



Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology

Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology Interest Group on Geospatial Methods for Federal Data Charter

1. Objective

The purpose of this interest group is to facilitate information sharing on geospatial methodologies, classifications, standards, and criteria in the context of producing federal statistics. It is open to experts and non-expert federal employees alike. The interest group provides opportunities to identify areas of common research, practice, and challenges, to coordinate collaborative research projects in those areas, and to disseminate relevant information. The group can organize events such as information sharing sessions, workshops, and conferences. This interest group does not produce Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) or other official government products.

2. Background

Geography is the organizing principle underpinning much of the work conducted by federal statistical agencies and programs; that is, all activity measured by agencies occurs at a location or, in the case of migration, commuting, or commodity flows, between multiple locations. The principled use of geographical information in survey and administrative record data is becoming more important now that federal agencies are working with Big Data. In particular, this involves several challenges such as the ones listed here:

- Presenting statistics and measures of sampling error at different levels of resolution.
- Constructing displays that help non-specialists to better understand the information.
- Devising measures of spatial and temporal association with surveys.
- Linkage of observed phenomena with predictors subject to confounding and aggregation effects.
- Quantitative assessment of non-response based on geographic location.

- Integrating information and estimation for geographic areas that have different boundary definitions.
- Understanding and sharing information about statistical geographic area concepts and classifications, particularly those used across federal statistical agencies for statistical data collection, analysis, and dissemination.
- Dealing with confidentiality issues, especially when linking data.

A planning meeting was held on August 21, 2014, to explore agencies' interest in forming an interagency interest group. Representatives from the following agencies attended: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the Census Bureau, National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), National Center for Science Engineering Statistics (NSF-NCSES), and the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

It was determined that this interest group would provide value for the participating agencies through the sharing of information on ways to analyze and visualize geospatial data, exploring linkage of data sources, and conducting collaborative research in the context of producing federal statistics. The Geospatial Interest Group has been operating with FCSM's approval and sponsorship since 2014. FCSM formally chartered this group in 2022.

3. Scope and approach

The main focus of this group will be on the analysis and methodologies applied to geospatial data gathered, managed, and disseminated by federal statistical agencies, particularly in their application with statistical and administrative data. In particular, this includes the challenges listed in section 2, but are not limited to only those. Any topics related to the analysis and use of geospatial data are in-scope.

The outputs from this geospatial interest group will not overlap with those of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), which is concerned with the development, sharing, and dissemination of geospatial data. When necessary, we will exploit the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), which is designed to enable sharing of national geographic information.

The group will hold bi-monthly meetings, utilizing a hybrid approach that facilitates in-person (when appropriate) and remote attendance and participation. This meeting schedule and format will allow the group to share information and plan activities on a regular basis and maximize outreach.

4. Proposed Deliverables and Dates

The co-chairs (appointed by the FCSM Chair) will provide the following annual deliverables to the sponsor:

- Proposed schedule of meetings and list of activities for the group
- A report that could include a description of member agencies’ geographic data, current research efforts, and challenges
- Identify potential topics/areas of focus for an annual workshop in the DC area.

5. Sponsor

The Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM)

6. Communications

- The team will provide regular informal status reports to the sponsor.
- The team will use a Wiki or other means (e.g., collaboration site through FCSM).
- As needed, the group will plan presentations to other FCSM or federal groups.

7. Group members

The members of this group must be federal civil servants. However, contractors can provide briefings and participate in specific meetings and workshops.

Members will be familiar with the geospatial data and how they are used. The group will facilitate conversation among experts in statistics and geographic data.

Agencies can have more than one member in the group. Members do not represent their agency. The group must be chaired or co-chaired by a member of FCSM, appointed by the chair of FCSM.

FCSM CHAIR SIGNATURES

NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Rochelle (Shelly) Martinez	<i>Rochelle (Shelly) Martinez</i>	7/19/2022