Organizing Principles and Policies

1. Formation

1.1. GISCorps is organized as a program under the auspices and pursuant to the objectives and principles of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA).

Commentary: This section places GISCorps, first and foremost, within the structure and mission of URISA.
2. Purposes.

2.1. GISCorps shall operate to coordinate short-term, volunteer-based geographic information systems (GIS) services to underserved communities worldwide to:

2.1.1. Support humanitarian relief.
2.1.2 Support human rights relief.
2.1.3. Enhance environmental analysis.
2.1.4. Encourage economic development.
2.1.5. Support community planning and development.
2.1.6. Support health and education activities.
2.1.7. Strengthen local capacity to adopt and use information technology.
2.1.8. Benefit communities in need, GISCorps volunteers and their communities, GISCorps Partner Agencies and their affiliates, and the URISA community.

2.2. In achieving its purposes GISCorps will rely on four kinds of supporters:

2.2.1. GISCorps committee members – persons who serve on the GISCorps Core Committee or on one of the Activity Committees it directs.
2.2.2. GISCorps volunteers – persons who register on the GISCorps website to be considered for a GISCorps volunteer mission.
2.2.3. Partner Agencies – agencies or entities, and their affiliates, who manage projects and receive GISCorps services.
2.2.4. Donors – Entities or persons, other than committee members, volunteers or Partner Agencies, who provide support, financial or otherwise, to GISCorps.

Commentary: This section states the mission and vision of, and participation in, GISCorps.
3. Ethical Principles 3.1. GISCorps committee members and volunteers shall adhere to the GISCorps' Code of Conduct in all GISCorps activities.

3.2. In addition, GISCorps committee members and volunteers shall:

3.2.1. Make recommendations without exploitation or regard for personal or agency profit.
3.2.2. Seek the most appropriate and sustainable technology and solution for the community in need.
3.2.3. Remain vendor-neutral in the recommendation of software, hardware, and other related technologies and services.
3.2.4. Not use a volunteer assignment to promote or engage in any political, religious, or commercial activities.

3.3. GISCorps shall not provide support for Partner Agencies or projects that are contrary to URISA's objectives, the GIS Code of Ethics, or GISCorps purposes. 3.4. GISCorps shall not accept donations from entities formed for the purposes, and/or engaged in activities, contrary to URISA's objectives or to the GIS Code of Ethics.

3.5. GISCorps is intended to provide unbiased consulting assistance. All donations regarding hardware, software and services shall be properly directed towards the Partner Agency. For selected projects and only when donations further the mission of GISCorps and its Partner Agencies, GISCorps may accept software and/or hardware donations from any donor company. GISCorps and its volunteers shall not endorse or promote any software and/or hardware.

 - 3.5.1 If there are any significant contributions to GISCorps of software or hardware that are transferred to another exempt purpose organization or government organization, there will be documentation from the donor with the value of the contribution. This should be forwarded to URISA along with the information as to who the donated hardware/software

was then transferred to. 3.6. Core Committee members shall not take unfair advantage of their membership on the committee or their association in GISCorps. Unfair advantage includes seeking to establish business opportunities with existing or prospective Partner Agencies and affiliates.

Commentary: This section affirms the Code of Ethics as fundamental to GISCorps activities, and explicitly prohibits the use of GISCorps activities for the promotion of commercial interests or personal economic gain. Sections 3.3 and 3.4 require GISCorps to select sponsors and donors that also support these values.

4. Scope and Limits of Activities

4.1. To achieve its purposes, GISCorps shall undertake the following activities:

4.1.1. Provide coordination between Partner Agencies and volunteers.
4.1.2. Evaluate the professional qualifications of volunteers.
4.1.3. Establish relationships with Partner Agencies and donors.
4.1.4. Screen proposed projects and verify that they match the GISCorps objectives.
4.1.5. Match volunteers' expertise with project requirements.
4.2. GISCorps' activities shall be undertaken subject to the following limitations:

4.2.1. GISCorps will not sponsor projects directly. GISCorps will refer volunteers to Partner Agencies and vice versa, but volunteers will deal directly with the Partner Agencies.
4.2.2. Neither URISA nor the GISCorps will be responsible for food, lodging, living expenses, insurance of its volunteers, travel, or any other expenses. Expenses should be defrayed either by the individual, her/his institution, the Partner Agency and their affiliates, or by the host community on a project-by-project basis. GISCorps may, at its discretion, provide limited reimbursement of direct costs incurred by the volunteer in traveling to and from the project location. Guidelines and procedures on providing such assistance are presented in GISCorps' Travel Guidelines and Travel Reimbursement Procedure.
4.2.3. GISCorps shall recommend the most qualified volunteers for a given assignment. Where there are several qualified volunteers, GISCorps shall also take into consideration GISP Certification and URISA membership. GISCorps shall also seek to provide volunteer opportunities to as many volunteers as possible.
4.2.4. GISCorps may provide volunteers to public entities, non-governmental organizations, and professional associations. Organizations that operate under a Social Business model, or are undertaking a project for humanitarian purposes rather than for profit, may also be assisted with volunteers (see http://www.muhammadyunus.org/Social-Business/social-business/ and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_business for an explanation of a Social Business). Requests of this nature will be examined thoroughly on a case-by-case basis to ensure they align with the GISCorps mission. In these limited cases, volunteers may be provided to a humanitarian project that is managed by a for-profit organization if:

Appropriate GIS expertise is not available from other sources;
There is no viable alternative nonprofit or government organization (associated with the project) to which GISCorps volunteer services can be provided;
In requesting GISCorps support, the GISCorps contribution is not intended to contribute to a profit from the project to the managing organization.
4.2.5. Although assistance may be offered in developed communities, the focus is on communities in developing countries.
4.2.6. As GISCorps' goal is to remain financially self-sustaining, GISCorps may also consider appropriate grant funding mechanisms and sources, as the need arises. The process of identifying, applying, managing, and implementing these funding mechanisms will be guided by URISA's standard policies and procedures on these matters.

Commentary: This section states how GISCorps can best achieve its purposes given URISA's strengths and limitations.

5. Membership

5.1. Participation in GISCorps activities, and membership on all GISCorps committees, except the Core Committee, is open to anyone with a sincere interest in achieving the purposes and furthering the activities of GISCorps.

5.2. GISCorps Core Committee membership is open to any URISA member. The URISA membership requirement may be waived only by specific authorization of the URISA Board of Directors.

Commentary: This section requires that GISCorps leadership come from within URISA's membership, but otherwise opens GISCorps membership and participation to all.

6. Organizational Structure

6.1. GISCorps Core Committee. GISCorps shall be directed by a Core Committee, which shall plan and direct the work of GISCorps and its Activity Committees. The Core Committee shall provide information, as requested, to the URISA Board of Directors, and hold regular and special meetings, as needed, to carry out its responsibilities. 6.2. Activity Committees. The Core Committee may, at its discretion, create and direct Activity Committees to carry out work, such as volunteer coordination, partnership coordination, volunteer evaluation/selection, public information, and administration.

6.3 GISCorps Finances. All GISCorps finances shall be administered by URISA headquarters staff, which shall provide monthly statements of accounts to the Core Committee. Grants and donations to GISCorps shall be held in restricted URISA accounts, and such funds shall only be expended with the approval of the majority of Core Committee members and in accordance with URISA's constitution, by-laws, and policies. 6.4 Core Committee Membership and Leadership. The Core Committee shall consist of at least three, and no more than 7, persons, including a Chair and a Vice-Chair. The Chair shall set Core Committee meeting schedules and agendas, convene and preside over Core Committee meetings, and ensure that requested information is delivered to the URISA Board of Directors. The Vice-Chair shall work closely with the Chair and assume the duties of the Chair in the event of Chair's absence or incapacity.

6.5 Core Committee Powers and Duties. The Core Committee shall ensure that GISCorps carries out the activities set forth in section 4.1, including but not limited to:

6.5.1. Evaluating volunteers, and selecting and recommending the most suitable and qualified candidates for each position.
6.5.2. Finding and contacting prospective Partner Agencies; evaluating Partner Agencies for compatibility with GISCorps; evaluating proposed projects; and coordinating requests for donations.
6.5.3. Providing articles, interviews, and information for news media, online journals, listservs, and donor solicitations.
6.5.4. Reviewing and revising these organizing principles and policies, and GISCorps' strategic plan, operating plan, and standard operating procedures.
6.5.5. Handling meeting agendas, minutes, and other internal communications of the Core Committee and Activity Committees; financial reports and database reports; routine correspondence with prospective volunteers and Partner Agencies; maintenance of GISCorps' knowledge base and website; and coordination with URISA's Archives Committee.

6.6. URISA Liaisons

 - 6.6.1 URISA Headquarters Staff: URISA Headquarters staff shall interact with the Core Committee through designated staff. URISA Headquarters staff may participate in Core Committee conference calls. The Core Committee shall authorize and direct the work performed by URISA Headquarters staff on behalf of GISCorps.

 - 6.6.2 URISA Board of Directors: The GISCorps program will liaise with the URISA Board of Directors through a Board member as designated by the Board. This individual – hereafter referred to as the URISA Board Liaison - will be added to the Core Committee listserv and may participate in Core Committee conference calls.

