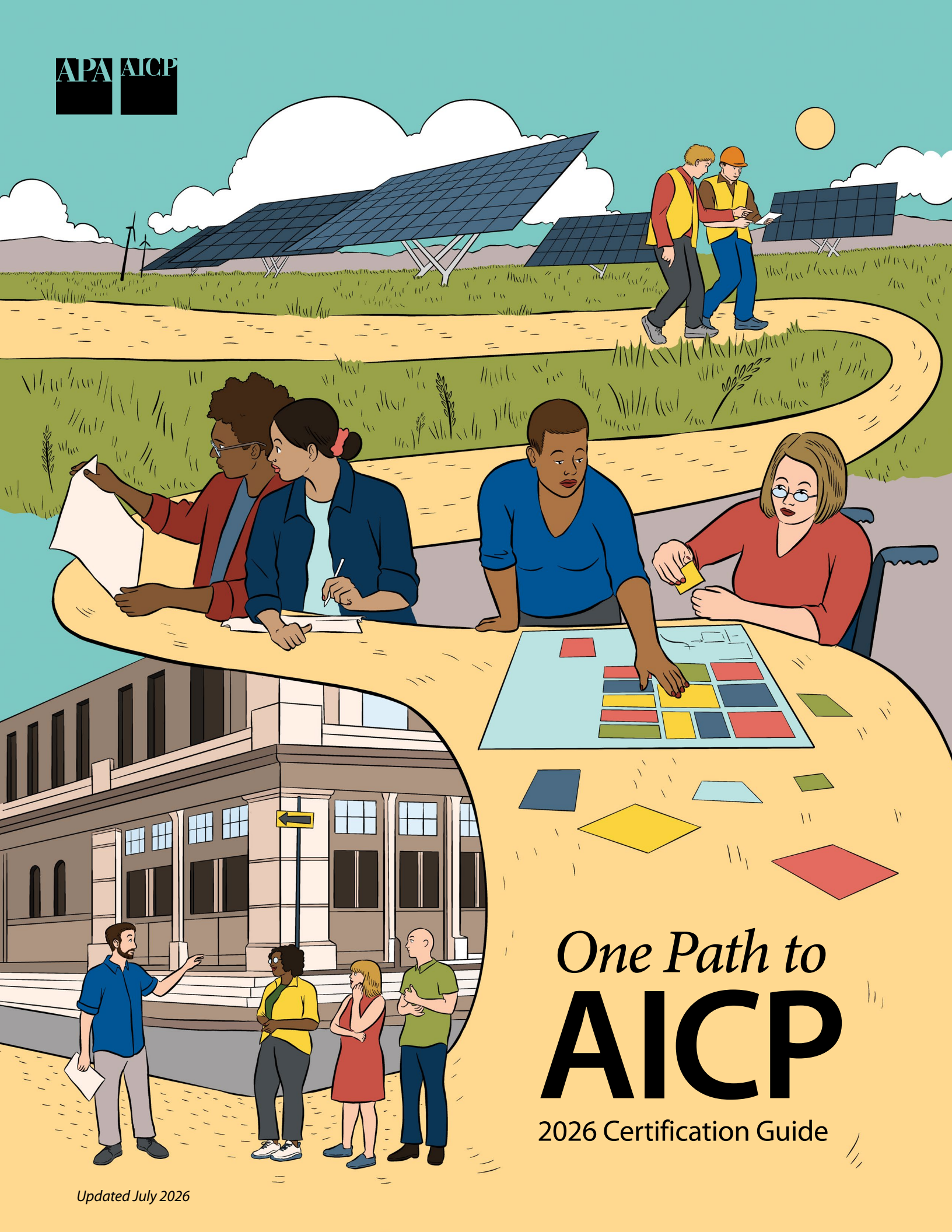


One Path to AICP

2026 Certification Guide

Updated July 2026

General Information

American Planning Association

The American Planning Association (APA) brings together thousands of people—practicing planners, citizens, elected officials—dedicated to creating great communities for all. APA is a nonprofit public interest and education organization committed to urban, suburban, regional, and rural planning. More information about membership can be found on the APA website.

American Institute of Certified Planners

APA's professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), provides leadership in professional development, ethics, and the standards of planning practice. AICP-certified planners have demonstrated a commitment to high standards of professional practice and a mastery of theories and tools of planning.

The AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct defines the aspirational principles and rules of conduct to which a certified planner must adhere. AICP's Certification Maintenance program ensures that certified planners remain current in their professional knowledge and skills. To maintain certification, AICP members are required to complete 32 hours of approved professional development every two years. This ongoing education supports planners in upholding the high standards of the profession and staying informed about emerging trends, best practices, and evolving community needs.

American Planning Association
American Institute of Certified Planners
200 E. Randolph Street, Suite 6900, Chicago, IL 60601-6909
312-431-9100 | planning.org/certification | planning.org

APA
American Planning Association
Creating Great Communities for All

AICP
American Institute
of Certified Planners
Creating Great Communities for All

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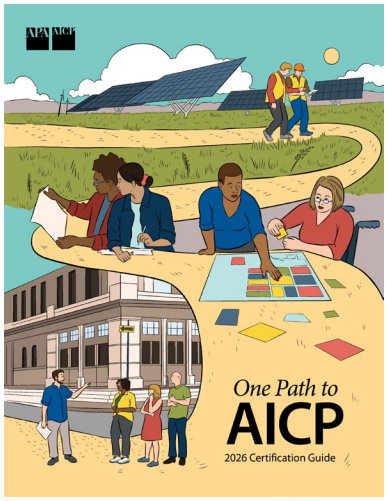
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How should I use this guide?

This guide contains a wealth of information about One Path to AICP. Refer to it often! For easy navigation, the contents page has in-document links to quickly get you to the information you need. It is also searchable with a PDF reader program.

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Illustrations by Raphaelle Macaron

One Path to AICP

APA members can earn AICP certification through a straightforward three-step process.

Step 1

Register for the certification program and schedule your exam. The only requirement to take the exam is that you are an APA member. Any APA member is eligible to take the exam, regardless of educational status or professional planning experience.



Who can take the AICP exam?

ANY member of APA regardless of education or work experience.



Step 2

Test and earn the AICP Candidate designation when you pass.

Step 3

Submit your education, work history, and professional planning experience to meet the AICP certification requirements and achieve AICP certification.



Don't forget to add us to your contact list.

Prior to starting the path to certification, please add aicp@planning.org to your list of contacts so that all emails sent by AICP get delivered to your inbox.

