

# Minnesota Geospatial Advisory Council Operations Handbook

v1.0

9/3/2025

---



# Contents

- Introduction..... 4
- About the GAC..... 4
  - Relationship to MnGeo and Minnesota IT Services ..... 4
  - Mission ..... 5
  - Guiding Principles ..... 5
  - Membership ..... 5
  - Priorities ..... 6
  - Committees and Subgroups ..... 7
  - GAC Website..... 7
  - External Coordination..... 7
- Roles and Expectations..... 8
  - Council Members..... 9
  - Committee and Subgroup Volunteers..... 12
  - Administrative Support Staff..... 14
- Conducting Business..... 14
  - Conducting Work..... 15
  - File Storage and Sharing ..... 15
  - Using AI..... 16
  - Communications..... 16
  - Work Plans..... 17
  - Reporting ..... 17
  - Committee and Subgroup Operations ..... 18
- Laws and Regulations ..... 18
  - Open Meeting Law ..... 19

Data Practices Act.....	20
Digital Accessibility .....	21
Meetings.....	21
Meeting Process .....	21
Recording Meetings.....	25
Funding.....	27
Compliance.....	27
Version History .....	27
Contact .....	27
Appendices .....	28
Organization Chart .....	28
Forms and Templates .....	28
References and Related Information .....	29

## Introduction

Advisory bodies, such as the Minnesota Geospatial Advisory Council (GAC), play a vital role in supporting Minnesota IT Services (MNIT) and state government by offering expert insights and strategic recommendations on key issues, policies, priorities, and investments. The GAC operates independently in its advisory capacity, enabling MNIT, the Minnesota geospatial community, and the public to benefit from the specialized expertise brought by its members.

This handbook establishes clear expectations for the GAC's advisory role and provides guidance on its operations to maintain alignment with state government policies and laws, promote transparency, and safeguard the integrity of its work. It serves as a guide for council members, volunteers, and administrative support staff, outlining the council's structure, governance, and operational procedures. By following the handbook, the GAC can effectively fulfill its mission and achieve its goals while maintaining high standards of accountability and ethical conduct.

## About the GAC

The GAC was established by state statute in 2009 and reauthorized in 2013 ([16E.30, subd. 8](#)) to advise the Minnesota Geospatial Information Office (MnGeo) on improving the operations and management of geospatial technology within state government, and on issues of importance to the community. As such, the council serves as a coordinating body for the Minnesota geospatial community and provides recommendations for improving services statewide through the coordinated, affordable, reliable, and effective use of geospatial technology.

Individuals appointed to the GAC serve a two-year term, following the Minnesota biennium cycle. The Minnesota biennium begins on July 1 of each odd-numbered year and ends on June 30 of the next odd-numbered year.

In addition to its members, the council relies on its [committees and subgroups](#) to help fulfill its mission. The work of the council is guided by feedback from the community (see [Priorities](#)).

Before the GAC was established, its functions were facilitated by its predecessor, the Governor's Council on Geographic Information (GCGI). The GCGI operated by authority of Executive Order of Minnesota's Governor from 1993 to 2009 and informed the work of the Land Management Information Center – now MnGeo.

## Relationship to MnGeo and Minnesota IT Services

The Minnesota Geospatial Information Office (MnGeo) provides coordination, guidance, and leadership for the state's use of geographic information systems. MnGeo is an office within Minnesota IT Services (MNIT), the state's IT agency, and is led by the State of Minnesota's Chief Geospatial Information Officer (GIO). The MnGeo team supports state agency and community geospatial efforts.

As an advisory body for MnGeo, the GAC is a council of MNIT and is administratively supported by MnGeo, including logistical support, web content management, and the hosting of collaboration sites for committees.

Through its work and advisement, the GAC helps identify geospatial community needs and opportunities to better serve Minnesota with GIS technology and data. The work of the GAC both informs and complements the work of MnGeo.

An [Organization Chart](#) of the GAC, its committees, and subgroups in relation to MNIT and MnGeo is available in the appendices.

## Mission

The GAC acts as a coordinating body for the Minnesota geospatial community. It represents a cross-section of organizations that include counties, cities, universities, business, nonprofit organizations, federal and state agencies, tribal government, surveyors and other stakeholder groups that benefit from geospatial technology.

## Guiding Principles

The GAC operates under the following guiding principles, which serve as the foundation of its commitment to strategic and collaborative statewide use of geospatial technology. These guiding principles are designed to ensure that every action taken is aligned with the GAC’s statutory responsibilities.

1. Promote effective investments in geospatial information
2. Promote geospatial information as a shared public resource
3. Support the establishment and use of geospatial standards and best practices
4. Champion collaboration among geospatial practitioners and related stakeholders
5. Educate and inform policymakers about the value and use of geospatial technology
6. Provide a forum for ideas and issues to be shared and acted upon by the geospatial community
7. Encourage all council sectors to contribute to the state geospatial infrastructure
8. Encourage all council members to communicate outcomes with relevant stakeholders
9. Encourage geospatial education at all levels
10. Advocate for free and open geospatial data

## Membership

GAC members are appointed by the State of Minnesota Chief Information Officer (MNIT Commissioner) following procedures established by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. Member appointments span a single two-year term, following the Minnesota biennium described above. Members may apply for reappointment.

Members must represent a cross-section of organizations that includes counties, cities, universities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, federal and state agencies, and tribal governments. This representation can be specific to an organization or representative of a sector as a whole. Council membership may include additional GIS partners that use and benefit from geospatial technology, such as land surveying, K-12 education, etc. This expanded representation can include other sectors or organizations that may be relevant to current needs or activities.

Minnesota’s Chief Geospatial Information Officer must serve as a non-voting member of the GAC.

The number of appointed seats is determined by the GAC, as recommended by its members and selected by the appointing authority. For those sectors with more than one designated seat, after the first seat is filled, additional seats may be flexed as-needed to an At-Large category, based on the applicant pool and current geospatial community trends.

