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Mr. David M. Burmaster
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Albany, New York 12242

April 21, 2014

Dear Mr. Burmaster,

As the representative of the New York State GIS Association (NYSGISA) serving on the Geospatial Advisory Council (GAC) that you met with on April 3rd, I greatly appreciated your appearance before the GAC to discuss OGS procurement policy and your approach to GIS related contracts. FYI, the NYSGISA is an organization of GIS professionals, currently composed of 588 dues paying members and is affiliated with fifteen local and regional GIS groups that have coverage across the entire State.

On behalf of the NYSGISA Board of Directors, I'm writing to urge you to continue to pay close attention to the procurement needs of New York State's GIS community. Because GIS operations are not centralized in one large, influential IT Department but are dispersed, many in small units, across most state and local agencies, we sometimes don't appear on the radar screens of policy makers and government managers. I hope you'll take the following thoughts under consideration.

- GIS is a specialized type of IT that is rooted in the geographic sciences. GIS location data, in the form of an address or an x,y coordinate, can be found in almost every database in the State, and is the foundation for data integration, spatial analysis, modeling and visualization: essential to most government operations. Consequently, just about every IT project now has important geospatial features which, however, can be hidden behind a more encompassing IT identity. For example most applications concerned with emergency response, customer relationship management (311) or utility, asset and property management must have at least a GIS based geocoding component to work, but often also have proximity, routing, remote sensing and visualization capabilities as well.

- The implementation of GIS enabled applications often produces significant cost savings and gains in effectiveness. Benefits include more accurate property assessments, higher tax collection rates, and more efficient service delivery and asset management operations.
- Geospatial systems are renowned for their ability to support life-saving missions. For example: 911 emergency response systems, which save countless lives annually, depend on GIS for accurate addressing and dispatching. And GIS is the information tool of choice when a region must respond to a disaster event like 9/11, Sandy or the recent flooding in NYS southern tier counties.

These reasons make it important for there to be a State procurement contract that enables government agencies to acquire GIS services that fully meet their needs. The HBITS contract, while essential to IT, does not work well for GIS requirements. The primary expression of GIS value comes through the development of GIS components, functions and applications. These generally require the work of a team that can bring to bear not only a variety of programming skills but specific geospatial expertise. Most of these projects are too small to warrant a full RFP process, and for larger projects, a shortage of GIS personnel can make an RFP process prohibitively time consuming.

As an additional consequence of the absence of a workable GIS contracting vehicle, the more than one hundred small and mid-sized GIS consulting firms in NYS are severely disadvantaged. Temporary employees to fill IT service gaps do not provide the kind of staffing required to get a modestly sized and always challenging GIS project designed and implemented. As a result GIS services are rarely contracted through HBITS. Without an efficient way to get at needed data development, integration and analysis; and application development services, beneficial GIS projects have difficulty getting off the ground and GIS vendors in the state are deprived of opportunities to perform valuable work.

We believe the solution for this situation is for OGS to establish a GIS consulting contract that allows for a rapid competitive response to specifications, by high quality, pre-qualified vendors. This method of procurement, which OGS has had in place in the past, can cut six months to a year off normal RFP timelines. Such a contract would be important to the State's GIS vendor community, and enable the implementation of many valuable projects with significant benefits to State and local government agencies and the citizens they serve.

We encourage you to continue to consult with GIO William Johnson and the GAC on this matter. The New York State GIS Association is willing to assist you in any way you might find useful. I can be reached at 212-551-6416 if you have any questions or would like additional information about the Association.

Sincerely,



Alan Leidner

Cc: Kathleen McAuley, OGS; Sean Hume, OGS; William Johnson, GIO/ITS; Julie Tolar, President, NYSGISA; Susan Nixon, President Elect, NYSGISA