and working hard** to achieve your goals. There simply are no substitutes.

13) **Mange the expectations of your stakeholders**. Don't let them believe that achieving the goals is a simple process. If you do, they will loose interest after early failures and they will not be there to support your efforts when they are most needed.

## ***Ensuring the Failure of Your Project***

1) **Don't do all of the above**.

2) Make your plans so **complex or confusing** that management has to guess what your project is really about.

3) **Inflate the cost benefit or ROI figures** in your plan. You will lose any credibility that you have.

4) **Underestimate the risks involved** or their impact on your plans.

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5) **Skip the number-crunching** and try to do it all with text. Management wants to see the numbers.

6) **Forget common sense.** The pie in the sky will wind up on your face.

7) **Assume that people know what you're talking about.** "Check-in" with the stakeholders and executives on a regular basis and create feedback loops to see if they do understand the issues.

8) **Always work from the top down.** People at the top typically don't have much time, are focused on a very specific agenda, and know little about the technology that people use or need.

9) **Always work from the bottom up.** People at the bottom may not be able to communicate a good idea up the chain of command even if they are excited about it

10) If you're trying to sell something to a group that is well-funded, **don't come on too strong.** They probably have a well-developed instinct for other groups trying to get at their money.

11) **Be afraid to seek publicity.** Even an average "PR" piece will expose the name of your program and what you do.

12) **Waste time fighting the agents for status quo.** You need to find the people who are looking for a better way.

13) **Underestimate peer pressure.** A big selling factor for technology is "buzz" and everyone wants to be first, biggest and best.

14) Forget that **the point of technology is to empower people.** It has to be simple enough that they can take ownership of it and use it to help themselves.

15) **Do it all for "them"** and expect "them" to like it. Others will often do more with something that they have invested in than something that they got for free.