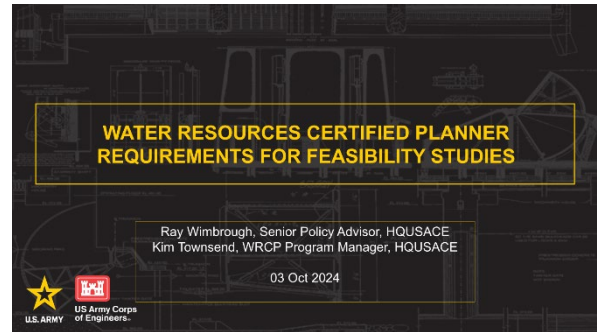


WRCP Requirements for Feasibility Studies

3 October 2024

Q&A Summary

This webinar provided an overview of the recently signed memo entitled “Water Resources Certified Planner Requirements for Feasibility Studies,” which requires all feasibility studies, including General Reevaluation Reports (GRRs), initiated since 1 October 2022 to have a Water Resources Certified Planner (WRCP) assigned as the Planning Technical Lead or mentor to the Planning Technical Lead. Presented by Ray Wimbrough (HQUSACE Senior Policy Advisor) and Kim Townsend (HQUSACE WRCP Program Manager), this webinar discussed the contents and implications of the memo, and the process for applying for WRCP certification.



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

Water Resources Certified Planner Resources:

- [Water Resources Certified Planner Requirements for Feasibility Studies Memorandum](#)
- [WRCP Scoring Rubric](#)
- [WRCP Program Page – Planning Community Toolbox](#)
- [WRCP Knowledge Management Portal \(SharePoint\) Site](#)

Clarification on New WRCP Requirements

Are there any exceptions to the requirement that Planning Technical Leads must be WRCPs (e.g., if someone has a certain number of years of experience or is a GS-12 or higher)?

If the Planning Technical Lead is not a WRCP, a WRCP must be a formal mentor to that Planning Technical Lead (PTL), regardless of the PTL’s years of experience or GS-level. Exceptions to the requirement for assignment of a WRCP to a feasibility study, either as the PTL or as a mentor to the PTL, must be requested by the District Commander, endorsed by the Division Commander, and submitted to the Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations, for approval.

Do the WRCP requirements apply to small programs or non-General Investigation studies?

This requirement does not apply to Continuing Authority Program studies, Planning Assistance to States, Floodplain Management Services, or Silver Jackets projects or activities. Dam Safety Modification Studies would be considered feasibility studies and would need to fulfill the WRCP requirement.

Will Districts be tracked to ensure compliance with the new requirements?

Currently, District compliance is not being formally tracked, but you can expect data calls, or questions about this requirement from the milestone decision-makers during milestone meetings.

How many WRCPs are available to fulfill the requirements of the memo (i.e., currently work in Districts)?

75 of the 114 WRCPs currently in our agency are District employees. However, WRCPs at any level of the organization can be mentors to the PTL. the full list of current WRCPs can be viewed on the USACE [Planner Database](#).

WRCP Mentor Details and Expectations

Do WRCP mentors for PTLs need to come from within or outside the District?

Either. Mentors can be from other Districts or can be pulled from the study's District.

Will there be additional study funding made available to support WRCP mentorship?

If the PTL is a WRCP, a mentor is not needed and will not affect the budget. However, funding a WRCP mentor for a non-certified PTL will be a District responsibility, and funds will need to be found within the study budget or from another resource.

Could all Plan Formulation Section Chiefs become WRCPs and act as mentors for their staff?

While possible, it is important to think about whether a Section Chief would have the time to be a supervisor and a mentor to the PTL.

Does the WRCP mentor have to be from the Plan Formulation discipline?

A WRCP does not have to be in the Plan Formulation discipline to act as a Planning Technical Lead mentor. However, a Plan Formulation sub-CoP WRCP may have more relevant experience to draw from in supporting the Planning Technical Lead than a WRCP from another discipline/sub-CoP. Ultimately, this will be the District's decision.

How is a WRCP mentor different from an Agency Technical Review (ATR) reviewer?

Being a mentor is a different role than conducting ATR. ATR is a very specific action and less in-tuned with the workings of the study, while a mentor will be engaged directly with the PTL with most aspects of the study.

Will WRCP mentors partake in all study team meetings?

The expectations and the functions of the mentor role will be established by the Districts based on the needs and experiences of the PTL and the study.

WRCP Application Process and Expectations

Are WRCPs certified for their experience within a specific mission area/business line?

WRCP certification is not by mission area. However, in the Planner Database, WRCPs can be searched for by area of expertise if you're trying to find a WRCP that fits a certain business line or mission area as a PTL or mentor.

Is there a minimum number of years of experience an applicant should have?

There is no required minimum number of years of experience. Most WRCPs have at least 8 years of planning experience when certified, though many have 10-15 years.

Is there a limit on the number of certifications awarded each application cycle?

There is not. Applicants are measured via a point system, and an applicant is only considered for certification if they achieve a certain number of points based on what the applicant provides in their Planner Database application, interview, and submitted essays.

Is ATR certification a prerequisite for becoming a WRCP?

No. While many WRCPs have an ATR certification, it is not required.

What should a junior planner do if they want to become a WRCP in the future?

A junior planner should use the application criteria as a guide on what kinds of experiences they should be seeking out. Supervisors should support junior planners by providing opportunities or assignments that support experience to satisfy those criteria.

What should applicants expect from the WRCP interview process?

Those who achieve a certain number of points in their Planner Database application will move on to the interview portion. In the interview, applicants will have 15 minutes to answer three questions about aspects of their professional experience and goals. The interview will be conducted by the WRCP Program Manager (currently Kim Townsend), the PCoP Deputy (currently Susan Werning), and the relevant MSC Planning Chief.

Would presenting in national webinars fall into the teaching category for the WRCP requirements?

Yes. All kinds of teaching experience can be captured in the application.

Since studies can become stalled for years for a myriad of reasons, how important is the application requirement of "leading studies from start to finish?"

Study experience counts even if the applicant was not involved at the time the study concluded. However, a WRCP applicant's score for any given study is dependent, in part, on the number of milestones in which the applicant was involved for that study. Applicants should keep in mind that while they can list up to 15 studies in their application, only the 5 highest-scoring studies will be counted toward their application score.

Does a planner need to be a WRCP to reach GS-13?

No. WRCP certification is not used as a criterion for promotion.

Will applicants who are not selected be informed about what they were missing in their application?

Yes. At the end of each application cycle, the WRCP Program Manager (currently Kim Townsend) sends all non-selected applicants personalized feedback, so that they know which portions of the Planner Database application (and, if applicable, the essays and interview) they need to improve in when they apply again in the future.

Has HQUSACE looked at opportunities to use other organizations' certifications rather than developing our own?

Because the USACE planning process is so unique to our agency, other more widely recognized planning certifications (i.e., that offered by the American Institute of Certified Planners) are not necessarily a good indicator of one's ability to lead a Corps planning study. For that reason, USACE established the WRCP Program to identify those individuals within our community of practice who possess a broad variety of experience and training in the USACE planning processes and are capable of leading complex water resources planning efforts. That being said, Planning leadership strongly supports our personnel pursuing any other professional certifications that interest them and that they believe will benefit their professional careers. Many planners have their WRCP certification as well as their Professional Engineer, Project Management Professional, Certified Floodplain Manager, or other licensures.