



**ICMA CREDENTIALING ADVISORY BOARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**  
*REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS AND ANNUAL REPORTS*  
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## I. Introduction

The Credentialing Advisory Board is responsible for implementing the Voluntary Credentialing Program and advising the ICMA Executive Board on issues related to the Program. Implementation includes 1) reviewing applications and making recommendations on granting credentials and 2) reviewing annual reports on professional development activities and what was learned.

CA Board members are advised to:

- Not show favoritism toward applicants who are known socially or personally.
- Be thoughtful about e-mail communications—especially in light of sunshine laws.

## II. Review of Applications

- Staff assigns applications to two board members after verifying that the applicant:
  - is a Full Member of ICMA,
  - has completed the AKA within the past 3 years,
  - has a regionally accredited or DETC-accredited university listed in Who's Who
  - is not the subject of a current ethics investigation and has not been publicly censured within the last 5 years.
- One of the two board members will be designated as the “primary” reviewer and the other the “secondary” reviewer. Both are to determine first whether the applicant has the required executive experience and second whether the professional development plan is adequate. Review criteria are outlined below.
- For each application, the two board members can vote YES, NO, or MAYBE. The reviewers confer as needed to agree on a recommendation. If both reviewers vote YES on granting the credential, the recommendation goes forward to the member review period. If either board member votes NO or MAYBE, the application is reviewed by the CA Board on a conference call organized by ICMA staff.
- A final list of recommendations is completed in time to post online in the e-newsletter *Leadership Matters* for member perusal prior to submission to the ICMA Executive Board. A minimum of 14 days is allowed for member review before transmittal to the executive board.
- Before the e-newsletter *Leadership Matters* goes out, the CA Board chair should notify any members who are not recommended of that fact and the reason, copying staff. The CA Board chair will be provided with a sample letter for each applicant who has not been recommended.

## Executive Experience

Assessing Titles: Title is not necessarily descriptive of responsibilities. The following are some questions the CA Board may have when assessing titles:

*Q: Does COG Director experience count?*

A: Yes. COG Directors are eligible for ICMA corporate membership.

*Q: Does time spent as an Acting Manager count?*

A: Yes.

*Q: Does all time as a Deputy or Assistant count?*

A: Yes.

(Note of clarification: If the local government has two or more deputy/assistant managers, they are all taken at face value as having executive level experience. If you have a large jurisdiction with one or more deputy managers reporting to the manager and one or more “assistant managers” reporting to the deputies, the deputies would automatically qualify and the “assistant manager” should fill out the Other Experience Questionnaire.

*Q: What about other titles in the organization that may have full credit executive level responsibilities?*

A: Some titles, such as Management Services Director or Administrative Services Director, could either be a department head position or a full credit executive position. Ask the applicant to fill out the Other Experience Questionnaire.

*Q: Does “Assistant to” experience count?*

A: Generally, it does not because the “Assistant to” title implies a position that is project oriented and that is in a support role without executive level decision making authority. If there is a question about this, ask the applicant to fill out the Other Experience Questionnaire.

*Q: Does state league experience count?*

A: Yes. According to the ICMA Constitution, state municipal league staff are considered in service to local government, so executive or assistant experience with a state league would be eligible for full credit.

*Q: Does experience in a special district count?*

A: It depends. Follow up with the applicant to find out whether the manager of the single purpose district has responsibility across several functions within the district (some special districts have their own fire, police, medical, etc.). See Appendix E for a questionnaire to aid in this exchange.

*Q: Do department head positions count?*

A: At its discretion, the CAB may grant half-credit toward the executive experience requirement for time served as a department head. In the exercise of this discretion, the CAB will consider the scope of responsibility, the extent of authority, and the complexities of the responsibilities involved in the department head position. If clarification is needed, the applicant will be asked to complete the Other Experience Questionnaire.

*Q: How do we assess eligibility for half credit?*

A: An applicant whose primary experience has been in some area other than local government (such as significant executive experience in the private sector, the military, or in other levels of government) or as a local government department head will be given the opportunity to demonstrate how the applicant’s prior experience qualifies as “executive experience” by filling out the Other Experience Questionnaire. Recognizing that titles do not always reflect actual job responsibilities, this credit could apply to local government position titles other than department head if the applicant can demonstrate how the experience would qualify.

