

Cultural Resources Theme Strategic Plan 2025 - 2027

Geospatial Data Act of 2018
Section USC 43 Sec 2805(b)(3) Requirements

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Introduction

This Cultural Resources Theme Strategic Plan (henceforth Plan), developed in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, spans three years, FY 2025 - FY 2027. The Plan outlines a strategy to achieve progress toward meeting [Section 2805 of the Geospatial Data Act of 2018](#)¹ (GDA). The Plan derives its origin from Sec. 2805 (b)(3)(B) to “provide leadership and facilitate the development and implementation of a plan for nationwide population of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme.” The Plan is organized by goals, addressing major subsections of Sec. 2805, objectives supporting the goals, and anticipated actions to be taken over the lifecycle of the Plan to achieve progress.² In addition to meeting GDA requirements, these goals and objectives align with the [National Spatial Data Infrastructure \(NSDI\) Strategic Plan](#)³ as required by Section 2805(b)(3)(C). A crosswalk of the GDA and the NSDI Strategic Plan can be found in Appendix A of this document. For each FY covered by the Plan, the lead covered agency theme (see Background below) will generate an annual performance report, as required by the GDA, to inform on progress in achieving the Plan.

The FY25-27 Cultural Resources Theme Plan replaces the previous 2015-2018 theme strategic plan. With the passage of the GDA in late 2018 it was determined that all themes would develop new plans based on established GDA goals and use similar templates. This document represents that undertaking.

In 2013 the FGDC chartered a Cultural Resources Subcommittee for the theme to engage stakeholders, define tasks for the theme and explore user needs. In 2019 the National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) Cultural Resources Subcommittee developed a series of recommendations and presented them to the FGDC Cultural Resources Subcommittee, providing additional guidance and establishing specific goals for the theme. The five NGAC recommendations include:

- Develop a definition of cultural resource spatial data
- Develop guidelines on the management, access control, and exchange of geospatial data associated with sensitive cultural and historical resources
- Identify data sharing agreements and strategies
- Continue and complete development of current spatial data transfer standards
- Develop a training strategy and materials

This Plan incorporates the priorities outlined by the NGAC for the theme in addition to the GDA goals and tasks undertaken by the Subcommittee. The FGDC Cultural Resources Subcommittee continues to work together with the theme lead to carry out all of the GDA and NGAC objectives identified.

Background

The Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), henceforth Committee, is composed of both covered and non-covered agencies as defined by the GDA. For each National Geospatial Data Asset (NGDA) data

¹ <https://www.fgdc.gov/gda/43-usc-ch-46-geospatial-data-geospatial-data-act.pdf#page=8>

² Sec 2802(c)(A)(i) an evaluation of the progress of each lead covered agency in achieving the requirements under subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D) of section 2805(b)(3) of this title; and (ii) a determination of whether, for each of subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D) of section 2805(b)(3) of this title, each lead covered agency meets expectations, has made progress toward expectations, or fails to meet expectations.

³ <https://www.fgdc.gov/nsdi-plan>

theme (henceforth theme), the Committee designates one or more covered agencies as lead covered agencies (LCA) for the theme. As called for in the [OMB Circular A-16 Supplemental Guidance](#),⁴ the lead covered agencies designate theme leads to oversee the management of the theme. The lead covered agencies have taken a coordinated approach to addressing GDA section 2805.

Starting in late FY 2022 and continuing into FY 2023, lead covered agencies collaborated on a common approach to improving annual performance reporting.⁵ The result is a Theme Strategic Plan template for use by all themes based on a common set of goals and objectives to meet the GDA requirements. This approach ensures the application of a common set of metrics and allows the FGDC Office of the Secretariat (FGDC OS) to provide a consistent summary of individual and collective progress made by all themes in meeting GDA requirements. Depending on their complexity, themes may expand beyond the common set of goals, objectives, and actions within the template. In subsequent years, within the lifecycle of the Plan, the National Park Service (NPS) for the Cultural Resources Theme will provide an annual report that includes status on identified actions and demonstrates progress made in achieving the Plan goals and objectives aligned to the GDA requirements.

