



CANADIAN INSTITUTE  
OF PLANNERS

INSTITUT CANADIEN  
DES URBANISTES

*Shaping our Communities  
Sustaining Canada's Future* || *Bâtir nos communautés  
Pour un Canada viable*

# COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR THE PLANNING PROFESSION IN CANADA

## FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION



**Note:** As a result of changes in CIP governance policy, the National/Affiliate Membership Committee has been renamed the National Membership Standards Committee (NMSC)

On July 8 and 9, 2010 the National Membership Standards Committee met to review the draft Task Force documents developed for the Planning for the Future Project and to consider feedback received from Members, CIP and Affiliate Councils, and other stakeholder groups. Based on this review, modifications were adopted to a number of proposals contained in the reports. The National Membership Standards Committee has formally endorsed these reports, as revised, as final recommendations for consideration by CIP and Affiliate Councils to guide the development of by-law revisions to be voted upon by the membership at large.

### **MODIFICATION OF THE COMPETENCY STANDARDS REPORT**

Having considered the feedback received on the Competency Standards Report, the National Membership Standards Committee has made no modification to this report.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## *Why review Membership Standards and Processes?*

The Canadian Institute of Planners and the Affiliate Institutes have initiated the Membership Continuous Improvement Project to review membership standards, practices and related policies. It has been more than twenty years since membership standards were last reviewed. This review is timely as some Affiliate organizations are experiencing significant budget and volunteer resource challenges in attempting to administer membership processes. Changes in the external environment, including new legislation and policy initiatives on the part of several Provincial governments, have also impacted on the realm of planning practice and the competencies that will be required of a professional planner. International and interprovincial trade agreements that require reductions of trade barriers to labour mobility and clear, transparent processes for credential transportability are now also a reality.

## *The Project Mandate*

Management of the Membership Continuous Improvement Project has been delegated to the National/Affiliate Membership Committee. The project mandate is to:

1. Determine appropriate competencies for a professional planner and processes for keeping them relevant as the profession moves forward.
2. Identify ways and means of addressing external and internal challenges and responding appropriately.
3. Identify and recommend improvements to the membership process that will serve the profession and its future members.
4. Develop new policy and processes to allow CIP to continue to meet the expectations of its constituents and its mandate now and into the future.

In support of the Membership Continuous Improvement Project, the Competency Standards Task Force was formed by the National/Affiliate Membership Committee to address a range of recommendations to support improvements in membership and certification standards to guide both National and Affiliate Institutes. The task force is comprised of a representative from each of the Affiliates and a representative of the National/Affiliate Membership Committee. A listing of those serving on the task force is provided in Appendix A.

The task force has been charged as the group responsible for implementation of the following recommendation and to develop Draft National Competency Standards for consideration by the Affiliate/National Membership Committee.

***Establish National Competency Standards to support certification (professional program courses, prior learning assessment recognition and advanced standing, work experience criteria, continuous professional learning development, examination development, reciprocity arrangements) and accreditation standards.***

Based on an extensive review of existing CIP Membership Standards and Practices and the best practices from a range of planning and other professional bodies, the task force has prepared draft competency standards. These standards present the Functional and Enabling Competencies which capture the scope and realm of practice of planning for an entry-level Registered Professional Planner in Canada and would apply only to those candidates entering the profession after adoption of the changes proposed by the

Membership Continuous Improvement Project. These are presented in summary and detailed form in Sections 2 through 5 of this report.

The task force has received and considered comments from Affiliates and the Affiliate/National Membership Committee, and also input from members at large and employers of planning professionals gathered by means of a survey. The further development of the Draft National Competency Standards and related policies and processes presented in this report has benefited greatly from the input provided by these stakeholder groups. The comments received are attached as Appendix B.

Acknowledging that the purpose of professional certification is public protection and competency, the Membership Continuous Improvement Project has set appropriate entry-level competency standards respecting the practice of planning in the public interest. Core competencies have been identified against which an individual member may assess their own performance and the planning profession can assess the qualification of a candidate for the professional designation. These national standards, when adopted across the country, will serve as the basis for assessment and formal qualification of candidates for entry into the profession, and the transportability of credentials throughout Canada.