For half credit to be granted for any position, a credentialed manager’s last three years of work must be as an executive in local government (full credit position). Candidate status requires only the last year be executive experience. This local government executive experience must be the most recent work experience and the applicant must currently be in a local government executive position unless he or she is in transition. No more than six years’ credit will be given for “other” experience. For example:

	MPA or MPP	Other Master’s	Bachelor’s
<i>CM</i>	3 yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs
	4 credit yrs (8+ yrs other experience)	5 credit yrs (10+ yrs other experience)	6 credit yrs (12+ yrs other experience)
<i>CM Cand</i>	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
	4 credit yrs (8+ yrs other experience)	5 credit yrs (10+ yrs other experience)	6 credit yrs (12+ yrs other experience)

*Other Executive Experience Issues*

*Q: Is less than two years in a position a cause for concern?*

A: The guideline under Tenet 4 of the ICMA Code of Ethics states that a “short tenure (under two years) should be the exception rather than a recurring experience.” Single instances of less than two years in a position are not a concern; rather, the concern is where there is a recurring pattern of short tenure. The CA Board should also determine whether the short tenures involve career advancement within the same organization or if there is some other reasonable explanation.

*Q: Are Life or retired members eligible to be credentialed?*

A: The applicant must have been in service to a local government or must have clearly demonstrated a commitment and connection to the profession within the last 5 years.

*Q: Do applicants receive credit for graduation from leadership development programs toward the credential?*

A: They can get credit for the following programs:

### **ICMA Leadership Development Programs**

- Leadership ICMA — one year
- Emerging Leaders Development Program — six months
- Mid Career Managers Institute — six months
- Two ICMA leadership development programs BONUS — additional six months

### **Other Leadership Development Programs**

- MMANC/SC Credentialed Government Leader Program — six months
- Certified Government Chief Information Officer Program — three months

## **Professional Development Plans**

- **Professional Development Needs:** For the initial application, professional development needs are guided by the results of the Applied Knowledge Assessment. Because conditions and circumstances can change rapidly, the member may identify a specific need at any time and the member is encouraged to review and modify this section as appropriate.
- **Learning Goals:** Learning goals to address identified professional development needs should be covered in two time frames. First, there should be a statement of overall learning goals for a longer time period (for example, next three or five years). Second, there should be a statement of short term learning goals, i.e. what will be addressed in the coming year.
- **Planned Professional Development Activities:** This section should illustrate that the member has given appropriate consideration to how the member's learning goals for the year will be met. It is recognized that specific planned activities for the coming year are subject to change for many reasons. However, the member is encouraged to be as specific as possible regarding conferences, meetings, workshops, seminars, etc. that the member plans to attend. If book study is anticipated as a part of the professional development activity, these books should be identified.
- If more information needs to be added to the plan, forward or link to the sample plan located at [icma.org](http://icma.org) (under Career Development, Credentialing, Resources) and request that the applicant add more information, copying the Credentialing Program

Manager. See Appendix A for a sample communication. See Appendix F for a sample professional development plan.

- The Knowledge of the Code of Ethics (Integrity) item in the AKA is based solely upon the ICMA Code of Ethics, so any plans including this item should possibly include a re-review of the Code.

*Q: How specific should professional development plans be?*

A: The applicant will not always be able to indicate specific conference or workshop sessions in advance due to schedules not yet being published. Therefore, the CA Board agreed that the focus of the plan should not be on specific activities, but directed toward what specific learning goals the member plans to accomplish and a general outline of how he or she plans to do so. The CA Board has agreed to be conservative in reviewing plans having found that weak plans often lead to insufficient annual report. Please note that resources such as recommended reading and workshops, sample plans, and other resources can be found in the Credentialing Resources section of [icma.org](http://icma.org).

