

Getting Approval to Attend GIS-Pro & CalGIS 2018

Don't be afraid to ask! Good managers see the benefit of continuing education and networking for their staff and will be willing to make it work if they can.

1. Send your manager an email with the basic information about the conference (event name, date, location, fees, and a few sentences about anticipated benefit for your organization). Then ask your manager for a meeting to speak in person well ahead of the deadline for early bird registration discounts, **which is July 23**.
2. Focus on how your participation will benefit your organization. Mention speakers you can learn from, sessions you plan to attend, contacts you will make, and best practices you can apply to your work. If you have a challenging project coming up, talk about the specific sessions and workshops you can attend that will help you move the project forward.
3. Your manager may ask you whether a lower-cost alternative is available. Perhaps note a smaller, local conference that won't address the breadth and experiences you'll gain at GIS-Pro and CalGIS and a larger, more expensive event where it is difficult to have meaningful interactions in order to identify solutions. Be ready to state your case as to why GIS-Pro provides opportunities the others don't. And certainly mention the location (particularly if you're in the west). URISA was in Toronto in 2016, Jacksonville, Florida in 2017 and will be in the Midwest next year. Stress the affordability and ease of travel to Palm Springs!
4. In addition to explaining how GIS-Pro & CalGIS will benefit your own work, offer to share the knowledge you've gained and solutions you've identified after you return. Offer to plan a meeting where you can present some of your a-ha moments from the conference with the rest of the team.
5. Assure your manager that you'll take necessary steps to ensure your work is covered while you attend the event and can check in periodically via email or telephone calls.
6. Decision time:
 - a. If your manager doesn't give you a decision, ask when you should follow up, reminding him or her of the deadline to register.
 - b. If your manager offers to cover your attendance at another event (or pay for your attendance at GIS-Pro in the next budget year), **be grateful** that your manager is willing to invest in your professional development.
 - c. If you do not gain approval to attend, be sure to ask your manager about the likelihood of approval for future professional development opportunities. Was the decision strictly financial or was the benefit of attendance not apparent? This will help when considering future requests.

Overall, the most important thing you can do when requesting approval to attend GIS-Pro & CalGIS 2018 is to come prepared. When resources are tight, any justification you can provide regarding return on investment can be the difference between a yes and a no.