



**Health Informatics Council  
Intra-agency Data Sharing & Software Access & Warehousing Subcommittee**

**GIS Advisory Subcommittee Minutes**

October 4, 2007

\* Note: For purposes of clarity and brevity, these minutes have been written in summary form and organized by topic rather than written as a temporal record of the meeting discussions.

**Present:** Miriam McGaugh, Anne Bliss, Sam Cannella, Elizabeth Kruger, Sheryll Brown, Carmen Clarke, Carrie Zeman, Derek Pate, Joyce Morris, Vicki Kirtley, Connie Hall-Jones, Susan Boyd, Bonnie Hartzell, Walter Jacques, Jo Lynn Johnson, Amy Fletcher, Mary Beth Cox, James Joslin, Larry Weatherford, Kristen Eberly

**Call to Order**

Miriam McGaugh called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. Miriam was standing in as Chair for Katy Rich who was on maternity leave.

**Discussion of the Needs Assessment Report**

There were several comments about the report emailed to Miriam and/or Katy. Many suggestions were related to wording/phrasing. Miriam asked the committee to please tell Miriam or Katy if you see something missing or something erroneous in the report. Mary Beth said that she doesn't think that MCH Assessment provides support to Child Guidance, as stated in the report, so that will need to be verified.

Several committee members reported problems with the Excel files from the report – many blank pages would print (with only lines). They also had problems with page breaks in the Excel documents, and Miriam stated that formatting would be improved for the final version of the report.

Sheryll Brown commented that she noticed some clear patterns emerging from the report. She wonders what type of approach the agency should take to get up-to-date on GIS technology. She noticed that there are several different types of regions in the state that are program specific – maybe the regions should be universalized or at least centrally accessible. She also saw commonalities with regard to facilities and populations across program areas. There were a lot of potential projects that involved overlaying populations with regions or facilities with populations. She thought the report was very eye opening. She was very surprised that some of these GIS projects for Trauma/EMS haven't yet been done. She said that GIS has been approached in a very ad hoc manner in the agency. Part of this is because the programs don't have staff that can do the GIS work in addition to not having software access, even though there

is a big need to do these projects. She also noticed the common theme of Internet access to OSDH GIS data.

Joyce would like to see a distinction between the needs for “mapping” and for “GIS”. Miriam wondered if she meant “spatial statistics”. Joyce clarified that she was referring to “mapping” as simply locating things and “GIS” as doing overlays or statistics. She doesn’t consider creating maps as being a GIS activity. Miriam said that she sees the mapping activities as the basis for doing analysis – having locations for facilities, etc and then going on to do spatial analysis.

There was some argument as to what exactly constitutes GIS activities. The main point of contention was whether simple mapping of locations is GIS or not. Joyce pointed out that most people assume that’s what GIS is and they don’t think about how it can be used. Miriam pointed out that building a base of facility locations is extremely important for setting up the foundation for doing further spatial analysis. Sheryll pointed out that program staff is already mapping locations in PowerPoint but this is time-consuming and difficult to update. Anne pointed out that standardizing the methodology to update the GIS maps would be important too. There was some further discussion that vocabulary is a major obstacle to thorough understanding of the report and should be addressed in trainings.

Joyce sees a need for a repository of maps that will be used in different programs. Miriam said it sounded like maybe there’s a need to break down the potential projects by the level of skill needed to complete them.

Derek would like to see a summary of the overlap in projects between programs. He noticed a lot of duplication in the report (many projects could use the same data). He suggests pulling out a list of projects that would benefit the whole agency or the most service areas.

Miriam said that the GIS Users Group has done some work in the past to look at how many of the GIS users have overlapping files that were taking up network space to save the same data in multiple locations. The needs assessment report has not addressed this yet but it may be something that needs to be added in and highlighted in the final recommendations.

Elizabeth suggested that region maps be made available on the network for all users to access because all the regions are the same. However, several committee members reiterated the fact that there are many differing regions in OSDH programs.

Walter mentioned that there is some new legislation coming out that says a nursing home administrator can work at two nursing homes as long as they’re not more than 60 miles apart. He wondered how it would be possible to determine that manually (there are over 400 nursing facilities in the state that he would have to draw 60 mile radiuses around). Miriam mentioned that, as an agency, we are purchasing the Network Analyst extension to ArcGIS. This will allow us to analyze distance by driving distance rather than “as-the-crow-flies” distance, as well as doing routing and other network analysis.

## **GIS Software Access Standards Discussion**

Miriam introduced this topic of discussion by explaining that the agency is moving to using concurrent-use GIS licenses which means that the software will be individually installed on a user's computer but that computer will have to go across the network to access the license manager and pull an open license to enable the software. We currently have 3 concurrent-use ArcInfo licenses. Those three licenses are shared across several users. There are conflicts over usage of the software license very rarely and usually that involves tracking someone down to ask them to close the software if they are done. We would like to have a web-based report where users could access information about what licenses are available and what other users are accessing a license at any one time. The new software acquisition will include 12 ArcView concurrent licenses in addition to the 3 ArcInfo that we already have. This will mean that 15 people can use the GIS software at the same time. We will also still have 5 single-user licenses for laptops that are not connected to the network.