*Q: Can one type of activity make up the entire professional development plan?*

A: Yes. If a member plans to attend an intensive educational session that lasts 40 hours or more, such as the ICMA SEI Leadership Institute, that is fine. Also, if a member is in transition or is facing budget difficulties, relying on books alone is fine.

### **III. Review of Annual Reports**

- Annual reports are assigned to only one board member at first. If that board member votes “Maybe” or “No”, the annual report is assigned to the entire CA Board for review.
- If a CA Board member receives his or her own annual report for review, that member should alert ICMA staff.
- The CA Board has agreed to be liberal in its annual report reviews, taking a “mentor” rather than “policeman” role. For response to a weak report, a sample communication is provided in Appendix B. This sample provides information on what is expected from the member the following year. In rare cases, such as when a member has submitted a weak report for two or three years in a row, the CA Board will ask for a revision. The point is to coach, not to create work, so a partial revision focusing only on two or three activities is fine. Explain to the member in terms of how it helps him or her, not in terms of how it helps CA Board. See Appendix G for the sample annual report that members see inside the system.
- The CA Board has agreed to communicate with each member individually. The purpose is to provide reinforcing feedback to those who submit good reports or personal guidance to those who submit weak reports. The CA Board has also agreed to pay special attention to first-year reports because it is important to make sure members understand what is expected from the beginning.

- Completed activities in the annual report may be different from planned activities due to changes in circumstances or offerings.
- Completed activities must be more than a recitation of activities attended. What is required is a discussion of the outcomes of the professional development activity. This can be in the form of a reflection on how the activity has improved the member as a person or a manager, or it can be in the form of a narrative of how the member applied the information obtained from the professional development activity in his or her work. This can also be in the form of "lessons learned" or "takeaways" from the activity.

*Note: Generally, professional development consists of structured learning, such as participating in workshops or studying books. (Casual reading of newspapers and magazines is not considered "structured learning".) The structured learning itself is the professional development activity and counts towards the 40-hour professional development requirement. For example, doing a strategic plan is not professional development. Attending a workshop or studying a book to improve your strategic planning skills is a professional development activity.*

Every ICMA member commits to forty hours annually of professional development (Tenet 8 of the Code of Ethics). What distinguishes Credentialed Managers and Candidates is their commitment to plan for continuous personal improvement, to reflect upon their development activities, and to document their learning for peer review.

Some advice for maximizing learning: as members advance in their careers, they often lament that training activities rarely provide grand, new solutions or insights. Such unrealistic expectations can lead to skepticism of any presenter, author, or trainer and cause our attention to wander. The mind closes, rather than opens, to learning. We may miss even small, useful kernels of new knowledge.

Attention and reflection help capture more of these kernels. Taking notes increases our attention. Later, even brief reflection or review of our notes seems to expand and help retain concrete learning. If time is available, greater learning gains can occur by preparing a journal of thoughts and reactions, discussing ideas with a colleague, or studying more on the topic.

- Members are required to create a new professional development plan at the same time they submit their annual reports. (The software will ask for the new plan first, then the annual report of completed activities, and then the member can click "Submit".) The CA Board has agreed to check to make sure the new plan is adequate.



## **Assessing the 40-hour Requirement**

- The application includes a two-page overview of “Guidelines for Fulfilling the Annual Professional Development Commitment (“What Counts”). That overview can be found in Appendix C.
- The CA Board has also approved the following as being eligible professional development activities, as long as the member briefly outlines a specific example of what he or she personally learned from each activity.
  - Short sessions, such as one-hour sessions or keynote speeches at conferences or meetings (In reporting learning from national and state conferences, hours reported should be commensurate with the sessions/conference hours attended, not including social events or missed sessions. Generally speaking, one or two conferences do not equal 40 hours of professional development.)
  - Intensive, week-long executive institutes, such as the ICMA SEI Leadership Institute at the University of Virginia
  - Job shadowing in other communities
  - Learning time spent overseas in active military service or as a military consultant
  - Volunteer work where the member can demonstrate that something related to local government management was learned
  - Studying books, preferably followed by discussion with colleagues (count actual time spent reading up to 10 hours per book)
  - Toastmasters, up to 10 hours per year
  - Writing for published textbooks or reports
  - Preparation for serving as adjunct professor
  - Professional development completed while working with an executive coach
  - Retired and life members can include information about what was learned from travels and other retirement activities if appropriate
  - The time spent in formal mentoring activities, up to 20 hours
  - Time spent coaching as part of the ICMA Coaching Program, up to 20 hours

