



# **2020 Covered Agency Annual Report and Self-Assessment**

*for*

**Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Geospatial Data Act of 2018  
Section 759(a) Requirements**

March 19, 2021



## Table of Contents

Acronyms .....	ii
Introduction .....	1
Self-Assessment for Department of Veterans Affairs.....	2
759(a)(1) Covered Agency Geospatial Strategies .....	2
759(a)(2) Support Data Sharing .....	3
759(a)(3) Promote Data Integration .....	5
759(a)(4) Ensure Records Retention Schedule for Geospatial Data .....	6
759(a)(5) Allocate Resources for Geospatial Data Management Responsibilities .....	7
759(a)(6) Use Data Standards .....	8
759(a)(7) Support Coordination and Partnerships .....	9
759(a)(8) Promote Application of Geospatial Data Assets .....	11
759(a)(9) Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality .....	13
759(a)(10) Declassified Data .....	14
759(a)(11) Non-Duplication of Data .....	15
759(a)(12) Ensuring High-Quality Data .....	16
759(a)(13) Point of Contact .....	17
Appendix A: Survey Picklists .....	19

## Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
ATO	Authorization to Operate
CA	Covered Agency
FGDC	Federal Geographic Data Committee
GDA	Geospatial Data Act
NGAC	National Geospatial Advisory Committee
NGDA	National Geospatial Data Asset(s)
NSDI	National Spatial Data Infrastructure
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
<b>Agency Acronym</b>	<b>Agency</b>
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOC	Department of Commerce
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DOI	Department of the Interior
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOL	Department of Labor
DOS	Department of State
DOT	Department of Transportation
ED	Department of Education
GSA	General Services Administration
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Treasury	Department of Treasury
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USEPA	Environmental Protection Agency
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs

*Table of Acronyms.*

## Introduction

Section 759 (b) of the Geospatial Data Act (GDA) requires each covered agency<sup>1</sup> to submit to the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) “an annual report regarding the achievements of the covered agency in preparing and implementing the strategy described in subsection (a)(1) and complying with the other requirements under subsection (a).” [<https://fgdc.gov/gda/online>]

This document serves as the Department of Veterans Affairs’s baseline annual report to the FGDC covering the period from October 5, 2018 – when the GDA was enacted – through Fiscal Year 2020 (September 30, 2020). The report was developed through a self-assessment template developed by the FGDC agencies. Subsequent annual reports will each span one fiscal year. The report includes a rating for each covered agency responsibility of "meets expectations," "made progress toward expectations," or "fails to meet expectations," as required by the GDA. A summary and evaluation of all of the covered agency reports will be generated by FGDC and provided to the National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) for review and comment. The summary reports, along with the NGAC comments, will also become part of the biennial FGDC GDA report to Congress and will be published online.

This report is based on a standardized questionnaire and self-assessment score for each covered agency responsibility. The Department of Veterans Affairs has maintained documentation supporting the responses provided for this assessment. This information may be reviewed as part of the biennial Inspector General (IG) audits of covered agencies.

A recommended self-assessment key has been provided for each responsibility. In some cases, optional text is provided for additional insights or to justify a self-assessment selection. Any optional responses provided are not a factor in the self-assessment. Please note that covered agencies are not expected to “meet expectations” in all areas for this first reporting cycle.

Where data or datasets are referenced,<sup>2</sup> information relates to all geospatial datasets owned or managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs that are, or should be, available to the public.

To support a more comprehensive picture of agency compliance and related activities, each agency had the option to submit up to a 2-page document, using the survey, as part of the agency’s submission. If provided, the document may include highlights and examples that can supplement the FGDC report to Congress, support the feedback process with the NGAC, or provide context to Office of the Inspector General (OIG) findings.

The Department of Veterans Affairs self-assessment GDA Covered Agency Annual Report was initially submitted during February 2021.