The Cultural Resources theme has gone through several iterations since its original designation in OMB Circular A-16 as the “Cultural and Demographic Theme.” As the cultural and demographic theme, it was defined as containing data that, “describe the characteristics of people, the nature of the structures in which they live and work, the economic and other activities they pursue, the facilities they use to support their health, recreational and other needs, the environmental consequences of their presence, and the boundaries, names and numeric codes of geographic entities used to report the information collected.” Similarly, OMB Circular A-16 originally established an independent “Geographic Names theme,” defined as including data describing, “both the official place name (current, historical, and aliases) and locative direct (i.e., geographic coordinates) and indirect (i.e., State and County where place is located) geospatial identifiers and categorized as populated places, schools, reservoirs, parks, streams, valleys, and ridges.”

The current Cultural Resources theme no longer contains demographic data and has incorporated the geographic names data set. The theme is now defined as including, “historic places such as districts, sites, buildings, and structures of significance in history, architecture, engineering, or culture. Cultural resources also encompass prehistoric features as well as historic landscapes.”

Note that although the NPS is the lead covered agency (LCA) for the theme, not all NGDA data sets within the theme are managed by the NPS or the Department of Interior (DOI). Additionally, these data sets do not define “cultural resources” consistently or delineate features with the same parameters due

⁴ https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/legacy_drupal_files/omb/memoranda/2011/m11-03.pdf.

It should be noted that the revised Circular A-16 is currently in development for release by the Office of Management and Budget for use by the FGDC Community. Associated Technical Guidance may be developed by FGDC once the revised Circular is released.

⁵ NSDI Strategic Plan Goal 1.3. Identify common approaches and tools to meet GDA and related planning and reporting requirements.

Sec 2805 (b)(3)(E)(ii)(I): (ii) submit to the Committee—

(I) a performance report, at least annually, that documents the activities relating to and implementation of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, including progress in achieving the requirements under subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D).

to their individual originating legislation as well as their intended data use. All theme NGDA data sets do have national regulatory requirements however and consolidate spatial data from multiple sources such as states, Tribes, federal agencies, and other partners.

Despite these challenges, the theme NGDA data sets relate to each other and contribute to the larger classification of “cultural resources,” as intended by OMB Circular A-16, capturing evidence of past human activity as well as related elements of the natural and physical environment. The theme community continues to work together to meet their data creation, data documentation and reporting obligations under the GDA, relative to the broadest definition of “cultural resources” feasible.

I. Goal: 2805(b)(3)(E) – Administer the Theme

The Committee designates National Geospatial Data Asset data themes (henceforth theme).⁶ The Committee also designates one or more covered agencies as the lead covered agencies for each theme.⁷ Themes may include NGDA datasets that are contributed by other covered agencies and non-covered agencies. The National Park Service (NPS) is designated the lead for the Cultural Resources Theme by the Department of Interior as the Covered Agency. Note that the NPS is the lead covered agency (LCA), but not all National Geospatial Data Asset data sets within the theme are produced by the NPS.

I.A. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(i) – Point of Contact

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to designate a point of contact within the lead covered agency who shall be responsible for developing, maintaining, coordination relating to, and disseminating data using the GeoPlatform.

GDA Reference

(b) Lead covered agencies

(3) Specific responsibilities

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(E) as part of administering the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme—

(i) designate a point of contact within the lead covered agency who shall be responsible for developing, maintaining, coordination relating to, and disseminating data using the GeoPlatform;

I.A.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(i) – Point of Contact

The NPS shall designate a point of contact (POC) who shall be responsible for developing, maintaining, coordination relating to, and disseminating data using the GeoPlatform. The POC will be updated and reported annually.

