

# URISA Chapter Leaders Manual *v1.0*

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## REVISION HISTORY

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We would like to welcome you to URISA International. URISA International has more than 25 state, provincial, and regional Chapters. Chapter meetings, workshops, conferences, and social events occur regularly through the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. The current list of URISA Chapters is here: [http://www.urisa.org/urisa\\_chapters](http://www.urisa.org/urisa_chapters) This manual contains the requirements for starting and maintaining a URISA Chapter or local section of a Chapter. It also presents techniques that have proven successful in URISA Chapters over the last decade.

Note that URISA Chapters have historically been independent and volunteer-driven with support from URISA International and the Chapter Relations Committee (CRC).

### **URISA INTERNATIONAL**

Founded in 1963, URISA - The Association for GIS Professionals - is a leading provider of learning and knowledge for the GIS community. URISA connects great ideas and great people to inspire leadership and achievement. We strive to provide exceptional educational experiences, a vibrant and connected community, and the essential resources GIS Professionals need to be successful in their career.

For details about current URISA International activities and programs, visit [www.urisa.org](http://www.urisa.org).

### **MISSION**

URISA promotes the effective and ethical use of spatial information and information technologies for the understanding and management of urban and regional systems.

### **VISION**

1. To lead and be a key partner in advancing the effective use of spatial information and geographic information technologies (especially geographic information systems) across a wide range of disciplines for the understanding and management of urban and regional systems, and to focus on issues, create policies, and define standards related thereto.
2. To offer opportunities for professional camaraderie, education, exchange, service, advancement, and recognition.
3. To create and disseminate high-quality professional education materials.
4. To increase URISA's membership, and to extend URISA's influence beyond the United States, Canada and the Caribbean.
5. To secure URISA's long-term financial stability.
6. To foster strong chapters, and establish mutually beneficial relationships with allied organizations.

7. To provide for sound, responsive Association management by relying on member volunteers for subject expertise and overall association direction, and professional staff for administrative, business, and conference management expertise.

URISA International Leadership - <http://www.urisa.org/about/leadership>  
URISA is led by an elected volunteer Board of Directors. Each year, URISA members elect a President and three directors to the URISA Board. Terms are three years in duration and begin at the close of that year's annual conference. Presidential terms consist of one year as President-elect, one year as President, and one year as Immediate Past President.

The Board has established multiple committees which have varying responsibilities including leadership development, education and outreach, chapter relations, conference planning, and more. These committees each have a Chair and report to the Board of Directors.

The day to day operations of URISA are overseen by our Executive Director. The Executive Director and staff coordinate the various URISA sponsored Conferences and programs, support the URISA Board and committees, and are available to provide services and advice to the local chapters. Services may include such items as incorporation and tax assistance to full conference management. A comprehensive list of services is available here (<http://www.urisa.org/chapters/essentials> ) or by contacting URISA's Executive Director.

### **URISA CHAPTER RELATIONS COMMITTEE (CRC)**

In 1992, URISA established a Chapter Relations Committee to promote the health and growth of regional Chapters.

Note that URISA Chapters are primarily volunteer-driven with support from URISA International and the CRC.

#### **MISSION**

The Chapter Relations Committee (CRC) is the liaison between URISA International and its Chapters. The CRC has five specific responsibilities which are as follows:

1. To maintain contact with active Chapters (through email, phone calls, etc.)
2. To provide information and assistance requested by Chapter Leaders, support new Chapter development, and evaluate requests for affiliate status.

3. To communicate Chapter needs to the URISA Board, and recommend Board actions.
4. To train and support Chapter leaders by conducting the annual Chapter Leaders Forum and maintaining the Chapter Leaders Manual.
5. To issue the Outstanding Chapter Award (annual award to recognize innovation, education, outreach, and community impact).

The CRC has the following Responsibilities to the URISA International Board:

1. To provide feedback from their Chapters regarding initiatives brought forward.
2. To get questions or concerns from their Chapters resolved in a positive and timely fashion.

### **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

CRC representatives are appointed from candidates who have had Chapter leadership experience. The committee position is a three-year term. The CRC consists of six Chapter representatives. Two members rotate off the Committee each year. Each member is assigned a region that may consist of a number of Chapters.

The Committee holds monthly conference calls and communicates via email between meetings. URISA International funds some of the costs associated with CRC meetings.

Chapter leaders interested in serving on the CRC should notify their CRC representatives.

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## **SECTION 1: STARTING A NEW CHAPTER (*"Organizing Status"*)**

URISA has been highly successful representing and supporting the GIS profession and professional on the international, national, and local level. The key to this success has always been our local chapters. No one knows better what issues are important, what educational offerings are needed, or where the trends are heading than the GIS Professionals that are out there on a daily basis putting this technology into use. Through its network of Local Chapters and International Leadership, URISA is able to make its decades of experience in the integration of technologies and spatially enabling the enterprise, and the knowledge of our network of professionals available to all our members.

