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GENERAL INFORMATION

American Planning Association

The American Planning Association brings together thousands of people—practicing planners, citizens, elected officials, and students—dedicated to making great communities happen. APA is a nonprofit public interest and education organization committed to urban, suburban, regional, and rural planning. APA’s professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, provides leadership in professional development, ethics, and the standards of planning practice.

About the AICP Certification Exam

The AICP Certification Examination tests the knowledge and skills of candidates eligible for membership in AICP. The examination has been developed by committees of experts in the field of planning with the help of Prometric test specialists. An examination committee oversees the program to ensure its continuing professional relevance.

Prometric

APA works with Prometric to administer the AICP Certification Examination. Prometric is the recognized global leader in testing and assessment services, providing computer-based, internet, and paper-and-pencil testing solutions. It offers a fully integrated testing system that includes test development, test delivery, and data management capabilities. On behalf of more than 600 current clients in the academic, professional, government, corporate, and information technology markets, Prometric develops and delivers assessments through a global network of testing centers in 131 countries, as well as directly to candidates via the web.
INTRODUCTION TO THE AICP CANDIDATE PILOT PROGRAM

The steps and criteria required for AICP certification are the same whether you choose to enroll in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program or follow the traditional path. The AICP Candidate Pilot Program changes the order in which those steps are completed, enabling you to take the exam and earn the AICP Candidate designation prior to attaining professional planning experience.

- Students and graduates of PAB-accredited programs can join the program, earn Certification Maintenance credits, and begin optional mentoring.
- Graduates of PAB-accredited programs can take the AICP Certification Exam prior to earning the required professional planning experience. Once they pass the exam, they may use the “AICP Candidate” designation after their names on resumes, etc.
- After AICP Candidates earn their professional planning experience, they submit documenting essays. Once APA approves their essays and they pay AICP dues, they become certified, join AICP, and may use the AICP credential.

Participants have five years from the date of their enrollment to complete the AICP Candidate Pilot Program and become a member of AICP. An active membership with APA is required. This includes completing the following milestones:

1. Enrolling in the program as a student of a PAB-accredited program;
2. Graduating from a PAB-accredited program;
3. Taking and passing the AICP exam and becoming an “AICP Candidate”;
4. Tracking 16 Certification Maintenance Credits
5. Gaining the required professional planning experience; and
6. Applying for AICP certification and receiving approval.

The total cost of the program is $495, which includes*:

1. $20 enrollment fee;
2. $100 exam registration fee ($100 per exam attempt); and
3. $375 AICP certification application fee (one time only, when applying for AICP certification).

*All fees are non-refundable.

Note: Current deadlines are posted on the AICP Candidate Pilot Program webpage.
AICP CANDIDATE PILOT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Participants must meet the following eligibility requirements before enrolling in the Program:

1. Be a current member of the American Planning Association; and
2. Be a student in or graduate from a program that is approved by the Planning Accreditation Board* at the time of graduation.

* 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 recognized by the Canadian Institute of Planners.

IMPORTANT DATES AND PROGRAM TIMELINE

Enrollment
Students in or graduates of PAB-accredited programs can enroll in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program at any time during the year. However, enrollees may not register for the AICP Certification Exam until they have graduated and submitted appropriate documentation. APA review of graduation documentation can take up to six weeks. Participants should be aware of the following dates and timelines.

Exam Registration Windows
The AICP Certification Exam is offered in May and November. Each exam window is two weeks long. The registration deadline for each window closes at the end of the preceding month. For the May exam, the registration deadline is the last Friday in April. For the November exam, the registration deadline is the last Friday in October.

*Example:* If you enroll in the Program (or update your enrollment if you enrolled as a student and have graduated) in April, the earliest you could take the exam is November.

AICP Application Windows
After you have enrolled in the Program, passed the AICP Certification Exam, and gained the appropriate planning experience, you can apply to become an AICP member. The application windows are in December and June each year, typically from the first Monday to the last Friday. Application review by AICP Peer Reviewers takes 10 weeks. (See Step 3: Gain Experience and Apply for AICP Membership in this guide to learn more about the application process.)

Program Duration
Participants have five years from the date of their enrollment to complete the AICP Candidate Pilot Program and earn the AICP Certification.

*Note:* Current deadlines are posted on the AICP Candidate Pilot Program webpage.

How to use the AICP Candidate Designation
After you have passed the AICP Certification Exam, you can begin using the AICP Candidate designation professionally. The designation must be fully spelled out as "AICP Candidate", and not abbreviated as "AICP-C". An active membership with APA and your local chapter is required to continue use of the designation.
STEP 1: ENROLLMENT

Enrollment Process Overview

1. Bring your APA membership up to date
All participants in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program must be current members of the American Planning Association. Please make sure that your APA and chapter memberships are up-to-date before you enroll.

If your chapter and APA dues (if applicable) are not fully paid, you will not have access to the online enrollment form.

2. Review the enrollment eligibility requirements
All participants must meet eligibility requirements for the AICP Candidate Pilot Program before enrolling. See AICP Candidate Pilot Program Eligibility Requirements.

3. Submit the online enrollment information and pay a $20 fee
Participants can enroll in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program year-round at planning.org/aicp/candidate.

Describe and verify education history

Students: Select your PAB-accredited degree program (college or university name and undergraduate or graduate program).

Graduates: Select your PAB-accredited degree program (college or university name and undergraduate or graduate program), enter your graduation date, and upload your graduation documentation.

Acceptable forms of documentation are: PDF of official transcript that state the degree was awarded/conferred; PDF of letter from registrar/dean; or copy of diploma. Please be sure to review all your documents for accuracy prior to uploading them.

Read and verify you have read the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Application summary and review
Review the information you provided prior to submission.

Submit form and pay $20 enrollment fee
You must pay online with a credit card. (Note: All fees are subject to change. Refer to the APA website for the most up-to-date information.)

4. Receive emails from APA acknowledging receipt of your enrollment information and payment

For Graduates

It will take approximately four weeks for APA to thoroughly review your enrollment information, including graduation documentation. When the review is completed, APA will update your enrollment status in the AICP Status section of My APA, and notify you by email whether your Program enrollment is approved or incomplete.

Graduation Documentation for Participants Who Enrolled as Students and Have Graduated

Students who enroll in the Program must submit graduation documentation to be eligible to register for the AICP Certification Exam. This step is required to confirm that you have graduated. To submit this documentation, go to the AICP Status section of My APA and choose “AICP Candidate Enrollment Status.”

Please note that you must submit graduation documentation by the first Monday in March if you want to take the AICP Certification Exam in May, or the first Monday in September if you want to take the exam in November. Acceptable forms of documentation are: PDF of official transcript; PDF of letter from registrar/dean; or notarized copy of diploma. Please be sure to review all your documents for accuracy prior to uploading them.
**Incomplete Enrollment**
Enrollees who provide incorrect information will be assigned “Incomplete” status. They must update their enrollment information with accurate information about their PAB-accredited program or graduation documentation.

**Denied Enrollment**
Enrollees who are not students in or graduates of a PAB-accredited program will be assigned “Denied” status. They must demonstrate that they meet required Program criteria in order to participate.

**Enrollment Status Key**
Due to the high volume of enrollments APA receives as a submission deadline approaches, it may take up to 10 weeks to review your submission. During the review process, APA status updates will inform you where your application is in the review process. You are responsible for checking the status of your enrollment status in the AICP Status section of My APA.

Below are the enrollment statuses and their definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Enrollment Approved</td>
<td>Your enrollment was approved. You are a graduate enrolled in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>Your enrollment was approved. You are a student enrolled in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Enrollment Pending</td>
<td>You submitted enrollment information and APA is reviewing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Enrollment Denied</td>
<td>Your enrollment was denied. APA will notify you of the reasons for denial.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Current deadlines are posted on the [AICP Candidate Pilot Program webpage](#).
CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE

Background

Certification Maintenance strengthens the value of the AICP certification, demonstrating members’ ongoing commitment to excellence and professional development.

