

Directory Interchange Format (DIF) Usability Survey

NASA's Earth Science Data Systems Standards Process Group (SPG) is considering the DIF (Directory Interchange Format) specification, developed by the GCMD (Global Change Master Directory), for adoption as a community standard. Your responses to this survey on the usability of the DIF and the suitability of this specification for Earth science data will be helpful.

Please answer as many of the questions below as you can..

1. Please provide your name, organization and contact information (including email address).

2. Are you answering for your entire organization, for a smaller group, or individually?

a) Entire organization

b) Smaller group (please specify) _____

c) Individual response

3. Are you a data producer, data consumer, or both?

a) Producer b) Consumer c) Both

4. How long have you been using the DIF?

[Since the inception of EOS Land Data Products \(~1998 forward\)](#)

5. Please describe how the DIF is used in your organization.

[This organization populates information related to EOS Land Data Products to the DIF template for publication on the GCMD website and formerly in support of document searches on EDG.](#)

For the following, you can answer either about the DIF alone, or relative to other, comparable specifications.

6. What are the strengths of the DIF? How has the use of the DIF helped your organization?

DIFs present basic product characteristics to users and for the most part centralize access to relevant information by providing links to access interfaces, references, archive centers, etc..

DIFs have somewhat driven the content of product descriptions presented on the DAAC website. The DIF template is populated using information composed for “one-pagers.”

7. What are the weaknesses of the DIF? What would you like to change about the DIF or what would make the DIF a better specification?

DIFs are available only to users with knowledge of their purpose and location. Promotion of the GCMD as a source for data information would expand the use of DIFs. DIF parameters such as ISO Topic and Keywords are of questionable value to anyone without direct connections with their respective organizations.

8. How well does the DIF solve your metadata storage, discovery, and/or interchange needs? Are there specific areas it is applicable to vs. areas where it is not applicable or not used?

The DIFs are not applicable in this capacity at the DAAC.

9. How suitable is the DIF for representing your data holdings?

The information presented in a DIF is good for a general overview of EOS Land Data Products. It does not address the more relevant information gaps related to application relevance and usability of the products.

10. Do you use the DIF to track your own data holdings (i.e. do you use DIF in your own data management activities)?

No.

11. What are the limitations of the DIF? Does the DIF prevent you from doing things you would like to do? Does its use make other things more difficult?

The DIFs are a product documentation requirement that costs minimal time to fulfill. Otherwise it has little effect on the archive and distribution of EOS Land Data Products.

12. Do you think ESDS-RFC-012 (and thus the DIF) should be endorsed as a NASA Earth Science Data Systems Standard? Why or why not?

To provide general awareness of EOS Land Data Products, the DIFs have potential to be useful to the Land remote sensing community. It is commendable to create a comprehensive listing of products with leads to specific and relevant information, but without knowledge of DIF purpose or location, users will not enjoy this benefit.