

FGDC Standards Endorsement Process

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For questions, please contact the FGDC at standards@fgdc.gov

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Introduction

Since 1990, the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), interagency committee of Federal agencies, has been directed to develop and promulgate standards and protocols for geospatial data development, documentation, exchange, and geospatial services, per [OMB Circular A-16](#). The [Geospatial Data Act of 2018](#) (Pub. L. 115-254) (“GDA”) codified these requirements in law. To comply with the GDA and its required biennial audit requirements, and to fulfill its mandates for FGDC and Federal agencies, the FGDC’s Executive Committee (ExCom) established a Standards Task Team (STT) to evaluate and provide recommendations to the ExCom on an updated standards endorsement and management process. The recommendations need to be sustainable under current resource constraints.

The STT, in a separate document, made recommendations that require changes to the current FGDC governance structure, including establishing a Standards Working Group, introduces a new standards lifecycle management process, and includes discussion points for numerous related policies, considerations and decisions. That information can be used, if and when, the FGDC is resourced to implement a more robust standards program. This document focuses on the endorsement process and resolving the status of standards on the FGDC’s legacy endorsed standards list.

NOTE: In relation to the FGDC governance process used for decision making, the term “established” used in the GDA, i.e., standards “established” under the GDA, equates to any standard endorsed by FGDC vote for mandatory use by Federal agencies.

Key Considerations

Standards are required to support interoperability and data exchange of geospatial data, enable rapid data integration from multiple data sources, and support application development. The GDA mandates the FGDC and its member agencies develop and maintain geospatial standards, and gives the FGDC the lead authority and responsibility in the executive branch to do so.

The recommended endorsement process relies on the engagement and leadership of Federal agencies and their standards expertise to nominate, sponsor, and track standards under the FGDC’s authority through a Standards Working Group (SWG).

The standards endorsement process applies to the endorsement of theme specific standards (aka content standards) and interoperability and exchange standards by the FGDC. It is intended for agencies that collect, produce, acquire, maintain, distributes, use, or preserve geospatial data to fulfill their mission.

Standards proposed for FGDC endorsement by an agency should directly relate to the agency, FGDC, a federal business requirement, or compliance with laws and policies. As such, each standard proposed for FGDC endorsement requires that an agency that uses the standard act as its sponsor.

Any standard proposed for endorsement under this process is required to be vetted by the FGDC Standards Working Group. The working group will be led and staffed by FGDC agency members.

RECOMMENDATION: That the FGDC vote to retire, in its entirety, the legacy list of FGDC endorsed standards. Agencies should sponsor any standard on that list that is still being used for FGDC endorsement. This resolves the issue of the legacy standards list and establishes a new list. NOTE: the potential impact to the non-Federal community and partners who utilize FGDC endorsed standards is unknown.

Standards Endorsement Process

In accordance with the FGDC Executive Committee and FGDC Charters, the FGDC OS will manage and provide all vote materials for the ExCom and FGDC, and work with the nominating agency for any additional required materials. The FGDC OS will oversee the execution of all votes, document the results, and update the status of standards in a centrally managed inventory on the FGDC website. This endorsement process only includes the ability for the FGDC to endorse or retire a standard. The STT's recommended standards lifecycle management process proposes multiple endorsed stages of a standard that requires additional time and investment that are beyond the FGDC OS capability and capacity to support. For the endorsement process, a standard endorsed by FGDC vote enters the standards lifecycle in the monitoring stage, one of the two stages (i.e., monitoring and retired) supported as part of the endorsement process. Standards that have been endorsed by FGDC are only mandatory for Federal agencies.

The endorsement process includes five steps, through which a standard goes to become an FGDC endorsed standard. These steps are: 1) Nomination, 2) Review, 3) Recommendation, 4) Endorsement, and 5) Monitoring.



Figure 1. FGDC standards endorsement process steps

- 1) **Nomination Step** – The sponsoring agency nominates a standard for FGDC endorsement completing and submitting a standards nominations form (included as Appendix A) to the FGDC OS. Standards may be nominated by anyone in the FGDC community but must be coordinated with and approved by their agency's FGDC SAOGI prior to submission. The sponsoring agency is responsible for responding to questions from the FGDC OS, other agencies, the ExCom, or the FGDC if questions arise during the process.
- 2) **Review Step** – The FGDC OS reviews the agency submitted form for completeness, returning incomplete forms to the sponsoring agency. The FGDC OS sends completed forms forward to the SWG, who reviews and vets each nominated standard. The SWG evaluates each standard

and provides a brief summary of the evaluation to the ExCom. For the standards that meet the requirements and have completed forms, the FGDC OS prepares a vote for the ExCom using its administrative processes.

