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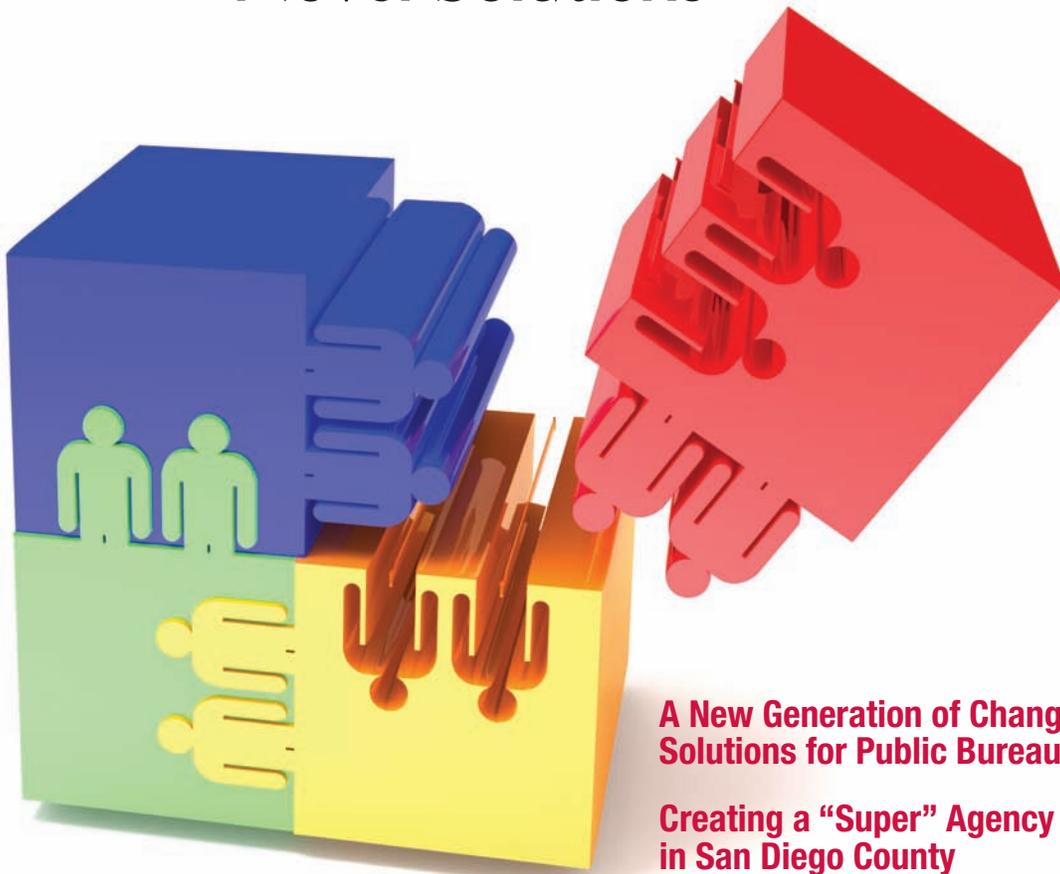
# The Public Manager

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# The National CPM Program

by Howard R. Balanoff  
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Expansion of a model certification program in Texas and across the United States holds promise for public-sector workforces around the world.

**T**he Certified Public Manager (CPM) program in the United States is a nationally recognized professional development program. It is designed for federal, state, and local government managers, but the skills, knowledge, and competencies taught are also relevant for managers and supervisors in the nonprofit sector.

The CPM program's primary goal is to improve the performance of public-sector managers and the organizational performance of federal, state, and local government employees. It is a comprehensive course of study through which public managers can acquire and apply the best practices and theory to their management behaviors and strategies using prescribed sets of professional standards, often referred to as "competencies."

The curriculum uses theory as the foundation and applies it to practical problems facing the participants, their agencies and departments, and the citizens. Those who complete the program earn a nationally trademarked designation of CPM.

The CPM program has been operating in the United States since 1979. It began in Georgia as a certification program for public managers in Georgia's state government. Initially, it spread throughout the southern states (Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas) and eventually to all regions in the country.

By 1995, the CPM program had expanded throughout the United States, encompassing federal, local, and nonprofit and non-governmental employees. By 1996, the Graduate School, USDA, was delivering a CPM program to federal employees, and the Texas CPM program was

training significant numbers of local government employees, in addition to serving federal, state, and nonprofit employees. By 2008, thirty-seven CPM programs, including Washington, DC, and the federal government (through the Graduate School, USDA), were operating in the United States. Some of the newest CPM programs are in California and New York.