There are areas (states, provinces, countries, regions) that are currently not served by an established URISA chapter. This section of the Manual provides an overview of how you can help organize a new chapter to serve your local area. Your new URISA chapter will be able to provide high quality professional education through URISA certified workshops, foster communications among IT/GIS management professionals in your area, and offer opportunities to contribute to the growth of the profession.

The first step is to contact URISA's Executive Director to find out if there is already a group of URISA International members that is contemplating organizing a local chapter and to discuss the overall process. URISA International staff can provide a list of current members in your area and facilitate discussions to help identify other interested individuals.

Once a core group of local members is identified that shares chapter development goals, you can proceed with organization.

### **CHAPTER ORGANIZATION**

1. Establish an Organizing Committee – organizing a core group of interested members is the key to starting a URISA Chapter. A group of three to six people is usually enough to get things rolling.
2. Develop list of potential chapter members – the core group should begin to develop a list of potential chapter members at meetings and local events. It is important to note that the core group should not host their first official start up meeting of the chapter until after the notification to URISA International.
3. Establish a "Chairperson" – determine who is going to lead your small core group in the groundwork of becoming a chapter.

4. Establish general idea of Chapter goals and focus – after reviewing the mission and vision of URISA International, begin to establish the goals and focus of your local chapter. Other chapter websites may be beneficial when establishing what your local chapter is all about. Also, your answer to the following questions may give you the goals and focus of your chapter.
  - a. Reasons for existing as a chapter
  - b. What goals are and how they are planned to be accomplished
  - c. Opportunities and threats that exist in your area
5. Establish rough definition of chapter area – the area can be based on state or provincial boundaries, groups of states or provinces, or portions of very large states or provinces. The URISA Board of Directors must approve the geographical boundaries of the Chapter when the petition for recognition is approved.

### **URISA NEW CHAPTER PETITION REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST**

To form an official Chapter, the organizing group must submit a written petition to the Executive Director of URISA. The petition must be signed by ten (10) URISA International members in good standing (dues paid) from the chosen geographic area. There is no official format for the petition, but it must address items 1-4 of the following items:

1. Chapter name and geographic area to be served.
2. Name of primary contact person to represent the chapter.
3. Identify chapter mission statement and goals for first year
4. Identify dates, topics, and attendance figures for previous start-up meeting and events
5. Request start-up funds from the URISA Board. See Appendix D: Sample Petitions for Recognition as a URISA Chapter.

The URISA Board considers petitions at their meetings.

(Grounds for disapproval may be a conflict with an existing Chapter, proposed goals that are inconsistent with URISA goals, or failure to obtain signatures from ten (10) URISA International members in good standing.)

Upon approval of a petition, a Chapter is recognized as having organizing status and is assigned a CRC representative.

While in Organizing Status, the Chapter will continue to work with their CRC representative and can obtain general assistance from URISA International Headquarters. Organizing Status lasts for one year, or at least until the first

Board meeting of the calendar year following the approval of the petition for recognition.

At the end of its first calendar year in "organizing status", the organizing Chapter must file an Annual Chapter Report. This report should be submitted to the Executive Director along with the cover letter requesting active status. A copy of the report should be sent to the Chapter Relations Committee member assigned to this new Chapter. Upon its acceptance by the URISA Board of Directors, the Chapter will be granted "active status". Chapters will not be granted active status until they have resolved administrative issues and demonstrated that they are sponsoring regular meetings and events.

## **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS**

Chapters are required to accomplish the following items in the first year.

### **1. CHAPTER BYLAWS**

Draft and approve Chapter bylaws consistent with URISA's Constitution and Model Chapter Bylaws (See Appendix). This is where the minutes that you took at the kick-off meetings come in handy. The URISA Board of Directors must approve your bylaws and any amendments to them, before they can become official. Your bylaws will establish your mission, vision, goals, and objectives. They will establish your Officers duties and terms of office, as well as, your election procedures, membership guidelines (See Appendix), and dues that will be assessed. As you work through this process, you will find that you will refine your goals, objectives, and outcomes to balance with you mission and vision. That is to be expected.

### **2. CHAPTER NAME**

Establish a Chapter Name. You chose a name for your chapter with your petition to become a Chapter. However, as you investigate a not-for-profit status you may find that your chosen name is inappropriate. Your chapter name should contain the word URISA and should clearly indicate the geographic area which you serve, but in order to obtain the correct legal status it is important for you to consult your local laws when your chapter name is selected.

### **3. CHAPTER LOGO**

Create a logo for letterhead, marketing, website, etc. The logo should meet the requirements as set forth in the "Conditional Use of the URISA logo. The URISA Association has used URISA printed in script as its logo for many years, and registered this as a legal trademark. Because image is of great concern to the Association, URISA has adopted several policies covering how Chapters may use URISA's logo in the Chapter's logo, publications, and publicity. Chapters are encouraged to incorporate URISA's logo into the Chapter logo to foster overall recognition of both URISA and the Chapters. Chapters wishing to do so shall submit an artist's rendering the proposed Chapter logo to the Board for approval, along with a letter acknowledging that Chapter use of the logo does not give to

the Chapter any rights, title or interest in the logo. Once the board has granted approval, the Chapter logo should be used on all Chapter publications and on the Chapter website.