The core competencies will also guide members in assessing their own competence of practice by aiding in the identification of areas for strengthening through a program of Continuous Professional Learning (CPL). Universities will also use the competency standards when developing and reviewing planning curricula for the purpose of seeking an initial or a renewal of accreditation.

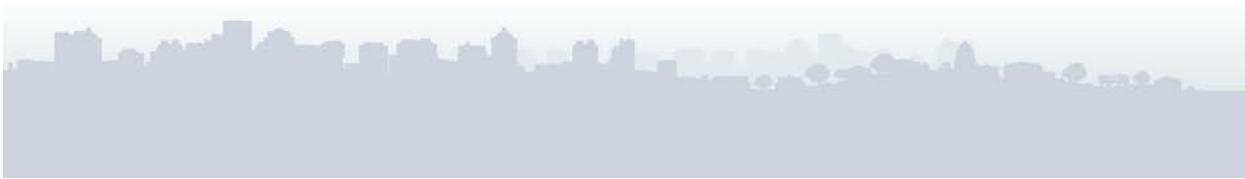
### ***Why do we need professional standards?***

The public and other users of the services of a Registered Professional Planner (RPP) have a right to expect that those operating within the realm of professional practice are competent in the area of service they offer. They also have the right to choose the range of service appropriate to their situation. The establishment of competency standards provides a means to make relevant information available to the users of the services of a planning professional regarding the capacities and expertise of the individual practitioner.

Professional standards represent the minimal level of performance that professions use to evaluate the practice of those certified as professionals. They are intended to guide the daily practice of all members. While the expectation is that members will strive to exceed the requirements set forth in the standards, they set the benchmark that establishes the levels below which conduct or performance is unacceptable.

Professional standards for planning are developed to:

- assure the public of professional, accountable and ethical practice
- serve as a guide to the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to practice planning
- define the realm of practice of planners
- provide a clear and transparent standard against which the conduct of practice and competencies of Registered Professional Planners can be evaluated by the profession, clients, employers and the public
- enable Registered Professional Planners to advance the caliber of their practice
- promote the role of the planning profession.



What sets a Registered Professional Planner apart from an individual that practices planning without the professional designation is public accountability, adherence to professional standards and ethical practice.

### ***What is a competency standard?***

Competency standards attempt to capture the various dimensions that, when taken together, account for 'competent' performance. They describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for practice by individual planners. Competency standards may be used for a variety of purposes in addition to the assessment of the knowledge, expertise and capacities of the individual practitioner required for regulating entry and ongoing membership within the profession. They provide a valuable source of information to the “consumers” of professional planning services which ultimately will aid in increasing the profile and professional reputation of planners. They provide guidance to the design and delivery of appropriate educational curricula and continuous professional learning programs for the planning profession. They can aid in establishing the minimum education and experience standards for entry into the professional field of practice and the profession for those considering a career in planning. They can inform the process of evaluation of educational programming for accreditation purposes. Finally, they can provide a basis for the mutual recognition of competency across provincial borders and the development of international reciprocal arrangements, and the transportability of professional credentials.

The Task Force has identified two realms of competence to describe what a planner can do. These are Functional Competencies which identify the common knowledge and skill base of all planners and Enabling Competencies which identify the capacities required of a planner to practice effectively, professionally and ethically. Section 2 of this report identifies the Functional Competencies proposed by the Task Force Group and provides an outline of the constituent sub-domains within each. More detailed descriptions of each Functional Competency are given in Section 3. Section 4 identifies the Enabling Competencies proposed by the Task Force Group and provides an outline of the constituent sub-domains within each. More detailed descriptions of each Enabling Competency are given in Section 5.

### ***What is the current standard?***

At the present, the Canadian Institute of Planners utilizes a credential standard as the basis for entry to Provisional Membership. Requirements for examinations and period of relevant planning experience required vary according to the academic credential presented whether a planning degree, a degree related to planning, or a degree unrelated to planning. All individuals within each class are treated as the same.

