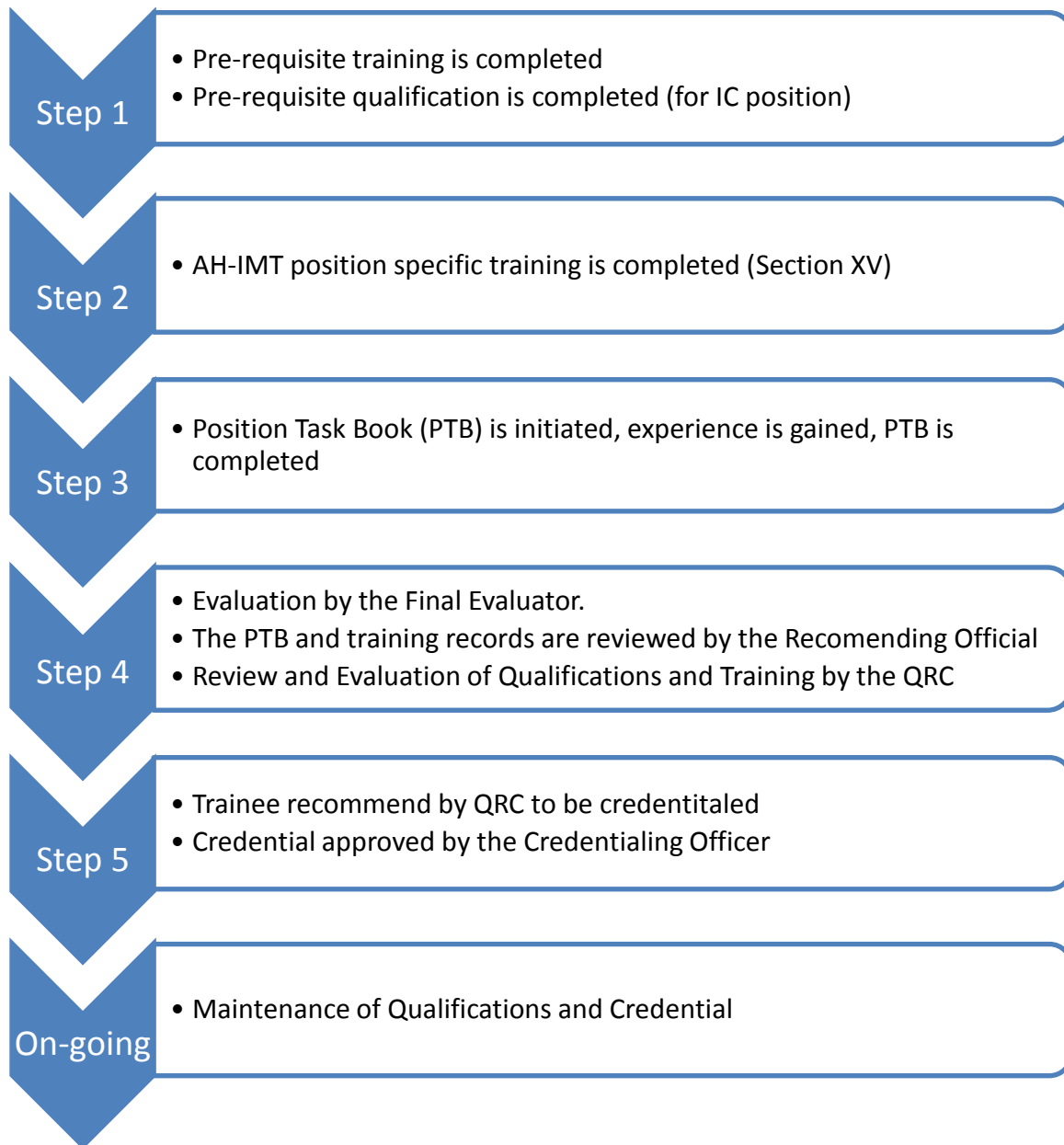


VIII. The Recommended Qualification Process



Steps in the Qualification Process

There are five recommended sequential steps to be credentialed as qualified for a given position. Additionally, once an individual has been credentialed, there are qualification requirements to maintain the credential.

