**FAICP Process Prep Materials for Mentors and Potential Candidates**

**APA California Chapter**

A Companion Document to the APA California Policy and Procedures Guide for the FAICP Process

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The following information has been assembled by the APA California Vice President of Professional Development (VPPD) and the FAICP Coordinator who oversaw the 2014 FAICP process. Material was assembled from interviews with successful and unsuccessful FAICP candidates, FAICP mentors, past VPPD and FAICP Coordinators, and observers of the process who were able to share with us from outside the Chapter perspective. This document should be used in its entirety by the VPPD and FAICP Coordinator with the Chapter Nomination Committee and Mentors, and with candidates as applicable.

**Candidate Readiness – Tough Early Questions to the Candidates**

* Can you identify one of the four categories in which you are able to explain to someone who does not know you about your work’s transformative nature
* Can you give examples where YOUR PERSONAL role can be promoted and clearly delineated from that of others working on the project
* Can you translate a list of projects or papers or qualifications into a discussion about how your work in particular transformed lives and built stronger communities: why what you have done has made a difference
* Can you change the audience you are writing for? Many of us write for elected officials or the public: the application is writing for a jury judging YOU by a given set of criteria
* Can you assemble a variety of letters regarding your work from individuals who can personally speak to the transformative nature of your work and who you are not seeking out because they are prominent and they know you
* Are you ready to spend 100 hours writing and assembling your application, and taking the advice of your FAICP mentor about strengthening aspects of your discussions? Experience with candidates has shown that applications need to be revised multiple times to be able to focus on the aspects of the candidate that the APA National Jury is looking for

**APA California’s Preliminary Application Form & the Timing and Process**: Mentors and Chapter representatives can use these bullets’ content to respond to interested candidates, or when seeking potential candidates, along with Candidate Readiness questions

* Rule: mentors will NOT deal with a candidate’s assistant in assembling, reviewing or discussing applications or process. The discussion must be with the applicant personally. It’s complicated enough for candidates to understand how to explain what transformative work they have done; it would be harder or impossible for an assistant to not see an impressive volume of work equaling transformative work
* Note: Chapter is changing the preliminary application following Class of 2014 to ask specifically for transformative examples, explain what that means, and review & edit to assure inclusion. This will help mentors and the Chapter identify candidates who are truly ready to enter the process
* Mentors will be assigned once the list of candidates the Chapter will support has been approved by the Executive Committee. Prior to that time while candidates are deciding, or starting the Preliminary Application on their own, they should be advised to seek input from a current FAICP they know to discuss their body of work and try to get a perspective about its transformative nature
* The entire process to solicit or identify probable candidates will start earlier than it did for the Class of 2014: the Chapter will NOT wait for the APA list of eligible AICP members – VPPD, FAICP Coordinator, interested FAICP members & mentors should talk in the fall and proceed to contact those generally believed ready to pursue FAICP
* Last round the Nomination Committee was expanded to include someone from each Section and it was that larger group was who recommended to the Board the candidates that should be supported by the Chapter. While having the larger group assisted finding candidates from around the entire Chapter and making sure they had the opportunity to submit a Preliminary Application if they were interested, it may have contributed to a large final, generally geographically-balanced, group that spread mentor resources thin. That approach is being amended in 2014 to identify the role of the expanded Nomination Committee as a working group that makes recommendations to the Nomination Committee as identified in the currently-adopted [as well as proposed 2014] Chapter FAICP Guidelines. The Nomination Committee then makes its presentation of the individual candidates’ applications, along with pros and cons and the Committee’s recommendations, to the Executive Committee of the Chapter Board where the final decision is made. This removes any tendency to end up with a list that includes a candidate from each Section if it doesn’t result in the strongest group of candidates
* At the time of the preliminary application, candidates must be asked to consider if they have 6-10 people they could go to for letters of support as discussed above
* At some point in the process, the mentors should get together on a conference call to discuss how to write successful letters for the candidates who are in the process; consider peer review among mentors, or additional FAICP members, of all candidates’ letters
* Provide available examples of Nominating letters of past successful candidates to mentors
* Back up the deadlines for the preliminary application and final drafts so that the Nominating letter, which cannot be written by the candidate [will be final-written by mentor] since letters will benefit from the applicant having completed the application. This will allow the letter writer to see and comprehensively understand the application’s description of the transformative nature of the applicant’s work and allow the Nomination letter to reflect the body of that work
* Emphasize with candidates: OUTCOMES over VOLUME
* Be ready to explain to candidates that the Chapter votes to not support that they can pursue other avenues [e.g., through a National Division] although if the Chapter believes the candidate is not ready to submit, it is likely they are not ready! It doesn’t mean they will not be, or are not a valuable member of the profession, but the need to demonstrate the transformative nature of candidate’s work in the application should be taken seriously

