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# 6 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU SELECT A GIS

Whether you're choosing a provider for the first time or considering a solution that better fits your needs, searching for a new geographic information system (GIS) can be overwhelming. **At Ruekert & Mielke (R/M), we think your GIS should make your work life easier, not more complicated, which is why we've come up with 6 important questions to ask before you select a GIS.**

## 1. WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

Before deciding what GIS best suits your needs, we suggest sitting down and getting very honest with yourself and your team about the struggles, needs, and goals of your department.

### How can a great GIS help your team succeed?

What pain points are you experiencing, and how can a GIS alleviate those issues while supporting your team to be more productive and efficient? **Are you looking to create a reliable, effective database for your department?** Are you looking to simplify the ways in which your department gathers and reports data? Do you have long-time employees retiring, and their asset management knowledge leaving with them?

Whatever your needs and goals are, list them and make them your priority when choosing your next GIS.

## 2. WHAT OTHER DEPARTMENTS WILL BENEFIT FROM A GIS?

From hydrants to plow routes, an effective GIS will help you manage a wide variety of municipal assets and benefit a multitude of municipal employees. Before you choose your next provider, decide which departments should have access to the software. **Your public works, water utility, police, and parks and rec departments may be able to improve their processes with the right GIS.**

Figuring out exactly which individuals will be supported by your new GIS, and getting major stakeholders involved in your evaluation process from the beginning, will help you choose the system that will best suit your needs and may even **help your department to share the cost with others.**

## 3. WHO WILL USE THE GIS?

**How will your GIS users need to access information?** Will they need mobile access in the field? Will they be in the office most of the time, making desktop features a priority? **Do you have users who work best as visual learners and will benefit from an interactive interface?** How many licenses will you need? Does it make sense to take advantage of enterprise licensing or will licensing per user suffice?

Having answers to these questions will help you search for a new GIS with the right people in mind.



#### 4. HOW CAN A GIS IMPROVE YOUR PROCESSES?

In what ways are you looking to make your workflows more efficient?

##### **The right GIS system will drastically improve the way your department handles asset management.**

For example, AssetAlly allows you to link important documents to your assets and locations so your team can access critical information where and when you need it most. It also allows you to quickly review as-built records while on-site and easily visualize parcel records using a map interface, making your life much easier.

Look at your current workflows and evaluate how they're working- and not working- for your team, and **ask yourself how a GIS can help you maximize your department's efforts.**

#### 5. WHAT KIND OF TECHNOLOGY WILL HELP YOU SUCCEED?

**Choosing the best GIS for your team means choosing a GIS with technology that works for you, not against you.** Asking the right questions before committing to a solution will help you avoid headaches in the long run.

For example, who owns the data you collect? We've had experiences where clients have decided to move their information to a new system and have found that their data was actually owned by their old provider. Where do you want your information stored? Do you have the ability to host your data onsite, or do you need a consultant who can store the information for you? Finally, who is the technology catered to? Is it engineered towards national standards or local standards? **Are you getting a one-size-fits-all solution, or a solution tailored to your needs?**

This may seem like a lot to consider, but figuring out what kind of technology you need will help you choose the best GIS for your team.

#### 6. WHAT KIND OF EXPERT SUPPORT DO YOU NEED?

Finally, it's essential to know what kind of implementation and ongoing support your team will need to be as successful as possible with your new GIS. **How will you ensure a smooth transition and implementation to your new GIS?** How intuitive and user friendly is the software? Will there be ongoing training and customer support available on a local level? Do you have in-house GIS experts? Or will you rely more heavily on your consultant's expertise and availability?

**Choosing the right GIS software is one thing, but making sure that your team has the ongoing support it needs will really allow them to do their best work.**

Ready to choose a GIS that will empower your staff to be more efficient and successful? **Contact one of our experts today!**