



## THE NIGP CERTIFICATION COMMISSION ANNOUNCES ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND EXAM CONTENT FOR THE NIGP-CPP CERTIFICATION

December 12, 2019

The 14-member NIGP Certification Commission is excited to announce the eligibility requirements and exam content outline for the new NIGP-CPP Certification which will launch in Spring 2020. There has been great enthusiasm and anticipation for this new offering - this handout provides the information you need to determine if the new NIGP-CPP should be a Pathway for you!

### **The Framework of the NIGP Certified Procurement Professional (NIGP-CPP)**

The Commission determined that the *primary audiences* for the NIGP-CPP are *mid and senior level leaders in public procurement*.

The Commission adopted the following principles to guide the program development:

- The NIGP-CPP must be perceived as valuable by public procurement professionals, their supervisors and their employing organizations (e.g., district superintendents, finance officers, etc.). Employers should be able to use the NIGP-CPP as a benchmark for finding qualified employees.
- The NIGP-CPP must value competency over years of experience.
- The NIGP-CPP must serve a significant portion of NIGP members and the public procurement community.
- The NIGP-CPP must be flexible and adaptable to remain current and relevant. It must also be rigorous and meaningful.
- The NIGP-CPP must be comprehensive to include enabling competencies (i.e., soft skills) - not just technical competencies.
- The NIGP-CPP must advance the NIGP mission and strategic priorities.
- The NIGP-CPP must follow credentialing best practices and be legally defensible.

### **The Basis for Determining Eligibility and Exam Content**

The Institute has prioritized accreditation by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as a key objective for its professional certification program. ANSI accreditation requires that the program meet stringent global standards of ISO 17024 - an international standard which specifies criteria for personnel certification bodies. To this end, the standards and credentialing best practices of ANSI and ISO 17024 require research and ensuing data to inform the decision-making body on the certification scheme to include eligibility and exam content.

The Institute appointed a Practice Analysis Panel of 12 senior practitioners and stakeholders to spearhead the development of a comprehensive Practice Analysis Survey. The Commission released the Panel’s survey in August/September 2019 and received over 1,200 responses. A survey methodology was used to assess the frequency with which mid and senior level leaders in public procurement perform a range of responsibilities and the perceived importance of those responsibilities; in essence, validating what tasks professionals should be able to perform and the knowledge they need to accomplish those tasks. The data gleaned from this research informed the Commission on decisions related to eligibility (initial certification and re-certification) and exam content. Key conclusions from the survey include the following:

- Most of the responsibilities listed in the survey are performed by at least 75% of the public procurement professionals who responded.
- Professionals who have fewer years of experience in the profession, and those who have not attained a formal degree or certification, are less likely to perform many of the outlined responsibilities than their more experienced or educated peers.
- Many highly experienced and highly performing public procurement professionals reported that they do not have a bachelor’s degree.
- Only 19% of surveyed public procurement professionals believe that a bachelor’s degree or higher formal qualification is critically important as an eligibility requirement for the NIGP-CPP certification.

### NIGP-CPP Eligibility Requirements

The Practice Analysis research study concluded that relevant work experience was of equal importance to formal education. Therefore, the Commission has established **six different pathways for eligibility** based on a combination of formal education and relevant work experience:

<b>Pathway A</b>	Graduate degree related to public administration, public policy, supply chain, procurement, or economics  Plus 2 years (24 months) of relevant work experience involved with procurement (public or private, purchaser or seller) within the past 10 years
<b>Pathway B</b>	Bachelors or higher degree (any discipline) and a graduate level certificate in public administration, public policy, supply chain, or procurement  Plus 3 years (36 months) of relevant work experience involved with procurement (public or private, purchaser or seller) within the past 10 years
<b>Pathway C</b>	Bachelors or higher degree (any discipline)  Plus 4 years (48 months) of relevant work experience involved with procurement (public or private, purchaser or seller) within the past 10 years

<b>Pathway D</b>	Two-year post secondary diploma (or) associate degree (any discipline) (or) a NIGP Public Procurement Associate designation  Plus 6 years (72 months) of relevant work experience involved with procurement (public or private, purchaser or seller) within the past 10 years
<b>Pathway E</b>	High School diploma / GED  Plus 8 years (96 months) of relevant work experience involved with procurement (public or private, purchaser or seller) within the past 10 years
<b>Pathway F</b>	Current holder of the Certified Public Procurement Officer (CPPO) or Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) designation; or recently lapsed within one year of the expiration date of the certification  Proof of formal education or relevant work experience is not required for candidates seeking the NIGP-CPP via Pathway F

For all education standards, global equivalents are acceptable.