In using the URISA logo: Chapters must be careful to use it for the benefit of URISA and in a manner consistent with URISA's principles and interests. Chapters shall not use URISA's logo to imply the Chapter represents the parent association in an official capacity. Chapters should not use URISA's logo in any way that interferes with or diminishes URISA's right in the logo.

#### **4. ELECTED OFFICERS**

Elect officers based on your approved bylaws. Elected officers of the board must be URISA members in good standing. All new officers are encouraged to attend the Chapter Leaders Forum held at the beginning of each annual conference. This workshop offers a chance for new officers to learn from experienced URISA Chapter leaders.

#### **5. CHAPTER RELATIONS: CRC LIAISON**

Once the petition to begin organizing a new chapter is submitted, a Liaison from the URISA Chapter Relations Committee (CRC) will be assigned to the prospective new chapter. They will become your link to URISA International.

#### **6. RECRUITMENT MEETING**

New chapters must have at least 10 existing URISA International Members in good standing to form. URISA can provide a list of active members in the area to be covered by the newly forming chapter. It is also recommended new chapter organizers make contact with other GIS Professionals or users in the area to begin establishing a larger membership base (consider local user groups, student GIS clubs, etc.). Promoting the formation of a new chapter via e-mail, posts to list serves, phone calls and use of social media are all good ideas. Make sure to include why it is important to come and sometimes a simple nudge will get them there. Items to cover at this kick off meeting might include the following:

- Develop an agenda that introduces the organizing committee, chapter goals and focus
- Develop a plan to assess interest and obtain list of potential members
- Needs Assessment
- Remember, this is your first membership drive
- Use meeting time to better identify goals of interested parties
- Maintain minutes for meeting (s) with dates, agenda, & attendance. These will help your core group when you are working on your petition, by-laws, mission statement, etc.

## **7. FINANCES**

Bank Accounts, Tax Exemption, and Communication: Immediately upon formation, a Chapter will need to open a bank account, decide when to file for tax-exempt status, and set up a means of communication among members. The CRC and URISA International Headquarters' staff are available to discuss options and provide recommendations.

### **a. BANK ACCOUNTS**

Every Chapter will have some operating expenses, whether it is for conference calls, postage, or start up fees for workshops and conferences. It is recommended newly formed chapters obtain a tax ID number to use when opening their bank account to avoid possible personal tax liabilities for the new chapter leaders. It is also recommended that more than one chapter leader have access to any and all accounts a chapter might have.

### **b. TAX EXEMPTION**

You should file for tax exempt status as soon as you are able. The process can take as much as 6 – 12 months, depending on which country or state you are filing in. Make sure to check your local tax laws for tax exemption requirements.

### **c. MEMBERSHIP DUES**

Every chapter should have addressed whether you were going to charge dues as you were working through your bylaws. Currently, membership dues are separate with respect to URISA International and the Chapters. In other words, membership in a local chapter is not membership in URISA International and vice versa. Also, membership in one local chapter does not grant you membership to another local chapter.

### **d. COMMUNICATION**

E-mail, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, a list serve, etc. are all inexpensive means of establishing communication among your membership body. URISA International can provide some assistance as well offering a Conference Call Bridge or email polling/survey service such as SurveyMonkey if needed.

### **e. OTHER LEGALITIES**

Make sure to consult with and get advice from experts in your area regarding tax and legal requirements for your state and federal government.

## **URISA INTERNATIONAL CHAPTER 'FIRST YEAR' SPONSORSHIP**

Assistance that URISA International is Willing to Provide for 1st Year Activities includes:

- Email blasts to URISA International contacts (members and nonmembers) in Chapter area to announce meetings, etc.
- Host the Chapter web page and make updates
- Offer of one free URISA Certified Workshop license to use during first year
- Advice on financial, organizational, and other administrative requirements.
- A one-time grant of \$200 awarded to new Chapters to assist with the costs of Chapter startup or will provide mailings and other recruitment services to assist the Chapter in recruiting members.

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## **MAINTAINING A CHAPTER ("*Active Status*")**

Starting a local URISA Chapter allows individuals to experience the benefits of URISA, in a more intimate, year-round environment. URISA Chapters benefit the geographic areas they serve by helping local professional meet the needs of area residents. Chapters also attract new members to URISA through local meetings, giving added breadth and strength to the organization.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Strategic Planning is the key to any organizations for sustainability. Long term goals should only be in increments of 5 years, with short term goals being 6 months to two years. As goals are met, new goals need to be established. When looking at your goals, you need to examine whether they meet the mission and vision of your chapter and URISA International. Goals could include any or all of the following: membership drives, workshops, conferences, classes, on-line registration, web site development, etc. It is important to remember that your strategic plan is just that yours, tailored to your chapter needs!

### **MEMBERSHIP**

In order to maintain a healthy chapter, membership must be maintained and expanded. This has multiple benefits. First it benefits the members themselves by providing greater knowledge sharing and networking opportunities. Second, for the chapter itself, memberships are a potential source for funding the organization so it can continue to offer services to the members. Third, the more members a chapter has, the more volunteers are available to assist with activities, outreach and administration.

