



The Approach to Maximize Impact

To maximize the impact of any technology platform, organizations need a thoughtful, consensus-driven strategy for using the platform to meet their business needs. The same is true with geospatial and geographic information system (GIS) technology.

A geospatial strategy defines how your organization will use GIS to achieve its goals. An effective geospatial strategy connects your business needs with the right people, processes, and technology to help you overcome challenges and improve results. With a geospatial strategy, you can use GIS to achieve location intelligence—the ability to understand why and where things happen—so that you can make better decisions and operate more efficiently.

To develop and execute your own geospatial strategy, Esri recommends using a proven approach. You can use this business-oriented approach to identify gaps and challenges in your organization, prioritize solutions that deliver real value, give your staff new knowledge and capabilities, and improve your workflows and processes. Through this work, you will be able to clearly articulate the business value of GIS to key stakeholders and maximize the impact of your GIS investment.

A geospatial strategy helps you

- Identify how to overcome business challenges.
- Allocate financial and staff resources through justifiable and documented recommendations.
- Deliver solutions and capabilities incrementally in a sustainable manner.
- Leverage people, processes, and technology within your organization.
- Leverage location intelligence to achieve your business goals more effectively.

Esri has worked alongside thousands of customers of all sizes and industries. In our experience, the organizations that maximize the impact of GIS are those that thoughtfully develop and execute a geospatial strategy.

Reasons You Need a Geospatial Strategy

Over the past 50 years, GIS technology has evolved from desktop applications used by professional GIS analysts to a distributed web-based platform that serves people across organizations. GIS now caters equally to GIS analysts, business users, fieldworkers, and anyone in the organization who can contribute to and benefit from location intelligence. These increases in capabilities and potential users mean that GIS is more valuable than ever—as long as organizations know how to make the most of their GIS technology investments.

Faced with a variety of GIS solutions and options, a geospatial strategy can help you define the best way to use GIS to overcome your business challenges and achieve your organization's mission.

Key Roles

To develop a successful geospatial strategy, you need to get the right people involved. Since this strategy requires a business-first approach, these key stakeholders should represent different aspects of your business, not just the technologists or GIS experts. Your stakeholders' priorities, organizational knowledge, and desire to improve the business will lead to a more valuable strategy that can get broad buy-in throughout your organization.

With their individual insights and knowledge, different people in your organization can contribute to the development and execution of a geospatial strategy. The people involved in developing a strategy need to fulfill three key roles: champion, executive sponsor, and technical leadership. By filling these roles, you can significantly increase the adoption and success of your geospatial strategy.

Champion

A champion is a person who evangelizes GIS and uses it to improve the way an organization works, often by making operations more efficient or more effective. Your champion should be someone who sees the opportunity to overcome business challenges and meet the organization's goals by better leveraging its people, processes, and technology. With input from others in the organization, the champion helps define a vision for how the organization can apply GIS to operate more effectively.

Executive Sponsor

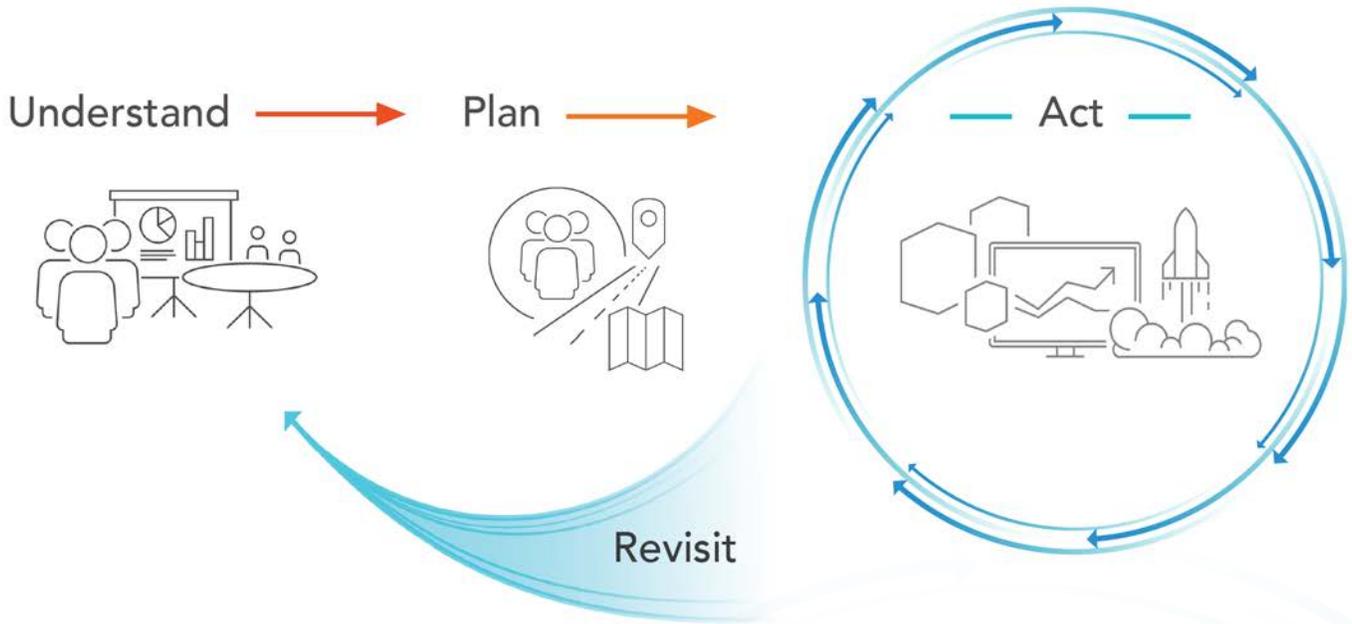
An executive sponsor is someone with authority who believes the vision is aligned with the organization's goals. Your executive sponsor should be able to get the right people engaged in developing and executing your strategy, and to assign staff and financial resources to bring the champion's vision to reality.