“Relevant work experience” is defined as experience that aligns with one or more of the competency statements contained in the NIGP-CPP exam. This is explained further under Exam Content and Application Fees.

Education and relevant work experience are the only **two requisites for the NIGP-CPP**. There are *no requirements for procurement coursework/training*. Candidates will have the flexibility to sharpen their skills and competencies without any mandate; including NIGP’s learning program which aligns with the Public Procurement Competency Framework. NIGP is releasing new competency modules via the Institute’s Certificate Program in December 2019, January 2020, and March 2020; and all learning modules will be available in-person or online by June 2020.

**Exam Content for the Comprehensive NIGP-CPP Exam**

The NIGP-CPP exam is a competency-based exam that aligns with the competencies embedded within the seven major focus areas from the Public Procurement Competency Framework (PPCF). The research produced through the Practice Analysis determined the percentage of the exam that will relate to each of the seven focus areas. Within each focus area, the Commission has defined specific competency statements that will be assessed through the exam:

Focus Areas (7)	NIGP-CPP Competency Statements
<b>Strategy (10%)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Create procurement’s strategic goals, objectives, and policies in alignment with the entity-wide strategic plan</li> <li>■ Choose and implement strategic improvements for the procurement function</li> <li>■ Manage efficiency and effectiveness in achievement of procurement’s mission</li> <li>■ Identify, evaluate, and implement social and environmentally sustainable procurement policies and other procurement priorities</li> </ul>

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**Policy, Legislation and  
Program Oversight (14%)**

- Engage the legislative process to further procurement interests
- Ensure compliance with applicable rules and regulations from the various branches and levels of government
- Create, implement, and maintain fair, accessible, and transparent policies and procedures that align organizational behaviors, priorities, and professional procurement values
- Advise the entity on how to resolve procurement-related issues
- Manage stakeholder expectations by communicating requirements, responsibilities, and outcomes
- Create, lead, and provide holistic procurement program oversight

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**Planning and Analysis (11%)**

- Analyze information from multiple sources to create a procurement plan to meet the overall entity's goals
- Analyze current market trends and the impact on procurement planning
- Identify opportunities for strategic contracting initiatives
- Use procurement priorities and best value considerations in addition to cost, price, and spend analysis methods to inform decisions
- Assess risk and implement appropriate risk management approaches
- Determine most advantageous sourcing, solicitation, and award method

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**Sourcing and Solicitation (14%)**

- Determine the most favorable contract structure and content
- Manage all stages of the selection process (from receipt to award)
- Develop a negotiation strategy that maximizes advantages for all involved
- Manage a protest consistent with the law and the entity's policy
- Manage the issues distinct to international business

**Contract Administration (11%)**

- Establish policies and procedures for contract administration
- Establish policies and procedures to promote acceptable contract performance
- Establish policies and procedures to address contract performance issues
- Ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of asset management, warehousing, and logistics programs
- Recommend options to dispose of assets to maximize residual value

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**Leadership (26%)**

- Create and foster a professional, ethical culture
- Create policies and procedures to support an ethical workplace
- Create a culture and system to foster continuous improvement
- Provide procurement professional development opportunities
- Provide educational opportunities related to procurement best practices to all (non procurement)
- Engage stakeholders in development of entity key performance indicators to achieve change implementation
- Communicate programs, policies, and procedures in support of entity's continuous advancement
- Develop criteria for evaluation of internal and external relationships and procurement's performance
- Align procurement change with entity goals
- Recruit, hire, develop, retain, and promote procurement professionals
- Identify and address challenges and conflicts

**Business Principles and Operations (14%)**

- Establish a continuous improvement plan
- Identify how changes in global, national and regional economies will affect operations
- Develop and manage a thriving and resilient workplace
- Select and implement technology to further procurement goals
- Obtain and manage budgetary resources to further procurement goals
- Develop and implement a communication plan to enhance the image of the procurement function

**Exam Content for the Bridge Exam**

The Commission will offer a bridge for those holders of the UPPCC’s CPPO or CPPB designations who wish to attain their NIGP-CPP Certification. To be eligible for the bridge exam, candidates must submit a copy of their certification at the time of application which reflects either active status or lapsed status within one year after the expiration date on the certificate. At present, the bridge will be available through 2024. A bridge from other professional certifications may be considered in the future.

The purpose of the bridge exam is to differentiate between these programs by assessing candidates competency and knowledge statements incorporated into the NIGP-CPP exam which were not included in the CPPO and CPPB exams. This requires the Commission to perform a gap analysis (currently underway) between the CPPO and CPPB program and the NIGP-CPP program. The outcome of the analysis will set into motion the content of the bridge exam including whether a different exam will be established separately for the CPPO and CPPB holders. That decision should be made by the Commission in February 2020.