Membership can often be divided into categories such as Student, Member, and Corporate Member. Each chapter should set up membership categories that will work best for the chapter and its members. Typical categories are explained as follows:

#### **STUDENT MEMBERS**

Students currently enrolled in GIS or related education program at a local University, College or Technical School. It is suggested that dues, if any, be very minimal. These are your potential future full members.

#### **MEMBERS**

Current GIS Professionals or GIS users. This group will represent the majority of your membership and will generally be the target market for most of your chapter's activities and programs.

#### **CORPORATE MEMBERS**

Typically a vendor with a focus on providing services to GIS Professionals and users. Corporate Members are a valuable resource. They often are willing to provide assistance to chapters by providing resources (web hosting, online meetings, meeting facilities, training computers and so on). They also are typically willing to pay higher membership fees for opportunities to market to the Chapter Membership. The best way to encourage corporate participation is to maintain a list of vendors that serve the region and to contact these vendors periodically to offer the benefits of corporate membership. Chapters should start with the corporate sponsors of URISA because some of them may have local offices. Chapters should also review their membership databases to determine if any members' employers are candidates for corporate sponsorship of the Chapter. Another way to spot potential corporate members is to review newsletters and journals that serve the urban and regional information systems community. As a Chapter it is important to note that these corporate members are being tapped from a variety of directions and that you need demonstrate to them what they can get out of the partnership with you. On the other side, the local Chapter should not become the marketing arm of a vendor and focus either conferences or articles on one vendor.

## **OUTREACH AND MARKETING**

### **GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE**

Many chapters as they grow realize their membership's geographic footprint may shift or grow and the current methods of outreach are not meeting the needs of all the members. This often happens with chapters that start with a majority of members in a major metro area but represent a larger state or regional area. Over time, the use of GIS expands as does the membership footprint.

There are several possible ways to address an expanding membership base. One method several chapters have adopted is rotating meetings. They will host a meeting in the different major membership regions within their area of coverage. This way at least one chapter event each year is held for the members in each region.

Another method some chapters have adopted is the creation of regional sub-chapters. These sub-chapters are all part of the main chapter and supported by the local chapter but have autonomy to host their own meetings and workshops to best meet the needs of the members in those areas. In many cases the head of each sub-chapter is a member of the governing board of the main local chapter.

## NEWSLETTER

Developing a Newsletter – Chapter newsletters are a great vehicle for communicating with members and prospects. However, they require a lot of hard work and commitment on the part of editors and contributors. It is a good idea to form a newsletter committee or board of editors rather than assigning the newsletter to one volunteer. This approach will distribute the workload and keep a variety of ideas flowing. A newsletter committee is also a good way to get (and keep) the membership involved in Chapter activities. Before starting a newsletter, the Chapter should clarify its purpose and how many issues it plans on having annually. Decisions on roles and responsibilities for production of the newsletter should be made in light of stated goals and timetables, as well as, number of volunteers available to assist. Here are some tips to keep in mind for the first issue:

- Consider making the Newsletter a part of your Web Site or distribute it electronically.
- Stick to a simple two column format unless the editor has previous layout experience and access to publishing software.
- Develop a recognizable masthead that incorporates the Chapter logo.
- Include links to relevant sites.
- Email or Mail notice of New Issue Postings.
- Include a calendar of events and a list of Chapter contacts.
- Offer space for member articles or commentary.

Before you reprint articles from other publications, be sure to get permission from the original author and/or publisher in writing.

## NEWSLETTER FINANCES

The average cost of publishing an 8-page black-and-white newsletter with a subscription base of 500 at six issues per year can be as high as \$3,000 (US). This includes printing and postage only. The time spent by contributors and editors is voluntary. That is why many Chapters are moving toward electronic means for distribution.

## ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP

Advertisements can help offset the cost of producing the newsletter. Typical sizes are business card, quarter page, half page, and full page. Chapters should be careful about using a single private-sector sponsor because readers may assume that sponsor controls the newsletter content.

## ASSEMBLING

The newsletter can be as creative as your chapter would like it to be. Some standards that exist are as follows:

- Paper size is generally 8.5" x 11" format for each page which makes a foldable 11" x 17" for easy assembly
- The masthead is a typographic element used on the first, it is the most important element, and it sets the tone for the newsletter. It may include the Chapter logo, the name of the publication, and a tag line with the volume number and date.
- The contents should be a balance between different types of articles to include: regional news, section news, vendor activities, editorials, President's messages, Chapter news, events calendars, news from URISA International and vendor ads.
- Set up a timetable for producing the newsletter. Set deadlines accordingly. Editors should set aside time to follow up with authors as the deadline for articles approaches.
- A calendar of Chapter activities is an important element of the newsletter. It helps members schedule time to attend the events and place budget requests for registration fees.

## CIRCULATION

Some chapters treat their newsletters as membership benefits and circulate them only to members in good standing. Others send newsletters to prospects in the hope of attracting them to Chapter events and securing their membership dues. Chapters should send copies of the newsletter or links to them to URISA International, their CRC representatives, and other Chapter leaders. This fosters communication within the organization.

