PREPARING FOR THE AICP EXAM

North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association
2022 State Planning Conference

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Vice President for Professional Development
WHO IS IN THE AUDIENCE

- Just want more information/ Considering AICP
- Preparing for exam in November 2022
- Preparing for exam in May 2023
- Others?
WHY?
PROCESS
RESOURCES
SUBJECT MATTER
PREPARATION
EFFECTIVE TEST STRATEGIES
QUESTIONS
WHY BECOME CERTIFIED?

- Demonstrate Expertise
- Get an Edge in the Job Market
- Show Your Commitment to Ethics
- Grow Your Career
- Elevate Your Skills and Knowledge
- Lead the Profession
- Boost Your Professional Stature
STEPS TO AICP CERTIFICATION

1. REGISTER
   Register for the certification program and schedule exam

2. TEST
   Pass AICP exam and become AICP Candidate

3. APPLY
   Provide educational and professional experience

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<th>SPRING CYCLE</th>
<th>FALL CYCLE</th>
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<td>April</td>
<td>October</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>December</td>
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GET READY TO REGISTER ($255)

- Have you joined APA/ Are you a Professional Planner?
- Agree to abide by AICP Code of Ethics?
- Able to confirm you Understand the Certification Requirements?
- Will you be prepared to Test for the Upcoming Exam (May or November)?

### Fall 2022 AICP Certification Cycle

**STEP 1: REGISTRATION**

**Opens:** Monday, October 3, 2022 at 9:00am CST  
**Closes:** Friday, October 28, 2022 at 3:00pm CST  
**Transfer Deadline:** Tuesday, November 29, 2022 at 3:00pm CST

### Spring 2023 AICP Certification Cycle

**STEP 1: REGISTRATION**

**Opens:** Monday, April 3, 2023 at 9:00am CST  
**Closes:** Thursday, April 27, 2023 at 3:00pm CST  
**Transfer Deadline:** Thursday, May 25, 2023 at 3:00pm CST
TEST ($0)

- Must Register and Pay First - Eligibility ID
- Schedule with Prometric Testing Center - Confirmation #
- National Audience (i.e. no state specific questions)
- 170 Multiple Choice Questions of which 150 are Scored
- 3.5 Hours to Complete Test on Computer

STEP 2: EXAM
Exam Window: November 1-30, 2022

STEP 2: EXAM
Exam Window: May 1-26, 2023
## APPLY ($255)

1. **Planning Process**
   - a) Planning Processes
   - b) Skills/Practices
   - c) Project Example with Step Description

2. **Evaluate Multiple Impacts**
   - a) Planning Interventions
   - b) Community Consequences
   - c) Outcomes
   - d) Example

3. **Public Decision-Making**
   - a) Method of Influence
   - b) Type of Decision
   - c) Area of Public Interest
   - d) Example

* AICP Planning Experience Assessment Worksheet
**Criterion 1: Demonstrate a Professional Level of Responsibility and Resourcefulness While Applying a Planning Process Appropriate to the Project or Situation**

Professional urban, rural, and regional 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.

1.1(A) **Planning processes**

In the entirety of my verified professional planning experience, I have led or been responsible for applying all or parts of the following types of planning processes (select all that apply):

- Plan making (e.g., regional, comprehensive, functional, subareas)
- Community engagement
- Regulatory or incentive program design
- Zoning administration or development review
- Analysis (e.g., economic, environmental, health, transportation, land use, housing, historic preservation, community development)
- Development project or land-use site selection
- Development project or land-use entitlement
- Research program or project design
- Research program or project execution

1.1(B) **Planning processes**

Please briefly describe one project example in which you applied **ONE** of the planning processes you selected in 1.1(A) (50-word maximum):

Example response: I drafted an update to a municipal sign code, which was approved by the city council.

Briefly describe each step you applied in that process, making your role and responsibility clear (50-word maximum for each step; add as many steps as needed):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Planning Process Step Description</th>
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<tbody>
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**STEP 3: EXPERIENCE**

**Opens:** Monday, December 5, 2022 at 9:00am CST  
**Closes:** Friday, December 30, 2022 at 3:00pm CST

**STEP 3: EXPERIENCE**

**Opens:** Thursday, June 1, 2023 at 9:00am CST  
**Closes:** Thursday, June 29, 2023 at 3:00pm CST
EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

- Transcripts, Diploma, Formal Letter from School
- Employer, Title, Dates of Employment, Full or Part Time, Supervisor Info, Summary of Tasks

- Tools:
  - Planning Curriculum Worksheet
  - Interactive Experience Calculator
  - Planning Experience Worksheet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Required Years of Professional Planning Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree (masters or doctoral) in planning from a PAB-accredited program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree in planning from a PAB-accredited program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree in planning from a program not accredited by the PAB</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any other graduate or undergraduate degree</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>No college degree/no degree information provided</td>
<td>8</td>
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*Education Details

