

USGS Information Strategy: Stakeholder Questionnaire/Interview

Purpose of the Questionnaire/Interview:

The USGS GIO, Karen Siderelis, has established a bureau-wide Tiger Team to develop an overall “Information Strategy” for USGS that provides an integrated 10-year vision for all aspects of the Bureau’s information programs and capabilities. The 2001 NRC review of the USGS emphasized the critical role of the bureau’s information program in fulfilling our scientific research agenda: “The NRC recommends that the USGS evolve into a natural science and information agency” (p. 3). This point is further elaborated in the report:

Effective information management will be critical to the future performance of the USGS. For the USGS, information management has two essential aspects. The first is the ability to assess the information needs of its customers and partners and to focus its resources on meeting those needs. The second is to effectively deliver and facilitate the use of reliable high-quality data and information. (p. 4)

Major areas that the Information Strategy will address include management of USGS knowledge and data, policies and standards, information architecture, information technology and infrastructure, information services, information science research, funding and investment strategies for information, workforce planning and development, and internal and external partnerships. The Information Strategy will also build on the work of six other bureau-wide Tiger Teams that are currently developing recommendations for specific information-related sub-topics (see list at the end of this questionnaire). The Information Strategy Team complements these other teams by developing the broad strategic framework and vision encompassing all bureau information activities, and especially in defining how information and natural science are inter-related when USGS considers its future as a Federal science agency.

The Information Strategy Team is soliciting input on *defining the Information-related priorities, challenges and opportunities that face the USGS for the next decade and beyond*. In developing the Information Strategy, the team wants to ensure that we have consulted widely with stakeholders and customers inside and outside USGS. This questionnaire/interview is part of our data gathering process.

Strawman Strategic Goals:

In order to initially frame the discussion, the Information Strategy Team has developed an initial “strawman” set of strategic goals. These are preliminary. We are soliciting input from a wide audience to judge their merit with a critical eye and from diverse perspectives, and to recommend additional focus areas if key issues have been overlooked.

1. **Support Long-term Management of Data and Information (Stewardship).** Ensure USGS data and information are quality-assured, well documented, and maintained over the long term (archived). It is important that USGS data and information be collected and stored over the long term so that they can be used for multiple, future applications. Sample objective: identify data and information collections at risk of being lost and initiate measures to migrate them and their associated documentation to long-term storage media and facilities.

- 2. Enhance Data and Information Availability (Delivery).** Enhance the availability and delivery of the data and information required to meet the needs of the USGS and external user community. This includes not only the timely and effective delivery of existing USGS data and information, but also the acquisition and delivery of new or externally available data and information. USGS will provide value-added services that enhance the availability and utility of the data, and that ensure that the data and information are available in formats usable for both scientists and the general public. Sample objective: provide a basic level of spatial data and data processing, including digital elevation models and rectified aerial imagery, free for use in all USGS research efforts and in the production of databases, products and displays.
- 3. Promote Scientific Inquiry (Application and Use).** Provide the information infrastructure, technical support and expertise, and the tools necessary to support USGS scientists in the development and application of advanced scientific modeling and analysis capabilities. Sample objective: provide advanced scientific data visualization and collaboration tools and services to USGS scientists and collaborators.
- 4. Exploit Technology to Improve Data Acquisition, Stewardship, Application and Delivery.** Investigate and implement new technologies that have potential for significantly increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of USGS scientific and information support activities. Sample objectives: 1) expand the availability of wireless computational and communication capabilities to enhance the accessibility and use of information by scientists at remote sites and enhance the potential for real-time collection and update of data by scientists in the field; 2) where possible, invest in enterprise-level technologies to achieve improved efficiencies in USGS administrative and operational activities, thereby reducing administrative and cost burden on science programs.
- 5. Foster Creative Partnerships to Help Achieve Information Objectives.** Encourage the development of partnerships with other government agencies, academic institutions, and private industry to complement USGS internal information programs and capabilities. Sample objective: continue to encourage and participate in the development and use of “open” data standards and technologies that facilitate cross-organizational sharing and data integration, e.g., Open GIS Consortium and Federal Geographic Data Committee.

Please take the time to address the six questions below and help shape the future of information activities at USGS. Thank you for your time; we appreciate your input.

Specific Questions:

- (1) Please comment on the five draft strategic goals – their appropriateness, their inclusiveness, their deficiencies, and their reasonableness.

- (2) What are the highest priority information needs of the Bureau that should be achieved in the next decade? Feel free to also comment (from a broad strategic perspective) on activities and capabilities that you think should be diminished, eliminated, or alternatively-sourced.

- (3) What are the most important capabilities and technologies relative to information that you think the USGS should invest in that would significantly advance the USGS scientific program?

- (4) How can USGS best utilize the skills and capabilities of information personnel (those working in information technology, information management, information science, etc.) to support and advance the USGS scientific mission?

- (5) How can data and information (already in existence within the USGS, and to be collected in the future) better serve multidisciplinary needs and investigations relative to USGS primary mission objectives? What is your vision of a "model" or ideal information/data library or repository?

- (6) What advances and improvements in technology do you envision on the horizon that will support natural science research and that USGS should be integrating into our Information agenda?

Respondent information: Please check the categories that apply:

Agency Organization: USGS _____ Non-USGS _____

Primary Duty Station: Regional Office or Cost Center _____ Reston Headquarters _____

Primary Work Focus: Science _____ Information Technology/Management/Services _____

Administration _____ Management _____

If you have additional ideas or issues you would like to have considered, please feel free to talk with any of the members of the Information Strategy Tiger Team:

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For your further reference, the six other information Tiger Teams are:

(1) Enterprise Information Architecture

To develop a vision and framework to guide the development and implementation of the USGS Information Architecture. (An information architecture is a blueprint or roadmap that focuses on the science-driven requirements of the bureau and defines how an efficient information technology environment can best support these requirements).

(2) Enterprise GIS

To develop a recommended strategy for providing an integrated bureau-wide/enterprise-level GIS capability (including data, tools, training, etc.) for the USGS.

(3) Publishing

To develop recommendations regarding publishing policy, optimal organizational alignments and management authorities needed to perform the publishing functions of the USGS, identification of critical short-term issues and long-term strategic issues, and a process for addressing them.

(4) Information Technology Customer Service/Help Desk

To develop bureau strategies for effective and cost-efficient help desk and desktop support deployment and operation.

(5) Information Technology Capital Planning and Investment

To develop bureau-level guidelines and procedures for information technology capital investment planning that will enable USGS to effectively implement requirements of OMB and the Congress.

(6) Information Services

To develop a vision and recommendations to enhance the bureau's information services programs and capabilities (e.g., web information services, publications, libraries, information centers, etc.).