

Chapter Guidelines for WiGIS

Guidelines for regional chapter formation.



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Definitions

Member: Any member who has paid dues to the international organization: WiGIS.

Chapter: A local, regional organization that promotes the mission and goals of WiGIS overseen by WiGIS' international board and committees. A Chapter will operate as an **unincorporated nonprofit association** (see definition below) and will **not** be legally or financially protected by WiGIS' nonprofit status.

Chapter Lead: The person responsible for forming the local, regional organization affiliated with WiGIS.

Unincorporated Nonprofit Association: A group of two or more members joined by mutual consent for a common, nonprofit purpose (see individual state laws for details).

Please note: Because a non-profit unincorporated association is not respected as a separate legal entity, its members generally can be personally liable for its debts and liabilities.

However, if that group or association continues indefinitely, it may be subject to certain legal requirements, even though it hasn't filed for incorporation under its state's incorporation laws.

We recommend that chapter founders take the time to research any requirements necessary for unincorporated nonprofit associations for your state.

WiGIS Mission Statement:

Women in GIS (WiGIS) is an international, professional, and social organization as well as an advocacy group for women and their allies. The aim of WiGIS is to serve as a safe place for women from all geospatial fields to: work towards overcoming job discrimination; lower pay, professional isolation, and other common barriers women might face; and foster relationships and resource sharing among members and institutions.

WiGIS is a consortium of advocates from academia, government, and private industry designed to advance the presence of women and minorities in GIS.

Activities of the organization include social gatherings, professional development and educational events, and opportunities for networking and mentoring. At a minimum, our goal is to meet quarterly and to engage in constant communication as needed and desired via forums such as the WiGIS website and an email listserv/newsletter.

A chapter can choose to write their own mission statement or adopt the chapter mission statement template below. The only requirement is that a local chapter mission statement cannot contradict WiGIS' mission statement above.

WiGIS Chapter Mission Statement Template

[Name of Local WiGIS Chapter] is a professional and social organization as well as an advocacy group for women and their allies. The aim of [Name of Local WiGIS Chapter] is to serve as a safe place for women from all geospatial fields to: work towards overcoming job discrimination; lower pay, professional isolation, and other common barriers women might face; and foster relationships and resource sharing among members and institutions.

Activities of the organization include social gatherings, professional development and educational events, and opportunities for networking and mentoring. At a minimum, our goal is to meet quarterly.

How to start a local or regional chapter of WiGIS

Step 1 – Find out who's out there

Check the [WiGIS Story Map](#) for Chapters that may already exist in your area. Using the contact information provided, reach out to the chapter organizers and find out if they are still active. If you can join their group, please do so. If their mission doesn't quite line up with yours and you would still like to create your own chapter, please write a short justification for your chapter and include with the submittal materials outlined in Step 2.

Step 2 – Contact WiGIS

Contact the international organization at outreach@womeningis.org. Inform WiGIS that you are interested in forming a local chapter of WiGIS. If available, submit the following information:

- Chapter/groups goals and objectives and how they support WiGIS' mission statement (see above)
- List of founding member(s); including name, email address, mailing address, and phone number.
- Copy of meeting notes at which the chapter was approved or requested by members
- Membership list; including name, email address, occupation, mailing address, and phone number.
- Preferred name. All Chapter names will be preceded by 'WiGIS' (e.g. WiGIS Los Angeles)

Step 3 – Approval Process

Members of WiGIS' Outreach Committee will use the items outlined in the section titled **Criteria for Chartering Chapters** to determine if your Chapter is to be approved. The Outreach Committee will take no more than two months to inform you of their decision.

Step 4 – Contact potential chapter members

Once approved, WiGIS will provide a list of WiGIS members in your community or metropolitan area. You can use this list to solicit members. However, WiGIS recommends that you first identify individuals or potential members you already know. Contact them and ask them to participate in the formation of the new chapter. Get two or three people who share your enthusiasm and goals to assist you in the creation of the local chapter.

Step 5 – Decide on a structure

At a minimum, WiGIS requires designating a **Chapter Lead**, one person who will be responsible for communicating with WiGIS board and committee members and who will ensure local meetings are organized and advertised.