As of May 2025, the designated GAC seats include 26 members\* – 25 voting and 1 non-voting (ex-officio):

### Council Member Seats

- City, Twin Cities Metro (1)
- City, Greater MN (1)
- County, Twin Cities Metro (1)
- County, Greater MN (1)
- Regional Government, Twin Cities Metro (1)
- Regional Government, Greater MN (1)
- State Government (2)
- Federal Government (2)
- Tribal Government (1)
- Nonprofit (1)
- Business (2)
- K-12 Education (1)
- Higher Education (2)
- Surveyor (1)
- MetroGIS (1)
- MN GIS/LIS Consortium (1)
- At-Large (5)
- Chief Geospatial Information Officer (1)<sup>Non-voting</sup>

\* “Twin Cities Metro” refers to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. The organizations included in this designation are subjective and can vary. However, the Metropolitan Council’s coverage area is a recommended resource for inclusion. “Greater Minnesota” refers to those areas outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan region.

Members are not compensated for their participation on the council. However, a member’s affiliated organization may opt to reimburse a member for incurred expenses as a representative of the organization.

See [Member Roles and Expectations](#) for more information about the responsibilities of a member.

## Priorities

The GAC establishes priorities for the term by seeking feedback from the Minnesota geospatial community.

### Why create priorities?

1. To create a voice for the Minnesota geospatial community
2. To direct work plans of the GAC and its committees
3. To inform MnGeo’s priorities
4. To allow other organizations to compare priorities and align efforts
5. To inform outreach and policy-related efforts
6. Having clear direction helps motivate people to participate

To collect this feedback, a priorities survey is conducted in the first few months of each new term to help shape the focus of work throughout the term. Collected priorities inform both the GAC and MnGeo about the values, interests, and needs of the community.

The GAC ensures priority work is supported by assigning each priority to a committee. Committees own assigned priorities and drive progress toward completion. MnGeo may be asked by the GAC to directly support some of these priorities in addition to or in lieu of a committee or the GAC taking on this work.

## Committees and Subgroups

The GAC relies on its committees to guide decisions, advance priorities, and help fulfill its mission. Each committee depends on community volunteers to complete this work and is led by one or more volunteers. At least one committee leader must be a GAC member.

Some committees may be long-term, whereas others may be established as needed and referred to as ad hoc committees. In addition, committees may use subgroups to complete specific tasks, manage long-term initiatives, and maintain expertise relevant to their missions.

- **Committees** address ongoing needs or operations and are considered long-term.
- **Ad hoc committees** address specific needs or tasks that are time-bound with an identified outcome or deliverable.
- **Subgroups** (such as subcommittees and workgroups) are formed within a committee to address specific topics or tasks.

The work of committees is guided by term priorities assigned by the GAC. A committee can work on tasks beyond assigned priorities. However, this work should not compromise progress on priorities.

Volunteers of these groups do not need to be a GAC member to participate, offering a unique opportunity for the community to get involved. Those interested in participating can contact committee leadership. See the [Committee and Subgroup Volunteer Roles and Expectations](#) below.

## GAC Website

To support interaction with the community and provide transparency of the GAC's operations, the council has its own website, which is hosted by MnGeo. The [GAC website](#) is the primary source for the public to access information about and resources from the council, including meeting schedules and minutes. Within the website, each committee has its own webpage.

The GAC website is hosted and maintained by MnGeo. However, it is the responsibility of council and committee leadership to advise MnGeo on necessary edits or revisions to content.

## External Coordination

The GAC coordinates with other organizations to help fulfill its mission and elevate impact. These organizations are important to the GAC's role among the local and broader geospatial community landscape.

## National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC)

The [National States Geographic Information Council](#) (NSGIC) exists to advance effective state-led geospatial coordination for the nation. NSGIC provides a national forum to share policies and practices for geospatial activities and national policy leadership. Minnesota is working on geospatial topics similar to other states, and NSGIC committees and workgroups are an effective way to connect and share information with other states.

In odd-numbered years, NSGIC conducts a Geospatial Maturity Assessment (GMA) that provides a summary of geospatial initiatives, capabilities, and issues within and across state governments. The GMA is a tool that can help Minnesota evaluate its state of geospatial maturity compared to other states and can provide information that may help the GAC and MnGeo prioritize work.

MnGeo supports a yearly “State Council +” NSGIC membership that entitles GAC members to have a NSGIC membership for their GAC term. MnGeo staff will assist in arranging NSGIC memberships for GAC members. Additionally, there are a limited number of memberships for GAC committee members.

## Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium (MN GIS/LIS)

The Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium (MN GIS/LIS) is a nonprofit organization with a mission “to develop and support the GIS/LIS community in Minnesota for the benefit of [its] people and contributors.”

The work of the GAC and MN GIS/LIS provides complementary support to the Minnesota geospatial community. While the GAC focuses on progressing geospatial data, infrastructure, and services, MN GIS/LIS focuses on advancing the geospatial profession, and more specifically the geospatial professional. To support coordination between the two statewide geospatial organizations, one GAC member seat is allocated for a MN GIS/LIS representative, and this same member also serves as a MN GIS/LIS board member. This GAC member is responsible for ensuring collaboration and communication between the two entities.

Examples of coordination between the two entities include:

- Sharing and amplifying news and information
- Supporting MN GIS/LIS conference content

## Roles and Expectations

The primary purpose of the GAC is to advise MnGeo, serving as a voice for the Minnesota geospatial community. The structure of the GAC includes various roles to operate and complete this work:

- Council members
- Committees and subgroups
- Administrative support staff

## Council Members

Members of the GAC are expected to support the council’s mission and employ its guiding principles. It is the responsibility of all members to uphold the operations set forth in this document.

Each member plays a vital role in shaping the GAC, contributing their sector-specific expertise and insights to inform council decisions and ensure that the geospatial community across Minnesota is effectively supported.

GAC members serve as a liaison between their sector and the council. Their main responsibilities include:

- **Providing expertise:** Offering insight and knowledge about geospatial technologies and practices relevant to their sector.
- **Advocating interests:** Representing the needs and priorities of their sector in council discussions and decision-making processes.
- **Facilitating communication:** Ensuring effective communication and collaboration between the council and their sector.
- **Contributing to policy development:** Helping to shape policies and strategies that impact geospatial data and technology use.

The following subsections further detail member roles and expectations.

### Sector Representation

Each GAC member serves as an ambassador for their sector, conveying its needs and relevant information to the council, while also sharing council news and information back with their sector. This exchange of information should go beyond interaction with the member’s own organization and extend to the sector more broadly. To help fulfill this role, each member is expected to complete the following activities, which assist the member in uplifting the voice of their sector among the Minnesota geospatial community:

- Present at least once about their sector to the council during the two-year term.
- Promote sector participation in the council’s priorities survey—for example, by encouraging survey submission among the sector community or collecting priorities from the sector for submission.

