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New Jersey Geospatial Forum
Data Sharing/Security Task Force

Final Report

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The Data sharing/security task force finished its work in mid-2005. Some findings, and useful information and resources were loaded onto the NJGF task forces web pages. Additional information will be loaded as opportunity allows.

Goals and Objectives

A mission statement that specified task force objectives was never formally submitted because, as members found out, the topic was much more vast and comprehensive than initially thought. However, the task force did put together a thorough preliminary list of issues for examination. In no particular order, they were as follows:

- Secure/sensitive data distribution and access – who, what, why, how
- Database information sensitivity
- Sharable versions of secure data
- Business processes and mechanisms – inconsistencies
- Impediments to data sharing – lack of, or onerous procedures, costs, lack of responsibility
- Differing restrictions and policies at various government levels
- Uncertainty among government officials – data distribution and access, cost recovery
- Outreach and education for data stewards about data sharing requirements
- Abuse of security protocols to restrict data sharing
- Using the NJ Geographic Information Network (NJGIN) portal to share secure and publicly accessible data
- Need to overcome home rule mindset
- How license agreements and copyrights prevent data sharing
- Data sharing protocols and policy models in other states and federal government
- Triggering security issues with combined datasets

From the preliminary list there was a decision to focus on the following:

- Outreach and education about structures, mechanisms and processes for data sharing
- Standards for determining data security/sensitivity among various constituencies
- Impediments to data sharing – procedures, methods and costs
- The applicability of Open Public Records Act (OPRA) rules

Outreach and Education

Regarding methods for data sharing, the task force identified the New Jersey Geographic Information Network (NJGIN) portal as an effective means to facilitate geospatial data

sharing through its structure, mechanisms and processes. Task force research revealed no other significant methods or resources in New Jersey.

The NJGIN portal has been a well-known resource for geospatial data sharing since 2003. The NJ Office of GIS (OGIS) continually promoted its capabilities at meetings, conferences and other forums to facilitate data sharing through its metadata search engine for geospatial data, maps and other documents from sources throughout New Jersey. The task force felt that no further effort was needed to provide outreach and education about the NJGIN portal to the GIS community.

Standards

For standards to determine data security/sensitivity among various constituencies, use of the <u>FGDC Guidelines for Providing Appropriate Access to Geospatial Data in Response to Security Guidelines</u> was deemed to be the best resource available. It lists basic criteria for making determinations on whether specific federal data should be publicly accessible or secure, but the task force felt it was generic and objective enough to be universally applicable.

Other identified resources were:
- Rand Report
- URISA Open Data Sharing Report
- Open Geospatial Consortium
- Government Records Council
- Dept of Homeland Security Protected Critical Infrastructure Information Program
- 9/11 Commission Report

Impediments

The task force had a discussion with Bruce Harrison, when he was the NJ State Geographic Information Officer, to obtain information about data sharing/security issues at the federal, state, county and municipal levels of government. Bruce furnished his unique perspective by virtue of the relationships he developed with representatives at all levels of government and the long time he has been dealing with these issues. He gave examples of government agencies that restrict access to data for security reasons.

One of the examples was the Emergency Preparedness Information Network (EPI*Net*) Data Warehouse, a component of an information sharing system for homeland security and emergency response in NJ. Data created within the scope of this program are considered secure and not subject to OPRA rules.

The New Jersey State Office of Attorney General is putting together agreements between State agencies to determine data distribution policy on a case-by-case basis. Task force members agreed that a data distribution policy is also needed at county and municipal government levels.

The task force also felt it needed to do more research on how the culture of data sharing/security is manifest throughout the state. We hoped to organize this information into a best practices manual, not only for those seeking data from government entities, but also for data stewards at municipal and county government, to provide a frame of reference in which to make data sharing/security decisions in a NJ context. The task force initially hoped a State directive might come out of that effort.

OPRA

The task force wanted to meet with the Government Records Council (GRC) to provide guidelines on public access to geospatial data regarding OPRA. Two task force members volunteered to research OPRA rules and data sharing customs throughout NJ. As part of their research, they hoped to interview someone at the GRC to understand how OPRA works. Members of the task force did not had time to undertake this and came to understand that it would have been difficult to meet with the GRC anyway.

Respectfully submitted,

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