Creating a Successful, Multi-Jurisdictional Collaboration Group

in

Fulton County, Georgia

Chris Whatley
GIS Supervisor,
Fulton County DoIT

Nick O’Day
GIS Manager,
City of Johns Creek IT
Facts about Fulton County...

• Nearly 1,000,000 + population (2010 Census)
• Total Area ~ 530 Square Miles
  ▫ Spanning nearly 70 miles from north to south
• 14 independent cities
• 3 Major Regions within Fulton
  ▫ Atlanta
  ▫ North Fulton cities
  ▫ South Fulton cities & unincorporated Fulton
GIS in Fulton County (& Cities) Timeline...

- **Fulton County GIS:**
  - Began late 1980s in Public Works and Planning Depts.
  - Added functions such as parcel mapping in mid 1990s
  - Was main repository for countywide GIS until 2006

- **Atlanta GIS**
  - Began in early 1990s
  - Small in-house operation with outsourced projects
  - Now several groups: Watershed Management, Atlanta Airport GIS

- **North Fulton cities**
  - Esri & SQL-based systems grew to serve each city’s needs, independent from FC GIS
  - Young programs, but very competent

- **South Fulton cities**
  - Mostly CAD-based systems
  - Serve city needs but utilize FC GIS
  - Outside GIS consultants/advisors
Benefits of Collaborating...

- Eliminate redundant maintenance of core data
- Share resources (technology and knowledge)
- Voice in impact of projects and points of project integration (for cost savings)
- More accurate allocation of taxes collected by County
Getting started... year one

Membership:
• It’s all about relationships... so network
• Invite all core individuals... leave politics at the door

Vision Statement:
• Develop a vision statement
• Keep your expectations grounded

Set Goals:
• Short-term (for 1st year)
• Easily attainable

Meet Regularly & Provide Notes:
• Every other month at most... not too much
• Centralized location (ie. County HQ)
Keeping things going... year two

Shared Ownership of the Group:
• Rotate host sites
• Get volunteers to take meeting notes and agendas

Communicate:
• Turn meeting minutes into a newsletter
• Use less email, create a Google Group
• Transition from FTP/email data to GeoPortal

Work through Challenges:
• Individual needs vs. Collaborative Solutions
• Build and/or adopt standardized data models

Formalization... a thin line:
• Meet regularly, but don’t pressure
• Stay away from bureaucracy... no need to elect officers
Moving forward… year three and beyond

Step 1: Follow through with Goals

Step 2: Work up to Bigger Issues Gradually

Step 3: Stay Motivated, not Obligated