

**Rules
of
Georgia Department of Community Affairs**

**Chapter 110-12-9
Procedure and Submission of Service Delivery Strategies**

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**CHAPTER 110-12-9-.01
PURPOSE & INTERPRETATION**

110-12-9-.01 Purpose & Interpretation

(1) Purpose. O.C.G.A. § 36-70-23.1 and 36-70-26 directs the Department of Community Affairs (the Department) to promulgate rules and regulations to provide a uniform procedure for Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) submission, review, verification, and state-wide mapping standards. These specific rules and procedures are provided herein and are applicable to all local governments and authorities in the State. As such, the intent of these rules is to: (1) provide direction for the filing (submission, review, and verification, etc.) of SDSs; (2) provide uniform mapping standards for the description of geographic areas for local government services within the SDS; and, (3) accomplish any and all other directives to the Department related to local service delivery strategies pursuant to applicable statute. The rules intentionally provide no substantive guidance surrounding the mechanics of the interparty process of formulating service delivery arrangements or renegotiating them or the resolution of disputes related to or arising from them. No action from the Department shall be interpreted as an agency action approving or disapproving the specific elements or outcomes of the strategy. These rules become effective January 1, 2026.

(2) Changes and Interpretation. These rules and regulations may be revised from time to time by the Department. The Department is the final authority for interpretation of these rules.

Authority: O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20, et seq.; O.C.G.A. § 50-8-1, et seq.

CHAPTER 110-12-9-.02 DEFINITIONS

110-12-9-.02 Definitions. For the purpose of these rules, the following words will have the meaning as contained therein unless the context does not permit such meaning. Terms not defined in these rules but defined in O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20, et seq., will have the meanings contained herein. Terms not defined in these rules or in O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20, et seq., will have ascribed to them the ordinary accepted meanings such as the context may imply.

(1) ‘Parties’ within the SDS include the county and any municipality located either wholly or partially within the county without regard to whether the local government is a signatory of the SDS, required or otherwise.

(2) ‘Service Delivery Strategy’ means the collection of the forms, geospatial information, intergovernmental agreements and contracts, and all other supporting materials that describe the totality of service delivery arrangements for a county, all municipalities located wholly or partially therein, and authorities providing service to any territory within the county. This may also be referred to as the “SDS Document” or the “Agreement”, (if referring to an intergovernmental agreement or some other agreement, it will be specified as such.).

(3) ‘Service Delivery Strategy Amendment’ is an amendment as required under O.C.G.A. § 36-70-21(a)(2), or any other amendment to the SDS as necessary.

(4) ‘Service Delivery Strategy Update’ is the update required under O.C.G.A. § 36-70-21(a)(1). This may also be referred to as the ‘10-year update’ or ‘full update’. This is an SDS that contains a Form 2 for every service provided by or on behalf of any local government or authority serving any territory within the county covered by SDS.

(5) ‘Verifiable Delivery’ means delivery that can be decisively confirmed to have occurred. All notices and communications to the Department, necessary to implement O.C.G.A. § 36-70-26, will be sent via verifiable delivery or as specified by the Department. Verifiable delivery between the Parties includes:

- Posted mail with a tracking number produced by a mail carrier service (e.g., USPS, FedEx, UPS);
- Email showing delivery time/ date in the message’s header or (delivery and read receipts are strongly advised),
- For hand-delivered materials, a scan or photo of the notice clearly showing a date-received stamp on the document accompanied by the signature of the person who accepted delivery of the notice on behalf of the receiving party. An affidavit including the following information is also acceptable: the name and signature of the person who accepted delivery of the notice on behalf of the receiving party, the date received, and the name and signature of the person who delivered the notice.

Authority: O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20, et seq.; O.C.G.A. § 50-8-1, et seq.

CHAPTER 110-12-9-.03 MAPPING STANDARDS

110-12-9-.03 Mapping Standards

(1) Requirements for Data Submission. If a party elects or is required to provide a map within the SDS, the geospatial data used in producing such maps must be submitted to the Department in a GIS (Geographic Information System) digital vector data format simultaneously with the submission of the SDS. The submission shall meet the technical standards as promulgated by the Department. These standards are outlined in the "Service Delivery Strategy Technical Specifications for Data, Mapping, and Document Assembly" guidance document, located on the Department's website.

(2) Map Elements for Service Area Maps. Maps visually represented in the SDS document shall be created using mapping software such as ArcGIS or QGIS that enables compliance with the data requirements detailed by the Department's website. Maps produced by any other method (e.g., by hand on a printed map, using a computer-based "painting" or "drawing" program to place shapes on top of a map, etc.), will not be verified. Any map verified in previous iterations of the SDS which do not conform with these standards must be recreated in a manner that complies with current standards and must be included as a component of the next SDS submitted for verification.

