



**2021 Covered Agency Annual Report
and Self-Assessment**

for

Department of Veterans Affairs

**Geospatial Data Act of 2018
Section USC 43 Sec 2808(a) Requirements**

February 4, 2022



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Introduction

The Geospatial Data Act of 2018 (GDA) was signed into law on October 5, 2018. The GDA was included as a component of the FAA Reauthorization Act (H.R. 302, P.L. 115-254). The GDA is now in [U.S. Code, Title 43 – Public Lands, Chapter 46: GEOSPATIAL DATA](#).

USC 43 Sec 2808(b) of the Geospatial Data Act (GDA) requires each covered agency¹ 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 annual report to the FGDC covering the period from October 1, 2020 through Fiscal Year 2021 (September 30, 2021). The report was developed through a self-assessment template developed by the FGDC agencies. Annual reports 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 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 via the [FGDC GDA pages \[https://fgdc.gov/gda\]](#).

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.

Where data or datasets are referenced,² 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.

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

² 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

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(1) Covered Agency Geospatial Strategies

GDA Requirement	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
Agency Self-Assessment	Made Progress Toward Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Question 1.1 and 1.2 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Question 1.1 and No to Question 1.2 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Question 1.1 and 1.2

Table 1. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(1) Covered Agency Geospatial Strategies Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

Clarifying Text: FGDC developed and released a new national strategic plan for the development of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) [the GDA, USC 43 Sec 2804(c)], which was approved by the FGDC Steering Committee in November 2020. Covered Agency Geospatial Strategies [the GDA, USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(1)], which will support the goals in the NSDI strategic plan, were 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 Is your agency's strategy complete, approved, and being implemented?

- Yes

1.2 Is your agency's strategy published?

- No

1.3 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(1), "Prepare and implement a strategy for advancing geospatial data activities appropriate to the agency's mission." If the assessment is "made progress toward expectations," include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the "meets expectations" level.

The VA Geospatial Data Workgroup completed the development of the VA Spatial Data Strategy in 2021. The strategic goals align with both those in the VA Data Strategy (2021) and the National Spatial Data Infrastructure's (NSDI) Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024. The VA Spatial Data Strategy has been approved by VA's Data Governance Council and is currently being implemented. The VA Spatial Data Strategy will be routed through the agency concurrence process in January 2022 before finalization and publication. Activities in the plan are being implemented concurrently with this process.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(2) Support Data Sharing

GDA Requirement	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.
Agency Self-Assessment	Meets Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Data is currently shared</i> selections for all agency appropriate parties for Question 2.1 and Yes to Questions 2.2 and 2.3 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Data is currently shared</i> selections for some appropriate parties for Question 2.1, or Question 2.2 and 2.3 have a mix of answers • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Questions 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3

Table 2. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(2) Support Data Sharing Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

Clarifying text:

- ✓ This section does not include efforts related to partners, which are covered under Question 7, USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(7).
- ✓ Review the [GDA definition of geospatial data](#) to consider the questions in this section.
- ✓ Remember, your agency’s answers should include information about all geospatial datasets owned or managed by your agency that are, or should be, available to the public in accordance with agency statutory authorities and missions; not just National Geospatial Data Asset (NGDA) Datasets.
- ✓ Sharing data on the Internet using open standards, 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.
- ✓ Geospatial data that will not or cannot be distributed to the public does not need to be considered for GDA-related responses as per the GDA.

2.1 Does your agency ensure that all eligible geospatial data is managed so it can be readily shared and is it provided in open formats, as appropriate? (This will include agency open government and transparency guidelines.) (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- 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)? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- 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? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

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

2.4 Optional Question: Would the agency like to provide 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?

- No

2.5 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(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." If the assessment is "made progress toward expectations," include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the "meets expectations" level.

In 2021, VHA published data to ArcGIS Online giving external GIS users access to data that's approved for public dissemination. VHA also developed and received approval from the VA Privacy Office to display aggregated Veteran Enrollee data using hexbins. Hexbins provide greater granularity than county-level summary data and allow end-users to identify population clusters while protecting privacy.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(3) Promote Data Integration

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

Table 3. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(3) Promote Data Integration Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

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

- Yes. The agency has taken appropriate action to promote data integration.

3.1.a If yes or partial to Question 3.1, in what ways does your agency promote data integration from multiple sources? (Select all that apply (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- 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.

3.2 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(3), "promote the integration of geospatial data from all sources." If the assessment is "made progress toward expectations," include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the "meets expectations" level.

