



APPLICANT PROCEDURES MANUAL

Updated May 2025

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the GISP Certification. As of April 1, 2025, the requirements to obtain the GISP Certification are as follows:

- A minimum of four (4) years of full-time equivalent experience in the geospatial field. Individuals with a GISP-E Certification only need three (3) years of full-time experience.
- Completion of the Portfolio Requirements.
- Successful completion of the GISCI Geospatial Core Technical Knowledge Exam.

You can start by registering on our website for free. Payment is only required when you submit your portfolio or take the GISP Exam. Once you do either, you have up to six years to complete the certification process before starting over.

Registering

Start by registering on the GISCI website at www.gisci.org. Click the 'Register' button in the top right corner to create your profile. This gives you access to the Portfolio Application and lets you apply for the GISP Exam.

We recommend using personal email, so your profile stays current if you change jobs. Be sure to use your legal first and last name as your display name. Keeping your contact info up to date helps ensure you don't miss important messages or recertification notices.

Preparation for Completing the Portfolio Application

Before starting the portfolio application, it is important to gather all required materials and request any necessary external documents in advance, as some of these requests may take a significant amount of time to process.

Primary materials include:

- Supervisor's letter
- Official or unofficial college transcript(s)

Secondary materials may include:

- Certificates of completion/participation
- Awards
- Publications

Request External Official Documentation

Submit requests for external official documents (such as transcripts and employer/client letters) well in advance of your intended application submission date. All materials will need to be uploaded to your GISCI portfolio page.

- **Transcript(s)** – Transcripts are required from all institutions where you have earned a degree or completed coursework. Unofficial transcripts are acceptable. Contact your

school's registrar to request copies of your transcripts. It is recommended to redact personal identifiers, such as your social security number, before submitting.

- **Supervisor and Client Letter** – Supervisor letter should come from your most recent immediate supervisor or employer. The letter must include an original signature and be written on official organization letterhead. A template and additional instructions can be found in the “Required Documents” section of the portfolio application.

For self-employed applicants, a letter from a client is acceptable, preferably one who can verify the start and end dates or continuation of your contract work. Client letters should contain similar information to employer letters, including:

- Identification of you as a contractor/consultant
- Description of GIS-related work performed for the client
- The duration of the contract or work performed

Note that no template is available for client letters.

Completing the Portfolio Application

Removal of Sensitive Personal Information

Remove or block out any sensitive personal information (e.g., Social Security number, driver's license number, maiden name) from your documents. Only GISCI staff will view these files.

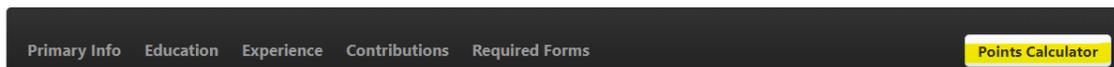
Redacting this information is the only change allowed on official documents.

Helpful Tips Before You Begin

There's no advantage to earning more than the required 150 points. Applications with 150 points are evaluated the same as those with higher totals. Since extra points aren't shown on your certificate, it's best to focus only on meeting the minimum requirement.

The website automatically calculates your points as you complete each section and displays your total in the '**Points Calculator**' tab in the upper right corner of the page, making it easy to track your progress.

[Recertification Procedures Manual](#)



Tony Spicci

[Current Submission](#) [Submission History](#)

Current Submission

Portfolio Application Objectives and Strategy

The goal of the portfolio application is to:

- **Meet the minimum point requirements** in each of the three categories:
 - Educational Achievement: 30 points
 - Professional Experience: 60 points
 - Contributions to the Profession: 8 points
- **Achieve a total of 150 points** across all categories.

Suggested Strategy

To minimize unnecessary effort in locating documents, consider the following approach:

1. Start with the sections where you have readily available documentation.
2. Move between categories as needed, completing sections at your own pace.
3. Focus on ensuring all minimum requirements are met while striving to exceed them if possible.

Important Notes:

- **Documentation Required:**
 - Claims of 3 points or more must be documented.
 - Claims of 2 points or less do not require documentation, but GISCI may verify these claims randomly.
- **Accuracy Checks:**
 - GISCI may contact applicants for clarification on any claim.
 - Applicants can correct mistakes without penalty.
 - Intentional falsification will result in rejection of the application and possible forfeiture of the review fee.
- **Documentation Tips:**
 - Applicants are not expected to document every contribution from a 10- or 20-year career, particularly for 1- or 2-point claims.
 - Focus on contributions with readily available documentation, starting with the most recent.