The Schedule

Each year there is a window for completing the three steps. Please check our website for the current schedules.

Step 1
Register and Schedule the AICP Certification Exam

Before You Begin

Review these questions before starting this step of the AICP certification process. They may be updated periodically, so be sure to check for the latest versions.

Are you an APA member? If you have prepared and feel ready to take the exam, the only requirement is that you are an APA member—even if you do not have a degree or have not earned your professional planning experience. If you are not an APA member, join today!

Does the name on your exam registration match your government-issued ID? Your first and last names must exactly match your ID. Middle names are optional but must match if included. Contact AICP with any questions.

Have you read this AICP Certification Guide entirely? This guide outlines each step toward certification. You will need to confirm you have read it when registering for the exam.

Have you checked the exam registration and experience assessment submission dates? View the key dates to stay on track.

Interested in an AICP Certification Scholarship? Fifty scholarships are awarded twice a year via a lottery. Applications are accepted twice per year—once early in the certification cycle and once mid-cycle—with notifications sent the following month. These can be used for either the exam or the experience assessment.

Have you read the AICP Code of Ethics? You will affirm this when registering—please take time to review it.



Step 1

Information About the AICP Exam

The AICP Certification Exam tests planners' knowledge and skills for professional certification. Developed by AICP-credentialed planning subject matter experts and guided by Prometric exam development specialists, the exam is overseen by the AICP Exam Committee to ensure it evaluates relevant planning knowledge and skills.

The exam is designed to be taken by a national and international audience, covering a wide range of planning topics in the United States. You may take the exam before earning the required professional planning experience.

The general content areas of the exam are outlined on the APA website. The exam consists of 170 multiple-choice questions, with 150 scored and 20 unscored questions being considered for future exams. You can take the exam up to three times per year, with at least one month between each attempt.

When should I take the exam?

It's recommended to register and schedule the AICP exam early in the year to maximize availability and options.

Where to Take the Exam

The exam is computer-based and available at over 300 Prometric test centers in the U.S., Canada, and internationally. Review Prometric's FAQs prior to scheduling your exam. Remote testing at your home, office, or other secure location is also available at no extra cost. The exam is timed; you will be given 3.5 hours to complete the exam and an additional 30 minutes for pre-exam setup.

You can schedule and reschedule exam appointments online with Prometric. Test centers can be searched by zip code, and hours are typically from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with varying Saturday hours.

You can select the most convenient location, regardless of your state of residence. Prometric will try to assign you to your preferred center, but other organizations also use Prometric, so capacity may be limited.



Remote Testing

Prometric offers the flexibility to take the AICP Certification Exam anywhere with a secure internet connection.

Before registering for the remote option, review these remote testing resources. You must:

- Confirm that your computer meets the system requirements to take the exam remotely

- Complete a pre-system check and a test-day check
- Confirm your testing environment is suitable

Corporate devices **should not** be used as they often have firewalls that prevent the test from starting. If you must use a corporate device, it is essential you review these instructions.

Contact Prometric with questions about remote testing.

How to Register and Schedule the Exam

The only requirement to take the AICP exam is APA membership. During the exam check-in process, you will be required to show two IDs. Ensure the name on the IDs match the name on your MyAPA account. If they do not match, contact APA. For information on acceptable IDs, please see the Identification Requirements section in Step 2.

APA members may attempt the AICP Certification Exam up to three times during a testing cycle. Candidates who do not pass must wait 30 days from their exam date before registering for another attempt.

To register (on the APA website)

1. **Click on the** registration link (you must be logged into MyAPA).
2. **Enter** education information.
3. **Confirm:**
   - That you have read and will abide by the AICP Code of Ethics
   - That you understand the certification requirements
   - That you read the AICP Certification Guide
4. **Complete payment** (major credit cards accepted; checks not accepted)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with an eligibility ID to schedule your exam with Prometric. Check your spam/junk folders if you cannot find the email.

Note: if you copy/paste this eligibility ID, make sure there are no spaces before or after it.

If you need accommodations, review Appendix 3 in this guide **before** scheduling your exam with Prometric. All accommodations must be approved by APA and then added to your AICP exam registration record **before** scheduling your exam with Prometric.

Will my corporate computer or other device have problems if I take the exam remotely?

Most likely. Review these remote testing resources and visit Prometric's Help Center before exam day to confirm your device meets all requirements to ensure a successful exam launch.

Can I get a refund of my exam fee?

No refunds will be given once the exam fee is paid. You must take the exam within the same calendar year as when you registered.



To schedule (on the Prometric website)

1. **Use the eligibility ID** received in your confirmation email to schedule your in-person or remote exam appointment with Prometric. If you copy/paste this eligibility ID, make sure there are no spaces before or after it.
2. **After scheduling,** you will receive an email from Prometric with a 16-digit confirmation number. Retain this number in case you need to make any changes to your appointment.

If you experience issues finding availability or scheduling your exam:

- Contact Prometric. You will be given a case number.
- Contact APA with the case number and information about the issue.

APA will work with Prometric to resolve your issue.

Exam Appointment Changes

To change your exam appointment date, time, or testing method, visit the Prometric website. You can make changes up to **three business days** before your scheduled exam. If you are within three business days of your appointment and you are unable to keep your appointment, your registration fee will be forfeited.

To reschedule your exam:

1. **Log on to** Prometric at least three business days before your scheduled appointment.
2. **Enter** your 16-digit confirmation number and last name.
3. **Reschedule** your appointment. Prometric charges a fee for changes made three to 29 days before the test date.

Prometric's No-Show, Cancellation, and Rescheduling Policies

You cannot reschedule and will forfeit the exam fee if:

- It is less than three business days before a test date.
- You fail to appear for the scheduled exam.
- You arrive more than 30 minutes after the scheduled start time for taking the exam and are refused admission.
- You do not provide acceptable IDs and are denied admission (see Identification Requirements in Step 2).

You will be charged a fee if the exam needs to be rescheduled three to 29 days before the scheduled test date.

No fees will be charged if you reschedule your exam 30 or more days before the test date.

Am I required to take the exam during my chosen window?

By registering for the AICP exam, you commit to taking it within the specified exam window. If you do not, your registration will be forfeited. No refunds or transfers will be provided.



Step 2
Take the AICP Certification Exam

Before You Begin

Review these questions before starting this step of the AICP certification process. They may be updated periodically, so be sure to check the AICP website for the latest versions.

Does the name on your exam registration match your government-issued ID? Your first and last names must exactly match your ID. Middle names are optional but must match if included. Contact AICP with any questions.