The preliminary gap analysis based on the 43 NIGP-CPP competency statements reflects the following - consistent with the premise that more than half of the NIGP-CPP is based on new content and competencies:

NIGP-CPP Focus Area	# Technical Statements	# Covered in CPPO/CPPB	# New to NIGP-CPP
<b>Strategy (10%)</b>	4	2	2
<b>Policy Legislation (14%)</b>	6	3	3
<b>Planning and Analysis (11%)</b>	5	3	2
<b>Sourcing (14%)</b>	6	5	1
<b>Contract Administration (11%)</b>	5	3	2
<b>Leadership (26%)</b>	11	3	8
<b>Business Principles (14%)</b>	6	1	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>

## Exam Format and Delivery

The Commission has determined that the **NIGP-CPP will be a two-part, modular exam**. The bridge exam will likely constitute one of the modules. A modular exam provides the flexibility for a candidate to either take both modules or just one of the modules in a single setting. It also means that a candidate's test scores will be based on each module; if the candidate passes Module A but is not successful in Module B, she/he only needs to retake the Module B exam.

The Commission has also determined that it will use local testing centers administered by a third party and exams will be offered more frequently throughout the year rather than segmented into two test administration periods.

The Commission has not yet determined its policies with respect to re-testing when a candidate fails to achieve a passing score. Those policies would include the waiting period between exams and re-testing fees.

## Application and Fees

The application for the NIGP-CPP program should be available mid-February 2020. The Commission is dedicated to a single, simplified application process that verifies the eligibility of the candidate through minimal but critical documentation. The application will be online and supporting documents (such as copies of diplomas, certificates, certifications, and/or transcripts conferring a degree) will be uploaded by the candidate as PDF attachments.

*Candidates who are eligible for the bridge exam as CPPO or CPPB certificants will simply submit proof of their current certification status. They do not need to verify formal education or relevant work experience. For these candidates, there are no application fees and no initial testing fees through June 2021. However, if the candidate re-takes the exam, fees will apply. Additionally, these candidates can take advantage of complimentary NIGP-CPP online prep courses through June 2021.*

The Commission is committed to the premise that years in a position do not necessarily prove the expertise of the individual; and that competency-based work experience is a better measure of one's ability and future success. Therefore, candidates who are not eligible for the bridge exam will demonstrate their relevant work experience via an Experience Verification Form. The amount of work experience (measured in months) is determined by the Pathway selected by the candidate. For example, those candidates who have earned a master's degree in public administration, public policy, supply chain, procurement, or economics (Pathway A) need to demonstrate relevant work experience over a 24-month period within the last ten years.

For work experience to be '*relevant*' for eligibility, **each work experience must align with a minimum of 20 of the 43 competency statements identified in the NIGP-CPP exam content**. And the experience must be earned within the past ten years. Using the Experience Verification Form, the candidate will self-attest which competency statements within the total of 43 that she/he performed (or is currently performing) within each work position; and this information must also be verified by the direct supervisor or Human Resources representative via the Form. There are no minimum percentages of time that must be dedicated to the competency statement for it to qualify as relevant work experience. This activity takes the

guesswork out of the application process since a candidate performs his/her self-assessment, obtains verification by a specified third-party, and instills confidence in her/his eligibility before submitting an application and paying fees. In fact, the candidate does not submit official or working position descriptions with her/his application; but may be required to do so during the assessment process via a trigger audit.

*The application fee for comprehensive exam candidates is:*

- \$150 for NIGP members
- \$250 for non-members.

*Testing fee (initial exam and re-exam) is anticipated to be:*

- \$100 per testing module with no differentiation between Members and Non-Members. The Commission is currently negotiating testing fees with a third-party test administrator and this will be a pass-through fee.

## Re-Certification

Once a candidate achieves his/her NIGP-CPP certification, he/she will need to **recertify the credential every three (3) years**.

During the re-certification period, the individual must earn a minimum of **36 Continuing Education Hours** (CEHs). Individuals may earn up to 25% of their CEHs via teaching, instructing or developing public procurement content. While the Commission values volunteer leadership and service to the profession, the purpose of NIGP-CPP re-certification is to ensure that certificants remain current on best practices and trends and are committed to continuous learning. Therefore, CEHs are limited to continuing education only.

NIGP will automatically upload all CEHs earned through NIGP's Learning Management System (Aspire) into the NIGP-CPP certificant's record. The candidate can enter additional CEHs at any time by accessing her/his online NIGP-CPP portal.

