



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
441 G STREET NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

07 JAN 2011

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MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Planner Certification Program – National Pilot Program

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to begin implementation of the National Pilot Program for Planner Certification. The objective of the program is to advance the technical capability of each individual planner and the national planning team. This program is a framework for a more results-oriented and diversified workload with increasing levels of technical complexity, responsibility and leadership. The program lays out a path to become an “Expert Planner.” It is anticipated that Expert Planners within the Planning Community will have greater opportunities for nationally significant assignments and career opportunities.
2. Previous efforts to enhance planning capability focused heavily on formal training and on-the-job training. This effort describes a broader group of elements that contribute to enriching the capability of a planner. Through this program, an Expert Planner for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers would be a reflection of having strength from Four Key Sources:
 - a. Education and Training.
 - b. On the Job Experience.
 - c. Knowledge/Engagement/Management of Relevant Issues, Guidance and Processes.
 - d. Leadership/Mentoring/Communication.
3. To become certified as an Expert Planner, specific milestones along a path toward achieving planning excellence based on the above four elements must be met. Once certification is achieved, planners must meet continuing standards to maintain the certification.
4. In developing the pilot program, the PAB considered the variability of workload and related staffing size among the 38 Corps Districts. Therefore, it was decided that four districts which

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vary in size and region of the country will implement the Pilot Certification Program during FY11. The Districts are as follows:

- Larger Sized Districts:

- a. Jacksonville District (SAD).
- b. Los Angeles District (SPD).

- Moderate Sized Districts:

- c. Portland District (NWD).
- d. Buffalo District (LRD).

5. The selected districts will implement the pilot program as outlined in the enclosed worksheets. Worksheet 1 is a step by step procedure outlining how planners would be certified. Worksheet 2 is a checklist of requirements for certification as Expert Planner. The selected districts shall monitor progress and document any observations, recommendations or adjustments, to help shape the nationwide Expert Planner Certification Program to begin in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012.

6. The ultimate program goal is to fully implement the program throughout the planning community in FY 12. To accomplish this, a National Pilot Planner Certification program for FY 11 has been developed by the national Planning Advisory Board (PAB) as part of its mission to improve overall planning capability. In order to meet this goal the following schedule must be adhered to:

- a. 10 January 2011: Finalize and disseminate this memorandum.
- b. 14 January 2011: “Kick-Off” Orientation Meeting (Phone Conference) with the four selected Districts, three Divisions and Headquarters. Selected Districts begin implementation of pilot program.
- c. 31 March 2011: Mid-Point VTC to discuss experiences to date and suggested course corrections for pilot program.
- d. 30 June 2011: VTC to discuss basis of final evaluations of Districts and Divisions.
- e. 31 July 2011: All evaluations and suggestions provided to HQUSACE.
- f. 30 August 2011: HQUSACE will provide MSCs guidance on the implementation of the Planner Certification Program for implementation in FY12.

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7. My team and I look forward to working with you in the pilot program, and I thank you for your assistance and support in this initiative. The point of contact for this initiative is Ms. Susan B. Hughes, Deputy Planning Community of Practice, 202-761-4121.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



THEODORE A. BROWN, P.E.
Chief, Planning and Policy Division
Directorate of Civil Works

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1. Worksheet 1
2. Worksheet 2

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CHIEF, PLANNING, NORTHWESTERN DIVISION, (CENWD)
CHIEF, PLANNING, GREAT LAKES AND OHIO RIVER DIVISION, (CELRD)
CHIEF, PLANNING, JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT, (CESAJ)
CHIEF, PLANNING, LOS ANGELES DISTRICT, (CESPL)
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WORKSHEET 1: CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The Certification Process

For Current Planners (Must be a Current Planning Employee)

Step 1. Evaluate your experience, training, and skills using the outline in Titled “Elements of an Expert Planner.” For each item listed provide no more than two sentences to support your completion/experience regarding the item. Sign the checklist with “Certification Attestation” shown below.

Step 2. Take the completed checklist and relevant supporting documentation to your direct supervisor. Resolve any questions your supervisor has, and have them sign the checklist.

Step 3. Supervisor submits the checklist with both signatures to the District and MSC Chiefs of Planning.

Step 4. On an annual basis, during annual performance reviews, certification should be discussed to affirm Planning Certification remains valid, or re-submittals to obtain certification should be reviewed.

Maintenance of Certification

To maintain a certification each year, the planner shall do two of the following items to give back to the local, regional, or National Planning COP.

(1) Be involved in the development of and/or the instruction of at least two activities including training courses/seminars/brown-bag-lunches on relevant topics from which they feel their district, region or National Planning COP would benefit.

(2) Writing an article for a journal or publication on a Planning related issue could be evaluated as fulfilling the annual contribution to the Planning COP.