Have you reviewed APA's exam prep materials? We have curated videos, slides, reading materials, and much more to help you prepare.

Taking the exam remotely? Make sure your device meets technical requirements—even if it's new. Corporate computers should not be used. Review these remote testing support resources for more information.

Do you need exam accommodations (ESL or ADA)? If so, submit a request form. See Appendix 3 in this guide for details. All requests must be submitted prior scheduling your exam with Prometric.



Step 2

At the Test Center

Plan to be at the test center for four hours. Arrive early and bring the proper IDs. See Identification Requirements section below. You must arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment to complete the admission process. Late arrivals will not be admitted.

After admission, the Test Center Administrator (TCA) will give you a short orientation and escort you to a workstation. You must remain in your seat during the exam unless authorized to leave by a test center staff member. You may not leave the testing room without the TCA's permission. For additional information about Prometric's testing requirements, please visit the Prometric site.

Remote Testing

Prometric offers the flexibility to take the AICP Certification Exam anywhere with a secure internet connection.

Before registering for the remote option, review these remote testing resources. You must:

- Confirm that your computer meets the system requirements to take the exam remotely
- Complete a pre-system check and a test-day check
- Confirm your testing environment is suitable

Corporate devices **should not be used** as they often have firewalls that prevent the test from starting. If you must use a corporate device, it's essential you review these instructions.

Contact Prometric with questions about remote testing.

Will my device have problems if I take the exam remotely?

Most likely. Using a corporate device requires special access, and personal computers aren't always equipped with the proper system requirements. Review these remote testing resources and visit Prometric's Help Center before exam day to confirm your device meets all requirements to ensure a successful exam launch.



Identification Requirements

To be admitted to the test center or test remotely, you must have two forms of identification bearing your name and your signature. One must be a primary ID with a recent photo. Prometric will only accept a valid, government-issued ID for the primary ID. If you do not have valid identification, you will not be able to test.

IDs Accepted at Test Centers

PRIMARY FORMS OF ID	SECONDARY FORMS OF ID	INVALID ID
State-issued driver's license	Photo-bearing employee ID card	Draft classification card
Valid passport	Bank automated teller card	Student identification card
Citizenship card	Valid credit card with signature	
Military ID card	Social Security card	

IDs Accepted When Testing Remotely

PRIMARY FORMS OF ID	SECONDARY FORMS OF ID	INVALID ID
State-issued driver's license	Photo-bearing employee ID card	Social Security card
Valid passport	Insurance cards	Debit/credit card
Citizenship card	Library card	Military ID card
		Birth certificate

Two primary IDs will be accepted in lieu of one primary and one secondary ID provided that both IDs are valid and not expired.

Acceptable Differences in IDs

Some name discrepancies are allowed if the name on your official identification differs from the name on your exam registration. Please refer to the examples below. If your name variation is listed, you may schedule your exam with Prometric.

If the name variation is not listed in the examples of acceptable name variations shown below, you must contact APA **at least three business days** prior to your scheduled exam. AICP staff will update your record and notify you once the changes are made (allow 48 hours).

If your name differs due to a legal name change, you will need to present one of the following:

- Marriage certificate
- Divorce decree
- Court-issued name change order or other official government document verifying the legal name change

Note: The address in your exam confirmation does not need to match your ID. However, substituting another name (e.g., Smith to Jones) is not permitted without proof of legal name change.



Allowable name discrepancies	Examples
A single-letter discrepancy exists in test-taker's name	Single-letter difference: Johnson vs. Johmson Single-letter transposition: Alexander vs. Alexandre Single-letter omission: Schultz vs. Shultz Single-letter addition: Miller vs. Mialler or Miler
One version of test-taker's name has a middle initial or middle name while the other does not	John E. Smith vs. John Smith Mary R. Abernathy vs. Mary Rose Abernathy
First name is provided formally on one document, but a typical variation is used on another document.	Michael Jones vs. Mike Jones
Incorrect letters are used in a name on one document, but correct letters are used on another document.	Diller vs. Ditter Dutton vs. Ditton
Maiden name is used as a middle name on one document, while given middle name is used on another document.	Mary Elizabeth Smith vs. Mary Jones Smith
The order of the first and last names do not match.	Russell, Amy vs. Amy Russell
Suffixes are used on one document, but not used on another document.	Robert Jones vs. Robert Jones, Jr. Sam Smith vs. Sam Smith III

After Completing the Exam

Immediately after completing the exam, you will receive your Official Score Report (OSR) from Prometric. The report will be sent from ElectricScoreReport.com. Please see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 in this guide for more about the OSR.

You can also access the OSR on the Prometric website using the 16-digit confirmation number (from your confirmation email after scheduling your exam with Prometric). It can take up to 48 hours for your scores to be transmitted to APA, after which you will receive an email with your next steps. Prometric retains the OSR for two years.

AICP Candidate Designation

Passing the exam grants you the "AICP Candidate" designation, which does not expire as long as your APA membership is active.

CM requirements begin after you achieve AICP certification. The designation will be added to your MyAPA profile and can be used after your name. The designation should not be abbreviated (e.g., AICP-C).

You will also have access to a digital certificate that you can link to your email signature, resume, social media, etc. This designation distinguishes you from noncertified planners and can be leveraged with your employer. Learn more about AICP's value to employers.

Does my AICP Candidate designation expire?

Passing the exam grants you the "AICP Candidate" designation, which does not expire as long as your APA membership is active.

As an AICP Candidate, do I need professional development credits?

You are not required to earn professional development or log Certification Maintenance (CM) credits while holding the "AICP Candidate" designation.

Step 3
Submit Education Verification, Employment History, and Experience Assessment

Before You Begin

Review these questions before starting this step of the AICP certification process. They may be updated periodically, so be sure to check the AICP website for the latest versions.

Do you meet the required professional planning experience? Please review the chart in the next section, or on our Get Assistance page, and use the Interactive Experience Calculator to track your progress.

Does your experience qualify as professional planning? Review Appendix 5 in this guide and the Experience Worksheet to assess your eligibility.

Have you completed the Experience Assessment Template? Before submitting your assessment, we recommend you complete, review, and print the Experience Assessment Template pdf and use it to prepare for filling out the online form.

Wondering whether your master's degree qualifies as a non-Planning Accreditation Board-accredited planning degree? Use the Planning Curriculum Worksheet to confirm how much professional planning experience you will be required to provide.



Step 3

To earn AICP certification, you must complete the required years of professional planning experience based on your education. This section outlines the combinations of education and experience that meet AICP certification requirements and describes the assessment process. International degrees and experience are accepted.

