**I-GUIDE PRIMER ON INFORMED CONSENT IN GEOSPATIAL RESEARCH**

Informed consent is a process that ensures participants know what they’re agreeing to and can freely make that choice. It helps protect participants from harm and misuse of their information.

For consent to be valid, address the following **five conditions** (in practice, it is almost always impossible to ensure all five conditions are fully met – try to comply with them as much as you can):

1. **COMPETENCE:** The person must be able to understand and reason about the decision.

* Assess competence based on the decision—not the person’s background or education;
* Consider context (e.g., fatigue, stress, or language barriers can affect decision-making);
* For research involving children or vulnerable populations, include safeguards and, where possible, seek assent from legal guardians.

1. **DISCLOSURE:** People must be told what they’re agreeing to do, including goals, risks, benefits.

* Be specific and open about how geospatial data (like locations) will be used;
* Disclose any risks of identification;
* Use visuals or examples where possible.

### **UNDERSTANDING:** People must understand the information they’re given.

* Avoid jargon. For instance, instead of “predictive spatial modeling,” say “a computer tool that tries to predict what might happen where”;
* Ask participants to explain back what they’ve understood, and give them opportunities to ask questions for clarification

1. **VOLUNTARINESS:** People must not be pressured or coerced into participating, and must be able to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

* Make it clear that participation is optional, and that participants can opt out at any time;
* Avoid offering large incentives that may feel coercive.

1. **TOKEN OF CONSENT:** There must be clear (documentation of participant agreement.

* Use written consent forms where literacy is high.
* In other settings, use verbal consent with an audio recording, or visual signals documented by a witness;
* Keep records of when and how consent was given.

These five conditions are adapted from:

Millum J. & Bromwich D. (2020), “Respect for persons”. In Iltis A. S. & MacKay D. (eds.), *Research Ethics*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

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