

*This webinar provided an overview of the USACE certification for Agency Technical Review (ATR) in Planning, including certification application timelines and tips for success. Presenters included members of each of the Planning sub-Communities of Practice: Nancy Brighton (Cultural Resources ATR Lead, HQUSACE), Charlie Hanneken (Plan Formulation ATR Lead, Northwestern Division), Max Millstein (Economics ATR Lead, South Atlantic Division), and Debby Scerno (Environmental Compliance/Ecosystem Restoration ATR Lead, HQUSACE Office of Water Project Review).*



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

### **ATR Certification Eligibility & Requirements**

#### **Are Project Managers (PMs) eligible to become ATR certified?**

USACE staff from any discipline are eligible to apply for ATR certification, but it is typically difficult for non-planners to meet the necessary criteria given the certification requirements relate specifically to planning experience. However, there are several ways PMs and others can meet those requirements, including by completing details within Planning to gain the needed experience or by seeking out dual-hatted Planner/PM positions.

#### **Is there a minimum General Schedule (GS) level required for ATR certification?**

There is no formal minimum GS level requirement for ATR certification, but the type and amount of experience required for ATR certification typically favors those in GS-12 or higher-level positions. However, there may be some districts in which GS-11s are taking on the necessary level of work to meet the certification requirements, in which case they are welcome to apply when they feel ready to do so.

#### **Does experience reviewing manuscripts for professional journals count towards the ATR certification requirements?**

Reviewing manuscripts for professional journals would contribute to the self-study category of certification requirements. It would not count as a formal review experience, which must be directly related to reviewing USACE feasibility studies.

#### **Does completion of private-sector training classes on National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) topics count towards ATR certification?**

NEPA courses from private-sector providers, such as the Shipley courses that have been offered through USACE, may count towards the background education requirements for ATR certification. Applicants with this experience would still need to show an application of that knowledge on specific USACE feasibility studies to qualify.

**What is the best way to participate in ATR shadowing?**

Those interested in shadowing an ATR reviewer should find out who in their district is ATR certified, see what ATR reviews are upcoming, and talk with their supervisor about their desire to shadow the review process to determine the best opportunity to do so.

**ATR Certification Process**

**When will the latest group of ATR recertifications for Economics appear in the [Planner Database](#)?**

Planners should check with their MSC Economist about the timing of ATR recertifications for Economics.

**What is the recertification process for environmental compliance and ecosystem restoration ATR certification?**

For both environmental compliance and ecosystem restoration, certified reviewers will get an automated e-mail three years after their last certification/recertification asking them to reapply. The application from three years ago will be reopened in the Planner Database and will need to be updated with the additional ATR and District Quality Control reviews the applicant has completed since their last certification/recertification, and any other relevant projects they have worked on in that time. The application will then be submitted for recertification.

**Why is the Economics sub-CoP the only one to certify ATR reviewers by business line?**

Economic analyses for different business lines vary, with each business line having its own set of assumptions, analyses, tools, and models. While someone can be ATR certified for Economics across different business lines, they must demonstrate business line-specific experience to get certified under each one.