All professional planners who are members of AICP engage in mandatory continuing education to maintain their certification. The CM program links certified planners to training opportunities that keep them up to date on the latest trends, technologies, and best practices.

The AICP Candidate Pilot Program includes CM to ensure participants are current in professional practice and knowledge.

Tracking CM Approved Credits

Enrolled Program participants must track a total of 16 CM credits (1 contact hour of training = 1 CM credit) from events delivered by CM Approved Providers. A minimum of 1.5 CM credits must be on the topic of ethics; another 1.5 CM credits must be on the topic of current planning law. You will record the CM credits you earned in the AICP Status section of MyAPA and via links to the CM Log and CM Search pages.

The 16 CM must be tracked before you can apply for AICP Certification.

Find and Track CM Approved Credits

Training opportunities that earn CM credit are displayed on the CM Search page. We encourage you to bookmark this page and check back often to search for training opportunities.

Note: The CM Tracked while you are in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program will not rollover to your CM Log, which is created after you are officially AICP Certified.

Step 1: CM Tracker Location
From the AICP Status section of MyAPA, click “AICP Candidate Enrollment Status.”

- The enrollment status page will display a summary of your CM credit totals.
- You will also see links to find CM events and to your full CM Tracker.
Step 2: **CM Tracker**
View and manage your CM credits.

- Your CM status should be “active” (blue arrow).
- 16 total CM credits are required (green arrow).
- Of those credits, you must earn 1.5 CM Law credits and 1.5 CM Ethics credits (purple arrow).
- Remaining credits needed will decrease as you add CM-activities to your tracker (pink arrow).
- There is a link to go back to your AICP Candidate status page (orange arrow).

Step 3: **Search**
Search events by event type.

- Click “Search CM Events” for live in-person or on-line training.
- Click “Search On-Demand Products” for recorded training.
- Click the “?” for more information.

Step 4: **CM Search**
Look for CM-eligible training and add credits to your CM Tracker.

- Events offering CM credits will have a CM notation with the total number of credits.
- If Law or Ethics is included you will see the L or E, for example CM | 6.25 | 1.
- Using the keyword search, you can search based on the seven-digit event ID number (e.g. 9103443), the title, or a portion of the title.
- You can refine your search using filters like event type and date range.
Step 5: Add CM credits to your tracker
- For single and on-demand courses, click “Add to My CM Tracker.”
- For multipart events (e.g. conferences with multiple sessions), click “Add Activities to My CM Tracker.”

Step 6: Track and evaluate the event
- Evaluate the event by rating it (orange arrow), from one to five stars. This is required to add the event to your tracker.
- You may add comments (green arrow) about the event (optional).
- Click the Agree box to verify you attended the event in full (red arrow).

Step 6: Track and evaluate the event, continued
- Rate the speaker(s) (required) and add your comments about the speaker(s) (optional) (purple arrow).
- If you would like to publish your comments to share with other AICP members, click Agree (optional) (blue arrow).
- Click the green Submit button to add this event to your CM Tracker (red arrow).
You have successfully submitted your claim.

- When you click Submit, you will be redirected to your CM Tracker.
- At the top of your CM Tracker page you will see the green confirmation that you have successfully submitted your claim.
- Note: if you are logging a multipart event (e.g., a conference with multiple sessions) click the link to “Log More Activities…” to continue adding to your CM Tracker.
- If you are finished adding CM events, click “Dismiss”.

Helpful CM Resources
Below are links to CM training opportunities that are free or reduced cost for APA members.

APA free on-demand education offering CM credits

APA e-Learning: Live and on-demand courses. CM notation indicates eligibility for CM credits.
MENTORING

Participants in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program may take advantage of the opportunity to be matched with a mentor.

Sign Up

To sign up to be matched with a mentor, please enroll through this webpage: https://engage.planning.org/mentoring/mentor-overview. You will need to be logged into your APA account to access the form. APA will match you with a mentor based on shared interests and geography and tell you how to contact him or her.

APA will provide a Guidelines and Ground Rules document and other resources to facilitate the mentor/protege relationship. Guidelines and Ground Rules includes a Letter of Agreement to formalize how and when you and your mentor will meet and communicate. Both you and your mentor must sign the document and return it to APA.

Roles and Responsibilities

You are responsible for initiating the mentoring relationship. Once you have made first contact, be prepared to get the most from the opportunity.

- Make a good first impression. Bring a goal or topics for discussion to the first meeting.
- Take time to become acquainted and set expectations for the relationship at the beginning.
- Bring specific topics for discussion to each session.
- Be humble, listen attentively, and don't rush to judgement. Be open to feedback.
- Discuss how to cancel or reschedule a meeting.
- Commit to minimizing schedule changes.
STEP 2: REGISTER FOR THE AICP CERTIFICATION EXAM

Register for the Exam
Before registering for the exam, please confirm that your name listed on your My APA page matches your first and last name on your identification card (driver's license, passport, etc.). If it doesn’t, please email us at aicp@planning.org to request a change.

Participants in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program may register for and take the AICP Certification Exam after they have earned a degree from a PAB-accredited program.

To register for the exam, go to the AICP Status Section of My APA. The registration process includes paying the $100 AICP Certification Exam registration fee and receiving an Eligibility ID for the current exam window. The registration confirmation email will tell you where to retrieve your Eligibility ID and how to schedule an appointment to take the exam at a specific date and time at the Prometric testing center of your choice.

Exam Candidates Outside of the United States and Canada
Exam candidates outside of the United States and Canada take the computer-based test during the regular May and November testing windows. The examination can be administered at a Prometric international site or a prearranged site such as an embassy or university. Locate an international Prometric test center site here. There is no additional fee to sit for the test outside of the United States.

Special Testing Arrangements
Exam candidates with documented visual, physical, hearing, or learning disabilities that would prevent them from taking an examination under standard conditions may request special testing accommodations and arrangements.

Prometric requires written documentation of the disability from the candidate’s doctor or another qualified medical professional that specifies the accommodations needed by the applicant. The exam candidate must email a copy of the document to APA at aicp@planning.org prior to making an exam appointment. There is no extra fee for making special testing arrangements.

In considering a request from an applicant for special accommodations, APA and Prometric are guided by a sense of fairness. Special accommodations are granted to give a candidate the opportunity to be tested in an equivalent manner with other candidates, but not to provide an advantage over other candidates.

A list of pre-approved personal items for testing accommodations can be found on the Prometric website.

Note: Current deadlines are posted on the AICP Candidate Pilot Program webpage.
SCHEDULING TEST APPOINTMENTS

Test Center Locations

All domestic and international candidates may schedule, reschedule, and cancel appointments online at www.prometric.com/aicp. Please note that testing center locations change, albeit infrequently. The website lists current test center locations and contact information and directions for each site.

Where to Take the Examination

Test centers are located domestically and internationally. Review the test center list online and select the most convenient location, regardless of whether it is in the state where you live. Prometric will make every effort to assign you to the center of your choice. There may be times, however, when more examinees apply for one center than can be accommodated. Examination candidates who attempt to schedule at a test center already at capacity will have the opportunity to select another date within the exam window or a different test center as near as possible to the requested location.

Scheduling Your Examination Appointment

If your application is approved, you will receive an Eligibility ID after you pay the exam registration fee. You also will receive instructions on how to set up your exam appointment during the testing window. Please note:

- You must have your Eligibility ID to schedule an appointment. Find it in the AICP Status section of My APA after you have registered.
- Candidates must take the examination during the testing window indicated in the Eligibility ID email.

To schedule your appointment:

- Try to schedule your appointment on Prometric’s website. Their online scheduling system is the most accurate, efficient, and effective way to get your first choice for an exam appointment.
- If you are unable to schedule your appointment online, call either Prometric’s Candidate Service Call Center at 800-796-9853 or the Prometric test center of your choice.

NOTE: A tester who needs to make special testing arrangements should first contact APA to make sure the special accommodations request has been communicated to Prometric, and then schedule with Prometric’s Candidate Service Call Center at 800-967-1139. (See Special Testing Arrangements.)