Only for “recognized” planning degrees has there been any attempt to specify the knowledge and skills a planner should have. However, these standards have been applied only to the program assessed and not the individual graduating. No distinction is made among graduates receiving the degree credential from an accredited program. Figure 1 presents a comparison of the existing and proposed competency standards.

## CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS STANDARDS

### *Knowledge Components*

Structure and Function of Human Settlements	History and Principles of Community Planning Processes and Practices	Legislative, Legal, Political and Administrative Aspects of Planning and Policy Implementation	Methods of Policy Implementation and Planning	Environmental and Ecological Aspects of Planning	Roles and Responsibilities of Planners
Problem Identification, Research Skills, Data Gathering	Analytical Skills	Written, Oral and Graphic Communication Skills	Collaborative Problem Solving Skills	Synthesis and Application of Knowledge to Practice	Ethics

### *Skills Components*

(Source: CIP Membership Manual, Volume 3)

## PROPOSED FUNCTIONAL AND ENABLING COMPETENCY STANDARDS

### *Functional Competencies*

Human Settlement	History and Principles of community Planning	Government, Law and Policy	Plan and Policy Considerations	Plan and Policy Making	Plan and Policy Implementation	Developments in Planning and Policy
Critical Thinking	Interpersonal		Communication	Leadership	Professional and Ethical Behavior	

### *Enabling Competencies*

**Figure 1: Comparison of Existing Standards and Proposed Competencies**



### *A framework for the ongoing review of standards*

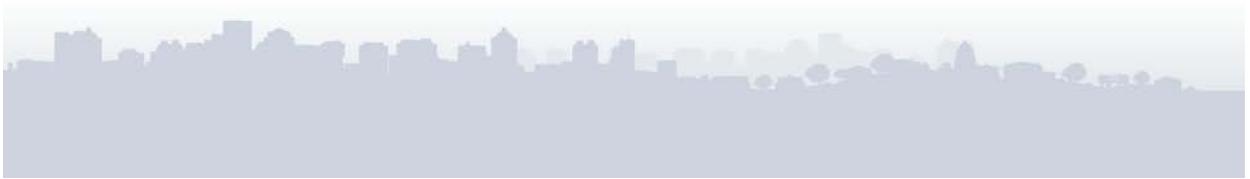
Having rigorous and relevant competencies will assist with a renewal of the planning profession in Canada and improve the competitive positioning and brand for planners with their distinctive competencies.

The competency framework being proposed in this report has the potential to further develop the competencies in years to come. The framework proposed provides for an ongoing review of competency standards. The reviews, which would take place at least once every five years, will allow an assessment of market demands and expectations of planners.

## 2. Summary of Functional Competencies

<i>Human Settlement</i>	<i>History &amp; Principles of Community Planning</i>	<i>Government, Law and Policy</i>	<i>Plan and Policy Considerations</i>	<i>Plan and Policy Making</i>	<i>Plan and Policy Implementation</i>	<i>Developments in Planning and Policy</i>
Human Settlement And Community, Regional and Provincial Settings	History of Planning in Canada and Other Countries	Government and Legislation	Environmental and Sustainable Development Issues	Planning Approaches and Focus	Decision Making and Risk Management	Emerging Trends and Issues
Influences on Communities	Planning Theories, Principles and Practices	Policies and Application	Diversity and Inclusiveness	Developing Visions and Outcomes	Implementation Plan	
			Functional Integration of Knowledge	Strategic Information Gathering and Analysis	Project Management	
			Finance and Economics	Obtaining Input and Approvals	Finance and Administration	
					Evaluation	

**Figure 2: Proposed Functional Competencies**



### 3. Details of Functional Competencies

#### HUMAN SETTLEMENT

##### Human Settlement and Community, Regional and Provincial Settings

- Understand knowledge of human settlement, its evolution and history, influence of natural setting and site context, geography, economy, environment and sustainability issues, changing forms and political and social structure.
- Able to identify lessons learned from past experiences.
- Able to link lessons learned in human settlement to current and future planning challenges and opportunities.

