AICP’s Core Competencies

Approved by the AICP Commission, August 28, 2017.

The knowledge of a planner is both wide and deep. Planners work in various realms and on a broad variety of topics. Planners often refer to themselves as "professional generalists" while serving as conveners and facilitators, bringing diverse interests together toward a common goal. The American Institute of Certified Planners’ Core Competencies establishes a framework for the "core" of skills, experience and values that form the foundation of our profession - fundamental knowledge and understanding that every planner should both possess and share. These Core Competencies provide opportunity for planners to track their own progress as they advance planning principles and move forward in their career.

It is the AICP Commission’s responsibility to assure that the standards and processes to obtain and maintain AICP certification remain relevant and current. This includes the professional planning experience criteria established as part of the AICP Certification application, the AICP Certification Examination, AICP Certification Maintenance requirements and related resources.

The AICP Core Competencies will guide AICP in establishing and maintaining:

- confidence in the correlation between the AICP application and exam, and what skills, knowledge, experience and values planners should possess at the time of AICP certification;
- confidence in the correlation between the AICP Certification Maintenance (CM) program, and the knowledge AICP members need to advance their careers;
- dialog and exchange of perspectives between planning educators and planning practitioners on the skills, knowledge and experiences that lead to greater success of planning school graduates, and better planning outcomes; and
- a standardized base of core planning knowledge, skills and commitments that can be used to as a general reference resource about the planning profession.

The AICP Core Competencies are meant to be a “living document,” to be revised over time to reflect the continuing evolution of the planning field. As such, these competencies will be periodically updated. The AICP Commission recognizes the importance of specialty competencies that go beyond what is listed here, specialties that include those recognized by APA’s Divisions, as well as other planning specialties.

AICP’s Core Competencies

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<tr>
<th>1. Fundamental Knowledge: The basic tenets of planning, including planning history, theory and law.</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. Planning Theory: The behaviors and structures available to bring about sound planning outcomes. Knowing why planning is undertaken by communities, cities, regions, and nations.</td>
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<td>b. Human Settlements: The growth and development of places over time and across space. Understanding of interactions flows of people and materials, cultures, and differing approaches to planning across world regions.</td>
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<td>c. History of Planning: The history of planning and planning movements.</td>
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<td>d. Planning Law: Foundational legal principles of constitutional law and related judicial decisions that have guided planning in the US.</td>
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<td>e. Land Use Planning and Building Form: The relationships of land uses and building form, both current and future, and the utilities, facilities and services necessary to serve them.</td>
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2. **Research, Technical and Analytical**: Specific research, technical and analytical tasks required in the practice of planning.

   a. **Research**: Assembling and analyzing ideas and information from prior practice and scholarship, and from primary and secondary sources.

   b. **Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**: Using data collection, survey, analysis and modeling tools for forecasting, policy analysis, and design of projects and plans.

   c. **Demographics and Economics**: Analyzing demographic data to discern trends in population, employment and health.

   d. **Impact Assessment and Demand Analysis**: Systematically identifying and assessing the demands and impacts (fiscal, economic, environmental, transportation, health, etc.) of proposals.

   e. **Technology and Related Applications**: Understanding information technologies and how evolving technology can impact planning and be used to advance the profession.

   f. **Spatial Analysis**: Understanding spatial systems, mapping and interpretation, including Geographic Information Systems, and their value to advancing planning concepts.

3. **Communication and Interaction**: Creating and facilitating the flow of ideas, information, and understanding between and among individuals and groups.

   a. **Accuracy and Quality**: Providing timely, adequate, clear, and accurate information on planning issues to all affected persons and decision makers.

   b. **Written and Graphic**: Preparing clear, accurate and compelling text and graphics for use in documents and presentations.

   c. **Presentation**: Effectively conveying information through spoken presentations and interactions. Ability to explain complex issues and convey technical points in lay terms.

   d. **Comprehension and Listening**: Accurately comprehending, receiving and interpreting verbal messages. Paying attention to what is said, how it is said and what is emphasized.

   e. **Interpersonal Relations and Customer Service**: Working effectively with various public and private sector officials, staff, citizens and other customers.

   f. **Mediation and Facilitation**: Acting as a mediator or facilitator when interests conflict.

   g. **Communication and Notification**: Using notification and communication resources, including social media. Identifying the best methods for any particular audience.

   h. **Sharing and Conveying**: Conveying planning knowledge and concepts to others, including students, coworkers and the public.

   i. **Political Savvy**: Managing sensitive or controversial political situations.

   j. **Diversity**: Understanding how cultural, racial, generational, disability and gender-based perspectives can influence communities and planning.

   k. **Public Participation and Relations**: Working with the public and articulating planning issues to a wide variety of audiences, fostering public empowerment and participation. Knowledge of participatory techniques, such as charrettes, and visioning.
4. **Plan Making**: Plan formulation and adoption.

   a. **Appropriate Process**: Applying a planning process appropriate to the situation. Identifying plan purpose, components, application and available resources.

   b. **Comprehensive Context**: Applying an appropriately comprehensive point of view in plan preparation. Understanding the consequences of planning related decisions.

   c. **Visioning and Goal Setting**: Using visioning techniques. Establishing viable and sustainable planning goals and objectives.

   d. **Facilitation and Consensus Building**: Fostering negotiation and mutual compromise among competing interests.

   e. **Planning Process Methods**: Promoting stakeholder involvement and community engagement, working with diverse communities.

   f. **Problem Solving**: Using a balance of technical competence, creativity and pragmatism.

   g. **Interrelationships**: Understanding physical, economic, natural, and social relationships, including the interaction between the economy, transportation, housing, health and human services, and land-use regulation.

   h. **Scoping and Scheduling**: Plan management, scope of work and timeframe establishment and monitoring.