In addition to annual reporting, the NPS shall inform the Committee of interim changes to the POC as necessary to maintain continuity. NPS and NGDA data steward agencies designated the following contacts, who are listed on the cultural resources GeoPlatform community web page:

- Theme Lead: Deidre McCarthy, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
- Executive Champion: Joy Beasley, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
- NGDA data steward: Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) – USGS National Map Downloadable Data Collection, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey
- NGDA data steward: Geographic Names Server (GNS), U.S. Department of Defense, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
- NGDA data steward: National Registrar of Historic Places, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

⁶ Sec 2805(a) the term "National Geospatial Data Asset data theme" is defined as the National Geospatial Data Asset core geospatial datasets (including electronic records and coordinates) relating to a topic or subject designated under section 2805 of this title.

⁷ Sec 2805(b)(1) For each National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the Committee shall designate one or more covered agencies as the lead covered agencies for the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme.

The theme lead will update the NGDA team when any points of contact change during the period covered by this Plan.

I.B. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(ii)(I) – Annual Reporting

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to submit a performance report, at least annually, that documents the activities relating to and implementation of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme.

GDA Reference

(b) Lead covered agencies

(3) Specific responsibilities

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(E) as part of administering the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme—

(ii) submit to the Committee—

(I) a performance report, at least annually, that documents the activities relating to and implementation of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, including progress in achieving the requirements under subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D); and

I.B.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(ii)(I) – Annual Reporting

The NPS shall submit a performance report annually, that documents the activities relating to and implementation of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, including progress in achieving the requirements under subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D).

The NPS (Cultural Resources theme LCA) participated in the development of the LCA report template for FY20, 21, 22 and 23. The NPS will continue to collaborate with other NGDA theme leads and the Committee to create future templates during the period of this Plan. The NPS submitted final versions of the LCA report for FY20, 21, 22 and 23, which have subsequently been published on the Committee website for the public. The NPS will continue to create and submit required annual reports to the NGDA team throughout the period covered by this Plan. Final versions of the annual reports will continue to be published on the FGDC website for the public during this period.

I.C. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(ii)(II) – Annual Report Comments

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to submit comments to the Committee about the annual performance summary, as appropriate.

GDA Reference

(b) Lead covered agencies

(3) Specific responsibilities

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(E) as part of administering the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme—

(ii) submit to the Committee—

(II) comments, as appropriate, regarding the summary and evaluation of the performance report provided by the Committee under section 2802(c)(12) of this title;

I.C.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(ii)(II) – Annual Report Comments

The NPS shall submit comments, as appropriate, regarding the summary and evaluation of the performance report provided by the FGDC OS under section 2802(c)(12).

On behalf of the theme, the NPS participated in the NGDA working group to develop the LCA annual report template in FY20, 21, 22 and 23, sharing draft templates as well as text with the theme NGDA data stewards to coordinate the final version. The theme lead will continue to participate in the development of LCA annual reports, providing comment and feedback, as well as coordinating the final product with the theme NGDA data stewards, throughout the period covered by this Plan. The NGAC has not requested any formal comments from the theme to date. Responses to any such requests will be provided by the theme lead, if required, during the period covered by the Plan.

II. Goal: 2805(b)(3)(B) – Provide leadership and facilitate the development and implementation of a plan for nationwide population of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme

The NPS Theme Lead developed this Plan in coordination with the agencies that manage and contribute to NGDA datasets within the Theme. Over the next three years, the Theme Lead shall facilitate the implementation of this Plan through annual performance reporting. Each of the following goals and objectives within this Plan support the nationwide population of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme in direct correlation with the GDA.

II.A. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(B)(i) – Partnerships

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to provide leadership and facilitate a plan to develop partnership programs with states, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, private sector entities, other federal agencies, and local governments.