## **Personal Development and Interpersonal Communication**

Personal development and interpersonal communication are among the core competencies identified as being necessary for effective local government management and are therefore appropriate for a professional development plan. The Credentialing Advisory board will recognize a maximum of 20 hours (of the required 40 hours of annual professional development) for a structured program of work with a trained life or career coach, therapist, fitness coach, nutritionist, or other trained professional. The annual report needs to address lessons learned from these activities, but these may be generalizations in order to protect the privacy of the member. Reading related to these activities counts toward the 20-hour maximum.

## **Mentoring**

While credentialing is primarily about one’s own professional development, mentoring

the next generation of managers is of great value to our profession. The time spent in formal mentoring activities can count toward 20 hours maximum of the 40-hour annual professional development requirement, if the mentee is not an employee of the ICMA Credentialed Manager.

If the mentee is an employee, the relationship is considered a work responsibility, and mentoring credit will not be granted unless mentoring is completed through a formal program such as the ICMA Emerging Leaders Development Program, the ICMA Coaching Program and state partners, the Local Government Management Fellowship Program, a college internship, or similar program approved by the Credentialing Advisory Board chair.

To receive credit, the mentoring relationship must be a commitment of at least six months between an ICMA Credentialed Manager and a college student or local government employee or intern. The purpose of the mentoring relationship must be to help the mentee prepare for a career in local government management.

The mentor must report in the annual report the name and position of the person being mentored, as well as the frequency, duration, and a brief description of the subjects covered.

*Time spent coaching as part of the ICMA Coaching Program can also be credited as meeting the credentialing requirement up to a maximum of 20 hours per year. These sessions are generally one-time sessions of an hour or less. For credit, the coaching must be documented as to the position of the person coached, the duration, and a brief description of the nature of the coaching.*

Teaching is considered by the CA Board to be different from mentoring. Hours of learning in preparation for teaching college, continuing education courses, workshops, webinars, and so on, related to the local government management profession, count toward the 40-hour requirement. The teaching itself does not count.

Additionally, learning to mentor is different from mentoring. Attending a course on mentoring or reading a book on mentoring is a regular professional development activity that does not fall under the mentoring policy.

## **Work Activities**

On-the-job activities (work) are not considered to be professional development. Work must have some structured learning to which it relates, such as book study and discussion or workshops. The structured learning itself would be considered a professional development activity or activities. Work is practice, but professional development is the study of how to practice. For example, doing a strategic plan is work. Attending a workshop to improve your strategic planning skills would be considered a professional development activity. In organizations that restrict travel, the CA Board should accept some things, such as serving as an interim department head or

visiting other communities in the region. These kinds of activities cannot be a predominant part of the annual report. Their acceptance will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

#### **IV. Annual report Extensions**

- Extensions of up to 180 days can be granted by the CA Board Chair in cases of extenuating circumstances such as severe medical emergency, death in the family, or very recent job change. In the case of a job change, the member must include information on what kind of activities are planned during the extension period.
- Extensions of up to one year can be granted by the CA Board Chair in cases of major, ongoing life events, such as medical problems.

#### **V. Retired Credentialed Manager Designation**

Retired members who have been credentialed for at least 5 years are eligible to become Retired Credentialed Managers. Retired Credentialed Managers do not have to submit annual reports unless they desire to retain the “active” credential.

#### **VI. Members in Transition**

Members in Transition (MITs) are encouraged to remain in the Voluntary Credentialing Program. It is important to attend state and regional meetings to network and stay current while in transition. However, if one cannot attend as many conferences as they would like, there are other ways to fulfill the requirement.