To submit your Assessment, you must:

1. **Be a current** member of the American Planning Association (APA)
2. **Pass** the AICP Certification Exam
3. **Complete** one of the combinations of education and corresponding years of professional planning experience listed below. The degree may be obtained before, during, or after planning experience is obtained.

Education	Years of planning experience
Master's degree in planning from a program accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) Accredited degrees have been determined by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) to meet standards approved by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) or accredited by the Professional Standards Board (PSB) for Planning in Canada. The accredited degree must have been obtained during the period the university has been accredited (or previously recognized). If you are unsure about the status of your planning degree (PAB, PSB, or other), contact AICP.	**2**
Bachelor's degree in planning from a PAB-accredited program	**3**
Graduate (master's or doctoral) degree in planning from a program not accredited by the PAB Use the Planning Curriculum Worksheet to determine whether a non-PAB-accredited graduate degree qualifies as a planning degree.	**3**
Any other graduate or undergraduate degree (including Associate degree)	**4**
No college degree or no degree information provided	**8**

Section 1: Education Verification

Enter your education information (if any) to confirm your degree, when it was conferred, and whether it was in planning.

Provide your education verification in one of the following forms (PDF, JPG, or PNG formats are accepted):

- University transcripts (official, unofficial, and e-transcripts accepted).

- Photocopy of diploma.
- Letter from school dean, registrar, or program director confirming the degree was conferred. The letter must be on a school/university letterhead and include the writer's title and contact information.

If you have a different name on their education document due to marriage, you must email AICP with a copy of your marriage certificate.

Section 2: Employment History

Enter your professional planning employment information for each position needed to meet the experience requirements:

- Employer
- Position title
- Dates of employment
- Full-time or part-time indication
- Current/former supervisor
- Email address of supervisor
- Detailed summary of professional planning tasks and responsibilities

Use the Experience Worksheet and Appendix 5 of this guide to confirm whether your experience qualifies and meets AICP's definition of professional planning experience.

If you do not have contact information for a former employer, share the HR department's contact information instead, or contact AICP.

Section 3: Assessment

Demonstrate that your experience meets AICP's definition of professional planning experience by selecting all applicable items from lists that align with each criterion and completing open-text fields with brief examples from your employment history provided in Section 2 above, and as described in further detail below. Before submitting your assessment, we strongly recommend you complete, review, and print the Experience Assessment Template and use it to prepare for filling out the online form.

Review Appendix 5, Additional Guidance on Professional Planning Experience, and use the Experience Worksheet to confirm that your experience qualifies.

Section 4: Review

Review each section prior to submission. You will not be permitted to change or edit the assessment once it has been submitted.

Section 5: Submission and Payment

Payment is due upon submission. Any major credit card is accepted but checks are not. No refunds will be granted. Your assessment will be

Not sure if your master's degree is considered a planning degree?

Use the Planning Curriculum Worksheet to determine if your master's degree meets AICP's definition of a non-PAB-accredited planning degree and confirm the required professional planning experience.

Not sure if you have enough professional planning experience?

Use the Interactive Experience Calculator to make a determination.

reviewed by AICP-credentialed staff, and APA will email you with your assessment status within four weeks (excluding holidays) of submission.

If your Experience Assessment meets requirements, you have completed all the steps for AICP certification. You can use the AICP designation immediately, and no additional fees need to be paid. You will receive an email with information on how to claim your digital badge with Credly (APA's digital badge provider) and print your AICP certificate, as well as Certification Maintenance (CM) information.

If your Experience Assessment does not meet requirements, you will receive an email with next steps.

How is my experience assessed?

The AICP Commission has established the three criteria that distinguish the experiences of professional planners from those of layperson planners, allied professionals, community stakeholders, and elected or appointed officials.

Experience Assessment Criteria

Planners help create communities of lasting value by managing change. The goal of planning is to maximize the health, safety, and well-being of all people living in communities.

The AICP Commission has established the following three criteria that distinguish the experiences of professional planners from those of layperson planners, allied professionals, community stakeholders, and elected or appointed officials. To achieve AICP certification, you must demonstrate through the Experience Assessment that your self-verified employment experience meets all three criteria.

Criterion 1: Demonstrate a Professional Level of Responsibility and Resourcefulness While Applying a Planning Process Appropriate to the Project or Situation.

Professional urban, regional, and rural planners apply multistep processes related to managing change in communities. Typical process steps include defining a problem or opportunity, setting goals and objectives, generating alternative strategies, selecting a preferred alternative, implementing the preferred strategy, and monitoring and evaluating strategy performance.

Criterion 2: Evaluate Multiple Impacts to a Community When Implementing Professional Planning Tasks.

Professional urban, regional, and rural planners consider the interrelated effects of policies, programs, projects, and actions that cause or influence change in communities. They identify and evaluate the potential positive and negative effects of specific planning interventions and work to shape those interventions in ways that minimize negative impacts and create quality-of-life improvements for the communities they serve.



Criterion 3: Influence Public Decision-Making in the Public Interest. Professional urban, regional, and rural planners influence decisions related to managing change in communities made by elected or appointed public officials in ways that protect or improve the well-being of the general public. This influence may be through direct communication with public officials or through intermediary processes.

The Experience Assessment step in the certification process allows you to demonstrate how your work experience meets these three criteria.



Experience Assessment Requirements

For Criterion 1: Demonstrate a Professional Level of Responsibility and Resourcefulness While Applying a Planning Process Appropriate to the Project or Situation.

You must:

- Draw from the entirety of your professional planning experience to indicate the type(s) of planning processes you have applied and the professional planning skills and tools you have used in applying those processes, and
- Using a single specific project example, briefly describe a planning process you have applied and a skill or tool you used in that process.

For Criterion 2: Evaluate Multiple Impacts to a Community When Implementing Professional Planning Tasks.

You must:

- Draw from the entirety of your professional planning experience to indicate the type(s) of planning interventions you have participated in, the multiple community consequences you have considered and addressed in your work, and the benefits to community quality of life that your work has resulted in, and
- Using a single specific project example, briefly describe a planning intervention you have applied, the multiple community consequences you considered and addressed in that planning intervention, and the benefits to community quality of life that resulted.

For Criterion 3: Influence Public Decision-Making in the Public Interest.

You must:

- Draw from the entirety of your professional planning experience to indicate the method(s) of influence you have applied to influence

public decision-making, the type(s) of public decisions that you or your work influenced, and the ways in which those decisions serve the public interest, and

- Using a single specific project example, briefly describe a method of influence you have applied, the type of public decision that you or your work influenced, and how that decision served the public interest.

