

NISC National Information Sharing Consortium

The NISC is pleased to share its progress on enhancing the Virtual USA program through the expansion of its suite of information sharing tools and technologies. The enclosed press release announces NISC plans to include Esri's ArcGIS Online (AGOL) as a component of Virtual USA—an important venture made possible by the partnership with Esri outlined in the press release and the ongoing input of practitioner stakeholders across the nation. This is just the beginning. The NISC will continue its work with the homeland security, public safety, emergency management, and first responder communities to evaluate and deploy additional tools and technologies that bolster the Virtual USA program, enhance shared situational awareness capabilities, and help establish a robust national and cross-border public safety information sharing environment.

PRESS RELEASE
June 24, 2013

For Immediate Release
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NISC Adopts ArcGIS Online as a Virtual USA[®] Technology Platform

First Responders Gain Greater Information Sharing Capabilities Across Jurisdictions

Washington D.C.-June 24, 2013-The National Information Sharing Consortium (NISC) has announced it is working with Esri, the world leader in geographic information systems (GIS), on deploying and configuring ArcGIS Online for Organizations (AGOL) to serve as a platform to support the Virtual USA[®] Program (vUSA). The First Responders Group (FRG) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate developed the vUSA Virtual Library and MyLibrary Widget technologies in 2009 to enable multi-jurisdictional and multi-discipline information sharing across all levels of the homeland security enterprise to provide decision makers the information they need in a timely fashion. The NISC has partnered with FRG to provide governance and administration of vUSA technologies.

Esri endorsed the vUSA initiative in 2010 and expressed their commitment to make certain their technologies would support the goals of the program. At the time, Esri committed to work closely with users and other stakeholders and provide resources to support the promise of vUSA—where multiple jurisdictions and disciplines interact and share real-time, actionable information—to enable greater interagency collaboration. Esri committed to continue to develop and provide users with tools to enable and deliver a new level of comprehensive situational awareness. The relationship between the NISC and Esri will ensure that this occurs.

With the widespread adoption and use of AGOL at the federal, state, and local government levels over the past few years, the NISC believes the deployment of an AGOL Portal consistent with vUSA will dramatically enhance the state and local agencies capacity to participate in the vUSA program. This will in turn accelerate the establishment of shared situational awareness and information sharing capabilities among and between homeland security, public safety, first responder, and emergency management organizations across the nation.

Six (6) pilot projects involving over 35 states have been conducted since 2009 to demonstrate vUSA's ability to support near real-time information sharing. Outcomes from the pilots include cross-cutting observations and requirements in the areas of governance; essential elements of information; data availability, accessibility, and integrity; and supportive technology. More than 35 U.S. states; federal, and local government; Canadian provincial and federal government; non-governmental organizations; and private sector partners continue to participate in vUSA since the first pilot was conducted.

The NISC, in collaboration with FRG and the first responder community, are using pilot outcomes as the basis for transitioning vUSA technologies from prototypes to foundational components of information sharing platforms that will not only be interoperable with other technologies and situational awareness systems already in use, but will also be complementary of other information sharing efforts already in progress. Development of these capabilities by Esri is an important step toward ensuring that vUSA tools offer maximum functionality made possible by cutting-edge technologies. Additionally, Esri and the NISC are committed to ensuring that tools will be widely accessible and sustainable.

Esri is proud to partner with the NISC on this important initiative.

The NISC is an independent consortium that is bringing together data owners, custodians, and users involved in the fields of emergency preparedness, management, and response to leverage efforts related to the governance, development, and sharing of technology, data, processes, and best practices. For more information about the NISC, visit www.nisconsortium.org, or send an e-mail to info@nisconsortium.org.

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