

A/E Pass Rate Incentives program description

October 8, 2008, rev 12/8/08, rev 9/17/09
Commercial Plan Review and Permitting

1. Background

For over two years, the Department has actively worked on evaluating and improving the OnSchedule Plan Review Process. Initially, much of the attention focused on appropriate staffing levels, but over time we included questions of whether the process was as efficient as possible. Ultimately, we also discussed whether or not design professionals were responsible in their use of Department resources. This program targets the latter point.

In January 2008 the Department delivered a report to the Building-Development Commission (BDC), summarizing over a year's worth of work that involved approximately 45 participants, including Architects and Engineers (A/E's), Directors, Core Process Managers (CPM's), line staff, who undertook 35 formal meetings. This report consolidated the work of three separate groups evaluating Commercial Plan Review:

- Engineering Process Assessment
- Meetings by the Plan Review Task Force, including members of the design community
- Review of the Commercial Plan Review scope of work

A key component of the January 15, 2008 report summary is the development of a program grading A/E's on their plan review pass/fail performance. The Department began grading contractors in 1999, and that program proved very successful in driving inspection pass rates up, improving process efficiency and lowering service cost to both customers and the Department. We believe we can achieve the same improvement in plan review.

2. Purpose

The A/E Pass Rate Incentives program **goal** is to support A&E's by moving them up in the plan review process because they take the profession and the OnSchedule process seriously and have earned resulting high pass rates. Conversely, those professionals who abuse the OnSchedule process will move back, until they improve.

3. How the program will work

- Commercial Technical Assistance Center (CTAC) and Mega projects (as defined in the BDC Ordinance) are exempt from the program, but the Program applies to all other OnSchedule submissions.
- A/E seal holders will collect pass/fail events individually:
 - Architects will collect only their failures on "A" sheets; whereas, the Electrical Engineers will collect only their failures on the "E" sheets, etc.
 - Non AE seal holders (interior design, et al) will register with the Department, collecting failure events against an assigned Dept registration number.
- The Dept will record, tabulate and post results on a quarterly basis (Jan 1, April 1, etc).
 - Graded A/E's will receive notice on or before the 10th day of the following quarter of their standing in the A/E pass rate program. So, for grades collected January 1 thru March 31, the A/E will receive notice of standing on or before April 10.
 - A/E grades will be posted on meckpermit.com for public reference, similar to the contractors failure rate program.

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- A/E's will be placed in one of three categories on a quarterly basis:
 - Superior performer: plan review pass rates of 85% or better
 - Average performer: plan review pass rates between less than 85% and 50%
 - Poor performer: plan review pass rates of less than 50%.
- The OnSchedule A/E Grade Driven Service Summary chart will be applied to all graded Architects and Engineers.
- Other details
 - Grading is cumulative based on the most recent 7 to 14 plan review cycle events.
 - A Plan Review Cycle event will be defined as including all activities involved in a B/E/M/P submittal, including AAN and Interactive Review.
 - At the program start, all A/E's will be given credit for 3 (free) passing review cycles.
 - Thereafter, A/E's who are new to the program (new seal holders or out of town Architects) will be given credit for 3 (free) passing review cycles.
 - A/E's with less than 7 review cycle events will be graded as average, until they reach their 7th review event.
 - Each review cycle is a pass/fail review, grading event for the involved discipline.
 - A failed review consists of any plan review deficiency, not able to gain resolution through either Interactive Review or Approved as Noted (AAN).
 - Any B/E/M/P deficiencies identified in plan review, not able to gain resolution through either Interactive Review, or Approved as Noted (AAN), accumulate in the current quarter's tabulation, to be reported to the A/E on the 1st day of the following quarter.
 - The Department and A/E community have agreed to a list of "plan review failures that are not really failures" (final draft 12/5/08) to be posted on meckpermit.com. Any item on this list, though noted in the plan review, will not be considered a plan review deficiency (will not count).
 - The Department has the option of weighting plan review failures for project size and complexity, by a defined publicly posted method that is uniformly applied to all projects.
 - The program applies to reviews for NC State Building Code compliance in building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing.
 - Until further notice, the program does not apply to local ordinance or fire review.
 - Projects will be classed by A/E team, with the lowest grade of the team seal holders determining the grade of the overall team, and also determining the application of the OnSchedule A/E Grade Driven Service Summary chart.
 - A/E team grades will be assigned at the time of OnSchedule application. If the A/E's grade status changes during the plan review process, their grade status at OnSchedule application will continue for that project scope of work only, through completion of all cycles of that project component.
 - Further clarifying, later project subcomponents or later phases will assume the new grading status.
 - This program defines the permit application process as beginning with the application for OnSchedule review.