Technical Leadership

Technical leadership includes the leaders who will need to support and maintain future-state capabilities. Your technical leadership should participate in the development of your strategy, to validate that the proposed capabilities are in line with your organization's technology plan. Your technical leadership can also advise you on how they can help implement, administer, and deliver new capabilities.

Phases of the Approach

Once you have a team that represents the three key roles, you can begin to work on your geospatial strategy. Developing and executing the strategy involves four distinct phases: **Understand, Plan, Act, and Revisit.**



Understand

In the Understand phase, you define a shared understanding of your organization’s goals, success criteria, and current challenges. This allows you to justify and develop a plan to overcome these challenges.

The Understand phase begins by learning about the business needs of your organization. You accomplish this by having conversations with departmental and functional area executives, key business unit directors, and GIS users and managers. Through these conversations, you should build consensus around your organization’s goals, define how success will be measured (and how you’ll know if you’ve met your goals), and identify the challenges that are currently preventing you from achieving your goals.

The conversations in the Understand phase are framed from a business perspective, not a technical or GIS perspective. You should not begin discussing possible solutions until the organization’s challenges are firmly understood.

Plan

In the Plan phase, you define a clear road map that the organization can follow to reach its short- and long-term goals.

The Plan phase focuses on defining the future state; comparing it to the current state; and identifying the technology, data, workflows, and skills necessary to establish sustainable solutions that are aligned with the business challenges. This lets you produce a road map with a prioritized set of sequenced, time-bound activities. These activities can include supporting foundational infrastructure, developing information products, defining governance plans, restructuring teams—whatever is needed to achieve the future state.

Act

In the Act phase, you launch a series of implementation cycles based on your road map. You should organize these implementation cycles to deliver incremental value and continual improvement so that you can easily measure your progress and the impact GIS is having on your business.

Each cycle follows four distinct steps: prepare, implement, operate, and review. Like the Understand and Plan phases, the Act phase focuses on people, processes, and technology, except now you are actively aligning them to overcome challenges and make improvements. The outcome of each cycle is an implemented solution or capability. To evaluate its success, determine whether the solution or capability mitigates the specific challenges it was meant to address, and measure the success criteria you defined in the Understand phase.

Revisit

In the Revisit phase, you review and update your strategy, if necessary, to account for changes in leadership priorities, business goals, and technology. Esri encourages reevaluating your strategy continually—every time you complete the Act phase—to ensure that your strategy keeps delivering value to your organization.

Getting Started

If you want to maximize the impact of GIS in your organization, consider developing your own geospatial strategy. To get started, you should

- **Build a team to support your effort.** Identify the champion, executive sponsor, and technical leadership who can help you develop an effective geospatial strategy for your organization.
- **Identify business challenges.** Work with stakeholders to identify business challenges that are impeding your organization's goals.
- **Address the challenges.** Identify the technology, data, workflows, and skills needed to help your organization overcome the business challenges.
- **Prioritize solutions and capabilities, and sequence your activities.** Prioritize the solutions and capabilities that offer the greatest benefit with the lowest risk so that you can deliver rapid value. Then sequence your activities based on any prerequisites. This becomes your road map.
- **Act on your road map.** Use iterative cycles to execute your road map, deliver sustainable solutions, and provide continuous value.
- **Reevaluate after each cycle.** Did the solution address the challenges? Does something need to change? Revisit and reevaluate organizational challenges, and update the road map to reflect the latest plan.
- **Ask for help.** You can take advantage of many resources if you want to learn how a geospatial strategy can help your organization, you need help reviewing an existing strategy, or you want support developing a new one. You can work with your local community or collaborate [online](#), attend an [event](#) and collaborate with your peers in person, or reach out to Esri at GeospatialStrategy@esri.com.

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