



Executive Summary

September 5, 2008

† Federal Coordination Factors †

Introduction

Geographic information provides the foundation for enhanced services and products resulting in quicker, more reliable decision-making – in essence, better government. Government agencies at all levels develop and deploy programs that describe and affect the same geography from dissimilar perspectives. Location-based governmental services create enormous opportunities to work together in partnerships that eliminate redundant activities, and leverage our shared efforts to reduce the costs of data creation and maintenance. Improved communication, coordination, cooperation and collaboration will allow us to realize the benefits of partnering.

In May of 2004, the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) developed nine coordination criteria to measure the effectiveness of statewide geographic information technology (GIT) coordination programs. That effort was very successful in providing a scorecard by which individual states can measure the effectiveness of their GIT coordination efforts, and it provides a reference template for the federal coordination of GIT.



The Purpose of a State Model for Federal Coordination

This document identifies seven fundamental characteristics that promote effective partnerships and solid working relationships between state and federal government agencies concerning the development and deployment of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). These critical factors measure current performance, define the effectiveness of statewide coordination with federal agencies and programs,

and provide guidance on states' partnership-building efforts with federal initiatives. Identified below, these seven criteria represent over 50 success factors that are detailed in NSGIC's *Criteria for Federal Coordination of Geographic Information Technology – A State Perspective* white paper.

Federal Coordination Criteria

It is NSGIC's hope that the white paper will guide states and federal agencies through their partnership building processes, and will help to measure their successes. Briefly, the seven fundamental characteristics are:

1. Clear, Defined Line of Communications

All partnerships must begin with an appropriate point of contact and effective communications. State-level coordination efforts struggle when they must deal with federal personnel at agency headquarters, regional offices, and/or more locally to develop partnership agreements. Opening and maintaining an effective line of communication between partnering agencies is the first step in building the NSDI. Maintaining up-to-date and web-accessible appropriate points of contact (POC) lists for each federal program would assist the states. Federal agency POCs must be empowered to speak authoritatively for their agency and any other agency they officially represent as POC.



2. Commitment to Coordination with Federal and National Organizations

Coordinated partnerships that leverage assets and resources across several levels of government are more cost efficient and are instrumental in building the NSDI. It is imperative that federal initiatives

work in concert with each other and that they do not compete for resources, funding, and time from partnering agencies. As agency budgets are constrained, coordination and cooperation among federal agencies will be increasingly required. This competition for resources, funding and time is not limited to federal agencies. State, regional, tribal and local governments wrestle with similar issues, which force them to set cooperative priorities and manage the impact of resource constraints.

National organizations provide effective means of communicating and coordinating with large populations of both traditional and non-traditional geospatial users and producers. This commitment to intergovernmental coordination benefits every level of government, the public and efforts aimed at data collection, maintenance, and dissemination.

3. Coordinated Federal Program Development

Federal government representatives must speak with one voice, provide a single direction and allow for many options to accomplish their spatially-related programs and initiatives. State and Local governments are stuck between federal agencies that, so far, have been unwilling to work on common programs that provide benefits to all partners.



Government initiatives should instead be accomplished through the development and linkage of transparent information systems that are maintained in a distributed manner by all of the partners. Non-federal partners should be able to work with the most appropriate federal agency in order to provide access to non-federal data holdings.

Federal agencies should work together to overcome programmatic and technical issues related to systems interconnectivity and data interoperability. It is critical that every federal requirement for state and local agencies' data have a menu of choices to meet these needs. They must also provide for general consensus standards to account for the varying capabilities, business needs, political environments, legal requirements, and resources of individual states and local providers.

Through coordinated programs, federal efforts should speak with one voice, providing a unified direction for governmental action, while simultaneously allowing many paths to accomplish their national goals and objectives.

4. Interaction with Statewide Coordination Councils

At its core, NSGIC's Fifty States Initiative supports the development of strategic and business plans for the management of spatial information systems that address the needs of all stakeholders within each state. To that end, effective statewide coordination councils must be established in each state, and it is important that federal agencies encourage and support those councils and their statewide geospatial business plans. Statewide coordination councils are the appropriate governance entities to facilitate and coordinate geospatial programs between federal and non-federal levels.