For chapter leads who do not want to form a legal entity, but prefer some additional organization, WiGIS recommends forming an **unincorporated nonprofit association**. In many states, to form an unincorporated nonprofit association you simply have to start meeting and have a common goal. *There is nothing more you need to do except start meeting.*

In some states, you can submit a form to your state to inform them of your association. You can then often apply for a tax identification number as well (if you plan to raise funds). You can find out more about these types of associations here: <https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/what-an-unincorporated-nonprofit-association.html>.

You may wish to incorporate your chapter as a non-profit entity. *You are not required to do this*, but it can provide you some additional benefits. We recommend that you consult with the Internal Revenue Service for more information on incorporation as a non-profit: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exemption-requirements-section-501c3-organizations>

Step 6 – Member Dues

WiGIS recommends that a Chapter *not* collect dues. Instead, **we require each member to join WiGIS**. Once WiGIS accepts your chapter application and all chapter founding members have joined WiGIS at the professional or student level, (with the expectation that all subsequent Chapter members will become paying WiGIS members), WiGIS will provide the benefits outlined in the section titled **Benefits WiGIS can provide to a chapter**.

Step 7 – Develop your chapter goals (if not already established)

What do you want to accomplish for your first year? Take the time now to develop your mission statement, ensure that it supports WiGIS' mission (see previous section). And develop

a calendar of events. Is there a local conference you'd like to participate in? Start planning now!

Step 8 – Record Keeping

Set-up a system for record keeping and accounting. At a minimum you will need to track:

- Member contact information
- Activities

Step 9 – Go for it!

The chapter exists to do things. It is important the chapter has a mix of activities and a structure to its activities. This will entice membership as people may join for different reasons and it will bestow the professional credibility appropriate to a chapter. Suggested activities include the following:

- Provide networking opportunities for your members (i.e. sponsor meetings at a local café or public office)
- Participate in GIS Day events near you
- Visit local schools to tell students about your job in GIS or spatial technology
- Celebrate Geography Awareness Week (second week of November)
- Celebrate International Women's Day (early March)
- Provide or organize learning seminars
- Provide or organize a HOT event (Humanitarian Open Street Map)

Benefits WiGIS can provide to a chapter

WiGIS can provide the following to approved chapters:

- Website page on womeningis.org – maintained and updated by WiGIS webmaster
- Access to WiGIS email list for disseminating news and soliciting participation in local chapter events
- Chapter events will be announced and posted on WiGIS Event Calendar
- 100 WiGIS stickers/year or 100 WiGIS buttons/year to disseminate at conferences or meetings
- 10% discount on WiGIS merchandise (on Cafepress)
- Limited funding support (when possible)

How many chapters should WiGIS form?

WiGIS will place no limit on the number of chapters formed. They will be approved on a case-by-case basis. However, geographic continuity will take precedent. For example, there can only be one Washington D.C. chapter. If another group in or near Washington D.C. wants to form a separate chapter from an existing Washington D.C. chapter, then they

will have to demonstrate a compelling reason why they cannot join the existing chapter. In addition, they will have to name their chapter with a distinctive, but geographical, name (i.e. WiGIS Potomac).

Fee Structure

All chapter members are required to join WiGIS (international organization).

Criteria for Chartering Chapters

Chapter leadership must agree to the following:

1. Mission statement of chapter must support WiGIS' mission statement.
2. Chapter must identify at least 1 (one) Chapter Lead.
3. Chapter leadership must commit to running their chapter for a minimum of 1 (one) year.
4. Chapter leadership and members must be paying members of WiGIS.
5. Chapter activities other than the suggested activities list above must be pre-approved by WiGIS board of directors and/or committees.

Chapter-Forming Assistance

WiGIS will assist each chapter in forming their local chapter in whatever manner possible. Foremost, by providing this document to each chapter.

Termination and Monitoring of Chapters

Revocation of a chapter's charter with WiGIS may result from:

- failure to satisfy obligations
- failure to observe the limitations on chapters set forth in the organization's bylaws
- changes in bylaws that bring the chapter into conflict with the national organization
- fiscal impropriety
- failure to pay dues to WiGIS
- loss of a "critical mass" of members (less than 2 people)

WiGIS will check with each chapter at least once a year to ensure it is active and operating within WiGIS' mission statement.