---

<sup>1</sup> GDA definition of *agency*: <https://www.fgdc.gov/gda/online#the-term-“covered-agency”-—means—an-executive-department-as-def>

<sup>2</sup> GDA definition of *geospatial data*: <https://www.fgdc.gov/gda/online#the-term-%E2%80%98%E2%80%98geospatial-data%E2%80%99%E2%80%99%E2%80%94means-information-that-is-tied-to-a>

# Self-Assessment for Department of Veterans Affairs

## 759(a)(1) Covered Agency Geospatial Strategies

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	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
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Made Progress Towards Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Question 1.4</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Questions 1.1, 1.2, or 1.3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Questions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Clarifying Text:** FGDC developed and released a new national strategic plan for the development of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) [GDA Sec. 755(c)], which was approved by the FGDC Steering Committee in November 2020. Covered Agency Geospatial Strategies [GDA Sec. 759(a)(1)], which will support the goals in the NSDI strategic plan, are due to be completed and submitted for agency approval by February 26, 2021, per FGDC guidance. For more information, please visit <http://fgdc.gov/nsdi-plan>.

### 1.1 Has your agency reviewed the draft NSDI strategic plan?

- Yes

### 1.2 Has your agency developed a plan and timeline to complete development of the Covered Agency Geospatial Strategy appropriate to the agency's mission as required by GDA Sec.759(a)(1)?

- Yes

### 1.3 Is your Covered Agency Geospatial Strategy on schedule to be completed and submitted for agency approval by February 26, 2021?

- Yes

### 1.4 Has your agency completed and implemented your plan?

- No

### 1.5 If your plan is online? If yes, please provide the URL:

- No

**1.6 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(1), "Prepare and implement a strategy for advancing geospatial data activities appropriate to the agency's mission."**

VA produced a general Data Strategy and ensured that the NSDI strategic plan goals and objectives were matrixed and accommodated. VA's Data Governance Council, Data Analytics Workgroup's Geospatial Subgroup is working on a nested VA Spatial Data strategic plan and roadmap for implementation.

**759(a)(2) Support Data Sharing**

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Collect, maintain, disseminate, and preserve geospatial data such that the resulting data, information, or products can be readily shared with other federal agencies and non-federal users.
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Data is currently shared</i> selections for <b>all</b> agency appropriate parties for Question 2.1 and Yes to Questions 2.2 and 2.3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Data is currently shared</i> selections for <b>some</b> appropriate parties for Question 2.1, <b>or</b> Question 2.2 and 2.3 have a mix of answers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Questions 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Clarifying text:**

- This section does not include efforts related to partners, which are covered under Question 7, Section 756(a)(7).
- Review the [GDA definition of geospatial data](#) to consider the questions in this section.
- Remember, your answers should include information about all geospatial datasets owned or managed by your agency that are, or should be, available to the public, not just National Geospatial Data Asset (NGDA) Datasets.
- Sharing standards-based data on the Internet using standard protocols and formats makes it part of the NSDI.
- Additional detail on the definition of geospatial data may be provided by OMB Circular A-16 when finalized.
- Data that will not or cannot be distributed to the public does not need to be considered for GDA-related responses.

**2.1 Does your agency ensure that all eligible geospatial data is managed so it can be shared and is it provided in standard formats, as appropriate? (This will include agency open government and transparency guidelines.)**

**The following items were selected from a picklist:!**

- Data is currently openly shared to the public.
- Data is currently shared on a limited basis with federal partners.
- Data is currently shared on a limited basis with non-federal users.

**2.2 Does your agency disseminate eligible geospatial data in a way that can be readily shared in open formats (for example using machine readable formats or searchable metadata)?**

- Yes, eligible geospatial data and metadata are shared in open formats.

**2.3 Are maintenance processes in place to ensure other Federal agencies and non-federal users have access to the most recent data in addition to data and metadata updates and corrections?**

- Yes, agency policies exist to ensure all programs implement data maintenance processes.

