

IV. Collaborators and their roles

Three kinds of leadership are at work in the GIS Coordination program: state level leadership of the entire enterprise and its philosophy of data sharing and cooperation; agency level leadership in the active adoption of the cooperative and its goals; and leadership of individual experts who were chosen to sit on the Coordinating Body and chair the Working Groups and Advisory Committees.

State-level leadership, provided by the Project Director of the NYS Office for Technology (OFT), gives guidance and direction to all government agencies involved in GIS activities. OFT is organizationally located in the Office of the Governor and was established to coordinate NYS information policies and resources. OFT successfully provided the state-level leadership necessary to implement the GIS Data Sharing Cooperative by designating a leader who acted as a steadfast champion for the cause of cooperation. By pursuing a strategy of incremental gains, practical goals with challenging deadlines, and wide consultation within the GIS community, a great deal has been accomplished in a short time. It is important to understand, as well, that OFT is a new agency linked to the Governor. As such, it has no "history" to overcome, and state agencies, local governments, and private businesses alike perceive the GIS initiative to have the commitment of the State's top elected leader.

A second source of leadership was necessary to convince agencies to become active in the coordination effort and to join the formal data sharing cooperative. This leadership came from several state agencies who are the acknowledged leaders in the use of GIS: the Departments of Transportation and Environmental Conservation (DOT and DEC), and the Office of Real Property Services (ORPS). Many other state agencies needed to see these GIS leaders demonstrate commitment before they would join. DOT, in particular, was a critical player as it had a historical policy and practice of selling its GIS data, even to other government agencies. New leadership within DOT became committed to the cooperative program and put its key data sets on the clearinghouse for the free use of all cooperative members. DOT also led the effort to create and advocate for the Data Sharing Agreements. ORPS engaged with DOT in a successful experiment in making data from both agencies available over the Internet. DEC, an early advocate of data sharing, is among the first agencies to develop complete metadata for its data holdings and to encourage their use. While many other agencies advocated for cooperation, and actively contributed to the effort, these three agencies provided essential leadership and credibility for the project.

Finally, individual leadership was required at all levels represented in the Cooperative. In order to address concerns of all parties having an interest in the GIS data sharing effort, the Coordinating Body appointed three advisory groups representing local government, state government and the private sector. In addition, seven working groups were created to reflect upon, make recommendations, and develop sharable resources in the following areas: the clearinghouse, communications, data coordination, education, finance, legal issues, and standards. Each sector and level of government is represented in these groups. In order to provide strong leadership, the GIS Coordinating Body appointed recognized and respected experts as leaders of the advisory and working groups.