(3) Be the lead for an ATR effort.

(4) Serve as a technical consultant for a planning effort.

If the certified planner does not fulfill this requirement, their certification may be suspended until this requirement is met for each year.

If supported by the respective Chief of Planning, with input from the appropriate PAB, a Planner may use a major contribution to the PL COP, such as leading an ATR on a very large project, toward their maintenance of their Planner Certification for up to two years.

Certification Attestation

The following shall be included at the bottom of each certification document.

I have prepared and reviewed this documentation to support my Expert Planner Certification. I hereby certify the accuracy and completeness of the documentation.

I hereby affirm that I, _____, qualify as a Certified Corps of Engineers Water Resources Expert Planner.

Planner

Date

I have personally observed this individual's performance and affirm that their performance is satisfactory in all areas, and that the accomplishments described above merit recognition as a Certified US Army Corps of Engineers Water Resources Planner.

Supervisor

Date

District Planning Chief

Date

MSC Planning Chief

Date

WORKSHEET 2: ELEMENTS OF AN EXPERT PLANNER

The following describes a broad group of elements that contribute to qualifying a US Army Corps of Engineers' Water Resources Planner as an Expert Planner level. Most all of the items included below should be completed or could be completed independently by a top performing planner.

An Expert Planner for the US Army Corps of Engineers is a reflection of having strength from Four Key Areas.

- a. Education and Training
- b. On the Job Experience
- c. Knowledge/ Engagement/Management of Relevant Issues, Guidance and Processes
- d. Leadership/Mentoring/Communication

1. Education and Training. To meet criteria of Certified US Army Corps of Engineers Water Resources Expert Planner, the planner must explain how he/she meet or exceed the description of items for 4 of the following 6 types of education and training.

- a. Undergraduate and/or Graduate degrees and course work—complete a degree in a related field. (degrees in both undergraduate and graduate related fields can count for 2 items)
- b. Training seminars—complete 3 or more seminars outside the Corps of Engineers in a Planning related matter.
- c. PROSPECT courses including Corps Curriculum Courses—complete at least 5 courses or qualify to be grandfathered through experience.
- d. Webinars, coordination with professional organizations—participate in related planning topics several times each year.
- e. Planning Associates Program—complete the Planning Associates program.
- f. Professional Certification (to include but not limited to American Institute of Certified Planners, Registered Professional Engineer, etc.).

2. On the Job Experience. There are 11 types of on the job experience listed. To be able to say you have “met” any one of the 11, you need to document how you completed at least half of the items for each category. To satisfy the required Key Area of On the Job Experience, you will need to have “met” the criteria for 9 of the 11 types of On the Job Experience.

- a. Written or developed (at least 7)
 - i. 905b/Reconnaissance Report
 - ii. Feasibility report
 - iii. Any Decision Document (to include but not limited to Post Authorization Change reports—General Reevaluation Report, Limited Reevaluation Report, etc)
 - iv. Project Management Plan
 - v. Scope of Work for Contractor

- vi. Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement
 - vii. Record of Decision or Finding of No Significant Impact
 - viii. Chiefs Report
 - ix. Slides for Office of Management and Budget briefing
 - x. Letter from the district
 - xi. Memo to higher authority
 - xii. White paper on a technical and/or policy issue
 - xiii. Congressional letter
 - xiv. Economics Report
- b. Met with a local community/sponsor/stakeholders (at least 2)
 - i. Led a special investigation site visit to see if Corps Authorities exist to help the community and to discuss the potential for Federal Interest
 - ii. Led a meeting with a sponsor/local community/stakeholder to discuss a planning effort
 - iii. Negotiated a Cost-Sharing Agreement (CSA)
 - iv. Led coordination activities
- c. Cost sharing agreement package to higher authority (at least 3)
 - i. Prepared checklist and ensured inclusion of all items
 - ii. Coached sponsor to prepare all items needed
 - iii. Walked sponsor through CSA and study process
 - iv. Documented deviations
 - v. Negotiated deviations
 - vi. Developed allocation of funds table
- d. Met with members of Congress or staff members (at least 2)
 - i. Explained planning and/or study process
 - ii. Led coordination activities
 - iii. Prepared legislative drafting service
 - iv. Attended briefings/meetings
- e. Met with members of the vertical chain (at least 4)
 - i. Led pre-submittal coordination call
 - ii. Responded to comments
 - iii. Led Feasibility Scoping Meeting
 - iv. Led Alternative Formulation Briefing
 - v. Led Issue Resolution Conference or an In Progress Review
 - vi. Briefed vertical team members
 - vii. Attended Civil Works Review Board (CWRB)
 - viii. Presented at CWRB