**2.4 Optional Question: Use the following section to document up to 5 key examples of ongoing or planned activities that ensure eligible geospatial data and associated metadata can be easily shared, understood, and re-used by others, now and in the future.**

- Not applicable.

**2.5 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(2), "collect, maintain, disseminate, and preserve geospatial data such that the resulting data, information, or products can be readily shared with other Federal agencies and non-Federal users."**

From VA's IG Audit #20-02339-35: "VA follows FIPS publications for geocoding so the resulting data, information, or products can be readily shared with other federal agencies and nonfederal users. Geocoding converts addresses into geographic coordinates so that the addresses can be placed on a map. The publications facilitate data sharing across VA offices and with other federal agencies and nonfederal users. ... Geospatial data is collected, managed, stored, and published on the ArcGIS platform at the Austin Information Technology Center in Austin, Texas. Geospatial data is stored locally in secure databases throughout VA's enterprise so that the data can be used by analysts. These data can be shared externally with other government agencies after being posted on Data.gov and shared publicly using ArcGIS online. All data shared publicly or with external agencies must be approved and cleared in accordance with VA's Privacy Service guidelines and policy to ensure confidentiality."

759(a)(3) Promote Data Integration

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Promote the integration of geospatial data from all sources
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Made Progress Towards Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Question 3.1</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Partial to Question 3.1</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Question 3.1</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**3.1 Has your agency taken action to promote integration of data from multiple sources?**

- Partial. The agency has taken appropriate action to promote data integration from some sources.

**3.1.a If yes or partial to Question 3.1, in what ways does your agency promote data integration from multiple sources?**

The following items were selected from a picklist:"

- Hosts a data sharing infrastructure where partners and/or data users can share and discover data.
- Develops data integration processes to promote integration of non-agency data into applications.
- Provides data in openly standardized readable formats or as downloadable file packages.
- Develops data sharing agreements or Memoranda Of Agreement (MOA) with public and private partners for ingest or sharing of data.
- Other [textboxes provided below]

<b>Other Methods</b>
Established Authoritative Data Source for address.

**3.2 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(3), "promote the integration of geospatial data from all sources."**

The Office of Data Governance and Analytics and the VA Data Governance Council (DGC) have promoted geospatial analytics at Community of Practice meetings and established a Geospatial Subgroup of the DGC Data Analytics Workgroup that seeks to make geospatial computing tools accessible to all analysts in VA. The FGDC SAOGI (alternate) (in the Office of Data Governance and Analytics) communicates regularly with key spatial data stakeholders in VA about the activities of the FGDC and VA's



responsibilities under the GDA. The SAOGI seeks input from stakeholders on all key requirements under the GDA, e.g., the NSDI strategic plan, covered agency report template, etc.

**759(a)(4) Ensure Records Retention Schedule for Geospatial Data**

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Ensure that data information products and other records created in geospatial data and activities are included on agency record schedules that have been approved by the National Archives and Records Administration
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Made Progress Towards Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Questions 4.1 and 4.2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes or Partial to Questions 4.1 and 4.2 <b>or</b></li> <li>○ No to either 4.1 or 4.2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Questions 4.1 and 4.2</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**4.1 To ensure approved National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) schedules are in place, does the appraisal process for your agency to determine which data is archived include geospatial data?**

- Partial. Some agency programs are included in the archiving appraisal process for data information products and other records created in geospatial data and activities.

**4.2 Are geospatial data assets included on agency record schedules?**

- Partial. Some agency record schedules are inclusive of data information products and other records created in geospatial data and activities.

**4.3 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(4), "ensure that data information products and other records created in geospatial data and activities are included on agency record schedules that have been approved by the National Archives and Records Administration."**

From VA's IG Audit #20-02339-35: "Geospatial data are often intermediary records and are scheduled through the General Records Schedule. The [Veterans Health Administration's (VHA)] geographic information system relies on current data for analysis and retains only the information necessary for running analyses. Data from previous years are deleted from the system database when a business use no longer exists, in accordance with the VHA Records Control Schedule."