At minimum, one county-level map (zoomed to the visible extent of the county) must be provided for each service being mapped and visually represented in the SDS document. Each map visually represented in the SDS document shall conform to the requirements, below:

(a) Layers. Each service area map must clearly show one or more Service Area Boundary Layers and one or more of the following layers as appropriate:

- County Layer
- Municipal Boundary Layer
- *Parcel Layer (As desired by the Parties and as practical in the scale of the map, most likely only useful in an inset map. Data must be provided as discussed above, whether the layer is shown or not.)
- *Census Tract Layer (As desired by the Parties and as practical in the scale of the map, most likely only useful in an inset map. Data must be provided as discussed above, whether the layer is shown or not.)

(b) Title. A title shall be provided on each map, clearly indicating what service is being provided to what service area. The title must match exactly the name used on the submitted Form 1 "General Instructions" and the Form 2 "Summary of Service Delivery Arrangements" corresponding to the specific service being mapped. (For instance, "2026 Sample County Sewer Map".)

(c) Legend. A clear legend is required that defines any markings (colors, symbols, gradients, etc.) used on the map. The legend shall reflect all markings on the map, and the map should reflect all items defined in the legend. The legend shall be consistent with the information provided in corresponding SDS forms.

(d) Map Scale. A map scale shall provide accurate linear relation information.

(e) North Arrow. The north arrow shall be obviously located and shall clearly illustrate which direction on the map is ‘North’.

(f) Labels and Wayfinding Aids. Labels shall be included where appropriate to provide bearing and map clarity (for instance, to mark interstates or large roads). Transportation facilities (key roads, and highways) and other easily recognizable characteristics of the mapped territory should be incorporated into maps to facilitate users’ orientation and interpretation of the boundaries and areas of mapped service areas. If the map is countywide or large-scale, labels should mark the location of cities within the county. Labels shall be consistent with the descriptors used in corresponding SDS forms.

(g) Resolution and Scale. Care must be exercised in creating the map to ensure that all map features can be readily discerned (e.g., not blurry) and are presented at a size that facilitates their use.

For small service areas or geographies with multiple service providers in a small area, the SDS document shall include one or more inset maps which visually represent geographies smaller than the full extent of the county. This inset map should be provided at the visible extent necessary to clearly illustrate and document service area boundaries while containing all required layers listed above.

Authority: O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20, et seq.; O.C.G.A. § 50-8-1, et seq.

CHAPTER 110-12-9-.04 FILING PROCESS

10-12-9-.04 Filing Process

(1) First Update. The first SDS update provided after January 1, 2026, as required under O.C.G.A. §§ 36-70-21(a)(1) and 36-70-26, shall be a ‘full update’. In subsequent amendments (as defined in these standards), it is permissible to list any services that are unchanging in Box III on Form 1, thus there is no requirement to include a Form 2 for any service listed in Box III in SDS amendments. (The referenced forms are described hereafter.)

(2) Procedure for Filing an SDS. The SDS shall be submitted to the Department using the methods and materials specified by the Department herein.

(a) Forms. The Department will promulgate standardized forms that, along with other materials described in these standards, comprise the SDS. SDS's must be submitted to the Department using the appropriate forms. Because SDS forms may be updated or revised by the Department from time to time, parties shall ensure that SDS updates and amendments are produced using the most up to date versions of SDS forms available on the Department's website at the time of the SDS update or amendment. The standardized forms shall not be altered by users without explicit direction from the Department except to fill the fields necessary to reflect local agreed-upon service delivery arrangements. Each field on the form must be fully completed as appropriate per the SDS. We encourage using "Not Applicable" to fill form fields where no response is necessary to ensure that no fields are erroneously unaddressed. An overview of the standard forms is provided, hereafter:

1. Form 1 – General Instructions.

- The first field asks for the county name.
- The following fields ask for a listing of all local governments (including municipalities located wholly or partially within the county) and authorities that provide services included in the SDS.
 - There are also two fields where all services provided by or on behalf of any local government or authority included in the SDS must be listed: (1) a field (Box III) for services included in the SDS that are being continued without change; and, (2) a field (Box IV) for all services included in the SDS that are being revised (in any way) or being added (new).
 - In Box IV, notation should be provided for any service that is being discontinued or merged into another service. Each service listed in Box IV must be included on an associated Form 2 (unless such service is being discontinued).

There is no standardized list of all services that must be included in an SDS.

Services may be broken into component elements to facilitate accurate reflection of service delivery mechanisms (e.g., Police Services could be broken into: Police – Patrol, Police – SWAT, Police – Investigations, etc.).

2. Form 2 – Summary of Service Delivery Arrangements. As each service listed in Box IV requires an associated Form 2, this form includes a field for the service name. The service name on Form 2 must exactly match the service name as it is listed on Form 1.

- This form asks for the following information:
 - Information regarding the service delivery arrangement between the Parties;

- How the service will be funded and by whom;
- How/ if the strategy for providing this service has changed since the previous SDS was verified;
- Which local governments are responsible for providing services;
- What territories are being served, if there are any other agreements; contracts, or mechanisms that will help implement this strategy for this service; and
- Who completed the form for this service.

