



GIS Certification Institute

Understanding GISCI's GISP Professional Certification: A Guide for Employers and Organizations

What is GISCI's GISP Certification?

The GISCI program is an examination-based, world-recognized certification, that includes an exam and self-documented and peer reviewed application as the evaluation mechanism. The program uses a point-based system where activities are translated into points and then documented accordingly. This program is for established GIS professionals interested in earning recognition from a credible 3rd party certification Institute. It is a way of deepening one's commitment to the field of GIS and for building professional esteem.

A person obtaining a GISP Certification must have at least 4 years full-time equivalent experience, meet the requirements of the Portfolio, and pass the Geospatial Core Technical Knowledge Exam. GISCI certification is gaining more momentum in the professional community. The Institute has currently certified over 10,800 professionals. We want to alert employers and colleagues of certified GIS professionals (GISPs) about what they can do to support their efforts.

The Portfolio application is broken down into four parts:

- **Educational Achievement:** The applicant's degree along with formal and informal learning activities and coursework. This section awards points for university courses, workshops, training, and conference attendance.
- **Professional Experience:** Professional positions claimed by the applicant involving duties related to GIS and geospatial technology.
- **Contributions to the Profession:** Activities benefiting the profession. These are broken down into six primary categories: publications, association involvement, conference participation, workshop instruction, awards, and related community contributions. Sample activities include writing articles, being a member of a local user group, presenting papers and posters, organizing GIS-Day activities, volunteering, etc.
- **Code of Ethics:** All GISPs must sign the Code of Ethics before being recognized by the Institute. The Code of Ethics lists the appropriate and ethical guidelines for GIS professional practice and conduct.

Most employers and organizations can assist applicants with the Education and Contributions section of the application. These categories indirectly reward the professional-employer

relationship. Education requires applicants to learn and hone skills related to geospatial technology. Contributions require GISPs to stay involved with the professional community and use that informal network to supplement their knowledge and experience.

How Can Employers and Organizations Help?

Use the GISP Certification as an additional employment screening tool in the job application.

The Education Section: Encourage employees to take courses and workshops that will expand their knowledge and technical proficiency. Not all education needs to come from an accredited college or university. Vendor training, association-sponsored workshops, and online learning modules are also worth points in the portfolio process.

State, local, and national educational and user conferences are worth points in the portfolio process. On average, a GISP or a prospective GISP should try to attend one local and one national conference each year. This education should be supplemented by online or classroom training.

The Professional Experience Section: GISPs claim credit along three tiers of GIS work. Sit down with the applicant and determine if the proper balance of those tiers is being reflected in their regimen. It is important that employers know what duties are being performed by GISPs and what points are attributed to those activities.

The Contributions to the Profession Section: Points can come from a wide array of sources. The list of contributions points was tailored to fit the needs of diverse employers who spend their time and resources in a variety of different ways. Presenting papers and posters helps employers with robust travel and education budgets. Being a member of associations or local user groups helps GISPs seeking solutions and networking but often cannot leave the area. Organizing GIS days or volunteering maps and technology assists employers who see the value in spreading the word about GIS and giving back to the community at large.

GISPs are expected to remain active following certification. It is important that professionals receive support and encouragement for these activities vital to the growth of the profession.

The Code of Ethics: Familiarize yourself with the Code and be wary of possible ethical violations. All violations of the GISCI Code of Ethics should be brought to our attention immediately.

What are the Recertification Requirements?

GISPs must recertify every three years. Points are earned in the recertification window following the initial certification date and before the recertification date. If a GISP waits until the last minute to start earning points, they may jeopardize the credential. It is important that GISPs earn points over the 3-year period so that recertification is quick and straightforward.

What is the Next Step?

Employers should sit down with anyone interested in the GISCI program and discuss its benefits. The flexibility of the program fits into most company budgets. If an organization is serious about offering a professional development program for its GIS staff, GISCI provides the perfect framework within its application. Work with your GISP or prospective GISP to ensure they are meeting the demands of the program, documenting activities correctly, and are looking for new ways to better themselves and your organization.

GISPs are proud of their accomplishment. They want their employers and colleagues to share in that pride. Help support your GISP and reap the rewards of getting involved.

More information about the GISCI program and all application materials are available at www.gisci.org.

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, contact GISCI at info@gisci.org or at 847-824-7768.

Best Regards,
Tony Spicci GISP CGMP
GISCI Executive Director
503 E. Nifong Blvd #338 Columbia, MO 65201-3717
tspicci@gisci.org