## National CPM Consortium

CPM programs in the United States operate under the umbrella of the National CPM Consortium. Formed in 1979, this consortium establishes and preserves standards for the CPM designation. It monitors and accredits all CPM programs in the United States. Only accredited programs are authorized to award the CPM designation, which is trademarked by the consortium and its member programs. Accredited CPM programs are reviewed and reaccredited every five years for continued compliance with national CPM standards.

The purpose of the consortium is to promote the CPM programs. It provides and monitors accreditation standards, facilitates program development, encourages innovation, and develops linkages with programs and organizations with similar values and interests.

The National CPM Consortium Council comprises seventy-four members. Each CPM program is authorized to send up to two representatives to the council. One of the representatives is the state CPM program director, who designates the state's second member. The consortium is a "loose" confederation of various CPM programs, which allows for variation and creativity in the development of individual programs. The one thing that all programs have in common is that they all conform to the general standards and competencies set by the National CPM Consortium.

The consortium authorizes one organization per state to deliver the accredited CPM program. CPM applicants go through a series of steps to reach full membership in the consortium. The first step for a new member is associate membership, which indicates that the applicant is willing to develop a new CPM program. Active membership is the next step, which occurs when a new member be-

gins to offer a CPM program. The final step is full membership, which occurs after the new member successfully passes a peer review evaluation and is initially accredited by the consortium.

Additional information on the consortium, including officers, standards, and accreditation proceedings, is available on the CPM Web site at [www.cpmconsortium.org](http://www.cpmconsortium.org).

## Texas CPM Program

The Texas CPM program is an example of one of the programs under the umbrella of the consortium. Texas State University (TSU) began offering the CPM program for Texas after receiving authorization in April 1995 from the consortium. In July 1995, the Public Service Academy, a division of the Continuing Education Program at TSU, began offering the Texas CPM program for state and local government and nonprofit-sector employees.

The program is approved for continuing education credit for a number of public and nonprofit organizations, including the Peace Officers, Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education, and Texas State Board of Public Accountancy. The County Commissioners' Education Committee for Commissioners' Continuing Education Credit has approved it as mandated by the Texas state legislature.

The Texas CPM program, through the William P. Hobby Center for Public Service, offers seminars, workshops, and a variety of field-based projects. The program is designed to enhance the skills and abilities that participants need to deal with "real-world" problems and situations. One of the major features of the Texas CPM program is the completion of several applied projects, which deal with practical situations.

The seven courses that make up the CPM program in Texas are as follows:

1. Personnel and Human Resources Administration
2. Managing for Quality
3. Organizational Communication
4. Public Finance and Budgeting
5. Productivity and Program Evaluation
6. Information Systems for Managers
7. Applied Project Practicum.

Prior to graduation, all CPM participants are required to complete a major applied project in Track 7, which is the capstone of the program. In Track 7, the student demonstrates the management skills, knowledge, and abilities learned in the previous six tracks.

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## Course Cycles

CPM courses operate in a cycle, normally beginning with Track 1 and ending with Track 7. After Track 7 is completed, the rotation begins again with Track 1. CPM courses in Texas can be taken in any order. In addition to receiving certification credit, academic course credit at no additional cost may be granted to students eligible to receive it. After successfully completing the seven-course sequence, participants receive the designation of Certified Public Manager. For new graduates around the State of Texas, CPM graduation ceremonies are held June and December at the Texas State Capitol in Austin.

Some of the CPM “course cycles” are “open enrollment cycles,” in that enrollment is open to all participants from the public and nonprofit sectors. Some cycles are “closed enrollment cycles,” which means that TSU has a direct contract with a city or public-sector organization to deliver the CPM program to that organization’s managers. A CPM class consists of between twenty and thirty managers.

To meet the needs of working participants, as well as those commuting from long distances, CPM courses in Texas are offered in two formats: one and one-half days a month and one day a month. Completion of the program takes a minimum of fourteen months for the former and twenty-one months for the latter. In addition to the regular classroom sessions, CPM participants are assigned take-home exams for each day of work in the program. At least thirty hours of outside work per course (graded by the CPM cycle coordinator) is assigned. The total amount of instruction under the direction of the cycle coordinator is at least 160 hours for the entire seven tracks.

Since the CPM program is offered through the TSU Department of Continuing Education, people without a college degree can be accepted. CPM courses can be used for academic credit toward a bachelor’s or a master’s degree at TSU. As mentioned, there is no additional cost for registering for academic credit.

## CPM Program Cycle Coordinator

All Texas CPM locations have a “cycle coordinator,” who is responsible for all seven tracks at a specific location. The cycle coordinator, a university faculty member with at least adjunct status, is responsible for organizing and coordinating each of the seven courses that make up a CPM cycle. The cycle coordinator is responsible for designing and implementing the delivery of the CPM courses at a particular location and is the main point of con-

tact with program participants and faculty. The coordinator also designs and grades the take-home exams.