Step 1 – Prerequisite Training and Qualifications

The ICPD Qualification Tables identify prerequisite training for the position. Some IMT positions require prerequisite experience that must be attained before an individual can pursue a specific position and before a PTB can be initiated for the target position.

Direct Entry at Type 4 and 3 Level

At this time the UT-IIIMTQS does allow “direct entry” at the Type 4 and 3 level into an ICS officer (except SOFR), chief, director, supervisor, or leader level IMT position without previously obtaining the specific position qualifications that position supervises in a fully-staffed ICS organization. However, a core principle of the Incident Command System requires that when a lower position is not filled in an incident organization, the position above assumes all the functional responsibilities of the unfilled position below.

It is important that Evaluators, Final Evaluators, Training Officers, Recommending Officials, and the Qualification Review Committee to insure a direct entry Trainee is fully capable of meeting their ICS responsibilities before recommending to be credentialed. This may require the direct entry Trainee spend more time (more operational periods) in Trainee status than might be needed by a Trainee who has previously qualified in the subordinate position(s) (see Section XV).

Step 2 – Position Specific Training is Completed

Completes the required training for the position, including any additional training that may be required, in Section XV.

Step 3 – Position Task Book Initiated and Completion

Position Task Book Initiated

The role the person who initiates a task book is different from an Evaluator, Final Evaluator or Recommending Official. A Trainee who desires to become qualified in an ICS position must complete a Position Task Book (PTB). The PTB is initiated by the candidate’s employing/sponsoring organization head or the QRC member in their region. The PTB initiator does not have to be qualified in the position, but must be able to make decisions regarding setting the position candidate on the path to credentialing.

The Initiator should consider the following before PTB initiation:

- Can the employing/sponsoring organization commit to the time and expense required for the candidate to complete the PTB and become qualified?
- Can the employing/sponsoring organization provide on-going support and approval to perform in the position once qualified?
- Has the candidate completed prerequisite qualifications required by the UT-IIIMTQS?
 - If so, has the candidate demonstrated through his/her performance in the prerequisite position a readiness to pursue the next level qualification?
- Is there any training or experience required by the UT-IIIMTQS or needed for the individual that should take place before the PTB is initiated and the candidate is assigned as a Trainee?

The generally accepted practice is that the PTB can be initiated upon completion of the prerequisite qualifications as identified in the ICPD qualifications tables, even at the same time as required training is being completed.

A Trainee cannot be assigned to an intrastate/interstate incident unless the PTB has been initiated.

If within three years of the first task entry in a PTB, the trainee has not completed the final evaluation, the task book may be extended at the discretion of the Training Officer for up to three additional years. The intent of the extension is for the Training Officer and Trainee to consider whether additional training, such as position-specific training, or other preparation is needed for the Trainee to be adequately prepared for a Trainee assignment. The reason for the extension will be noted by the Training Officer in the Trainee's PTB or on an attachment to the PTB.

Position Task Book Completion and Associated Task Book Codes

Each task has at least one code associated with the situation(s) within which the task must be completed. Performance of any task in a situation(s) other than that required by the task's code(s) is not valid for qualification.

If more than one code is listed, the task may be completed in any of the situations (e.g. if code I1, I2, and O1 are listed, the task may be completed in any one of the three situations).

Definitions for these codes are:

I1 = Task must be performed on an incident which meets the following criteria:

- Is managed under the ICS
- Requires a written Incident Action Plan
- Requires using the Planning P to plan for multiple operational periods

I2 = Task can be performed in the following situations:

- Incident
- Incident within an Event or Incident

The situation must meet the following criteria:

- Is a critical time-pressured, high-consequence incident managed under the ICS
- May only be one operational period and without a formal written IAP
- Matches or is higher complexity level (see Section XIII – Incident Complexity Analysis Chart) than the type rating being pursued

O1 = Task can be performed in the following situations:

- Planned Event
- "Full Scale Exercise" or "Functional Exercise" as defined by HSEEP (see Section XIV)

The situation must meet the following criteria:

- Is managed under the ICS
- Matches or is higher complexity level (see Section XVI – Incident Complexity Analysis Chart) than the type rating being pursued
- Requires a formal written Incident or Event Action Plan (IAP/EAP)
- Requires using the Planning P to plan for multiple operational periods
- For an Event, requires contingency planning for an Incident within the Event

O2 = Task can be performed in the following situations if the situation affords the opportunity to evaluate the knowledge/skills associated with the ICS position:

- Planned Event
- Exercise

R = Rare events seldom occur and opportunities to evaluate Trainee performance in real settings are limited. Examples of rare events include accidents, injuries, vehicle and aircraft crashes. Through interviews, the evaluator may be able to determine if the trainee could perform the task in a real situation.

Position Task Book Evaluation

It is recommended as a minimum that a Trainee is evaluated on at least two qualifying experiences (incident, planned event, or exercise) one of which must be an actual qualifying incident that is a type 3 complexity level. There should be one fully completed incident Evaluation Record in the PTB with accompanying sign-offs on relevant tasks for each Trainee experience completed by the trainees immediate supervisor. If the Trainee had multiple supervisors on an extended incident, evaluations from each supervisor is recommended. It is also recommended that a complete evaluation for each qualifying incident, planned event, or exercise include a completed ICS-225 Incident Personnel Performance Rating or equivalent.

Coach/Evaluator

Within the context of this guide, the Coach is the individual who provides instruction to a Trainee, whether in the classroom, on the job, planned event, exercise, or on an incident. Although many of the job responsibilities of the Coach are similar to those of an Evaluator, to preserve the integrity of the qualifications system the roles of coaching and evaluating must remain separate. For example, a Coach may instruct a Trainee in proper interviewing techniques. When the Trainee appears to have mastered the tasks, the Coach could employ the use of another individual to act as the evaluator or could transition into the role of an evaluator and observe and record the performance of the task. It is similar to providing instruction on a topic within the classroom and then administering a test to determine mastery of the subject. The functions of coaching and evaluating must remain separate and must be performed in sequence and not at the same time.

- 1) To be qualified as a Coach or Evaluator for task code "I" and "R" in the PTB
 - a. the individual must be qualified in the position being coached or evaluated, or
 - b. the individual must be qualified in a position that, within the ICS, supervises the position being coached or evaluated.

It is recommended the Coach/Evaluator has previously performed successfully on two separate Qualifying Incidents or Qualifying Exercises in either the position being coached and/or evaluated on, or successfully performed in a/one of the ICS position(s) that would normally supervise the position that the Trainee is being instructed or evaluated on. As an example, if the individual being instructed or evaluated on was a Situation Unit Leader Trainee, the Coach/Evaluator should have successfully performed on two different Qualifying Incidents/Events or Qualifying Exercises as a qualified Situation Unit Leader, or as a qualified Planning Section Chief, because the Planning Section Chief normally supervises the ICS position of the Situation Unit Leader.

Task codes “O” in the PTB may be evaluated in other situations. For instance, in the classroom by an instructor(s) (usually qualified as above), or during the course of daily work, by a supervisor.

Step 4 – Review and Evaluation of Qualifications

Final Evaluator

The Final Evaluation is made by the individual who evaluates the Trainee during the final position performance assignment in which the last remaining tasks are evaluated and initialed. A Final Evaluator’s qualifications are different than that of a Coach/Evaluator. A Final Evaluator must be fully qualified in the same position for which the Trainee is being evaluated, not just be ICS qualified in a position that would supervise the Trainee. The difference is necessitated due to the increased responsibility of the Final Evaluator and the increased depth of knowledge and understanding of the position being evaluated that only a qualified individual may possess. The Final Evaluator is responsible for completing the Final Evaluator’s Verification statement in the PTB.

There are positives to have evaluators assessing personnel from different agencies; however, this is not always possible. If no local final evaluators are available, the applicant may contact DEM to obtain a list of individuals qualified to act as the Final Evaluator.

A key component is evaluation of an individual’s capability to perform in a position. Completion of required training and experience requirements and other Incident Command Position Description Qualification Tables criteria alone does not guarantee that an individual should be credentialed to perform in a position.