Before submitting your assessment, we recommend you complete, review, and print the Experience Assessment Template and use it to prepare for filling out the online form.

Note: You are strongly encouraged to carefully read each question and use the sample written responses provided in the Experience Assessment Template and in the assessment form itself as guidance when writing your responses to ensure that you provide the information required for approval.

You will also be asked to attest to the accuracy and truthfulness of your responses and your compliance with the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice.

If you are unable to complete the assessment based on your current professional planning experience, you have not yet met the criteria required to attain AICP certification. You will need to complete the certification process when you have gained additional professional planning experience to demonstrate that you have met each of the criteria requirements.

While professional planning experience as defined by AICP is typically obtained in an agency (private or government), institute, or firm providing planning services, instruction, or research, this is not a prerequisite. APA encourages individuals with nontraditional, professional-level planning experience to apply.

Unsure whether your work experience qualifies as professional planning practice?

Review Appendix 6, Additional Guidance on Professional Planning Experience, and use the Experience Worksheet to confirm that your experience qualifies.



Experience Assessment Review

AICP-credentialed staff will review your Experience Assessment. Please allow up to four weeks for review.

If your assessment meets requirements, you will receive an email indicating that you have successfully completed the certification process. You can use the AICP designation immediately and claim your Credly badge (more information will be provided in the email).

If your assessment does not meet requirements—e.g., you have not checked the minimum number of items required, or your written examples do not provide the information required by the criteria questions—you will receive an email with a description of why your assessment does not meet the requirements for approval. Depending

on your situation, you may supply additional information to amend or clarify your assessment responses, or you may wait to gain more professional planning experience and reapply at a future time.

To supply additional information, please email AICP within one week of receiving the email. The additional information you provide will be reviewed, and you will be informed as to whether the requirements have been met.

When supplying additional information:

- Carefully review the information provided about why your assessment did not meet requirements.
- Carefully review the example responses provided in the Experience Assessment Template for guidance in how to write your new responses.
- Provide new responses with additional or clarifying detail regarding your original assessment work example that stay within the word limit established for those responses. If you decide to use a different work example, you must re-answer all the open text field questions for that criterion.

Note: Again, you are strongly encouraged to carefully read the instructions provided in the assessment and use the sample written responses as guidance when writing your responses. **In nearly all cases, assessments are marked as not meeting requirements because the applicant did not follow directions, and their written responses did not contain the information required for approval—not because the applicant is not qualified.**

Appealing an Assessment Decision

If the additional information you provide still does not meet requirements, you will receive an email that will inform you of the decision that your assessment will not be approved and explain why the additional information you have provided still does not meet requirements.

You may reapply again with a revised assessment that better demonstrates how your work experience meets the professional planning experience criteria required for certification, or you may appeal that decision with the AICP National Membership Standards Committee. If you choose to appeal, you must email APA within one week of receiving the decision to receive further instructions on creating an appeal letter and paying the appeal fee. The AICP National Membership Standards Committee will review your original submission, the additional information you provided, and your letter of appeal and will make a final decision.

What's the most common reason assessments don't meet requirements?

In nearly all cases, assessments are marked as not meeting requirements because the applicant did not follow directions and their written responses did not contain the information required for approval—not because the applicant is not qualified.

Can I appeal an assessment decision?

You may reapply again with a revised assessment that better demonstrates how your work experience meets the professional planning experience criteria required for certification, or you may appeal that decision with the AICP National Membership Standards Committee.

Appendices

Appendix 1: About the AICP Exam

Exam Content

The AICP Certification Examination is designed to assess a planner's critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and readiness to meet the professional standards required by AICP certification.

The exam evaluates whether you meet the educational and experiential standards of the AICP by testing your ability to:

- Think critically, anticipate consequences, and address complex planning challenges;
- Demonstrate foundational knowledge of core planning principles and competencies;
- Understand contemporary and innovative planning practices, including emerging trends and best practices;
- Collaborate across disciplines and serve as facilitators within communities;
- Promote social justice and integrate equity into planning processes, while addressing historical barriers to racial and social equity;
- Apply the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, which underpins the professional responsibilities of certified planners; and
- Demonstrate planning knowledge relevant across the United States—not tied to any one region or locality.

The examination is developed by AICP-certified practitioners and educators from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Exam Format

Total Questions (170 multiple-choice questions)

- Scored Questions: 150
- Unscored (Pilot) Questions: 20 (these are unidentified and do not count toward the final score)

Question Types

The exam includes both traditional multiple-choice questions and scenario-based questions, in which three to five questions are tied to a shared planning scenario. These questions are designed to assess your ability to apply planning knowledge and critical thinking skills in real-world contexts.

The exam content outline provides you with detailed insight into the subject areas and competencies covered.

Note: The exam content is reviewed annually to ensure it is valid, reliable, and fair. It is updated periodically to maintain relevance and accuracy, and is reevaluated every five to seven years to ensure its validity, relevance, and accuracy.

Major Topic Areas

The exam covers nine key topic areas. Each topic includes multiple subcategories. While all nine topics will be represented on the exam, not all subtopics will necessarily appear. Examples are provided for many categories, though questions may cover material beyond the listed examples. The expanded list of the

subcategories covered under each major topic area may be accessed at the AICP Certification Exam Content Outline.

Topic Area	Percentage of Exam
Research and Assessment Methods	**11%**
Fundamental Planning Knowledge	**15%**
Communication and Interaction	**13%**
Plan and Policy Development	**15%**
Plan Implementation	**12%**
Administration and Management	**6%**
Leadership	**6%**
Areas of Practice	**12%**
AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct	**10%**

Note: All ethics questions are based on the **2022 AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.**

Exam Preparation Resources

APA offers a range of resources to help you prepare for the exam, including updated **Exam Prep Videos** and guidance materials. Visit the AICP Exam Tip Page for the full suite of prep tools. And don't forget to contact your chapter's Professional Development Officer for additional resources!

Exam Score Reporting

Your exam results are securely provided by Prometric, APA's testing partner, and shared directly with APA. Your score report includes your overall performance and the number of questions you answered correctly in each content area—valuable feedback if you're planning to retake the exam or improve your planning knowledge.