Additional Scheduling Information

- Eligibility IDs for a particular testing window are not released until the previous window has passed and all administrative reporting has been completed.

- Review your Eligibility ID carefully. Be certain all information is correct. This will facilitate rapid and efficient processing at your test appointment. Contact APA at 312-431-9100 or email aicp@planning.org if your Eligibility ID is incorrect.

- Prometric charges APA for the number of candidates who schedule an appointment to test. If, after scheduling an appointment, you do not take the exam during the assigned testing window, you will be required to pay the exam fee again in order to reschedule for the next testing window. (See Appendix for details.)

- If you sign up for the exam, you are expected to sit for the test during that exam window. If you do not schedule an appointment to test and are not approved for a transfer to the next exam window by the relevant deadline, you will forfeit your full exam registration fee. (See Appendix for details.)
Finally:

- You must make your appointment at least 48 hours before the test window opens.
- The AICP Certification Exam is not the only examination administered at Prometric testing centers. Seats fill quickly, so register as early as possible.
- Make sure you have your Eligibility ID on hand when you make your exam appointment.
- If you lose your Eligibility ID, contact APA at aicp@planning.org to request a duplicate authorization.
- Test centers typically are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Saturday hours vary by test center.
- If your first test center choice is unavailable, you will be offered an alternative as close as possible to your first choice.
- Once your examination has been scheduled, you will receive a confirmation number via email. You will not receive a confirmation of your appointment by regular mail. Do not lose this number—you will need it if you need to change your appointment. (See Appendix for details.)
- To get door-to-door directions to the Prometric testing center, call Prometric’s automated direction line at 800-796-9853 or visit Prometric’s website at www.prometric.com/aicp.
PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

As part of your enrollment in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program, you can access information to help you prepare for the AICP Certification Exam. Your chapter’s Professional Development Officer can refer you to additional resources. Find your PDO’s contact information at planning.org/chapters/. More exam prep information is available at planning.org/aicp/candidate/exam/.

DAY OF EXAM

Identification Requirements

Proper photo ID is required to enter the test center. You must have two forms of identification bearing your name and your signature. At least one must be a primary form of identification that includes a recent photo.

- Primary forms of identification include: valid passport, valid driver’s license, or photo-bearing employee ID card.
- Secondary forms of identification include: military ID card, citizenship card, valid credit or debit card with signature, or Social Security card.
- You may not use a draft classification card or student ID.

Important:

- Keep both forms of identification with you at all times. If you leave the testing room for any reason, you will be required to show the Test Center Administrator your identification to be readmitted.
- If you do not bring the appropriate identification to the test center, you will not be able to test within that testing window.
- Your name as it appears on your identification must match the name used to register for the exam. Therefore, if any information on your Eligibility ID is incorrect, contact AICP at aicp@planning.org or 312-431-9100 prior to scheduling your exam appointment. (See Acceptable Differences in ID in the Appendix.)

At the Test Center

Plan to be at the test center for four hours. Arrive early and bring proper ID. You must arrive at the test center 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment to complete the required admission process before testing begins. Late arrivals will not be admitted.

After you are admitted, the Test Center Administrator will give you a short orientation and escort you to a work station. You must remain in your seat during the examination, except when authorized to leave by the TCA.

You will have access to a calculator on the computer. The TCA will provide you with a marker and small dry erase board, which may be augmented as needed during testing. You may not remove the scratch paper from the testing room. You will not be allowed to bring your own scratch paper, pencil, or calculator into the testing room.

Raise your hand if you:

- have a problem with your computer;
- need more scratch paper;
- need to take a break (Note: you will not get extra time to take the examination); or
- need the TCA for any reason.

When you have finished the exam and a post-examination survey, the TCA will collect all your scratch paper.

Examination Logistics

You will have 3½ hours to answer 170 examination questions. 150 of the questions will be scored; 20 are questions being considered for future examinations that will not be scored. This is the standard format for computer-based testing. Scored and unscored questions and content areas are distributed randomly throughout the examination.

You will have 15 minutes prior to the exam for an online tutorial and 15 minutes after the exam to answer a brief computer-administered exit survey.

During the examination, you will have the opportunity to review all questions. You may change answers or mark or
skip questions and go back to complete your answers. This system allows you to use your time efficiently. Answer the questions you are sure of first, leaving your remaining time for the more difficult questions.

When time expires, all answers, regardless of how they are marked, will be calculated into your score. You cannot see the questions once your allotted time expires or you submit your completed exam.

**Exit Survey**

The exit survey will provide APA and Prometric with an evaluation of your testing experience. All comments will be reviewed after the testing window closes and will remain confidential.
STEP 3: GAIN EXPERIENCE AND APPLY FOR AICP CERTIFICATION

After passing the AICP Certification Exam, you will become an “AICP Candidate.” You can use this designation after your name in your resume and LinkedIn profile, on your business card, and in other places where you list your professional credentials. When looking for a job, be sure to let potential employers know that “AICP Candidate” means you passed the AICP exam, so you only need to earn planning experience to become an AICP member. This may help you get a position that requires earning AICP certification within a certain timeframe. You must have an active and current membership with APA to use the AICP Candidate designation.

The next step is to gain the required amount of planning experience and apply to become an AICP member. AICP Candidates with a PAB-accredited undergraduate degree need three years of experience; AICP Candidates with a PAB-accredited graduate degree need two years of experience. The AICP membership application for AICP Candidates consists of three essays that document that your professional planning experience meets required criteria.

- In this section you find information about
  - Application process
  - Criterion requirements
  - Does your experience qualify?
  - Internship experience
  - Employment verification
  - Application tips
  - Criterion checklist

AICP Peer Reviewers will make a decision 10 weeks after you submit your application, including early-bird applicants. If APA approves your application, you will receive an email detailing the finals steps to become AICP Certified.

Early-Bird Application Window
There are two benefits to applying during the early-bird application window (the first week of the application window):

First, an early-bird applicant whose application is not approved may revise the application—according to the advice provided in the denial letter—and resubmit it in the same application review window.

Second, an early-bird applicant receives early notification of the application decision.

The review process for early-bird applicant is ten weeks. You will be notified of the decision approx. ten weeks after your application was submitted.

- Re-submitting a disapproved application.
  The application must be resubmitted before the unique deadline conveyed in the denial letter to be considered for the same application review window. APA will notify an applicant who resubmits of the outcome of the second review by the final notification deadline. Note: APA does not guarantee approval of a revised and resubmitted application.
- Early notification of application status
  An early-bird applicant will be notified of the application’s approval or denial by the early-bird notification deadline posted at planning.org/certification/currentexam. APA will inform any early-bird applicant who does not receive approval or denial notification by this date that the application requires additional review. These applicants will be first in the review queue and will receive their approval or denial notice shortly thereafter.

Please refer to the exam application schedule posted at planning.org/certification/currentexam.

Email aicp@planning.org with questions about the AICP application process.
APPLICATION TIPS

TIP 1: Carefully read the guidance provided in this guide before starting your application.

TIP 2: It pays to apply early: If you apply during the Early Bird window and your application is denied, you can address the issues and re-apply in the same exam window. This opportunity is available only for Early Bird applicants, so make sure to apply by the Early Bird submission deadline.

TIP 3: To ensure your verification letters will be accepted, provide your past employers with a copy of the sample job verification letter.

TIP 4: It is recommended that you draft the letter for your previous and current employers to streamline the process. They can then copy the text on to their letterhead, confirm the details then sign and return it to you.

TIP 5: A complete job history is not required. Focus on providing only enough verified experience to meet the Minimum Eligibility Requirements, as defined on page 9.

TIP 6: Internship experience can count toward professional planning experience if the internship was not part of course work for graduation and the work experience meets the criteria for professional planning experience. See page 11 for more information.

TIP 7: Part-time professional planning experience can count toward meeting professional planning experience requirements. Simply prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent. Similarly, persons working full time, but devoting a portion of their time to another field, may also prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent.

