

Guidelines for Naming and Nomenclature of “Institutions” and “Collections” in the registry of U.S. Federal Scientific Collections (USFSC)

The scientific collections owned by the U.S. Federal Government are being registered in a web portal located at <http://usfsc.grscicoll.org>. The following guidelines have been prepared by the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections (IWGSC) for agency officials tasked with submitting and updating information on their collections through the USFSC portal. Questions and suggestions should be sent to the site administrator (scicoll@si.edu) and Eileen Graham (grahame@si.edu).

Overview. The database that feeds the registry of US Federal Scientific Collections (USFSC) is structured around 'Collections' that belong to 'Institutions'. Since Federal agencies have many hierarchical levels, it may be difficult to decide where divisions between Collections should be drawn and which level in the agency’s hierarchy should be listed as Collections and their parent Institution. In preparing data for entry into USFSC, agencies should:

1. Identify their collections as separate operational units that share a catalog numbering system. A single collection may be housed in different physical locations and contain different types of objects, but if they are unified by a catalog numbering system they can be considered a single collection. These will be Collections in USFSC, each of which must be associated with a single Institution in the registry.
2. Identify the administrative unit that has direct responsibility for collections. This will be the Institution with which the Collections are associated in the registry.

1. Institution Names should have two parts, separated by a comma (,):

- The parent department and up to one lower organizational level, separated by a slash. This part of the Institution Name must be on a controlled vocabulary list maintained by IWGSC and will be checked for consistency by the USFSC moderator.
- The name of the institution that directly administers the collections. This name should be recognizable as a collection-related entity, not the office within which the institution is located.

Examples are:

- USDA/Forest Service, Bitterroot National Forest
- HHS/CDC, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases
- Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History
- Interior/USGS, Woods Hole Coastal and Marine Science Center Samples Repository

2. **Institution Codes** should be short (generally four letters or less; numbers and other characters are prohibited) to identify the institution that administers the collections. It should not include anything about the parent department or agency. The portal will check the Institution Code to ensure that it is globally unique.

Please note, if your institution uses a code that does not adhere to these criteria exceptions may be made to ensure proper connectivity between codes in USFSC and other places (e.g. publications).

3. **Collection Names** should clearly represent the contents of that collection. The name should not include anything about the organizational structure because that information is provided in the Institution Names.

Examples are:

- Apollo Moon Rock and Soil Collection
- Active Bacterial Collection

4. **Collection Codes** should consist of letters only and should be short, but long enough to represent the contents of the collection. The Collection Code is commonly used in published citations of the collection and specimens/samples. Since they only have to be unique within that institution, different institutions can use the same Collection Codes.

5. **Mailing Address Fields:** Agencies should put Institution Name in Mailing Address Line 1 so that users, for example, will find "USDA" or "Forest Service" by searching in either the Institution Name or Locality fields.

Other levels in the organizational hierarchy can be included in one of the Mailing Address lines. Searches using the Locality field will find them.

6. **Collections hosted/managed by other organizations.** Several agencies own collections that are hosted and managed by other federal agencies or by non-federal partners such as university museums. These museums will be registered in GRSciColl but they probably won't register the federal collections they are hosting as separate entities. For example, Interior/NPS owns microbial strains that are hosted and managed by the American Type Culture Collections (registered as the Institution Code ATCC in GRSciColl). ATCC has chosen not to register the NPS samples as a separate collection within their institution, but NPS can do so through USFSC.

The standard practice in these circumstances is:

- The agency registers as an institution (e.g., USDA/ARS, [specific name])
- The agency registers the collection under that institution (e.g., Tardigrades)
- The agency's address is then entered under Mailing Address; and
- The host institution's address is entered under Physical Address.