

Frequently Asked Questions

Certification Program: IAP2 USA

Question: Do I have to take IAP2's Training Program in order to apply for Certification?

Yes. The Task Force began its journey to develop this program by reviewing other professional certification programs. Virtually all rely on an academic program to provide foundational knowledge. The Task Force labored long and hard regarding what to require as a knowledge base for the certification program. Given that public participation professionals come from a wide range of academic backgrounds (including, but not limited to: communications, journalism, public relations, public administration, conflict management, etc.), the Task Force was not able to specify a single academic discipline that provides the definitive and most appropriate background for the P2 Professional.

The IAP2 USA Board of Directors approved one prerequisite to be completed prior to application for certification. Applicants must first complete IAP2's 5-day training program (either the IAP2 Foundations training that was provided through early 2023 or the [Global Certificate in Public Participation](#) program which began in 2023).

This prerequisite is a requirement for the following reasons:

1. The certification program was designed as an organizational self-certifying credential. In order to offer such a credential, IAP2 must be able to verify that the basic knowledge of candidates is adequate and comprehensive. The only knowledge base IAP2 has control over, and verification of, is the IAP2 training. It is simply a knowledge prerequisite demonstrating basic understanding of the important principles and aspects of public involvement, as promoted by IAP2.
2. Research has not revealed an academic or training program that provides equivalent comprehensive basic principles of P2.
3. IAP2 has neither the resources nor the capability of vetting equivalent knowledge frameworks if they do exist. Conceptually, the range of things that might be proposed on a nationwide - and international - level could be boundless.
4. The goal of the prerequisite is to ensure to candidates and the assessors that everyone starts the certification process on an equal footing with similar background knowledge. Allowing anyone to propose another foundational knowledge program as equivalent to the IAP2 Foundations Course would not ensure a level playing field to all certification candidates.
5. The Task Force is keenly aware that this approach may not be universally accepted as the best one and is highly sensitive to the fact that completing IAP2's training adds significant cost to the overall certification process. The Task Force is confident that this approach received extensive and thorough consideration and is justifiable and defensible. Every effort was made to be fair and transparent to all seeking certification.

Question: I thought I was already certified because I took IAP2 training. Now you are telling me I need to do more?

Actually, IAP2 did not have a certification program until 2015. The organization has offered a 5-day training program since the early 2000s. People who took that training were awarded a certificate of attendance at the end of the course.

You and others may have claimed that you were certified, but in fact, you were not. It was based on this confusion, in part, that IAP2 renamed the 5-day training program to the Foundations Program in 2014.

Professional certification programs are conducted to support professionalization in many fields, including planning, architecture, public relations, facilitation, and many others. Professional certification requires a formal and independent assessment that an individual is able to perform against industry-defined standards. Prior to the creation of the professional certification program, IAP2 had never required an assessment of performance and so it was erroneous for people to claim that they were certified simply as a result of having completed training.

The five-day training is a prerequisite for certification, which means you are already eligible should you be interested in applying for certification. The steps in the certification process, once an application is accepted, are designed to independently verify that candidates can perform against essential core competencies. These core competencies were defined based on input from members.

Question: Why does the Program cost so much?

The pricing for the Certification Program was established to ensure that the program is self-supporting and can run on a cost-recovery basis.

Question: My company won't pay for professional certification. Why would it be worth it to pay that much money out of my own pocket to become certified?

It can be frustrating that many of us work for companies that don't necessarily value our work. It is everyone's responsibility to promote and advocate for responsible and meaningful P2 that equates to more than checking a box. Another way to look at the cost of certification is this: The credential is portable and like any other credential, you can take it with you as progress in your career.

Question: Who will receive the Certification Program fees?

Program fees will go to IAP2 USA.

Question: What criteria will be used to weigh, measure, and evaluate candidates and is there a scoring system?

[Click here for the Core Competencies.](#) Assessors will be looking for evidence of the core competencies throughout the three-step process. Assessors should be able to find evidence of all criteria for someone to be eligible for certification (**all are considered essential**). International membership provided input into the determination of the assessed criteria, the principles and the process.

The application (including portfolio), case study response, and assessment center are designed to accumulate evidence of each candidate's experience, capabilities, and performance for the criteria. It is recommended that candidates become thoroughly familiar with the core competencies and all of the

criteria and approach the three-step certification process as an opportunity to demonstrate and document their experience, capabilities, and performance against all of the criteria and all five core competencies. Merely saying “I have done this before” or “I know how to do that” may not present compelling evidence to the assessors that a candidate is capable of doing something.

Is there an expiration date on my certification, should I earn it?

Ongoing Requirements (for maintaining certification). To maintain certification once it has been awarded, CP3's and MCP3's must:

- Remain an IAP2 USA member.
- Provide a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer (unpaid) service to IAP2 USA and/or the profession on an annual basis. Eligible activities include leadership positions on the IAP2 USA Board or chapter level, service on IAP2 USA committee work, participation in the Mentorship Program, development of case studies for use in the Certification Program, authoring articles for newsletters, leadership of an IAP2 sponsored webinar or conference session, etc.
- Participate in a minimum of 12 hours (annually) of continued professional development. Eligible activities include attendance at webinars, conference sessions, academic courses, training classes, etc.

Periodic Recertification. Every three years, CP3s and MCP3s must undertake recertification.

Re-certification will entail submission of a recertification application (with fee) for review of the application by an assessor. The content of the recertification application should include:

- A professional goal for the next three years and the rationale for selection of that professional goal,
- A 100-word self-assessment related to the one's progress on the goal established during the prior certification cycle,
- A 750-word project description for a project completed since the prior certification cycle along with a self-reflection on what was learned from that project and a reference for that project.

The recertification application will be reviewed by an assessor and feedback will be provided.

Question: Will IAP2 members who completed the 5-day IAP2 training that results in a Certificate be able to claim that they are “certified” by IAP2? If not, what can they claim?

Taking the IAP2 “Certificate Program” is not the same as being Professional Certified... because it lacks any form of **assessment**. If you complete the certificate program you have not earned professional certification. Certification requires successful completion of a formal assessment program and demonstration of education and experience to confirm knowledge, skills and abilities.

Other professions (facilitators, architects, planners, attorneys, and engineers, to name but a few) offer credentialing programs that affirm practitioners possess the competencies needed to deliver professional results in accordance with established standards and/or core competencies.

Question: What happens if I apply and you have too many qualified applicants for the Assessment Center? My concern is that you might have a lot of applicants and the application fee is non-refundable.

You will only pay your application fee once. If we cannot accommodate you in that Assessment Center we will hold your application until we find an assessment center spot for you. It is envisioned that there will be more than one assessment center each year once the program is well established.