##### Influences on Communities

- Understand local government and relation to provincial government, finance and land use, and the broad principles that guide the physical design of communities and the design and operation of infrastructure and services.
- Understand the role that transportation infrastructure plays in determining community structure.
- Understand the roles of economic development and social service provisions, including housing.
- Understand the elements of sustainable community building and ability to assess progress of initiatives.
- Able to relate the influences to planning activities.

#### HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

##### History of Planning in Canada and Other Countries

- Understand the history of small and large scale community planning.
- Understand the historical evolution of community planning as a function of government, as a professional activity, and as a reform movement.
- Understand how to use lessons learned to support future decision making.

##### Planning Theories, Principles and Practices

- Understand theories, ideals and principles which have guided small and large scale community planning and its physical expression
- Understand approaches to and methods of policy analysis and the role and methods of public consultation and involvement in decision making
- Understanding of the concepts of community based development.
- Understand the strengths, limitations, and uncertainties associated with the political, social, environmental, cultural and economic nature of public interest and the roles of professional judgment, expertise and advice within these frameworks.

## **GOVERNMENTS, LAW AND POLICY**

### Governments and Legislation

- Understand the political, legal and institutional contexts of the realm of planning practice.
- Understand how legislation and laws influence and requires planning.
- Understand the agency and employment relationship of planning to legislation.

### Policies and Application

- Understand and able to evaluate critically policy formulation, evaluation, and tools and strategies for implementation
- Understands policy application in specific planning contexts (resource management, health, environment, development etc) and how the legal/legislative context affects planning
- Understand how planners support legislation, develop recommendations and advise on policies.
- Understand methods for implementing public policy and planning within the framework of Canadian law and the process of government (Includes planning law, community development processes and plans, zoning and other implementation techniques, urban design, governments systems, political and organizational behavior, public finance principles, evaluation methods, impact assessment, and litigation).

## **PLAN AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### Environmental and Sustainable Development Issues

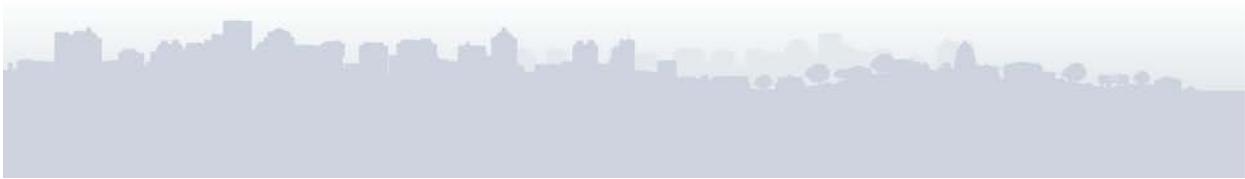
- Understand environmental management, biophysical environments and systems, ecological limits and processes, and science and sustainability.
- Understand the relationship between ecological, social and economic factors in planning, including the concept of sustainable development.
- Able to assess issues and the effects on development actions and able to debate and link the relationships by using planning as a positive influence.

### Diversity and Inclusiveness

- Understand demographics of society and diversity and inclusiveness considerations including, but not limited to Aboriginal people.
- Understand practices to effectively comply with legal aspects and benefit from approaches to building on diversity and difference.
- Able to develop plans that build on diversity and inclusiveness considerations.

### Functional Integration of Knowledge

- Understand basic elements and interactions between the following functional areas and other areas that have a relationship to planning: transportation; facilities; economics; social; urban design; legal; resources; environment; recreation; housing; infrastructure; land use; development control; etc.
- Understand how to use networks and other domains of knowledge to support decision making
- Able to integrate knowledge and demonstrate technical capacities to apply it to planning situations.
- Able to understand how technology can support planning analysis and activities, policy development and decision making.



## Finance and Economics

- Understand the economics of development (private and public perspectives).
- Understand local government finance and its relationship to development.
- Able to assess financial and economic considerations, and use this information to support the development of planning proposals and reports.

## **PLAN AND POLICY MAKING**

### Planning Approaches and Focus

- Understand the various approaches and instruments used in small and large scale plan making and policy development.
- Able to determine the challenge or opportunity to be addressed.
- Able to select an approach to and clarify the focus of the plan.

