AGENCY TECHNICAL REVIEW

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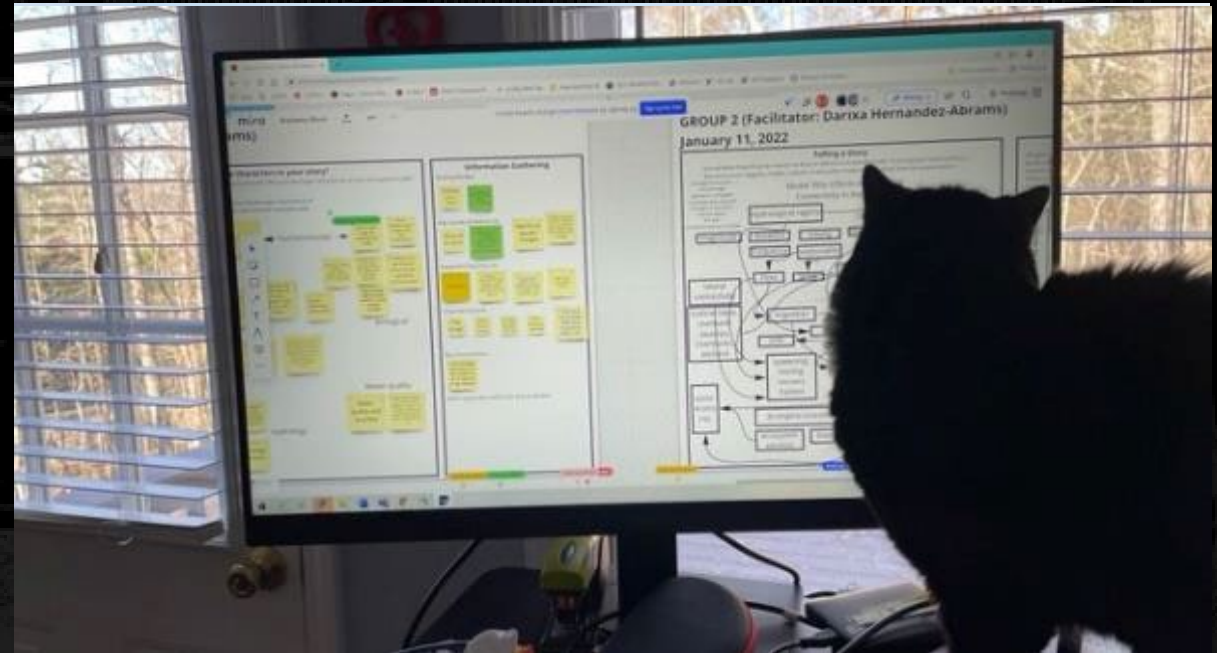Office of Water Project Review

8 August 2024

U.S. ARMY

US Army Corps of Engineers®

WHAT IS YOUR LOCATION AND DISCIPLINE?

WHERE WE ARE - USACE WORLDWIDE

Archaeologist/Cultural Res._____

Environmental Planner_____

Plan Formulation_____

Economist_____

Geologist_____

Hydrologist_____

Civil Engineer_____

Environmental Engineer_____

Electrical Engineer_____

Mechanical Engineer_____

Other Engineer_____

Counsel_____

Real Estate_____

Project Manager_____

Project Support (other)_____

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ATR?

Not Much

I am interested in becoming certified

ATR just causes more work

WHAT IS AGENCY TECHNICAL REVIEW?

From ER 1165-2-217

- Undertaken to ensure the quality and credibility of the government's scientific and technical information.

- Mandatory for all draft and final decision documents and most implementation products.

- The level of review should be commensurate with the significance of the information being reviewed, which should be determined using risk-informed decision making

- ATR is conducted outside the District with an ATR Team Lead from outside the MSC to remove unintended bias of the District/Division.

- The role of ATR is to assess adequacy of DQC, validate key PDT decisions, bring up important issues, concerns, and lessons learned.

- The corporate intent is for the ATR process to ensure overall technical analyses and approaches are correct and compliant with all pertinent USACE guidance to achieve high quality work products and facilitate vertical alignment early in work product development.

- The ATR Team is to perform an independent review of the PDT work and is not to make project decisions. The PDT is responsible for the work product/design.

TYPES OF CERTIFICATIONS - PLANNING

ATR Teams will be comprised of senior USACE personnel who have been vetted and certified by their respective Community of Practice (CoP) for their specific areas of expertise.

Certified ATR professionals are listed in the Planner Database (http://sme.planusace.us/).

- Cultural Resources
- Plan Formulation
- Economic
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Environmental Compliance

POLL QUESTION

True or False?
Only those "who know someone" are approved for ATR certification.

True or False?
Certification for ATR is easy to achieve.

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FALSE

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Certification for ATR is easy to achieve.

FALSE

CULTURAL RESOURCES ATR CERTIFICATION FOR PLANNING FEASIBILITY STUDIES

- Annual ATR Certification Open Season – Start of FY
- Submit a complete qualifications statement form:
  - Demonstrate minimum five-year experience in USACE Planning Studies and projects;
  - Demonstrate experience in the completion of cultural resources compliance requirements in accordance with Planning policy for all decision and product milestones;
  - Highlight technical expertise (archaeology, architectural history, history, etc.), regional experience, and experience in Planning study areas (coastal storm risk management, flood risk management, navigation, etc.); and
  - Highlight academic history, training, other areas of related technical or USACE experience.
- Completed form requires District and MSC approval and support (endorsed through MSC Cultural Resources Leads/RTS).
- Review by CR CoP Lead and MSC Cultural Resources Leads/RTS.
- Currently no re-certification required.