**Candidates and Mentors Work on the APA National Application**: some bullets here are directed toward mentors or other FAICP members assisting while others are directed at the mentor <<>> candidate working relationship and necessary outcomes

* Review someone’s experience with an eye toward what the current lingo is that would make sure the jury understood the significance
* The mentoring of the last process was great. Going forward, every candidate that the Chapter approves to proceeding with must have an individual mentor
* Mentors can help candidates portray themselves in the manner needed for the application: Planners have a hard time promoting themselves or writing about themselves as having had THE role in something being transformative
* It could make for a more productive relationship of mentors and candidates came together by a process other than assignment by the Chapter: candidates should seek their mentors early in the process
* The Chapter should reach out to understand who from the Chapter that Divisions might be sponsoring [though great majority come from Chapters]. It was noted that some candidates’ applications might be perceived more strongly if the nomination is sponsored by a Division in which the candidate’s work fits. Maybe contact a Division if a candidate’s nomination would benefit from Division sponsorship
* If there’s a candidate whose work has a National focus, who should mentor them?
* The nomination letter for each candidate needs to be very strong. It needs to “create magic” about the candidate and address the transformative nature of the candidate’s work. It must not just repeat information from an annotated resume. The Chapter must make it clear why this particular candidate’s work and other activities make them uniquely qualified for selection: it must encapsulate the ‘soul’ of the candidate. The letter should be printed and copied in a format that is easily readable by jurors.
* The California Chapter & mentors advise more strongly/better about categories some candidates are submitting their preliminary applications in. The majority of applications are submitted under the category of “professional practice” when some of them would have done well in the category of “community service”.
* While some candidates cross categories in their accomplishments, what would be their strongest? The word “transformative” is THE key word to keep in mind while preparing an application: How project and activities of the candidate are transformative. Don’t just use the word “transformative”, demonstrate what it translates to
* We need to stress that a listing of experience is not what the application is asking for or what the jury is looking for: the application is not a resume or a Statement of Qualifications.
* Lists of projects do not show the individual candidate’s creativity, innovation or accomplishment – and that is what the jury is looking to see. What is the candidate’s personal role?
* When judging experiences that have been “transformative”, look at the time since the work was done: it needs to have been done and some time passed so the transformative impacts can be identified and judged Follow directions: if there’s a word limit, observe it; if there are criteria, respond directly and do not inflate or avoid answering
* Candidates must realize that during the final few months – after the Chapter agrees to support them and they are writing and rewriting their application – they need to spend 40-50 more hours from August through October to fine-tune the application and work with their mentor
* Candidates need to think about their required letters earlier: they need a range of letter-writers who know them and can personally discuss the transformative nature of the candidate’s work
* Don’t seek letters too early, though, because candidate doesn’t want to go to someone to get a letter then not be supported by the Chapter to move forward. The content of the letters probably benefit from knowing what is being written in the application – again aiming toward examples of transformative contributions
* It’s not impressive to the jury that letters are from high-ranking officials. It is good to show the jury that letters are from a cross-section of the community: government; non-profits; those who benefitted from the applicant’s work
* External letters of support should be as specific as possible in telling how the letter writer sees the work of the applicant being transformative. Just having well-known letter writers isn’t what the jury will be looking for: the letters should speak to the virtuosity of the candidate, and the letter writer’s personal knowledge of the candidate’s work. Letters from community leaders are a good addition
* The annotated resume for each candidate should tell the story of the applicant’s overall career, and why the candidate’s work is transformative. The 50-word statement and 1 page summary should provide a message consistent with the annotated resume and be concise and well-written
* While the application should not include every project the candidate has participate in, focusing on only one can leave the impression that is the candidate’s only transformative work
* Documentation of activities supporting APA or other professional planning organizations should be included if applicable

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