Educational Achievement Component

GISCI values all types of education, which is why it awards points for non-geospatial degrees. A formal degree isn't required for GISCI Certification—applicants can earn Education points through courses, self-study, and software training.

While work experience carries more weight, education still plays a key role in building the skills needed for success. These guidelines promote lifelong learning and encourage the creation of strong GIS programs.

GISCI doesn't accredit schools or programs. Instead, it verifies that applicants have completed a basic level of relevant education.

Education Point Schedule

A minimum of thirty (30) Education points is required for certification. Any additional Education points will contribute toward the Supplemental points total.

The Education Point Schedule has four categories:

- **Degrees/Certificates:** Points earned for completing a formal degree or GIS certificate program from an accredited institution. Note: Software-specific GIS certifications do not qualify.
- **Academic Coursework - Accredited Institution (University/College):** Points earned for completing courses, or other formal educational activities related to GIS technologies at accredited institutions (e.g., colleges or universities).
- **Non-Academic Coursework/Training:** Points earned for completing software training, workshops, and other educational activities related to GIS technologies, typically outside of accredited institutions.
- **Conferences and Webinars:** Points awarded for attending conferences, meetings, and webinars sponsored by professional societies or user groups, recognizing informal learning opportunities.

Claiming Credit for GIS-Related Training – New applicants earn credit for GIS-related training, with GISCI awarding **1 course point for every 40 documented training hours**.

Degree/Certificate Points

Applicants can claim credential points based on the highest degree or certificate earned. For example:

- An applicant with both an associate and a bachelor's degree can claim 20 points (the value of the bachelor's degree). If they have dual degrees, points can only be claimed for one degree; the others may count toward Course Points (see below).
- An applicant with a GIS Certificate but no formal degree can claim 5 points.
- Applicants with degrees from non-U.S. institutions can claim points for the most comparable degree (justification required).

Degrees in any field from accredited institutions count toward Education points. GIS Certificates typically involve 4-5 courses offered at colleges or universities specifically for GIS. While an Esri certification itself does not count as a 5-point credential, the training taken to earn it will count toward Education points.

Academic Coursework- Accredited Institution Points

Applicants can earn points for GIS-related classes, workshops, or other formal training with proper documentation. Points are based on Total Student Activity Hours, which include time in class, studying, completing assignments, and preparing. For example, a 3-credit course typically equals around 135 hours.

Eligible subjects include GIS, Statistics, Programming, Computer Science, Analysis, Databases, and similar topics. While related subjects may count, GISCI expects applicants to show a strong focus on GIS to reflect their commitment to the profession.

Calculating Student Activity Hours: Standard Activity Hours per Credit

Most educational institutions determine credit hours for a class based on the total amount of student workload, which includes both in-class time and out-of-class preparation. A typical credit hour represents one hour of instruction per week and an additional two hours of preparation time outside of class. For example, a typical 3-credit hour course equals 9 activity hours per week, which over a period of 15 weeks, totals over **135 total Student Activity Hours**.

Adjustments for Unique Credit Systems

Some institutions, particularly international ones, use non-standard credit hour systems. In such cases, the activity hours per credit should be adjusted. For example:

- A university offering 1-credit courses at **9.0 activity hours per credit hour** over 15 weeks results in **135 Student Activity Hours**.

Applicants or universities must provide documentation explaining unique credit systems to ensure accurate point calculations.

Non-Academic Coursework/Training Points

Applicants may claim credit for any GIS-related training. This includes formal training focused on GIS science, related technologies, and applications may qualify, including:

- Programming, computer science courses
- Mathematics (e.g., trigonometry, statistics)
- Field methods
- Training in similar professions (drafting, surveying, etc.)
- Classes with database-related content

For non-credit courses and workshops where no credits or CEUs are awarded:

- The **Student Activity Hours** must be documented by the training provider through course descriptions or certificates of completion.

- If the hours are not pre-documented, applicants should request a letter from the provider, sponsoring agency, or instructor detailing the activity hours.

Conference and Webinar Points

Conference points are based on the total number of days spent at events hosted by professional organizations or user groups. For each event, enter the conference name, year, host organization, location, and number of days attended. Points are based on full days—not hours.

