

# GISCorps

## 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. Enhance environmental analysis.
- 2.1.3. Encourage economic development.
- 2.1.4. Support community planning and development.
- 2.1.5. Support health and education activities.
- 2.1.6. Strengthen local capacity to adopt and use information technology.
- 2.1.7. Benefit communities in need, GISCorps volunteers and their communities, GISCorps and its partner organizations, 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 committees it directs.
- 2.2.2. GISCorps volunteers – persons who register on the GISCorps website as volunteering to be considered for a GISCorps volunteer posting.
- 2.2.3. Project sponsors – agencies or entities sponsoring or managing projects for which they have requested GISCorps support.
- 2.2.4. Donors – Entities or persons, other than committee members, volunteers, project sponsors, who provide financial or other support to GISCorps.

**Commentary:** This section states the mission and vision of GISCorps.

## 3. Ethical Principles

3.1. GISCorps committee members and volunteers shall adhere to the GIS Code of Ethics 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.
- 3.2.4. Not accept donations of software, hardware, or other commercial products (see item 3.5).
- 3.2.5. Not use a volunteer assignment to promote or engage in any religious, sectarian, or commercial activities.

3.3. GISCorps shall not provide support for projects undertaken, nor for project sponsors formed, for purposes contrary to URISA's objectives, the GIS Code of Ethics, or GISCorps purposes.

3.4. GISCorps shall not accept donations from entities formed for purposes or engaged in activities contrary to URISA's objectives or to the GIS Code of Ethics.

3.5. All donations regarding hardware and software are properly directed towards the Partner Agency.

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 opportunity with existing or prospective partner agencies).

**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 values. 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. Providing coordination between project sponsors and volunteers.
- 4.1.2. Evaluating the professional qualifications of volunteers.
- 4.1.3. Establishing relationships with project sponsors and donors.

- 4.1.4. Screening proposed projects and verifying that they match the GISCorps objectives.
- 4.1.5. Matching 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 agencies and vice versa, but volunteers will deal directly with the host agencies.
- 4.2.2. Neither URISA nor the GISCorps will be responsible for food, lodging, living expenses, and insurance of its volunteers. These expenses will be defrayed either by the individual, her/his institution, the partner organizations, or by the host community, on a project-by-project basis.
- 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.
- 4.2.4. GISCorps shall not provide assistance to for profit private companies or corporations. GISCorps will provide volunteers to public entities, non-governmental organizations, and professional associations.
- 4.2.5. GISCorps is intended to provide unbiased consulting assistance. Therefore, no volunteer shall offer any commercial products and no free or promotional software shall be distributed by any GISCorps volunteer. No donations of proprietary software can be accepted by GISCorps or its volunteers.
- 4.2.6. Although assistance may be offered in developed communities, the focus is on communities in developing countries.
- 4.2.7. 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, and 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. Donations to GISCorps shall be held in restricted URISA accounts. Funds brought in from donations and grants shall 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 persons, including a Chairperson and a Vice-chairperson. The chairperson 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-chairperson shall work closely with the chairperson, and assume the duties of chairperson in event of the chairperson'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 project sponsors; evaluating prospective sponsors for compatibility with GISCorps; evaluating proposed projects; and coordinating requests for support donations.
- 6.5.3. Providing articles, interviews, and information for news media, online journals, listserves, 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;

maintaining GISCorps' knowledge base and website; and coordinating with URISA's Archives Committee.

**6.6. URISA Headquarters Staff.** URISA Headquarters staff shall be represented by designated staff, who shall serve as ex-officio members of the Core Committee.

### **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, and an annual meeting shall be conducted at 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:** All members 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.
- **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. Each year at its first meeting the Core Committee shall select 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.
- **6.7.8 Removal:** Any member may be removed from position by the 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 causes as defined by the Committee. Removal of any officers or director shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all Committee members.
- **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. In the event that both the Chair and Vice-Chair shall be unable to serve, a Nomination Committee (made up of the remaining members) shall nominate a new Chair and Vice-Chair. The new

Chair and Vice-Chair shall take office immediately. Vacancies in any other positions may be filled for the balance of the term by the Committee.

**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, and may be amended at any time by the URISA Board of Directors according to the procedures in effect for amending 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 promptly notify 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 a complete and current copy of these principles and policies, together with a summary of any amendments made during the period since the preceding activities report.

**Commentary:** This section situates GISCorps specifically under the general authority and direction of the URISA board, and gives the board unilateral authority to override the Core Committee, but it also gives the core committee substantial freedom, within its scope, to act independently of direct Board authorization.

Approved, August 25, 2005

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Approved by URISA Board of Directors on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006.