TIP 8: Use the AICP Certification Criteria Checklist to make sure your responses meet the professional planning criteria requirements. Typically, up to one third of first-time applicants are denied because their essays do not meet the criteria requirements as defined.

TIP 9: Proofread your responses. Spelling and grammar errors can make it difficult for exam reviewers to evaluate the content of the responses.

TIP 10: Project managers or people with substantial experience in the field sometimes take for granted the application process. APA is concerned not only with the number of years of planning experience, but also with making sure the experience meets the established professional planning criteria. Experienced applicants should take care in making sure their responses meet each established professional planning criterion. For example, managers or directors should use examples that demonstrate their planning experience, not their administrative or managerial responsibilities, especially when responding to Criteria 1 and 2.
APPLICATION PROCESS

This section of the Guide reviews the steps in the AICP Application process. Be sure to carefully review these steps to make sure you have all the information you need before you start your application.

Application Process Overview

1. CONFIRM YOUR APA MEMBERSHIP STATUS
To apply to for AICP Certification, you must be a current member of the American Planning Association. Please make sure that your APA and Chapter dues are up-to-date before you start your application. If your chapter and national dues are not fully paid, you will not be able access to the online application.

2. REVIEW THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR AICP MEMBERSHIP
To apply for AICP Certification as an AICP Candidate, you must meet APA’s eligibility requirements for AICP membership, including having passed the exam and tracked 16 CM.

3. SUBMIT THE ONLINE APPLICATION AND PAY APPLICATION FEES
You will need to complete and submit the online application along with your employment verifications and pay the application fee by the application deadline posted at planning.org/certification/currentexam. Before you can submit your AICP Application, you will complete the following sections on the application:
    - SECTION 1: DESCRIBE AND VERIFY EDUCATIONAL HISTORY
      *This step was completed during AICP Candidate Program Enrollment.*
    - SECTION 2: DESCRIBE AND VERIFY EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
      Enter professional planning employment information and upload a valid employment verification letter for each position entered.
    - SECTION 3: RESPOND TO ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
      Write three essays demonstrating how your verified work experience meets APA’s definition of professional planning experience. Please be sure to review the guidance and checklist provided in this guide to ensure that your essays meet criterion requirements as defined by APA. See the Demonstrating Professional Planning Experience section on page 31, and the AICP Certification Criteria Checklist on page 38.
    - SECTION 4: READ AND VERIFY YOU HAVE READ THE AICP CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
      Click the button to agree to abide by the Code of Ethics in submitting your application.
    - SECTION 5: APPLICATION SUMMARY AND REVIEW
      Review your entire application prior to submission. You will not be permitted to change or edit the application once it has been submitted.
    - SECTION 6: SUBMIT APPLICATION AND FEE
      The application fee for AICP Candidate applicants is $375. The $375 application fee is due when you submit your application.
If your application is denied, you will not owe a resubmission fee. Payment must be made online with a credit card. Checks and purchase orders are not accepted. (Fees subject to change. See website for up-to-date information.)

All other applicants will be notified of application approval or denial by the Final Notification Deadline (relevant deadlines are posted at planning.org/certification/currentexam). Please note that applications submitted on or near the application deadline may take longer to process and review due to the high volume of applications received. Once your application is reviewed, your application status will be updated in My APA and you will receive an email notifying you of your application approval or an emailed letter notifying you of application denial.

### APPLICATION
#### (AICP Candidate APPLICANTS)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$375</td>
<td>(non-refundable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No resubmission fee</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. RECEIVE A NOTIFICATION EMAIL

Due to the volume of applications and thoroughness of the review process, you will be notified of the status of your application approximately 10 weeks after you submit. If you apply during the Early-Bird Application Window you will be notified of application approval or denial by the Early-Bird Notification Deadline.

NOTE: If you submit your application before the Early Bird Application Deadline, but do not submit valid verification materials in time to be reviewed with the other Early Bird applicants, your application will be reviewed as a regular application. If your application is not complete at the time it is submitted, including valid verification documents, it will not be eligible for revision and resubmission in the same exam window if it is denied.
NOTES FOR SELECT APPLICANTS

Early-Bird Application Window

Early-Bird Applications are accepted during the first week of each application window. There are two benefits to using the Early-Bird Application Window. The first is that if you apply Early Bird and your application is not approved, you will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit your application in the same exam window. The second is early notification of your application status. Regular AICP Candidate applicants have to wait until the following application window to resubmit a revised application.

Re-submittal of denied Early Bird applications: If your Early Bird application is denied, the revised application must be resubmitted before the deadline conveyed in the denial letter in order to be considered for the same application window. You will be notified of the outcome of the second review by the final notification deadline. A second submission of a revised application in the same window does not guarantee an approval.

Lapsed AICP Members

Former AICP members whose membership lapsed and who are not eligible for reinstatement must sit for the AICP exam to re-establish certification. These members will be pre-approved to sit for the exam and are not required to write the criteria responses or provide verification of education or employment. Lapsed AICP members must contact APA staff at aicpexam@planning.org prior to starting an application to ensure the pre-approved status is in place.

NOTE: A previous approval does not guarantee a second approval. If one or more of your responses were approved in a previous exam cycle, but your application is beyond the application lifespan, APA encourages you to carefully review current criteria guidance and revise your previous responses accordingly.
EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL PLANNING EXPERIENCE

This section of the Guide will help you determine if your combination of education and professional experience meet the requirements to apply for AICP Certification.

To apply for AICP Certification, you must meet the following requirements:

1. Be a current member of the American Planning Association (APA).
2. Be engaged in professional planning, either currently or in the past, as defined by AICP.
3. Enrolled in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program
4. Tracked 16 CM
5. Passed the AICP Certification Exam
6. Have completed, at the time of application submission, one of the combinations of education and corresponding years of professional planning experience listed in the chart below:

As a participant in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program, you only need two or three years of professional planning experience to apply for AICP Certification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF EDUCATION</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL PLANNING EXPERIENCE REQUIRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree in Planning from a program accredited by the PAB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree in Planning from a program accredited by the PAB</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree in Planning from a program not accredited by the PAB</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other post-graduate, graduate, or undergraduate degree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No college degree/no degree information provided</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The education may be obtained before, during, or after the experience.
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 recognized by the Canadian Institute of Planners. 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 member is filed. If you are unsure about the status of your planning degree, consult the Planning Accreditation Board’s list or contact AICP.
3 Non-accredited undergraduate planning degrees and degrees in related and other disciplines (i.e. Geography, Architecture, History, Music, etc.) at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.
DOES MY EXPERIENCE QUALIFY?

Determining if your professional experience qualifies can be challenging, particularly if you have not worked for, or provided planning services to, a municipality or regional planning agency. This section looks at what does and does not qualify as professional planning experience. You will describe how your experience meets APA’s definition of professional planning experience in your criterion essays.

Experience That Generally Does Qualify: Non-Traditional, Part-Time, and Internship Experience

NON-TRADITIONAL PROFESSIONAL PLANNING EXPERIENCE

While AICP’s professional planning criteria are more likely to be met 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 if they can demonstrate how their experience meets the criteria for professional planning experience listed in the AICP application.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “NON-TRADITIONAL PROFESSIONAL” PLANNING EXPERIENCE?

Examples of “nontraditional professional” planning experience include unpaid work or work done in a volunteer capacity. Like traditional professional planning experience, nontraditional professional planning experience must be supported by verification documentation.

Applicants submitting nontraditional professional planning experience should ensure that the experience meets the definition of professional-level planning experience (involves 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 the applicant was only responsible for setting up meetings, supporting administrative functions such as data entry or file management, or providing general customer service, etc. However, the experience may be considered to be at a professional level if the applicant was also 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 computer application, strategy development, impact analysis, etc.)

In order for examples of 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, applicants must include this service as part of their job description in the verification letters for that traditional employment.

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 an applicant worked 20 hours/week for six months that would equate to three months of professional planning experience.