GDA Reference

(b) *Lead covered agencies*

(3) *Specific responsibilities*

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(B) *provide leadership and facilitate the development and implementation of a plan for nationwide population of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, which shall—*

(i) *include developing partnership programs with States, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, private sector entities, other Federal agencies, and local governments;*

II.A.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(B)(i) – Partnerships

In 2013 the FGDC Cultural Resources Subcommittee was chartered and charged with the identification, prioritization, implementation, coordination, and oversight of strategies and tasks required to support the national cultural resources geospatial data theme and coordinate these activities across Federal geospatial programs. The primary objective of the Subcommittee is to provide assistance and identify best practices useful to the NPS in meeting its theme stewardship responsibilities under OMB Circular A-16 and the GDA. The Subcommittee membership includes federal, state, Tribal, local government and

NGO representatives. With the addition of the recommendations provided by the NGAC Cultural Resources Subcommittee, the FGDC Subcommittee will continue to pursue the specific tasks and products outlined during the period of this Plan, beginning with the completion of the cultural resource spatial data standards currently in final draft form, as well as creating a definition for cultural resource spatial data that applies across federal agencies.

Individual NGDA data sets within the theme have additional partnership programs created through their associated organizing legislation. For instance, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created the National Register of Historic Places and the network of State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), certified local governments (CLGs) and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), in addition to the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) supporting their activities. The NPS administers the HPF, provides technical assistance to SHPOs/THPOs, and maintains the National Register of Historic Places NGDA based in part on data they create.

Similarly, the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) NGDA works with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN), a federal body established by law to maintain uniform geographic name usage throughout the Federal Government. The GNIS dataset fulfills DOI's requirement to promulgate the BGN's decision regarding official geographic names. The BGN staff also participate in Council of Geographic Names Authorities (COGNA), an association of state and federal agencies representing the official and recognized geographic names authorities who promote national standardization of the names of geographic features for official use. The BGN also works with Pan American Institute of Geography and History-Names subcommittee and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. The Geographic Names Server (GNS) NGDA operates in a parallel fashion, coordinating with international partners from multiple nations, participating in the same United Nations Group of Experts on Geographic Names meetings, and conducting Board on Geographic Names Foreign Names Committee quarterly meetings.

The NPS will continue to seek out and invite additional partners to participate in the Subcommittee and any NGDA data sets within the theme. The theme lead will replace partners who are no longer able to participate in the Subcommittee when needed throughout the period covered by this Plan. Additionally, the NPS will continue to update partners and progress made toward meeting GDA requirements and NGAC identified recommendations through the GeoPlatform cultural resources community hub page when major milestones are reached throughout the period covered by Plan.

II.B. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(B)(ii) and 2805(b)(3)(D) – User Needs

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to provide leadership and facilitate a plan to meet the needs of users of geospatial data including a process to, as necessary, collect and analyze information from users of NGDA within the Theme and incorporate the needs of those users into strategies related to the NGDA data theme.

GDA References

(b) Lead covered agencies

(3) Specific responsibilities

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(B) provide leadership and facilitate the development and implementation of a plan for nationwide population of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, which shall—

(ii) meet the needs of users of geospatial data;

AND

(b)(3)(D) as necessary, collect and analyze information from users of geospatial data within the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme regarding the needs of the users for geospatial data and incorporate the needs of users in strategies relating to the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme;

II.B.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(B)(ii) and 2805(b)(3)(D) – User Needs

User communities represented by the various federal, state, Tribal, local, NGO and even international partnerships associated with the theme and its NGDA data sets provide a continued source of specific user needs. Combined with defined regulatory requirements laid out in originating legislation for those data sets, clear priorities emerge for the theme as a whole. Secretarial Orders (such as the removal of derogatory and offensive names from the GNIS) further direct the theme activities.

The FGDC Subcommittee, in combination with local, state, tribal and federal partners and stakeholders perform needs assessments on an ongoing basis. The NGAC Cultural Resources Subcommittee has further articulated a set of recommendations for the theme, based on their user study. The NPS continues to work toward addressing the tasks assigned by the NGAC based on these user needs. Upon completion of NGAC priority one recommendation (Committee sponsorship of cultural resource spatial data transfer standards), the Subcommittee will undertake the process to identify varied partner agency definitions of “cultural resources” and how those resources are delineated in spatial data. The NPS will categorize findings related to cultural resource definitions and methods of spatial delineations during the period covered by this Plan to achieve this NGAC goal and meet significant user needs already identified. The NPS will partner with other FGDC cultural resource subcommittee participants to perform at least one additional user needs study during the period of this Plan.