- A/E's may rotate off the "poor performer" list by the following options:
 - a) A/E's may study their way off the poor performer list by attending and successfully completing either:
 - An NC level III Code Officials Class in their discipline (successful completion means passing the class test).
 - Or other code classes of similar rigor, defined by the Department.

4. Project examples of A/E Pass Rate incentives

- ❖ **Superior performing A/E team:** The Architect submits required documentation for the OnSchedule plan review process. Using the Electronic Plan Management system (EPM) as a model, it would work as follows:
 - The lead professional of the A/E team enters all required data in EPM by internet, attaches the project drawings and uploads both items to the Department electronic entry point, <http://epm.mecklenburgcountync.gov>.
 - The project description includes the list by name and license number of A/E/M/P seal holders.
 - The Architect has identified seal holders, with all falling at or above the Superior Performer threshold in the Grading system.
 - EPMS confirms the A/E team's Superior Performer grade to the applicant (lead professional of the A/E team), advising that the team has the following plan review service options, as outlined in the OnSchedule A/E Grade Driven Service Summary chart.
 - Preliminary code reviews available
 - Electronic self-gatekeeping optional
 - Expedited review options: Express Review, Professional Certification or 3rd Party Review
 - Priority review available
 - Walk thru service available on limited basis
 - Pool reviews available
 - Plan clarification tools available; interactive review; AAN
 - Projects eligible for review schedule preference (able to bump others)
 - The lead professional of the A/E team selects the desired services, confirms project review appointments (from a selection offered by EPM) as well as submittal schedule.
 - The project proceeds to the submittal and review, engaging as many cycles as necessary to gain plan review approval and permit issuance.

- ❖ **Average performing A/E team:** The Architect submits required documentation for the OnSchedule plan review process. Using EPM as a model, it would work as follows:
 - The A/E team leader enters required data in EPM by internet, attaches the project drawings and uploads both items to the electronic entry point <http://epm.mecklenburgcountync.gov>.
 - The project description includes the list by name and license number of A/E/M/P seal holders.
 - The identified seal holder list includes 3 in the Superior Performer threshold in the Grading system; however, the 4th seal holder has a 65% pass rate or average.
 - The entire team is ranked as average based on the lowest seal holder's grade.

- EPMS confirms the A/E team's Average Performer grade to the applicant (lead of the A/E team), advising that the team has the following plan review service options, as outlined in the OnSchedule A/E Grade Driven Service Summary chart.
 - Preliminary code reviews available
 - Expedited review options available: Express Review, Professional Certification or 3rd Party Review
 - Pool reviews available
 - Plan clarification tools available; interactive review; and AAN
 - Not available: electronic self-gatekeeping, priority review, walk thru service, review schedule preference
 - The lead professional of the A/E team selects the desired services, confirms project review appointments (from a selection offered by EPM), as well submittal schedule.
 - The project proceeds to the submittal and review, engaging as many cycles as necessary to gain plan review approval and permit issuance.
- ❖ **Poor performing A/E team:** The Architect submits required documentation for the OnSchedule plan review process. Using EPM as a model, it would work as follows.
- The A/E team leader enters required data in EPM by internet, attaches the project drawings and uploads both items to the electronic entry point, <http://epm.mecklenburgcountync.gov>.
 - The project description includes the list by name and license number of A/E/M/P seal holders.
 - The identified seal holder list includes 3 in the Average Performer threshold in the Grading system; however, the 4th seal holder has a 45% pass rate or poor.
 - The entire team is ranked as poor, based on the lowest seal holder's grade.
 - EPMS confirms the A/E team's Poor Performer grade to the applicant (lead professional of the A/E team), advising that the team has the following plan review submittal requirements, as outlined in the OnSchedule A/E Grade Driven Service Summary chart, including.
 - Added requirements:
 - Peer reviews, Preliminary reviews required with meeting documentation, Gatekeeper ready documentation, Advanced Appendix B meeting
 - Basic service available;
 - CTAC, Gatekeeping, OnSchedule reviews, AAN
 - Services not available:
 - electronic self-gatekeeping, Interactive review, Priority review, walk thru service, review schedule preference, pool reviews, and all expedited review options (Express, Professional Certification, 3rd Party)
 - The lead professional of the A/E team selects the desired services, confirms project review appointments (from a selection offered by EPM), as well submittal schedule.
 - In this case, the A/E also confirms pre-submittal meeting and other requirements.
 - The project proceeds to the submittal and review, engaging as many cycles as necessary to gain plan review approval and permit issuance.

5. Timeline; schedule moving forward

- Interactive review startup by Sept.1, 2008; (complete)
- Program description and concept details confirmed with A/E's by, December 10, 2008; (complete)
- Grading system software development; (complete)
- Public awareness campaign to local A/E community; (complete)
- Begin collecting A/E individual seal holder grading events; (complete)
- Publish A/E grades and begin using the program's key tool, the OnSchedule A/E Grade Driven Service Summary; (complete)