### Meeting Participation

Members shall actively participate in and contribute to council activities by attending the majority of council meetings, including:

- Responding to calls for agenda items and suggesting topics pertinent to their sector.
- Coming prepared for meetings by reviewing past meeting minutes, the agenda, committee reports, and any other items included in the agenda packet for review and consideration.
- Participating during the round robin portion of the meeting by reporting sector-related updates.

## **Committee Participation**

Each member should actively participate on and contribute to at least one of the GAC's committees or subgroups. This participation may be in a leadership capacity or as an additional volunteering member of the committee or subgroup. Members may choose a committee or subgroup based on the member's expertise, interest, or skills that may be of use to the group, or they may choose a group based on an area they wish to learn more about, offering a unique professional development opportunity for the member. A member's participation may help fulfill the committee requirement to have at least one council member in a leadership position.

## **Policies and Standards of Conduct**

Upon being appointed as a council member, each member must sign an Oath of Office indicating that the member will abide by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Minnesota.

As an appointed member of a MNIT council, members must abide by MNIT policies and standards of conduct. When conducting any business with or on behalf of the council, members must represent themselves professionally and respectfully as an affiliate of the State of Minnesota. A member's seat on the council must not be used for personal or professional gain (e.g., securing a contract for a project). Any member business on behalf of the council must be approved by the council.

If a council member, or a committee or subgroup volunteer is providing guidance on the distribution of funds as part of their role, they may be asked to sign a conflict of interest disclosure document.

If a council member detects a real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest, they should bring this to MnGeo for consideration and advisement. If needed, the conflict of interest will be brought to the appointing authority.

## **Council Leadership**

### *Executive Team*

The Executive Team of the GAC provides council leadership, informs council strategy, and ensures effective council operations. It leads the functions of the council by:

- Authoring the council work plan and term report
- Aligning council activities to adhere to the work plan
- Organizing the quarterly public council meetings
- Gathering feedback from the GIS community through the priority surveys
- Ensuring that committee work supports the priorities
- Developing reporting mechanisms for the council and its committees and subgroups
- Identifying and communicating resource needs to MnGeo

All work plans, council meeting agendas, and other deliverables are brought to council members for consideration, allowing opportunity for member feedback and modification prior to approval or adoption.

The Executive Team consists of the following roles:

1. **Chair:** Primary council leader; leads council meetings
2. **Vice-Chair:** Secondary council leader; leads council meetings in the absence of the Chair; leads the priority projects survey and assists the Chair as needed
3. **Secretary:** Administrative support; facilitates the gathering of reports, slides, and other materials needed for each council meeting, supporting MnGeo's compilation and publication of these materials
4. **Minnesota Chief Geospatial Information Officer:** Ex-officio position; provides historical, organizational, and statutory context related to the GAC's responsibilities, advising as appropriate

The GAC Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary are elected by the GAC members during the first meeting of each two-year term. Members may nominate themselves or another member for consideration.

The Executive Team meets once between each quarterly council meeting, before meeting with the Leadership Team to plan the council meeting, totaling two times between each quarterly council meeting. These meetings are led by the council Chair.

A limited number of additional Executive Team meetings may occur when deemed necessary.

MnGeo administrative support staff assists the Executive Team by participating in Executive Team meetings and activities. However, MnGeo does not make decisions and only provides support in the same manner that it supports the GAC as a whole. See the [Administrative Support Staff section](#) for more information about MnGeo's role.

### *Leadership Team*

The Leadership Team of the GAC collaborates with the Executive Team to help refine council strategy, operations, and meeting planning. It supports the functions of the council by:

- Attending and participating in quarterly GAC meeting planning
- Helping develop GAC meeting agendas
- Providing feedback to the Executive Team regarding council operations and strategy
- Contributing to the GAC term work plan and accomplishments report
- Participating in other leadership team discussions as needed

The Leadership Team consists of the following roles:

1. Executive Team members
2. Past Chair or Past Vice Chair (most recent, if available)
3. Up to three GAC member volunteers

The Past Chair/Vice Chair and three GAC member volunteers are elected by the GAC members during the first meeting of each two-year term. Members may nominate themselves or another member for consideration.

The Leadership Team meets once before each quarterly GAC meeting, after the quarterly Executive Team meeting has occurred. The primary focus of these meetings is to plan the council meeting and to tend to any additional items requested by the Executive Team or recommended by the Leadership Team. These meetings are led by the GAC Chair.

A limited number of additional Leadership Team meetings may occur when deemed necessary.

MnGeo administrative support staff assists the Leadership Team by participating in Leadership Team meetings and activities. However, MnGeo does not make decisions and only provides support in the same manner that it supports the GAC as a whole. See the [Administrative Support Staff section](#) for more information about MnGeo's role.

## Committee and Subgroup Volunteers

Committee and subgroup volunteers work on behalf of the committee as assigned by the GAC and/or directed by the group, often dedicating specialized knowledge or skills to meet specific goals or develop deliverables. Volunteers are expected to support the GAC's mission and employ its guiding principles.

Committee and subgroup volunteers should abide by the same [Policies and Standards of Conduct](#) as GAC members; however, only council members need to sign an Oath of Office. Variation from these expectations may result in removal from the committee or subgroup.

See the [Committees and Subgroups section](#) to learn more about these groups and how they operate.

## Committee Leadership

Committee leaders are responsible for the work of the committee and its volunteers. They are expected to:

- Maintain the committee charter
- Organize regular committee meetings
- Author the committee work plan and reports
- Align activities with the committee work plan and charter
- Facilitate completion of work, including tending to priorities assigned by the GAC
- Coordinate with and provide guidance to committee subgroups
- Liaise with the GAC to keep council members informed of committee and subgroup plans, activities, and needs, and to stay informed of changing GAC priorities
- Bring decisions, actions, or deliverables to council members for feedback, adoption, or approval
- Notify MnGeo of necessary changes to the committee website
- Communicate the guidelines in this handbook to committee and subgroup volunteers

As part of the committee leadership's coordination with the GAC, committee leaders are expected to:

- Attend quarterly council member meetings
- Submit quarterly updates to the GAC regarding the committee, its subgroups, and priorities
- Share major updates from the GAC with committee and subgroup members
- Request necessary resources from the GAC as needed
- Present at least once a term to the GAC to share about the committee's work and needs
- Complete the committee end of term report

As explained in the [Committees and Subgroups section](#), at least one committee leader must be a GAC member – this leader will be especially helpful in liaising and maintaining alignment with the council. If a committee leader is not a GAC member and does not have GAC member co-leading the committee, then they should seek out a GAC member to lead beside them or request assistance from the council to meet this need.