- Web based newsletters are becoming easier to create with most word processing software.
- Mailing Labels can be created from membership databases, and postage can be reduced from first class postage per newsletter to a bulk rate for large mailings. There is an annual fee and some paperwork, however, this bulk rate can pay for itself in a short time if you have at least 100 members. Check with your local post office for current bulk mailing rate information.

## ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS

### MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

Many Chapters find that there are other organizations in their area of jurisdiction that offer services and programs similar to those offered by the Chapter. Some Chapters have chosen to develop agreements with these organizations documenting a relationship

that will be mutually beneficial. See the appendix for an example of the MOU.

#### ACADEMIC COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

One way to involve people from this community is to actively solicit members from colleges and universities. The academic community is a valuable resource to a Chapter. Here are some ways to get them involved in your Chapter:

- Elect an academic representative to the board
- Organize a meeting at an academic institution
- Give academic scholarships
- Create a pilot project that involves university students.

#### LOCAL USER GROUPS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

There may be established GIS user groups representing a specific vendor in your local area or local chapters of other allied professions which might offer mutually beneficial sharing of knowledge and education.

#### AFFILIATE RELATIONSHIPS

In 1995, the URISA International Board of Directors adopted a different way to work with existing state and local organizations that are not currently URISA Chapters. This partnership is called an affiliate relationship. It is a new kind of relationship in which established state and local organizations and URISA can find mutually beneficial ways to share resources.

In an affiliate relationship, the state or local organization and URISA International agree to share mailing lists, provide access to business partners, and share intellectual resources such as publications, speakers' bureaus, and workshops. For the state or local organization, becoming a URISA International affiliate means expanded access to similar organizations across the county. For URISA International, the affiliate provides a mechanism to encourage organizations with missions similar to URISA International's to network worldwide.

#### **FINANCES**

It is essential for Chapters to establish and maintain a good financial base. The executive board is responsible for the Chapter's financial well-being. All financial transactions other than use of petty cash should require approval of the executive board or the Treasurer. Expenditures should always be documented

by written requests and receipts. This section of the manual presents guidelines and alternatives for managing Chapter finances.

URISA's Chapters have a tradition of independence. In that spirit, URISA's constitution, bylaws, and policies, disclaims all responsibility of URISA for any actions or commitments of the Chapters.

#### BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

How to develop a budget – It is advisable that all Chapters develop an annual budget to cover anticipated Chapter activities for many reasons, but the first two are that the finances of the organization are open to the membership, the executive board, the URISA Board and the public if not-for-profit status is obtained and for accountability to your membership body. Organizing Chapters that wish to apply for a start-up grant from URISA must have detailed budgets. All Chapter expenditures should be tracked against the budget. A chart of accounts can easily be set up in the accounting program used. Examples of software programs are Microsoft Money, Quicken, Quick Books, Peach Tree, etc. The advantages of such a system is that it is easily portable when Officers (Treasurer) change.

#### RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING

##### HOW TO KEEP A LEDGER

The accounting software doubles as the Accounting Ledger. The Chapter Treasurer should maintain a single General Ledger that includes all Chapter and section transactions. Sections may wish to maintain unofficial ledgers as well.

##### HOW TO TRACK RECEIPTS & EXPENDITURES

Accounting software provides for detailed record keeping; which is desirable. All moneys received by the Chapter should be entered into the program. Entries should include as much detail as possible, including the date, amount, source, and reason for income. Normally, the accounting program records transactions. When entering expenditures in this record, Chapters should give as much detail as possible, including the payee, amount, date, and reason. Chapters should obtain a statement receipt, or invoice to cover every item that requires payment, even in the petty cash fund. This will facilitate clearance by an audit committee.

##### HOW TO SUBMIT A REPORT

There are two types of reports: Quarterly reports and Annual Reports. Each quarter, the Treasurer should submit a written report on the financial standing of the Chapter. The use of accounting software makes this task simple. In addition, the Chapter should prepare an annual

financial statement. Although not required, URISA encourages Chapters to submit their treasurer's reports and annual financial statements to Headquarters. Financial statements will assist the Treasurer in completing forms for taxing authorities. This annual report should be provided to the membership at the annual general meeting. Chapters may include the report in the first newsletter after the annual general meeting, or they may choose to circulate it independently if the newsletter is sent to non-members or if there is no newsletter.

For the protection of each Chapter, to reassure the members and to ensure compliance with tax laws, the financial records and accounts should be audited on an annual basis. The law may require this if the Chapter is incorporated. It is the duty of the auditors to review all financial transactions and prepare a formal report to the membership. When ready to conduct an audit, be sure to have available the following items: record books, bank statements, canceled checks, all receipts and statements, bank deposit books, and a copy of the previous year's audited financial statement. If an audit is done, the results of the audit can be forwarded to Headquarters.

