



# The comprehensive spending review

## What does it mean for GIS Managers in UK local government?

**By the time you are reading this, the chancellor George Osborne will have delivered his comprehensive spending review, outlining departmental budgets for the next four years. What will be the implications for GIS managers as the cuts are imposed in each local authority? The outcomes rather depend on how proactive GIS managers are in accepting the realities of their situation, and in making the case for geographic information.**

We suggest you consider assessing your own organisation's progress against the following 10-point checklist :

### 1 Share procurement

The public sector is increasingly procuring goods and services collaboratively. It is not just about using buying power to negotiate price reductions. It's also about making savings in the procurement process itself.

### 2 Share services

Identify the strengths of your organisation in handling GI and promote your particular forte to your neighbours and partners. It doesn't matter that they have different GI technologies. That's why we have standards.

### 3 Rationalise

Don't be surprised if you find that 80% of your desktop GIS users need only 20% of the functionality you have made available to them. Identify those users who you could migrate to less expensive and simpler web-based solutions.

### 4 Standardise

Spatial is 'special', so the old argument went. That was before GIS embraced mainstream IT. However, if your GIS doesn't support open standards then it may be time to refresh some parts of your infrastructure.

### 5 Integrate

You will be expected to improve both the 'reach' of information (getting it to more people) and its 'range' (getting it to more applications). Your ability to achieve both will be heavily dependent on the ease with which your technologies can integrate with each other, and with mainstream and vertical applications.

### 6 Re-use

Reduced budgets invariably point more

towards repeatable rather than bespoke solutions. Instead of investing in separate applications for internet, intranet, and extranet, it might make sense to invest in a common infrastructure to support all these instances of web GIS.

### 7 Go Lean

Your aim should be to provide a service in which geographic information is delivered to your customers – internally and externally – with a minimum of human intervention. Self-service is the way forward.

### 8 Focus on the customer

GIS will continue to play an important role in channel substitution, through internet-based self-service by the public. The Localism and Big Society agenda have presented additional opportunities for GIS – as a vehicle for prioritising and coordinating spending under the whole area approach to public service delivery.

### 9 It's about Information not systems

Information is your prime asset, and with an increased focus on transparency in government, there is about to be a lot more information made publicly available. This presents a major opportunity for you as GIS managers to shift your attention from the 'S' of GIS to the 'I'. If you don't have a shared spatial data warehouse, think about getting one soon.

### 10 Innovate

It will be up to you as a GIS manager to demonstrate the contribution of GIS not only to improvements in efficiency but also to changes in efficacy – i.e. doing things differently, and doing different things. The benefits are there to be had, as a recent LGA report<sup>1</sup> has shown. Understand them and be proactive in selling them.



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<sup>1</sup> The Value of Geospatial Information to Local Public Services Delivery in England and Wales, LGA and IDeA, July 2010