If multiple leaders of a committee exist, leaders are expected to coordinate with one another and share the above duties.

If a committee leader cannot attend a quarterly council meeting, they should review the meeting minutes to stay up to date on council activities and any changing requirements of the committee.

### **Subgroup Leaders**

Leaders of a committee subgroup are responsible for the work of the subgroup and its volunteers. They are expected to:

- Follow direction for the subgroup as described in the committee work plan and/or directed by committee leadership
- Organize subgroup meetings
- Facilitate completion of work
- Coordinate with committee leadership to keep committee members informed of subgroup plans, activities, and needs, and to stay informed of changing priorities
- Bring decisions, actions, or deliverables to the committee for feedback, adoption, or approval

As part of the subgroup leadership's coordination with the committee, subgroup leaders are expected to:

- Attend committee meetings
- Regularly report subgroup activities, progress, and needs to committee leadership
- Share major updates from the committee with subgroup members
- Request necessary resources from the committee
- Provide subgroup information to committee leadership for the committee end of term report

If multiple leaders of a subgroup exist, leaders are expected to coordinate with one another and share the above duties.

## Administrative Support Staff

MnGeo is statutorily responsible for administratively supporting the GAC. To meet this requirement, MnGeo dedicates staff time to support the council. MnGeo staff support the council by:

- Organizing quarterly GAC meetings
- Coordinating with the State Chief Information Officer regarding council appointments
- Orienting new council members and leaders regarding GAC operations
- Keeping GAC leadership informed of changes to relevant MNIT policies, procedures, and statutes
- Storing GAC files as required by Minnesota data practice laws
- Tracking council meeting expenses
- Hosting and managing a collaboration platform for GAC members, committees, and subgroups
- Hosting and supporting maintenance of the GAC website
- Communicating GAC activities and open appointments to the geospatial community
- Attending council, Executive Team, and Leadership Team meetings
- Offering historical knowledge of the council to inform operations and strategy
- Responding to council requests for assistance

As part of the support for council meetings, administrative staff:

- Announce meetings on the GAC website and via email
- Secure in-person meeting locations
- Set up and distribute meeting invitations to GAC members and the community
- Request funding for council meeting costs such as food, beverage, and reimbursable member expenses
- Organize food and beverage orders
- Complete meeting minutes
- Publicly share meeting agendas, minutes, and other materials

In coordination with the Office of Secretary of State, administrative staff:

- Post open GAC appointments to the Office of Secretary of State's webpage
- File necessary documentation with the Office of Secretary of State
- Maintain the GAC's Office of Secretary of State's webpage

MnGeo extends the above meeting support to council committees and subgroups as needed.

In addition to administratively supporting the GAC, MnGeo receives and considers council recommendations to inform its operations.

## Conducting Business

Following [Open Meeting Law](#), all council business must be conducted at council meetings, including discussion, decisions, acceptance of deliverables, and adoption of recommendations, standards, guidelines, and policies. See the [Meetings section](#) for more information about council meetings and associated requirements.

The GAC is subject to state laws and policies and may not perform official or representative functions on behalf of state government. The GAC cannot enter a contract on behalf of MNIT or make decisions regarding internal MNIT policies.

## Conducting Work

Work of the council should be conducted using the MnGeo-provided GAC SharePoint site. This SharePoint site supports file development and storage, information sharing, and collaboration. Within the GAC SharePoint site, there are subsites for each committee to draft and store documentation and deliverables. GAC members and committee leaders should reach out to MnGeo with any SharePoint customization requests.

Work products created by advisory bodies are subject to data practices and accessibility laws; therefore, work product created by the GAC or in accordance with its purpose must be stored on state or MNIT-approved channels and platforms, and in an easily accessible format. “Work product” includes websites, applications, proposals, reports, recommendations, research, meetings minutes, presentations, and any other material created or prepared by the GAC or its committees and subgroups.

Members and volunteers should use [MnGeo-provided templates](#) for meeting agendas, minutes, presentations, and other correspondence, such as letters. These templates are available on the GAC website and SharePoint.

For more information about digital accessibility requirements, see the [Digital Accessibility section](#).

For more details about the GAC SharePoint site and storing GAC work, see the [File Storage and Sharing section](#).

## File Storage and Sharing

State agencies are responsible for ensuring that all government records are stored securely. To support compliance with the [Data Practices Act](#), all council, committee, and subgroup meeting agendas, notes, and other documentation and deliverables should be developed and stored within the GAC’s SharePoint site. Storing all GAC-related files within SharePoint supports compliance by providing MnGeo access to all records to support requests for information from the public or otherwise. This practice also helps avoid potential loss of data due to council member and volunteer turnover, especially when this occurs unexpectedly.

In addition to supporting compliance with data laws, this workflow provides consistent operations across all members and committees. This consistency enables the GAC to work efficiently while also enabling MnGeo to support all council members and volunteers equally.

All sharing of files should occur within the GAC SharePoint site – data should not be download locally or to other web-hosted environments for development and sharing. If a resource needs to be made available to the public via a public-facing website or communication, MnGeo will arrange this on their web servers. All files made available to the public must meet [state accessibility requirements](#). For assistance in meeting these requirements, contact MnGeo.

MnGeo will handle all public requests for information. If you receive a request for information, contact MnGeo.

Access to the GAC SharePoint site is managed by MnGeo. Only those with a business need to access GAC resources should have access to the GAC SharePoint. Access can vary based on site, subsite, document library, folder, or specific resource. Contact MnGeo for access to the GAC SharePoint. These requests should detail which site, subsite, or resource is needed for access.

## Using AI

Any use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and services to conduct council business must follow MNIT AI policies and recommendations, including the [MNIT Public Artificial Intelligence Services Security Standard](#).

When entering council-related information into AI tools, it must be information defined as “public” by [Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13](#) and be intended for public availability.