The quality of experiences gained in a given position should be closely evaluated when making a determination for advancement to the next higher position, to a different position, or for renewal of the credential. Of particular importance in reviewing the quality of a Trainee’s experience is that the Trainee must have demonstrated satisfactory performance on planned events, exercises, and incidents that were typed at a complexity level 3, 2, or 1.

This *Guide* recommends that more than one position performance assignment be experienced before credentialing, one of which should be an actual incident and not merely a qualifying event or exercise. It is also recommended before an individual begins the process to advance to the next higher level that more than one assignment be experienced after completing the PTB and being credentialed in the position. If a responder is associated with a local response agency, an initial review and evaluation of a Trainee’s records should be completed by the local employing/sponsoring response agencies’ Training Officer. This evaluation should occur before submitting the records to the Qualification Review Committee.

The PTB and Training Records Reviewed

The employing/sponsoring organization’s Recommending Official reviews PTB and training records and recommends the trainee for credentialing to the QRC by signing the trainee’s PTB. The PTB and training records are then submitted to their region’s QRC member for review and the QRC member submits them to the QRC.

Step 5 – Credentialing

The Qualification Review Committee will review the submitted documentation and will determine if the trainee should be recommended for credentialing to the Credentialing Officer.

The Credentialing Officer is the individual who, upon recommendation from the QRC, may credential the Trainee in the requested position. The Credentialing Officer has exclusive authority and holds the responsibility to determine if the individual should be credentialed in the position. This determination should be based on a Trainee's demonstration of position competencies and behaviors documented through the completion of a PTB including the Final Evaluator's Verification.

The Credentialing Officer may delegate his/her authority to another individual, through a written agreement. Such a delegation should be bestowed only when the same standards are applied by the designee as would be by the Credentialing Officer.

Credentialing of NIMS ICS Qualification

Credentialing is issued by DEM to attest to the fact that the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position and has successfully accomplished all the criteria set out in the ICPD Qualifications Chart for that position. The State should make copies of certain sections of the PTB and other needed items that are submitted. These items shall be maintained according to State guidelines. This record should, at the minimum, contain:

- Certain training records
- Certain experience records
- The Type level of incidents, planned events, exercises during which the individual performed.
- Other incident, event, or exercise performance evaluations from qualified evaluators or supervisors (ICS-225)
- Recommendation from the Qualifications Review Committee (QRC).

Physical Fitness

- Fitness levels shall be evaluated annually by the Employing/Sponsoring Organization.
- Fitness standards listed in the UT-IIIMTQS should be considered as generic, and not applicable to all types of hazards.
- Personnel must meet established physical fitness standards for specific hazards for Incident assignments as set by the UT-IIIMTQS guidelines.
- When an individual is credentialed in multiple All-Hazards positions, and the positions have different fitness levels, the highest fitness level shall be required for that credentialed position.
- The Employing/Sponsoring Organization has the latitude to determine the method of evaluating the physical fitness level of their Employed/Sponsored personnel within UT-IIIMTQS guidelines (see 5 CFR, Chapter 1, subpart B 339.203).
- All-Hazards positions, with no pre-established physical fitness guidelines, the QRC have the latitude to determine the fitness levels.
- The following four categories of physical fitness have been established:
 - **Strenuous:** Duties involve fieldwork requiring physical performance calling for above - average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending, and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of work typically is set by the emergency situation.
 - **Medium:** Duties involve fieldwork requiring complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 25-50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping, squatting, twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals usually set their own work pace.

- **Low:** Duties mainly involve office type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities may occur at an incident command post, base or camp which include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle, and long hours of work, as well as some bending, stooping, or light lifting. Individuals almost always can govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.
- **None:** Duties are normally performed in a controlled environment, such as an EOC.

Technical specialist positions that are needed at the incident should have minimum fitness level of Low. Technical Specialists who are required to work in the field shall have the minimum fitness level of Medium (some may require Strenuous).

