

## **Q & A: Winning with People: Trained, Equipped and Capable of Solving Problems – Understanding Planning Modernization: People**

**October 16, 2014**

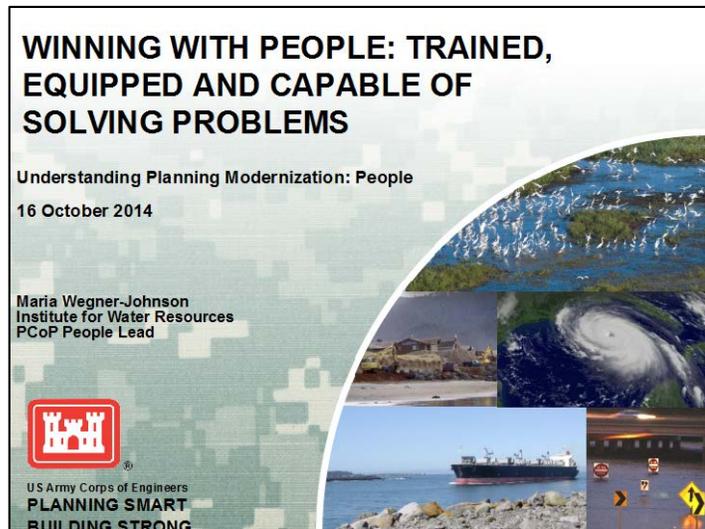
The October 16<sup>th</sup> webinar, part of a series of information-sharing webinars hosted by the Planning Community of Practice, provided an update on the elements of Planning Modernization contributing toward achieving the goal of: Investing in our People by improving planner knowledge and experience through training and other opportunities and creating a sustainable national and regional planning operation and organization.

Maria Wegner-Johnson of the Institute of Water Resources and

Sue Hughes of the Planning community of Practice presented and responded to questions.

The questions and responses below are not a direct transcript; they have been reordered and edited for clarity. Additional questions and feedback are always welcome via the Planning Community Toolbox's SMART Guide comment form online at:

<http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/smart.cfm?Section=10&Step=1> or by email to [hqplanning@usace.army.mil](mailto:hqplanning@usace.army.mil)



### **The Planning Corps Curriculum**

**Regarding moving the Corps Civil Works Development Process (formerly PCC1) to a “Distributed Learning” online course, are those taking the course now learning the same material and getting the same background as those who did the classes in-person?**

The team first identified the KSAs (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities) and objectives of the courses and utilized the materials from the in-person course to develop the online version. Because we do training evaluation only on the last day of the course, it is hard to say for sure whether or not the knowledge retention is similar long-term, but we do know that long-term retention in the week long lecture courses is low across all sectors and industries.

The conversion to Distributed Learning is part of our strategy to develop an efficient way for delivering information that Planners – and other new Corps employees - need to know up front, from day-one of their job. Civil Works Orientation was the first critical part. We are aware that there is a need in the field for intermediate and advanced level seminars as follow up on each of the twenty-one steps covered in the Civil Works Development Process that build on the knowledge and experience through face-to-face dialogue and instruction. Some of those courses exists, are under development, or planned for development as resources allow.

**I just wanted to thank you for the virtual training opportunities. Obviously a balance between virtual and face-to-face is good, but we had such a great need to train so many folks and the availability of the course material for the Corps planning courses last year was very helpful. To be honest, it is a fantastic way to deliver important information in the most efficient way possible. Thank you very much.**

Thank you for the feedback, we appreciate it.

**More than 90% of the attendees in Civil Works Orientation are not planners. Can they / should they take the Plan Formulation and Evaluation capstone when it is available?**

Yes, they certainly could take the planning curriculum, including the Capstone when it is available, although the primary audience will be Planners. Our goal with developing a Capstone course that builds on Civil Works Development Process and Planning Essentials – as well as experience in Planning – is to ensure our planners have the best training they can get at the time that they need it.

### **Functional Workforce Workload Capacity Assessment**

**Recently, we participated in the Functional Workforce Workload Capacity Assessment, a self-evaluation by district and division and then nationally. How have those results modified what you are thinking about regarding planner development? Essentially we were asked to look at ourselves on capability and capacity out to FY17. We have some concerns around turnover and the new staff coming in and combining that with the uncertainty of budgets.**

At the time of the webinar, we were not familiar with that Assessment and hadn't seen those results. However, in reviewing the materials over the past week, we discovered the Enterprise Workload to Workforce functional assessment pilot under Campaign Plan Goal 4d1: *Shape the Future Workforce* did not produce any information that would cause us to change the ways we are modifying our training programs. Consistent with our training data, the Workload to Workforce assessment shows that attrition is and will be impacting our expertise levels and capabilities.

We know we need to target a certain range of planner. In the first three years, it is most important to provide a core-level training. Beyond that, we recognize there is a need to continue to develop competencies with more intermediate and advanced training. Our focus for the incoming employees is on providing the core curriculum within the first three years.

### **ATR Certification Process**

**In qualifying for ATR certification, the emphasis seems to be placed on larger complex studies. Can you explain that emphasis on large studies?**

In 2012, the Inspector General concluded that we were not identifying experts / qualified people to do ATR or sufficiently vetting them. The agency's response was to develop a process to ensure that happened, including ATR certification. The emphasis on larger and complex studies is because those studies generally receive more attention and also contain a level of complexity

with systems that are interrelated. However, it is important to use qualified reviewers on ALL studies.

**Is there a process in place now for becoming certified as an ATR reviewer?**

Yes, there is a process and point of contact at every MSC for economics, plan formulation, and environmental ATR certification. There is also a representative for cultural resources. It is important that you are affiliated with a sub-community of practice. The Sub-CoP is where everything is happening regarding the subject matter expertise database and the certification protocols. Some planners are aligned with multiple Sub-CoPs, which is a good thing. When in doubt, align with more than one, but clearly you need to be aligned with at least one.

**How do CAP and ATR certification interact? Have you worked this out internally?**

We will have to get back to you; we are still trying to work out the details on that. We want to coordinate with the Engineering and Construction Community of Practice given what the ECB says about ATR for E&C, where they don't have an exception for CAP.

**Planner Certification**

**Is there anything more you can say about planner certification?**

Details on Planner Certification were intentionally left that out of the presentation. We want to make sure it is finalized and not present information that changes later. We are close. It is aligned with the ATR certification process: it entails having a qualification statement, going through the chain of command, a supervisor endorsement, and a MSC endorsement. It will also likely be reviewed by the Planning Advisory Board (MSC Planning Chiefs). Clearly we have been talking about planner certification for some time. Since the pilot program, we have been very much consumed by the ATR certification process and we have also learned a lot from the pilot. The timeframe is to finalize and roll out the certification early in CYY15 so that we can integrate an education/outreach component in the rollout.

**PCoP Conference**

**Is there anything in the works looking at reinstating the PCoP conference? Virtual interaction can be good and efficient, but it can be difficult for us to network beyond the district to see what others are doing from a technical standpoint.**

We support all of your comments regarding the value of face-to-face interaction in the planning community. We have been hindered by the rules regarding conferences and large meetings. We are working to have a PCoP conference and are shooting for FY15. We will have to be in a government facility and we will have to limit it to Corps participation only. While this is unfortunate, it is better than nothing.