 - 6.6.3 Core Committee List Serve: The Core Committee List Serve will consist of all members of the Core Committee, designated URISA staff, and the URISA Board Liaison. Individuals serving as President-Elect, President and immediate Past-President may also be included on the Core Committee listserv at their discretion. The listserv shall be updated as appropriate when membership in the Core Committee, the URISA Board or the URISA designated staff change.

 - 6.6.4 GISCorps Items on Board Agenda: If a GISCorps item is placed on the Board of Directors meeting agenda, the URISA Board Liaison will notify the Core Committee. The Chair of the Core Committee (or designate) will be invited to attend the Board meeting for discussion and clarification of the item.

6.7 Core Committee Rules of Procedure and Membership

6.7.1 Core Committee Conference Calls and Meetings: The Core Committee shall hold conference calls monthly, or as needed, to carry out its responsibilities. An annual meeting may be conducted at the URISA Annual Conference. Special conference calls and meetings may be called at any time by the Chair, or at the request of a majority of the members.
6.7.2 Quorum: At any conference call or meeting, a majority of members shall constitute a quorum to do business.
6.7.3 Voting: Each member shall have one (1) vote. Unless otherwise specifically provided herein, a majority vote of the members present and voting shall govern.
6.7.4 Rules of Order: The current edition of "Roberts Rules of Order" governs this Committee in all parliamentary situations

that are not provided for herein.

6.7.6 Elections: New Core Committee members shall be nominated by the current Core Committee members or by the URISA Board of Directors. Nominees must be individuals that have amply demonstrated the necessary skills and abilities within GISCorps volunteer missions or committees (preferably as a mission coordinator) or other URISA activities. New Core Committee members are elected by current Core Committee members.

6.7.7 Tenure of Officers and Core Committee Members: All Core Committee members shall assume their position at the URISA Annual Conference for a term of three years. The term is renewable by majority vote of the Core Committee members. Each year at its first meeting the Core Committee shall elect from its members a Chair and Vice-Chair, each of whom shall serve for one year. No member shall hold more than one (1) position during a term. All members shall serve without compensation.

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6.7.8 Removal: Any member may be removed from position by the Core Committee, after due and proper hearing, for failure to participate in GISCorps activities or Core Committee meetings, neglect of duty, improper conduct, violation of these principles and policies, or other behavior that significantly impedes the success of the mission. Removal of any officers shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all Core Committee members.

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6.7.9 Vacancy: In the event of a vacancy in the position of the Chair for reason other than expiration of tenure, the Vice-Chair shall automatically succeed to the office of Chair for the term to which he/she was elected. The new Chair shall take office immediately and a new Vice-Chair will be elected by majority vote of the remaining Core Committee members. In the event that both the Chair and Vice-Chair shall be unable to serve, two individuals from the remaining Core Committee members shall be elected to those roles for the remainder of the term.

Commentary: This section structures GISCorps as a Core Committee coordinating a number of Activity Committees, and specifies the key activities to be coordinated. The Activity Committees may be defined and established as needed by Core Committee.

7. Amendments

7.1. These principles and policies shall have the effect of URISA policies set forth in the URISA Policy Manual.

7.2. These principles and policies may be amended by two-thirds majority vote of the GISCorps Core Committee favoring the change, provided that the amendment does not conflict with URISA's constitution, by-laws, or other policies. 7.3. Proposed amendments shall be transmitted in written form to all Core Committee members at least 20 days prior to the meeting at which the change is to be voted on.

7.4. The Core Committee shall inform the URISA Board of Directors of any amendments to these principles and policies. Each year, as an attachment to its annual activities report to the URISA Board of Directors, the Core Committee shall transmit the current copy of these principles and policies, together with a summary of any amendments made during the period since the preceding activities report.

Approved, August 25, 2005
Shoreh Elhami, Martha Lombard, Juna Papajorgji, Ed Wells
GISCorps Core Committee
Revised on August 18 and September 25, 2006
Shoreh Elhami, Martha Lombard, Juna Papajorgji, Mark Salling, Frank Chang
GISCorps Core Committee
Revised August 28, 2008
Shoreh Elhami, Mark Salling, Dianne Haley, Ingrid Bruce
GISCorps Core Committee
Revised September 2010
Shoreh Elhami, Mark Salling, Dianne Haley, Allen Ibaugh, Heather Milton, Ray DeLeon
GISCorps Core CommitteeRevised October 18, 2011
Allen Ibaugh, Shoreh Elhami, Mark Salling, Dianne Haley, Cindy Braddock, Heather Milton
GISCorps Core Committee

Revised August 11, 2016
Allen Ibaugh, Shoreh Elhami, Mark Salling, Dianne Haley, Heather Milton, Dave Litke
GISCorps Core Committee