## BANK ACCOUNTS AND PETTY CASH

### BANK ACCOUNTS

Chapters need bank accounts to manage their funds and to accept start-up financial assistance from Headquarters. To open a bank account, US Chapters must first obtain an IRS Employer Tax Identification Number or EIN. URISA strongly advises against any individual opening a bank account on behalf of a Chapter.

The Treasurer will normally make deposits as money is accumulated. Withdrawals should always be made by check. Two members of the Board, usually the Chapter President and Treasurer should sign each check. Provisions should also be made for an alternate in the event that the President or the Treasurer is unavailable for any reason. For example, due to geography it may not be possible for the Treasurer and the President to sign the checks in a timely manner for payments. It may need to be the Treasurer and another official designee of the Chapter.

Chapter bank accounts should serve the needs of all sections within the Chapter. Sections should not ordinarily maintain their own accounts. Depending on the banking situation and the type of account used, canceled checks may be used to keep track of financial transactions. The use of checks helps make financial record-keeping more accurate and provides a means of monitoring expenditures. While it is not customary for non-profit organizations to accumulate large sums of money, excess

funds can be invested in short-term bank certificates in order to maximize Chapter income.

#### PETTY CASH

The Chapter executive may need to buy items that involve small sums of money (for example, stamps). Since it is not always practical to pay for them by check, the Chapter may wish to create a petty cash fund. This fund can be established with the approval of the Board. The fund is opened by writing a check to the Treasurer for petty cash. Chapters may also wish to establish separate petty cash funds for their sections.

The Treasurer (and designated section leaders where applicable) are responsible for paying for small purchases from the petty cash funds. When most of the fund has been paid out, it is important to account for all expenditures by presenting the receipts and bills for all purchases at an executive meeting. With approval, another check is authorized to bring the petty cash fund back up to the agreed upon amount.

#### EXPENDITURES AND FEES REIMBURSEMENT

##### REIMBURSING EXPENDITURES

Expenditures incurred by a member of the Chapter and approved by the board for activities in support of the Chapter should be reimbursed; however, no officer or member of the Chapter should receive remuneration for services.

##### REFUNDING OR WAIVING FEES

Chapters should not refund any portion of membership fees after they have been collected. Conferences and other events that have registration fees should have cut-off dates established for cancellations that are eligible for rebates. These dates and the amount of the administrative fee for cancellation should be clearly stated on the registration form. Chapter may choose to waive registration and event fees with prior approval of the executive board for Chapter officers, invited speakers, or event volunteers.

##### QUALIFICATION FOR 501(c)(3)

To qualify for 501(c)(3) status, your chapter must be organized and operated for one of the following purposes: religious, educational, charitable, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, to foster national or international sports competition, or for prevention of cruelty to children or animals. The articles of incorporation must limit the organization's purpose to one or more of these purposes and must provide for the

dedication and distribution of assets upon dissolution for one of these purposes. Your articles of incorporation must also indicate that no substantial part of your organization's activities will include the dissemination of propaganda, the influencing of legislation, or participation or intervention in a political campaign.

- Step 1: Choose a mission
- Step 2: Contact the secretary of state
- Step 3: Name Your Board Members
- Step 4: Draft Bylaws
- Step 5: File for Incorporation
- Step 6: File the IRS Form 990

Additional information can be found at [www.irs.com](http://www.irs.com) .

## INCORPORATION

URISA encourages Chapters to incorporate and seek tax-exempt status. Chapters should consider the following advantages and disadvantages, which were adopted from (and summarized here with detail in Appendix ?) Fundamentals of Association Management, published by the American Society of Association Executives.

### ADVANTAGES

- Limited Liability
- Tax Exemption
- Legal Life
- Continuous Existence
- Organizational Formality
- Low Postage Rates

### DISADVANTAGES

- Cost
- Paperwork
- Lack of Flexibility

## HOW TO INCORPORATE

Incorporation requirements vary from state to state but the following are the recommended steps:

- Choose and reserve a corporate name
- Select a corporation type
- Decide where you will incorporate
- Create a pre-incorporation agreement
- Prepare and file articles of incorporation
- Prepare corporate bylaws

- Record minutes of your first Board of Directors organizational meeting

For more information see [www.how-to.com/Operations/incorporate.htm](http://www.how-to.com/Operations/incorporate.htm)

## TAX EXEMPTIONS AND OBLIGATIONS

### US CHAPTERS

For several years URISA attempted to obtain a group tax exemption for US Chapters. The IRS ultimately denied that request. Thus Chapters are not covered by URISA's tax-exemption-profit status. Each Chapter must file and obtain state and federal tax exempt status on their own. URISA Headquarters has prepared a lengthy general summary of the various tax obligations a Chapter might incur, going into some detail on the federal taxes. The officers of every Chapter should familiarize themselves with this report. Contact URISA Headquarters if more specific advice is needed.

Tax exempt organizations must file legally required forms with taxing authorities annually. URISA Headquarters will assist Chapter treasurers in completing the necessary forms. Chapters should make provisions for their treasurers to provide training to elected successors.

Chapters that fail to obtain state and federal tax-exempt status, and to submit required returns, risk liability for back taxes, penalties, and interest against the Chapter and possibly the officers personally. Chapter leaders are urged to contact URISA Headquarters with questions, and to ensure that Chapter tax obligations are met.

