

**FY19 Planning Associates Program
Planning CoP Webinar
July 19, 2018
Q&A Session**

Mr. Byron Rupp, New England District, and the Planning Associates Refresh Implementation Team (Ms. Joy Muncy, IWR; Ms. Rachel Mesko, MVP; Mr. Nate Richards, MVR; Mr. Jon Sobiech, MVP) provided an overview of the Planning Associates Program and approximate due dates for application to the FY19 Planning Associates Program. The presentation also addressed several new changes to the PA Program, which will be transitioning to a two-year program starting in FY19. Those who are not on the Planning Community of Practice distribution list but would like to be to receive the formal application should contact Ms. Muncy. Additional questions or information should be directed to Ms. Muncy or Mr. Rupp.



This summary of the Question / Answer session of the webinar is not a transcription; questions and responses have been edited and reordered for clarity.

Application & Program Requirements

What are the pre-requisite Planning courses that must be taken before applying to the program, and where can I find them?

Mandatory courses for the Planning Associated Program include a combination of PCC1 (USACE Civil Works Project Development Process), PCC2: Planning Essentials and PCC3: Plan Formulation and Evaluation Capstone, **OR** PCC1, PCC2 and PCC6 (Plan Formulation). The Planning Core Curriculum can be found here:

<https://planning.erdcdren.mil/toolbox/resources.cfm?Id=236&Option=Planning%20Core%20Curriculum%20and%20Other%20PROSPECT%20Training>. Register for PROSPECT Courses via the USACE Learning Center (ULC): <http://ulc.usace.army.mil/>

Is a long-term employment commitment required if a person participates in the Planning Associates Program?

Following successful completion of the PA program, a one year employment commitment is required. This service can be with another federal agency, but there is a strong preference to fulfill that commitment with USACE, and particularly within Planning.

Is work outside of USACE considered toward the years of experience? Does other experience help with the scoring criteria?

Work experience outside of USACE will be considered; however, applicants should be sure to clearly explain the relevance of non-USACE coursework and work experience in their applications.

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Will applications to audit individual courses be due at the same time as the application for the two-year program?

No, the applications for auditing courses will be due at a later date; we will announce the available courses for audit to the Planning Community via email and other means.

Are the application process, requirements, and criteria the same for auditors?

The application process to audit Planning Associates courses will be fairly similar and will include a resume, approval from your supervisor, and having been in the planning field for at least five years. When auditing a class, the participant's home office is responsible for funding both labor and travel.

Program Logistics

Under the refreshed program, what is the extent of TDY?

In a nutshell, the refreshed course schedule includes about 12 weeks total of training broken up over two years, but not all of it will be TDY. At least part of each class will have some virtual component, although logistics have yet to be determined. TDY in the refreshed course will be limited to weekdays to avoid weekend travel when possible, with additional classroom time needed switched to virtual presentations. The longest TDY periods will not be longer than two weeks.

In what month will the program start?

Currently the FY19 course is slated to start with in-person team building the last week of October and first week of November 2018; however, there will likely be a virtual orientation a week or two beforehand.

Will a draft schedule be made available for potential applicants to review before applying to the program?

A draft schedule will be provided with the application announcement.

The presentation noted that Districts are responsible for some labor costs. Does HQUSACE cover the majority of labor and travel costs associated with the program?

Yes, HQUSACE covers labor and travel comp time. Once I find out how much virtual time Planning Associates will need to spend on the program, I will make sure as much of that labor as possible is covered. The short answer is that HQUSACE covers the majority of labor and travel costs.

Will there still be an annual application, or will the application process only be offered every two years?

Yes, the program will be accepting new applicants each year and the program will now take two years to complete. Beginning in FY 2020, the new class of Planning Associates will overlap with the class that began in 2019. For the first time in the history of the PA program, groups of Planning Associates, beginning the program in different fiscal years, will have the opportunity to interact.

What is the target class size for FY19?

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There isn't a set number; the class size will depend on the number of applications, the quality of applicants, and availability of funding.

Program Content

Can you provide information on the application assignment?

The application assignment is intended to be tailored to the individual strengths of the Planning Associate. Over the course of the two-year program, the Planning Associate will work with mentors on a hands-on assignment that directly impacts an actual project or study. The details will be worked out on an individual basis as the program progresses.

Are the course lists finalized? I would suggest Water Supply be maintained in some manner. Water Supply is only gaining importance as we move into the future. In addition, there is new rulemaking regarding Water Supply policy new planners should be familiar with.

We had to focus the new program on the three priority mission areas. We, as an enterprise, may have to take a look at the need for more Water Supply training and potentially develop other PROSPECT courses outside of the Planning Associates Program. However, we're hopeful we can find ways to integrate key information from important topics like Water Supply, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and cultural resources into the program, because there is absolutely crossover with the priority mission areas.

Are the reading assignments similar to what they have been in past years?

Reading assignments should be similar to the past since similar material will be covered, but they are still being finalized.

Can more clarity be provided on the intent to retain "some" coverage for cultural resources, ESA, etc.?

The detail still needs to be worked out with the course owners. The bottom line is we're not going to turn a blind eye to these topics, but still need to work out how exactly they will be worked into courses.

Is there a PROSPECT course on cultural resources available?

A revamped version of PROSPECT 299 ([Cultural Resources](#)) with new instructors will be offered beginning in 2019. There is also a planned PROSPECT class on Native American Perspectives in Corps Missions.

Advice from past Planning Associate Program graduates:

- Start your application early and have plenty of people review it. It does take time to get the participation agreement signed, because they have to go through your senior leaders at the District level. The endorsement letters can take some time as well.
- The program is a great opportunity to gain a more strategic, multi-mission view of the Corps and to meet the people executing the mission every day. I highly enjoyed my year in the program and maintain close friendships with my classmates.
- It is not only important to understand the benefit of the program to your own professional development, but it is also key to understand what your participation will bring to USACE in the

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future. You should try to include this in your long-term individual development plan, and your application should explain how you will use what you learn in the program to further the USACE mission.