Examples of where using AI may be appropriate:

- Transcribing a public meeting which contains no privately shared information (e.g., via Microsoft Teams built-in transcription services)
- Summarizing long documents that only contain public data
- Generating documents that only deal with public information

State employees participating in council activities are encouraged to restrict AI use to internal platforms only, such as the licensed version of Microsoft Copilot and built-in Microsoft Teams transcription functionality.

See [MNIT’s AI Standard FAQ page](#) for answers regarding public vs. nonpublic data, example tasks for using AI, and more.

## Communications

### Internal and state government communication

State of Minnesota advisory bodies engage in independent internal communication as needed to fulfill their advisory responsibilities. These communications can be subject to data requests and may constitute official government records made in the transaction of public business. Because of this, internal GAC communications should align with the GAC’s mission, scope, and establishing statute, as well as [standards of conduct described above](#).

The GAC and its volunteers may request that MnGeo share information internally via email or internal GovDelivery newsletter. Contact MnGeo administrative support staff with these requests.

### External communication

MNIT is subject to state policies regarding plain language and digital accessibility of government information. As such, **council members and volunteers should coordinate with MnGeo administrative support staff before engaging in any external communications**, including those that represent or imply representation of official state government views. MnGeo will then coordinate with MNIT’s communications team to seek recommendations and/or approval for these communications.

External communications include (but are not limited to) public statements, social media engagement, press releases, publications, public notices, and public statements made by members of advisory bodies in their official capacity as members. This includes content on public-facing webpages and applications, as well as presenting or hosting a booth at a conference or other type of public event.

**Advisory bodies of MNIT may not have their own social media accounts.** However, MNIT can post to its own social media platforms on behalf of the GAC. MnGeo can facilitate these requests. MnGeo can also share GAC information and news via its external GovDelivery newsletters.

## Work Plans

At the end of each two-year term, the GAC and its committees must each complete a plan for activities over the next term, including identification of necessary resources. These work plans should include plans to progress council priorities and may be updated as needed to accommodate changing priorities. Work plans may be included in the end-of-term report described below, depending on GAC leadership implementation.

## Reporting

Various levels of reporting exist to share GAC accomplishments and plans among its members and volunteers, and with the community:

- **Quarterly:** Prior to each GAC meeting, committee leaders submit brief updates to council members regarding assigned priorities and committee and subgroup activities and needs; these updates are skipped at the end of each fiscal year in lieu of end-of-term reports.
- **Mid-term:** After the term priorities are defined and assigned, committees should submit a revised term work plan to align with the priorities for the current term.
- **End-of-term:** At the end of the second year of the term, the GAC and its committees submit an end-of-term report summarizing accomplishments from the term, providing updates on assigned priorities, and detailing recommendations for MnGeo; this also includes a work plan for the next two-year term.

All reports are included in the corresponding quarterly council meeting agenda packet and posted on the GAC website.

In addition to reports completed by the GAC and its committees, MnGeo administrative support staff completes an annual Office of Secretary of State report for the council. These reports convey general council information and activity over the year, including number of meetings, spending, and hours of administrative support provided.

## Committee and Subgroup Operations

GAC committees are established through the council's approval of a committee charter, whereas committee subgroups may be formed by a committee as needed.

Committees and subgroups are expected to conduct business in the same manner as the council. However, meetings and activities may be less formal:

- Agendas do **not** need to be formally approved.
- Meeting notes **are** required. However, these do **not** need to be formal minutes.
  - Meeting notes do **not** need to be formally approved by the committee or subgroup, but opportunity for amendments should be provided.
- Motions are **not** needed to make decisions. However, **voting** is recommended to ensure that actions taken represent the majority of the committee or subgroup.
- Motions are **not** needed for deliverables and recommendations that will be provided to the GAC for acceptance, approval, or adoption; however, **voting** is recommended to ensure proposals to the council reflect the majority of the committee or subgroup and that they are of high quality for council presentation.

All votes must be documented.

Meetings of committees and subgroups must follow guidelines set forth in the [Meetings section](#), including compliance with [Open Meeting Law](#). While the schedule of meetings can be determined by committee and subgroup leadership, a regular meeting cadence is recommended (e.g., monthly, quarterly).

Committees and their associated subgroups should coordinate regularly to facilitate cohesion between the groups, meet requirements for reporting and aligning with the GAC, and help upkeep the committee webpage. In support of this, subgroup leaders are encouraged to attend committee meetings and report out on subgroup activities during these meetings. Committee and subgroup leader activities are further detailed in the [Roles and Expectations section](#).

## Laws and Regulations

There are several laws that govern how public bodies, such as the Minnesota Geospatial Advisory Council, must conduct business. Described here are a few of those laws. It is pertinent that council members, volunteers, and administrative support staff are aware of and understand these laws, as they inform the operations and procedures set forth in this document and set precedent for understanding the impacts of non-compliance.

Resources regarding the State of Minnesota's data practices and open meeting laws are provided by the [Data Practices Office](#).

## Open Meeting Law

Public bodies, including the Minnesota Geospatial Advisory Council and its committees and subgroups, must follow Open Meeting Law ([Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13D](#)) rules and regulations when holding meetings. The following references some of the most relevant information for the council. Please refer to the [Open Meeting Law resource page](#) for more information, including remedies for violations.

### Purpose

The Open Meeting Law serves to:

- Prohibit actions taken at secret meetings
- Assure the public's right to be informed
- Give the public an opportunity to present its views to the public body (however, there is no requirement to reserve time for public comment)

### Applicability

Gatherings subject to Open Meeting Law:

- A quorum (majority) or more of full public body, or quorum of any of the public body's committees, subcommittees, etc.
- Where the quorum (majority) discusses, decides, or receives information as a group on issues relating to its official business

Gatherings NOT subject to Open Meeting Law:

- Gatherings of less than a quorum of members
- Chance or social gatherings
- Training/team building activities so long as formal business is not discussed

Meetings with less than a quorum that are used to avoid having a public meeting may be considered a violation of this law.