### Developing Visions and Outcomes

- Understand approaches to the development of visions and outcomes.
- Able to use analysis and processes to assess possible options.
- Able to develop visions and outcomes.
- Able to articulate, present, and defend visions, plans and policies.

### Strategic Information Gathering and Analysis

- Understand what information should be gathered.
- Able to gather information to enable a critical analysis of the situation.
- Able to analyze information gathered to support development of a proposal or plan.
- Understand how technology can gather input and analyze information.
- Able to apply technology to support analysis

### Obtaining Input and Approvals

- Understand practices to effectively engage and gather input from key stakeholders.
- Able to prepare reports and presentations to support input gathering.
- Able to present analysis and reports, support discussions and make recommendations leading to approval.

## **PLAN AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

### Decision Making and Risk Management

- Understand various modes of decision making and how the technical, financial, social, environmental and political factors are integrated into sound decision making.
- Understand risk management and its integration into sound decision making.
- Understand land use regulations, legal, environmental, infrastructure, finance and economics, development control, and other considerations that are part of implementation.
- Able to integrate information to minimize risk.

### Implementation Plan

- Understand practices to develop an effective implementation plan.
- Able to engage other key stakeholders in the development and review of the plan.
- Able to develop and support implementation of a plan.

### Project Management

- Understand basic practices of project management.
- Able to apply project management techniques and tools to support projects.
- Able to complete projects based on desired outcomes and targets.

### Finance and Administration

- Understand finance and administration practices to effectively manage project or plan implementation.
- Able to monitor and assess financial and administrative activities.
- Able to report on financial and administrative activities.

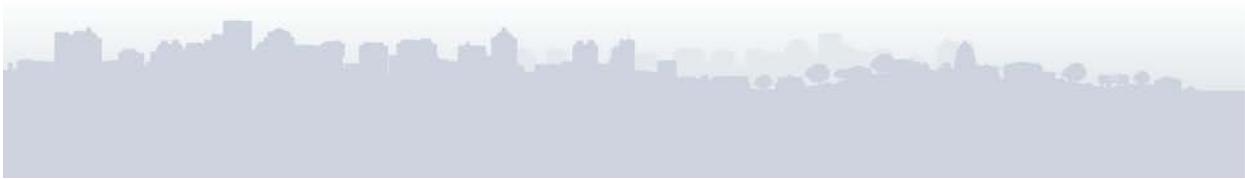
### Evaluation

- Understand practices to evaluate and monitor plan implementation.
- Able to frame recommendations for implementation which can be monitored and evaluated.
- Able to assess and determine when correction is required.
- Able to direct or use evaluation processes and develop reports.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN PLANNING**

### Emerging Trends and Issues

- Understand practices to monitor emerging trends and issues that relate to planning.
- Able to source and critically assess external and internal environment information to support analysis of the topics.
- Able to critically assess applicability to plans, physical designs, projects and activities, and report on potential innovations and improvements.
- Support information exchange within the profession on trends and best practices.



#### 4. Summary of the Enabling Competencies

<b><i>Critical Thinking</i></b>	<b><i>Interpersonal</i></b>	<b><i>Communication</i></b>	<b><i>Leadership</i></b>	<b><i>Professionalism and Ethical Behavior</i></b>
Issue Identification	Integrity and Trust	Listening	Vision	Professionalism
Problem Solving and Decision Making	Diversity and Inclusiveness	Written, Oral and Visual Presentation	Responsiveness and Influence	Ethical Standards
Research and Analytical	Facilitation	Information and Knowledge	Team Building	Continuous Learning
Innovation and Creativity	Negotiation	Use of Information Technology	Climate of Excellence	
Political Awareness	Collaboration and Consensus Building	Internal and External Relations	Managing Resources and Results	
Change Management	Conflict Management			

**Figure 3 – Proposed Enabling Competencies**

## 5. Details of the Enabling Functional Competencies

### CRITICAL THINKING

#### Issues Identification

- Understand effective issues identification practices to determine and manage issues.
- Able to identify and track emerging issues in light of project goals, resources and stakeholder interests.
- Able to facilitate processes to identify issues and seek input, categorize, analyze and report on issues.