### CANADIAN CHAPTERS

Canadian Chapters often apply to the provincial ministries responsible for agencies and societies in order to be recognized as a non-profit agency. This registration requires renewal on an annual basis along with the submission of the current list of officers to the ministry. Annual tax returns should also be filed with the federal government.

If a Canadian Chapter acquires a Business Registration Number (BRN) for the collection of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the receipt of GST credits, quarterly GST returns must also be filed.

### GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

The Canadians are the most adept at getting direct financial assistance from government entities. In the United States, implicit in the law is the separation of non-profit organizations and state. However, a recent trend

in government is to foster entrepreneurial activities, which can lead to co-sponsorship of conferences and other events. Government entities in the United States may not give direct financial sponsorship to events, but they may encourage employees to attend local conferences or be willing to excuse the employees from their jobs to participate at a conference. Although a URISA Chapter may not get a direct subsidy from a government entity, most often the bulk of the participation at an event will be either from government agencies or people who want to sell to government agencies.

## **EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS**

URISA International is always interested in fresh ideas for workshop topics. Planning and designing a new workshop is a lot of work, but it can be very rewarding. Chapters interested in developing a new workshop might consider forming a special committee or task force to develop the materials. This is a process that usually takes 6 months to a year. For more information see the Appendix regarding workshops.

### **NEW INSTRUCTOR REQUIREMENTS: REQUIRED**

- Membership in URISA International
- Current curriculum vitae or detailed resume on file at URISA International
- Practical experience related to the workshop topic(s)
- Attendance at the preferred workshop.
- **PREFERRED**
- Advanced academic degree
- Previous experience as a session speaker or panelist in the workshop topic area
- Prior workshop experience
- History of publications in the topic area

### **CONFERENCE PLANNING**

The most ambitious activity offered by Chapters is the local or regional conference. These conferences generally span two to four days and can be conducted solely by the Chapter, in cooperation with other associations, or with help from URISA International staff members. The Conference Planning Checklist found in the Appendix is a very high-level guide to assist the Chapter with conference planning. The guide is not all-inclusive and is intended only to aid those who have not had experience in organizing Chapter conferences.

### **FUNDRAISING GUIDELINES**

Chapters require funds to carry out their activities and to cover unforeseen events. Several opportunities exist for raising funds.

#### HOW TO RAISE FUNDS

Membership Fees should be high enough to cover all administrative expenses, including mail-outs and newsletter publications. Corporate sponsors may be a source of funds and/or resources to include but not be limited to the following: donation of Office Resources, Corporate Memberships, or Seed Money. Chapter activities could include workshops, URISA workshops, luncheons, or break-even events, advertising Space in the quarterly or annual newsletter, conference booth spaces and sponsorships for breaks and meals.

#### POSSIBLE TAX IMPLICATIONS

US Chapters should be aware that federal regulations require filing additional tax forms for more than \$1,000 gross income in a year from an unrelated trade or business activity such as advertising revenue or mailing list sales.

#### EVENT SPONSORS

*NEED CONTENT HERE*

#### **INSURANCE**

Increasingly, both Chapters and the Association are concerned with the question of liability as it relates to conferences, workshops, and other events. The primary purpose of general liability insurance is to protect an organization from claims by members of the public alleging bodily injury caused by the negligence of the organization. Chapters have the following alternatives in limiting their liability: buy event specific policies, include URISA International in Chapter events, associate with a local, regional, or state agency for major Chapter events, or buy a general liability policy for the Chapter.

#### GENERAL GUIDELINES

##### NATIONAL INSURANCE SPECIFICS

Specifics on what it covers, especially when paperwork needs to be filed with National and additional charges apply. Who to contact at National for more information.

#### **CHAPTER MATURITY ASSESSMENT**

The CRC has compiled detailed information on each Chapter, including information on Chapter membership and activities by the completion of an annual Chapter Maturity Assessment. This information is published on the URISA International website. It is a great tool for both the Chapter that submitted it to

reflect on historical activities and their successes, as well as, other chapters to glean new and fun activities for their fellow chapters.

URISA International Board of Directors established the policy that all chapters who completed a Chapter Maturity Assessment would be eligible to receive one (1) complimentary registration to the Annual URISA International GIS-Pro Conference provided that they attended the Chapter Leader Forum.

#### CHAPTER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Each year, URISA recognizes an outstanding Chapter that has sponsored particularly effective activities or has otherwise excelled in serving its membership and the community. Outstanding Chapter Award criteria include the following:

1. Innovation – something new or different introduced or tried
2. Education – the act or process of imparting or acquiring particular knowledge or skills, as for a profession
3. Outreach – to reach beyond, the act of extending services, benefits, to a wider section of the population
4. Community Impact – an influence or effect on a group, whose members reside in a specific locality and often have a common heritage.

