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FEMA

MEMORANDUM FOR: Regional Flood Insurance and Mitigation Division Directors
Risk Identification Branch Staff

FROM: 
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Acting Director
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SUBJECT: Geospatial Data Coordination Policy

1. PURPOSE

This policy establishes the principles for coordinating, communicating, documenting and reporting existing and proposed geospatial data collected, produced or manipulated under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Map Modernization Program. The purpose is to enable data sharing and secondary data use.

The primary goals of this policy are to ensure that the Map Modernization Program will:

- a. protect its investments in geospatial data by requiring data to be documented, standards compliant and easily accessible to the general public when appropriate and release of the data does not pose a security risk,
- b. maximize the use of partnerships, including Federal, State and local partners, for the acquisition and production of geospatial data,
- c. minimize duplicative requests from Federal agencies to State and local data stewards,
- d. recognize the value of existing coordination efforts at the State and local levels, and
- e. comply with all Federal requirements for coordination and reporting of geospatial activities.

Through Circular A-16 the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directed Federal agencies that produce, maintain, or use spatial data to participate in the development of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). The goals of the NSDI are to reduce duplication of effort among agencies; improve quality and reduce costs related to geographic information; make geographic data more accessible to the public; increase the benefits of using available data; and establish key partnerships with states, counties, cities, tribal nations, academia and the private sector to increase data availability.

FEMA supports the requirements, guidance and standards provided by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) and the related e-Government initiative goals of the Geospatial One-Stop (GOS) that implement the NSDI.

2. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

This policy applies to all FEMA organizations, contractors and grantees of FEMA, who design, develop, compile, collect, convert or maintain FEMA geospatial data collections developed for the Map Modernization Program.

This policy does not preclude or rescind more stringent regional or program-specific policy and guidance.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

- a. The Risk Identification Branch (RIB) shall be responsible for implementing and supporting this policy and for providing guidance and technical assistance where feasible and appropriate in implementing and improving the requirements of this policy.
- b. Regional Flood Insurance and Mitigation Division Directors shall establish procedures within their respective organizations to ensure that information collection and reporting requirements under their direction are in compliance with this policy.

4. PROVISIONS FOR WAIVERS

Requests for waivers from specified provisions of the policy may be submitted for review to the Risk Identification Branch Chief at FEMA Headquarters. Waiver requests must be based clearly on data quality objectives and cost impacts and must be signed by the relevant Regional Flood Insurance and Mitigation Division Director prior to submission to the Risk Identification Branch Chief.

5. POLICY

It is FEMA's policy that geospatial data for use in the development of Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps be coordinated, collected, documented and reported with standardized, complete and current information in compliance with Federal geospatial data reporting standards.

It is FEMA's policy to avoid all unnecessary duplication of Federal, State or local mapping efforts by consistent coordination and application of this policy to mapping projects. Further, it is FEMA's policy to align its coordination efforts with existing State and local coordination processes.

Specifically, anyone collecting, acquiring, producing, contracting for or managing geospatial data for Map Modernization projects shall:

- a. Post Planned Projects to Appropriate Systems for Coordination
 - i. Post planned production to Geospatial One-Stop (GOS).
 - a. A record will be posted to GOS describing each major data theme required for the project such as orthoimagery, vector data, and elevation data. The record should include the specific project area and general information about the project sufficient to assist potential partners in determining if there is a possible overlap with their requirements.

- b. The initial posting for each project shall be accomplished prior to January 31st of the fiscal year prior to the year when the project will be initiated based on OMB/GOS requirements.
 - c. The information posted to GOS shall be updated after scoping, when data collections are completed, and whenever more details are available that would assist potential partners in determining if project data would support their requirements as well.
 - ii. Planned orthoimagery should be posted in the National Digital Orthophoto Program (NDOP) project tracking system and coordinated with NDOP.
 - iii. Planned digital land or bathymetric elevation data should be posted in the National Digital Elevation Program (NDEP) project tracking system and coordinated with NDEP.
- b. Identify Existing Data
- Prior to initiating any new data production, sources at the Federal, State, and local levels should be coordinated with in order to identify existing holdings:
- i. Federal – Investigate the Federal data holdings in appropriate systems, including GOS, NDOP, and NDEP. Search existing FEMA holdings. Contact state-level Federal agency contacts.
 - ii. State – Coordinate with the designated state geospatial data contact and investigate state data inventories.
 - iii. Local – Contact the affected jurisdictions and the County to determine available sources of information.
- c. Acquire Existing Data
- i. Follow data acquisition procedures based on current state specific Geospatial Coordination Procedures maintained by the Regional Office.
 - ii. When acquiring existing data for use in the development of the DFIRM, ensure that each distinct data set is accompanied by metadata that is FGDC compliant.
 - iii. Ensure that FEMA has distribution rights for acquired data as appropriate. (See section 5.e.iii)
 - iv. Non-Federal orthoimagery used for a project should be posted in the NDOP project tracking system.
 - v. Non-Federal digital land or bathymetric elevation data used for a project should be posted in the NDEP project tracking system.
 - vi. Ensure that the data are archived on the MIP or in an approved partner archive and made available as appropriate.
- d. Build Partnerships for the Creation of New Data
- i. Search for similar planned projects in the area in order to identify potential partnerships.

- ii. Check with Federal, State and local partners for potentially compatible projects and work to build partnership arrangements for the acquisition or creation of the new data. Be flexible and seek partnerships that are beneficial to all parties.
 - iii. Planned orthoimagery production should be coordinated with NDOP and posted in the NDOP project tracking system.
 - iv. Planned digital land or bathymetric elevation data production should be coordinated with NDEP and posted in the NDEP project tracking system.
 - v. Post the planned acquisition to GOS.
 - vi. Ensure that any partnership agreement provides FEMA unlimited public distribution rights to the data (See section 5.e.iii).
- e. Document and Standardize Data
- i. Regional offices shall maintain state specific Geospatial Coordination Procedures for each state in the Region. These will identify points of contact, desired level of State involvement, State geospatial resources and other information to facilitate coordination with the State.
 - ii. When new data is produced or acquired for a flood study project, ensure that FGDC compliant metadata is part of the deliverable.
 - iii. Insure that data partnership agreements provide FEMA appropriate data distribution rights.
 - a. All flood data and all base maps must allow unlimited free distribution by FEMA and partners.
 - b. Elevation data created using FEMA funding must allow unlimited free distribution by FEMA and partners.
 - c. Community (or other partner) supplied elevation data should allow unlimited free distribution unless there are substantial cost savings or other compelling reasons to use data that are not freely distributable.
 - d. Licensed, commercial datasets other than flood data and base maps may be used if it is advantageous for the project.
 - e. Data that represents a security risk if disclosed do not need to allow unlimited free distribution.
 - iv. When production is complete, remove GOS records for planned datasets and post GOS records for the finished datasets.
 - v. Publish metadata for completed dataset on an NSDI clearinghouse node.
 - vi. Update information provided to the NDOP and NDEP to reflect completed status of the project.
 - vii. Document:
 - a. Amount spent for each data category by FEMA (ground elevation, cross section survey, base map, etc.).
 - b. Acquisition cost / in-kind contribution for each partner.

6. ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

The detailed procedures and guidelines for implementing the policy are issued under separate cover (Geospatial Data Coordination Implementation Guide). This implementation guidance will provide more detail on the Geospatial Data Coordination Policy as well as procedures for its implementation.