Official Score Report (OSR)

You'll receive your Official Score Report from Prometric immediately after completing your exam. The report will be sent from ElectronicScoreReport@prometric.com. Your Official Score Report will show:

- A total scaled score (see below for details on scaled scoring)
- Whether you passed or did not pass

For privacy reasons, scores will not be shared by phone. If you have questions about your results, please contact AICP. Prometric stores the OSR for two years. APA stores only the exam scores permanently.

Using your 16-digit appointment confirmation number and last name, you can access your OSR on Prometric's site.

Diagnostic Analysis Scores

If you did not pass the exam, your score report will include a diagnostic breakdown of your performance by content area. These diagnostic scores show the number of questions answered correctly within each content domain, allowing you to review how your performance varied across the exam.

Please note:

- These are raw diagnostic scores (number of correct responses) and are not scaled or percentage scores.
- The content-area scores will not add up to your total exam score, as the total score is calculated using a statistical scoring process.
- Diagnostic scores are provided to help you identify areas to focus on for future study.

We recommend concentrating on the content areas where your scores were lower to better prepare for a future attempt.

Appendix 2: Testing Procedures and Scoring the Exam

Testing Procedures

To ensure fair and accurate results, a standardized testing environment will be maintained.

The following regulations and procedures will be observed at every test center:

- Instructions given by the Test Center Administrator (TCA) must be followed.
- Personal possessions must be stored in a secure locker. Reclaim them when you leave.
- Both forms of identification must be kept with you. Show your ID to the TCA if you leave the room.
- The calculator that is built into the electronic exam interface can be used during the test. Do not bring books or other reference materials into the testing room.
- Scratch paper will be provided by the TCA. Return all scratch paper after the exam.
- Do not bring your own scratch paper, pencil, or calculator.
- The exam has a 3.5-hour time limit with an on-screen clock.
- Visitors are not permitted.

Raise your hand if you:

- Have a problem with your computer.
- Need more scratch paper.
- Need to take a break or use the rest room (no extra time will be given).
- Need the TCA for any reason. You must get the TCA's permission to leave the room during the exam.

For more information about test procedures, or to contact Prometric, please visit their FAQ page.

Computer-Based Exam Tutorial

A brief tutorial precedes the exam to familiarize you with the computer and testing software. You have 15 minutes to complete the tutorial, in addition to the 3.5 hours for the exam. The tutorial covers selecting answers, moving between questions, and using features like "Item Review." It is for practice only, and there is no penalty for incorrect answers. Once you exit the tutorial, you cannot return.

Exam Logistics

Your appointment time is four hours, with 3.5 hours to answer 170 questions. Of these, 150 are scored, and 20 are unscored questions being considered for future exams. Unscored questions are distributed randomly throughout the exam.

You have 15 minutes before the exam for an online tutorial and 15 minutes after for an exit survey. During the exam, you can review, change, mark, or skip questions and return to them later. This allows you to use your time efficiently. If your time expires, all answers will be calculated into your score. Once your time is up or you exit the exam, you cannot review the questions again.

Exam Security

APA is committed to making sure the AICP Certification Exam is reliable, valid, respected, and valued for planning professionals. APA, in partnership with its exam partner, Prometric, takes appropriate measures to ensure that the integrity of its exams is never compromised, preventing and detecting fraud and exam

security breaches. APA requires Prometric to ensure an appropriate physical testing environment and ensure the security of a remote site. Proctors who observe violations of rules or suspect a testing security breach will document and notify APA with the reporting date, time, and location of the incident, name of test-taker, and name and version of exam taken.

The following behaviors and actions are taken to protect exam security:

- **Recording Devices:** You are not allowed to bring recording devices such as cameras, audio recorders, phones, glasses, or even paper and pencils into the testing area.
- **Communication Devices:** Mobile phones, tablets, smartwatches, and other communication devices are prohibited during the exam.
- **Unauthorized Materials:** Any notes, books, dictionaries, calculators, or other materials are prohibited.
- **Copying or Sharing Exam Content:** Reproducing exam content or sharing it with others outside the testing area is not permitted.
- **Receiving or Providing Unauthorized Assistance:** This includes communicating with other test-takers or anyone outside the testing room during the exam.
- **Testing Misconduct:** Creating a disturbance of any kind, ignoring testing regulations or TCA instructions, or tampering with the test center's computer is not permitted.
- **Leaving the Testing Area Without Authorization:** Unauthorized breaks may result in not being allowed back into the testing room.

Consequences of Violating Policies

- **Exam Termination:** Your exam may be terminated if you are caught with prohibited devices or engaging in cheating behaviors.
- **Exam Voiding:** Your exam score may be invalidated, and you may be required to leave the test site immediately.
- **Loss of Certifications:** Violators may lose any existing certifications and become permanently ineligible for future certifications.
- **Other Actions:** The testing sponsor or program may take further action, such as decertifying you or precluding your future participation in the testing program.

Reporting Test Center Irregularities

If you experience delays or technical problems at the test center, ensure the Test Center Administrator (TCA) documents the issue. Obtain the case number and contact AICP. The TCA will file a report with Prometric and APA.

If You Have a Complaint

If you have a complaint or comment about test center facilities or supervision, exam content, or any other matter related to the testing program, please email AICP.

Include your name and APA ID number. If your complaint concerns an exam you have taken, also include the name of the exam, date, test center, and exam number. APA will investigate and respond within a reasonable amount of time.

If You Retake the Exam

If you retake the exam again, be aware that your test score may slightly increase or decrease due to various factors, such as how you feel on the test day, the room temperature, etc. To improve your score

significantly, increase your knowledge of the subject material. You cannot retake only part of the exam; you must register and pay the full exam fee to retest.

Understanding Your Score

EQUATING AND SCALING. Your Official Score Report will show a scaled score, which is a standardized version of your raw score (the number of questions you answered correctly).

Because the AICP Certification Exam has multiple versions (called forms), each with slightly different questions, some versions may be slightly harder or easier than others. To ensure fairness, your raw score is adjusted through a process called equating—this accounts for any differences in difficulty so all scores reflect the same level of knowledge.

After equating, your score is scaled, meaning it's converted into a consistent format. This makes scores comparable across all exam versions.

Note: Scaled scores are not percentages—they reflect your ability level, not the number of correct answers.

Example: Two test-takers with the same level of knowledge may take different versions of the exam. One might answer more questions correctly simply because their version is slightly easier. Scaling adjusts the scores, so everyone's results are fair and reflect their true knowledge.

RELIABILITY. Reliability means that the exam gives consistent results across different test dates and conditions. A reliable test minimizes errors and gives you a score that accurately reflects your ability.