II.C. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(B)(iii) – Human and Financial Resources

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to provide leadership and facilitate a plan to address human and financial resource needs for nationwide population of the NGDA data theme.

GDA Reference

(b) Lead covered agencies

(3) Specific responsibilities

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(B) provide leadership and facilitate the development and implementation of a plan for nationwide population of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, which shall—

(iii) address human and financial resource needs;

II.C.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(B)(iii) – Human and Financial Resources

Challenges related to human and financial resources remain for the theme. The NPS lacks dedicated funding and staff for theme management as well as stewardship of the National Register of Historic Places NGDA data set. Despite these obstacles, in FY23, the NPS renewed efforts to work directly with the NPS National Register Program, improving the quality and accuracy of the spatial data within the

data set. The rejuvenated discussions have led to significant updates to the National Register of Historic Places NGDA data set and will lead to the development of procedures to improve the quality of data in addition to establishing protocols to expand the data creation process during the period covered by this Plan.

The GNIS and GNS enjoy dedicated funding and staff to continue to develop, update and expand their NGDA data sets. Neither of the agencies that steward these NGDAs expect the allocation of additional resources during the period covered by this Plan.

An additional .1 percent of a Full-time Equivalent (FTE) was added to the NPS theme management team in FY23 to assist with GeoPlatform theme community hub page expansion. No additional human or financial resources are anticipated to contribute to the theme management during the period of this Plan. The theme lead will continue to work with the theme NGDA data stewards, pursue identified NGAC recommendations and address user needs based on the limited availability of human and financial resources associated with the NGDA theme contributing federal agencies throughout the period of this Plan.

II.D. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(iii) – Publish Maps or Comparable Graphics Online

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to publish maps or comparable graphics online showing the extent and status of NGDA data within the Theme.

GDA Reference

(b) Lead covered agencies

(3) Specific responsibilities

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(E) as part of administering the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme—

(iii) publish maps or comparable graphics online (in accordance with the mapping conventions specified by the Committee) showing the extent and status of the National Geospatial Data Asset data themes for which the covered agency is a lead covered agency;

II.D.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(iii) – Publish Maps or Comparable Graphics Online

Both the National Register of Historic Places and the GNIS NGDA data sets publish web GIS applications and digital graphics describing the national scope of the data on the GeoPlatform theme community hub website. Additionally, all three theme NGDA data sets publish applications, graphics and data services through the National Map, through individual agency websites, data.gov and other public data portals. The theme will continue to share these resources via GeoPlatform and ensure their continued functionality during the period covered by this Plan through quarterly examination of the links on the GeoPlatform theme community hub site for each NGDA data set in the theme.

II.E. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(iv) – Provide Access to NGDA Through the GeoPlatform

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to encourage Theme data and metadata sources to share their data via the GeoPlatform.

GDA Reference

(b) *Lead covered agencies*

(3) *Specific responsibilities*

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(E) *as part of administering the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme—*

(iv) *encourage individuals and entities that are a source of geospatial data or metadata for geospatial data for the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme to provide access to such data through the GeoPlatform;*

II.E.i. [Action\(s\) to Meet Objective: 2805\(b\)\(3\)\(E\)\(iv\) – Provide Access to NGDA Through the GeoPlatform](#)

All NGDA data sets within the theme are available through GeoPlatform via direct download, map services and other means on the cultural resources theme community hub page. Web links leading directly to the NGDA metadata records, data descriptions and data access records display on the community hub page, connecting to GeoPlatform and data.gov. The associated NGDA data stewards distribute these same links through their individual agency websites and other means. The theme lead periodically checks the GeoPlatform links to ensure that all NGDA data sets are available and valid. This process will continue on a quarterly basis throughout the period of this Plan.

