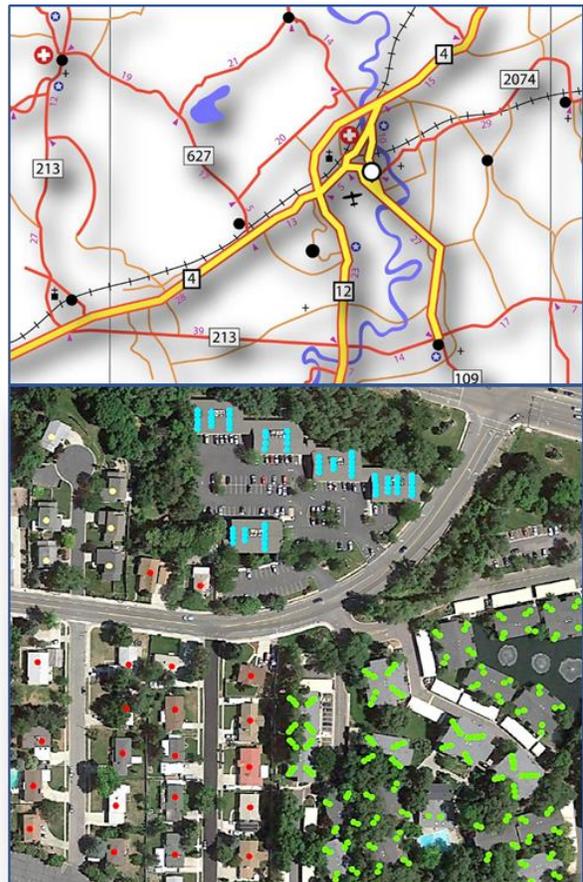


Core Beliefs

Background: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are widely used to link data from many different sources to produce information that greatly aids decision makers. To be effective, GIS operations must access and utilize high quality geospatial data. Experience shows that good data, effective tools, and training will lead to cost savings, more efficient operations, and more effective decision-making. To that end, NSGIC's advocacy efforts focus on developing the high quality geospatial data required to produce current and dependable information, build accurate map services, and to fully enable leaders to make more informed and transparent decisions. Furthermore, when data are put in the public domain, the public is better informed and they create many new business opportunities for the private sector.

National Data Programs: Geospatial data are critical to a wide range of public and private activities. These include activities as diverse as 9-1-1 response, floodplain management, broadband access, marketing, and school bus routing. However, we lack national data strategies to consistently deliver data sets that meet the business needs of all levels of government. Sometimes the data simply don't exist or only exist for some places, but not nationwide. In other cases the data don't meet the needs of multiple agencies because they weren't produced using appropriate standards or scales for potential user organizations. Alternatively, there are redundant versions of the same data supported by taxpayers that have been created to meet the specific, narrow, and uncoordinated needs of individual agencies.

NSGIC believes we should develop and maintain focused national data programs that meet the needs of all levels of government as well as the private sector. This generally means large scale data that meet the needs of local emergency responders on the ground, as well as Federal analysts looking at nationwide trends. We believe that data should be collected once and used many times using a systematic approach that we refer to as *For the Nation*.



Public dollars are in short supply. Federal, state, and local geospatial budgets remain stressed by priority spending issues. National geospatial data require significant funding, but much of that money can be attained by eliminating redundant programs and by leveraging efforts across various levels of government. A large part of the money needed is already being spent, but in a disorganized manner. Additional funding could come from cost savings gained by programs making efficient use of this data.

Revise and Refocus Federal Data Programs: Depending on the particular data theme, there are two basic ways that Federal data programs can be revised and refocused to meet the needs of all levels of government. They are 1) coordinating the roll-up of high resolution local data to the national level, or 2) allow local buy-up enhancements to Federal data collection efforts.

Roll-up Local Data

In many cases local data are best. The data produced by local governments to meet their own needs can generally meet the needs of state and Federal agencies. To make that happen, local data must be integrated across regions and 50 states. By developing a systematic national programmatic and technical approach, we could make this happen, thus engaging cities, counties, and others in a coordinated effort that would pay benefits to and for all.

Local Buy-ups within Federal Programs

The Federal government often has the business need and the necessary resources to collect its own data. This is well and good. However, it is a problem when each agency has slightly different data needs and agencies are not required to work together to implement a single collection effort. Another problem is leaving out the needs of state and local governments. A standard national scale for producing topographic maps is 1:24,000. State and local governments often need maps that are 10-times higher in resolution (1:2,400 scale), or more. By working together, data can be collected that meet the needs of all levels of government at costs that are far below what each jurisdiction or agency would have to pay separately.

Federal and State Governments Need to Work Together

Our citizens are best served through coordinated activities and common goals. The cost of government can only be reduced when joint programs are developed that meet the business needs of all levels of government. To this end, NSGIC makes the following recommendations to the Federal government.

- 1) Federal agencies should develop the standards and tools that support the integration of local data to state and national levels.
- 2) Federal data collection activities should include cooperative options for state and local buy-ups.

3) Federal agencies should notify states of upcoming data collection activities in their area as soon as possible. States can then respond appropriately, possibly by curtailing redundant efforts or providing additional funds to enhance the federal effort.

4) Federal agencies should notify states of pending grant and contract programs. The states can then notify local governments and help develop better proposals to meet national needs.

5) Federal agencies and state governments should work together to develop a common understanding of program requirements and the data required to meet those needs. NSGIC participates in NOAA's Digital Coast program and believes it is a successful example of such a coordinated approach.

6) Federal programs should be coordinated across all Federal agencies. This will make it easier for the states to work with the Federal government. Some of this is happening already (e.g. NDOP coordinated aerial photography and 3DEP elevation data). The Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) should encourage more efforts like these.

7) When appropriate, states should be contracted to develop national data programs. States did this for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to create the National Broadband Map which produced better data that are used by many sectors. This will provide the Federal government with on-the-ground expert advice and lead to better data for all.

8) NSGIC's *'For the Nation'* requirements (below) should be adopted for all national geospatial data programs.

- A custodial organization and key individuals must be identified to serve as the POC.
- The proposal must be clearly defined, including a vision statement.
- The proposal ensures national coverage at full implementation (as appropriate).
- The proposal is designed to meet the multiple business needs of all levels of government.
- Stakeholder communities affected by the proposal are involved in developing the concept.
- Strategic and Communications Plans are available and were developed with stakeholders.
- Each component piece of the initiative is clearly identified and defined.
- The initiative includes "buy-up" options that increase flexibility to meet business needs.

- Specifications meet the highest functional requirements of the broad geospatial community.
- Technical specifications allow for multiple technological solutions and future technologies.
- A maintenance plan and process flow are available.
- Dedicated, capable, and willing long term custodians or data stewards are identified.
- Public Domain data distribution and archive mechanisms are identified.
- A Cost Benefit Analysis is available proving the value of the initiative and allowing the review of alternatives.
- A complete business plan is available.
- A sustainable funding plan is available.
- Governance mechanisms and adjudicatory processes allow for reasonable variations in implementation steps and technical specifications.
- Management options include federal, state, regional, and local approaches.
- Regular meetings of the governance groups are conducted at least semi-annually.
- The governance groups conduct bi-annual reviews of their strategic and business plans.