### Hosting meetings

There are three types of meetings recognized under Open Meeting Law:

- **Regular meetings** – Schedule of meetings; requires a schedule of the meetings to be kept on file or in the case of a regular meeting being held by interactive technology, a 10-day advance notice on the council website
- **Special meetings** – Any meetings not on the regular schedule; requires 3-day advance notice on the council website, including date, time, place, and purpose
- **Emergency meetings** – Special meetings called because circumstances don't allow for a 3-day prior notice; council must attempt to give as much notice as possible to the public

A meeting must be open to the public unless declared closed. Meetings may only be closed if required or permitted by law. All closed meetings must:

- Follow the same notice requirements as open meetings
- Be recorded (except for attorney-client discussion)
- Make a public statement on-record indicating:
  - Time and place of the closed meeting
  - Legal authority to close the meeting
  - Specifics of what will be discussed
- Include a public written record of members and all other persons present at the closed meeting

If a meeting is to use telephone or interactive technology:

- Members should be given notice that they may participate remotely
- One member must be physically present in the regular meeting room
- All members must be able to hear one another and testimony
- Public may monitor remotely
- Public must be able to hear all discussion, votes, and testimony
- Votes must be taken by roll call if the vote involves an appropriation of money

## Decisions

All council decisions and discussion of business must occur during meetings (e.g., not via email or private conversation). For example, members cannot privately exchange information or opinion to develop consensus via email, phone call, or other means not open to the public. This ensures transparency in the decision-making process.

One-way communication between the chair/staff and members of a public body is permissible, such as sending meeting materials via email to all board members, with no discussion or decision-making.

## Data Practices Act

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act ([Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13](#)) is a state law that creates rights and obligations around government data. The Data Practices Act applies to state agencies, statewide systems, counties, statutory or home rule charter cities, school districts, and certain townships located in the metropolitan area, thereby including the Minnesota Geospatial Advisory Council. Chapter 13 also creates the requirement for the issuance of Tennesen Warnings when capturing certain data. See the [Tennesen Warning Department of Administration webpage](#) for additional information.

Under the Data Practices Act, work products created by the GAC are subject to data practices requests and thereby may be made available to a requestor, including members of the public. Not public security information, private personnel data, and any other protected information must be redacted from data requests. Any GAC-related data practices requests should be referred to MnGeo so that the request can be properly processed.

Please refer to the [Data Practices resource page](#) for more information, including remedies for violations.

## Digital Accessibility

[Several federal and Minnesota laws](#) require that state government bodies, such as the GAC, adhere to standards for accessible documents and website. All deliverables of the GAC must therefore meet requirements set in the [State of Minnesota Digital Accessibility Standard](#). This ensures that GAC information and resources are equally accessible by all, including people with disabilities.

## Meetings

Council meetings are where official business of the council occurs. All meetings of the GAC and its committees follow Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. See the [Open Meeting Law section](#) for more information about these requirements.

Meetings of the GAC occur four times per year and are open to the public. These meetings are hybrid (in-person and online) or primarily virtual, and the schedule is determined by the council. Once established, the meeting schedule is posted on the GAC website.

Special meetings of the GAC are rare and, if scheduled, will be announced as soon as feasible and within the requirements of Open Meeting Law.

Committee and subgroup meeting frequency varies, and these meetings are also open to the public unless indicated otherwise. Committee and subgroup meeting information is available on each committee's website; meeting dates and times will be posted on the GAC website as known and in compliance with Open Meeting Law.

## Meeting Process

Meetings of the council follow Robert's Rules of Order. This is not a requirement of Open Meeting Law, but a practice established by the council following common practice.

Meetings can occur without a majority of members present. However, a majority must be present for any GAC motions or votes (except to adjourn). As described above in the [Open Meeting Law section](#), all meetings with the majority of members present are subject to Open Meeting Law requirements.

All members have equal rights to speak and participate in discussion. The process defined here protects this right and ensures that a minority voice is not unfairly suppressed by the majority.

Council members may take a variety of actions during a meeting, some of which require a [motion](#) (vote) – see the table below for more information about these actions and examples of each. All actions must be documented in the meeting minutes.

Table 1. Typical actions that can be taken by a council during a meeting.

Action	Description	Example(s)	Motion Required
Adopt	To formally take up, follow, or use	Adoption of resolutions, bylaws, rules, standards, guidelines, etc.	Yes
Approve	To formally signify support	Acceptance of minutes, signifying that they are accurate and official	Yes
Accept	To formally endorse something as its own; less common	Endorsing the contents of a report or recommendation, taking these on as the council's own views or recommendations	Yes
Receive	Acknowledge deliverance	Acknowledge receipt of committee reports	No

Typically, each meeting proceeds as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Attendance (introductions)
3. Approval of meeting agenda\*
4. Approval of past meeting minutes\*
5. Receipt of committee reports
6. Unfinished business (as applicable)\*\*
7. New business (as applicable)\*\*
8. Recurring updates
9. Miscellaneous announcements from members and/or guests (“Round Robin”)
10. Adjournment\*

\*Meeting agenda items that require a motion

\*\*Meeting agenda items that may require a motion, depending on the type of business occurring

While Open Meeting Law does not require preparation of agendas or minutes, it does require public bodies to record and maintain votes of its members. If minutes are created for a meeting or printed materials are prepared for the meeting, they must be available for inspection by the public during the meeting. In addition, Minnesota’s Official Records Act ([Minnesota Statutes, section 15.17](#)) requires public bodies to “make and preserve all records necessary to a full and accurate knowledge of [its] official activities.” By implementing Robert’s Rules of Order, the GAC is helping ensure compliance with these requirements.

## Motions

During a meeting, specific business or actions taken by the council require a “motion.” A motion is the proposal of an action or decision, usually related to a topic under discussion. A motion is used by a member to propose an action or decision by saying, “I move [to/that]...” (e.g., “I move that we add an additional break to the agenda” or “I move to adopt the proposed recommendation”).

Here are the steps for a motion – only one motion may be discussed and voted on at a time:

1. (Optional) Chair **asks** for a motion
2. Member **makes** a motion (“I move [to/that]...”)
3. (Optional) Chair restates the motion for clarity
4. Another member **seconds** the motion (“I second”)
5. Chair **restates** the motion and asks for questions/discussion of the motion
6. Members **discuss** the motion
7. Chair **asks** for a vote on the motion
8. Members **vote** on the motion
9. Chair **announces** result of the vote

Motions may be prompted by the council chair, or a member may make a motion without a prompt. A motion is only considered for discussion if seconded by another member. An additional member must second the motion by saying, “I second.” Once a motion has been seconded, the chair restates the motion and invites questions/discussion regarding the motion. After discussion, the chair asks for a vote on the motion.