The NPS theme management team identified a designated GeoPlatform community hub content manager in FY23. The GeoPlatform community hub content manager will work to ensure that GeoPlatform access to the NGDA data sets remains active, along with metadata and web services on a quarterly basis throughout the period of this Plan. The content manager will also continue to publish access to these links and support further expansion of documents included on the GeoPlatform community hub on a quarterly basis throughout the period of this Plan. Theme data stewards will review and incorporate Committee and other technical metadata guidance to ensure compliance with any expanded distribution requirements that may be established during the period of this Plan.

II.F. [Objective: 2805\(b\)\(3\)\(E\)\(v\) – Coordinate with the GeoPlatform](#)

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to coordinate with the GeoPlatform as part of administering the NGDA data theme.

GDA Reference

(b) *Lead covered agencies*

(3) *Specific responsibilities*

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(E) *as part of administering the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme—*

(v) *coordinate with the GeoPlatform;*

II.F.i. [Action\(s\) to Meet Objective: 2805\(b\)\(3\)\(E\)\(v\) – Coordinate with the GeoPlatform](#)

The theme lead and NGDA data set stewards regularly attend monthly theme lead meetings to coordinate with the Committee, NGDA team and other themes, focusing on reporting and data documentation topics as well as general theme administration efforts. Further, the theme lead regularly communicates with DOI geospatial staff, the Committee and the NGDA team to make sure theme NGDA

data set metadata is being harvested properly from data.gov, appears properly on the GeoPlatform community hub site and is findable through general search processes on GeoPlatform. These actions will continue on a quarterly basis throughout the period of this Plan at a minimum.

To facilitate general theme administration, the theme lead regularly submits draft reports and documents to the NGDA team for review and compliance with required regulations, sharing them with the theme NGDA data stewards for feedback. Additionally, the designated GeoPlatform community hub content manager regularly posts materials to the cultural resources theme community hub site to exchange information, describe progress and document ongoing tasks on a biannual basis. The current level of interaction with GeoPlatform and the NGDA team will continue throughout the period of this Plan.

II.G. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(vi) – Publish Proven Geospatial Practices

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to identify and publish proven practices for the use and application of geospatial data of the LCA as part of administering the NGDA data theme.

GDA Reference

(b) *Lead covered agencies*

(3) *Specific responsibilities*

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(E) *as part of administering the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme—*

(vi) *identify and publish proven practices for the use and application of geospatial data of the lead covered agency.*

II.G.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(E)(vi) – Publish Proven Geospatial Practices

The FGDC Cultural Resources Subcommittee charter states that its primary objective is to provide assistance and identify best practices useful to the NPS in meeting its theme stewardship responsibilities under the GDA. These responsibilities may include developing and implementing appropriate Committee standards, a strategic plan for populating the cultural resources theme, and goals that support the NSDI. Additionally, the Subcommittee periodically assists in meeting GDA administrative responsibilities focusing on preparing LCA reports, disseminating cultural resource spatial data, and publishing proven practices for the use and application of cultural resource data sets.

The NGAC Cultural Resources Subcommittee recommendations developed in 2019, provided additional goals for the theme specifically related to developing best practices and guidance for cultural resource spatial data, protection of sensitive cultural resource data as well as data standards. The five NGAC recommendations include:

- Develop a definition of cultural resource spatial data
- Develop guidelines on the management, access control, and exchange of geospatial data associated with sensitive cultural and historical resources
- Identify data sharing agreements and strategies
- Continue and complete development of current spatial data transfer standards
- Develop a training strategy and materials

In fulfilling the NGAC goals, the FGDC Subcommittee has completed a final draft of the cultural resource spatial data transfer standards. The theme has designated a GeoPlatform theme community hub site

content manager and uses the GeoPlatform community hub to share these documents along with associated guidance materials on a biannual basis. The current use of the GeoPlatform community hub site is expected to expand based on progress made by the theme in meeting major milestones in the other NGAC recommendations throughout the period of this Plan. The theme will disseminate additional guidance and best practices documents as they are developed, meeting NGAC and GDA goals.

