Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure Theme Stewardship

Governance and Appointment Process

Introduction:

The Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI) consist of digital geospatial data themes representing land information that is identified by the Montana Geographic Information Officer (GIO), with the advice of the Montana Land Information Advisory Council (MLIAC), as necessary to meet the spatial information needs of the state of Montana and its citizens. Effective stewardship of the MSDI will advance framework information as "data you can trust" – the best available data for Montana; standardized, maintained, and discoverable. For the purposes of this document, stewardship is defined as:

Stewardship is the assumption of responsibility for a MSDI data theme that, depending on the needs of the theme, includes direct or indirect coordination of the production, maintenance, integration, enhancement, distribution, coordination, promotion, and support-resources for that data theme.

The critical nature of MSDI theme stewardship assignments means that any entity accepting the obligation must incorporate these duties as an essential part of their everyday business processes or the base layer itself will suffer. This standard is very high. It does not mean they just "use" or "disseminate" the data; the steward must be the primary creator or statewide coordinator of the data collection and maintenance processes, and take major responsibility for the development of theme related web-based services as one of their principal (mission critical) business functions.
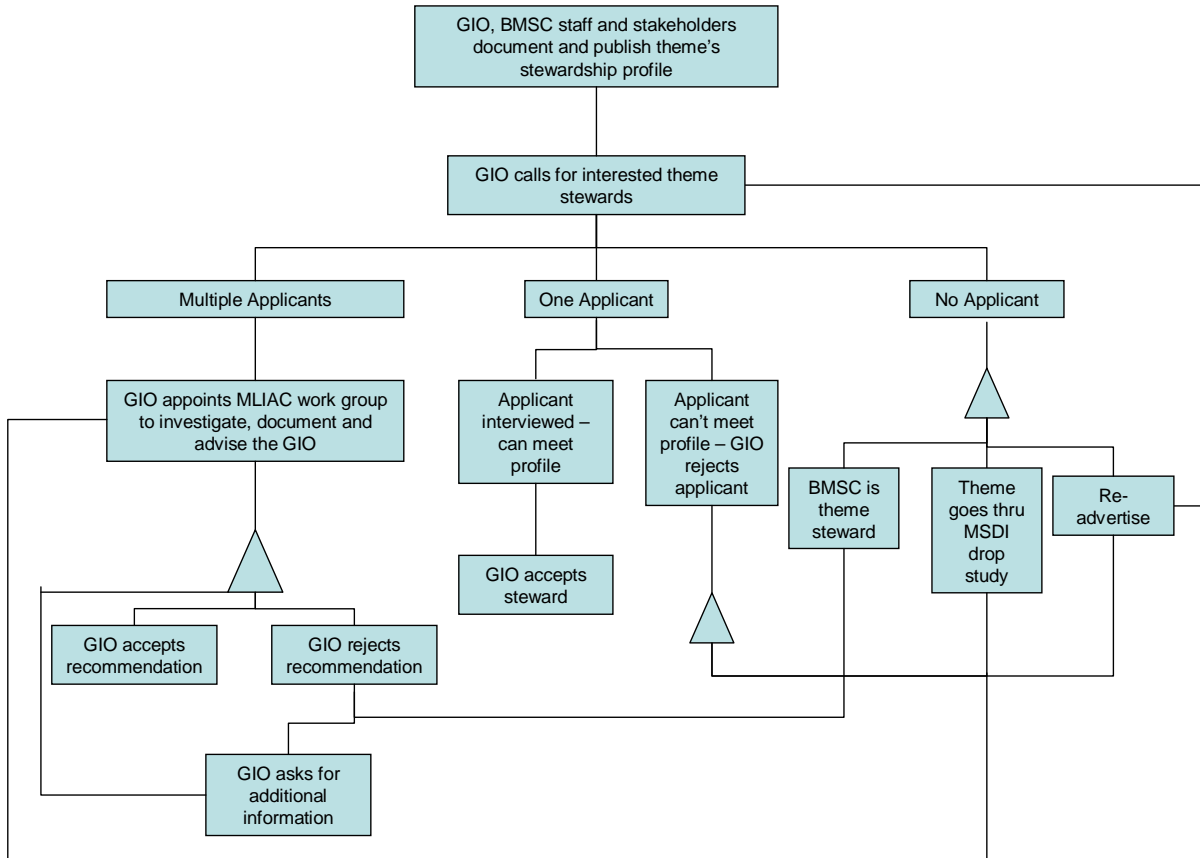
However, each MSDI theme has different complexities and therefore, the responsibilities of stewardship may vary. Some themes may require full-time stewardship including a database administrator while others may require only part-time coordination of funding or data acquisition. Some themes may be so ingrained within the business processes of what might be called an "intrinsic" steward that stewardship responsibilities occur naturally. There are other themes so inherently multi-jurisdictional and/or that contain such a variety of sub-themes that identification of a logical "intrinsic" steward will never occur. Understanding these complexities is essential for the logical appointment of theme stewards and long-term management of the MSDI in total.