NOTE: Documentation is not required, but GISCI may randomly verify claims. If any information is found to be false, your application will be rejected and the review fee forfeited.

Webinar points are assigned based on the total number of hours spent online.

Once you have reached 30 points stop unless you use education for supplemental points.

The Professional Experience Component

Why Professional Experience Matters

Hands-on work is key to building and applying GIS skills in real-world situations. Both successes and challenges help you grow professionally. Working in a GIS setting also promotes collaboration, mentorship, and ongoing learning.

Minimum Professional Experience Requirement

To qualify for certification, you need the equivalent of four years (48 months) of professional geospatial experience and a minimum of 60 points. Internships and assistantships count, even if unpaid. Points are based on the type of work—tasks like GIS analysis or system design earn more than data entry or teaching.

Completing the Professional Experience Section

List your current and past GIS jobs, starting with the most recent. For each position, include your job title, employer, dates of employment, and select the appropriate Tier from the drop-down menu. Be concise when describing your duties and relating them to your role. Enter your work time across all relevant categories. The system will calculate your points automatically. Focus on jobs with longer durations and only include as many as needed to meet the 60-point minimum. You don't need to list every position.

Professional Experience Point Schedule

The Experience Points Schedule is broken down into three tiers:

Tier 1 – Advanced GIS: Points Per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Year: 25

This role focuses on advanced geospatial analysis, system design, and data development with a strong emphasis on programming and application development. Typical responsibilities include:

- Designing data models and databases tailored to organizational needs.

- Conducting needs assessments to inform application design and development.
- Developing, critiquing, and optimizing geospatial software and programming solutions.
- Creating geospatial data through photogrammetric techniques, remote sensing, and geocomputation.
- Performing spatial analysis and interpreting geospatial datasets to support decision-making.
- Implementing and deploying geospatial systems and applications effectively.

The role requires expertise in geospatial technology, data science, and programming to deliver innovative and robust GIS solutions.

Tier 2 – Basic GIS: Points Per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Year: 20

This role involves intermediate-level responsibilities in geospatial data management, maintenance, map composition, and user support. Tasks include:

- Managing and maintaining GIS databases, layers, and spatial data.
- Editing, validating, and ensuring the quality of geospatial data (QA/QC).
- Composing maps, generating reports, and creating visualizations for decision-making.
- Administering GIS systems, performing geocoding, and managing GIS transactions.
- Utilizing GPS and photogrammetric outputs for data collection and maintenance.
- Providing technical support, troubleshooting, and coordinating GIS operations.
- Conducting instructional training and teaching GIS methodologies to users.
- Supporting GIS implementation, data acquisition, and web GIS capabilities.

The role bridges technical and instructional functions, focusing on data integrity, operational support, and user empowerment.

Tier 3 – Supervisory: Points Per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Year: 10

A GIS supervisory role involves overseeing the planning, coordination, and execution of geospatial projects while managing a team of GIS professionals. Key responsibilities include:

- Leadership and Management: Providing guidance to GIS analysts, technicians, and developers. Delegating tasks, setting project goals, and ensuring deadlines are met.
- Strategic Planning: Developing and implementing GIS strategies and workflows to align with organizational objectives.
- Quality Assurance: Ensuring the accuracy, consistency, and integrity of geospatial data, maps, and analyses.
- Technical Expertise: Offering advanced knowledge of GIS tools, technologies, and methodologies to support complex projects.
- Training and Mentorship: Organizing training sessions and fostering professional growth within the GIS team.
- Communication and Coordination: Acting as a liaison between stakeholders, departments, and external partners to ensure project requirements are clearly understood and met.
- Budget and Resource Management: Managing budgets, resources, and procurement for

GIS hardware, software, and datasets.

- Problem Solving and Decision-Making: Addressing technical issues, optimizing workflows, and making decisions to improve GIS operations.
- Reporting and Presentation: Preparing reports, maps, and presentations for internal and external audiences, including executives and decision-makers.

The role requires a combination of technical expertise, managerial skills, and the ability to inspire and lead a team to deliver high-quality geospatial solutions

Full Time vs. Part Time Work

The Percent field is based on a 40-hour work week. If the applicant works part-time, the proper percentage should be noted.

