

AICP Certification Examination Content Outline

Starting with the May 2017 Exam

The AICP Certification Examination:

- Tests a planner's ability to succeed at the levels of education and experience required by AICP certification – to think critically, anticipate consequences, and mitigate problems;
- Recognizes that all planners achieving AICP certification must share a fundamental knowledge of core elements and competencies that form the foundation of our profession;
- Is written by AICP members who are practitioners or educators working in the public and private sectors;
- Relates to what planners should know today, including innovative practices, emerging issues, trends, and best practices;
- Reflects that planning occurs at the intersection of many disciplines, and that planners frequently work as conveners and facilitators within communities and with experts in other fields;
- Emphasizes that the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is fundamental to being an AICP-certified planner and is the foundation for much of what planners do; and
- Tests knowledge of planning as practiced throughout the United States, and not in any particular region, state, or place.

The exam consists of 170 multiple choice questions (20 of which are unidentified questions-in-development that do not count toward the final score). This outline offers candidates preparing to take the exam insight into its subject matter.

The exam covers five major topic areas, each encompassing several categories. It includes questions from all five topics, but may not necessarily include questions from each category. Examples are provided for most categories, but questions are not confined to those examples. The percentage of exam questions pertaining to each major topic area is indicated.

I. Fundamental Planning Knowledge (25%)

- A. History of planning, planning movements, and influences on planning
- B. Foundational legal principles and decisions (e.g., housing law, property rights, eminent domain)
- C. Theories of and about planning (e.g., public interest, incrementalism, comprehensiveness, equity, advocacy planning, rational planning)
- D. Patterns of human settlement (e.g., growth and development of places over time, role of transportation in shaping urban form, cultural influences on the form of places)
- E. Statutory basis of planning (e.g., relationship to national and state government, governance structure)
- F. General terminology, practices, and principles of related professions (e.g., public health, architecture, law, engineering, real estate, environmental restoration)
- G. Natural, social, and economic systems (e.g., political context, demographics, social trends, ecology, water, health, climate)
- H. Core values of planning (e.g., equity and social justice, public interest, sustainability, healthy and prosperous communities, diversity, democratic engagement, transparency)

II. Plan Making and Implementation (30%)

- A. Conducting research and acquiring knowledge (e.g., qualitative and quantitative research, research methods, precedents and examples, best practices, analysis and reporting, surveying)
- B. Spatial analysis (e.g., GIS, mapping, interpretation)

- C. Public engagement (e.g., participation methods, social media, strategies and tools, advocacy, outreach)
- D. Communication (e.g., clear and understandable visual, written, and spoken concepts; building relationships; conducting meetings; media relations)
- E. Preparing to plan (e.g., visioning, goal setting, identifying key issues, forecasting, legal context)
- F. Formulating plans and policies (e.g., creating and evaluating alternatives, full range of impacts, plan presentation, policy analysis, building constituency, visualization techniques)
- G. Plan implementation (e.g., codes and regulations, budgeting and finance, demonstration projects, decision making)
- H. Monitoring and assessment (e.g., measures of performance, outcome indicators)
- I. Project or program management (e.g., RFPs, RFQs, grants, preparing budgets, managing contracts, scheduling, allocating staff)
- J. Social justice (e.g., planning for diverse or underserved communities, social empowerment)

III. Areas of Practice (30%)

- A. Comprehensive and sectoral planning (e.g., spatial planning, growth management, long range planning, general planning, regional planning, fiscal impact analysis, capital improvement planning, policy planning, tribal planning, governance structures)
- B. Community, subarea, corridor, and neighborhood planning
- C. Current planning (e.g., codes and regulations, zoning, plan review, design review, site planning)
- D. Sustainability planning (e.g., sustainable processes, practices and outcomes, including environmental planning, economic planning, and equity planning)
- E. Transportation planning (e.g., mobility and accessibility planning, land use and transportation demand, transportation modes, goods movement, ports, airports, intermodal, pedestrian, bicycle, transit, parking, and access equity)
- F. Infrastructure planning (e.g., utilities, community facilities, energy, green and blue infrastructure, communications, waste, water and sewer, concurrency)
- G. Hazards, mitigation, and resiliency planning (e.g., flooding, earthquake, wildfires, spills, brownfields, anti-terrorism, disaster preparedness planning)
- H. Environmental and natural resources planning (e.g., air quality, climate change, environmental impact analysis, aquatic planning, agriculture, forestry, extraction, habitat, shoreline planning, environmental justice)
- I. Economic development planning (e.g., community revitalization, economic analysis and forecasting, incentives, financing mechanisms, tourism, workforce development, business development, resiliency, shared economy, tax increment financing)
- J. Urban design (e.g., place making, transit oriented development, walkability, mixed use, public realm, design guidelines, wayfinding, infill development)
- K. Housing planning (e.g., homelessness, affordability, market analysis, policy, finance, fair housing, manufactured housing, micro-housing, universal design, co-housing, accessory dwelling units)
- L. Parks, recreation, and open space (e.g., standards, incentives, greenways and trails, scenic resource, preservation, viewsheds, wildlife corridors, connectivity, conservation easements, transfer/purchase of development rights)
- M. Historic and cultural resources planning (e.g., historic preservation, adaptive reuse, regulatory context, financing, cultural and heritage preservation, arts districts)
- N. Institutional planning and siting (e.g., schools, universities/colleges, hospitals, jails and prisons, military bases, religious facilities)
- O. Food planning (e.g., food security, access and justice, food production, food economies, food governance)

- P. Health planning (e.g., active living, aging in place, environmental justice, health districts and service distribution, health impact assessment)
- Q. Rural and small town planning (e.g., rural economic development, main streets, natural resource protection, tourism, multi-jurisdictional relations, rural character and scale)

IV. Leadership, Administration and Management (5%)

- A. Leadership (e.g., influencing decision making in the public interest, strategic decision making)
- B. Managing external relationships (e.g., customer service; client interaction; representing and promoting organizations; relationships with partner/sister organizations, decision makers, and boards and commissions; transparency; freedom of information; confidentiality; privacy)
- C. Internal organizational management (e.g., team building and staff training, planning-office culture, strategic planning, organizational budgeting and financial management)
- D. Technology and related applications (e.g., using technology and related information tools to advance planning, smart cities technology planning)

V. AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (10%)

- A. Section A: Aspirational principles (e.g. responsibility to the public, clients, employers, the profession, and colleagues)
- B. Section B: Rules of conduct
- C. Sections C, D, and E: Procedural provisions (e.g. advisory opinions, adjudication of complaints of misconduct, discipline of members)