



# Report in Brief

September 22, 2022

## Background

On October 5, 2018, Congress enacted the Geospatial Data Act of 2018 (GDA) to foster efficient management of geospatial data, technologies, and infrastructure through enhanced coordination among the federal government, state and local authorities, the private sector, and academia. The GDA created a geospatial management structure to minimize the duplication of geospatial data and improve collaboration across agencies.

The GDA requires inspectors general of the covered agencies to audit the agencies' collection, production, acquisition, maintenance, distribution, use, and preservation of geospatial data not less than once every 2 years. In October 2021, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency clarified that these audits should only include the agency's progress meeting GDA section 759(a), 43 U.S.C. § 2808(a). This is our second audit of the U.S. Department of Commerce (the Department) under the GDA.

The GDA defines 13 responsibilities for covered agencies. These responsibilities include geospatial strategy, data sharing, integration, records retention, management, standards, partnerships, application, privacy, classification, duplication, quality, and points of contact.

## Why We Did This Review

Our audit objective was to assess the Department's progress toward compliance with GDA requirements under 43 U.S.C. § 2808(a).

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

### The Department Needs to Improve Its Metadata Processes Under the Geospatial Data Act

OIG-22-032-A

## WHAT WE FOUND

We found the Department has generally made progress toward complying with 10 of the 13 requirements under 43 U.S.C. § 2808(a). However, we found the Department's geospatial metadata is inconsistent with best practices in *FGDC Technical Guidance: Data.gov and The GeoPlatform Metadata Recommendations Including Guidelines for National Geospatial Data Assets (NGDA) (FGDC Guidance)*. Without following the *FGDC Guidance*, the Department's geospatial data stakeholders could face challenges—regardless of where users discover or access the data—to making the most efficient and effective use of the Department's entire geospatial data portfolio. We also found technical challenges on the GeoPlatform are still causing metadata harvesting issues for the Department, which means GeoPlatform users may be unable to find the Department's geospatial data and determine if it meets their needs.

## WHAT WE RECOMMEND

We recommend that the Department's Chief Data Officer and the Senior Agency Official for Geospatial Information do the following:

1. Develop plans and timeframes to align metadata quality control processes with *FGDC Guidance*.
2. Ensure that the U.S. Census Bureau aligns its metadata quality control process to *FGDC Guidance* best practices for metadata content.
3. Ensure that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration aligns its metadata quality control process to *FGDC Guidance* best practices for metadata content.

We recommend that the Department's Chief Data Officer do the following:

4. Review the Department's geospatial data harvesting processes to Data.gov to ensure that it does not contain duplicates.

We recommend that the Senior Agency Official for Geospatial Information do the following:

5. Work with the U.S. Department of the Interior to establish a reporting process to identify any issues with the availability and organization of national geospatial data assets on the GeoPlatform and to understand GeoPlatform changes affecting the Department's harvesting processes.