



Society for Conservation GIS (SCGIS) Mission & Vision

The mission of the Society for Conservation GIS (SCGIS) is to build community, provide knowledge, and support individuals using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and science for the conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage.

The following contains suggestions for helping to organize, plan and grow a new SCGIS Domestic Chapter.

Phase 1: Getting off the ground

- **Establish a core group or Steering Committee.** We recommend having 3-4 people who are interested in leading the Chapter, which makes organizing and distributing tasks much easier. Many times, one person tries to do it all and then gets burned out. Plus, it's more enjoyable to work with others that have similar interests and want to make the Chapter succeed.
- **What do you want your Chapter to do?** Some Chapters are more social, and generally meet in an informal setting to provide an opportunity for networking. Others periodically provide training sessions or formal presentations. It is suggested that you do both as a way to “mix things up”, but this is a decision for you and your Steering Committee. As you progress, ask your attendees or local members what they are interests are. Grow your Chapter as a community organization as well as a professional one.
- **Sign and submit your agreement and submit a Chapter proposal application.**
- **What is the capacity of your Chapter to succeed in meeting its goals?** If you have ambitious goals and want to provide numerous events, make sure you have the capacity to accomplish these goals. Your attendees or Chapter members may have time and experience to help. Reach out to them to solicit more volunteers.
- **Set a goal for the number of meetings per year.** It takes more time to organize a meeting than anticipated. If you can plan your meetings in advance for the year ahead, it will allow you to organize and execute your meetings more effectively.

Phase 2: Building the Chapter

- **Utilize SCGIS organizational resources (website, listserv, social media, etc.) to help spread the word and let others know that you exist.** You can utilize existing resources through SCGIS for facilitating your outreach and social media presence. Reach out to the SCGIS Domestic Chapters Chair and SCGIS Board if you have questions on how best to utilize the existing resources of SCGIS.
- **Identify locations where you can meet.** Some non-profit organizations have free or low-cost facilities for non-profit use. If you have an organization that can provide free meeting space, take advantage of the opportunity. Local government agencies, libraries, or even bars that have a quiet, private room (free of charge) are good places to start. The meeting space should fit the needs of your meeting. If your meeting is just a social event, a pub or restaurant could work, but if you're planning a presentation or tech talk, a loud venue may not be appropriate.



- **Begin to network and ask for active participants.** This starts with understanding who your attendees or members might be. It is recommended that you ask for volunteers at every meeting, just to get more people involved. Ask for help setting up, cleaning up, greeting people at the beginning of a meeting, organizing the next meeting, etc. Having your members actively involved helps build community and gives your Chapter a better chance of success and sustainability. A Chapter does not exist without active participants.

Phase 3: Maintaining Momentum

- **Continue to engage with your members thru social media, email, website, etc.** If you do not engage with your members, they will move on to something else. Making sure they know about your next meeting is critical for keeping your members engaged. Remember to keep using the main SCGIS listserv to remind general members that your Chapter exists so that they can forward the info on to friends or colleagues who might know someone living in your area. Remember to keep your SCGIS Domestic Chapters webpage up-to-date, and use it to advertise your upcoming events.
- **Reach out to non-GIS organizations to find similar interests or opportunities for co-hosted meetings or presentations of topics of similar interest.**
- **Engage with local industry, private and public sector organizations.** Engaging with experienced individuals or organizations that are actively involved in conservation projects can provide a meaningful contribution to your Chapter.
- **Determine what the core interests of your members might be in order to steer your activities to meet those needs or address those interests.** Actively reach out to your members or attendees and ask them about their interests, and what interests them about the Chapter. Many members have minimal experience, are students or just started working in the conservation GIS field. They might have ideas about topic areas for future meetings.
- **Ask for donations or in-kind contributions from organizations or companies who are interested in SCGIS and want to contribute on the local level.** It doesn't hurt to ask around to see if local companies or organizations might be interested in helping your chapter, whether through offering a meeting space, sponsoring a happy hour, or providing a training. Always remember to give credit to those that have sponsored an event and consider sending a short thank-you note.

The great thing about organizing a local Chapter is that you get to choose the direction and how much you want to accomplish. Look for “low hanging fruit.” If you have experience or work in water conservation, then set up your first few meetings to focus on these topics. Likewise, if you want to provide a social setting for networking, organize a GIS trivia night or happy hour somewhere fun. In the end, this should be something fun and enjoyable.

The mission of the Society for Conservation GIS (SCGIS) is to build community, provide knowledge, and support individuals using GIS and science for conservation. By establishing a local Domestic Chapter, you have begun the process of building a new SCGIS community.

For any questions, reach out to the Board or committee at domestic_chapters@scgis.org.

Good luck!