

I. Underlying Strategic Vision

The founders and advocates of the NYS GIS Coordination Program envisioned a future where existing spatial data sets would be cataloged and described in a comprehensive and standard way; where potential users could easily contact and negotiate with the data custodians to re-use that data; where costly but highly beneficial projects to develop new spatial data resources would be undertaken by groups of organizations working together to create a shared asset; where GIS practitioners could readily share their problems, questions, and experiences with one another; and where GIS analyses of many kinds would contribute to improved environmental management, health care, social policy, education, land use planning and commerce. In the early 1990s, however, New York State lagged behind most other states in term of GIS coordination. Nearly every other state already had a mechanism to support GIS coordination. In 1994, only four states were without a formal or ad-hoc coordinating body.⁽¹⁾ However, New York State benefited from many geographic data resources, deep pockets of GIS expertise, and a number of localized coordination efforts. The value of these resources needed to be substantially leveraged by a policy-driven coordination effort at the State level. The central issue facing NY was how to organize and sustain a collaborative effort across all levels of government and with the private sector that would take advantage of the analytical power of GIS to improve government services, drive down costs, and stimulate economic development.

(1) National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC), 1994