VA’s Data Governance Council (DGC) has an established Geospatial Data Subgroup that brings together agency staff involved in geospatial work to promote integration of geospatial data and spatial analysis across the enterprise. The FGDC SAOGI is a member of the DGC and regularly communicates with key spatial data stakeholders and the general data community about FGDC activities and agency GDA responsibilities. The Office of Data Governance and Analytics is working to develop a trusted veteran object to facilitate analytical requirements for many questions about the veteran population and early efforts are focused on providing authoritative geospatial data (address and location) for every member of the veteran population. This data will be integrated within an enterprise analytics solution to facilitate re-use as required by entities across VA. VHA publishes authoritative data through Portal for ArcGIS so the most current and complete data can be used agency wide. VHA also expanded the GIS software Enterprise Agreement (EA) to include all VHA programs and offices. Expansion of the EA reduces GIS

silos and promotes the integration of spatial data across the organization. OIT also publishes geospatial data in multiple formats for integration with larger systems such as VA's Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) which allows for cross-platform use and access by users across the agency.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(4) Ensure Records Retention Schedule for Geospatial Data

GDA Requirement	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
Agency Self-Assessment	Made Progress Toward Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Questions 4.1 and 4.2 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes or Partial to Questions 4.1 and 4.2 or ○ No to either 4.1 or 4.2 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Questions 4.1 and 4.2

Table 4. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(4) Ensure Records Retention Schedule for Geospatial Data Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

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?

- Yes. Agency record schedules are inclusive of data information products and other records created in geospatial data and activities.

4.3 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(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." If the assessment is "made progress toward expectations," include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the "meets expectations" level.

Geospatial data are often intermediary records and are scheduled through the General Records Schedule. VHA's geographic information system relies on current data for analyses 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. The agency does utilize geospatial data and activities in order to stay in compliance with NARA requirements. In 2021, the agency started utilizing geospatial in records management, and it is making this a top priority but is not yet fully implemented across the enterprise.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(5) Allocate Resources for Geospatial Data Management Responsibilities

GDA Requirement	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
Agency Self-Assessment	Meets Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Question 5.1 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partial to Question 5.1 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Question 5.1

Table 5. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(5) Allocate Resources for Geospatial Data Management Responsibilities Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

5.1 Are 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? (Select the most appropriate answer and provide context for your agency’s response in Question 5.2.)

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 in Appendix B (if provided).

- Yes

5.2 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(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." If the assessment is "made progress toward expectations," include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the "meets expectations" level.

VA has allocated sufficient resources to complete GDA responsibilities. However, to fulfill the full vision of the GDA, more resources are required to ensure data quality, fully geo-enable VA data with authoritative address data or other geospatial information, increase data discovery and accessibility, and curate open geospatial data and analytical solutions. These efforts are being integrated into existing activities, however, to leverage current funding for related efforts that can include a geospatial component, such as data curation activities using contract support for the development of trusted objects that include authoritative geospatial data. VHA has expanded the GIS software enterprise agreement to all VHA programs and offices and secured funding to develop, deploy, and maintain a cloud architecture that will meet VHA’s current and future GIS needs. Cloud deployment is in progress.

OIT has partnered with other VA agencies and program offices such as National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to provide an enterprise GIS platform which supplies GIS services, software, and data and leverages resources across multiple entities that require support.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(6) Use Data Standards

GDA Requirement	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
Agency Self-Assessment	Made Progress Toward Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Questions 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any other combination of Yes, No, and Partial to Questions 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Questions 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3

Table 6. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(6) Use Data Standards Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

Clarifying Text:

- ✓ Reestablishment of an active, resourced, and sustainable standards process with supporting governance is currently under consideration by the FGDC (Committee).
- ✓ The FGDC has not yet established any standards under the GDA, USC 43 Sec 2806.
- ✓ Answers should include information about all geospatial datasets owned or managed by your agency that are, or should be, available to the public in accordance with agency statutory authorities and missions; not just National Geospatial Data Asset (NGDA) Datasets.

6.1. Are defined data standards used in collecting, processing, and/or disseminating the data being addressed? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- Yes. Eligible geospatial datasets use FGDC endorsed data standards under OMB A-16, 2002, or more current versions of those endorsed standards.

6.2 Does your agency maintain its metadata in an FGDC-endorsed, or ISO-compliant geospatial metadata standard format? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

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/>.

- Yes. Eligible non-legacy 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 USC 43 Sec 2808(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 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(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.” If the assessment is “made progress toward expectations,” include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the “meets expectations” level.