Members may fulfill part or all of their annual professional development commitment through professional reading from the local library or other sources. They may count actual time spent studying up to ten hours per book. ICMA waives dues payments in six-month increments for up to three years. The registration fees for the Annual Conference and for one 90-minute ICMA University webinar per month are waived as well. If they are not able to attend the Annual Conference, archived virtual conference materials are provided free of charge after the event.

Also, the multi-rater assessment deadline can be extended until two years after the start date of the member’s new position, whether it is in the private or public sector.

#### **VII. Members Who Are No Longer in Service to Local Government**

Some Credentialed Managers may leave the local government management profession and wish to keep the Credentialed Manager designation. The Voluntary Credentialing Program is a program to recognize local government management professionals who have attained a certain level of education and executive level experience, who are committed to the ICMA Code of Ethics and who, on an annual basis, engage in at least 40 hours of professional development that enhances their local government

management skills. It is appropriate for Credentialed Managers not in the service of local government to maintain the credential if they are working in an area closely related to local government (for example, local government consulting, state or regional agencies that deal primarily with local government, etc.) or if they plan to return to local government management in the future.

A Credentialed Manager not in the service of a local government, in order to maintain the credential, must continue to submit an annual report that reflects at least 40 hours of professional development that is related to local government management. While almost everything can be "related to local government management" in one way or another, there needs to be a clear relationship between what is reported and local government management. For example, training specific to state, federal, military, private sector, or civic programs/work would not be acceptable. Consultants are particularly cautioned not to report on their consulting work, but on structured activities that were a part of their continued local government professional development.

### **VIII. Corrective Action**

The purpose of the Voluntary Credentialing Program (VCP) is to promote, encourage and recognize a commitment to a structured approach to continued professional development and life-long learning by ICMA members. Every effort should be made to interact with participants in a positive, coaching manner. However, the VCP has standards and requirements which must be enforced if the program is to have meaning over the long term. As a last resort, some members may have to be dropped from the program for failure to meet the standards and requirements of the program. Three types of status change are fairly straightforward:

**Voluntary withdrawal.** A participant can make a voluntary withdrawal at any time simply by giving notice to ICMA.

**Failure to submit annual report.** The failure to submit the annual report within the required timeframe will result in the member being dropped from the VCP with no further action by the CAB or the ICMA Executive Board.

**Ineligible because of ethics violations.** Anytime the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct and the ICMA Executive Board reviews a member's actions as a possible violation of the ICMA Code of Ethics, the member's status as a "Credentialed Manager" should be reviewed concurrently and dealt with appropriately. If the CAB, in carrying out its normal review process, believes that a participant has provided false or misleading information either in an application or an annual report, a report should be filed with the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct and this should be handled as a regular investigation.

To date, the CAB has identified two other events that could trigger a recommendation that a member's status as a "Credentialed Manager" be reconsidered. These are discussed below:

**1. Failure to complete a multi-rater assessment or approved alternative within each five-year period.** The VCP requires that a participant complete a pre-approved multi-rater assessment or alternative once during each five-year period. In the event a member does not want to use such an assessment because of sunshine laws or other valid reasons (example: a particularly unstable political environment), the CAB will allow other well-documented external feedback. This is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For “Members in Transition” or members with new jobs, the multi-rater assessment deadline will be extended until two years after the start of the member’s new position. The multi-rater assessment requirement is completely waived for members who have been granted the “Retired Credentialed Manager” designation. It is also waived for actively credentialed members who are retired from all sectors. Actively credentialed members who are retired from local government, but not retired from the private sector or academia, must still fulfill the requirement. It is understood that such members will need to work with the CA Board to devise an alternate method of gathering external feedback.

The CAB will allow up to a one-year grace period on a case-by-case basis and will strongly encourage the member to provide evidence of a documented external feedback process in order to guide the member’s professional development activities. At any time that the CAB determines that the member is not in compliance with the multi-rater assessment requirement, it will recommend that the member be dropped from the program.