1. The degree may be obtained before, during, or after planning experience is obtained.
2. Accredited degrees have been determined by the Planning Accreditation Board to meet standards approved by the American Institute of Certified Planners and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning or accredited by the Professional Standards Board (PSB) for Planning in Canada. AICP gives educational credit to applicants holding these degrees if the degree was received (1) during the period the university has been accredited (or previously recognized), and (2) by the time that an application for membership is filed. If you are unsure about the status of your planning degree, consult the Planning Accreditation Board's list or contact AICP.
3. Use the Planning Curriculum Worksheet to determine whether a graduate degree qualifies as a planning degree.
THE AICP GUIDES

- Eligibility Requirements
- AICP Certification Guide
- Planning Curriculum Worksheet
- Interactive Experience Calculator
- Planning Experience Worksheet
- Registration Details & Fees
- Exam Details & Scheduling

https://planning.org/certification
THE EXAM BASICS

- 3 hours and 30 minutes
- 170 questions
- Online Proctored or On-Site
- Score from 25-75 with 55+ Passing
- You will Know Immediately if Pass or Fail
- 9 Areas of Subject Matter
CHAPTERS WITH GUIDES/COURSES

- Connecticut
- Florida
- Georgia
- Iowa
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Texas

November 2022 AICP Study Group

The Treasure Coast AICP Study Group begins August 18 and will run until late October/early November. Planners wishing to participate need to contact Henry Bittaker at hbittaker@aol.com and provide their APA member number and state APA Chapter name. Sessions will be provided LIVE via GoToWebinar and will be recorded. Session recordings and many other study materials, including practice exams, are available to APA members from a Dropbox site run by the Chapter.
TI P 3: ATTEND AN EXAM PREP TRAINING

Exam prep sessions offered by PDOS or chapters are a valuable starting point. They can provide detail on the application process, exam content, and testing tips. The depth of these offerings varies, with some chapters offering multi-session prep courses.

The videos linked below were recorded in February 2022. The recordings cover nine major topic areas, each encompassing several categories. The percentage of exam questions pertaining to each major topic area is indicated.

- Introduction
- Research and Assessment Methods (11% of exam content)
- Fundamental Planning Knowledge (15% of exam content)
- Communication and Interaction (13% of exam content)
- Plan and Policy Development (15% of exam content)
- Plan Implementation (12% of exam content)
- Administration and Management (6% of exam content)
- Leadership (6% of exam content)
- Areas of Practice (12% of exam content)
- AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* (10% of exam content)

*All ethics questions are based on the Code of Ethics adopted in 2016.
ONLINE RESOURCES

TIP 4: ACCESS ONLINE RESOURCES
Some resources are available online. Online research can be particularly useful for exam content that is a weakness in your background.

The following resources are useful starting points:

- Selected Resources: AICP Certification Exam
- Chapter Presidents Council AICP Exam Study Manual
- Chapter Presidents Council Exam Prep History Timeline
- AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*
  *All ethics questions are based on the Code of Ethics adopted in 2016.
- Planning and Law Division Foundational Land Use Law Cases
- APA Policy Guides
- PAS Reports
- Planning magazine
- American Planning History Since 1900
  This free resource was developed for individuals interested in the planning field. Although it is an engaging and useful resource, be aware that it is not a comprehensive list of historical milestones in planning.
APA Policy Guides

- Energy
- Impact Fees
- Agricultural Land Preservation
- Public Redevelopment
- Provision of Child Care
- Homelessness
- Billboard Controls
- Food Planning
- Smart Growth

http://www.planning.org/policy/guides
SELECT READINGS

www.planning.org/library/greatbooks/
**CODE OF ETHICS (10%)**

- **KNOW THE CODE**
  - Communications through the Ethics Officer
  - Adopted 2005; revised in 2009 & 2016 & 2021

- Five Sections:
  - A. Aspirational Principles
  - B. Rules of Conduct
  - C. Advisory Opinions
  - D. Adjudication of Complaints of Misconduct
  - E. Discipline of Members

Source: ICMA

https://www.planning.org/ethics
PRACTICE TESTS & STUDY MATERIALS

- FL-APA Treasure Coast Section Study Links
  www.floridaPlanning.org/professional-growth/aicp-exam-preparation

- Study Stack
  www.studystack.com

- APA tutorial & reading list
  www.planning.org/certification/examprep

- Planning Prep
  www.planningprep.com

- Planning Peeps
  planningpeeps.com/aicp-prep
SUBJECT MATTER
**SUBJECT EMphasis**

- Research and Assessment Methods (11%)
- Fundamental Planning Knowledge (15%)
- Communication and Interaction (13%)
- Plan & Policy Development (15%)
- Plan Implementation (12%)
- Administration, & Management (6%)
- Leadership (6%)
- Areas of Practice (12%)
- AICP Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct (10%)

http://www.planning.org/certification/examprep/subjectmatter.htm
Research and Assessment Methods (11%)

- Conducting research and acquiring knowledge
- Data and source interpretation and evaluation
- Spatial analysis
- Community involvement and engagement
- Data collection strategies appropriate to identifying planning issues while acknowledging privacy and confidentiality concerns
Fundamental Planning Knowledge (15%)