Sources of error can include:

- Test-related factors (e.g., unclear questions)
- Environmental issues (e.g., noisy testing centers)
- Test-taker factors (e.g., fatigue or anxiety)

The fewer these issues, the more reliable the score.

STANDARD ERROR OF MEASUREMENT (SEM). No test score is perfectly precise. The Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) estimates how much your score might vary due to small, random factors.

Think of SEM as a margin of error. The smaller the SEM, the more precise your score. APA and Prometric work to keep the SEM as low as possible to ensure fair and accurate scoring.

SCORE VALIDITY REVIEW. As part of routine quality checks, APA and Prometric review exam results to ensure they're accurate—even when no problems are reported. If a scoring issue or irregularity is found, affected test-takers will be contacted with next steps.

Appendix 3: Exam Accommodations

You can request an exam accommodation for English as a Second Language (ESL) or Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) considerations.

Accommodations are provided individually based on need and with required documentation. Together with Prometric, APA ensures fair opportunities for test-takers with ESL considerations or documented disabilities.

Accommodations must:

- Not present an undue burden to APA/AICP
- Not alter the fairness of the grading for all test-takers
- Not change exam content
- Not alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge
- Not jeopardize exam integrity and security
- Be compatible with the exam's nature and purpose

Notes:

- Requests must be made each time you register for the exam.
- All requests for exam accommodations are strictly confidential.
- Not all requests will necessarily be granted.

ESL Considerations

You may receive additional time and other necessary accommodations for the exam based on ESL considerations. All requests will be considered by AICP, and you must wait for approval before registering for the exam.

To request an ESL accommodation:

1. **Submit** an ESL accommodation request form.
2. **Contact AICP if you do not** receive a reply within five business days.
3. **If granted,** register for the exam on the APA website during the registration window. Do not schedule the exam with Prometric.
4. **After registering,** email AICP with your eligibility ID to add your accommodation onto your Prometric record.
5. **Once confirmed** by APA, schedule your exam with Prometric.

ADA Considerations

AICP complies with the ADA and provides reasonable accommodations for test-takers with documented disabilities or qualifying medical conditions. The decision for non-ADA medical conditions is at APA's discretion.

To request ADA accommodations:

1. **Submit** an ADA accommodation request form and upload the necessary documentation from your health-care provider. Documentation must be on official letterhead. Include the provider's credentials, contact information and signature. Provide a reason for each requested accommodation. Contact AICP if you do not receive a reply within five business days. Inadequate documentation may delay the review process.
2. **If granted,** register for the exam on the APA website during the registration window. Do not schedule the exam with Prometric.
3. **After registering,** email AICP with your eligibility ID to add your accommodation onto your Prometric record.
4. **Once confirmed** by APA, schedule your exam with Prometric.

Appendix 4: Additional Information

AICP Certification Scholarship

A limited number of scholarships are available to reduce the exam registration fee or the experience assessment fee. More information is available on the APA website. Contact AICP if you have any questions.

GI Bill Exam Reimbursement

Military veterans and their surviving dependents can request reimbursement for AICP certification fees from the Veterans Administration. Information about the GI Bill Education Benefits Program and reimbursement for AICP certification is available online. Contact AICP if you have any questions.

Outside of the United States

The exam is administered in a computer-based format to test-takers outside the U.S. during the same testing windows. It can be taken at Prometric international sites, prearranged locations such as embassies or universities, or remotely. There is no additional fee for taking the exam outside the U.S. View international Prometric test center sites on the Prometric website.

Lapsed AICP Members

Former AICP members whose membership has lapsed and are not eligible for reinstatement must retake the exam to regain certification. Lapsed members are preapproved to sit for the exam without submitting an experience assessment or verification of education or employment. After registering, lapsed members must contact AICP for further instructions.

Other National Certifying Institutions

If you are in good standing with another professional planning certifying institute, you may be exempted from the Planning Experience Assessment. Contact AICP with your APA ID number and a verification letter confirming your membership with the other institute. APA staff will set up your exemption status and email you instructions to register for the AICP Certification Exam.

Appendix 5: Additional Guidance on Professional Planning Experience

To qualify as professional planning experience, your professional experience must meet the three criteria established by the AICP Commission as described in this guide. Use the Experience Worksheet to determine whether your professional experience meets AICP's definition of professional planning experience.

While professional planning experience as defined by AICP is typically obtained in an agency (private or government), institute, or firm providing planning services, instruction, or research, this is not a prerequisite. APA encourages individuals with nontraditional, professional-level planning experience to apply. This section provides additional information on what does and does not qualify as professional planning experience.

Not sure whether your professional experience qualifies as planning experience?

Use the Experience Worksheet to determine whether your professional experience meets AICP's definition of professional planning experience.

Experience That Does Qualify

Academic Experience

Academic professionals conducting planning research or providing planning education may submit this work as eligible professional planning experience. To be eligible, research must have practical planning applications, and teaching experience must be part of a planning curriculum or focused on substantive planning concepts, theories, or skills.

If you use academic planning research and teaching experience as project examples for short answer responses in the Planning Experience Assessment, choose examples that reflect an application of your own planning skills and knowledge and that have specific practical application. Eligible examples could include:

Criterion 1: A multistep process you developed and implemented for a planning-related research study

Criterion 2: A planning studio in which you guided students to consider multiple potential consequences to the community of their work

Criterion 3: A research product you have published intended to be used by decision-makers to influence planning-related decisions in the public interest, or a studio you have taught in which the process you designed and led students through resulted in a study or plan intended to help local officials make better planning-related decisions for their community.

Volunteer Professional Planning Experience

Professional planning experience may include work done in a volunteer capacity. Like traditional professional planning experience, volunteer professional planning experience must be submitted as a separate position in the Employment History section of the online Assessment application.

Volunteer professional planning experience must involve a high level of

personal responsibility and substantive technical accomplishments. For example, volunteer work at a community-based organization would not usually be considered professional planning experience if you were only responsible for setting up meetings or supporting administrative functions such as data entry, file management, providing general customer service, etc.

Volunteer planning experience may be considered to be at a professional level if you were involved with or responsible for:

- The preparation of research and documents
- The supervision of projects
- The presentation of proposals and plans before decision-making bodies
- Providing significant input in one or more facets of a project (e.g., giving technical expertise in areas such as strategy development, impact analysis, etc.)

For volunteer service performed as a function or extension of a salaried planning position (e.g., appointment to an advisory committee) to be eligible as an example of professional planning experience, you must include this service as part of your job description for the position. See Section 2: Employment History for details.

