

Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council Business Meeting

9:00 a.m., September 25, 2025

Department of Military Affairs (HAFRC), Room 209, 1956 Mt. Majo St., Fort Harrison, MT 59636

Executive Summary

Recording Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d66vU1Q3W4k>

Attendance:

- **Council Members:** Adam Carpenter, Allen Armstrong, Maureen Celander, Lee Macholz, Valentijn Hoff, Eric Spangenberg, Joe Kaufmann, Brian DeMarco, Jennie Stapp (Chair, State Librarian).
- **Staff:** Erin Fashoway, Matt Trebesch, Sean Anderson, Michael Fashoway, Rebekah Kamp, Evan Hammer, Victoria Gersdorf (Administrative Assistant).
- **Guests and Public Attendees:** Jackson Rose, Steve Varro, additional attendees via Zoom (names not recorded)
- **Council Members Absent:** Karen Coleman.
- **Vacant Positions:** Private Sector Representative

Call to Order and Introductions

Timestamp: 00:00:00

- **Chair Jennie Stapp** called the meeting to order at 9:00am and welcomed attendees.
- **Introductions and Welcome:** Victoria Gersdorf was introduced as the new administrative assistant, council members introduced themselves.
- No changes or additions were made to items listed on the agenda.
- Jennie notes that the MGIA Council is in the process of transitioning the State Representative position as Karen Coleman will no longer be serving on the council and the Private Sector representative is currently vacant. There are also other seats that are up for re-appointment according to state law.

Business Items

Approval of May 15, 2025, Executive Summary

Time Stamp: 00:05:14

No corrections or additions to the minutes from the previous meeting were noted.

Action: The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Montana Geospatial Information Plan (FY2025–2028)

Time Stamp: 00:05:42 – 01:14:47

- **Discussion:** Chair Stapp led a detailed discussion on the updated Geospatial Information Plan. The plan transitions from annual to multi-year planning and includes case studies, financial gap analysis, and strategic goals. Council members praised the inclusion of impact narratives and discussed how to define and measure the success of the impact of the updated Geospatial Information Plan using financial gap analysis. Increasing outreach strategies to non-GIS audiences was suggested.
- **Next Steps:** Suggestions included annual impact reports and broader outreach to non-GIS stakeholders.

Time Stamp: 01:14:06

- **Motion:** to recommend the 2025-2028 Geospatial Information Plan to the Montana State Library Commission.
- **Moved By:** Eric Spangenberg
- **Seconded by:** Adam Carpenter
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved
- **Next Steps:** The 2025-2028 Geospatial Information Plan will be presented to the Montana State Library Commission.

Discussion Items

Internal MGIA Grant Program Review

Time Stamp: 01:15:59 – 01:44:52

- **Presentation: Grant Interviews** – Rebekah and Erin visited 8 different grant recipients and performed structured interviews with them to gauge candidate feedback to be incorporated into the MGIA Grant Program. Key recommendations included simplifying application and reporting processes, standardizing templates and tools, regular check-ins and peer collaboration, improved invoicing and reimbursement guidance, and moving to a biennial grant cycle to improve project flexibility and reduce administrative burden.
- **Discussion:** Council members supported the recommendations given by Rebekah and Erin.
- **Next Steps:** Council members volunteered to review the final report on the interviews before public release. A draft report will be shared in October for Council review ahead of the November 13 meeting.

GIS Governance Policy Updates

Time Stamp: 01:44:52 – 02:14:14

- **Presentation:** Erin Fashoway and Matt Trebesch presented updates on MSDI themes, governance policy development, and metadata standards from the GIS Coordination Strategic Plan. Matt Trebesch presented the draft GIS governance framework, distinguishing between “Big G” (policy level) and “Little G” (operational level) governance.

The Montana State Library (MSL) hosts 10 agencies and over 5,700 public items in ArcGIS Online. A hybrid governance model is being implemented, with MSL managing security and agencies managing content.

- **Discussion:** Council members discussed the importance of authoritative data, public trust, and the need for clear governance roles. Council members also highlighted the need to reduce data duplication, ensuring authoritative data, improving metadata compliance and supporting future ArcGIS Hub deployment.
- **Next Steps:** The council supported continued development of governance documentation and outreach as laid out by the GIS Coordination Strategic Plan and the governance documents will be shared for review.