Federal agencies must work through the statewide coordination councils to partner with state and local agencies. By establishing them as the primary conduit for communicating and coordinating information to other levels of government, federal agencies affirm the Council's role as the geospatial facilitator for the state, which increases opportunities for coordinated and collaborative efforts at all levels. Each state then has a vested interest in maintaining connections to other levels of government, which helps to accomplish Statewide Spatial Data Infrastructure (SSDI) programs.

5. Coordinated Program Development in Partnership with States

Effective partnerships result when the needs of each partner are met and there is an identified positive value proposition for each partnering agency. At all government levels, spatial data integration requirements and other business needs are common components of coordination initiatives, and they should accomplish the following:

- support state initiatives,
- engage state activities, and
- provide maintenance mechanisms and funding assistance

These needs should be addressed in each federal agency's program development process.



6. Deployment of Federal Programs that Incorporate Partnerships -

The proliferation of commercial mapping systems has given the public, policy makers, and legislators a false sense that all of the mapping needs of the Nation are being met. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-130 and Circular A-11, Section 300, mandate federal agencies to create a number of business planning documents to describe their information technology investments, but these documents are difficult to comprehend from state or local levels. Federal agencies must develop clear summaries of each program's objective, its geographic coverage, and the role that state and local governments are expected to play in the program's success. Federal agencies must participate in developing cost-benefit analyses (CBA) that support both the concept of the NSDI as well as their individual roles in creating the NSDI. These CBA documents must justify the expenditures required to meet the accuracy and scale requirements, as well as the business needs of all partners involved in shared data and system development projects. These activities need to be synthesized into concise working documents that can be used to establish and support multi-agency partnership opportunities.

7. Federal Participation in Data and System Development Programs

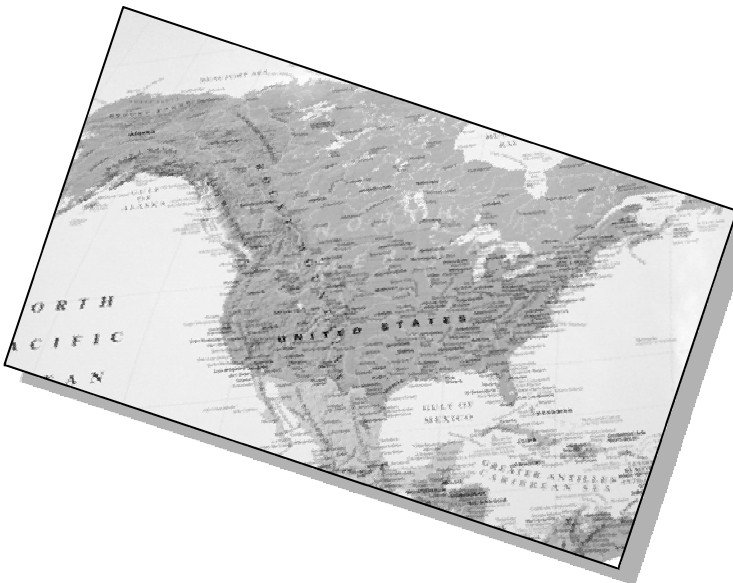
Federal agencies must be active partners with state and local agency data and system development projects by providing financial support and/or effective in-kind services. Federal agencies must engage in state activities that are supportive of federal objectives and provide programmatic support. Effective partnerships are based on participation by all partners and encourage data compatibility and access.



Summary

Developing and maintaining NSDI framework components is complex and will take a concerted effort at all levels of government. By promoting effective communication, coordination and collaboration efforts, NSDI framework components can be developed, established and sustained. Efforts that address the common business requirements and spatial data needs expressed at state, local and federal levels provide insights into the most effective way to build the NSDI.

The success factors identified here and in NSGIC's "For the Nation" criteria are not new. They are consistent with the success factors that contribute to the success of all major endeavors that require true partnerships and multi-agency participation. The adoption and use of NSGIC's *Criteria for Federal Coordination of Geographic Information Technology* will help guide states and federal agencies through the partnership building process, and will move us forward in collaborating on implementing an integrated, sustainable solution to the NSDI. Get a copy at: http://www.nsgic.org/resources/federal_coordination_factors_may2008.pdf



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ABOUT NSGIC — The National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) is an organization of States committed to efficient and effective government through the prudent adoption of geospatial information technologies. Members of NSGIC include delegations of state GIS coordinators and senior state GIS managers from across the United States. Other members include representatives from Federal agencies, local government, the private sector, academia and other professional organizations. A rich and diverse group, the NSGIC membership includes nationally and internationally recognized