#### ANNUAL CHAPTER LEADER FORUM

During the URISA International Annual GIS-Pro Conference, URISA International sponsors a Chapter Leaders Forum (CLF). The Forum gives Chapter leaders an opportunity to share experiences and gain valuable information about Chapter programs and administration. There is no fee to attend the CLF, however regular conference registration fees apply if Chapter representatives want to attend the remainder of the conference.

#### WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

##### HOSTING AN EVENT

Many Chapters have offered successful, one-day mini-conferences, often with a particular theme. Another possibility for one-day events is to allow corporate members to present technical sessions and/or demonstrations that are not sales presentations. Each corporate member can be given an equal amount of time or can be allowed a speaker's position on a panel. In this approach, the rules must be applied equally to all to prevent conflict. One-day events are easier to organize than longer conferences. If held regularly, these events may evolve into larger regional conferences as the Chapter matures.

##### HOSTING A URISA CERTIFIED WORKSHOP

Chapters can sponsor workshops similar to the ones held URISA conferences. URISA International Headquarters will provide assistance by identifying potential instructors, promoting your event, and providing workbook files, certificates of completion and collateral materials. Contact URISA's Education Manager for details.

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**APPENDICES**

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## **Appendix A**

### **Membership Guidelines and Sample Databases**

Areas to address are as follows:

- Membership Categories
  - Regular
  - Student
  - Corporate
  - Sponsor
- Benefits of Membership
  - Newsletter
  - Discounts
  - Membership Directories
  - Exhibit booth
  - Conference Publications
  - Networking opportunities
- Dues
  - Allocation of dues
  - Fees for dues
- Member Recruitment
- Member Database and Mailing List
  - Examples
  - Privacy laws
- Fiscal and Membership Years
- Committees
- Visibility and Stability

## **Appendix B Elections**

Properly held and well-planned elections give members a feeling of confidence in Chapter leadership and help to prevent cliques within the executive committee. The following are guidelines for holding Chapter elections.

### **Nominations:**

According to the Model Chapter Bylaws a Nominating Committee prior to the Chapter's annual meeting must nominate all officers and directors. Additional nominations may be made from the floor when the slate is presented to the membership for approval. Nominees for President, Secretary, and Treasurer must be active members of URISA International in good standing. No member can hold more than one elective office during a term.

It is recommended that a Nominating Committee be established well in advance of any proposed election. The committee should be appointed by the President and approved by the Chapter Board of Directors. It is recommended that the committee take action at least three to four months ahead of the election in order to identify suitable candidates.

In addition to approaching potential candidates directly, the committee should invite interested members to submit their names or the names of others through the newsletter and other promotional material.

The Chapter should require potential candidates to confirm their willingness to serve before their names are placed on the ballot. It is, of course, preferred that at least two candidates vie for each position, although this is not always possible.

### **Election Frequency:**

Normally, elections are held annually unless a Chapter's bylaws state otherwise. In a start-up period, it is common for initial terms to be extended to 18 or 24 months while the Chapter is being established and incorporated.

### **Procedures and Schedule:**

Timing – Holding elections in the spring benefits Chapters because their newly elected officers can participate in the Chapter Leaders Forum at URISA International's annual conference at the start of their terms.

Ballots – There are many types of ballots that can be used based on your bylaws to include: mail-in, general meeting, secret ballot, electronically, or by e-mail.

Voting Privileges – Each member usually has one vote. Voting rights must be established for corporate or associate memberships if these membership categories are available from the Chapter.

Counting and Reporting the Ballots – A committee of at least two persons from either the nominating committee or a separate committee should count the ballots. The results of the election should be brought forward at the annual general meeting and circulated to all members in the newsletter. A list of new officers is required to be sent to URISA International within one month of the election.

Terms of Office – The term of office is determined by the bylaws of the Chapter. The transition period between the old and new officers should be established by the Chapter bylaws, however, the new officers should take over their roles at the beginning of the fiscal year.

**Appendix C**  
**Sample Petitions for Recognitions as URISA Chapter**

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**Appendix D**  
**Sample Petition for Active Status**

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**Appendix E**  
**Sample Annual Chapter Report**

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## **Appendix F Constitution & Bylaws**

URISA Constitution - <http://www.urisa.org/files/Constitution.pdf>

URISA Bylaws - <http://www.urisa.org/files/URISA%20Bylaws%20revNov2010.pdf>

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**Appendix G**  
**How to host a meeting and keep good minutes**

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**Appendix H**  
**Example of 1st year goals**

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**Appendix I**  
**Sample Memorandum of Understanding**

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**Appendix J  
ORGANIZATION CHART**

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URISA Org Chart - <http://www.urisa.org/files/URISAOrgChart20110519.pdf>

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**Appendix K  
Additional Resources**

**Chapter Relations Committee -**  
<http://www.urisa.org/chapters/essentials>

**URISA Leadership -** <http://www.urisa.org/about/leadership>

**URISA History -** <http://www.urisa.org/about/history>

**Chapter Support Services -**  
[http://www.urisa.org/files/Chapter%20Menu%20of%20Services 2011.pdf](http://www.urisa.org/files/Chapter%20Menu%20of%20Services%2011.pdf)

**URISA Committee List -** <http://www.urisa.org/URISA%20Committees>