Beginning a GIS Program: How Do We Get One?

Joseph Merritt
GIS Manager
Clinton County, Ohio
Where are we?
Introduction to the CATALIS Project

- The CATALIS Project
  - Clinton County
  - Automated
  - Topographic
  - Aspatial
  - Land
  - Information
  - System
The CATALIS Project

- A Consortium of members which include:
  - County Engineers Office
  - County Engineers Tax Map Office
  - County Auditors Office
  - Regional Planning Commission
  - Building and Zoning Department
  - City Engineers Office
  - Emergency Management Agency
  - Realtors Association
  - Soil and Water Conservation District
  - Health Department
  - County Bar Association
Steps to Building a Successful GIS Program

- Create an Identity – and *KEEP IT!*
  - Form a GIS Committee
  - Decide on a Logo for the newly formed GIS Department
  - Come up with an ACRONYM to describe your program.
- Understand the difference between a *Project* and a *Program*
Project vs. Program

- **Project**
  - Implies a beginning and an ending.
  - It is difficult to get people to equate the word “Project” with something other than a ONE DEPARTMENT activity or task.
  - PROJECT = TASK.

- **Program**
  - Beginning with no solid ending.
  - Easier for people to understand that the word program involves the COOPERATION of many.
  - PROGRAM = TASK(S).
Choosing a Consultant

- What do you need to have done, vs. what can you do in-house?
  - Some things are a no-brainer:
    - Aerial Photography
    - Creation of a Permanent Monument Grid
    - Digital Orthophotos
  - Other:
    - Some application development
    - Some data creation / digitization

- WHAT’S THE ANSWER?
There is NO EASY SOLUTION!

A key ingredient is your GIS staff

• Hire the most experienced GIS Manager you can afford.
• Give that person the freedom they need to be creative in the planning and the *execution* of your GIS plan.
• The knowledge and experience of your GIS Manager *DIRECTLY* corresponds to the amount of money you will need to spend on consultant-based activities, and the quality of those deliverables.
Keep an Audit Trail of Work in Choosing a Consultant

- You may (probably will) be called upon to back up your decision making process.
- Give everyone on your committee an opportunity to be on the selection team.
- Prep your selection team to make sure they know what you’re looking for.
Summary

You Don’t have to be a wizard to build a GIS Program…
Where to Get Help

- OGRIP
- User Groups
- Network of Users and Managers
- Reading Material
- Clinton County GIS Department
  937-382-0035
  http://in-touch.net/catalisgis