Contributions to the Profession Component

Why Professional Contributions Matter

GIS certification isn't just a personal milestone—it's a commitment to advancing the profession. Activities like organizing events, publishing work, serving on committees, and outreach all help grow the field. While time and resources can be limited, high standards for professional involvement should be maintained. Rather than lowering expectations, it's important to highlight how these contributions benefit both your education and long-term career. Certification shows employers that you're actively engaged in the GIS community.

Minimum Contributions to the Profession Requirement

To qualify for certification, applicants must earn points through activities that support both their own growth and the broader GIS field. Points can be earned in up to eight categories, either from one area or a mix. Note that job-related publications or sales presentations typically count as work experience, not professional contributions. Qualifying activities should share insights or techniques that benefit the wider GIS community, not just your own organization.

Contribution to the Profession Points Schedule

Active professionals are generally expected to earn at least two Contribution Points per year.

The Contribution Point Schedule provided below is broken down into eight categories:

- **GIS Publications** - (writing or reviewing certain GIS-related materials). Theses and dissertations are included in the Education section under coursework credit and no additional credit will be given.
- **GIS-Related Professional Association Involvement** – Being a member of an organization with a focus on GIS activities or education.
- **GIS Conference Organization** – Organizing and hosting GIS related conferences.

- **GIS Workshop Instruction** – Presenting a workshop at a state, local, or national event. Workshops that are presented on behalf of the applicant’s employer are not applicable.
- **GIS Conference Presentation** – Presenting at a state, local, or national GIS conference. This includes poster and digital presentations.
- **GIS Awards Received** – Awards for excellence in GIS proficiency that may be bestowed by a variety of sources.
- **GIS Volunteer Efforts** – Any form of uncompensated GIS-related work performed in agreement with a service-oriented organization.
- **Other GIS Contributions** – This includes GIS Day type event organization or participation and various community contributions.

CONTRIBUTIONS POINT SCHEDULE	
	Initial GISP
I. GIS Publications (pages 13 - 14)	
Publication Type:	Points earned per publication
A. Book or Published Atlas Author/Editor	15
B. Book Chapter or Refereed Paper Author	5
C. Magazine/Journal Article or Column	2
D. Magazine/Journal/Newsletter Column Editor	1
E. Newsletter Article or Review or Published Map	1
II. GIS-Related Professional Association Involvement (pages 14 -15)	
Level of Involvement:	Points per year involved
F. President or Board Chair	5
G. Board Membership	4
H. Committee Chairperson	3
I. Committee Member	2
J. GISCI Board Organization Membership (AAG, ASPRS, GPN, NSGIC, UCGIS)	2
K. Association/Organization Membership	1
III. GIS Conference Organization (page 15)	
Level of Involvement:	Points per conference
L. Conference Chairperson	5
M. Conference Committee Member	2
N. Conference Moderator	0.5
IV. Workshop Instruction (page 15)	

Level of Involvement:	Points per hour instruction
O. Workshop Instruction	0.5
V. GIS Conference Presentations (page 16)	
Presentation Type	Points per presentation
P. Conference Presentation (individual or panel)	1
Q. Conference Poster / Map Display - (traditional or digital)	1
VI. GIS Awards Received (page 16)	
Recognition Type	Points per award
R. National Award	3
S. Local/Regional/State Award	2
VII. GIS Volunteer Efforts (page 16)	
Nature of Volunteer Work	Points per activity
T. Volunteer Missions (points earned per day deployed)	0.5
U. Volunteer Work (points per hour of volunteer work)	0.05
VIII. Other GIS Contributions (pages 16 - 17)	
Participation Type:	Points per activity
V. Event Organizer (Non-Conference)	3
W. Event Participation (Non-Attendee Role)	1
X. Related Community Contributions	1-4

Detailed Contributions List

Publication Guidelines for Contribution Points

To earn contribution points, a publication must be publicly available in print or electronic form through an **independent third party** (not the author's employer or educator). "Publicly available" means it can be downloaded or obtained in hard copy.

Important Notes:

- **Theses and dissertations** are counted under **Education** and do not receive additional credit.
- **Authors and co-authors** receive credit as recognized in the publication.
- **Professional writing** done as part of work responsibilities is counted as **Experience**, not as a contribution. If the writing is done in addition to responsibilities, then it counts.