VHA geospatial open data is hosted via ArcGIS Online, however, metadata is not yet made available through the GeoPlatform. VA continues to use geospatial data standards when documenting relevant metadata and making it available through the GeoPlatform. OEI 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 Geospatial Service Support Center 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.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(7) Support Coordination and Partnerships

GDA Requirement	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
Agency Self-Assessment	Meets expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Questions 7.1 and Yes or Not applicable to Question 7.2 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any combination of Yes, Not applicable, Partial, or No to Questions 7.1 and 7.2 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Questions 7.1 and 7.2

Table 7. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(7) Support Coordination and Partnerships Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

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)? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- 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? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

Clarifying text: The selection list provided was taken from the GDA, USC 43 Sec 2803(b)(C).

- Other federal agencies
- States
- Local governments
- Tribal governments
- Private sector entities
- Nonprofit organizations
- **Other:** Veteran Service Organizations (VSO)

7.1.b If yes or partial to Question 7.1, what processes are in place to ensure partners and stakeholders are involved? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

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:** Mission-related projects performed in partnership with other entities.

7.2 Does your agency build upon existing non-federal geospatial data? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- 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? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- MOAs/data sharing agreements

7.3 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(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.” If the assessment is “made progress toward expectations,” include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the “meets expectations” level.

The Geospatial Service Support Group (GSSC) collaborates with private sector entities to develop and integrate spatial data for use in optimizing the selection of partner-hosted Telehealth access points. Entities within VA work directly with points of contact in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Defense, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs/Indian Health Services in data management activities such as data sharing and policy requirements. VA entities also collaborate with other offices to acquire geographic data from academic affiliates, researchers external to VA, special interest groups such as Veteran Service Organizations (VSO), and businesses that are working with VA on projects that advance healthcare initiatives such as the Telehealth access points referenced above. In addition, NCA and the U.S. Geological Survey are actively engaged in an established partnership to develop and maintain critical data for use in the U.S. Geological Survey’s National Map. In 2018, NCA and USGC signed an MOU to provide national cemetery boundary data for the USGC national map effort, which is in effect until July 2023.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(8) Promote Application of Geospatial Data Assets

GDA Requirement	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;
Agency Self-Assessment	Meets Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any combination of Yes, Partial and No to Questions 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3

Table 8. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(8) Promote Application of Geospatial Data Assets Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

USC 43 Sec 2808(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?

Clarifying Text: A number of examples of leveraging geospatial information for public use include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Making the data accessible
 - ✓ Providing data in ingestible services
 - ✓ Providing maps or visualizations of geospatial data - like a map of an agency’s jurisdictional regions so the public can identify their region on a website
 - ✓ Provided data in an online application – like the COVID-19 case tracker
 - ✓ Outreach/communications for user feedback
 - ✓ Making data open, standardized, or machine readable
- Yes

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(8)(B) enhance operations; USC 43 Sec 2808(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.

USC 43 Sec 2808(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? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- 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? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

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

8.4 Optional Question: Would the agency like to 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?

- No

8.5 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(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;"

If the assessment is "made progress toward expectations," include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the "meets expectations" level.

Expansion of the VHA GIS software enterprise agreement (EA) enables all VHA programs and offices to use spatial data and tools for analytics and decision making. The EA provides training plans and technical support to assist users in meeting their business needs. Data sharing in the Corporate Data Warehouse allows for geospatial analysis that support decision making around patient care, emergency management, and federal mandates (e.g., COVID vaccine mandate). In addition, National Cemetery Administration (NCA) GIS allows for quality control checks of veteran burials. The Office of Data Governance and Analytics (DGA) publishes data by different geographic units, maps, and shape files on the web using ArcGIS Online. DGA also produces the veteran population projection model, used by VA's administrations to support decision-making and operations using veteran population data and geographic projections. The VHA Office of Dentistry uses GIS to recommend allocating physical plant and human resources to provide dental care most cost-effectively. The dental program has furthered its efforts to impact dental care delivery by analyzing geographic dental disease patterns and targeting education opportunities appropriately.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(9) Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

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

Table 9. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(9) Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

9.1 Are the agency’s Privacy Threshold Assessment or Privacy Impact Assessment (PTA/PIA) processes inclusive of your agency’s 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 agency’s 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 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(9), “protect personal privacy and maintain confidentiality in accordance with Federal policy and law.” If the assessment is “made progress toward expectations,” include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the “meets expectations” level.