**2. Failure to provide evidence of an acceptable professional development program in the required annual report.** “Evidence of an acceptable professional development program” is that a participant reports on each professional development activity during the year in a “what I did – what I learned” format. The CAB believes that it is essential that the participant reflect upon and document the outcome of any professional development experience. This is an area that requires judgment and it is imperative that the CAB perform its coaching role in explaining to the participant what is required and why it is required. If a participant’s annual report is deemed unacceptable and is not corrected to the satisfaction of the primary reviewer, the CAB will decide on a case-by-case basis whether to drop the member from the program.

## **Drops and Reinstatements**

The credentialing drops process is based on the membership drops process. ICMA Credentialed Managers receive three reminders before their annual report deadlines (see Appendix G for an example) and one reminder at end of the three-month grace period. Those who do not respond are dropped from the program and notified.

If a member submits an unacceptable annual report, the Credentialing Advisory Board gives the member ample time to edit and resubmit. If the member does not respond, staff follows up and extends the deadline. If the member still does not respond, he or she is dropped from the program.

A participant who has lapsed may reapply unless he or she has otherwise become ineligible. A participant reapplying after three years must take the Applied Knowledge Assessment again. With reinstatement, the prior years of participation will count toward the requirement that a multi-rater assessment be completed within five years.

### **IX. Multi-rater Assessment Policy for Voluntary Credentialing Program**

Executive board policy states that “at least once during each five-year period, a credentialed manager must complete a pre-approved multi-rater assessment or alternative.”

ICMA Credentialed Managers must complete a multi-rater assessment so that they can be assessed by others. The Applied Knowledge Assessment, which ICMA Credentialed Managers take before applying for the program, is a self-assessment of knowledge, but the multi-rater assessment is an assessment of practice.

The purpose of this policy is to define what is meant by “alternative multi-rater assessment”. In order to be accepted, an alternative multi-rater assessment must meet the following criteria:

- Have all characteristics of a 360-degree assessment, which is an assessment of practice from several sources
- Involve supervisor(s), elected officials, peers, subordinate staff, and individuals who you work with outside the organization
- Address most of the [ICMA Practices for Effective Local Government Leadership](#)

The Credentialing Advisory Board has authorized ICMA’s Credentialing Program Manager to evaluate alternative assessments in advance on a case-by-case basis. If the Credentialing Program participant already did something that is acceptable, that is fine, but he or she cannot be assured that it will fulfill the requirement unless it is evaluated by the Credentialing Program Manager in advance. If the Credentialing Program Manager is unsure, the request will go to the Credentialing Advisory Board chair for pre-approval.

In the event that a manager does not want to use such an assessment to fulfill the requirement because of sunshine laws or other reasons, the Credentialing Advisory Board may allow other well-documented external feedback.

The Credentialing Advisory Board will evaluate these other types of external feedback in advance on a case-by-case basis. If the manager already did something that is acceptable, that is fine, but he or she cannot be assured that it will fulfill the requirement unless it is evaluated by the CA Board in advance.

For Members in Transition, the multi-rater assessment deadline can be extended until two years after the start date of the member’s new position, whether it is in the private or public sector. The multi-rater assessment requirement will be completely waived for retired members or those who have formally announced retirement from all sectors.

## Appendix A: Sample Communication, Weak Professional Development Plan

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a Credentialing Advisory Board member and the primary reviewer of your application. **I am writing to request that you edit and resubmit your professional development plan by [insert deadline here].**

Specifically, [insert specific advice here].

You can edit your plan using the following steps:

- Log in at [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org)
- Click on MY ICMA at the top right of the screen
- Select Credentialing History/Tracking from the Credentialing menu (in blue)

A sample plan is attached, and can also be found at [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org), Career Development, Credentialing, Resources.

Please let me know if you have any questions! You can reach me via e-mail at [insert e-mail address here] or via telephone at [insert number here].

Sincerely,

## Appendix B: Sample Communication, Weak Annual Report

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a Credentialing Advisory Board member and your primary reviewer. Thank you for submitting the annual report required to maintain the credential. Your commitment to professional development is so important to the public we serve and the profession will respect you for lifelong learning and growing.