5. **Plan Implementation and Placemaking**: Plan implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

   a. **Legal Applications**: Legal principles related to planning and development review, including property rights, police power, eminent domain, signage, etc.

   b. **Environmental Management**: The elements and techniques involved in environmental planning and management, including green infrastructure, hazard mitigation and resiliency.

   c. **Growth Management**: Growth management techniques, including adequate public facilities and concurrency management.

   d. **Urban Design**: Community and site design considerations, including scale and density, safety and walkability.

   e. **Current Planning**: Development plan and project review, including the preparation of staff reports.

   f. **Zoning and Subdivision**: Specific zoning and subdivision review techniques, including code enforcement.

   g. **Public Facilities Planning and Management: Facilities**: and institutional planning, capital improvement program management and related financing techniques.

   h. **Economic Development and Redevelopment**: Recognizing the market forces that drive development and the techniques use to foster economic development and community revitalization.

   i. **Preservation, Conservation and Reuse**: Skills associated with the preservation, conservation and reuse of land and related historic, cultural and environmental resources.

   j. **Plan Implementation and Evaluation**: Techniques used to implement plans and assess their effectiveness, including the consequences of planning decisions (land use, fiscal, economic, environmental, transportation, etc.)
6. Leadership
a. **Influencing Decision Making in the Public Interest**: Providing vision, input, direction and guidance to those with decision-making authority to make decisions in the best interest of the public.

b. **Leadership and Collaboration**: Skills regarding strategic decision-making, collaboration, change management, and organizational/community motivation.

c. **Innovation and Excellence**: Leadership in creating and consensus and support for a planning activity that lead to community improvements.

d. **Relations with Elected and Appointed Officials**: Skills needed to effectively address the needs and perspectives of elected and appointed boards and commissions.

7. Management
a. **Decision Making and Evaluation**: Policy analysis and program evaluation skills. Negotiating skills.

b. **Staff Management**: Promoting the development and performance of staff. Knowledge of principles of personnel management, including supervision, team building, training and performance evaluation.

c. **Project Management**: Skills generally associated with being in charge of a plan or project, including resource allocation, monitoring, etc.

d. **Intergroup and Stakeholder Relationships**: Fostering collaboration and information flow between groups and stakeholders.

e. **Budgeting and Financing**: Interpreting financial information to assess the short-term and long-term fiscal condition of the community, determine the cost-effectiveness of programs, and compare alternative strategies.

f. **Media Relations**: Skills addressing the needs and perspectives of the media, and working with them to accomplish planning objectives.

g. **Technical Proficiency**: Skills that incorporate innovation and new technology, including social media, to advance planning objectives.

h. **Strategic Planning**: Application of strategic planning principles to accomplish longer range planning objectives.

i. **Office Operations**: Skills in office operational management, including business planning, task analysis and financial management.

j. **Managing the Availability of Information**: Including transparency, freedom of information, confidentiality and privacy.

8. Integrity, Values and Ethics: Reinforcing the planning profession's shared sense of purpose by highlighting our values and ethical integrity.

a. **Relationships**: The interrelatedness of decisions and the special concern for the long-range consequences of present actions.

b. **Social Justice**: Expanding choices and opportunities for all persons, underserved groups and diverse communities.

c. **Professional Ethics**: Appreciation of key issues of planning ethics and the ethics of public decision-making, research, and client representation as outlined in the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

d. **Advocacy**: Support for policies, programs, or ideas that influence public decision-making and best serve the public interest through democratic engagement.

e. **Accountability and Transparency**: Knowledge and skills to assure plan and program accountability and transparency.
9. **Relevancy and Professional Commitment:** The knowledge and skills needed to remain current in the practice of planning, contributing to the development of, and respect for, fellow planners and the profession.

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<td>a.</td>
<td><strong>Professional Development:</strong> Commitment to professional development and continuous learning.</td>
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<td>b.</td>
<td><strong>Remaining Current and Relevant:</strong> Understanding of the latest planning trends, technologies, and best practices.</td>
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<td>c.</td>
<td><strong>Emerging Issues:</strong> Understanding emerging issues and trends, such as those relating to dynamic populations, food system planning, aging and livable communities and new urbanism.</td>
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<td>d.</td>
<td><strong>Commitment:</strong> Ongoing commitment to the development of, and respect for, the planning profession.</td>
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<td>e.</td>
<td><strong>Contribution:</strong> Contribution to advancing planning principles through participation in and volunteering with local, state and national organizations and initiatives.</td>
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<td>f.</td>
<td><strong>Mentoring:</strong> Commitment and success in providing planning education and mentoring at all levels, including opportunities to planning students and emerging planning professionals.</td>
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<td>g.</td>
<td><strong>Consultant Relations and Management:</strong> Skills relating to working with consultants, including RFP and RFQ development, selection, contracts, budgeting, project management and communication.</td>
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**Core Competency Reference Sources:**

- APA Leadership Core Competencies Exercise Input—September 2013.
- AICP Certification Examination Subject Matter Outline (2016).
- AICP Certification Application—Professional Planning Experience Criteria.
- AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct—Our Overall Responsibility to the Public.
- FAICP Nomination Guidelines.
- Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) Criteria—Required knowledge, skills, and values of the profession.