A member may amend a motion if they wish to change the proposal. To amend a motion, a member should state, “I move to amend the motion.” The amended process would then follow the same steps as a regular motion by being seconded, discussed, then voted on.

A motion is considered resolved once it is either:

- Passed
- Defeated (rejected)
- Tabled
- Referred to a committee
- Postponed (temporarily or indefinitely)

Members can propose a few types of motions, all of which must be seconded and voted on – some of these may be in response to a main (original) motion:

- **Limit debate:** Set a limit to debate or discussion of a motion, e.g., by time or number of comments
- **Close discussion:** End a debate or discussion of a motion by saying, “I close debate”
- **Refer:** Transfer a motion to a committee for investigation or discussion; committee must report back
- **Table:** Set a motion aside to tend to other business, with no time set to return to its discussion
- **Postpone to a later time:** Postpone a motion until a specified later time
- **Postpone indefinitely:** End a motion with no additional discussion or action
- **Recess:** Call for a temporary break in the meeting
- **Adjourn:** End a meeting by saying, “I move to adjourn”; only needed if the agenda is not completed

Table 2. Types of motions and how they work.

	Must be seconded	Open for discussion	Can be amended	May be reconsidered or rescinded
Main Motion	X	X	X	X
Amend Motion	X	X		X
Limit Debate	X		X	X
Close Discussion	X			X
Refer	X	X	X	X
Table	X			
Postpone to a later time	X	X	X	X
Postpone indefinitely	X			X
Recess	X		X	
Adjourn	X			

## Voting

It is each member’s duty to vote on proposed actions and decisions. A vote passes with majority support (support from more than half of the council members).

Votes should not be conducted via email as this could be a violation of the [Open Meeting Law](#).

There are many ways that the council chair may choose to implement a vote:

- **By voice:** The chair asks those in favor to say “aye” and those opposed to say “no”
- **By roll call:** The chair or secretary calls each member’s name and each answer “yes” or “no”
- **By general consent:** The chair says, “If there is no objection...” and membership agreement is indicated by silence; if no objections are heard, the motion passes, however, if any member objects, a vote must be taken by roll call. This technique may be appropriate for matters that are considered relatively minor or where opposition is not expected.

Any votes taken using interactive technology (e.g., calling in, virtual platform) must be conducted by roll call if the vote involves an appropriation of money.

A member may choose to abstain from a vote by announcing “I abstain.” Members may choose to abstain due to a conflict of interest, lack of sufficient information, or other reasons.

All votes – in favor, against, or abstain – must be documented.

## Recording Meetings

Minnesota's Open Meeting Law **does not** require regular meetings to be recorded. However, there are specific circumstances that do require recording, such as closed meetings. See the [Open Meeting Law section](#) for more information about these requirements.

Recording meetings should be avoided unless required by the Open Meeting Law or when there is some other business need to do so, as any recordings are subject to requests from the public following the Minnesota Government [Data Practices Act](#). Recording meetings risks collecting private information, such as images of attendees or information shared verbally that was not intended for public record. A transcription or meeting minutes or notes will suffice in most scenarios (such as regular meetings of the council and its committees or subgroups). Some exceptions where recording may be necessary include trainings and demonstrations.

To comply with the above requirements and guidelines, GAC meetings will not be recorded unless there is a specific reason to do so, in which case administrative support staff will follow the procedures and guidelines established here. Committees and subgroups should also follow this practice.

Before deciding to record a meeting, meeting organizers must determine whether recording is required or if there is some other valid business need to record. To assist in this decision, organizers should ask themselves the Office of Data Practices' [Collection and Use of Data](#) questions. Meeting organizers should also consider whether a transcript of the meeting will meet the needs of the organizers and attendees. If unsure whether to record a meeting, consult MnGeo administrative support staff.

### Moving Forward with a Meeting Recording

All meeting recordings must be made in accordance with relevant state policies.

If recording a meeting, the meeting must be hosted on a platform owned by the State of Minnesota to ensure that the recording is stored on State of Minnesota servers. This practice helps ensure compliance with [data storage requirements](#). For assistance setting up a recorded meeting, contact MnGeo support staff.

A [Tennessee Warning](#) must be included in the meeting invitation (minimally three days before the meeting date) and be displayed at the beginning of the meeting, before the recording begins, to allow those who do not wish to participate to take action before recording begins. Tennessee Warnings are custom for each meeting and must be crafted by the MNIT legal team. Requests for custom Tennessee Warnings should be submitted to MnGeo council support staff, who can facilitate the request.

As such, the following information is required when submitting a Tennessee Warning request to MnGeo:

- The reason for recording the meeting (e.g., to provide training or demonstrate a process)
- Who is going to have access to the recording (e.g., GAC committee members only, the public, etc.)
- What private data is being collected (e.g., just images or additional information)

A Tennessee Warning and the use of a State of Minnesota platform are not generally required for transcriptions. However, the meeting must be hosted by the State of Minnesota and a Tennessee Warning provided if private data is collected in the transcription.

The MNIT legal team can assist with questions regarding Tennesen Warnings, Minnesota’s Open Meeting Law, or the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

## Tips for Recording Meetings

Here are some tips for a successful meeting recording:

- Do not record before or after a meeting or during breaks – these times pose elevated risk for private information to be shared during small talk.
  - To help avoid this, start a recording only after official notice has been provided at the beginning of the meeting and end it as soon as the meeting ends.
- Remind participants that the meeting is being recorded and not to share any private information.
- Direct anyone that wishes not to have their image recorded to turn off their camera.

## Storing and Sharing Meeting Recordings

Like other council files, all meeting recordings must be stored on State of Minnesota servers and should not be stored externally. These recordings may be stored on the council’s working collaboration platform (e.g., SharePoint). If nonpublic data is discussed in the recording, the recording must be stored securely in accordance with MNIT’s data practice requirements.

**Internal sharing:** Sharing of meeting recordings may occur internal to the council and its volunteers by using the resource link within the council’s SharePoint.

