

Planning & Zoning Training

Frequently Asked Questions



SOUTH CAROLINA
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING OR ZONING OFFICIALS OR EMPLOYEES [S.C. Code §§ 6-29-1310 – 6-29-1380](#)

The South Carolina Planning Education Advisory Committee (SCPEAC) is charged with approving education programs and determining categories of persons who are eligible for exemption from the educational requirements.

Who is required to receive educational training?

- Appointed officials who serve on a planning commission, board of zoning appeals, or board of architectural review
- Professional employees who are employed as a planning professional, zoning administrator, zoning official, or as a deputy or assistant to these positions

What training is required?

- Officials and employees must attend a minimum of six hours of orientation training.
- Thereafter, there is an annual requirement to attend at least three hours of continuing education.
- New officials and/or employees must attend orientation training within 180 days prior to and no later than 365 days after initial appointment or employment.

Are there limits or restrictions on the types of training or methods of delivery for the orientation or continuing education offerings?

Yes, the SCPEAC guidelines restrict the type of training and method of delivery. SCAC's course offerings comply with SCPEAC guidelines.

- Orientation Training – SCAC is currently developing an online orientation course for SCPEAC approval. Once approved, this course will be available at no cost to county board/commission members and county staff. After completing the course, individuals will receive a certificate of completion.
- Continuing Education – SCAC offers live continuing education webinars annually at no cost. Additionally, online recorded training can be viewed so long as it meets the requirement that participation or attendance can be confirmed. This is accomplished through SCAC's Learning Portal which tracks progress and completion. Certificates of completion are emailed upon completion.

Who is exempt from the educational requirements?

An appointed official or professional employee who has one or more of the following qualifications is exempt:

- Certification by the American Institute of Certified Planners
- Holds a master's or doctorate degree in planning from an accredited college or university
- Holds a master's or doctorate degree or specialized training or experience in a field related to planning as determined by the advisory committee
- Licensed to practice law in South Carolina
- A certification form and documentation of exemption must be filed with the clerk to council by the first anniversary date of appointment or employment. This documentation only needs to be filed once and must be retained while the official/employee is performing relevant duties.

What are the requirements of the local governing body?

- To identify their appointed officials and professional employees who are required to receive training no later than Dec. 31 of each year and provide a list to the clerk to council and to each planning or zoning entity in the jurisdiction
- To annually inform each planning or zoning entity of the educational requirements
- To sponsor and provide approved education programs or to fund approved education programs provided by another sponsor

What is the clerk to council's responsibilities?

The clerk must keep in the official public records originals of:

- All filed forms and documentation that certify compliance with educational requirements for three years after the calendar year in which each form is filed
- All filed forms and documentation that certify an exemption for the tenure of the appointed official or professional employee
- SCAC does not maintain records on behalf of the local governing body.

What are the consequences for failure to comply?

An appointed official is subject to removal from office and a professional employee is subject to suspension or dismissal from employment if he/she:

- Fails to complete the requisite number of hours of orientation training and continuing education within the allotted time or
- Fails to file the required certification form and documentation with the clerk.

Failure to comply may also call into question any decision or recommendations made by officials or employees and open the county up to liability.

A local governing body is prohibited from appointing or employing a person who has falsified the certification form or documentation.

How can I access the SCAC Learning Portal to watch recorded training and receive a certificate?

[The Learning Portal can be accessed by clicking here.](#)

To log into the Learning Portal, planning and zoning officials will first need an account with SCAC if they do not have one yet. This is so the Association can ensure they are a local government official in order to earn a certificate. To create an account or retrieve a password, use the following link: [Member Portal](#)

Once accounts are approved, participants can use the Learning Portal link above. At the top of the welcome page for the Learning Portal is a "Catalog" tab, which will go to the page listing all Planning & zoning training. Click the "Launch" button to open the recording and begin watching it. A certificate will be emailed upon completion. The recordings are various lengths, so attention should be paid to the descriptions.

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