

Data Endorsement ad-hoc Committee

August 18, 2026

1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Attendees

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| ☒ Alison Slaats , MnGeo (Co-Chair) | ☒ Alison (Ali) Wieckowicz , MNIT DOT |
| ☒ Kevin Trappe , Beltrami Co. (Co-Chair) | ☐ Linse Lahti , DNR |
| ☐ Sally Wakefield , MnGeo | ☒ Pamela Oslin , MESB |
| ☐ Gerald (Gerry) Sjerven , Allete | ☒ Jonathan Mortensen , City of Shoreview |
| ☐ Stacey Stark , U-Spatial, U of M | ☒ Robin Mertes , MN Pollution Control Agency |
| ☒ Tanya Mayer , Met Council | ☒ Kory Thurnau , MnGeo |
| ☒ Jason Ewert , MNIT MPCA | |

Discussion

I. Review Pilot Datasets

The committee tested the proposed GAC Data Endorsement process by applying the evaluation form to a statewide streams/hydrography dataset, to surface ambiguities in the form and confirm it supports the goal of highlighting statewide data most useful to a general audience.

II. Evaluation of the Streams/Hydrography Dataset

The form was generally straightforward to apply. Differences between reviewers mostly reflected interpretation of individual questions rather than disagreement about the dataset itself. The exercise surfaced several areas needing refinement:

GAC priorities vs. MnSDI framework themes The form's current wording could be read as requiring both a GAC-priority connection *and* an MnSDI framework-theme connection, or as stopping the evaluation if one is answered "No." *Consensus:* Clarify that satisfying **either** criterion is sufficient, and let submitters identify which priority or theme applies. This keeps the process flexible as GAC priorities evolve while preserving the MnSDI link.

Stewardship and maintenance The streams dataset's stewardship information was judged adequate — a steward is identified and the data is described as maintained/updated as needed. One reviewer initially flagged

the absence of a formal update frequency, but the committee concluded the existing description sufficiently addresses maintenance.

QA/QC The QA/QC question has been revised to ask whether the process is *documented or described*, rather than requiring a standalone data-quality plan — better accommodating cases where QA/QC is covered adequately within metadata. The committee also flagged the need to distinguish attribute fields that are truly mandatory from those that may legitimately be blank.

III. "Best Statewide Spatial Representation" Primary Issue

This was the meeting's central discussion. Concerns with the current wording:

- "Best" is subjective and reviewer-dependent.
- Spatial accuracy is just one dimension; completeness, attributes, and usability also matter.
- A dataset can be the best statewide option overall while a more specialized dataset suits a particular application better.
- Multiple statewide datasets may deserve endorsement if they serve meaningfully different purposes.

The streams dataset illustrates this: it suits water-quality applications, while other DNR hydrography data may better serve general-purpose use. The committee debated whether endorsement should name one "best" dataset per theme or allow multiple endorsements for distinct purposes, while agreeing the process must retain a real **vetting function** — an endorsed dataset should have a defensible claim to being a strong statewide choice for its intended use.

IV. General-Purpose Use and User Needs

Endorsement should help users quickly find data likely to meet their needs. The committee distinguished:

- the most technically detailed dataset,
- the most spatially accurate dataset,
- the dataset with the most complete attributes, and
- the dataset most likely to serve a broad range of users.

Key point: the best general-purpose statewide dataset is not necessarily the most detailed one — the evaluation criteria should reflect this. If multiple datasets are endorsed within a theme, their names, descriptions, keywords, and tags must clearly distinguish intended uses to avoid confusing users.

V. Possible Refinement of the Quality Question

Rather than a single subjective "best" judgment, the committee discussed supplementing or rewriting the question around factors such as:

- Spatial accuracy
- Completeness of geographic coverage
- Completeness of represented features
- Attribute content and usefulness

- Compliance with applicable standards
- Intended/general-purpose use
- Relationship to other statewide datasets in the same theme
- Whether a better statewide alternative exists

No final wording was agreed; this remains the top open item.

VI. Relationship to MnSDI Theme Planning

Endorsement may eventually identify core datasets within each MnSDI theme while allowing multiple endorsed datasets per theme for different purposes (e.g., general hydrography vs. specialized water-quality data). The committee sees this as important to the longer-term structure of both the MnSDI and GAC endorsement processes.

VII. Overall Assessment

The exercise found no fundamental flaw in the proposed process — only specific questions needing clarification. The committee emphasized preserving the process's original intent and avoiding added complexity while refining it. The goal remains a practical vetting process that surfaces high-value statewide data for users.

Action Items

1. **Refine ambiguous evaluation questions** — GAC priority/MnSDI theme applicability, QA/QC documentation, mandatory attribute fields, and "best statewide spatial representation."
2. **Clarify the priority/theme requirement** — revise the form so either a GAC priority or MnSDI framework theme qualifies, with submitters identifying the applicable one.
3. **Refine Data Quality Question 3** — determine whether "best" needs a precise definition or supporting criteria for a defensible determination.
4. **Address multiple endorsed datasets** — decide how to handle multiple datasets in one theme serving different purposes/audiences.
5. **Draft GAC presentation materials** — summarize the process, evaluation form, lessons from test datasets, and recommended changes; circulate before September 1.
6. **Discuss a permanent GAC Data Endorsement Committee** — on the September 1 agenda, including its role relative to MnSDI theme planning.

Next Meeting

September 1, 2026

- Review final revisions to the evaluation questions
- Review the draft presentation/package for September GAC Meeting (September 16, 2026)
- Discuss the proposed permanent Data Endorsement Committee
- Finalize recommendations for the GAC