Similarly, persons working full time but only part time on planning related activities may also prorate that experience into a full-time equivalent. See the Experience in Related Fields or Professions section for more details.
INTERNERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

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

- The internship cannot be part of course work for a grade or for course credit. This must be documented in your employment verification letter.
- The internship cannot be a requirement to complete the degree program.
- The work as an intern must meet all criteria for professional planning experience listed in the AICP Guide, Part 1 (i.e., this work is not pre-professional in nature).

An example of experience that can count towards meeting eligibility requirements include internships completed independent of degree requirements.

Experience That Does Not Qualify:
Pre-Professional Experience,
Elected or Appointed Officials,
and Work in Related Fields

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 along the lines of the criteria that define professional planning experience and more time dedicated to administrative functions and providing assistance to other staff. 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 programs areas or ordinances; performing routine office tasks in designated program areas, including data entry, file management, copying and answering the telephone; and 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 alone 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., law, 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, skillset, or approach.

Persons 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 her time to environmental science and half her 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.

- Site platting and engineering
- Traffic engineering or highway design
- Land surveying or mapping
- Facility programming
- Community organization
- Social work
- Market, physical, and social science research and analysis not connected to a planning process
- Construction/development logistics and management
- Business development
VERIFICATIONS OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Now that you’ve determined that your combination of education and experience qualify you to apply for AICP Certification, this section of the Guide covers requirements for education and employment verifications. When you apply for AICP Certification, you must submit verifications for each degree and job listed on your online application to document that you meet eligibility requirements to apply for certification. You are responsible for ensuring that acceptable verifications are provided in support of your application. Unverified experience and degrees will not be considered and may cause a delay in reviewing your application.

Your verification documents must be uploaded in PDF format directly in the application. Your goal should be to make sure that you’ve received all your verification documents prior to beginning your application.

Education Verifications

As a participant in the AICP Candidate Pilot Program, your education materials were already uploaded into the application portal. Education verification confirms you have received your degree, when the degree was conferred, and if the degree was in Planning. has received acceptable verifications. Education verifications are used to determine the amount of verified experience that you are required to provide. APA will accept education verifications in one of the following three forms:

- Official transcript. Please open sealed transcripts, scan them, and save as a PDF. E-transcripts accepted.
- Notarized photocopy of diploma. The Notary Public is confirming the copy is a true replica of the original diploma.
- Letter from school dean, registrar, or program director confirming that degree was conferred. The letter must be printed on school/university letterhead and include the letter writer’s title and contact information.

Employment Verification Letters

Employment verification letters are used to verify the professional planning experience that you have documented in your online application. The signed letter, on department/company letterhead, should come from either an immediate supervisor or principal of the firm, if still employed at the company/firm, or human resources department if your supervisor is no longer employed with the company.

NOTE: Any verification uploaded through the application must be a PDF of the original printed document. APA will not accept verifications submitted to APA via post mail, email or fax.

IMPORTANT: Review all verification documents for accuracy prior to submission. You are responsible for ensuring that your verification documents meet requirements. Verifications that contain inaccurate information or that do not meet requirements may cause a delay in application review or lead to an incomplete application for the exam cycle (see Incomplete Applications on page 36).
ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

Current Employment: If the letter is verifying current employment, the letter must be dated. Employment verification letters can only be used to verify experience up through the day they were written.

Part-time Employment: The dates of part-time employment must be specified in your verification letter (e.g. full-time February 2010 through November 2015 and part-time December 2015 through March 2016). Unless otherwise specified in the employment verification letter, part-time experience is assumed to be 50% of full-time experience.

Multiple Positions: Letters verifying multiple positions at the same company must address each position separately (i.e. position/title, dates of employment, and summary of duties).

Intern Experience: Verifications for intern experience must confirm that the experience was not completed for academic credit and was not part of coursework required for graduation (i.e., the experience must be separate from your education). This includes any work completed to meet the requirements of a degree, even if your actual title was not “intern.”

Letter Author: All employment verifications must come from the actual employer. If your former immediate supervisor is no longer employed with the organization, the verification letter must be written either by human resources or the principal of the firm. Employment verification letters written by a former immediate supervisor now working for another organization will not be accepted.

NOTE: The employment verification letter is not a reference letter. It is used to verify that positions provided on the application meet AICP eligibility requirements. Information beyond what’s listed below is not reviewed.

Each letter must include:

Your name,
Your APA ID number (provided by you to the employer)
Your position/title,
Your dates of employment (e.g. February 2010 through November 2015),
A brief summary of your duties as a professional planner, and
The name, title, and phone number of the letter writer should be noted in the signature.

A sample employment verification letter is available online here.
**Defunct Employer:** If your former employer has gone out of business or no longer exists, you will still be required to provide acceptable verification for the experience. Applicants in this situation should contact AICP staff for assistance. Unverified experience will not be considered.

**Employment Verification Letters for Principals and Consultants**

If you work as independent consultants or as principals of your own small firm, you may not have an employer or human resources department to write an employment verification letter. Applicants in this situation will need to provide a letter that contains the information required in the standard employment verification letter, as well as a project-client list that includes:

- Your role in each project,
- The dates that you were involved in each project, and
- Client contact information for each project (minimum of contact individual and phone number).  

NOTE: This option is only for individuals who do not have an employer to verify their experience. Principals of large firms who have a human resources department to verify employment should submit the standard employment verification letter.

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4APA will not use the client contact information for any other purpose than to confirm your work experience.
DEMONSTRATING PROFESSIONAL PLANNING EXPERIENCE ON THE APPLICATION

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 or appointed officials:

1. Professional planners demonstrate a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness while applying a planning process appropriate to the project or situation.
2. Professional planners evaluate multiple impacts to a community when implementing professional planning tasks.
3. Professional planners influence public decision making in the public interest.

To earn the AICP credential, all applicants must write three short essays (i.e., "criteria responses") that describe or explain how their professional experiences align with these normative criteria. This section of the Guide provides criteria response requirements and general tips for applicants before explaining each criterion and offering criterion-specific response instructions and guidance.

Criteria Response Requirements

- Each response must be between 250 and 500 words in length.
- Each response must be based on the applicant’s verified professional experience (but does not need to address the entirety of that experience).
- Each response must be unique and aligned with its respective criterion (i.e., a response cannot be repeated for multiple criteria).
- Each response must be self-contained and self-explanatory (i.e., a response must not be dependent on information provided in a different response, an employment verification letter, or external documentation).

General Tips for Applicants

- Follow the criterion-specific instructions for each response.
- Identify the position(s) held in each criterion.
- Provide one specific example from your professional experience for each response to illustrate your alignment with the criterion; avoid generalities or aspirational statements about planners.
- Describe or explain one specific example in detail for each response rather than briefly mentioning multiple examples.
- Write about your experiences in the first person and identify your personal contributions to all team efforts.
- Proofread each response carefully to make sure that your response as written meets the requirements as defined and stated by APA.

IMPORTANT: Please read the Professional Planning Experience Criteria carefully before you begin your online application. You are also strongly encouraged to make use of the AICP Certification Criteria Checklist to help ensure that your criterion essay responses meet the requirements described below. Your application will be denied if criterion essay responses do not meet the requirements described, regardless of your verified educational or professional experience.
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 participate in 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.

Response Instructions
First, identify the position or positions you held while participating in a specific planning process. Then, describe your step-by-step participation in this process. For each step, clearly state your role and describe how you used your knowledge, technical skills, and/or initiative to carry out your responsibilities. Finally, explain how your individual contributions affected process outcomes.