The candidate is not required to remain employed in the procurement profession at the time of re-certification but must confirm adherence to the NIGP-CPP Code of Ethics.

The Commission has not yet determined the fee structure for re-certification, but it will likely be introduced in the \$125 to \$150 range. The Commission is also discussing the parameters for issuing a NIGP-CPP Retired Certification. A lifetime NIGP-CPP Certification is unlikely because the Commission believes that continuous education is critical for those still practicing in procurement.

## The Continuing UPPCC Relationship

The introduction of the NIGP-CPP program does not alter NIGP's long-standing relationship with the Universal Public Procurement Certification Council. NIGP will continue to appoint three professionals to the UPPCC Board of Directors. NIGP will continue to offer foundational content that aligns with the UPPCC Body of Knowledge. It will continue to develop and offer new content that guides the professional in life-long learning which qualifies for re-certification points, and NIGP will continue to offer a wide range of certification preparation tools – from study guides to flashcards – from self-assessments to the prep courses available online and in-person.

## The Differentiators

There are differences that distinguish the NIGP-CPP from the current CPPO and CPPB programs and these differentiators should guide potential candidates as they consider their pathway to attaining the NIGP certification:

### NIGP-CPP (Competency-based)

- The NIGP-CPP is a competency-based exam based on the Public Procurement Competency Framework (PPCF) which focuses on knowledge, skills and performance.
- The NIGP-CPP is based on 43 competency statements within seven areas of focus within the PPCF.
- The NIGP-CPP eligibility provides optional pathways for candidates who neither have a post-secondary diploma nor an associate's, bachelor's or advanced degree.
- The NIGP-CPP does not require procurement coursework or training as an eligibility requirement.
- The NIGP-CPP is a two-part modular exam.

### CPPO and CPPB (Knowledge-based)

- The CPPO and CPPB are knowledge-based exams based on the Public Procurement Body of Knowledge (PPBOK).
- The CPPO and CPPB are based on 88 knowledge statements within six major domains. The knowledge statements are the same for the CPPO and CPPB; although the weighted percentages are different.
- The CPPO requires a bachelor's degree while the CPPB requires a 2-year post-secondary educational program or two additional years of work experience.
- The CPPO application requires 96 contact hours of procurement-related coursework/training and the CPPB application requires 72 contact hours.
- The CPPO and CPPB are single exams.

***All three exams focus on public procurement's technical aspects: sourcing, negotiation, contract administration, and supply management. However, the emphasis placed on these 4 PPBOK domains is different. These 4 domains make up:***

- Only 25% of the NIGP-CPP exam.
- 55% of the CPPO exam and 72% of the CPPB exam.
- Half of the NIGP-CPP exam will cover three focus areas: Strategy (10%), Business Principles and Operations (14%) and Leadership (26%).

## The Differentiators cont.

### NIGP-CPP (Competency-based)

- NIGP-CPP re-certification is every three years with a minimum requirement for 36 Continuous Education Hours.
- NIGP will automatically upload all CEHs earned through all NIGP educational programs (seminars, learning modules, webinars, virtual conferences, the annual Forum, etc.) to the candidate's secure certification portal; saving time and effort in tracking CEHs.

### CPPO and CPPB (Knowledge-based)

- The UPPCC requires re-certification every five years with a requirement for a minimum of 45 contact hours; and there are options to earn points in continuing education and professional development, employment experience in public procurement (1 contact hour per year) and professional contributions in procurement (20 contact hours minimum).
- The UPPCC requires manual, online data entry via MyUPPCC for each activity earning re-certification points.

## Timeline

### The key dates for the NIGP-CPP Program are as follows:

Exam content for the NIGP-CPP Bridge exam announced	<b>Mid-January 2020</b>
Certification Handbook released	<b>Early February 2020</b>
Applications for the NIGP-CPP Certification available online	<b>Mid-February 2020</b>
NIGP-CPP Bridge Prep Course available in-person and virtually	<b>March 2020</b>
First NIGP-CPP Bridge exams administered in testing centers	<b>April 2020</b>
NIGP-CPP Comprehensive Prep Course available in-person and virtually	<b>May 2020</b>
NIGP-CPP Bridge Exam Cut Scores determined; candidates informed	<b>June 2020</b>
First NIGP-CPP Comprehensive exams administered in testing centers	<b>June 2020</b>
NIGP-CPP Comprehensive Cut Scores determined; candidates informed	<b>July 2020</b>
First NIGP-CPP certificants publicly recognized at the 2020 Chicago Forum	<b>August 2020</b>