



Geospatial Data Strategy

Department of Health and Human Services
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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Chief Information Officer
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Overview

The Geospatial Data Act of 2018 (GDA) provides legislative direction to expand collaboration across agencies, increase efficiency of operations, and improve decision-making, enhance transparency, and provide oversight of the Federal government's investments in geospatial data. The GDA builds on the foundation of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI)¹ launched in the early 1990s and defined as *...the technology, policies, criteria, standards, and employees necessary to promote geospatial data sharing throughout the Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments, and the private sector (including nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education).*²

The GDA specifies the committees, processes, and tools to develop, drive, and manage the NSDI. The GDA formalizes governance processes related to geospatial data, provides policy and guidance to empower the use of geospatial data and technology, and facilitates broad cooperation between the public and private sectors.

The GDA defines geospatial data as:

- “Information that is tied to a location on the Earth, including by identifying the geographic location and characteristics of natural or constructed features and boundaries on the Earth, and that is generally represented in vector datasets by points, lines, polygons, or other complex geographic features or phenomena;
- May be derived from, among other things, remote sensing, mapping, and surveying technologies; and,
- Includes images and raster datasets, aerial photographs, and other forms of geospatial data or datasets in digitized or non-digitized form.”³

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Geospatial Data Strategy fulfills the GDA requirement to “prepare, maintain, publish, and implement a strategy for advancing geographic information and related geospatial data and activities appropriate to the mission of the covered agency, in support of the strategic plan for the National Spatial Data Infrastructure prepared under section 755(c).”⁴

HHS captures and analyzes geospatial data across all HHS Components. With the establishment of the HHS Data Governance Board (DGB), as required by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memorandum M-19-23, HHS has an agency-wide representative body to advance data quality, management, transparency, standardization, and sharing. The purpose of the DGB is to serve as the Department's principal data governance forum and decision-making body for managing HHS' data as a strategic asset to support HHS in meeting its mission and agency priorities, including implementation of the Evidence Act. The DGB's charter specifies that “[i]n accordance with the Geospatial Data Act, the DGB will:

- Ensure that HHS and its components fully implement the covered agency responsibilities found in GDA section 759(a). (299-908-10-1 OS)
- Maintain an inventory of all geospatial data assets, per section 759(b) of the GDA. (299-908-10-2 OS)”

Accordingly, HHS designated the Chief Information Officer (CIO) as the Senior Agency Official for Geospatial Information (SAOGI). The HHS CIO in turn delegated to the Chief Data Officer (CDO) the responsibility to act as the primary point of contact in all GDA related activities. In this capacity, the HHS CDO coordinates with the HHS Components for the collection, acquisition, maintenance, and dissemination of geospatial information and serves as the HHS representative for the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) and participates in FGDC work groups along with other HHS staff.

¹ FGDC NSDI plan (PDF)

² Geospatial Data Act of 2018; 43 U.S.C. 2801 Section 752(13)

³ Geospatial Data Act of 2018; 43 U.S.C. 2801 Section 752 (5)(A)

⁴ Geospatial Data Act of 2018; 43 U.S.C. 2801 Section 759 (a)(1)

The 2022 HHS annual report submitted to the FGDC incorporated information provided by all HHS Components regarding their geospatial data activities. The report served as the baseline for the development of the HHS Geospatial Data Strategy. In summary, HHS fully met expectations in five of the 13 areas, while it is making progress in the remaining eight. Among others, the report identified opportunities for improvement in the following areas:

- Developing an inventory of geospatial data leveraging the HHS Connect platform
- Making geospatial data available through the GeoPlatform
- Increasing the use of GeoPlatform or other sources to determine if geospatial data exists prior to making investments
- Assisting HHS Components to comply with GDA requirements
- Adopting FGDC-endorsed or ISO-compliant geospatial metadata

The goals and objectives presented of the HHS Geospatial Data Strategy are intended to strengthen HHS performance in the areas identified above. The adoption and implementation of this strategy is closely aligned with the overarching HHS Data Strategy.

Vision

Leverage HHS geospatial data, tools, and technologies in support of HHS' mission "to enhance the health and well-being of all Americans, by providing for effective health and human services and by fostering sound, sustained advances in the sciences underlying medicine, public health, and social services."

Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: Establish an effective and efficient geospatial data reporting structure to meet all statutory and policy requirements.