759(a)(5) Allocate Resources for Geospatial Data Management Responsibilities

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Allocate resources to fulfill the responsibilities of effective geospatial data collection, production, and stewardship with regard to related activities of the covered agency, and as necessary to support the activities of the Committee
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Question 5.1</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Partial to Question 5.1</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Question 5.1</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**5.1 Are adequate geospatial program resources (including full- or part-time federal employees or contractors) allocated to fulfill the responsibilities of effective geospatial data collection, production, and stewardship with regard to related activities of the covered agency, and as necessary to support the activities of the Committee?**

**Clarifying text:** Analyses of the requirements for the GDA are ongoing and it is anticipated that agencies will answer based on currently understood or anticipated requirements. Additional details can be provided in the 5.2 Brief Summary and in your agency’s 2-page PDF.

- Yes

**5.2 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(5), "allocate resources to fulfill the responsibilities of effective geospatial data collection, production, and stewardship with regard to related activities of the covered agency, and as necessary to support the activities of the Committee."**

As of 2020, VA has allocated sufficient resources to complete GDA reporting and to produce, maintain, and protect essential geospatial data. However, to fulfill the vision of the GDA, more resources are needed to ensure data quality, geo-enable VA data with authoritative address data or other geospatial information and increase data discovery and accessibility.

759(a)(6) Use Data Standards

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Use the geospatial data standards, including the standards for metadata for geospatial data, and other appropriate standards, including documenting geospatial data with the relevant metadata and making metadata available through the GeoPlatform
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Made Progress Towards Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Questions 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any other combination of Yes, No, and Partial to Questions 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Questions 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**6.1. Are defined data standards used in collecting, processing, and/or disseminating the data being addressed?**

The following items were selected from a picklist:<sup>iii</sup>

- Yes. Eligible geospatial datasets use FGDC-endorsed data standards.

**6.2 Does your agency maintain its metadata in an FGDC-endorsed, or ISO-compliant geospatial metadata standard format?**

**Clarifying text:** Question does not include legacy datasets that are static and no longer modified or otherwise managed. Also, see the list of endorsed FGDC-endorsed standards <https://www.fgdc.gov/standards/>.

The following items were selected from a picklist:<sup>iv</sup>

- Yes. Eligible datasets have well maintained FGDC-endorsed or current ISO-compliant geospatial metadata.

**6.3 Is your agency geospatial metadata available through GeoPlatform.gov?**

**Clarifying Text:** For the scope of the requirement, Section 758(b)(1)(A)(iv) provides for “includ[ing] download access to all open geospatial data directly or indirectly collected by covered agencies” and Section 759(a)(6) requires that “metadata [be] available through the GeoPlatform.”

- No. Agency geospatial metadata is not available through GeoPlatform.gov.

**6.4 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(6), "use the geospatial data standards, including the standards for metadata for geospatial data, and other appropriate standards, including documenting geospatial data with the relevant metadata and making metadata available through the GeoPlatform."**

From VA's IG Audit #20-02339-35: "VA used geospatial data standards when documenting relevant metadata and making it available through the GeoPlatform. OEI also follows standards established by VA's Data Governance Council that align with the Federal Geographic Data Committee and federal standards. Throughout geocoding and spatial data processing, the Planning System Support Group does not alter the standardized addresses it receives. This ensures when VA disseminates the data for wider distribution, it still follows the committee's standards. When VA shares group data sets, they are published as feature layers or services and include metadata that follows the committee's standards."

