

# *National Geospatial Collaborative* State-Level NSDI Building Block Assessment – Action Plan

Current as of October 17, 2025

## 1. Initiative Overview

**Title:** State-Level NSDI Building Block Assessment

**Mission Statement:** To advance the credibility, sustainability, and national alignment of geospatial data infrastructure across U.S. states by transforming the National States Geospatial Information Council's (NSGIC) Geospatial Maturity Assessment (GMA) into a standardized, independently validated framework that empowers continued data development, strategic planning, informed decision-making, and alignment with the National Spatial Data Infrastructure and federal geospatial standards.

**Lead(s):** Richard Wade, Jenna Leveille, Co-chairs, with support from Susan Miller and Lindsey Pena.

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## Executive Summary

The **State-Level NSDI Building Block Assessment**, co-led by National Geospatial Collaborative (NGC) directors Jenna Leveille and Richard Wade, is a strategic initiative designed to elevate the credibility, sustainability, and national alignment of geospatial data infrastructure across U.S. states. This effort seeks to transform the National States Geographic Information Council's (NSGIC) biennial **Geospatial Maturity Assessment (GMA)** from a state-led, self-assessed tool into a nationally integrated, independently validated framework. The enhanced GMA will better support the goals of the **National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI)** and align with federal programs and standards outlined by the **Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC)** and the **Geospatial Data Act (GDA)**.

By building on the existing GMA, NGC aims to establish a standardized assessment process that enables more effective benchmarking, resource allocation, and strategic planning across the geospatial community.

## Vision

A future where every U.S. state contributes to a resilient, accessible, and nationally integrated geospatial ecosystem, one that is driven by trusted assessments, aligned standards, and sustained investment, and that advances the collective impact of location intelligence across government, industry, and society.

## Key Objectives

The initiative is structured in **phases**, beginning with:

### Phase 1: Independent Evaluation of the GMA

This phase will engage a neutral third-party to assess the current GMA framework, laying the groundwork for future enhancements. Phase 1 focuses on two key objectives:

1. **Enhance Value, Credibility, and Visibility**

By validating and refining the GMA process and outcomes, the initiative will instill greater confidence among states, decision-makers, partners, and the public. It will also spotlight the impactful work already being done at the state level and reinforce the importance of continued investment in geospatial programs. The goal is to ensure the GMA remains a practical, trusted tool for both states and the broader geospatial industry.

2. **Build a Sustainable Future**

As the GMA evolves, its scope and resource requirements will grow. The assessment will offer recommendations to ensure long-term sustainability, including identifying new funding pathways and support mechanisms for states needing development. These efforts will contribute to a more complete, accessible, and resilient NSDI.

Phase 2 will be informed by the recommendations and outcomes of Phase 1.

## Strategic Benefits

- Independent validation of state geospatial maturity.
- Enhanced collaboration and knowledge sharing between states.
- Improved alignment with national geospatial priorities.
- Increased visibility and utility of GMA results for stakeholders.
- Support for long-term sustainability and funding opportunities.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The initiative actively involves a wide range of stakeholders, through the establishment of work group meetings, including:

- **State and federal agencies** (e.g., USGS, FGDC)
- **Private sector partners** and geospatial technology firms
- **Academic institutions** and research centers
- **Community organizations** and the general public

## Communication and Outreach

A robust communications plan ensures consistent messaging, stakeholder engagement, and transparency. Channels include but are not limited to NGC and NSGIC newsletters, conferences, MyNSGIC platform, and leadership briefings. Messaging is tailored to decision-makers, technical staff, and the public.

## Challenges and Mitigation

Key risks include state-level resistance, funding constraints, and variability in geospatial needs. These will be addressed through agile planning, inclusive engagement, and clear communication.

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## 2. Problem Statement

The National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) biennial Geospatial Maturity Assessment (GMA) is a voluntary survey based assessment that results in a 'report card' summarizing the maturity of state governments' geospatial initiatives, capabilities, and challenges. The assessment is a thorough evaluation assessing central data themes, programs and activities related to statewide geospatial data coordination and development.