III. Goal: 2805(b)(3)(A), (b)(3)(B)(iv) – Assess Metadata and Data Standards

To maximize the utility of the theme, the GDA requires lead covered agencies to identify needs related to the following three items: data standards for geospatial data within the NGDA data theme, metadata standards for geospatial data within the NGDA data theme, and access to NGDA data and metadata through the GeoPlatform.

III.A. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(B)(iv) – Metadata Standards

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to identify needs related to standards, metadata for geospatial data within the NGDA data theme, and the GeoPlatform to ensure that the NGDA are Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR).

GDA Reference

(b) *Lead covered agencies*

(3) *Specific responsibilities*

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(B) *provide leadership and facilitate the development and implementation of a plan for nationwide population of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, which shall—*

(iv) *identify needs relating to standards, metadata for geospatial data within the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, and the GeoPlatform;*

III.A.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(B)(iv) – Metadata Standards

The NGDA data sets within the theme are national as well as international in scope and follow processes to identify needs for data standards, improving data quality and addressing human/financial needs. These data sets meet their regulatory requirements under their individual originating legislation, other related laws and directives, Secretarial Orders as well as the GDA.

The FGDC Cultural Resources Subcommittee has developed a final draft cultural resource spatial data transfer standard. This standard development follows up on the data standard need identified by the NGAC Cultural Resources Subcommittee, which in turn follows up on a data standard user need identified by the collective of state, Tribal and federal agency representatives which pre-dated the FGDC Subcommittee. All NGDA data sets within the theme comply with existing bureau appropriate data standards, as well as general Committee and international metadata standards required for the data to be findable in GeoPlatform, meeting the FAIR principles. Theme data stewards will review and incorporate Committee and other technical metadata guidance to ensure compliance with any expanded metadata requirements that may be established during the period of this Plan.

Challenges remain to guarantee that data is harvested from data.gov (specifically NPS data) to allow NGDA data sets to be discoverable on GeoPlatform. The theme lead will continue to work with the NGDA team to find a dependable metadata harvest process that consistently ensures all theme NGDA data sets appear through GeoPlatform on a reliable basis during the period covered under this Plan. In addition, the theme lead will guide the final draft data transfer standard through the Committee

endorsement process during the period of this Plan, to meet the previously identified data standard needs.

III.B. Objective: 2805(b)(3)(A)(i); (ii); (iii) – Data Standards

The GDA requires lead covered agencies to develop a plan to originate and implement needed standards consistent with relevant community and international practices in accordance with Office of Management and Budget Circular A–119, or any successor thereto.

GDA Reference

(b) Lead covered agencies

(3) Specific responsibilities

To assist in fulfilling the responsibilities under paragraph (2) with respect to a National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, the lead covered agencies shall—

(A) provide leadership and facilitate the development and implementation of geospatial data standards for the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, with a particular emphasis on a data content standard for the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme, including by—

(i) assessing existing standards;

(ii) identifying anticipated or needed data standards; and

(iii) developing a plan to originate and implement needed standards with relevant community and international practices—

NGDA Baseline Standards Inventory

In 2021, the lead covered agencies participated in an FGDC-conducted NGDA standards inventory. This inventory was the initial action to identify the standards currently in use, or that needed to be removed or replaced, in the Committee’s list of previously endorsed standards. The inventory will be used to inform the changes required in the FGDC-approved standards list once the Committee implements a process to “establish and maintain geospatial data standards” in accordance with the GDA. The standards inventory results and background information are available on the GeoPlatform NGDA Portfolio [Standards](#)⁸ page.

III.B.i. Action(s) to Meet Objective: 2805(b)(3)(A)(i); (ii); (iii) – Data Standards

As discussed under the Partnerships objective, individual NGDA data sets within the theme have specific partnership programs created through their associated organizing legislation. For instance, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created the National Register of Historic Places and the network of State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), certified local governments (CLGs) and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), in addition to the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) supporting their activities. The NPS administers the HPF, provides technical assistance to SHPOs/THPOs, and maintains the National Register of Historic Places NGDA based in part on data they create. In this capacity, the NPS worked with these partners beginning in 2002 to develop a Committee-endorsed cultural resource data content standard.