**759(a)(7) Support Coordination and Partnerships**

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Coordinate and work in partnership with other Federal agencies, agencies of State, tribal, and local governments, institutions of higher education, and the private sector to efficiently and cost-effectively collect, integrate, maintain, disseminate, and preserve geospatial data, building upon existing non-federal geospatial data to the extent possible
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Questions 7.1 and Yes or Not applicable to Question 7.2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any combination of Yes, Not applicable, Partial, or No to Questions 7.1 and 7.2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Questions 7.1 and 7.2</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**7.1 Are there processes in place to ensure that, when appropriate, partners and stakeholders have visibility into agency geospatial data management activities (e.g., collection, integration, maintenance, dissemination and preservation)?**

- Yes. There are processes in place for all agency mission areas.

**7.1.a If yes or partial to Question 7.1, which external partners and stakeholders are involved in data management activities?**

**Clarifying text:** The selection list provided was taken from the GDA Section 754(b)(C).

- Other federal agencies
- States

- Local governments
- Tribal governments
- Private sector entities
- Nonprofit organizations
- Academia
- Other [textboxes provided below]

<b>Other Partner or Stakeholder Category</b>
Veteran Service Organizations

**7.1.b If yes or partial to Question 7.1, what processes are in place to ensure partners and stakeholders are involved?**

**Clarifying text:** When answering this question think about activities such as using surveys, listening sessions, Request for Information, booths at stakeholder conferences.

- Partnership outreach activities
- Advisory committee(s)
- Memoranda of Understanding
- Other [textboxes provided below]

<b>Other Process or Activity</b>
Mission-related projects performed in partnership with other entities

**7.2 Does your agency build upon existing non-federal geospatial data?**

- Yes. Agency builds upon existing non-federal geospatial data to the extent possible.

**7.2.a If yes or partial to Question 7.2, what ways do you build upon existing non-federal geospatial data?**

- Procurement/acquisition/grant

**7.3 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(7), "coordinate and work in partnership with other Federal agencies, agencies of State, tribal, and local governments, institutions of higher education, and the private sector to efficiently and cost-effectively collect, integrate, maintain, disseminate, and preserve geospatial data, building upon existing non-Federal geospatial data to the extent possible."**

From VA's IG Audit #20-02339-35: "VA works in partnership with federal, state, and local stakeholders to efficiently and cost-effectively collect, integrate, maintain, disseminate, and preserve geospatial data. When possible, VA builds on existing geospatial data. The Planning System Support Group works directly with designated points of contact in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Defense, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs/Indian Health Services. The group also collaborates with other

offices to acquire geographic data from academic affiliates, researchers external to VA, special interest groups such as veterans service organizations, and businesses that are working with VA on projects that advance healthcare initiatives. In addition, NCA and the US Geological Survey are actively engaged in an established partnership to develop and maintain critical data for use in the US Geological Survey's National Map."

**759(a)(8) Promote Application of Geospatial Data Assets**

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Use geospatial information to— (A) make Federal geospatial information and services more useful to the public; (B) enhance operations; (C) support decision making; and (D) enhance reporting to the public and to Congress;
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any combination of Yes, Partial and No to Questions 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**759(a)(8)(A) make Federal geospatial information and services more useful to the public;**

**8.1 Does your agency leverage geospatial information to make federal geospatial information and services more useful to the public?**

- Yes

**759(a)(8) (B) enhance operations;759(a)(8) (C) support decision making**

**8.2 Does your agency leverage geospatial information to improve operations and decision-making?**

- Yes. Agency broadly leverages geospatial information in operations improvements or decision-making.

**759(a)(8) (D) enhance reporting to the public and to Congress**

**8.3 Does your agency leverage geospatial information to enhance reporting to the public or to Congress?**

- Yes. Agency broadly leverages geospatial information to enhance public and Congressional reporting.

**8.3.a If yes or partial, for which of these audiences does your agency leverage geospatial information to enhance reporting?**

- Public reports (e.g., fact sheets, data briefs, Annual reports, other published Agency reports).
- Internal Agency and leadership plans, reports and communications.

