

## Strategic Analysis

The strategic analysis includes activities related to the review of NEAF's environment, including technical, political, and social characteristics. All content below was generated directly by the fourteen NEAF representatives through one-on-one conversations. The review findings are organized into four categories:

1. "*Strengths*" refers to the internal characteristics, qualities, and capacities of NEAF that make it successful in achieving the mission and vision of the organization.
2. "*Weaknesses*" refers to the internal characteristics, qualities, and capacities of NEAF that need to be improved to better align with the mission and vision of the organization.
3. "*Opportunities*" refers to external activities or trends that NEAF might benefit from to enhance its ability to meet the mission and vision of the organization.
4. "*Threats*" refers to external activities or trends that might inhibit the current and/or future success of NEAF.

### **Strengths**

**Topical Focus** – The remote sensing focus of NEAF fills an existing need in terms of education and application that is traditionally overlooked in favor of an emphasis on other related geospatial technologies (i.e. GIS).

**Financial Opportunities** – IAGT grant funding distributed to NEAF members to support remote sensing workshops, data buys, and application development is helpful in building upon existing goals and objectives of member organizations because:

- The funding award process does not narrowly dictate the exact spending parameters of the funds.
- Affiliate members are able to use the grant funds as "seed" money that can be leveraged to create, maintain, or supplement larger projects.
- Flexibility in the funding process for the remote sensing workshops allows for states to pool together financial and human resources to develop more effective curriculum.
- Funding opportunities provide the impetus for members to reach out to local governments, regional councils, and other state departments and agencies to showcase how remote sensing technologies can benefit their business processes.

**Educational Opportunities** – NEAF provides members with a remote sensing focused forum to:

- Bring together policymakers, program managers, and technical specialists in one physical location, such as the NEAF '04 Workshop, to address focused issues and that are pervasive throughout the fourteen member states.

- Extend the traditional northeast remote sensing community networking opportunities through the inclusion of non-traditional northeast states.
- Use NEAF supported projects and workshops to provide opportunities for members to increase networks within their own states.
- Leverage the success stories and challenges of peers to strengthen existing or future projects. This includes (but is not limited to):
  - Learning from peers about how to introduce new technologies to decision makers.
  - Learning from peers about alternative approaches to commonly encountered technical challenges.
  - Learning about existing or upcoming financial opportunities.
  - Discussing strategies for raising awareness and building capacity in local governments, regional councils, and other state departments and agencies.

## ***Weaknesses***

**Purpose** – There is no clear mission or vision to which NEAF activities are directed, which is leading to a lack of focus in the organization and an unclear communication of benefit for member participation.

**Topical Focus** – The generic remote sensing focus of NEAF is too narrow, as remote sensing is not separated out as a subset of geospatial technology at the point of implementation into decision making processes within governmental organizations. In addition, NEAF concentration on satellite based remote sensing is of little to no value for many state and local government entities in the northeast region.

**Communication** – Correspondence between IAGT and NEAF members and between NEAF members is ineffective because:

- Communication activities, such as conference calls, are not properly defined based on current issues of the members.
- The purpose of communication activities is not clearly articulated to members, which causes a lack of flow and continuity in communications.
- There is too little member-to-member interaction and too much federal representative-to-member “preaching.”
- Face-to-face educational opportunities, such as the NEAF '04 Workshop, have a forced march of pace that does not allow enough time for valuable networking.
- Technical documentation on subjects presented by members is difficult to obtain and is often buried deep within conference call or meeting notes.
- NEAF members do not face-to-face enough to build-up the rapport needed to most effectively share valuable information.
- NEAF members are only engaged with NEAF when funding is available and there is not a sustained relationship during off-cycles of funding.

**Financial Opportunities** – Funding provided to NEAF members from IAGT is flawed because:

- There is an unclear timeline for funded activities, which is required for members to properly conduct project planning.
- Funding opportunities are only addressing half of the remote sensing issue. For example, funding for data buys does not address the software needed to effectively work with the imagery.
- Some funding opportunities, such as imagery acquisition support, do not deliver a product that meets the predefined (“as advertised”) specifications required for an application.

**Participation** – NEAF activities typically engage the technical community, but do not fully engage the policymaker and program manager community. This results in:

- A lack of “real world” applicability of technology solutions to meet the needs of policymakers and program managers.
- NEAF not addressing the needs of policymakers and program managers because there is little discussion of their “hot button” issues.
- Experts (either technical or policy) not communicating their strengths and weaknesses to spur discussions on innovative approaches to solving issues.

## ***Opportunities***

**New Communication Methods** – Blogs, web forums, and virtual meeting technologies have created enhanced mechanisms for successful networking and information sharing that is location independent.

**Awareness** – Policymakers and program managers are becoming more aware that geospatial technologies exist and support their decision making processes. This has created a need to bridge the gap between the technical community and the policymaker community.

**Legislative Activity** – Lawmakers at the state level are passing geospatial related legislation at increasing rates.

**Partnerships** – Inter-jurisdictional activities are occurring with increased frequency as organizations deal with issues, such as homeland security and water resource management, which require communication outside of traditional boundaries to solve effectively.

## ***Threats***

**Funding Sources** – Key Federal funding sources, such as NASA, are not focused on ensuring the successful implementation of remote sensing at the state and local government levels.

**Regional Differences** – While the overarching issue areas (i.e. water resource management) challenging state and local governments are similar throughout the fourteen state NEAF region, substantial differences exist in the decision making processes and specific issue area needs within each of the states.

**Organizational Overlap** – There are several geospatial technology themed organizations that bring together leaders in the field to address common challenges.

**Access** – Geospatial professionals do not regularly interact with policymakers and program managers at the state and local government levels because:

- Policymakers and program managers are not educated on the benefits of applying geospatial technologies to their dominant issues.
- There is too much focus on the terms “geospatial,” “GIS,” and “remote sensing,” which has an alienating impact on policy makers and program managers.
- Local governments do not see a large role for remote sensing technology in their decision making processes.