Examples of Planning Processes
An applicant does not need to be employed by, or provide services to, municipalities or regional planning agencies to satisfy this criterion. The list below highlights some examples of planning processes that applicants may choose to discuss as their example:

- Comprehensive, functional, or subarea plan making
- Regulatory or incentive program design
- Zoning administration or development review
- Economic, environmental, health, or transportation analysis
- Development-project or land-use site selection
- Development-project or land-use entitlement
- Research program or project design
- Research program or project execution
- Plan, program, or project evaluation
- Technical assistance or training
- Course or curriculum development
- Course or curriculum evaluation

Examples of Professional Planning Responsibilities
Professional planners often have multiple responsibilities during a planning process. The list below highlights some examples of professional planning responsibilities that applicants may choose to reference as part of a planning process:

- Collecting, analyzing, or visualizing data
- Conducting public, partner, or stakeholder outreach
- Facilitating meetings
- Rendering ministerial land-use decisions
- Preparing staff reports, grant proposals, or grant reports
- Drafting studies, plans, or ordinances
- Providing public information, public testimony, or technical assistance
- Critiquing development proposals or student work
- Defining learning objectives or methods
- Preparing presentations, manuscripts, or exercises

Tips for Applicants

- **DO** describe either your participation in a single instance of a planning process or your routine participation in a specific type of planning process.
- **DON'T** simply list different planning activities in which you have participated or attempt to describe your participation in multiple different planning processes.
- **DO** provide details about your roles and professional responsibilities during multiple steps of a planning process.
- **DON'T** limit your response to your contributions during a single process step or discuss administrative or pre-professional responsibilities.
- **DO** emphasize the sequential and interrelated nature of the planning process.
- **DON'T** describe process steps as isolated activities.
- **DO** explain how you were able to work within constraints to achieve goals.
- **DON'T** describe your participation in an unsuccessful process.
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 to protect or improve quality-of-life improvements for the communities they serve.

Response Instructions
First, identify the position or positions you held while working on a planning task that required you to consider the interrelated effects of a specific policy, program, project, or action. Then, explain your thought process as you identified and evaluated multiple potential consequences of this intervention. Clearly describe how your evaluation informed your work products or decisions. Finally, explain how your work products or decisions affected quality of life for the community you served.

Examples of Interventions
An applicant does not need to be employed by, or provide services to, municipalities or regional planning agencies to satisfy this criterion. The list below highlights some examples of interventions that applicants may choose to reference:

• A comprehensive, functional, or subarea plan
• Land-use or development regulations
• A financial or technical assistance program
• A public investment, facility, or service
• A partnership or agreement
• A land-use or development project
• A public awareness or education campaign
• A research project
• An instructional module or activity

Examples of Consequences
Policies, programs, projects, and actions often have multiple intended and unintended consequences that affect the quality of life in a community. The list below highlights some examples of consequences that applicants may choose to reference:

• Effects on housing choice or affordability
• Effects on transportation access, safety, or convenience
• Effects on fiscal health
• Effects on air or water quality
• Effects on habitat
• Effects on public health or safety
• Effects on economic or social welfare
• Effects on energy supply or use
• Effects on historic or cultural resources
• Effects on community identity or appearance

Tips for Applicants
• DO explain your thought process as you considered multiple specific consequences of a specific intervention (see lists above for examples of consequences and interventions).
• DON’T simply list different planning tasks you have performed or explain the general importance of applying a systems approach to planning tasks.
• DO explain how your thought process led to specific work products or decisions that affected the quality of life for the community you served.
• DON’T use an example where your approach did not improve the community’s quality of life.
• DON’T use an example of an administrative or management process – instead focus on planning interventions that directly impact a community’s quality of life.
**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.

**Response Instructions**

First, identify the position or positions you held while participating in a planning process that provided you with an opportunity to influence either a specific decision or a type of decision by elected or appointed public officials. Then, explain how your actions or work products influenced either a specific public decision or a type of public decision. Be sure to note the decision point, the decision maker(s), and the decision made. Finally, explain how your influence over this decision or type of decision protected or improved the well-being of the general public.

**Examples of Methods of Influence**

An applicant does not need to be employed by, or provide services to, municipalities or regional planning agencies to satisfy this criterion. The list below highlights some examples of methods of influence that applicants may choose to reference:

- Providing formal written recommendations
- Providing public testimony
- Drafting research or policy briefs
- Preparing educational or training materials
- Conducting educational or training activities
- Presenting research findings or analysis
- Participating in advisory body meetings

**Examples of Decision Points**

Professional planners influence a wide range of public decisions. The list below highlights some examples of decision points that applicants may choose to reference:

- A legislative body votes on adoption of a plan, ordinance, resolution, agreement, or budget
- A chief elected official signs an executive order
- A planning commission votes on approval of a plan or discretionary use permit
- A zoning board votes on approval of a variance
- A chief appointed official issues an administrative rule or policy
- A judge or court issues findings and conclusions

**Tips for Applicants**

- **DO** explain how your work influenced either a specific decision or type of decision by elected or appointed officials (see lists above for examples of methods of influence and decision points).
- **DON'T** use an example in which public officials made a decision that conflicted with your recommendations or analysis.
- **DO** explicitly identify the decision makers, the decision point, and the decision made.
- **DON'T** simply describe the theoretical or aspirational connections between your work and public decision making or explain your influence over a staff-level decision within a public agency or a decision by a private individual or organization.
- **DO** explain how your influence over a specific decision or type of decision served the public interest.
- **DON'T** use an example in which the primary beneficiaries of a decision are a small number of private individuals or organizations rather than the general public.
- **DON'T** use an example that has not come to resolution.
NOTE: For those planners in research or academia and not practice, focus your response for Criterion 3 on how your work (studios, lecture materials, publications) promotes decision-making in the public interest. Your response must make a direct connection between your work and the criterion requirements by focusing on how decision makers use your work. Simply describing how your students will take what they have learned and one day apply it to influence decision-making in the public interest will not meet criterion requirements.
THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

After you submit your application, it will take up to 10 weeks for APA to review. This section provides information on the status updates that you will receive while your application is under review, as well as your options for appealing the decision if your application is denied.

Application Status Key

During the review process, APA provides status updates on submitted applications to inform members of where their application is in the review process. A member can view their application status in My APA. Applicants are responsible for checking the status of their application.

Below are the possible application statuses and their meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not Yet Submitted</td>
<td>An application was started but has not been submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>Your completed application has been submitted and received by APA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V_C</td>
<td>Verification Complete</td>
<td>Your verification documents were reviewed and validated. Your application will move forward into the review process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>Your application was found to be incomplete. APA will email you with notification that explains why your application is incomplete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Under Review</td>
<td>Your application is under review and APA will email you with your final application status by the final notification deadline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Candidate Approved</td>
<td>Your application was approved. You will receive an email with instructions to being using your AICP Certification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Candidate Denied</td>
<td>Your application was denied. APA will email you with notification and your denial letter detailing the reasons for denial.</td>
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</table>

Incomplete Applications

If you receive notice that your application is incomplete and your application status changes from Pending to Incomplete, this is the final status for your application for the exam cycle. Members whose applications are incomplete can reapply for the next exam cycle.

Incomplete applications do not undergo a review of the criteria responses as the education and/or employment information provided could not be verified by staff. If it is unclear what is wrong with your verification documents or why your application is incomplete, please contact AICP staff for assistance at aicpexam@planning.org or 312-431-9100.
Denied Applications
If your application is denied, you will receive notification via email. The email will include an attached letter that addresses the specific reasons behind the denial decision. Depending on your situation, you may need to wait to gain more professional planning experience, or simply reapply with a new application containing more focused criteria responses that better describe how your work experience meets the professional planning experience criteria required in the application. Your application will remain in our files for 2 years, so if you choose to reapply, the online form will pre-populate with your previous application information.

Appeals
Denied applicants have the right to appeal the decision. Appeals are reviewed by the AICP Membership Standards Committee in time to allow members with overturned denials to sit for the same exam period for which they applied.

If you decide to appeal, please write an appeal letter that is professional in tone that explains why your application should have been approved. Your appeal letter must demonstrate how your existing criterion responses meet the professional planning criteria requirements. It should clearly address the reasons for denial cited in the denial letter and may expand upon and clarify the information provided in your submitted criteria responses in order to demonstrate how you have met the criteria; however, it cannot include new or supplemental examples and materials that were not included as part of your original application.

Note: Appeals that include new responses, significant revisions, or additional examples or information not addressed in the original responses will not be accepted.