**8.4 Optional Question: You may provide up to 5 key examples and links that demonstrate how geospatial data assets are used, internally and externally, to make federal geospatial information and services more useful to the public; enhance operations; support decision making; and/or enhance reporting to the public and to Congress.**

- Not applicable.

**8.5 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(8), "use geospatial information to—**

- (A) make federal geospatial information and services more useful to the public;**
- (B) enhance operations;**
- (C) support decision making; and**
- (D) enhance reporting to the public and to Congress;"**

Multiple offices across VA produce and use geospatial information. To paraphrase VA's IG Audit #20-02339-35: The Office of Data Governance and Analytics publishes data by different geographic units, maps, and shape files on the web. DGA also provides mapping and geospatial analytic services and products to manage and update the geo-enabled United States Veterans Eligibility Trends and Statistics database, used in planning, business intelligence, modeling, and reporting. DGA produces the Veteran Population Projection model, used by the National Cemetery Administration, the Veterans Benefits Administration, and the Veterans Health Administration to support decision-making and operations. VA is also using geospatial data to improve its service to veterans. In response to the pandemic, the VA COVID-19 National Summary website provides information on patients at VA facilities, including non-VA data to show the extent of COVID-19 illness in the community where a VA facility is located.

759(a)(9) Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Protect personal privacy and maintain confidentiality in accordance with Federal policy and law
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Questions 9.1 and 9.2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes or Partial to Questions 9.1 or 9.2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Questions 9.1 or 9.2</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**9.1 Are agency Privacy Threshold Assessment or Privacy Impact Assessment (PTA/PIA) processes inclusive of your geospatial data?**

**Clarifying Text:** The Privacy Threshold Assessment/Analysis would be the mechanism that agencies use to determine if PII is, or is not collected, and whether a Privacy Impact Assessment needs to be done for an information system.

- Yes. The agency's PTA/PIA processes are inclusive of all agency data.

**9.2 Are the IT systems and applications that maintain and support your geospatial data covered by a current Authorization to Operate (ATO)?**

- Yes. All agency geospatial data is housed in a system covered by a current ATO and is appropriately protected in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

**9.3 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(9), "protect personal privacy and maintain confidentiality in accordance with Federal policy and law."**

From VA's IG Audit #20-02339-35: "All Planning System Support Group and OEI staff, including contractors, are required to complete training to protect the personal privacy and confidentiality of veterans. In addition, the Office of Data Governance and Analytics follows recommended procedures and practices for securing their systems and data and comply with VA rules and regulations regarding identification and authentication when accessing systems. All VA staff and contractors who require access to servers are required to follow VA procedures for requesting and maintaining elevated privileges as needed. Quarterly reviews of elevated privileges are completed and follow-up actions are taken, if necessary. All data is secured in databases with limited and controlled access. ...VA removes personally identifiable information before sharing data with individuals without access. OEI also has standard operating procedures regarding geographic information and cell suppression."



759(a)(10) Declassified Data

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Participate in determining, when applicable, whether declassified data can contribute to and become a part of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes or Not applicable to Question 10.1</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Question 10.1</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**10.1 If your Agency handles classified geospatial datasets, does it have a process to review declassified datasets for inclusion in the NSDI?**

**Clarifying text:** Sharing standards-based data on the Internet using standard protocols and formats makes it part of the NSDI.

- Not applicable: The agency does not handle classified data.

**10.2 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(10), "participate in determining, when applicable, whether declassified data can contribute to and become a part of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure."**

VA does not collect, hold, manage, or consume declassified geospatial data.