Part-Time Experience

Part-time professional planning experience may be used toward meeting the minimum eligibility requirements. Part-time experience will be prorated into a full-time equivalent. For example, if you worked 20 hours/week for six months, that would equate to three months of full-time professional planning experience.

Similarly, if you work full-time but only part-time on planning-related activities, that experience is prorated into a full-time equivalent. See the Work in Related Fields section for more details.

Internship Experience

Because eligibility for AICP certification depends on a combination of education and employment experience, these elements must remain separate and distinct. You can only count internships (or any professional planning work completed while enrolled in a degree program) that satisfy the following conditions toward your professional planning experience requirement:

- The internship cannot be part of coursework for a grade or for course credit. This must be documented in the assessment.
- The internship cannot be a requirement to complete the degree program.
- The work as an intern must meet all criteria for professional planning experience (i.e., this work is not pre-professional in nature).

International Experience

APA recognizes international professional planning experience. Please refer to the Other National Certifying Institutions section for additional information regarding reciprocal agreements with other certifying planning organizations.

Experience That Does Not Qualify

Work at a Pre-Professional Level

Although there is often a fine line between professional experience and pre-professional experience, the latter generally involves less personal responsibility and less substantive technical accomplishments.

Work at a pre-professional level may include:

- Substantial time dedicated to providing general information to staff and the public in the administration of specific planning program areas or ordinances

- Performing routine office tasks in designated program areas, including data entry, file management, and answering the telephone
- Preparing public notices or property owner verifications and maps, charts, or tables of limited complexity

Elected and Appointed Officials

While contributions by mayors and members of city councils, boards of commissioners, planning commissions, boards of zoning appeals, and citizen advisory boards are invaluable to the advancement of planning, service in this capacity does not constitute professional planning experience.

Work in Related Fields Not Generally Considered Professional Planning Experience

There are important distinctions between planners and allied professionals and between planning and related fields. Planners approach problems comprehensively, have a long-range perspective, and deal with unique place-based issues. Although people in related professions (e.g., architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, real estate development, etc.) and disciplines (humanities, psychology, etc.) often work with planners, they do not necessarily have the same knowledge base, skill set, or approach.

People working full-time but devoting a portion of their time to another field may prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent. For example, a position in which an environmental planner worked 40 hours/week for two years and devoted half their time to environmental science and half their time to professional planning may be prorated into the full-time equivalent of one year of professional planning experience.

The following illustrates types of work in related fields sometimes performed by planners, but more often by other professionals. These areas are generally not considered to be professional planning experience and will not satisfy the experience requirements.

- Code enforcement
- Building inspection
- Site platting and engineering
- Traffic engineering or highway design
- Land surveying or mapping
- Facility programming
- Community organizing
- Social work
- Market, physical, and social science research and analysis not connected to a planning process
- Construction/development logistics and management
- Business development

Unsure if your professional experience meets AICP's definition of professional planning? Use the Experience Worksheet to determine whether your experience meets requirements.

Appendix 6: Experience Assessment Template

Overview

The Experience Assessment Template will assist you in determining whether your verified professional planning experience meets the criteria for AICP certification.

Planners help create communities of lasting value by managing change. The goal of planning is to maximize the health, safety, and well-being of all people living in our communities.

The AICP Commission has established three criteria that distinguish the experiences of professional planners from those of layperson planners, allied professionals, community stakeholders, and elected/appointed officials:

Criterion 1. Demonstrate a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness while applying a planning process appropriate to the project or situation.

Criterion 2. Evaluate multiple impacts to a community when implementing professional planning tasks.

Criterion 3. Influence public decision-making in the public interest.

When to Use the Experience Assessment Template

When you apply for AICP certification, you must demonstrate that your professional planning experience meets the three criteria established by the AICP Commission by completing an online Experience Assessment, along with submitting education and employment verification. Use the Experience Assessment Template to help prepare for submitting your online assessment.

If you are not sure if your experience qualifies as professional planning experience, use the Experience Worksheet and Appendix 5 of this guide to determine if it qualifies to meet the experience requirement.

If you are unable to complete the Experience Assessment Template based on the self-verified professional planning experience that you will be including in Section 2 of the online application (Employment History), you have not yet met the requirements to attain AICP certification. You will need to complete the certification process at a later time when you have gained sufficient additional professional planning experience to demonstrate that you have met each of the criteria requirements.

How do I use the Experience Assessment Template?

The Experience Assessment Template is available on the AICP website. Before submitting your assessment, we recommend you complete, review, and print the Experience Assessment Template PDF and use it to prepare for filling out the online form.

Instructions

Download the Experience Assessment Template from the AICP website and follow the directions provided to demonstrate how your professional practice experience meets the three AICP criteria.

CHECKLISTS. Using the entirety of your self-verified professional planning experience from Section 2 of the online application (Employment History), select all the items that

apply from the checklists to show that your experience aligns with each criterion. **You must be able to select at least one item in every list and at least two items in 2.2(A) for your professional experience to qualify you for AICP Certification.**

An **"other"** option is offered in each list to allow you to enumerate the full range of your professional planning experience, if needed.

OPEN TEXT FIELDS. Using specific project examples from your professional planning experience, write brief responses that demonstrate how your professional experience meets the requirements for each of the three AICP criteria.

You may choose a different project example for each criterion, but you must use the same project example to answer all of the questions for a criterion.

Sample answers are provided with the open text fields in this worksheet. It is strongly recommended that you model your responses after the sample answers to ensure you provide the information required for the approval of your assessment.

Appendix 7: Helpful Links

One Path to AICP

Frequently Asked Questions

Experience Assessment Resources

Experience Assessment Template
Experience Worksheet
Interactive Calculator
Planning Curriculum Worksheet

Additional Resources

AICP Certification Scholarship
AICP Code of Ethics
Register for the AICP Exam
Schedule/Reschedule Exam with Prometric
Exam Prep Materials
Submit Experience Assessment

Prometric – Remote Testing

Prometric offers a variety of resources to help you prepare for remote testing. Please review all materials carefully. For additional assistance, contact Prometric directly.

Key Resources

- ProProctor User Guide
- Prometric Manuals and Guides (Includes instructions for Mac, Windows, and corporate or company devices)

System Requirements

- Perform a system check both before and on your test day
- Understand requirements for using corporate devices, including firewall settings

Remote Exam Preparation

Review guidelines to get ready for exam day

Now That You're AICP

Print Your AICP Certificate: link in MyAICP dashboard
Print Your AICP Verification Letter: link in MyAICP dashboard
Maximize Your Credential
Certification Maintenance