



American Planning Association • New Jersey Chapter

American Institute of Certified Planners
1776 Massachusetts Av, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Comments on Proposed AICP Certification Maintenance Program

Dear AICP Commission:

The New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association (NJAPA) strongly supports the idea of mandatory continued education as part of AICP certification. We appreciate the efforts of the AICP Commission to bring this idea to fruition. However, we have some concerns about the current proposal. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

1. The requirement that 50% of the credits must be earned through an APA/AICP sponsored program seems self-serving and excessive and overlooks the extensive overlap and partnerships that AICP members share with other professional organizations, not to mention the value of more locally-based planning-related training sessions. AICP members have a broad range of interests, engage in a broad range of activities and have a wide variety of joint affiliations with other professional organizations, many of which maintain their own rigorous mandatory continuing education programs. Unless APA/AICP can demonstrate that it will quickly recognize a broad range of programs offered by other organizations, we suggest that a better model would be for AICP to partner with these other professional organizations and fully recognize the crossover membership that exists between organizations. Whether an AICP member is receiving professional education credits through AIA, ASLA or any other accredited professional organization should not be relevant. The artificial silos created by professional organizations should not be brought into the continuing education field. The proposed fee to be charged to other professional organizations in order to qualify their programs for recognition as eligible for AICP credits is not acceptable. APA, ASLA, AIA, ITE, USGBC and all other relevant organizations should

quickly work out a system of mutual recognition that breaks down the silos and is user-friendly for all members of these professional organizations.

2. It is not clear why teaching assignments may count towards the required credits if unpaid, but not if paid. If attending a course at an accredited university program counts as learning credits for a student, why should it not count as teaching credits for the instructor? If AICP's intention is to require full time planning academics to demonstrate that they are exposed to continuing education opportunities outside their own subject areas within academics, then there are better ways to achieve this goal. Planning practitioners who teach planning courses on the side at accredited planning programs, often with considerable sacrifice to their own professional activities, should be able to receive credits for their dedication to the teaching side of the profession.

3. There is concern about the lack of recognition, in terms of certification maintenance, of the work professional planners may undertake as volunteers as part of planning or zoning boards. In addition to volunteering their time on behalf of their communities, volunteers are constantly exposed, as part of the development application process, to a variety of often very sophisticated planning materials generated by professional planners and other professionals in the field. If these volunteers are considered by their communities to be worthy of their trust in terms of making decisions on often complex development applications, should this work not be recognized?

4. The current proposal allows attendance at the National APA conference to count towards a lion-share of the required credits. Again, this seems insular and self-serving. Without the conference, it would be difficult for many practitioners to gain the total 48 hours in 2 years. Other conferences, including state chapter conferences, may be equally or more valuable in terms of a member's professional education. Similar to comment number 1 above, this approach overemphasizes AICP programs, and provides limited opportunities to achieve the necessary credits outside of the conference. While we can appreciate the positive effect that this requirement could have on conference attendance, it limits many of the people who may not be able to attend the conference in a given year, due to scheduling, financial or other equally valid reasons.

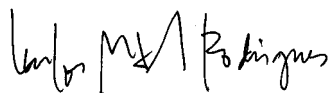
5. The proposed 48-credit requirement may be particularly difficult to sell in New Jersey, which has its own Professional Planning (PP) license. For most planning firms active in New Jersey, it is far more important for planning staff to maintain their PP certification than the AICP certification. As a result, if the 48 credit requirement is deemed excessive, this could be self-defeating in terms of AICP membership. We strongly suggest AICP double check its proposed requirements against the current professional development requirements established by other comparable professional organizations. We believe AICP will find that other similar professional organizations are requiring less time.

APA/AICP membership has also expressed, through surveys, its opinion that a lesser number of hours would be appropriate and desirable for the membership. We suggest AICP reduce the number of hours accordingly.

6. The self-study component of the proposal raises some concern. Should reading a book be sufficient? Watching a video? Going to a lecture? While all these activities may be worthwhile, indeed instrumental in the professional development of an individual, there is concern that some outside evaluation system should apply to validate this experience. Should there not be an effort in this respect?

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments and look forward to a revised proposal from AICP.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carlos M. Rodriguez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "R".

Carlos Rodrigues, PP/AICP
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