759(a)(11) Non-Duplication of Data

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Search all sources, including the GeoPlatform, to determine if existing Federal, State, local, or private geospatial data meets the needs of the covered agency before expending funds for geospatial data collection
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Question 11.1 <b>or</b></li> <li>○ Yes to Questions 11.1 and 11.2 and all agency appropriate responses to Question 11.3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Question 11.1 and Partial or No to Question 11.2 and agency appropriate responses to Question 11.3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Question 11.1 and No to Question 11.2 and <i>No additional assessments are done</i> selected for Question 11.3</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**11.1 Has your agency expended funds for geospatial data collection for the reporting period?**

**Clarifying text:** “Expended funds” may include grant distribution, agency collection, or procurement of data.

- Yes

**11.2 As per [OMB Circular A-11 Guidance](#) (Section 25, Page 3), has your agency searched the [GeoPlatform Marketplace](#) prior to making planned geospatial data investments to determine if an existing source for that data is available and meets mission requirements?**

- Yes. Agency has searched GeoPlatform Marketplace prior to all geospatial data investments.

**11.3 Has your agency searched other sources to determine if data necessary to meet requirements already exists (either within or outside the agency) before collecting or acquiring new data?**

The following items were selected from a picklist:’

- Market research
- Cross-agency or partner coordination
- Database search

**11.4 Optional Question: You may provide examples of cases where the agency did find existing data that met its needs or partnered on a joint data acquisition.**

- Not applicable.

**11.5 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(11), "Search all sources, including the GeoPlatform, to determine if existing Federal, State, local, or private geospatial data meets the needs of the covered agency before expending funds for geospatial data collection."**

To paraphrase VA's IG Audit #20-02339-35: Prior to geo-enabling the USVETS database, the Office of Data Governance and Analytics performed an environmental scan of internal VA sources, GeoPlatform, and other Federal sources. VHA's Planning System Support Group evaluated zip code data from Data.gov, the Census Bureau, and ESRI. VA is unable to use data in the GeoPlatform because the United States Veterans Eligibility Trends and Statistics database requires a current address to be associated with Veterans' names, and no data set on the GeoPlatform meets this requirement. In addition, the data presented on the GeoPlatform is not in real time. Therefore, both OEI and the Planning System Support Group determined GeoPlatform's data sets did not meet specific program requirements.

**759(a)(12) Ensuring High-Quality Data**

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	To the maximum extent practicable, ensure that a person receiving Federal funds for geospatial data collection provides high-quality data
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Made Progress Towards Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Question 12.1 <b>or</b></li> <li>○ Yes to Question 12.1 and <b>all</b> appropriate selections for Question 12.2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Made progress toward expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Question 12.1 and <b>some</b> agency appropriate selections for Question 12.2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Question 12.1 and <i>No official documented Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) process is in place for acquisition of geospatial data</i> selected for Question 12.2</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**12.1 Has your agency expended funds for geospatial data collection from non-federal sources during the reporting period?**

**Clarifying text:** The requirement for "a person receiving Federal funds" has been interpreted to mean non-federal organizations or corporations who are, for example, contract or grant recipients.

- Yes

**12.2 What methods does your agency employ to ensure quality in geospatial data collected from non-federal sources?**

The following items were selected from a picklist:<sup>vi</sup>

- Evaluate data for quality prior to any acquisition.
- Geospatial data quality standards are specified in contract documents.
- Staff data experts review and approve geospatial data deliverables.
- The Agency acquires data from another federal Agency that is responsible for QA/QC.

**12.3 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(12), "to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that a person receiving Federal funds for geospatial data collection provides high-quality data."**

From VA's IG Audit #20-02339-35: "Neither the Geospatial Data Act nor the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-16 defines what constitutes high-quality geospatial data. Also, the Federal Geographic Data Committee has not defined this term for covered agencies. However, in December 2016, the Federal Geographic Data Committee endorsed the International Organization for Standardization's metadata and data quality standards. The audit team determined that VA follows these standards. Additionally, VA's Enterprise Data Management policy states that its Data Governance Council 'shall create and maintain policy, processes, guidance, and standards to ensure that VA data are managed to provide the most integrated, efficient, and effective service possible to VA customers and internal business operations.' "