Standing Reports

Quarter 4 Financial Report

Time Stamp: 02:45:00 – 02:54:48

- **Presentation:** Jennie Stapp presented the financial dashboard. FY24 saw a revenue drop, prompting conservative FY25 budgeting. Recordation fee increases (effective Oct 1) are expected to improve FY26 revenue. Federal funding outlook is stable, with the FY26 budget including \$2.2M in authority, with \$1.3M budgeted and \$900K held in reserve.

MGIA Collections Dashboard

Time Stamp: 02:54:48 – 03:08:00

- **Presentation:** Erin Fashoway demonstrated updates to the collections dashboard, which is updated weekly and now covers 7 years of data, with Yellowstone County leading in collections. FY25 recordation's are trending above FY24.
- **Discussion:** Council members praised the tool's utility for local budgeting.

Strategic Plan Progress

Time Stamp: 03:09:05 – 03:21:34

- **Presentation:** Erin Fashoway provides updates on communication improvements for GIS using ServiceNow for tech support, the implementation of a tiered staffing model for user services, lightning talks for MSDI theme updates, policy development (changes to addressing standards), coordination with Rock Technologies on cloud architecture, and public outreach to new sectors (engineers, planners, and ranchers).
- **Discussion:** Council members discussed the need for continued support for local governments and training.

GIS Coordinators Report

Timestamp: 03:22:05

- **Presentation:** Council members Eric Spangenberg and Maureen Celander shared takeaways from the NSGIC conference, noting Montana's leadership in parcel and address data.
- **Discussion:** The Council discussed the upcoming NSGIC Midyear Meeting in Washington, D.C., and Montana's hosting of the 2025 NSGIC Annual Conference in Bozeman. Additionally, the state's membership to NSGIC was renewed and Council members are to be registered as part of that as there are opportunities to get involved as a council. Future meetings: Midyear meetings- Washington, D.C. on February 22-26, 2026 and the Annual Conference will take place in Bozeman in November of 2026.

Council Member Updates

MAGIP Update

Time Stamp: 04:00:05 – 04:04:28

- **Presentation:** Eric Spangenberg reported on MAGIP's retreat, new leadership, and the upcoming 2026 conference in Whitefish.
- **Next Steps:** Scholarships and GIS Day planning for new leadership and the upcoming 2026 conference in Whitefish are underway.

Local Government Update

Time Stamp: 04:04:28 – 04:21:10

- **Presentation:** Lee Macholz approached from the city perspective, highlighting challenges in city-county data alignment, staffing shortages, and the need to address those issues along with addressing standards and using grant funds to do so.
- **Discussion:** Council discussed centralized editing models and training needs.

Tribal Update

Time Stamp: 04:21:19 – 04:23:09

- **Presentation:** Brian DeMarco emphasized the importance of outreach and communication with tribal partners. He suggested presenting at multiple regional trainings and improving written reporting.

MARLS Update

Time Stamp: 04:23:44 – 04:24:52

- **Presentation:** Joe Kaufmann reported on organizational recovery and upcoming events.
- **Next Steps:** Council staff are planning on attending the MARLS conference in February of 2026.

University System Update

Time Stamp: 04:25:03 – 04:27:31

- **Presentation:** Valentijn Hoff reported that the GIS certificate program at the University of Montana currently has 67 students. A new faculty member, Jonathan Bachelor, has been hired.

Federal Update

Time Stamp: 04:27:40 – 04:37:50

- **Presentation:** Allen Armstrong noted staffing shortages and increased responsibilities across federal agencies. He emphasized the need for improved data coordination and support.

Other Business & Announcements

Time Stamp: 04:38:15

- No additional public comment was received.
- Council members discussed future meeting dates and professional development opportunities. September was favored for future meetings while July was noted as difficult due to budget cycles. A winter meeting focused on professional development (e.g., AI, storytelling) was proposed.

Adjournment

Time Stamp: 04:39:48

Chair Stapp adjourned the meeting.