#### Problem Solving and Decision Making

- Understand effective problem-solving and decision making practices and underlying values and potential ethical issues.
- Able to define problems and identify viable options and possible solutions.
- Able to relate activities in one area to others and assess potential for the integration of ideas.
- Able to pull together diverse ideas, issues and observations into a simple, clear and useful analysis and/or presentation.
- Able to support complex decision making.

#### Research and Analytical

- Understand methods and practices to find relevant information and conduct an analysis.
- Able to compare and integrate data from various sources and identify cause/effect relationships.
- Able to analyze results effectively.
- Able to evaluate results.

#### Innovation and Creativity

- Understand and encourage practices to support innovation and creativity in work environments.
- Use innovation and creative practices and tools to facilitate decision making.

#### Political Awareness

- Understand political motives, issues and actions.
- Actively follow political trends, issues and activities.
- Demonstrate awareness of how political trends, issues and activities influence decision making.

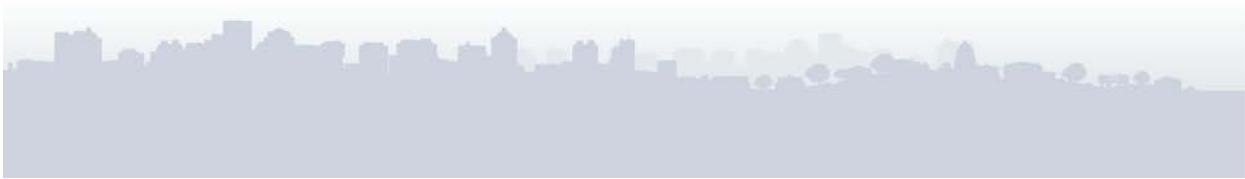
#### Change Management

- Understand stages within the change process and practices to implement change.
- Able to monitor issues and anticipate potential changes.
- Use change management processes to implement decisions.

### INTERPERSONAL

#### Integrity and Trust

- Understand the importance of maintaining high standards of integrity and trust.
- Able to provide a balanced picture, respect others and build trust.
- Able to set a positive example.



### Diversity and Inclusiveness

- Understand the elements of diversity and difference.
- Appreciate the value of diversity.
- Able to apply policy and practices to accommodate diversity and inclusiveness.
- Able to articulate recommendations for consideration and action.

### Facilitation

- Understand the value of facilitation to plan making and implementation.
- Understand practices to facilitate situations.
- Able to facilitate situations to support decision making and engender commitment.

### Negotiation

- Understand practices to support negotiations.
- Able to support position and presents issues in a factual and persuasive manner.
- Able to build on common ground and seek compromise when appropriate.

### Collaboration and Consensus Building

- Understand practices to support collaboration and consensus building.
- Able to assess and analyze an approach to support improvements.
- Able to facilitate collaboration and consensus building situations.

### Conflict Management

- Understand practices to manage conflict.
- Able to assess the nature of a conflict and suggest an approach to address the conflict.
- Able to address conflicts in a non-judgmental fashion, clarify differences, and build on common interests.
- Able to propose recommendations for consideration and action.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### Listening

- Demonstrate capacity to listen effectively and understand messages.
- Able to confirm messages have been received and are understood.

### Written and Oral Presentation

- Understand practices and tools to support simple and effective written, oral and visual/graphic presentations.
- Able to express ideas in a clear, organized and effective manner, both verbally and non-verbally, to achieve understanding.
- Able to communicate complex matters and be persuasive.

### Information and Knowledge

- Understand types of information and knowledge required to support decision making.
- Able to translate and integrate various sources of information.
- Able to support timely, relevant and accurate communications.

#### Use of Information Technology

- Understand issues, trends and how to integrate multi-media material into written, oral and visual presentations.
- Use current technology to complete work and make informed decisions.
- Evaluates the use of technology and, through benchmarking (review of best practices), identify opportunities for improvement and support of technical staff.

#### Internal and External Relations

- Understand the importance and practices of successful media and other external relations activities required to communicate messages effectively.
- Understand various types of internal communications and processes used to gather and disseminate information.
- Engage in activities to improve internal and external relations activities.

