GDA Implementation Subcommittee Membership (April 2023)

Membership:

- Cy Smith (Chair), Maggie Cawley (Vice-Chair), Nadine Alameh, Byron Bluehorse, Garet Couch, Tony LaVoi, Tim Trainor

Subcommittee Role:

- Identify GDA implementation outcomes and measure implementation going forward based on those outcomes.

- Provide high level evaluation of GDA implementation toward outcomes; recommendations for improvements to be incorporated as NGAC input to FGDC GDA Report to Congress next spring.

- Develop more detailed evaluation and recommendations regarding GDA implementation as part of a template for such a biennial evaluation going forward.

- Conduct an evaluation of NGAC's role as authorized in the GDA and provide recommendations for improvements in the implementation of that role.

NGAC Paper: "Evaluation of GDA Implementation"

Adopted at April 2023 NGAC meeting

Contents:

- Introduction

- Aspirational Outcomes

- Progress Towards the Aspirational Outcomes

- Need for Improved NSDI Governance

- Need for Improved Data Management

- Need for Reporting Improvements

- Recommendations

- Summary and Next Steps

Aspirational GDA Outcomes

1. Make NSDI data available to all stakeholders, including Congress, to improve and support policy making and operations, respond to national priorities and circumstances, and support the national economy.

2. Develop and foster meaningful partnerships with all NSDI stakeholders.

3. Complete and maintain NSDI data content nationwide.

4. Improve management of NSDI data

5. Improve accessibility and availability of NSDI data. Ensure NSDI compliance to established data standards.

6. Ensure NSDI compliance to established data standards.

Evaluation of GDA Implementation – Draft Paper

Need for Improved NSDI Governance – Recommendations:

1. The FGDC should participate in ongoing efforts to design a national organizational framework that will facilitate greater collaboration and coordination on the NSDI. All stakeholders would be represented in the design process and in the national organizational framework. The design process should be informed by the results of previous FGDC NSDI governance studies and activities.

2. The FGDC should re-examine the process for identifying NGDAs. NGAC recommends a tiered approach that would identify NGDAs based on priority, scope, and value of the data.

Evaluation of GDA Implementation – Draft Paper

Need for Improved Data Management – Recommendations

3. FGDC member agencies should define and agree on comprehensive best practices and capabilities required to establish, enable, and sustain mature data governance and management programs for geospatial data.

4. FGDC member agencies should comply with all applicable international, national, sector, and voluntary standards and best practices for making geospatial data, information, and assets Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR), to ensure maximum use and value from agency geospatial programs.

5. NGAC and FGDC leadership should institute a comprehensive review and evaluation of the business case and existing governance and management practices of the GeoPlatform to ensure alignment with GDA requirements and benefit to the national geospatial community of users and the larger user community dependent on geospatial information.

Need for Reporting Improvements – Recommendations

6. The FGDC should work with Congress to modify the GDA reporting requirements to include criteria for collaboration, governance, benefits, and outcomes, shifting the focus from reporting about general process-oriented compliance to an outcome-oriented reporting process that identifies and encourages collaboration among geospatial data providers, data managers, disseminators, and users of geospatial data. This kind of reporting would require explaining how an agency has coordinated with non-federal entities, with the NGDA elevation theme annual reports used as an example.

7. The FGDC should require agencies to conduct full baseline reports every 2 years, with any change to particular datasets reported annually, working with Congress to modify the GDA for this purpose if necessary. Significant changes by an agency in collecting, managing, and disseminating geospatial information rarely occurs during a single reporting period. Establishing a baseline often reflects a similar state of progress with negligible changes from year to year. Having agencies report on annual changes within a timeframe that the agency specifies for particular data sets and activities before requiring a subsequent baseline full report adds to efficiency in reporting.

Need for Reporting Improvements – Recommendations

8. The FGDC should work with Congress to change GDA requirements to have each respective Inspector General conduct program evaluations of an agency's performance every two years rather than full audits. Full audits should be only done every four years, not every two years as currently required. While external reviews of geospatial data responsibility of an agency are beneficial, the extent to which the review occurs will have an impact on limited agency resources. This change will meet the intent of external reviews while potentially reducing resource requirements for both the agency and its Inspector General's Office.

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GDA Reporting Subcommittee

Membership (April 2023):

- Mark Meade (Chair), Chad Baker (Vice Chair), Lynn Dupont, Bobbi Lenczowski, Cy Smith, Gary Thompson

Subcommittee Role:

- Work with FGDC OS staff & NGAC leadership to plan and coordinate NGAC's submission of comments as part of the GDA reporting process

- Identify areas of focus for NGAC review and assess the utility of the reports

- Collect/synthesize NGAC's comments on the GDA reports

- Document and communicate lessons learned and recommendations for improving the process for future reports.

FY 2022 GDA Annual Reports – Status

- FGDC agencies used common criteria, reporting templates, and processes – including agency self-assessments of performance – to complete the 2022 GDA annual reports

- All 2022 annual reports completed and posted on FGDC website, along with covered agency and NGDA dashboards

- FGDC submitted Summary of FY 2022 GDA Annual Reports to NGAC for review and comment on February 27, 2023

- NGAC GDA Reporting Subcommittee requested comments from NGAC members, met with FGDC team, and compiled consolidated set of NGAC comments

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FY 2022 GDA Report - NGAC Comments

Focus areas for NGAC comments on 2022 GDA Report Summary:

1. **Positive elements**

   - What was successful in the initial GDA report summary?

2. **Areas needing improvement**

   - What areas need improvement?

3. **Recommendations for future reports**

   - What can FGDC do to improve future versions of the GDA annual report summaries?