Eligible Publication Categories

A. Book or Published Atlas (Author/Editor)

- **Author:** Writing, originating, or creating a published book or atlas.
- **Editor:** Organizing or assembling a literary work or publication.
- **Documentation:** Link or photocopy of the cover and title page, including ISBN, year, and title.

B. Book Chapter or Peer-Reviewed Paper

- Writing or creating a chapter or paper reviewed before publication.
- **Documentation:** Link or photocopy of book/journal cover, table of contents, and first page, including ISBN, year, and title.

C. Magazine/Journal Article or Column

- Writing an article or column for a magazine or journal.
- **Documentation:** Link to articles or name of the publication, date, ISBN, and a photocopy of the article.

D. Magazine/Journal/Newsletter Column Editor

- Organizing or assembling content for a magazine, journal, or newsletter.
- **Documentation:** Editorial board roster or letter listing the publication, ISBN, and years served.

E. Newsletter Article, Review, or Published Map

- Writing an article, reviewing books/software/policies, or publishing a map in a periodical or book or online.
- **Documentation:** Date, issue number, publication name, and a copy of the article or title.
- **Note:** A series of maps in one publication count as one published map. Maps produced for work or academic assignments do not qualify.

Examples of Work-Related vs. Contribution Publications

1. **Not a Contribution:** A county GIS employee creates maps for the county website, which are posted by IT. The employer made the publishing decision.
2. **Contribution:** A city planner writes an article for a regional GIS newsletter about a zoning map project. The newsletter editor made the publishing decision.
3. **Contribution:** A consultant writes a magazine article about a project, even if the firm's marketing department requested it.
4. **Contribution:** A student turns research from a term paper into an article published in a peer-reviewed journal. The term paper itself is not a contribution.

These distinctions ensure that contributions extend beyond regular work duties and benefit the broader GIS profession.

GIS Professional Association Involvement

Professional Association Guidelines - A **Professional Association** is a group of individuals with a shared professional interest. It can be local or national, open or dues-paying, and of any size. However, please NOTE: this is **not** the same as an employer.

Membership Requirements:

- Participation must be voluntary.
- Members cannot receive a salary from the association (honorariums are allowed).
- The association must focus primarily or partially on GIS or geospatial technology.
- Organizations with GIS-related special interest groups or membership categories qualify.
- To earn credit for a full year, membership must be maintained for **at least six consecutive months**. Partial years do not earn points.

Eligible Roles

F. President or Board Chair – The chief officer responsible for guiding and administering the organization's policies.

G. Board Member – A member of a governing body with managerial, supervisory, or advisory responsibilities.

H. Committee Chairperson – Leads a committee tasked with investigating, reporting, or acting on specific matters.

I. Committee Member – Actively participates in a committee responsible for investigating or addressing key issues.

J. GISCI Organization Membership (AAG, ASPRS, GPN, NSGIC, UCGIS) - A general member of a professional organization on the GISCI Governing Board.

K. Association/Organization Member – A general member of a professional organization.

Documentation: Provide one of the following as proof of membership:

- Membership card
- Listing in a membership directory or association publication
- Dues receipt
- Certificate
- Verification letter from the association

GIS Conference Organization (organizing a state, local, or national GIS conference)

Conferences are organized events where participants discuss common concerns related to GIS or geospatial technology. They are typically more comprehensive than activities like GIS Day or user group meetings.

L. Conference Chairperson - The presiding officer of a conference focused on GIS or geospatial technology.

M. Conference Committee Member - A representative involved in planning a GIS or geospatial technology conference.

N. Conference Moderator - A representative that actively moderates a series of sessions or tracts at a conference.

Documentation: Acceptable forms of documentation may include a listing in the conference program, a published record, or a verification letter from the hosting association/organization.

GIS Workshop Instruction

Workshops are brief intensive educational programs for a group of people that focus on the transfer of techniques and skills in GIS or geospatial technology and are typically presented at a state, local, or national event. Workshops do not include presentations at conferences as workshops are longer in duration and deeper in scope. (Workshops that are presented on behalf of the applicant's employer are not applicable)

O. Workshop Instructor - Serving and the primary or supporting teacher of the material covered by the workshop.

Documentation: A copy of the relevant pages from the program or an acceptance letter from the organization sponsoring the event is acceptable documentation.