NOTE: DEM may credential an individual with physical disability(s). The DEM and the individual must establish what reasonable accommodations are needed before credentials are issued. If the individual can perform his or her job without any reasonable accommodations, the individual should be credentialed and deployed as any other qualified individual. If the individual requires some identified reasonable accommodations, these accommodations must be provided before the individual accepts an assignment. The individual should not deploy until the needed accommodations are provided. The individual needs to understand deployments are often to emergency locations and these locations do not have facilities that are ADA compliant. Reasonable accommodations will often be dependent on the accommodations needed and on the location, kind and length of the incident. It is important to note that when credentialing individuals with disabilities, the need for reasonable accommodations issues must be addressed before the credentials are issued.

On-Going – Maintenance of Qualifications and Credential

Currency

To prevent the degradation of knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully carry out the responsibilities of a position, a person needs to successfully perform in that position at least once every five years. The Employing/Sponsoring Organization should develop a system for identifying and assisting those individuals whose credential is about to lapse.

Generally, currency can be maintained by successful performance in:

- The position in which the individual is qualified.
- Some higher position(s) for which that position is a qualification prerequisite, providing the individual was previously qualified in that position.
- A position that is identified in this guide (see Section XV) or NWCG guide PMS 310-1 for other position assignments that will maintain currency.
- Some lower position(s) that are qualification prerequisite(s)

Currency documentation might include one or more of the following:

- Incident Action Plan with person's name.
- Incident, event, or exercise performance evaluations (such as an ICS-225 Incident Personnel Performance Rating or equivalent) from qualified evaluators or supervisors.
- Experience records with supporting information about:
 - Number of assignments
 - Number of operational periods
 - Variety of incidents

- The Type level of incidents, planned events, exercises during which the individual performed.

IX. Credential Revocation and Reinstatement

Revocation

An individual may lose or drop their credential for reasons including revocation, loss of currency or personal reasons.

Credential revocation is the process the QRC may initiate to remove an individual's position(s) qualifications. The QRC may recommend the revocation of a credential of an individual to the Credentialing Officer.

- Here are some of the grounds, but not limited to the following, where the QRC may recommend credential revocation:
 - Falsification of a position task book and/or other required experience
 - Falsification of the required training
- When it is determined that the individual has performed in an unsatisfactory manner, e.g:
 - Taking insubordinate actions that lead to unsafe conditions on the incident
 - Intentionally misrepresenting incident qualifications
 - Deliberately disregarding identified safe practices that could put their life or others in danger

An employing/sponsoring organization can recommend to the QRC an individual, who is employed/sponsored by them, to have their credential revoked for the cause listed above.

Individuals whose credentials are revoked or no longer valid, will not be available for an assignment as an Agent of the State. An employing/sponsoring organization can determine how the individual may perform within the local jurisdiction irrespective of their qualification status with DEM.

Reinstatement

A person who does not meet the currency criteria reverts to Trainee status for that position. The QRC will determine if training is necessary or if the person can gain and demonstrate the proper proficiency in a performance assignment or assignments. It is recommended that the individual perform the duties of the position for a minimum of two operational periods under the supervision of an Evaluator before credentialing is granted.

Other Credential Revocation and Reinstatement Information

The following guidelines for credential revocation are established:

- Credential revocation of NIMS/ICS qualification only applies to performance in the NIMS/ICS position the person was deployed for or was performing; it is not intended to affect regular job-related duties.
- Individuals can only be mobilized as Agents of the State in a position(s) for which they are currently credentialed or assigned as a Trainee.
- Incident Commanders (IC) do not have the authority to revoke a credential of an individual, but can recommend revocation to the QRC, if they can show cause. A credentialed individual or a trainee may be demobilized from an incident by the Incident Commander. The Incident Commander is responsible for providing documented reasons for relieving an individual,

forwarding the information to the individual's Employing/Sponsoring Organization and the Credentialing Officer, including a copy of the individual's *Incident Personnel Performance Rating (ICS-225)* in the documentation package.

The QRC should evaluate and prescribe the steps required to regain a credential on a case-by-case basis for an individual who has had their credential(s) revoked for reasons similar to those described above. Reinstatement of credential(s) may include, as appropriate, training outlined in the Incident Command Position Description (ICDP) and/or training relevant to the reason(s) for revocation. Reinstatement of an individual should, in most cases, include performance of the duties of the position for a number of operational periods, as prescribed by the QRC, under the supervision of an Evaluator, before the credential(s) is/are reinstated.

X. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning is a process that evaluates an individual's formal and non-formal learning through training and experience to determine the extent to which that individual has already acquired and performed the required competencies of an emergency response position. RPL is a more robust, performance-based evaluation and enhancement of traditional Historical Recognition processes. The RPL process measures an individual's demonstrated knowledge, skills and experience against the national standard competencies as established in the specific position task book. The measurement process focuses on evaluation of the candidate's acquisition of the skills described in the prescribed standards, rather than the manner or procedure which the skills were acquired. A candidate will not be judged on where he/she learned to do a job, but rather on the current ability to do the job.

Recognition of Prior Learning Process

1. A candidate will obtain a copy of Recognition of Prior Learning Portfolio (see Section XVII) to use as a guide for the position the candidate is interested. The Portfolio is an honest appraisal, listing past training and experience to assist the QRC evaluating whether the candidate has successfully performed the duties of the position desired. The appraisal is not based on "what the candidate thinks he/she can do", but rather is based on "I have already successfully performed this function".
2. Compile a portfolio of convincing evidence of the past training and experiences that documents the candidate has performed the job and completed it successfully. The portfolio is a collection of certificates, letters, and other documentation, that can provide support to the application.
3. The candidate will submit the portfolio to their Regional QRC representative for the QRC's review, at least 30 days prior to the date the candidate will meet with the QRC.
4. The candidate will be invited to an assessment interview, with the QRC and subject matter expert(s) (SMEs) for the requested position, where the candidate will be asked questions about the portfolio and experiences relating to performing the desired position.

The candidate will be interviewed by at least three members of the Qualification Review Committee and may include individual(s) credentialed in the position being reviewed and/or subject matter expert(s) for this position. This panel will evaluate how "the candidate performs" in this position and completes the job satisfactorily.

Note: Evaluating competence is the process of collecting evidence and making judgments about whether a candidate has achieved the standard capabilities expected in the incident management environment. The QRC and SME(s) will review a candidate's portfolio and documentation and compare it against the competency standards for the position. If the QRC and SME(s) do not gain sufficient information from the portfolio to make a judgment about the candidate's competence in a specific area, more information should be pursued during the interview. The QRC and SME(s) may ask the candidate for more information, to demonstrate a skill, or provide an explanation of knowledge during the interview.

When reviewing the portfolio, the QRC and SME(s) must be confident that the evidence gathered from the candidate is valid, current, sufficient, and authentic and the material or evidence provided by the candidate covers all the competencies of the qualification. During the interview, the QRC and SME(s) should utilize a combination of competency based evaluation methods.

5. After the interview is concluded the QRC and SME(s) will confer and then make a decision about the candidate's competency. If the group determines the candidate should be credentialed in this position, the recommendation will be made to the Credentialing Officer. If the QRC and SME(s) deems the candidate needs additional training and/or experience, the QRC will make recommendations to the candidate and the employing/sponsoring organization for additional training and development opportunities.

Falsification or forgery of documents used in the RPL process will be considered grounds for dismissal from the credentialing process. Any falsification or forgery of documents will be reported to the Employing/Sponsoring Organization.

Appeal Process

If a candidate feels the assessment was not administered properly or fairly; or some evidence of discrimination was present, the applicant has the right to file an appeal. Appeals should be filed with the Credentialing Officer within 30 days of receiving notice of the assessment. The appeal must demonstrate some breach of the RPL process to be valid.

Credentialing is an administrative process for validating personnel qualifications and providing authorization to perform specific functions during an incident. RPL is a tool that evaluates a candidate's demonstrated knowledge, skills, and past experiences, against a position's minimum standards for credentialing purposes. Just as your past experiences have qualified you for this desired position, your future experiences will refine your skills and prepare you for your next position.

XI. Credential Expiration and Renewal

A credential issued through this Guide shall expire five years from the date of approval. A credential may be renewed by applying and having participated in at least one qualifying incident, event, or exercise (simulation) from the date of the approval or renewal, in the position requesting renewal or in a position that supervises the position being renewed if they have been qualified in that position.