Because each SHPO, CLG, THPO, and Federal agency operates independently to collect, maintain, and develop their portion of the repository of over five million cultural resources nation-wide, coordination

⁸ <https://ngda-portfolio-community-geoplatfrom.hub.arcgis.com/pages/standards>

in data standards is critical as well as ambitious. The effort to create the data content standard ultimately failed due to the significant challenges encountered in establishing consistent data elements, terminology and spatial data parameters. Subsequently, the FGDC Cultural Resources Subcommittee was created with many of these same partners to focus on sharing data across state and local lines and to Federal agencies. This led to the development of the current draft cultural resource spatial data transfer standards, currently available on the theme community GeoPlatform hub site.

The NPS cultural resource spatial data transfer standard, established in 2006, updated in 2014 and currently used for the National Register of Historic Places NGDA data set, served as a model for the draft standard produced by the Subcommittee. The NGAC recommendation to continue development of this data standard by the FGDC Subcommittee has resulted in the final draft, now waiting for Committee endorsement. The theme expects to meet this NGAC goal within the span of this Plan and to begin the implementation of the Committee endorsed standard in cultural resource spatial data sharing among federal agencies and their partners.

The NPS is engaged in a process to update and evolve their own cultural spatial data content standard to align more with NPS core data standards and the draft Committee cultural resource spatial data content standard. This process involves detailed coordination with data users and cultural resource specialists within the NPS and its partners. The resulting updated NPS data standard will be applied to the National Register of Historic Places NGDA data set within the period covered by this Plan. The FGDC Cultural Resources Subcommittee will develop and incorporate a similar data standard analysis process to evaluate its cultural resource spatial data transfer standards once they have been formally endorsed by the Committee. The theme expects to receive this data standard endorsement inside the period of this Plan. Once endorsed, the theme will implement a regular schedule to review and update the standard based on the established process if any changes are required during the span of this Plan.

Appendix A: NGDA Data Themes (GDA Sec 2805) and NSDI Strategic Plan Crosswalk

The following is a crosswalk of National Geospatial Data Asset Data Themes (GDA Sec 2805) referenced within this Plan as the GDA relates to the NSDI Strategic Plan.

Goal	GDA Section	NSDI	GDA
I.	2805(b)(3)(E)	1.3, 2.1, 4.1	Goal: Administration of the Theme
I.A.	2805(b)(3)(E)(i)		Objective: Point of Contact
I.B.	2805(b)(3)(E)(ii)(I)	2.1, 4.1	Objective: Annual Reporting
I.C.	2805(b)(3)(E)(ii)(II)	2.1, 4.1	Objective: Annual Report Comments
II.	2805(b)(3)(B)	2.1-2.4, 3.1-3.4	Goal: Provide leadership and facilitate the development and implementation of a plan for nationwide population of the National Geospatial Data Asset data theme
II.A.	2805(b)(3)(B)(i)	4.1-4.5	Objective: Partnerships
II.B.	2805(b)(3)(B)(ii), 2805(b)(3)(D)	2.4 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2	Objective: User Needs
II.C.	2805(b)(3)(B)(iii)	4.4	Objective: Human and Financial Resources
II.D.	2805(b)(3)(E)(iii)	2.4, 3.1-3.4	Objective: – Publish Maps or Comparable Graphics Online
II.E.	2805(b)(3)(E)(iv)	2.4, 3.1-3.4	Objective: Provide Access to NGDA Through the GeoPlatform
II.F.	2805(b)(3)(E)(v)	3.1	Objective: Coordinate with the GeoPlatform
II.G.	2805(b)(3)(E)(vi)	2.4	Objective: Publish Proven Geospatial Practices
III.	2805(b)(3)(A), (b)(3)(B)(iv)	3.4, 4.5	Goal: Data and Metadata Standards
III.A.	2805(b)(3)(B)(iv)	3.4, 4.5	Objective: Metadata Standards
III.B.	2805(b)(3)(A)(i)-(iii)	3.4, 4.5	Objective: Plan for Standards