Joyce wondered if there would be a way to document utilization of the software (when it's used, how much, how often). Miriam said that she thinks Jeff Carlisle could write a little computer program to track the usage.

### *Granting Software Access*

There will not necessarily be a limit to the number of computers that the ArcView concurrent use licenses will be installed on, but there can only be 15 users of the ArcView/ArcInfo licenses at any one time. Access to the GIS software will not be taken away from current GIS users unless they choose to have it uninstalled from their computers.

The committee needs to come up with some guidelines about who can have the software installed on their computer, as well as guidelines to determine how users can gain immediate access for emergency/last minute projects. This should address who can "boot" people off the system and how that should be handled.

Miriam said that eventually we would like to have GIS software on everyone's computer whether it is access to the full ArcView or ArcInfo license or just a GIS Reader where the user can interact with the map a little bit or just a web-based system. Katy has been doing GIS trainings, so she would like to give software access to anyone who has gone through the training. She would also like to give software access to programs that have an immediate need to complete a GIS project and have the capability to do the project within their program area.

There are several ways that GIS software access could be granted. It helps to look at it two ways: there is the initial access that OSDH staff will request and there is access priority when conflicts occur. In the first case, people who already have the software will continue to have that access. In addition, Katy has suggested that people who have received training on the software should get access as well as those people with an immediate need for the software to work on a particular project. One person asked if any GIS training would fit the criteria or if it would have to be GIS training. There was some agreement that any GIS training would be ok. Someone suggested that there should be some guidelines for thinking through the immediacy of a project and determining if there is an immediate need for software access to work on a project. We should distinguish between priority users and priority projects.

There was some concern raised that staff classified as “low priority” GIS users would be neglected or shoved aside when it comes to software use and GIS assistance as has been the case sometimes when IT staff make their priority lists of projects. This will need to be addressed in the software access policies.

It was pointed out that new GIS users would need software access to practice using the software even before starting on a project. There was discussion of having one of the licenses dedicated for training/practicing. There could be an Outlook calendar just for scheduling this one license. It would be useful to make this license available for “crunch time” use if all other licenses were being used. This will need to be discussed further.

There was some discussion of whether or not there should be a dedicated GIS license for use by the “priority” GIS users (priority is yet to be defined). The high priority users might be defined as the current software users (original license purchasers). Someone asked if the high priority status would ever expire or if a program would have that status forever.

One person suggested having one license dedicated to each deputy area. However, someone else pointed out that that arrangement could potentially bring us back to the current situation of having GIS licenses sitting un-used for large amounts of time.

There was some question as to how the committee could enforce software access/usage guidelines or policies but this was not discussed in great detail.

Someone asked if there would be laptops with GIS software available to checkout to take on trips. This could be an option or there will be at least 6 single user versions of ArcView and some of those could be available for installation on laptops as needed. Not all staff have their own laptops. Katy needs to double check on ESRI licensing requirements and whether they allow for having the same single user license installed on a desktop computer and a laptop if they are owned and used by a single staff person. Katy should also check on whether or not one license could be installed on multiple “checkout” laptops if each laptop would only be used a couple times a year.

It was pointed out that ArcReader is a free GIS software product that could be installed on any and all computers. The committee can look into having this software added to the list of software for the standard computer image.

Someone asked if there is any other software sharing arrangement in place at OSDH or other agencies that we could model our policies/guidelines off of. No one knew of anything except maybe for the use of a scanner somewhere in OSDH.

### Monitoring Software Access

There was some question about the status of having a report of software license usage. That still needs to be addressed. The plan is to have more than one person monitoring the GIS software usage. It was suggested that Katy should produce periodic reports of software usage and highlight “low use” times when staff might be able to plan to practice on the software.

There was some discussion of whether or not there should be a timeout option on the license usage. For example, could we set it up so that if a license is being consumed (i.e. ArcView is open on someone's computer) but sits idle for 60 minutes then the connection to the license would be terminated? There would probably need to be a warning message before termination, a forced logoff warning or something similar. It was also pointed out that it would be courteous to pick up the phone and call the person using a license before disconnecting it.

The group discussed scheduling use of the GIS software. Some agreed that a flexible schedule on Outlook might be useful but there would probably be a lot of last minute usage. Someone pointed out that making the scheduling of the software too complicated would not be good and would make the IT side of software access very difficult.

### GIS Software Funding

Someone asked whether or not the programs need to continue to budget money to pay for GIS software maintenance fees. Current GIS software resources are covered by the Commissioner's budget so the programs should not need to budget for GIS software at this time although that could change in the future.

### **GIS Training/Support**

There was a question raised about GIS support staff and whether OSDH will have any or not. The GIS trainings that Katy offers are intended to make non-GIS staff familiar with the software and then one day we plan to have a specialized GIS analyst available to assist with specific projects.

### **GIS Data**

There was a question about how the GIS data repository will work. Currently, GIS users do their own thing as far as data storage goes. This has caused a lot of overlap in the storage of GIS data layers. Katy has initiated an inventory of GIS data layers. This inventory covered GIS shapefiles but not map documents, although maps were discussed in the needs assessment interviews. This information will be included in the needs assessment report.

### **GIS Standardization**

There is a lot of interest in standardizing GIS activities as they relate to the use of map projections and base data.

### **Meeting Closing**

The meeting was closed at approximately 10:30 a.m.