

Case Study:

GIS Strategic Implementation Plan Leads San Luis
Obispo County toward Improved
GIS Customer Service
San Luis Obispo County, California

Geographic
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Group

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Local Government*

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San Luis Obispo County, California



Located on the central coast of California, equidistant between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the County of San Luis Obispo is a thriving community of families and individuals living the good life amongst rolling hills and breathtaking ocean views.

With a year round mild, Mediterranean climate, San Luis Obispo County, better known as SLO, is truly a community on the rise. The population of about 250,000 is constantly looking for better ways to make their community stand out.

“We’re pretty unique,” said Susan Pittaway, Project Manager for San Luis Obispo County. “A lot of people stop here traveling between Los Angeles and San Francisco. There’s quite a mix of dynamics in the County as there are great beach and retirement communities contrasting with the faster pace offered by Cal Poly University and Cuesta College. The quality of life on the Central Coast is wonderful.”



Home to many parks, golf courses, museums, vineyards, and many other recreational and cultural resources, the County is in tune with creating a quality of life that satisfies residents and visitors alike. They are truly at the top of their game when it comes to providing services based on the needs of citizens. That’s why they spared no time in developing a strategic implementation plan to improve the County’s GIS.

“Before we had this plan, we had a group that was trying to get our GIS moving in a solid direction, but it wasn’t working,” said Pittaway. “The departments were acting as individuals and weren’t communicating with each other.”

SLO County used Geographic Technologies Group (GTG) to develop their GIS strategic implementation plan. The plan was specifically and strategically written based on the needs of SLO County. GTG developed a plan that allows the County’s departments to come together, communicate effectively, and share resources.

It was not difficult getting approval for the plan once the proposal was made. Pittaway said that it was obvious something needed to be done to create a more coordinated GIS effort, but the funding was hard to come by.

“We decided to use GTG to help us because we liked their focus on return on investment,” said Pittaway. “We’re extremely happy to be working with them. The staff has been phenomenal.”

“Most gratifying about working with GTG is their versatility in conveying technical ideas and strategies that are clear, concise, practical and sound,” said Victor Holanda, Director of Planning and Building for San Luis Obispo County.

“We’re using the plan’s recommendations to help our county,” said Pittaway. “Now, our departments are talking together instead of each doing their own thing. The plan recommends a governance process, improved data collaboration and appropriate staffing, all aiming to improve service to the public. The suggested GIS Coordinator will work with departments to make sure they’re working together on software purchases and decisions which affect our GIS future.”



SLO County is also anticipating the impact the plan will have on their citizens. Pittaway, who has been with the county for ten years, said that the collaboration among departments and related agencies, and shared funding will allow them to get better data and provide GIS to the public in different ways than what is available today. It will also give them the tools needed to move their GIS forward. Citizens will be able

to access a wider variety of information due to the increase in efficiency and better communication.

Our plan was completed early and within budget. It is an excellent document which provides the foundation for the future of GIS in the County. “We’re really looking forward to seeing improved GIS collaboration and better return on investment when the plan is implemented.”

San Luis Obispo County’s “great quality of life” just got even better.

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