



Contact: Kelly Power
703-883-9000 ext. 122
kpower@meritalk.com

New Research: GEOINT Workforce Not Prepared for AI Influx

91% believe AI can improve geospatial intelligence, but just 33% have an AI workforce strategy

Alexandria, Va., May 4, 2020 – While the majority of geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) stakeholders agree that human-machine teaming will be the industry’s new normal within just five years, a new study finds the GEOINT workforce has half (or fewer) of the skills needed to actualize AI benefits.

[MeriTalk](#), a public-private partnership focused on improving the outcomes of government IT, today announced the results of its new report, [“Mapping AI to the GEOINT Workforce.”](#) The results show that the geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) workforce has a long path ahead to prepare for the influx of AI.

The study, a collaboration with the United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF), is based on a survey of 150 Federal (Fed), state and local (SLG), and higher education GEOINT stakeholders. The report explores how organizations are deploying AI today, the challenges they face, and how they can work together with industry and academia to better prepare the workforce for the digital future.

“With AI being just announced by NGA as one of the five Tech Areas, this is a very timely study that will help inform the future of our work. Embracing the third wave of AI, USGIF and its partner academic institutions have been incorporating data mining, analysis, fusion and processing into their curricula in addition to the already taught GIS, Remote Sensing and Data Visualization competencies,” shared Dr. Camelia Kantor, Vice President of Academic Affairs, USGIF.

Forty percent of government organizations are currently benefiting from or implementing at least one GEOINT-related AI program. The primary applications include data mining, GIS and

analysis, and data visualization. Respondents cite faster decision-making and accelerated data analysis as the top initial benefits, with more on the horizon.

Ninety-one percent of respondents believe AI has the potential to greatly improve GEOINT's effectiveness. Fed (85 percent), SLG (75 percent), and higher education (71 percent) stakeholders agree that AI will bring rapid changes to the GEOINT role, including the involvement of human machine teaming for analysis and decision making within the next five years. From a mission standpoint, stakeholders predict that GEOINT-related AI will have the greatest impact on national security, emergency response and natural disaster aid, and urban planning and development.

Although stakeholders acknowledge the transformative value of AI to GEOINT, the workforce is largely unprepared to capitalize on the technology. Across Fed, SLG, and higher education, stakeholders say their biggest challenge will be addressing the skills gap (57 percent), while security concerns (51 percent) and lack of funding (49 percent) are significant secondary challenges.

Stakeholders believe they have half (or fewer) of the skills needed for AI benefits. In the next five to ten years, the most desirable skills for GEOINT professionals will be advanced statistics, analytics, or mathematical modeling; critical thinking; and data visualization. Organizations are investing in the workforce to prepare for greater use of AI – in skills development, training, and hiring. However, just 33 percent say they have a formal strategy for adapting the workforce to AI, while 54 percent are working on one.

“If you're not hip to AI, you're DOA in GEOINT,” said Steve O'Keeffe, founder MeriTalk. “We can choose to ride the new wave, or get drowned by it. Good time to learn to swim.”

Looking ahead, stakeholders suggest increasing collaboration with universities on an AI curricula and working to integrate AI skills into workforce training to help adapt GEOINT professionals to AI adoption.

“Addressing skills gaps and diverse backgrounds and experiences in preparation for a much more complex forth wave will be not be an easy task, especially without appropriate funding and

community support,” said Dr. Kantor. “With strong partnerships, such as the one with MeriTalk, we hope to be able to ride along all the future AI waves in our lives.”

Review the full [report](#), underwritten by Intel, MFGS, Inc., Microsoft, and Recorded Future. Additionally, register for the [virtual panel](#) discussing the results on Wednesday, May 27.

About MeriTalk

The voice of tomorrow’s government today, MeriTalk is a public-private partnership focused on improving the outcomes of government IT. The award-winning editorial team and world-class events and research staff produces unmatched news, analysis, and insight. The goal: more efficient, responsive, and citizen-centric government. MeriTalk connects with an audience of 151,000 Federal community contacts. For more information, visit www.MeriTalk.com or follow us on Twitter, [@MeriTalk](#). MeriTalk is a [300Brand](#) organization.

About USGIF

USGIF is a nonprofit educational foundation dedicated to promoting the geospatial intelligence tradecraft and developing a stronger GEOINT Community among government, industry, academia, professional organizations, and individuals who develop and apply GEOINT to address global security challenges. USGIF achieves its mission via its strategic pillars: Build the Community | Advance the Tradecraft | Accelerate Innovation. For more information, please visit www.USGIF.org and follow USGIF on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#).