

GIS Consortium Partnership Award Highlights

- \$1.2 million in cost savings (2009)
- 17 community members
- 132 total square miles
- 444,786 residents served
- One vote per member
- No annual membership dues
- Public/private partnership
- Perfect membership retention record

Program Summary

In 1999 four communities in the Chicago, IL USA region began developing an innovative low-cost solution for local government geographic information systems (GIS). These communities are the charter members of the GIS Consortium (GISC) - Highland Park, Lincolnshire, Glencoe and Park Ridge. The mission of the GISC was to reduce the cost and risk of GIS in small- and medium-size communities. The current economic challenges that face local government make the GISC model increasingly relevant. This model has evolved over its life to expand services, increase efficiencies, and provide members flexibility in uncertain times.

Developing technical programs like GIS is expensive. Successful GIS programs require appropriate staffing, hardware, software, and standards. The founding members recognized the benefits of GIS delivering efficient services to residents. In order to achieve this goal they determined that a collaborative model was necessary. The concept of the GISC began on this premise - that through partnership and collaboration each community could realize the benefits of this innovative technology without the prohibitive cost. Without collaboration, it is difficult for small- and medium-size communities to afford a GIS.

Everything in local government refers to place. GIS attaches spatial intelligence to community information. Spatial relationships like connectedness, adjacency, and proximity automate the location of valves that isolate a water main for repair, the assessment of properties zoned residential within a flood plain, and the emergency response time to at-risk facilities. These are just several possible GIS uses. GIS is an important part of local government services that affect the lives of residents.

Today the GISC consists of 17 communities who utilize a set of common practices to deliver efficient services. The collaboration between these local governments assures that the highest standards of practice are used in the development of individual programs. All members are required to participate in the development and use of these standards. Built on the value of representative democracy, each member contributes and gets an equal vote in determining the direction of the GISC.

The GISC is particularly proud of our membership retention record – it has never lost a member. This demonstrates that the growth of the model both in members and in sophistication is keeping pace with how communities are evolving. To provide efficient government services communities must consider creative approaches like the GISC.

The GISC solution has been demonstrating considerable savings since its inception. In 2009, the GISC analyzed and measured efficiency and costs savings. The following table presents the savings along with a subsequent discussion of each item and its benefits.

GIS Consortium Cost-Savings

In 2009, the GISC recognized over \$1.2 million in cost savings for its members. Staffing, intellectual property, procurement, and training efficiencies generate these savings.

\$540,000	Staffing
\$505,948	Intellectual property
\$145,600	Procurement
\$67,800	Training

Staffing

Staffing is the central component of the GISC model. It provides accountability and program continuity within a standard model implemented by all members. Staffing provides the conduit for the flow of ideas and information between communities.

The staffing solution is a public/private partnership in which the private sector delivers technical expertise. The GISC model identifies staffing requirements, qualifies service providers, and negotiates rates on behalf of its members. The positions include data specialists, database analysts and application developers. Specialization enables equitable service-to-cost ratios and access to the necessary professionals without the full-time cost. Community size and need determines the allocation model.

Staffing remains the single largest cost-savings component of the GISC. The rate structure is well below in-house or individually negotiated outsourced models. Savings are estimated to be

between 40-50% depending on the size of the community. The GISC members receive the benefits of the professionals without the costs associated with government overhead (recruitment, pension, enrichment). The private industry bears the responsibility of these costs in the GISC model.

Intellectual property

GISC members purchase, develop and share all intellectual property. One example is MapOffice™ a browser based mapping application that provides users with sophisticated access to geographic information within a simple user interface. MapOffice™ tools are designed along business processes and the application tracks usage across the GISC. It can support many of the daily operations of local government more efficiently. Simple tasks like property lookup, address notification, field measurement, and incident mapping are within a few clicks of any staff member. MapOffice™ provides an estimated \$505,948 in cost-savings annually.

A subset of this application is available publically. MapOffice™ allows communities to engage their citizens by providing the opportunity for citizens to leverage the investment made in GIS. The advent of cloud computing is an interesting development for the GISC. It is further reducing costs for members and spreading the influence of this model.

Procurement

The GISC is increasingly leveraging its buying power through shared procurement. For example, the base-mapping program enables communities to develop precise mapping with an approximate cost-savings of 30% compared to individual procurement.

The GISC members embarked on a program last year to support local businesses. They collectively procured a business analysis application to support community development. Detailed information about the demographic makeup of various locations including lifestyles and buying behavior is available using this tool. Technical analysis like drive time, density calculations, and threshold analysis supports informed and timely decisions by community staff and elected officials about how to adapt and react to changes in the marketplace.

Training

Training was an important part of the formation of the GISC. Today it has evolved significantly and remains a priority. The GISC offers a variety of enrichment opportunities including technical meetings, webinars, and training videos. Most meetings are conducted over the internet using virtual technology to reduce travel time and cost.

Summary

The GIS Consortium foreshadowed how local government would provide low-cost services. The GISC model provides one approach to reducing cost and increasing service level in the current economic times. GIS technology helps communities contain operational costs, support decision-making and communicate complex information. The GISC puts this technology within reach of communities that would otherwise not have access to this technology.