



2023 WSC Roundtable Summary

The inaugural Western States Caucus (WSC) Roundtable held on March 15, 2023 was a definite success. As promised, we are providing this written summary to document the key takeaways and next steps from the event. Over 90 people from state and local government, academia, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations registered for the event, while 45 attended the day of the virtual event.

First of all, if you missed Governor Kitzhaber's opening presentation describing the benefits of a Common Operating Picture (COP), you can still watch the [recording](#) of his thought provoking talk. He did a wonderful job of explaining how a GIS-based COP is critical to understanding how issues that may appear disjointed are actually very much related, such as forest management and homelessness. A COP brings unusual suspects to the table and tears down jurisdictional boundaries so that common approaches can be collaborated on to build agreeable solutions.

Overwhelmingly, everyone agreed that leveraging an ArcGIS Hub Premium account is the ideal technical solution to creating a COP. It creates a one-stop shop to facilitate collaboration and community engagement. Hub Premium provides the optimal technology solution for states to use to manage data and permissions securely and effectively. NSGIC will engage state representatives from the Western States Caucus to discuss the best configuration of using Hub both within states and across the region as NSGIC explores funding opportunities to support broader access to its licensing.

Another area of agreement is that it's better to get funding and set up the infrastructure before they are needed. In a perfect world, the best way to get in front of the lack of bandwidth is proactive preparation. We recognize these are tough and represent lofty goals in the real world.

The benefits identified by using a COP are lengthy. While a COP is typically associated with emergency management, building one around GIS helps to foster a COP culture outside of that realm, such as was described in Morgana Laurie's presentation highlighting communicating evacuation zones with Arizona's citizens. It helps to extend the network of stakeholders to include unusual suspects. It also helps to connect the unconnected by finding the professional groups discussing the issues and getting them connected across various levels of government or organizations. That helps to redefine the 'Common' in a COP. Building a COP helps to identify authoritative data and to get information out in a timely manner to both GIS and non-GIS audiences. Higher level questions can be addressed when they are framed in a COP. It is generally accepted that a COP helps to reduce duplication of effort and remove silos of data and work. Finally, as Erin Fashoway's (MT) example demonstrated, a COP is an extremely beneficial tool for engagement with Tribal Nations.

The challenges to implementing a COP are insightful. A continuity of funding across different states is missing as there are Have and Have-Not states across the west. Another common problem is actions and planning occurring in silos within states and across the west. It's hard to get the right people to the table, and it's equally hard to educate and raise awareness among stakeholders, both the public and executives. Not surprisingly, executive buy-in is critical for building a sustainable program. Finally, tenuous data sharing agreements can put the data that fuels a COP at risk.

NSGIC is committed to following through on the next steps identified in the Roundtable. The first is to document the best practices that are proven to achieve results in the states already leveraging geospatial technology to build a COP. We plan to produce a GIS 101 episode as well as facilitate discussions in our GIO Academy around COP. As we build out new state profiles, we will include any COP examples as were presented during the Roundtable. NSGIC is all about building relationships between states and business partners, and engaging those business partners to explore public-private partnerships could be a tenable path to success. We are also very interested in identifying a potential pilot project we can use to build a COP to facilitate finding and implementing solutions to complicated issues. We will work to find funding opportunities to underwrite a pilot using the enabling technology of ArcGIS Hub that should be built out at a variety of scales. The WSC will try to get Gov. Kitzhaber's presentation out to a wider audience (such as the Western Governors Association).

Please stay tuned as we work on building out the resources identified above and extending the reach of our message. And of course, keep your eyes out for our second annual Roundtable in 2024 where we expect to build on the themes we've covered and incorporate additional topics as suggested by you, our stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted by the WSC Co-chairs: Karen Rogers, Leland Pierce, Erin Fashoway, Steve Whitney, Wilma Robertson, Jeff Young, and Jason Caldwell