Certification Program Guidelines

Mission and Goals

Mission
The mission of the ALA-APA Certification Program is to certify that individuals have reached a defined level of competency in an area of specialization in the library field.

Goals
The goals of the ALA-APA Certification Program are as follows:
1. To improve practice in specific areas of library services through the establishment of continuing professional development goals;
2. To identify bodies of knowledge and skills necessary to the practice of library services and/or to specific specialization areas within library services; and,
3. To recognize those individuals who have demonstrated both mastery of a body of knowledge and skills and continuing commitment to ongoing professional development.

Guiding Principles
All certification programs will be guided by the following principles:
- Access will be equitable and nondiscriminatory.
- ALA member-generated needs will guide program development.
- ALA Divisions will initiate certification programs.
- An open-provider model will be followed, with use of multiple providers.
- A rich variety of venues will be used for content delivery.
- ALA-APA will not be involved in revocation of certification for violation of professional ethics.

Governance and Responsibilities
ALA-APA Certification Program Committee (CPC)
The Certification Program Committee will oversee the implementation of the overall certification program and will oversee the activities of each Certification Review Committee. The CPC is charged to
(1) Encourage and promote development of certification programs,
(2) Monitor and evaluate the progress of such programs,
(3) Encourage individuals to seek certification through such programs of the ALA-APA,
(4) Review appeals from applicants and providers, and
(5) Make recommendations to the ALA-APA Board of Directors for general improvements to ALA-APA certification, based on evaluations and trends in certification practice.

The CPC shall consist of 5 individuals, including the chair. The CPC reports to the ALA-APA Board of Directors and the ALA-APA Council.
ALA-APA Certification Review Committee (CRC)
A Certification Review Committee will be established for each proposed certification specialty program to oversee the implementation of that certification program. Each CRC is charged to

1. Review and approve the requirements for certification and re-certification,
2. Establish guidelines for education programs offered by providers,
3. Review and approve education providers based on an evaluation that the provider’s program will fulfill the guidelines of ALA-APA by addressing the standards for certification, including an evaluation component, and providing to ALA-APA a record of completion for all successful participants,
4. Encourage the participation of multiple providers (e.g., ALA units and divisions, ALA chapters, Affiliates, LIS programs, independent consultants, vendors) and the use of a variety of venues (e.g., workshops, printed materials, online courses, distance education, conference programming),
5. Oversee the process for development and validation of the satisfactory completion of standards,
6. Refer appeals from applicants and providers to ALA-APA Certification Program Committee, and
7. Review periodically (at least every five years) the standards established for the certification program and request that the division(s) make changes as needed.

Each CRC shall consist of 3-5 individuals, including the chair, with representation guaranteed for the division(s) proposing the certification program. The CRC shall include both active practitioners and LIS educators.

Certification Programs

Competencies / Standards
The competencies and requirements for professional practice (e.g., the body of knowledge, required experience, mandated skills) in a specialty will be established by the appropriate ALA division, as authorized by the ALA Council [ALA Bylaws Article VI]. These competencies will be adopted as the competencies required for certification by the ALA-APA.

Certification, unlike licensure, should not be considered a statutory requirement for a particular job. Certification will, however, provide valuable information that employers may use in determining the relative qualifications of a candidate.

Eligibility for Participation
The sponsoring ALA Division(s) and the Certification Review Committee for each program will establish the basic credentials required for candidacy, including:

- Required educational background
- Type of experience
• Duration of experience

Initial Certification
Initial certification will be based on a) demonstrated commitment to ongoing professional development and b) satisfaction of the criteria for the particular specialization and standards.

Applications for certification will be made to ALA-APA with documentation of successful completion of all requirements. Applicants will have five years from the time of initial application to completion of requirements.

Initial certification will be for a period of three years.

Re-Certification
Re-certification criteria will be determined by the appropriate Certification Review Committee. Re-certification will be based on demonstration of continued professional growth.

Applications for re-certification will be made to the Certification Review Committee for that program of certification with documentation of successful completion of all re-certification requirements. If the candidate fails to demonstrate continuing education and competence, the re-certification will be denied.

If re-certification is approved, the certification will be valid for five years.

Specific information about the re-certification process is provided in the document, “Re-Certification.”

Certification Process

All certification programs will follow the same process of development and implementation. That process involves ALA divisions, the Certification Program Committee, the Certification Review Committee, ALA-APA staff, providers, and the ALA-APA Board of Directors and Council.

An overview of the process is depicted in the flow chart, “Certification Path.”

A more detailed description of the process and areas of responsibility is outlined in the chart, “Certification Program Development Process.”

Participants

Participation in any certification program is voluntary.

Programs shall be developed to provide equitable and nondiscriminatory access to all participants.

Both ALA members and nonmembers may participate in a certification
program.

If a candidate does not complete the program within five years of application, the individual must begin the program again.

