



## LETTER OF ENGAGEMENT

Thank you for your interest in collaborating on the Locus Charter, a set of common international principles supporting ethical and responsible use of location data.

Using location data involves risks as well as opportunities. The aim of the Charter is to agree shared principles to improve standards of practice, help protect individuals and the wider public interest, and increase the overall benefits of using that data. "Locus" is the Latin word for "place".

Data ethics principles already support good practice in many sectors (e.g. healthcare; online platforms), professions (e.g. data scientist; researcher; manager), and data categories (e.g. personal medical; online consumer; financial). Right now, there are no common principles to support responsible use of location data. Geospatial data professionals - like people in other data sectors - believe in making applications work better for society. But most of them have had little training in understanding all the potential impacts of the many ways they use data.

Since 2019, the Benchmark and EthicalGEO initiatives have supported international dialogues with geospatial professionals and organizations, to explore what it means to use location data responsibly in different contexts. These dialogues have strongly suggested that common international principles could help users of geospatial data make more informed decisions, and provide the basis for communication with people affected by those decisions.

Developing common global principles must be a collaborative activity, respecting international contexts and perspectives. The Locus Charter as presented here was developed through our initial international workshops, and forms the basis for further collaboration.

We encourage you to use these principles, share them, help us improve them, and join the network of organizations working together to promote ethical use of location data.

## Locus Charter Founding Principles

1. **Realize opportunities:** Location data offers many social and economic benefits, and these opportunities should be realized responsibly.
2. **Understand impacts:** Users of location data have responsibility to understand the potential effects of their uses of data, including knowing who (individuals and groups) and what could be affected, and how. That understanding should be used to make informed and proportionate decisions, and to minimize negative impacts.
3. **Do no harm:** Physical proximity amplifies the potential harms that can befall people, flora and fauna. Data users should ensure that the individual or collective location data pertaining to all species should not be used to discriminate, exploit or harm. Rights established in the physical world must be protected in digital contexts and interactions.
4. **Protect the vulnerable:** Vulnerable people and places can be disproportionately harmed by the misuses of location data, and may lack the capacity to protect themselves. In these contexts, data users should take additional care, act proportionately, and positively avoid causing harm.
5. **Address bias:** Bias in the collection, use, and combination of location datasets can either remove affected groups from mapping that conveys rights or services, or amplify negative impacts of inclusion in a dataset. Therefore care should be taken to understand bias in the datasets and avoid discriminatory outcomes.

6. **Minimize intrusion:** Given the intimate and personal nature of location data, users should avoid unnecessary and intrusive examination of people's lives and the places they live in, that would undermine human dignity.
7. **Minimize data:** Most business and mission applications do not require the most invasive scale of location tracking available in order to provide the intended level of service. Users should comply with practices that adhere to the data minimization principle of using only the necessary personal data that is adequate, relevant and limited to the objective, including abstracting location data to the least invasive scale feasible for the application.
8. **Protect privacy:** Tracking the movement of individuals through space and time gives insights into the most intimate aspects of their lives. In the rare cases when aggregated and anonymized location data will not meet the specific business or mission need, location data that identifies individuals should be respected, protected, and used with informed consent where possible and proportionate.
9. **Prevent identification of individuals:** As an individual's mobile location data is situated within more and more geospatial context data, its anonymity erodes, measures should be put in place to prevent subsequent use of the data resulting in identification of individuals or their location.
10. **Provide accountability:** People who are represented in location data collected, combined and used by organizations should be able to interrogate how it is collected and used in relation to them and their interests, and appeal those uses proportionate to levels of detail and potential for harms.

**To affirm your commitment to the Locus Charter initiative, please review and sign the following pledge:**

\_\_\_\_\_ joins the Locus Charter initiative.

We, along with organizations from across the globe, will promote responsible practice in the use of location data across all sectors including public, private, educational, and not-for-profit contexts. We seek to inform and improve practice across all scales including individual projects and organizational mandates.

We understand our name and logo may be used on Locus Charter webpages indicating community membership alongside all other members. We are proud to participate in the Locus Charter and will promote engagement with it among our colleagues and networks.

\_\_\_\_\_

**NAME / TITLE / ORGANIZATION**

\_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE**

**\*Disclaimer:** *By signing this document you indicate only the commitment to participate in and publicly support the Locus Charter initiative and its associated community. This commitment does not serve as a legally binding contract, nor require payment or sharing of intellectual property.*