4. **Other Comments**

   - NGAC members provided high-level comments, under the focus areas above, to the GDA Reporting Subcommittee

NGAC Review & Comment

Positive Elements

- **FGDC Reporting Approach**

  - Improvements to reporting processes through standardized criteria and online tools.

- **Summary of Results**

  - Appreciate that NGAC feedback was directly incorporated in this year's report.

- **Overview**

  - Cross agency efforts to analyze GDA requirements and collaborative work between agencies was noted as an important accomplishment.

NGAC Review & Comment

Areas Needing Improvement

- **Executive Summary**

  - With 14% of lead covered agencies fully meeting expectations, there is still plenty of work to do.

- **Changes to GDA Annual Reporting**

  - Dashboards are very helpful but need additional usability refinements.

- **General Comments**

  - Valuable to compare the percentages of meet/pass/fail in the executive summary to the 2021 values (they are indicated as +/- in the table later in the report, but it would be good to have that info as a percentage comparison up front in the executive summary).

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NGAC Review & Comment

Recommendations for Future Reports

- **Executive Summary**

  - In the future, it would be helpful if commentary was provided on the covered agency self-evaluations that have ratings inconsistent with the Inspector General reports.

  - The Executive Summary describes changes in the reporting process and the results of the performance and statistical accomplishments of meeting the requirements for reporting but does not describe why that is important.

- **Changes to GDA Annual Reporting**

  - If a self-evaluation with a "-" indicates a lower rating than in the past year, it would help to know why an "M" was replaced with a "P " or why an "F" was introduced. The covered agency summary reports did not include an explanation. Having some insight into the cause of the decrease in the rating would be helpful.

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NGAC Review & Comment

Other Comments

- **Key Observations**

  - While the dashboards present the reporting information in a simple manner, they do not clearly convey the status of the effort due to subjectivity in how ratings are defined and applied. Further, the ratings should be evaluated to see if a change is needed to improve the effectiveness of conveying status of requirements for the themes.

- **Challenges and Observations**

  - Suggest adding language to the Challenges section to discuss the need for a 'standards baseline' in order to effectively measure progress of GDA Implementation. Consider adding a section focused on FGDC Challenges to advance the GDA.

FGDC Responses to NGAC Comments

- FGDC discussed NGAC comments with GDA working group and NGDA Theme leads
- FGDC team reviews NGAC comments as plans next year's reports are developed
- FGDC team documents responses to NGAC comments in spreadsheet distributed to NGAC GDA Reporting Subcommittee

FGDC Responses to NGAC Comments on FY2021 GDA Summary Report FINAL

NGAC Comment	Report Section	Report area	Positives, Improvements, or Recommendations	Type of Change/Suggestion	NGAC Comment (Original)	FGDC Comment (Consolidated/Summarized)
3.1.1	1.0 Introduction		Areas Needing Improvement	Report Format	Future reports should begin with an Executive Summary that addresses the health of the national geospatial program relative to the GDA reporting requirements, rather than a description of the reporting process. As the reports evolve, the process will become boilerplate and will no longer need to be featured at the front in the report.	This is a helpful comment and the suggestion makes sense. FGDC is currently developing the template for the FY2022 report and will look to incorporate this suggestion into the Summary Report.
3.1.2	1.1 - 1.4 Introduction		Areas Needing Improvement	Report Format	1.1 through 1.4 should be an appendix to the report, rather than part of the report itself. Having these sections at the beginning of the report can derail readers before they get to the key part of the report.	This is a helpful comment and the suggestion makes sense. FGDC is currently developing the template for the FY2022 report and will look to incorporate this suggestion into the Summary Report.
3.2.1	Table 1 Table 1		Areas Needing Improvement	Reporting Agencies	Additional agencies with geospatial responsibilities, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), should be included in the reporting requirements as both a Covered Agency and Lead Covered Agency. This recommendation was also made last year, but the EPA is still not described in the GDA as a covered agency.	The GDA defines covered agencies and the EPA is not included. Congressional action would be required as FGDC does not have the authority to designate additional covered agencies.
3.2.2	Table 1 Table 1		Areas Needing Improvement	Report Format	Footnote 3 appears twice at the bottom of page 3.	Comment noted, will address in future reports.
3.3.1	Table 2/3	CA Table 2 / LCA Table 3	Areas Needing Improvement	Additional summary explanation	The results in Table 2 and Table 3 should be expanded upon by descriptive or summary information discussing progress. The report should include highlights of achievements, progress toward goals, and deficiencies reported out by agencies with related explanations.	FGDC will work to include additional descriptive and summary information in future reports in an executive summary. FGDC has updated the FY 2022 template to include an optional opportunity for agencies to "briefly highlight a key achievement in making progress towards meeting GDA requirements or advancing geospatial activities. This submission will be considered for use in the upcoming FGDC Summary Report or the Report to Congress. Please note that this achievement may have already been highlighted in your Brief Summaries or your optional 2-page PDF submission."
3.3.2	CA Summary	General Comments	Areas Needing Improvement	Self-Assessment Approach	Even when reading actual report submissions, it is unclear how the change in self-assessment rating is determined. It would be helpful to understand the circumstances and rationale behind changes in self-assessment ratings.	The self-assessment rating is currently based on a key that is included in the final agency reports. We will work to make a more clear explanation of the self-assessment process in future reports. The noted change in the self-assessment rating is based on the previous year's annual report.
3.4.1	Overall	General Comments	Areas Needing Improvement	Self-Assessment Approach	The agencies' self-assessment approaches need to be better explained and better documented.	Agency self-assessments are currently based on responses to the suite of questions included in the final agency reports. Agencies also provide brief summaries for each requirement as described above. It would be helpful to receive specific recommendations from NGAC for improvements that may help explain or document agency achievements.