If you wish to appeal, please write a letter addressing the reasons for denial cited in your denial letter and email it to aicpexam@planning.org by the deadline specified in your denial letter. An APA staff member will contact you via email once the AICP Membership Standards Committee has reached a decision.

When writing your appeal letter:
- **DO** carefully review the denial statement provided.
- **DO** prepare a professional appeal letter that addresses each point of denial in your appeal letter.
- **DO** cite specific information from your criterion response(s) and articulate how it meets the requirements outlined in the criteria guidance section.
- **DO** provide additional insight and perspective into the denied criterion response. This is your opportunity to clarify your response and demonstrate how it does meet the criterion requirements.
AICP CERTIFICATION CRITERIA CHECKLIST

The first step in becoming a certified planner is demonstrating your professional experience meets AICP requirements by writing three criteria essays.

Please use this checklist to make sure your criteria responses meet the requirements as defined in the AICP Guide Part 1.

If your answer to any of the following questions is NO, please revise your response accordingly before submitting your application.

OVERALL CHECKLIST ITEMS

☐ Are my responses between 250-500 words each?
☐ Are my responses based on my verified professional experience?
☐ Are my responses self-contained and self-explanatory?
☐ Did I follow the criterion-specific instructions when writing my responses?
☐ Did I carefully proofread my responses?

CRITERION 1

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

☐ Does my response describe, in detail, either my participation in a single instance of a planning process or my routine participation in a specific type of planning process?
☐ Did I write this response in the first person and identify my roles and responsibilities during multiple steps of a planning process?
☐ Does my response emphasize the sequential and interrelated nature of the planning process I applied?
☐ Does my response explain how I was able to work within constraints to achieve goals?

CRITERION 2

Evaluate multiple impacts to a community when implementing professional planning tasks

☐ Does my response explain, in detail, my thought process as I considered multiple specific consequences of a specific planning-related intervention?
☐ Did I write this response in the first person and clearly explain how my thought process led to specific work products or decisions that affected the quality of life for the community I was serving?

CRITERION 3

Influence public decision making in the public interest

☐ Does my response explain, in detail, how my work influenced either a specific decision or type of decision by elected or appointed officials?
☐ Does my response clearly identify the decision makers, the decision point, and the decision made?
☐ Does my response explain how my influence over a specific decision or type of decision served the public interest?
☐ Did I write this response in the first person and identify my personal contributions to all team efforts?
APPENDIX: EXAM REGISTRATION DETAILS

Transfers and Appointment Changes
The following policies apply to rescheduling your test appointment within the same exam window or transferring to the next exam window. For a May window, the next exam window is November of the same calendar year. For a November window, the next exam window is May of the next calendar year.

Changing Your Test Appointment (within the same exam window)
To change an appointment date or time within the same exam window, you must cancel your scheduled appointment and reschedule your appointment through Prometric.

Log on to www.prometric.com/aicp or contact the test center directly by noon (ET), at least two full business days prior to your scheduled appointment. You will not be permitted to cancel or reschedule your appointment if you miss this deadline.

Prometric charges a $35 fee for cancelling or rescheduling an exam appointment 2–29 days before the scheduled test date. (See the No-Show Policy below.) Prometric will not charge a fee to cancel or reschedule your exam appointment if you do so 30 or more days before your test date. (See the chart below for more information.)

Cancelling an exam appointment with Prometric is only the first step in the transfer process. You also must contact APA staff to request a transfer before the deadline. If you cancel your exam appointment and do not request a transfer or do so after the deadline, you will forfeit your exam fee. Leaving a voicemail message does not qualify as canceling or rescheduling your testing appointment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 or more days before the test date</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–29 days before the scheduled test date</td>
<td>$35 (to be collected by Prometric from tester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than two days before the test date</td>
<td>Full exam fee payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail to appear for the scheduled test</td>
<td>Full exam fee payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused entry for arriving 15 minutes or more after the scheduled start time on the test date</td>
<td>Full exam fee payment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transfers to the Next Exam Window
If you register to take the AICP Certification Examination, you are expected to take the test during the upcoming exam window. However, you may transfer to the following exam window. AICP Candidate participants are allowed one free transfer to the next exam window. (For example, if you transfer your May exam registration, you must register again for the upcoming November exam.) A $100 registration fee applies if you do not sit for the exam in that next window. To request a transfer to the following exam window:

1. Cancel your existing exam appointment with Prometric. (See Changing Your Test Appointment above.)
2. Email APA at aicp@planning.org with your request to transfer and confirmation of your canceled exam appointment. Be sure to include your full name and APA ID number in the email. If you do not request a transfer by APA’s transfer deadline, you must either take the test during the scheduled exam window or forfeit your exam fee. (See Refunds below.) APA’s transfer deadline is posted at planning.org/certification/currentexam.
3. APA will process your transfer request and email your confirmation, with instructions on how to register for the next exam.

Please note: Consecutive exam transfers are not permitted except for extenuating circumstances. Transfer requests submitted after the transfer deadline or submitted while you still have a test appointment scheduled will not be accepted.
No-Show Policy
You will be considered a “no show” and will forfeit your full exam fee if:

- You miss your scheduled appointment.
- You cancel with Prometric less than two full business days prior to your scheduled appointment.
- You cancel with Prometric but do not request a transfer, or if you request a transfer after the deadline.
- You arrive 15 minutes or more past your scheduled appointment time.
- You do not bring acceptable ID with you to the test center and are denied admission.

In the cases listed above, you will not be allowed to reschedule your examination within the current exam window, you will forfeit all fees paid, and you must pay another full exam fee to register for a future exam window.

If You Never Schedule an Appointment
Testers who register to take the AICP exam must schedule a test appointment and sit for the exam during the upcoming exam window. Testers who register for the exam and do not test or transfer will forfeit their full exam fee.

Refunds
APA will not refund the exam fee. Testers who register for the exam must either take the test or transfer via the transfer request process.

Acceptable Differences in ID
Each tester must bring two forms of ID on exam day; both must contain signatures, and one must have a photo. If a tester’s name differs on the photo identification and the Eligibility ID email, refer to the list and examples of acceptable name variations below. If the name variation is listed, the tester may schedule an exam appointment. If the name variation is not listed, the tester must email APA at aicp@planning.org before making an appointment to test. AICP staff will update the tester’s record and forward the updated record to Prometric. APA will notify the tester once the appropriate changes have been made. The tester must wait 48 hours before making an appointment for the updated file to reach the Prometric test centers.

NOTE: The address in your exam appointment confirmation does not need to match the address provided on your identification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowable Name Discrepancies</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A single-letter discrepancy exists in examinee’s name.</td>
<td>• Single letter difference: Johnson vs. Johnsonson • Single letter transposition: Alexander vs. Alexandre • Single letter omission: Schultz vs. Shultz • Single letter addition or subtraction: Miller vs. Mialler or Miler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One version of examinee’s name has a middle initial or middle name while other does not.</td>
<td>• John E. Smith vs. John Smith • Mary R. Abernathy vs. Mary Rose Abernathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First name is provided formally on one document, but a typical variation is used on another document.</td>
<td>• Michael Jones vs. Mike Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect letters are used in a name on one document but correct letters are used on another document.</td>
<td>• Diller vs. Ditter • Dutton vs. Ditton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiden name is used as a middle name on one document, while given middle name is used on another document.</td>
<td>• Mary Elizabeth Smith vs. Mary Jones Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names are shown in Last Name, First Name format.</td>
<td>• Russell, Evan vs. Evan Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffixes to name should be ignored.</td>
<td>• For example: Jr., Sr., II, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the names on examinee’s record on computer and ID differ because the examinee made a legal name change, the examinee must present one of the following: marriage certificate • divorce decree • legal name change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Important: Substitution of another name for either the first or last name or both names (e.g., Smith to Jones or Smith to Smith-Jones, or John to James) is not permitted.
Testing Procedures

To ensure that all testers take the examination under comparable conditions and achieve fair and accurate results, a standardized testing environment will be maintained.