- 3) **Recommendation Step** – The ExCom receives the vote and supporting materials, reviews the requests, and votes on whether to recommend each standard for FGDC endorsement. The ExCom may request additional information from the endorsing agency.
- 4) **Voting Step** – In accordance with the FGDC Charter, the FGDC OS prepares and submits standards recommended by the ExCom to the Steering Committee for a vote. Any standard not endorsed will be returned to the sponsoring agency with the FGDC's reason for non-endorsement. Any standard that is voted to be endorsed becomes an established FGDC standard and will be posted on the FGDC website.
- 5) **Monitoring Step** – A periodic revalidation of the standard will keep the established list of standards current.
 - a. The sponsoring agency will monitor their sponsored standard to ensure that any new versions or changes are addressed and warranted action initiated to keep the standard current. This may occur at any time.
 - b. The FGDC OS will provide to the SWG a list of the standards that are approaching their 3-year endorsement date anniversary.
 - c. The SWG will review the provided list and work with the sponsoring agency to revalidate the existing standard for another 3-year period, or to recommend retirement and potentially the nomination of a replacement standard. For example: if a new version of the standard now exists, the SWG will work with the sponsoring agency to retire the old version and sponsor and nominate the new replacement version.

Appendix A: FGDC Standards Nomination Form

-FINAL-

Directions: The intent of this form is to provide information that the FGDC can use to determine a standard's appropriateness for FGDC endorsement for mandated Federal agency use. Use the following form to sponsor and nominate a standard for endorsement or retirement by the FGDC. After completion, email the form to standards@fgdc.gov. The FGDC's Office of the Secretariat will contact you if any additional information is needed. Other agencies contacts or FGDC members may contact the sponsoring agency for additional information.

Submission Date: _____

Nominating Agency Information	
Sponsoring Agency	
POC Name	
Email	
Phone Number	
SAOGI	
SAOGI Email	
Theme Name (If Applicable)	
<input type="checkbox"/> This proposed standards submission was reviewed and approved by the nominating agency's Steering Committee member.	

Nominated Standard	
Title	
Short Title	
Type of Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Content Standard (Theme Specific) If Yes, specify theme/dataset: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Interoperability and Exchange
URL link to standard	
Are there any fees associated with use of or access to this standard (e.g., ISO)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; if Yes, how much does it cost?: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No
Standard's Authoring Body	<input type="checkbox"/> American National Standards Institute (ANSI) <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) <input type="checkbox"/> International Organization for Standardization (ISO) <input type="checkbox"/> Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) <input type="checkbox"/> National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) Geospatial Standards Working Group (GWG) OR <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Authoring Body: _____

	AND: Brief description of how the standard has been vetted: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Proposed Action	<input type="checkbox"/> Endorsement <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement
Does this standard supersede a different one?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; if Yes, which one?: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
Has FGDC ever endorsed this standard?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; If Yes, what year was it endorsed?: _____ If Yes, is this still the current version of this standard? Yes/No <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there a competing standard to the one being nominated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; If yes, what is the competing standard?: _____ If yes, why is this standard being sponsored for nomination?: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the nominated standard designed to work with another standard?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; if Yes, what other standard(s)?: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No

Abstract

Please include a brief summary of the standard nominated including its purpose and value.

Applicability

Which communities use this standard?	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> Non-federal
Is this standard in use by more than one Federal agency?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes if Yes, which ones: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is this standard supported in commercial-off-the-shelf software (COTS) or open-source software (OSS)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes if Yes, which ones: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No

NGDA Theme Applicability

If the nominated standard is applicable to an NGDA or NGDA Theme, please complete the following table. <https://ngda-portfolio-community-geoplatform.hub.arcgis.com/pages/portfolio>

NGDA Theme Applicability				
NGDA Theme Name	NGDAID	NGDA Title	Category (Theme, Content, Metadata)	Subcategory
EXAMPLE: Address	195	National Address Database (NAD)	Theme	FGDC List

FOR FGDC OS INTERNAL TRACKING ONLY

Sponsoring Agency POC: Standard Name: Nomination submission date:	
FGDC OS Date Received nomination form: _____ Date OS sends nomination form the SWG: _____	Internal Notes:
Standards Working Group Date SWG provides summary to ExCom: _____	
Executive Committee Date of ExCom recommendation (vote): _____	Vote outcome: <input type="checkbox"/> Recommend to SC <input type="checkbox"/> Do not recommend Next Step:
FGDC (Steering Committee) Date of SC Vote: _____	Vote outcome: <input type="checkbox"/> Endorsed <input type="checkbox"/> Retired <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Authority

Section §2806 of the [Geospatial Data Act](#) mandates the FGDC establish standards for each National Geospatial Data Asset data theme. According to the GDA, the standards shall include (A) rules, conditions, guidelines, and characteristics for the geospatial data within the National Geospatial Data Asset (NGDA) data theme and related processes, technology, and organization; and B) content standards for metadata for geospatial data within the NGDA data theme.

Further, the standards, to the maximum extent practicable, shall be consistent with international standards, and protocols, and include universal data standards acceptable for the purposes of declassified intelligence community data. The GDA requires the FGDC to periodically review and update standards so they remain current, relevant, and effective.

The FGDC shall develop and disseminate standards, under this the GDA, in accordance with Office of Management and Budget Circular A-119, or any successor thereto, and after consultation with a broad range of data users and providers. The FGDC shall, to the maximum extent possible, use national and international standards adopted by voluntary standards consensus bodies. The FDGC shall establish new standards only when the conditions described have not been met.