

National Geospatial Advisory Committee

Public-Private Partnership Use Case:

GEOSPATIAL INSURANCE CONSORTIUM



An Evolving Public-Private Partnership

Background

The National Insurance Crime Board (NICB) was founded in 1992 as a not for profit organization with a mission to “combat insurance fraud and theft” through partnerships with insurance companies, consumers, and law enforcement. The NICB initiated the Geospatial Insurance Consortium (GIC), which operates as a consortium comprised of insurers and related companies that share proportionally in the cost of collecting and accessing geospatial information and analytic tools for use by insurers for different phases of the insurance lifecycle – including underwriting, claims investigations and adjustments, and disaster response.

The GIC partners with Vexcel Imaging to produce very high resolution vertical and oblique imagery productsⁱ and elevation data for use by consortium members. Imagery includes “blue sky” annual vertical imagery over the USA, with the addition of oblique imagery over metropolitan areas. The GIC also collects and provides “gray sky” vertical, oblique, and ground level imagery as needed in response to disasters. The GIC can deploy imaging assets within hours of an event. In addition, the GIC makes available automated damage assessment analytic tools developed by its partner, Munich RE, to rapidly identify and quantify losses in disaster areas, reducing the time and effort in assessing damage and minimizing fraudulent claims.

How Does It Work?

On the surface, the GIC looks like a consortium designed to cater only to the insurance community. However, to speed response, help save lives, and support recovery, the GIC has established a program for the first responder community in the U.S. and other nations to provide free access to pre and post disaster imagery products during disaster response operations. Imagery is made available for viewing for up to 180 days free of charge to requesting first responders including Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Red Cross, and other Federal, State and local government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community organizations.

Once provided credentials, first responders are granted access to the GIC Portal to view before and after disaster event imagery to support response operations. As there is no single point of coordination in the U.S. for first responders, GIC makes its best effort to advertise its geospatial information and capabilities to the first responder community and provides staff to arrange for access to these services.



Example View of Post-Disaster Imagery

Why Does It Work?

The GIC provides a significant economy of scale to its members by collecting, managing, and providing access to a common framework of geospatial information tools for use by the insurance industry as a whole. This eliminates redundant collection and data maintenance for the industry. The shared contributions of its members enable the GIC to provide current, highly accurate imagery, geospatial information, and tools suitable for insurance industry decision making. Economies of scale allow the GIC to delivery capabilities that no single company could efficiently provide.

Because timely response to save lives and assets are of common value to the insurance and first responder community, GIC benefits by partnering with public sector first responders to open access to its geospatial imagery during disaster response. First responders in turn benefit by having no-cost access to geospatial information to help understand the disaster extent and prioritize and plan response operations.

Challenges and Opportunities

First responder free access to imagery and related geospatial data is limited to viewing only, with authorization to display/distribute images only as part of media messaging and alerts and publicly shared apps supporting disaster response and recovery. Extended access and retention of imagery and related products is limited due to licensing terms and the GIC business model.

GIC leadership note that their consortium process is still being shaped, and that expanded membership and service offering opportunities may be on the horizon. The Public-Private Partnership (P3) subcommittee noted the potential for the current GIC model to be expanded to include public-private shared investment via sponsorship or membership of government and other organizations that depend on consistent local to nationwide imagery and elevation data for a range of activities.

Governments at all levels have need for consistent local to nationwide imagery and elevation data to support activities such as managing public lands and properties, identifying and insuring property in flood prone areas, modeling and issuing flood warnings, conducting land use / urban planning, and preparing for and responding to disaster events. Such

an arrangement has strong potential to provide a coordinated level of nationwide coverage, reduce redundant data collection and maintenance, and reduce the effort and cost for all parties involved.

Conclusions

The GIC business model has some of the characteristics of a P3. It is an innovative partnership of insurance and related companies that share the risk and reward of establishing and operating nationwide geospatial coverage and tools to support the industry. The model recognizes and supports the inclusion of public safety officials in times of crisis. There is significant potential for the current GIC consortium model to be expanded to enable inclusion of government and other non-insurance private sector organizations that have common needs for the nationwide coverage and tools offered by the GIC. This expanded sharing of cost, risk, and rewards to assure a current, accurate and trusted geospatial resource for the private and public sectors would be indicative of the benefits of a national P3 model.

ⁱ 100% of the continental U.S. is collected at 20 centimeters resolution nadir. For approximately 900 cities/towns (with a population of 15,000 or more) collection is accomplished at 7.5 centimeters resolution oblique and nadir.