Attachments may be necessary to supplement properly completed forms.

3. Form 3 – Summary of Land Use Agreements. This form asks Parties to consider and acknowledge any incompatibility between land use plans that were found while developing this SDS. The Parties are then asked to provide information indicating how these conflicts were addressed, if any were found. Finally, the form asks what policies or procedures the Parties have established, including water and sewer authorities, to ensure that new extraterritorial water and sewer service will be consistent with all applicable land use plans.

Attachments may be necessary to supplement properly completed forms.

4. Form 4 - Certifications. The Parties must certify that the statutory process was followed while developing this SDS.

The fields ask for the dated signatures (including the title and printed name) from each jurisdiction as required by O.C.G.A. § 36-70-25. The signature provided must be that of the local governments chief elected official unless such official is unavailable to sign due death or legal action prohibiting them from serving in this capacity.

The Department shall verify that the SDS includes the required elements and meets the minimum standards under O.C.G.A. §§ 36-70-23 and 36-70-24. The Department shall also verify that the forms are completed correctly, and that the SDS is internally consistent (e.g., there are no clear conflicts between or among the submitted SDS forms, there are no unexplained conflicts between the submitted SDS and previously verified iterations of the SDS). If the SDS is unable to be verified, the Department will notify the person that submitted the SDS for review with comments.

(b) Verification Deadlines and Compliance. If an SDS is not verified by the Department by December 31 of the year following the year in which the county's ten-year comprehensive plan update is due, or, within 180 days of the occurrence of an event requiring review and revision in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 36-70-28(b), the Department will notify all the necessary parties (including relevant state agencies) that the affected local governments and authorities are no longer compliant with the Service Delivery Act, O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20, *et seq.*, and sanctions must be implemented.

In the event that the SDS requires review and revision as specified in statute and these rules, one or more Parties shall notify the Department via verifiable delivery. The notification shall include what the event is, and the date that it officially occurred so that the Department can adjust and accurately track the new deadline. The notification must be delivered to the Department within thirty (30) days of the event as in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 36-70-22(a)(2).

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. §§ 36-70-25.2 and 36-70-25.3, the Department shall be notified when the parties enter nonbinding arbitration, mediation, and judicial resolution, via verifiable delivery, by an affected party to the event. The notification shall include when the process is to begin, so that the Department can adjust and accurately track the new deadline. The notification must be delivered to the Department once the process is scheduled.

- 1. Non-compliance.** When an SDS is not verified by the Department by the appropriate deadline as directed by O.C.G.A. § 36-70-26, the affected local governments will no longer be in compliance with the Service Delivery Act.

Effective January 1, 2026, all abeyances of the penalties for noncompliance are no longer recognized by statute.

- 2. Events requiring review and revision pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 36-70-28.** In addition to the ten-year update required to occur subsequent to a comprehensive plan update, each county and affected municipality shall review and revise the strategy:

- Whenever necessary due to changes in revenue distribution arrangements
- In the event of the creation, abolition, or consolidation of local governments
- When the existing service delivery strategy SDS expires
- Whenever the county and affected municipalities agree to revise the strategy

(c) Scheduled Update. SDS's submitted as required under O.C.G.A. § 36-70-26 shall include a Form 1, as well as a Form 2 for every service whether it is listed in Box III or Box IV on Form 1, a Form 3, and a fully executed Form 4.

Regardless of the impetus for the update or the Party who initiated the update, when filing the SDS with the Department for review, it shall be submitted by the county or county's representative.

(d) Amendments.

- 1. Components.** An amendment is required to have a Form 1, as well as a Form 2 for any service listed in Box IV on Form 1, and a Form 4 executed by the local

governments which are party to the change. However, any amendment to the SDS that is not required under O.C.G.A. § 36-70-26, does not require the submission of a Form 3.

2. Amendments involving less than all parties. Under O.C.G.A. § 36-70-28(b.1)(1) only if a change in the SDS does not affect all local governments involved, an SDS amendment limited to the changed service or services between only the affected local governments may be submitted (without the approval of the other nonimpacted county and municipalities).

3. Submittal and Review. O.C.G.A. § 36-70-28(b.1)(2) states that any of the aforementioned amendments will be subject to review and revision whenever the SDS affecting the county and all municipalities becomes subject to review and revision under the scheduled updated deadline and/ or the occurrence of an event requiring review and revision pursuant to O.C.G.A. 36-70-22(a)(2) as mentioned above.

Without regard to the above, no request for funding, permits, grants, or loans from any State agency, except as provided for under O.C.G.A. § 36-70-27, shall be eligible without a consistent SDS verified to be compliant by, and on file with the Department.

Authority: O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20, et seq.; O.C.G.A. § 50-8-1, et seq.