Government-Academia-Industry Partnerships

Since 2001, hydrographic survey-based studies have been growing in size, complexity and applications. This is a direct result of the continuously expanding success of these programs. Success can be measured in terms of data quality, performance and the expanded applications to end-users and participants, commonly called stakeholders. Stakeholders have expanded to include multiple agencies, multiple levels of government (local, state and federal), members of the general public, industry and academia. All participants in these studies have been challenged by their growth and complexity, leading to winning partnerships that are based on the government–academia–industry model.<P>

As the programs have become more challenging and costly, they have become too large to be supported by any single government agency. The latest technology and data collection demands are beyond the charter and capabilities of academic/research institutions and their associated staff or students. Industry does not have the assets to adequately analyse, interpret and assess the complex issues that drive the need for the studies. The skill sets from each member have been combined to develop the winning partnership approach. In recent years, this partnership approach has consistently resulted in success for the ultimate users, the stakeholders, and has allowed many more participants access to the process at every level. Worldwide, there are now many examples of this successful partnership approach. Each partnership success incorporates lessons learned and ideas from the previous implementation. The most recent success in the US, the California State Mapping Project (CSMP), is an excellent example of how the partnership has matured and become a proven model for success.

The CSMP now boasts multiple federal and state agencies working together to supply funding, guidance and representation for the stakeholders. Led by the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC), the success of the program has been due to the management by the California State Coastal Conservancy, and now includes other state and federal agencies including multiple departments within NOAA. Stakeholders include MPA administrators, geo-scientists, coastal engineers, commercial and sport fishing interests, marine biologists and a diverse list of recreational users of the coast, including surfers.

The initial stimulus for the program came from California-based academic institutions and federal researchers advocating a comprehensive, complete understanding of the entire California Coast. Led by researchers from California State University Research Labs and Regional offices of the US Geological Survey, a scientific basis was established for mapping from the shoreline to the 4.5km limit from Oregon to the Mexico border.

Industry became the last critical piece of the partnership by bringing capacity, providing the latest technological capabilities and an established history of completing large surveys within schedule and budget. In addition, industry has been able to share/donate technological developments with agencies and institutions that have advanced the knowledge of improved data collection techniques, data processing and data storage capacity. This provides another example of cooperation in developing a government–academia–industry partnership to successfully conduct large hydrographic surveys

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