**759(a)(13) Point of Contact**

<b>GDA Requirement</b>	Appoint a contact to coordinate with the lead covered agencies for collection, acquisition, maintenance, and dissemination of the National Geospatial Data Asset data themes used by the covered agency
<b>Agency Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>KEY to Self-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meets expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes to Question 13.1</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fails to meet expectations =</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No to Question 13.1</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**13.1 Has your agency appointed a POC to coordinate with the lead covered agencies for collection, acquisition, maintenance, and dissemination of the NGDA data themes used by the covered agency?**

**Clarifying text:** OMB Circular A-16 may include additional guidance on covered agency responsibilities for theme coordination.

- Yes. An agency POC has been appointed.

**13.2 Brief Summary (Limit 1000 characters, or approximately 150 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in addressing Sec. 759(a)(13), "appoint a contact to coordinate with the lead covered agencies for collection, acquisition, maintenance, and dissemination of the National Geospatial Data Asset data themes used by the covered agency."**

VA has designated representatives to work with the Federal Geographic Data Committee's Steering Committee, Address Subcommittee, and GDA working group.

## Appendix A: Survey Picklists

This appendix provides the full set of choices presented in the self-assessment survey as “check all that apply” responses used to generate this covered agency report.

---

### <sup>i</sup> Question 2.1 Picklist

- Data is currently openly shared to the public.
- Data is currently shared on a limited basis with federal partners.
- Data is currently shared on a limited basis with non-federal users.
- No data is currently shared to other federal agencies or non-federal users. (Note: For some agencies, this may be an appropriate response).

### <sup>ii</sup> Question 3.1.a. Picklist

- Hosts a data sharing infrastructure where partners and/or data users can share and discover data.
- Develops a data integration toolkit or APIs to promote integration of agency data in external applications.
- Develops data integration processes to promote integration of non-agency data into applications.
- Provides data in openly standardized readable formats or as downloadable file packages.
- Develops data sharing agreements or Memoranda Of Agreement (MOA) with public and private partners for ingest or sharing of data.
- Other (Textboxes provided)

### <sup>iii</sup> Question 6.1 Picklist

- Yes. Eligible geospatial datasets use FGDC-endorsed data standards.
- Yes. Eligible geospatial datasets use data standards that comply with OMB Circular A-119.
- Partial. Some eligible geospatial datasets use FGDC-endorsed data standards.
- Partial. Some eligible geospatial datasets use data standards that comply with OMB Circular A-119.
- No. Eligible agency geospatial datasets do not use FGDC-endorsed data standards or standards that comply with OMB Circular A-119.

### <sup>iv</sup> Question 6.2 Picklist

- Yes. Eligible non-legacy datasets have well maintained FGDC-endorsed or current ISO-compliant geospatial metadata.
- Partial. Some eligible datasets have well maintained FGDC-endorsed or current ISO-compliant geospatial metadata.
- Partial. Some eligible datasets have FGDC-endorsed or current ISO-compliant geospatial metadata, that needs to be reviewed or refreshed.
- No. Agency datasets do not use FGDC-endorsed or current ISO-compliant geospatial metadata standards.

---

<sup>v</sup> Question 11.3 Picklist

- Market research
- Cross-agency or partner coordination
- Expert consultation
- Database search
- Agency follows a documented process or official policy
- No additional assessments are done
- Other (Textboxes provided)

<sup>vi</sup> Question 12.2 Picklist

- Evaluate data for quality prior to any acquisition.
- Geospatial data quality standards are specified in contract documents.
- Independent verification and validation (IV&V).
- Staff data experts review and approve geospatial data deliverables.
- Data standards are enforced through automated processes such as database controls or script tools.
- The agency acquires data from another federal agency that is responsible for QA/QC.
- No official documented QA/QC process is in place for acquisition of geospatial data.
- Other (Textboxes provided).