GIS Conference Presentation

P. Conference Presentation - Presenting experiences, work, or material at an organized event featuring people discussing common concerns related to GIS or geospatial technology. This category is when you present in person at an event or virtually.

Q. Poster Display - Presenting experiences, work, or material at an organized event featuring people discussing common concerns related to GIS or geospatial technology. This category covers any type of print or digital submission.

Documentation - Conference agenda or confirmation letter showing presenter name, session title, and event date.

GIS Awards Received

R. National Award

Earning an award for excellence in GIS proficiency bestowed by an organization with a national or international focus.

S. Local/Regional/State Award

Earning an award for excellence in GIS proficiency bestowed by an organization with a local, regional, state, or provincial focus.

Documentation: A signed letter from the award granting institution or proof of when/where/why the award was bestowed. This can consist of a listing in a conference program, newsletter, magazine, memo, etc. May include a photocopy or digital image of the award.

NOTE: Awards issued by the applicant's employer do not count as a contribution to the profession.

GIS Volunteer Efforts

T. Volunteer Missions

Providing 72 or more consecutive hours of time, including time for food and rest, in active volunteer status.

U. Volunteer Work

Providing periodic volunteer work with a duration of less than 72 consecutive hours in active volunteer service.

Documentation: A signed letter from the organization acknowledging the nature of the volunteer effort.

NOTE: Do not claim credit for both Volunteer Work and Volunteer Mission for the same effort. The categories are either/or.

The volunteer effort must be independent of other contribution activities. For example, work done in support of a committee is already recognized in a separate category and no additional credit will be given.

Other GIS Contributions

This category is intended to capture volunteer activities that don't fit into other defined

categories. It may include a wide range of GIS-related efforts, such as school presentations, creating community maps, organizing GIS Day events, and similar outreach initiatives. Activities must be voluntary and cannot be part of the required job duties.

V. Event Organizer (Non-Conference)

Involves assisting with the planning of events focused on GIS or geospatial topics that are not part of a formal national or local conference. These events typically center on sharing or demonstrating GIS knowledge and may include workshops, seminars, meetups, or discussion panels.

W. Event Participation (Non-Attendee Role)

Refers to involvement in a GIS or geospatial event beyond simply attending. Participation may include helping plan or carry out the event outside of a formal committee role. These events typically focus on sharing or demonstrating GIS knowledge.

X. Related Community Contributions

This category is for GIS contribution claims that don't fit into other established categories. To qualify, the contributions must benefit both the applicant and the profession. GISCI will make the final decision on whether points will be awarded.

Documentation: Include any materials that would signify your participation in these events. This would include items such as letters, articles, fliers, etc.

Fill out the Contributions section similarly to the previous sections.

- **No Limits:** There is no restriction on how many times a category can be used or how many points can be earned in that category.
- **Optional Categories:** Not all categories need to be completed. For example, if you have not published a book, simply skip that category.
- **Requirement:** If you have less than eight (8) Contribution points, you will not be able to submit your portfolio application. Documentation must be provided for claimed contribution points over 2 points.

Entering Supplemental Points

The website will automatically fill in this field with any extra points you earn beyond the minimum in each category (Education, Experience, Achievement, and Contributions). If your total is less than 150 points, you won't be able to submit your portfolio.

Code of Ethics

A signed copy of the GISCI Code of Ethics must be included with your portfolio application and must be uploaded to the **Required Documents** section of the online application. You will not be able to submit your portfolio application online without uploading a signed Code of Ethics document.

GISCI Portfolio Payment Guidelines

A GISCI portfolio application will only be processed after full payment is received. Upon submission, applicants will receive payment options: pay immediately or later.

Payment Methods

Credit Cards: Pay online or via phone call using a credit card. GISCI accepts Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express.

Checks: Generate invoice then submit check to address on the invoice. Checks must be valid, signed, and for the full amount.

- Insufficient funds will result in application removal and a processing fee as determined by the bank.
- Checks with incomplete or incorrect information will be destroyed, and the application will not be processed.

Renewal of Certification (Recertification)

Please refer to the GIS Certification Institute website, www.gisci.org for further details and proper procedures on renewal of certification.

GISCI Certification Program Contact Information

Mailing Address:

GIS Certification Institute
503 E. Nifong Blvd. # 338
Columbia, MO 65201-3717

Phone: 847-824-7768
Email: info@gisci.org