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

- You must follow the instructions given by the Test Center Administrator.
- You will be provided a multi-functioning calculator. It will be a basic, non-programmable, non-printing, four function calculator with percent and square root buttons. You may use only this calculator during the examination. No other calculator will be allowed in the testing room.
- Do not bring books or other reference material into the testing room. The TCA will not permit anyone found possessing such materials to continue the examination.
- You will be provided a secured locker to store personal possessions and materials not allowed in the testing room. You may reclaim these items when you leave the test center.
- Visitors are not permitted at the test center.
- You may not bring scratch paper into the testing room. The TCA will give you scratch paper.
- If you wish to leave the room during the examination, you must secure the TCA’s permission.
- You will not be permitted to continue the examination beyond the 3½ hour time limit. An on-screen clock will count down the time remaining.

Tester Misconduct

The following are examples of behaviors that are considered misconduct and will not be tolerated:

- Giving or receiving assistance of any kind.
- Using any unauthorized references.
- Attempting to take the examination for someone else.
- Failing to follow testing regulations or the Test Center Administrator's instructions.
- Creating a disturbance of any kind.
- Copying, removing, or attempting to remove examination questions or scratch paper from the testing room.
- Tampering with the operation of the computer or attempting to use it for any function other than taking the examination.
- Leaving the testing room without permission.
- Using a calculator, cell phone, tablet, or similar electronic equipment.

Computer-based Examination Tutorial

A brief tutorial precedes the examination. The tutorial is designed to familiarize you with the computer and the testing software. You will have up to 15 minutes to complete the tutorial. This is in addition to the 3½ hours allotted to take the examination. The tutorial will teach you how to select answers, move from one question to the next, use testing features such as “Item Review,” and use the mouse and keyboard. By familiarizing you with the operation of the computer, the tutorial will make it easier for you to concentrate on completing the examination. You do not need to be concerned with the answers you select during the tutorial; it is intended for practice only and there is no penalty for incorrect answers. Once you exit from the tutorial, you may not return to it. We strongly encourage you to take the tutorial.

Reporting Test Center Irregularities

While at the test center, should you experience a delay in taking your examination or encounter any technical problems, please make sure that this irregularity is documented by the TCA. The TCA will file a written report with Prometric and APA.
Some Notes on Computer-based Testing
You do not need extensive computer experience to take the examination. On-site assistance includes:

- An online tutorial to guide you through how to use the computer.
- Computer workstations equipped with a mouse, standard keyboards, and 17-inch monitors for optimum viewing.
- Fully trained Test Center Administrators who are available during your examination for technical assistance. TCAs will not assist with examination content.

Among the benefits of computer-based testing are:

- Ability to mark questions for later review.
- Ability to track and display the time remaining on the examination.
APPENDIX: SCORING THE EXAMINATION

Score Validity Review
In the absence of observed misconduct, it should be noted that Prometric and APA routinely conduct post-test administrative review of the validity of the test scores. If irregularities are found as a result of these reviews, the candidate will be contacted and notified of procedures to resolve any validity issues concerning his or her score.

Score Reports
Your scores are confidential and are released to APA by Prometric. Official score reports will be emailed to testers after completion of the exam to the email address on file. Your official score report will show a total scaled score and will indicate whether you have passed or failed.

Scores are reported on a scale of 25-75, with 55 as a passing score. To protect candidates’ privacy and to maintain the confidentiality of test results, score information for individual candidates will not be given over the telephone. If you have specific questions or concerns about your scores, you may contact APA. You can access a copy of your score report here: https://scorereports.prometric.com/. Prometric will retain electronic score data for two years. APA retains this information in perpetuity.

Diagnostic Scores
For diagnostic purposes, testers who did not pass the exam are informed of how many questions they answered correctly (raw score) in each of the examination content areas. Do not expect diagnostic scores to average out to the total score. Raw score information is intended only to assist the tester in preparing for reexamination by indicating the areas in which the tester had the most difficulty. Testers who did not pass the exam should review those areas in which they scored comparatively low before retaking the examination.

Equating
The computerized version of the examination pulls the 150 scored questions from a larger pool of questions, meaning that there are different versions of the examination. Equating makes statistical adjustments to test scores to compensate for differences in the relative difficulty of different versions of the examination.

Suppose you and your colleague are equal in your mathematical abilities. You both take a mathematics test. Both tests are intended to cover the same type of mathematics questions; however, the test you take is harder than the one your colleague takes. You answered 35 questions correctly on your test. Your colleague answered 40 questions correctly on his test. It would not be accurate or fair to conclude, on the basis of the test scores, that you were not as proficient in mathematics as your colleague. The difference in the scores was not due to your mathematical abilities, because our first assumption was that you and your colleague were of equal ability. The difference in your scores was due to one test being harder than the other. Equating allows us to determine that a 35 on the test that you took represents the same level of mathematical knowledge, skills, and abilities as a score of 40 on the test that your colleague took.

Scaling
Scaling allows scores to be reported on a common scale. Instead of having to remember that a 35 on the test that you took is equivalent to a 40 on the test that your friend took, we can use a common scale and report your score as a scaled score of 55. Since we know that your friend’s score of 40 is equal to your score of 35, your friend’s score would also be reported as a scaled score of 55.

Important note: Scaled scores are not percentage scores. They allow us to report different raw scores that represent the same kind of knowledge, skills, and abilities as the same scaled score.

The scaled scores in the AICP Certification Examination range from a low of 25 to a high of 75. A scaled score of 55 or greater indicates a pass. The passing score was set by the AICP Commission — as recommended by the AICP Exam Committee — using a standard established statistical procedure.
Reliability

Reliability is a concept that refers to the accuracy of test scores, such as the scaled scores derived for the AICP Certification Examination. All test scores are affected by sources of error to some extent; the smaller the effect, the higher the reliability. Examples of error sources include an unclearly worded test question or even a momentary spell of boredom. Hypothetically, if you could take the same test an infinite number of times, while remaining unchanged (physically and psychologically), your scores would vary. The average of these scores would be your true score, which would be free of error. If a test were perfectly reliable (not affected by error), each time you took the test you would receive the same score and there would be no difference between your test scores and your true score. For a highly reliable test, your test scores would vary, but would all be close to your true score. The concept of reliability is expressed statistically as a reliability coefficient. Reliability coefficients range from 0 (absence of reliability) to 1 (perfect reliability).

Standard Error of Measurement

Since no measure of test performance is perfectly accurate, you might ask: “How accurate is my AICP Certification Examination scaled score?” This question is not directly answerable since it requires knowing what your score should be (true score). Your true score can never be known. The difference between your actual test score and your true score would be the “error of measurement” associated with this administration of the examination. Since errors of measurement vary from one test administration to another, it would be convenient to estimate how much these errors can be expected to vary. Such an estimate can be calculated without administering the examination to any examinee more than once. This estimate is called the standard error of measurement. If a test could measure basic elements of the subject matter without error, the value of the SEM associated with that test would be zero, in scaled score units. Although the SEM will invariably exceed zero, its value should be small. APA and Prometric closely monitor the SEM of each test form to ensure reasonable accuracy for the AICP Certification Examination.

If You Have a Complaint

If you have a complaint or wish to make a comment about test center facilities or supervision, examination content, or any other matter related to the testing program, please write to APA at:

American Planning Association
205 N. Michigan Ave.
Suite 1200
Chicago, IL 60601
Attn: AICP Exam

In all correspondence, be sure to give your name, address, and APA ID number. If your questions or comments concern an examination you already have taken, also include the name of the examination, the date you took the examination, the location of your test center, and your examination number. APA will investigate each complaint and respond within a reasonable amount of time.

If You Retake the Examination

If you decide to take the examination again, you should be aware that, without any change in your level of knowledge, your test score may increase or decrease slightly. This slight change may be caused by something as simple as the way you feel on the day of the test or the temperature of the room in which you take the test. To increase the probability of significantly improving your test score, increase your knowledge of the subject material. You cannot retake only one part of the examination; you must retake the entire examination again and pay the full exam fee.