Objective 1.1: Collaborate with HHS Components to develop and implement policies to address GDA requirements

The HHS Data Governance Board (DGB) will continue to be the forum for collaboration on HHS data strategy and data management. As the DGB develops overall HHS policies and initiatives geospatial data requirements will be addressed and incorporated as appropriate.

Objective 1.2: Implement processes to complete GDA-mandated reporting

HHS will continue to improve on previous GDA reporting practices by leveraging technology and employ efficient and effective processes. HHS will develop standard operating procedures that will provide consistent guidance across the Department to ensure timely and complete reporting.

Objective 1.3: Engage in geospatial partnerships

The Federal Geographic Data Committee will continue to be a pivotal geospatial data sharing partner for HHS. Through participation in this Committee HHS will be able to contribute to advance geospatial data sharing, engage with other federal agencies to identify and adopt geospatial data best practices.

Goal 2: Improve access to geospatial data by encouraging geospatial data sharing and awareness.

Objective 2.1: Support high quality and interoperable geospatial data by establishing governance structures

HHS will continue maturing the quality and strive toward maximizing the interoperability of geospatial data through improvements to the HHS data governance structures. That would include the HHS Data Governance Board and HHS Component-specific Governance Boards.

Objective 2.2: Establish and implement geospatial data standards including metadata

HHS will continue to advance standards for geospatial data under its DGB led initiatives to adopt and implement data standards. Geospatial data standards will be developed and maintained as part of HHS Metadata Standards Working Group.

Objective 2.3: Make geospatial data discoverable and accessible

HHS will utilize the HHS Connect platform to support its department-wide data inventory. Datasets included in the HHS inventory will include geospatial metadata elements to ensure that geospatial data is discoverable and accessible.

Goal 3: Support HHS Geospatial workforce by improving leadership and stakeholder understanding of the value of geospatial data.

Objective 3.1: Establish a geospatial data Community of Practice (CoP)

A geospatial data CoP will enable HHS staff who work with geospatial data to collaborate and maximize efficiencies through knowledge-sharing. In addition, such CoP will foster a sense of community and will increase talent retention for the Department. Collaboration will be fostered across HHS by establishing forums such as Communities of Practice (CoPs) and leveraging the work of initiatives such as CDC's Data Modernization Initiative (DMI).

Objective 3.2: Provide access to geospatial data training to upskill HHS staff

Training resources and programs are dispersed throughout HHS. HHS will develop a wide range of accessible geospatial training resources such as in-person and online courses, self-paced learning, tutorials, etc., to upskill the HHS workforce. In addition, we will engage various industry experts to share knowledge with the HHS geospatial data community.

Objective 3.3: Promote leadership and stakeholder engagement in advancing the use of geospatial data

HHS will leverage the DGB membership which includes the data leaders to promote the value of geospatial to meet the mission of the Department. DGB will serve as a conduit to collect input from their respective organizations and provide communications about geospatial data.

Appendix A: Crosswalk to National Spatial Data Infrastructure Strategy Goals

As required in GDA Section 759(a), a crosswalk table is provided to show the alignment between NSDI goals and HHS GDS goals.

NSDI Goals	HHS Goals
NSDI Goal 1: Implement the national geospatial policy and governance framework as defined in the Geospatial Data Act and related statutes and policies.	HHS Goal 1: Establish an effective and efficient geospatial data reporting structure to meet all statutory and policy requirements.
NSDI Goal 2: Advance the maturity of, accelerate the acquisition of, and expand the sources of National Geospatial Data Assets (NGDA) to ensure that they are findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable.	HHS Goal 2: Improve access to geospatial data by encouraging geospatial data sharing and awareness. HHS Goal 3: Support HHS Geospatial workforce by improving leadership and stakeholder understanding of the value of geospatial data.
NSDI Goal 3: Ensure open standards-based interoperability to enable geospatial shared services.	HHS Goal 2: Increase geospatial data sharing and accessibility.
NSDI Goal 4: Enable and promote collaborative governance and partnerships to meet national needs, priorities, and circumstances.	HHS Goal 1: Establish an effective and efficient geospatial data reporting structure to meet all statutory and policy requirements.

Appendix B: Acronyms

- **CDO:** Chief Data Officer
- **COP:** Community of Practice
- **DGB:** Data Governance Board
- **FGDC:** Federal Geographic Data Committee
- **GDA:** Geospatial Data Act
- **HHS:** Department of Health and Human Services
- **NGDA:** National Geospatial Data Assets
- **NSDI:** National Spatial Data Infrastructure
- **OpDiv:** Operating Division