Process for Appointing Theme Stewards

The Montana Base Map Service Center (BMSC) is the organization headed by the GIO and, with the advice of the MLIAC, has primary accountability for all Montana Base Map (MSDI) layers. Additionally, the BMSC is the institution responsible for coordination of

geospatial activities among State agencies and between those agencies and local governments, tribes, and the Federal Government, and for advancing the value of geospatial data and tools to the public decision making process. It is the place where long-term vision is set and conflicts are resolved. Therefore, the GIO as head of the BMSC has the primary responsibity for the appointment of MSDI theme stewards and monitoring their performance. The following decision tree documents that process.

MSDI Stewardship Decision Tree

Development of theme profiles is core to this process. As mentioned before, not all MSDI themes require the save level of effort to properly steward. With technological and institutional change, stewardship profiles will also change. Revisiting and developing amended stewardship profiles is not a trivial undertaking and therefore, the recommendation is that the GIO/MLIAC only annually review three to four profiles.

Stewardship Roles and Responsibilities Overview

To provide a common understanding, we must document certain MSDI stewardship roles and specific responsibilities. Initially, the document entitled MSDI_Theme_Stewardship_2006_09_07.pdf as approved (with minor recommended revisions) by the MLIAC on June 1, 2006, served as the most complete documentation of the roles and responsibilities of a MSDI Theme Steward. However, several significant events have happened since its adoption that has modified the accountability, including the:

1. Issuance of the "State of Montana GIS Common Operating Picture" by a CIO appointed task force at the request of MLIAC;
2. Appointment of a State GIO;
3. Publication of white papers on the Base Map Service Center and a Technology Vision;
4. Development of the Montana GIS Portal at the Montana State Library; and
5. Recognition of the Montana GIS Federation.

Additionally, the GIO and the Council acknowledge that for a variety of reasons including time, available staff, changing technology and the need to meet existing organizational internal demands, the MLIAC, the BMSC/GIO and the existing theme stewards are not meeting all the roles and responsibilities as defined in the existing stewardship document(s).

Only by developing individual theme profiles that include roles, responsibilities, and required assistance from the GIO, the BMSC and the MLIAC prior to assigning stewardship and the institutionalization of periodic reviews of each organization's role, will the Federation ever achieve true stewardship.

Action Items

The GIO, with the advice of the Council, will undertake the following actions:
1. By July 1, 2008, select three (3) initial MSDI themes for stewardship review;
2. By August 1, 2008, implement the MSDI Decision Tree process (identified above), including the appointment of MLIAC working groups where necessary;
3. Report the status of the stewardship review process to the Council at their September 4, 2008 (tentative) meeting, including:
    a. Status of the 3 selected stewardship reviews
        i. Progress
        ii. Decisions
        iii. Schedule
    b. Identify a stewardship review schedule for the remaining MSDI themes.