**External sharing:** For sharing meeting recordings beyond those that have access to the council’s SharePoint, MNIT can post the video on YouTube. Requests for a YouTube video posting can be submitted to MnGeo and must include the following information:

- Link to download the video
- Whether the recording should be shown on MNIT’s list of videos or only be discoverable by a user with the video link
- Whether the video contains private data and the nature of this data (e.g., images of attendees)
- Suggested video title
- Suggested video description which should include:
  - Meeting organizer(s) – e.g., a council committee
  - Meeting date
  - Purpose of the meeting
  - Major topics covered

For assistance in communicating meeting recordings to the public or other wider audience, please contact MnGeo administrative support staff.

## Funding

MnGeo dedicates select staff to supporting the GAC. MnGeo also provides funding to support GAC needs, such as the cost of food and beverage at in-person council meetings. The GAC does not receive funds directly from the legislature and is dependent on the availability of funds from MnGeo.

## Compliance

All GAC members, volunteers, and administrative support staff are expected to comply with the guidelines, expectations, and policies described in this handbook. Failure to adhere to these recommendations may impede council success and result in removal of the violating individual by the appointing authority.

## Version History

This handbook will be updated by MnGeo support staff in coordination with council leadership as needed. Updates will be tracked by assigning a new version number to the document and logging the completed changes in the table below.

*Table 3: Version history of the document.*

Version	Description	Date
1.0	Initial release	9/3/2025

## Contact

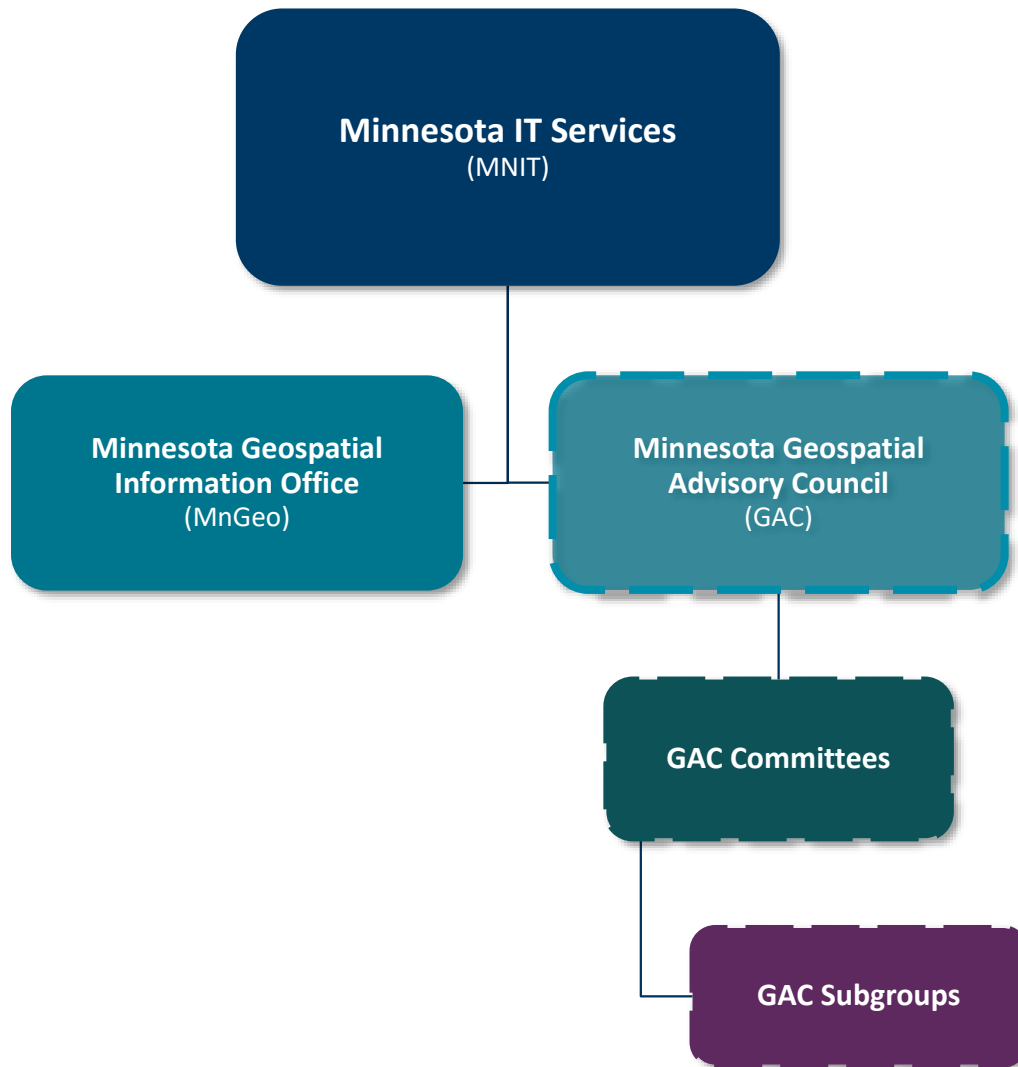
### Minnesota Geospatial Information Office

[gisinfo.mngeo@state.mn.us](mailto:gisinfo.mngeo@state.mn.us)

651-201-2499

## Appendices

### Organization Chart



### Forms and Templates

Committee forms and templates are available on the GAC website:

- [Committee Charter](#)
- [Committee Term Report and Work Plan](#)
- [Quarterly Committee Updates Survey](#)
- [Committee Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Committee Deliverable Announcement](#)
- [Committee Final Report](#)

## References and Related Information

- [GAC website](#)
- [Establishment of the GAC](#)
- AI
  - [MNIT Public Artificial Intelligence Services Security Standard](#)
  - [MNIT AI Standard FAQ page](#)
- Communications
  - [Accessibility-related statutes](#)
  - [State of Minnesota Digital Accessibility Standard](#)
  - [Minnesota State Brand Style Guide](#)
  - [MNIT Media, Legislative, and External Communications Policy](#) *(MNIT access only)*
- Data Practices
  - [Minnesota's Official Records Act](#)
  - [Minnesota Government Data Practices Act](#)
  - [Collection and Use of Data](#)
  - [Data Practices resource page](#)
  - [Data Practices Office](#)
  - [MNIT Data Practices Manual](#)
  - [MNIT Data Practices Policy](#) *(MNIT access only)*
  - [MNIT Records Retention Schedule](#) *(MNIT access only)*
- Open Meeting Law
  - [Open Meeting Law](#)
  - [Open Meeting Law resource page](#)