GMA results are intended to assist state geospatial programs with assessing status, determining priorities and goal setting, identifying peer states for knowledge sharing and collaboration, identifying areas requiring attention, and connecting with opportunities and resources. Completing the GMA offers state governments a mechanism to reflect on their geospatial strategy, operations, and progress towards a mature and sustainable state data infrastructure (SDI).

Because each state performs its own assessment based on their own interpretations, the validity of the results could be challenged. GMA theme leaders are volunteer subject matter experts within that theme and do not validate the state submissions, they summarize and report the results; identifying trends over time from previous assessments and across the national landscape.

An assessment provided by an independent source would mitigate bias in the results which allow for proper validation to take place for each state and national trends. Additionally, with

each state being assessed the same way, analysis of the results could potentially yield new and unique areas of opportunity for the states to consider for future growth. Aligning the GMA with national frameworks provides an additional tool for bench marking progress towards realizing a National Spatial Data Infrastructure.

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### 3. Justification for Selection as an NGC Priority

A major initiative was developed to create an independent, continuous assessment of geospatial maturity at the state level, building on and evolving the framework previously known as the Geospatial Maturity Assessment (GMA).

This effort was elevated to a priority initiative and represents a strategic shift: the GMA will no longer operate as a standalone state focused initiative, but will be embedded within NGC's overarching NSDI theme initiative. The reimagined assessment will serve as a powerful tool to evaluate the national geospatial health through the lens of the states, which are essential building blocks of the NSDI.

The assessment will:

- Provide independent validation and QA/QC of state responses.
- Align with FGDC and GDA reporting frameworks.
- Serve as a GDA reporting mechanism.
- Feature enhanced marketing to increase visibility and use of results.
- Emphasize sustainability, credibility, usefulness, and defensibility.
- Enable broader stakeholder adoption and external utilization of the data.

The initiative reflects a broader vision of transforming the GMA into a continuously enhanced national tool, capable of shining a light on programmatic gaps and guiding resource allocation to close them. This effort aligns with NGC's vision to pursue nationally significant initiatives that support the interests of the geospatial industry as a whole. The timing is especially critical to provide a clear and valid assessment of state level geospatial programs, how they support and align with the NSDI Strategic Plan developed by the Federal Geospatial Data Committee (FGDC), and where resources are needed for long-term success.

### 4. Goals & Objectives

Desired outcomes are sought in a phased approach. Phase 1 will engage a neutral, third-party assessment of the Geospatial Maturity Assessment (GMA). This assessment will lay the foundation and direction for phase 2. Phase 1 desired outcomes include two objectives:

1. Strengthen Value, Credibility, and Visibility – By validating and enhancing the GMA process and outcomes, we can give states, decision-makers, partners, and the public greater confidence in the results. This will increase the visibility of the strong work already being done by states and underscore the importance of continued investment in geospatial programs. Our aim is to ensure the GMA is—and remains—a practical, valuable tool for states as well as the geospatial industry as a whole.

2. Shape a Sustainable Future – As the GMA evolves and expands, its demands on time and resources will grow. The assessment will provide recommendations for how to make the program sustainable over the long term, including identifying new funding pathways and exploring ways to support the state programs the GMA identifies as needing development, contributing to a complete and accessible NSDI.

Phase 2 implementation will be guided by the recommendations identified in the phase 1 assessment.

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## 5. Establish an Advisory Working Group

### Primary Goal(s):

Establish a high-functioning, cross-sector Working Group that provides leadership, coordination, and accountability for the independent evaluation of the GMA, ensuring it reflects diverse perspectives and fosters meaningful, sustained progress. In phase 2, the Working Group will review recommendations from phase 1 and outline an implementation plan.

### Key Objectives:

**Objective 1:** Identify and recruit a diverse membership representing state and local governments, tribal entities, academia, private sector, associations, and non-profits, etc.

**Objective 2:** Establish a consistent meeting schedule and shared workspace prior to Working Group launch, with initial meetings held within 45 days of finalizing participants.

**Objective 3:** Formally launch the Advisory Working Group with clear purpose, roles, and responsibilities defined.