- f. Coordinated with Planning Center of Expertise (at least 4)
 - i. Developed a Review Plan
 - ii. Gained approval with PCX & MSC
 - iii. Conducted District Quality Control (DQC)
 - iv. Coordinated Agency Technical Review (ATR) on your study
 - v. Addressed Model Certification
 - vi. Responded to comments for ATR or Model Certification
 - vii. Contracted for Independent External Peer Review
 - viii. Responded to IEPR comments

- g. Led a multi-disciplined team (at least 5)
 - i. Identified problems, needs, opportunities, objectives, constraints
 - ii. Developed without project future conditions
 - iii. Identified alternatives
 - iv. Screened alternatives
 - v. Formulated a plan
 - vi. Addressed engineering/design issues
 - vii. Addressed real estate issues
 - viii. Addressed legal issues
 - ix. Addressed permit/environmental compliance issues
 - x. Managed a study from Recon initiation through Feasibility Process to Chief's Report (from beginning to end)

- h. Contracted work out (at least 5)
 - i. Wrote Scope of Work
 - ii. Developed Independent Government Cost Estimate
 - iii. Negotiated with Contractor
 - iv. Recorded the Negotiations
 - v. Monitored progress of contractor
 - vi. Reviewed work, provided comments, ensured scope was met
 - vii. Accrued payments
 - viii. Approved payments
 - ix. Closed out contract
 - x. Served on A/E or contract evaluation/selection panel

- i. Led Study into Construction (at least 1)
 - i. Experienced Solicitation process
 - ii. Provided Planning Support during construction

- j. Reviewed others' work (at least 3)
 - i. Served as member of ATR
 - ii. Served as member of DQC
 - iii. Led ATR team
 - iv. Served as a technical consultant

- k. Been designated as a Regional Technical Specialist (RTS) in any planning discipline or Sub Community of Practice

2. Knowledge/Engagement/Management of Relevant Issues, Guidance and Processes There are 8 types of types of involvement with Relevant Issues, Guidance and Processes listed. To be able to say you have "met" any one of the 8, you need to document how you completed at least half of the items for each category. To satisfy the required Key Area of Knowledge/Engagement/ Management of Relevant Issues, Guidance and Processes, you will need to have "met" the criteria for 6 of the 8 elements.

- a. Key Issues/knowledge—knowledge of the basic facts surrounding the body of knowledge. Understanding of how the related Corps procedures and how the Corps of Engineers interprets the area with respect to our studies and projects. Possible understanding of some contrary opinions to the Corps of Engineers perspective or procedures. Please include any additional issues/knowledge areas you believe should be included here too. (at least 2)
 - i. Sea Level Rise
 - ii. Environmental & Cultural Resources & Compliance
 - iii. Economics
 - iv. Risk and Uncertainty

- b. Project/Study Issues (at least 2)
 - i. Ability to recognize an issue on a study/project
 - ii. Ability to identify if it is a policy, technical, legal, design related issue
 - iii. Ability to resolve issues at lowest level, or raise issue to the proper channel, framed correctly, in a timely manner

- c. The Federal Process (at least 2)
 - i. Has an understanding of the Appropriations Process
 - ii. Has an understanding of the Federal Budget Process
 - iii. Has an understanding of the Authorization Process
 - iv. Has an understanding of crafting implementation guidance to new authorizations

- d. Tools/skills used by the Corps (at least 2)
 - i. CEFMS/P2
 - ii. Scheduling
 - iii. Budgeting
 - e. Participate in Relevant Webinars—actively participate in at least three each year
 - f. Familiarity with applicable regulations—provide list of which regulations you see as important as a planner and how you have used them.
 - g. Networking/Communication (at least 1)
 - i. Follows up with POCs from other Districts and Divisions regarding specific issues/concepts (provide at least 3 examples)
 - ii. Builds and maintains contact list and maintains coordination with POCs/Stakeholders regionally and nationally on relevant issues/concepts (provide at least 3 examples)
 - h. Independence (at least 1)
 - i. Identifies, initiates and completes appropriate tasks for assigned work on own (minimal supervision) (please provide 2 examples of complex work for which minimal supervision was required)
 - ii. Maintains coordination with management to keep them informed (please explain how management is kept informed on significant efforts)
3. Leadership/Mentoring/Communication There are 6 types of Leadership/ Mentoring/ Communication listed. To be able to say you have “met” any one of the 6, you need to document examples for each. To satisfy the required Key Area of Leadership/ Mentoring/ Communication, you will need to have “met” 4 of the 6 items.
- a. Mentored less experienced planners
 - b. Taught portion of training course/seminar/brown bag lunch/webinar
 - c. Presented paper at conference
 - d. Wrote article for Planning Ahead or journal
 - e. Led/implemented an initiative for District or Regional Planning Program
 - f. Participated in Leadership Development Programs