CULTURAL RESOURCES ATR CERTIFICATION

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True or False?

ATR Certification is only available if you are a Regional Technical Specialist?

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CULTURAL RESOURCES ATR CERTIFICATION

Potential Future Direction:

- Each year provide spreadsheet by USACE expertise to PCX leads and others

- Develop internal expertise for other USACE areas and other compliance activities to provide additional support to answer questions, provide examples, best practices, etc.

- Improve opportunities for Cultural Resources ATR

PLAN FORMULATION ATR CERTIFICATION

Process
- Announcement is made annually in summer. Application is submitted through the Planner Database with supervisor endorsement by October 31
- MSC Senior Plan Formulator reviews and endorses application
- Plan Form Senior Oversight Group reviews and endorses application

Plan Form Subject Matter Experts
Senior USACE technical expert within the PCoP who is highly skilled in plan formulation, Capable of independently accomplishing the most complex and difficult planning tasks.
Can easily answer questions; determine proper procedures; share lessons learned; coordinate and collaborate appropriately to a situation; and identify the various nuances within a given plan formulation topic; finding the appropriate resources, policies, or experts.

Experience
- Looking for broad experience across a majority of business lines
- Has taken several GI/CAP studies through the full planning process
- Has served as a DQC reviewer and/or shadowed ATRs

PLAN FORMULATION ATR CERTIFICATION

True or False?

Work as an economist or environmental specialist count towards your Plan Form ATR Certification experience.

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Work as an economist or environmental specialist count towards your Plan Form ATR Certification experience.

FALSE – The experience evaluated for plan formulation ATR certification is work as a plan formulator on a study or review.

ECONOMIC ATR CERTIFICATION

TRUE or FALSE? (Mark your response below each statement)

Economics ATR Certification "open season" only happens once a year.

TRUE   FALSE

Economics ATR Reviewers are Certified by each individual Business Line.

TRUE   FALSE

10 years of experience is required to be ATR Certified for Economics

TRUE   FALSE

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ECONOMIC ATR CERTIFICATION

- Annual Certification Process timing:
  - Applications Accepted starting 1 OCT
    (but may be earlier [Aug-Sep] according to new SOP)
  - Division Economists will review and score applica
    November
  - Senior Economists Group will meet to review ar
    Certifications by 1 January
  - Must re-certify every 3 years
- Certification requirements:
  - Economists seeking certification must submit a qualifications
    statement for each business line
  - The first- or second-line supervisor must review and verify the
    qualifications statement prior to submitting to the MSC Economist

ECONOMIC ATR CERTIFICATION

- Qualifications Statement & Crediting:
  - Academic Degree
  - Positions Held in USACE
  - Corps Training and Teaching in Economics
  - Developmental / Special Assignments
  - Review Team Assignments (DQC, ATR, IEPR responses)
  - Studies worked on within the business line
  - Self study
  - Years as Economist with USACE
- Review assignments and Studies worked on categories are worth the most points (more than half of the total)
  - Generally, a score of 70 points or greater will qualify

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION ATR CERTIFICATION

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Who: GS 12/13/14 experienced in ecosystem restoration.

What: Lead role in at least two projects focused on ecosystem restoration
Experience on multiple projects with
cost effectiveness and incremental cost analysis
determining federal interest

Where: Apply through the Planner Database

When: Can apply anytime, but applications are pulled mid-November each year
Decisions made by early February
Certification is for three years

Why: Strong interest in improving Corps Planning

Will need endorsement of supervisor.
Helpful if MSC lead knows of your work.
Training in ecosystem restoration and habitat analysis important.

POLL QUESTION

True or False?

If you are certified for Ecosystem Restoration you are automatically certified for Environmental Compliance.

POLL QUESTION

True or False?

If you are certified for Ecosystem Restoration you are automatically certified for Environmental Compliance.

FALSE - but the ER ATR reviewer will usually be required to do the Env Compliance review as well

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE ATR

Who: GS 12/13/14 experienced in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

What: Lead role in one or more Environmental Impact Statements
or multiple Environmental Assessments
Experience with Endangered Species Act consultations
Experience with other environmental compliance

Where: Apply through the Planner Database

When: Can apply anytime, but applications are pulled mid-November
Decisions made by early February
Certification is for three years

Why: Strong interest in improving Corps Planning

Requires endorsement by supervisor.
Helpful if MSC lead knows your work.
Training may include classes taken as undergrad or grad student.

POLL QUESTION

The types of ATR certification offered by Planning are:

A. Planner, Environmental, Archeological, Cost
B. Plan Formulation, Economic, Environmental, Cultural Resources
C. Plan Formulation, Economic, Env Compliance, Eco Rest, Cult Resources
D. Planner, Economist, Environment, Archeology

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C. Plan Formulation, Economic, Env Compliance, Eco Rest, Cult Resources
D. Planner, Economist, Environment, Archeology

TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

Keep a word document with key information about your projects –
Project name and dates
Your role and duties (use the application as a guideline)
Milestones achieved

Diversify your experience – Coastal, Inland, Navigation, Flood Risk,
Ecosystem Restoration, NEPA, compliance, etc.

Be sure that the projects you identify in your application support the experience and expertise you are highlighting in your application

Do not undersell or oversell yourself – no boy scouts or salesmen

District Quality Control experience is very helpful.

QUESTIONS?