

Agency Technical Review
16 June 2022
Q&A Session

This webinar provided an overview of the categories of certification for Agency Technical Review (ATR) in Planning, as well as discussed certification application timelines and tips for success. Presenters included Debby Scerno (Environmental Compliance/Ecosystem Restoration ATR lead, Headquarters Office of Water Project Review), Nancy Brighton (Cultural Resources ATR lead, Headquarters Planning & Policy Division), Max Millstein (Economics ATR lead, South Atlantic Division), and Charlie Hanneken (Plan Form ATR lead, Northwestern Division).



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

Relevant Resources:

- Planner Database for ATR certification applications: <https://sme.planusace.us/>

ATR Categories

Is a sub-Community of Practice (CoP) or new ATR category under consideration to specifically address Environmental Justice (EJ) and/or comprehensive benefits, in light of Administration and Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works direction regarding the incorporation of EJ and comprehensive benefits in studies?

EJ considerations are currently covered under Environmental Compliance ATR and evaluation of comprehensive benefits is covered by Economics ATR and by economics reviews specific to the various business lines. Planners should also note that a new Air Quality sub-CoP is under development.

ATR Certification Qualifications

Are planners required to have five years of experience at USACE before they can become ATR certified for all ATR types?

Cultural Resources is the only ATR certification which strictly requires five years of USACE Planning experience due to the very specific nature of USACE cultural resources work and their relationship to Planning milestones. For the other ATR certifications, personnel have a strong working knowledge of planning concepts before they apply. In some cases, applicants new to USACE with significant related experience that can be documented may be considered for certification.

How is experience with technical services (e.g., Flood Plain Management Services, Planning Assistance to States) considered in the ATR certification application process?

Applicants should be able to demonstrate that they understand the USACE planning process (often by GI or CAP study experience) and are familiar with all study milestones. However, a wide range of applicant experience is considered, and applicants should be sure to document all types of study and project work, especially as it pertains to understanding USACE planning processes, authorities, and guidance.

Are ATRs restricted to certified reviewers?

Reviews are generally restricted to ATR certified USACE planners. If an exception is needed, it can be carried out under [Engineer Regulation 1165-2-217, Civil Works Review Policy](#) when coordinated with the Review Management Organization (RMO) and documented in the study's Review Plan.

ATR Experience

Are there formal ATR “shadowing” programs at the MSCs or Districts that USACE personnel interested in becoming ATR certified can participate in?

There are no formal ATR shadowing programs at the MSC or District level; however, planners interested in becoming ATR certified can reach out to ATR reviewers in their District or MSC and ask to shadow them (e.g., by reviewing the same products they review). However, be sure to check with your supervisor, since often a project will not be able to fund a second person to conduct ATR review, but planners are welcome to do additional ATR work on their own time to gain experience.