

NSDI Future Directions Initiative: Towards A National Geospatial Strategy & Implementation Plan

Overview:

The National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) is the technology, policies, criteria, standards and people necessary to promote geospatial data sharing throughout all levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors, and academia. It provides a base or structure of practices and relationships among data producers and users that facilitates data sharing and use. Much has been accomplished in recent years to further the implementation of the NSDI, but there is still much to be done to achieve the vision of current geographic data being readily available across the country.

The goal of the NSDI Future Directions Initiative is *to craft a national geospatial strategy and implementation plan to further the development of the NSDI*. Drawing on the collective insights of the geospatial community, three overarching action areas have emerged.

(1) Forging Partnerships with Purpose: Adopting a governance structure that includes representatives of all stakeholder groups guides the development of the NSDI.

The NSDI can only be maintained and enhanced through the collaborative efforts of many organizations. A well-coordinated, concerted effort inclusive of the private sector, academia and all levels of government led by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), is needed to leverage resources, minimize redundancies and solve problems. A governance structure that fosters collaboration and shared responsibilities among stakeholders is critical to ensure success of this effort.

Essential elements for achieving the objectives are a bottom-up approach and partnerships.

(2) Making Framework Real: Implementing nationally coordinated programs that include collection, documentation, access, and utilization of data for generating framework data themes.

Standardization of framework themes is critical to the achievement of interoperability among diverse geospatial data suppliers and users. The national acceptance and utilization of American National Standards for framework data themes is the first step toward interoperability. Expansion of the current framework layers to encompass more themes of national, regional, local or topical importance is an FGDC priority.

(3) Communicating the Message: Ensuring that the NSDI is recognized across the nation as the primary mechanism for assuring access to reliable geospatial data.

The geospatial community must be able to communicate the benefits and value of the NSDI beyond the current user and supplier communities. The development of the business case, a strategic communications plan and training programs that support NSDI implementation will contribute to reaching this goal.

Progress to Date:

To address the strategic objectives, Action Teams were established using a phased-in approach; with most teams starting in September of 2004. Twelve of the thirteen strategic objectives are currently being addressed by action teams or working groups. Each of the operating teams developed a team charter and an action plan. Two teams have completed their reports and will seek Steering Committee approval. Other teams are implementing specific actions identified in their action plans or work plans. The Future Directions Quarterly Report outlines areas of responsibility, major accomplishments,

performance measures, issues and concerns and support needed for each team. Quarterly reports, action plans, team charters, and monthly reports are found at the FGDC web site (www.fgdc.gov/futuredirections).

A Summary of Accomplishments by Focus Area:

Partnerships with Purpose: The *Governance Action Team*, composed of members from the private sector, state and local government, academia and federal partners, is investigating and analyzing options for a more inclusive NSDI governance model. An extensive research and outreach effort is underway. Recommendations and options will be completed by June 2005. The *Tribal Action Team* and the *Non-Geospatial Organizations Action Team* have developed action plans and are targeting their outreach and implementation efforts. They are also coordinating activities with other action teams in order to avoid duplication of effort. The *Fifty States Initiative Action Team* has completed its report and action plan. The plan was approved by the NSGIC Board, presented to the FGDC Coordination Group and is scheduled for FGDC Steering Committee approval shortly. The strategic objective regarding agreements with the private sector and utility industry to facilitate participation in building the NSDI has not been formally addressed at this time. The involvement of the private sector has been approached indirectly through the extensive effort of the Governance Outreach Subcommittee. This objective will become a focus area for the FGDC secretariat staff director and staff during the next quarter.

Communicating the Message: The *Business Case Action Team* is reviewing literature to document and publish business cases that illustrate the value of collaborative development and access to geospatial information and services for selected audiences. Coordination and collaboration with the Strategic Communications Team as well as briefing the NGPO staff and the FGDC Coordination Group, Subcommittees and Working Groups are identified next steps toward implementation. The *Communications Action Team* presented the Strategic Communications Plan to the FGDC Coordination Group at the January meeting. FGDC, in concert with GOS and *The National Map*, will embrace a leadership role on behalf of the geospatial community to promote the significance and value of geospatial information and the NSDI. Primary targeted audiences for the first phase of the plan include FGDC member agencies, FGDC partners, tribal, local and state governments and non-geospatial organizations. An additional goal of the Communications Team is to provide communications support for the other FGDC Future Directions teams. The *Training and Education*

Team strives to aid the implementation of FGDC programs (Metadata, Framework and Clearinghouse/Portal) through training and education initiatives and outreach. Efforts include presentations and discussions at industry conferences, train-the-trainer workshops, engagement of the academic community to develop implementation strategies for framework integration, and research of alternative training methods including on-line and distributed network delivery.

Making Framework Real: The Future Directions activity emphasizes the adoption and implementation of framework standards. The *Standards Working Group* is accelerating the submission of framework data standards to ANSI. The project manager and contract support are adjudicating nearly 5000 comments before submitting these standards for approval by ANSI. Concurrently, a small diverse *Team to Identify New Themes for Standards Development* is researching and identifying potential data themes for future standards development. Outreach efforts to identify potential data themes are underway. The *Publishing Metadata Team* designed, developed, and recently distributed a Member Agency Profile to FGDC member agencies to determine the status of Federal agency metadata implementation and identify key agency metadata contacts. The profile will be integrated into the FGDC annual reporting format. The members of the *Standards and Web Protocols Team* are working collaboratively to develop their work plan while coordinating with the Standards Working Group and Training and Education Team. Lastly, the newly formed *Urban Areas Team* developed a team charter and work plan.

For more information:

Please visit the website

<http://www.fgdc.gov/policyandplanning/future-directions>

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