

Mission Statement

Operating under the auspices of URISA, GISCorps coordinates short term, volunteer based GIS services to underprivileged communities

Vision & Goals

GISCorps volunteers' services will help to improve the quality of life by:

- Supporting humanitarian relief.
- Enhancing environmental analysis.
- Encouraging/fostering economic development.
- Supporting community planning and development.
- Strengthening local capacity by adopting and using information technology.
- Supporting health and education related activities.

GISCorps implements URISA's vision of advancing the effective use of spatial information technologies, to improve the well being of developing and transitional communities without exploitation or regard for profit.

GISCorps coordinates the open exchange of GIS expertise among agencies, and strengthens the host community's spatial data infrastructure through implementation of the best practices.

GISCorps foster development of professional organizations in host communities to help sustain and grow local spatial expertise.

GISCorps will benefit communities in need, GISCorps volunteers, URISA, GISCorps' partner organizations, volunteers' own communities, spatial information technologies, global professional networking.

Becoming a Volunteer

Applying to become a GISCorps volunteer can only be done on line, via our link Sign up to volunteer. Once you have accepted our Code of Conduct and our General Policies and you have signed up to become a GISCorps volunteer, an automatic email message will be sent to you with a private login/password that you can use to update your record.

Contributing to GISCorps

The activities of GISCorps are possible thanks to volunteer work, in-kind services, grants, donations and contributions (excluding software and hardware) as defined by our Strategic Plan. Companies and individuals may contribute.

GISCorps operates under URISA's auspices and therefore, it is considered a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Contributions can be made to URISA for the GISCorps. For any questions concerning contributions/donations please contact GISCorps committee members at cc@giscorps.org.

Sponsoring a Project

Partner agencies are those governmental and non-governmental agencies within other countries, or whose main mission is in the developing world, who need volunteers for projects that fit the GISCorps mission. Partner agencies can complete the Project forms on our web site, or contact us at cc@giscorps.org, to suggest potential projects, request volunteers, and explore working with GISCorps in more detail.

Contact Information

GISCorps website: www.giscorps.org

Email: cc@giscorps.org



"...At the heart of volunteerism are the ideals of service and solidarity and the belief that together we can make the world a better place.

...But far away from the spotlight, there are millions of generous individuals who, around the clock and around the world, roll up their sleeves and volunteer to help in any way they can.

...Volunteers do not ask, "why volunteer?", but rather "when?", "where?" and "how?". These dedicated and courageous individuals are important partners in the quest for a better, fairer and safer world."

*Kofi A. Annan,
International Volunteer Day, 2003*

Interested in giving back to the community, or paying forward the generosity of mentors and teachers? Interested in helping to break down the digital divide that separates communities and hemispheres? Read on, and see if URISA's newest initiative, the GISCorps, excites you!

What IS GISCorps?

GISCorps is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization of GIS professionals committed to assisting developing countries and communities in need. GISCorps volunteers will seek to enhance the well being of less-developed communities by providing GIS expertise in areas such as humanitarian relief, environmental analysis, sustainable development, economic development, community planning and development, aboriginal issues, and health and educational related applications.

GISCorps operates under URISA (Urban and Regional Information Systems Association). URISA is an international non-profit association of professionals using GIS and other information technologies.

In October 2003, URISA Board of Directors unanimously endorsed the GISCorps as an initiative under URISA's auspices. Following the conference, a Core Committee of 6 individuals was formed. A Strategic and Operational Plan was endorsed by URISA's Board of Directors in February 04. The next step will be to launch a Public Relation campaign, seek donations and contributions, and conduct the first pilot project. The first unofficial project has already been implemented. Martha Lombard, URISA's past president and GISCorps committee member, assisted a World Bank mission in the Sacred Valley of the Incas in Peru to evaluate existing GIS capabilities.

GISCorps is funded by donations of other similar organizations, universities, local governments, and individuals. The seed money for GISCorps was provided by URISA.

Please consider volunteering with the GISCorps by filling out our Application Form.

Important Questions

Q: Will GISCorps pay for volunteer's expenses?

A: No, GISCorps' responsibilities include recruiting and pre-screening volunteers, identifying and evaluating projects, matching volunteers' expertise to project opportunities, establishing communications with partner agencies; universities and/or other organizations with similar goals, and investigating fund raising opportunities.

Q: Am I guaranteed a position if I volunteer?

A: GISCorps does not guarantee an assignment to everyone. As new projects become available, our task is to supply the best qualified candidates. For each project we will select two or three volunteer candidates and put them in touch with the agency that is hosting the project.

Q: Where would GISCorps send me and for how long?

A: Projects could be located anywhere in the world. We expect that most volunteer assignments would last from 2 weeks to 2 months.

Q: Is there any "time off" to explore the culture, the different regions of the country, and to get to know people outside of work? Can I bring family members?

A: Volunteers will be free to travel either before or after their assignments. Due to the short term of the assignment, "time off" is not likely to be included. Project Sponsors would not cover any expenses in bringing family members, GISCorps has no objection to bringing them.

Q: What would my job be like?

A: Your job will depend on the assignment and the place of work just like any other. It is our opinion that it will be rewarding at many levels and from many perspectives.

Q: How much does it cost? Who pays?

A: The GISCorps expects the Partner Agency to cover the cost of travel, accommodation and meals during the volunteer assignment. There would be no compensation for the work itself.

Q: What kind of GIS specialists do you need? Must I have X years of experience?

A: All kinds and levels are needed. We will select volunteers that closely match the skills needed by the partner agency.

Q: I'm not an American. Can I still apply?

A: Yes, you can apply. GISCorps is an international organization. However, your recruitment will depend upon the partner agency's requirements.

Q: Would I work alone or with other volunteers?

A: It will depend on the project.

Q: How are projects selected?

A: We screen all of the projects that are asking for our involvement to make sure that they fit our mission.

Q: What is the training like for GISCorps volunteers?

A: GISCorps will not hold any training sessions for its volunteers.

Q: Where would I live? What are the amenities?

A: We cannot specify that. We hope that, for many projects, volunteers would live with host families. Project Agencies will make those arrangements, and will make them known to the volunteer prior to arrival. The level of amenities available will vary, but likely will not be at the same level as experienced in the US or Europe.

Q: Is it safe?

A: There are risks associated with travel in the developing world. Volunteers should review the security and health information available about the Country they will be visiting, and make their own determination about whether the level of risk is acceptable to them.