- History of planning, planning movements, and influences on contemporary planning
- Patterns of human settlement
- Foundational legal principles and statutory basis of planning
- Planning Theory
- The general terminology, practices, and principles of related professions
- Natural, social, and economic systems
- Core values of planning
- How technology can be used to advance planning
- Information technology tools
**Communication and Interaction (13%)**

- Communication
- Strategies and techniques to provide non-discriminatory electronic media free of obstacles and/or barriers to accessibility.
- Listening, comprehension, and reflection of needs and ideas
- Leadership
- Social justice
- Culturally appropriate and respectful communication sensitive to cultural history and social movements
- The processes and techniques involved in working towards consensus for decision making
- Understanding the role of organizational structures and functions
- Outreach strategies and techniques for various communities, particularly that best suit engagement needs of the disenfranchised or marginalized community
- Evaluation of how well the planned outreach strategy actually engaged targeted communities/populations
- Evidence-based argument formulation and articulation
- Sensitive or complex political situation management
Plan and Policy Development (15%)

- Preparing to plan
- Planning as characterized by sequential steps and multi-variate analyses
- Familiarity with states' and federal laws
- Formulating and drafting policies
- Vision, goal, objective, policy, and priority statement creation and their interrelationships
- Objectives and actions to address identified needs and priorities within an equity framework
- Stakeholder and community inclusion in scoping a plan, policy, and project
- Mediation, negotiation, facilitation, or arbitration in order to address conflicting interests and demands
- Applying innovations and best practices appropriate to place and context
- Identifying and evaluating consequences
- Funding and financing considerations, demands, and strategies
- Community character and form
- Identifying, quantifying, and addressing incidence and burden, past and future, that results from systems that foster and perpetuate inequities and discrimination
- Conversance with related disciplines
Plan Implementation (12%)

• Develop and interpret rules, regulations, policies, and programs
• Aligning and activating funding and financing options
• Proposal or project assessment for consistency with adopted programs and plans, laws, regulation, and policy
• Developing strategic partnerships to facilitate plan implementation
• Identifying and mitigating challenges and obstacles for plan implementation
• Drafting action steps and assigning responsibility including managing, facilitating, and/or coordinating the implementation of programs or projects according to a schedule
• Monitoring, evaluating, and updating adopted plans and policies in order to achieve the greatest benefits with no or minimal adverse impact
• Integrating multiple projects to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and synergy
Administration and Management (6%)

• Project or program management
• Internal organizational management
• Management of external relationships in a manner considering transparency, freedom of information, confidentiality, privacy, etc.
• Mentoring and motivating staff to develop their skills optimally, and to ensure timeliness, accuracy, and clarity of work produced
• Results oriented management and accountability
Leadership (6%)

- Leadership in support of plan making, participation, recognition of needs, and commitment action
- Ethical aspects of advocacy
- Best practices and their potential applications
- Accountability to the profession, ethical principles and the public interest
- Institutional structures, including accountability, transparency expectations, and roles and responsibilities
- A planner's comprehensive approach to complex problem solving and decision-making
- The ethics of equity, diversity, and inclusivity in practice
- Coaching and mentoring
- Discerning and promoting the public interest related to a proposed action
- Professional development expectations and standards and sharing opportunities
- Discerning and promoting the value of planning to others, including students, coworkers, decision makers, and the public
- Opportunities to promote and volunteer in professional planning organizations and planning related services in the community
## Areas of Practice (12%)

- Comprehensive & sectoral planning
- Community, subarea, corridor, & neighborhood planning
- Current planning
- Sustainability planning
- Transportation planning
- Infrastructure planning
- Hazards, mitigation, & resiliency planning
- Environmental & natural resources planning
- Economic development planning
- Urban design
- Housing planning
- Parks, recreation, & open space
- Historic & cultural resources planning
- Institutional planning & siting
- Food planning
- Health planning
- Rural & small town planning
- Equity Planning
- Regional Planning
- More...
PREPARATION
PREPARATION

BEFORE THE TEST

- Study early & often
- Use practice tests
- Be strategic/Have Plan
  - Focus on weak areas
  - Use the best method of studying for your style
- Schedule your test site ASAP

FOR THE TEST

- Get a good night’s sleep
- Arrive early
- Bring 2 forms of ID
- Dress comfortably (layers)
- Bring a survival kit
- DON’T FREAK OUT
TEST STRATEGIES
3 HOURS & 30 MINUTES...

- **BREATHE**
  - 15-minute tutorial at test site occurs before test begins
  - 170 questions (150 count)
  - Keep a rhythm, pace yourself
- **ANSWER EVERY QUESTION**
  - Mark questions to come back to later
  - When in doubt, guess
  - 55+ is passing, tests are scaled, questions vary in value

http://www.planning.org/_offsite/certification/tutorial/
IF YOU DON’T PASS...

- DON’T PANIC!
- You are not alone
- Schedule your retake (re-apply if needed)
- Review your score report, identify weak areas
- STUDY, STUDY, STUDY