### **LEADERSHIP**

#### Vision

- Understand the importance of values and vision, and methods and processes for vision development and promotion.
- Apply a critical, integrative thinking approach to issues.
- Able to support the development of values and vision, monitor progress and identify when to make corrections.

#### Responsiveness and Influence

- Anticipates future needs and developments.
- Understand how to effectively engage stakeholders in complex issues.
- Understand how to connect needs and solutions and influence decisions.
- Able to propose influential recommendations to key stakeholders.

#### Team Building

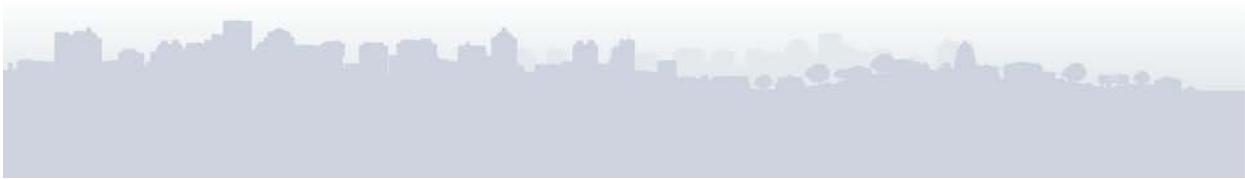
- Understand team building techniques and dynamics.
- Act as a leader or member of a multi-function team.
- Build and motivate teams.

#### Climate of Excellence

- Understand frameworks to support quality and performance measurement.
- Understand the meaning of accountability and practices to support accountability.
- Able to apply practices and tools to manage for results and achieve positive outcomes.

#### Managing Resources and Results

- Understand policies and processes to effectively manage resources and results expected.
- Able to manage human and financial resources and achieve targeted results.
- Able to assess the use of resources and identify areas for improvement.



## **PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR**

### Continuous Learning

- Understand practices to support life long learning, mentorship and coaching for self and others.
- Able to assess development needs.
- Engage in continuous learning and promoting the value of learning for self and others.

### Ethical Standards

- Understand ethical responsibilities and dilemmas for the professional planner.
- Understand and demonstrate adherence to establish ethical standards.
- Set highest standards for self and others, and monitors practice.

### Professionalism

- Understand the role of the professionals generally.
- Understand the role of the planner in the development of the profession.
- Monitor changes in the profession and demonstrate professionalism.
- Participate in activities to support development of the profession.

## APPENDIX A – TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The Competency Standards Task Force includes the following individuals:

- Michael Gordon MCIP
  - David Klippenstein MCIP, ACP
  - Ralph Leibel MCIP, PPS
  - Ian Wight MCIP
  - Dennis Jacobs MCIP, RPP
  - Claude Beaulac MICU, urbaniste
  - André Daigle LL.B. MICU/MCIP, UPC/RPP
  - John Bain MCIP, LPP
  - Ron Keeble MCIP, RPP (Chair)
- PIBC  
AACIP  
APCPS  
MPPI  
OPPI  
OUQ  
API  
National/Affiliate Membership Committee  
Co-Chair National/Affiliate Membership Committee

The task force was assisted by:

Dana Anderson, MCIP, RPP  
Bruce Curtis, MCIP, RPP  
Leanne Doyle, MCIP, RPP  
Denis Jacobs, MCIP, RPP  
Marilyn Lagdzins, MCIP, RPP  
Charles Lanktree, MCIP, RPP  
Linda McFayden, MCIP  
Tim Moerman, MCIP, RPP  
Paul Stagl, MCIP, RPP

Jim Pealow  
Project Consultant  
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## APPENDIX B – STAKEHOLDER INPUT

It was deemed essential to obtain broad member and other stakeholder input on the draft competency standards. The draft standards - prepared by the Task Force group and based on extensive research of best practices of other professional bodies and a review of existing CIP Membership standards, policies and practices - were offered for review by CIP Members and various employers of planners. An electronic survey of CIP members and other stakeholders was responded to by 1200 CIP members and 60+ other stakeholders.