## CPM Faculty

Each of the CPM courses is “team taught” by a combination of academic and practitioner faculty operating under the direction of the CPM cycle coordinator. Many of the academic instructors are regular or adjunct faculty of TSU, the University of Texas, and other Texas universities. Practitioners include city or county managers, state agency department heads, and school district administrators from a variety of school districts and city, county, state, and federal agencies. In addition, private professional development and training consultants are part of the faculty mix.

## TSU Coordination with Other Texas Universities

The Texas CPM program is run under the auspices of TSU. To facilitate the delivery of the program throughout Texas, TSU has entered into a series of interuniversity contracts with institutions across the state. Current university partners offering the CPM program in Texas include the following:

- ◆ The University of Texas at Arlington
- ◆ Texas Tech University, Lubbock
- ◆ Sam Houston State University, operating programs in Houston
- ◆ Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches
- ◆ Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi.

Each of the university partners is given a license to offer the CPM program in Texas under the auspices of TSU. TSU provides the curriculum and technical assistance necessary to begin a CPM program. It also conducts all CPM graduations at the Texas Capitol. In exchange for the services provided, the university partners provide an agreed-upon “overhead” back to TSU.

## CPM Program Linkages

The CPM program has been designed to link with and complement other established public-sector associations and organizations, such as the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). Another related organization is the American Academy of Certified Public Managers (AACPM), an association of CPM alumni.

## ASPA

The Texas CPM program is linked in several ways to ASPA. In Texas, for example, CPM participants are provided ASPA membership at no additional cost. In addition, ASPA and the Texas CPM program hold an annual joint Texas CPM/ASPA conference, one of the largest regional ASPA conferences in the United States.

In early 2007, paperwork was filed to initiate a new ASPA section called the Section on Certified Public Management (SCPM). Currently, more than 300 ASPA members are enrolled in the new section. Additional CPM participants and graduates around the country and the world are being encouraged to join both ASPA and the new ASPA SCPM. The SCPM is open to CPM alumni, students, and faculty as well as all ASPA members (whether or not they are affiliated with CPM) interested in the concepts, principles, and practices of certified public management.

The goal of the SCPM is to promote the professional development and training of public and not-for-profit managers in the ethical values and technical competencies associated with outstanding public service. The new section has adopted *The Public Manager*, the premier journal for public administration practitioners, as its journal. *The Public Manager*, along with the SCPM and individual CPM programs, is engaged in a number of cooperative projects, including offering professional development sessions at ASPA and CPM conferences and conducting occasional forums, seminars, and other discussion events around the country throughout the year.

For additional information about the Texas SCPM, visit [www.aspaonline.org/scpm/](http://www.aspaonline.org/scpm/).

## ICMA

The CPM program for Texas has been developed to meet the professional development and education standards of ICMA. CPM courses for Texas are developed to meet the eight essential training areas identified by ICMA: staff effectiveness, policy facilitation, service delivery management, strategic leadership, democratic responsiveness, organizational planning and management, communication, and integrity. ICMA's home page is located at [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org).

## AACPM

AACPM, a companion organization to the National CPM Consortium, is the national organization made up of the alumni of CPM programs throughout the coun-

try. Each state also establishes state CPM alumni societies. Each year, the AACPM holds an annual conference, which is attended by CPM alumni and program directors throughout the country. The National CPM Consortium meeting is held in conjunction with the annual AACPM conference. For additional information, go to the AACPM Web site: [www.cpmacademy.org/](http://www.cpmacademy.org/).

## A Model for Worldwide Public-Sector Workforces

The CPM program continues to grow and expand throughout the United States. Throughout its history, CPM has served as a valuable companion program to the traditional master of public administration (MPA) program. CPM is more applied and less theoretical than the MPA program. It is designed for those less interested in completing all requirements of the MPA program than in acquiring the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to become outstanding public servants. CPM also can be of value to those who have completed a traditional MPA degree and wish to update their practical skills. CPM focuses on values, such as improving ethics in the public service. It sets up a continuing education network of federal, state, and local civil servants, who can work together to improve the quality and the image of the public service.

The next logical step is to take CPM to the international level. Over the last few years, the authors have delivered a series of papers at international conferences around the world. The purpose of these papers was to provide additional information about CPM to public administration educators and practitioners worldwide. In July 2005, the concept of CPM was initially presented at the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration Conference in Lake Como, Italy. In May 2007, the authors presented a paper focusing on the value of CPM as a certification designation for public and non-profit-sector employees at a conference in Kiev, Ukraine. We also presented related papers on the value of CPM as an international public manager designation at conferences in Warsaw, Poland, and Moscow, Russia.

The CPM concept garnered a great deal of interest and comment at the international conferences where it was presented. We hope that the seeds of the CPM program planted at these conferences ultimately will take root in a number of countries around the world.