Spatial data that’s published to ArcGIS Online was cleared through the VA Privacy Office prior to publication allowing for further access to VA geospatial data and providing an additional layer of privacy protection review. Display methods for aggregating PII data receive approval from a privacy officer before dissemination. Geospatial data in the CDW follows PHI rules in HIPAA for access, use, and sharing. The Office of Data Governance and Analytics continues to follow recommended procedures and practices, and VA rules and regulations, for authenticated access to data systems. VA staff, including contractors, are required to complete training to protect the personal privacy and confidentiality of veterans. All VA staff and contractors who require access to servers are required to follow VA procedures for requesting and maintaining elevated privileges, and quarterly reviews of elevated

privileges are completed, with appropriate follow-up, when necessary. Limited, controlled access systems support protection of information, and VA remotes personally identifiable information before sharing to users without appropriate access. DGA also has standard operating procedures regarding use of geographic information and cell suppression.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(10) Declassified Data

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

Table 10. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(10)Declassified Data Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

10.1 If your agency handles declassified geospatial datasets, does it have a process to review these 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 declassified data.

10.2 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(10), “participate in determining, when applicable, whether declassified data can contribute to and become a part of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure.” If the assessment is “fails to meet expectations,” include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the “meets expectations” level.

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

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(11) Non-Duplication of Data

GDA Requirement	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
Agency Self-Assessment	Meets Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Question 11.1 or ○ Yes to Questions 11.1 and 11.2 and all agency appropriate responses to Question 11.3 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Question 11.1 and Partial or No to Question 11.2 and agency appropriate responses to Question 11.3 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Question 11.1 and No to Question 11.2 and <i>No additional assessments are done</i> selected for Question 11.3

Table 11. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(11) Non-Duplication of Data Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

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 If yes to Question 11.1, and as per [OMB Circular A-11 Guidance](#) (Section 25, Page 3), has your agency searched the [GeoPlatform](#) 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 prior to all geospatial data investments.

11.3 If yes to Question 11.1, 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? (Select all that apply - see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses)

- **Other:** <https://www.findagrave.com/> and <https://billiongraves.com/>

11.4 Optional Question: If yes to Question 11.1, would the agency like to provide up to 5 examples of cases where the agency did find existing data that met its needs or partnered on a joint data acquisition?

- No

11.5 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(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." If the assessment is "made progress toward expectations," include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the "meets expectations" level.

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.

NCA has contracted grave marker collection and inscription transcription to verify burial records for all veterans interred in national cemeteries. The breadth and scope of this initiative, to ensure 100% accuracy and accountability, can only be completed by collecting complete cemetery datasets at the time of comparison. Complete or 100% reliable data does not already exist to meet these requirements, requiring primary data collection by VA. Additionally, NCA has purchased GPS equipment to collect burial activity data for each new marker installed and each interment conducted. The GPS data is being assimilated into NCA's Enterprise GIS.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(12) Ensuring High-Quality Data

GDA Requirement	To the maximum extent practicable, ensure that a person receiving Federal funds for geospatial data collection provides high-quality data
Agency Self-Assessment	Meets Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Question 12.1 or ○ Yes to Question 12.1 and all appropriate selections for Question 12.2 • Made progress toward expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Question 12.1 and some agency appropriate selections for Question 12.2 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 selected for Question 12.2</i>

Table 12. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(12) Ensuring High-Quality Data Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

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 If yes to Question 12.1, what methods does your agency employ to ensure quality in geospatial data collected from non-federal sources? (Check all that apply and use the “other” textbox to briefly describe additional methods used to ensure quality for geospatial data acquired by procurement or grant process - *see Appendix A for complete list of optional responses*)

- **Other:** Contract Scope of Work (SOW) requires survey grade accuracy, and each deliverable is certified as being 100% accurate with surveyor stamp.

12.3 Brief Summary (Limit 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(12), "to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that a person receiving Federal funds for geospatial data collection provides high-quality data." If the assessment is “made progress toward expectations,” include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the “meets expectations” level.

Spatial data that is collected is reviewed and compared against other self-collected data, readily available imagery, and data from other sources. Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Control (QC) scripts and routines are used to verify data integrity and completeness.

USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(13) Point of Contact

GDA Requirement	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
Agency Self-Assessment	Meets Expectations
KEY to Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes to Question 13.1 • Fails to meet expectations = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No to Question 13.1

Table 13. GDA USC 43 Sec 2808(a)(13) Point of Contact Requirement and Self-Assessment Criteria.