Application Process
To apply for certification,
(1) Practitioners will download the application packet. They may also request a packet by mail. The packet may contain:
   a. The requirements for certification,
   b. An application,
   c. A work history document, to be filled out, signed, and returned with the completed application,
   d. A self-assessment, to be filled out, signed, and returned with the completed application,
   e. Instructions on how to access the lists of approved provider courses with enrollment information,
   f. A copy of the competency standards.

(2) Applicants submit a copy of their completed application, along with registration fees, to the ALA-APA Office. The Office creates a candidate file, reviews the materials for completeness, and maintains a file for each applicant, checking off the required certification components.

(3) The remainder of the process will be determined by each Certification Review Committee.

Application for Issuance of a Certificate
Participants in a certification program will be given documentation of satisfactory achievement of certification standards by each provider upon successful completion of coursework/training session activities.

Participants will submit their documentation of achievement to the ALA-APA Office. Participants will pay ALA-APA an established fee per standard, even if a single course/workshop covers multiple standards.

Once all requirements have been met, participants will initiate a review process by submitting an application for issuance of a certificate to the ALA-APA Office and paying a processing fee. The Office will review the applicant’s file for satisfactory completion of all requirements and issue the certificate signed by the Director of ALA-APA and the Executive Director of ALA-APA.

Providers
Providers must apply to and be approved by a Certification Review Committee established for review of each proposed certification specialty program. The approval will be based on the provider’s self-attestation that the provider’s program fulfills the standards established for the area of
certification, the guidelines/requirements set by the Certification Review Committee, syllabi for all courses/workshops to be offered, and the method by which the participants’ work will be rigorously evaluated.

ALA-APA will develop, with advice from legal counsel, a disclaimer that says that ALA-APA does not “endorse” a specific provider.

Providers may include ALA units and divisions, ALA chapters, Affiliates, LIS programs, independent consultants, vendors or other entities. The CRC will encourage the participation of multiple providers.

Providers may use a variety of venues (e.g., workshops, printed materials, online courses, distance education, conference programming). The CRC will encourage the use of multiple venues to provide more equitable access to certification coursework and materials.

Once approved, providers will schedule and deliver the courses, enroll participants, evaluate participants’ successful attainment of certification standards addressed in the course, and provide documentation of achievement to successful participants.

Providers will pay ALA-APA an established fee per year for each standard covered, even if courses/workshops include more than one standard. Once courses are approved and fees are paid, providers may repeat that course/workshop multiple times during that year.

Providers must apply for re-approval and pay the established fee annually.

**Appeal Process**

All decisions about certification and re-certification may be appealed. More specific information is included in the document, “Appeal Process for Providers and Applicants.”

If a provider and its coursework are not approved by the Certification Review Committee, the provider may appeal the decision in writing within three months of the decision.

Applicants who have been denied entry into a certification program or denied certification may also appeal the decision in writing within three months of the decision.

Disputes between participants and providers will be handled at the provider level. ALA-APA will not intervene at the provider level.

**Evaluation of Certification Programs**

The Certification Review Committee of each certification program will review the standards on a regular basis to determine their current relevance and applicability and will make revisions as appropriate.

Once a certification program has had time to be fully established and
operational, the Certification Review Committee will evaluate the participation in and effectiveness of that certification program and submit the evaluation report to the Certification Program Committee on an annual basis.

This evaluation will include:
(1) The number of applications on file,
(2) The number of applicants actively pursuing the certificate by engaging in education and training in designated courses,
(3) The number of providers seeking approval by ALA-APA,
(4) The number of providers offering training in the standards,
(5) An assessment of the satisfaction of participants.

As soon as certification within ALA-APA has been established and operational for a year, the Certification Program Committee will conduct a regular evaluation of the overall implementation and effectiveness of the certification program and report to ALA-APA Board of Directors and Council.

This evaluation will include:
(1) Analysis of results from individual certification programs,
(2) Survey and analysis of the perceptions of those with the certification that it:
   a. Aided their career advancement
   b. Increased their ability to be effective in their library position
(3) Ability of the certification program to sustain itself financially,
(4) Assessment of the credibility and influence of the certification program throughout ALA and in the library field.

Funding
Funding for the certification program may be generated through revenue streams from providers, applicants, preparatory materials, logo usage, and promotional materials.

ALA-APA may license standards from the sponsoring ALA divisions or negotiate other financial arrangements, such as not requiring sponsoring ALA divisions to pay approved provider fees.

ALA-APA fees will be determined by the ALA-APA Board of Directors in consultation with the Certification Program Committee. As much as possible, fees should be standardized across all certification programs.

Marketing
Marketing of certification will be a collaborative effort involving the sponsoring ALA divisions, ALA-APA staff, the Certification Program Committee, and each Certification Review Committee.

Marketing should be targeted to the memberships of the sponsoring and relevant units, committees within and outside of ALA, and other
associations and professional organizations.

Marketing should be an ongoing effort that includes:
- Press releases
- Web pages
- Ads in affiliated library publications
- Direct mail to members and nonmembers
- Targeted outreach to potential providers
- Presentations at national and regional conferences
- Articles
- Testimonials