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: According to the GDA Definitions, USC 43 Sec 2801(12), NGDA data theme means “the NGDA core geospatial datasets including electronic records and coordinates relating to a topic or subject designated under Section 756.” Also, 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 2000 characters, or approximately 300 words): Please provide a brief description of agency actions and accomplishments in FY2021 in addressing USC 43 Sec 2808(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." If the assessment is “fails to meet expectations,” include the actions your agency is taking to achieve the “meets expectations” level.

VA has designated representatives to represent the agency on the Federal Geographic Data Committee’s Steering Committee and Address Subcommittee.

Appendix A: Survey Picklists

This appendix provides the full set of choices presented in the self-assessment survey for questions that have multiple response options, including those that are “select all that apply.”

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

- 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).

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.
- Eligible geospatial data are shared in open formats, but not all metadata is open format.
- Eligible geospatial metadata are shared in open formats, but not all data are open format.
- Some geospatial data, and its metadata, is shared in open formats.
- No geospatial data is shared, or geospatial data is only shared in proprietary 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.
- Some programs/datasets have maintenance processes in place.
- Maintenance processes are in development or are partially implemented.
- No maintenance processes are currently in place or in development.

3.1.a If yes or partial to Question 3.1, in what ways does your agency promote data integration from multiple sources? (Select all that apply and use the “other” textbox to briefly describe additional methods)

- 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 (Textbox provided)

6.1. Are defined data standards used in collecting, processing, and/or disseminating the data being addressed? (Select all that apply)

- Yes. Eligible geospatial datasets use FGDC endorsed data standards under OMB A-16, 2002, or more current versions of those endorsed 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.

6.2 Does your agency maintain its metadata in an FGDC-endorsed, or ISO-compliant geospatial metadata standard format? (Select all that apply)

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/>.

- 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.

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.
- Yes. There are processes in place, but some mission areas do not have requirements for geospatial data management partnerships.
- Partial. There are processes in place for some agency mission areas, but not others.
- No. There are no processes in place. (Skip to question 7.3)

7.1.a If yes or partial to Question 7.1, which external partners and stakeholders are involved in data management activities? (Select all that apply and use the “other” textbox to add additional partners or stakeholders)

Clarifying text: The selection list provided was taken from the GDA, USC 43 Sec 2803(b)(C).

- Other federal agencies
- States
- Local governments
- Regional governments
- Tribal governments
- Private sector entities
- Geospatial information user industries
- Professional associations
- Scholarly associations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Academia
- Licensed geospatial data acquisition professionals
- Other (Textbox provided)

7.1.b If yes or partial to Question 7.1, what processes are in place to ensure partners and stakeholders are involved? (Select all that apply and use the “other” textbox to add additional processes)

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

- Market research
- Partnership outreach activities
- Expert consultations
- Advisory committee(s)
- Working group(s) and sub-committee(s)
- Steering committees
- Councils
- Engage with trade groups
- Feedback opportunities (e.g., contact email/phone, call center)
- Federal Register Notices
- Memoranda of Understanding
- Use other public comment processes
- Other (Textbox provided)

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.
- Not applicable: no existing applicable data exists.
- Partial. Agency builds upon some existing non-federal geospatial data.
- No. Agency does not build upon existing non-federal geospatial data.

7.2.a If yes or partial to Question 7.2, what ways do you build upon existing non-federal geospatial data? (Select all that apply and use the “other” textbox to add additional ways)

- Procurement/acquisition/grant
- Research partnership
- Cooperative data collection or crowd sourcing
- Mission assignments or Interagency Agreements
- MOAs/data sharing agreements
- Other (Textbox provided)

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.
- Not applicable: Agency does not leverage geospatial information in published reports.
- Partial. Agency leverages some geospatial information to enhance either public or Congressional reporting.
- No. Agency does not leverage geospatial information to enhance either public or Congressional reporting.

8.3.a If yes or partial, for which of these audiences does your agency leverage geospatial information to enhance reporting? (Select all that apply)

- Public reports (e.g., fact sheets, data briefs, Annual reports, other published agency reports).
- Congressional reports.
- Internal agency and leadership plans, reports and communications.
- Not applicable: agency does not leverage geospatial information in published reports.

11.3 If yes to Question 11.1, 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? (Select all that apply and use the “other” textbox to briefly describe additional sources)

- 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 (Textbox provided)

12.2 If yes to Question 12.1, what methods does your agency employ to ensure quality in geospatial data collected from non-federal sources?

(Check all that apply and use the “other” textbox to briefly describe additional methods used to ensure quality for geospatial data acquired by procurement or grant process)

- 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 (Textbox provided)