**We know how tough it is in very busy schedules to make these extra efforts, but the CAB can only ensure the integrity of the program if we know what was learned during your professional development activity.** As we advance in our careers, we tend to hunger for dramatic revelations and are often disappointed or only mildly entertained by conference sessions, workshops, etc. Most training activities provide only small lessons. To retain these small lessons seems to require more attention and reflection. This reflection is the means to take our professional development to a higher level. Credentialing aspires to help us get something more concrete and enduring from our training efforts than just a feeling. The annual report should demonstrate this by spending less time describing each activity and more time giving one example of something specific we learned or applied for each activity. Thus, we urge you to track your completed activities online (under My ICMA, Credentialing, then Credentialing History/Tracking) so that when you are due to submit your annual report, you will have it in good form.

A sample annual report is attached and also located at *icma.org*, Career Development, Credentialing, Resources to show how managers have provided the kind of detailed information that we think is helpful and pertinent. Some guidelines:

- Work must have some structured learning to which it relates, such as book study and discussion or workshops. The structured learning itself would be considered a professional development activity or activities. For example, doing a strategic plan is work. Attending a workshop to improve your strategic planning skills would be considered a professional development activity.
- Activities should also relate to the practice areas you have chosen to improve based on the Applied Knowledge Assessment or other assessments, supervisor's suggestions, current issues of the organization, etc.

We congratulate you and support you as you continue to fulfill your professional development plan and pursue the goal of lifelong learning.



## **Appendix C: Guidelines for Fulfilling the Annual Professional Development Commitment (“What Counts”)**

### **Statement of Principle**

Continuing education must accomplish two purposes simultaneously.

First, it must allow the participant to grow intellectually and/or to refine specific job-related skills appropriate to fulfilling the needs identified through the Applied Knowledge Assessment (AKA), multi-rater assessments, job performance evaluations, self-assessments, and other feedback and to adapt his/her behavior accordingly.

Second, it must be defined broadly enough to recognize that people learn differently and need access to different avenues of learning. Thus, it must allow not only for different modes of learning but also for different providers (including ICMA, state associations, universities, and others) and different delivery techniques (ranging from traditional seminars to Web-based instruction to videoconferencing). The simultaneous need to move beyond the sharing of “war stories” and to be flexible is at the heart of the dilemma of the “what counts” question. Too much flexibility leads to too little quality. Too much rigidity leads to a lack of access and leaves members unable to meet the challenges identified for them.

Each member should document annually how he or she has improved competency in the practices required of a local government manager. This annual improvement may result from a variety of professional development/learning experiences, including but not limited to professional reading; participation in formal university courses; active participation in workshops, seminars, or conferences focusing on the practice(s) where improvement is desired; and experiential learning. These professional development experiences should involve a minimum of 40 substantive hours each year. Because a plan of professional development is required each year, participants should not try to address all of the identified needs in any one year.

**Questions that the participant in the Voluntary Credentialing Program should ask himself/herself in planning his/her annual professional development activities**

**I. Will the educational experience be relevant to the practice area(s) I need to develop?**

*The answer to this question should reflect a direct relationship between the practice to be improved and the activity.*

- Which practice area was identified for improvement?
- How will the educational experience address the practice area identified?

**II. Will the educational experience challenge and engage me by exposing me to new knowledge or new ways of applying existing knowledge?**

*The participant must be asked to do more than listen to a presentation and walk away with a handout. Here are the questions a participant should be able to answer about the educational experience after he/she has completed it:*

- (a) What was the nature of the experience (ICMA workshop, state association simulation exercise, Web-based course, university course, independent study)? (b) What were the requirements of the experience? (What reading was required? What material was distributed? What follow-up was there?) (c) How many hours did the experience take, including “homework” assignments? (d) How were the participants involved in the experience (vigorous exchange, simulations, group exercises)? (e) Was there an opportunity to evaluate the specific educational experience by providing direct feedback to the instructor/presenter?

**III. Will it strengthen my professional capacity?**

*The experience must be one that addresses an identified need and that helps the manager to become an even stronger professional.*

- Specifically, how did you/do you plan to relate the knowledge or skills gained through the experience to the particular practice area you want to improve? How will you follow up the educational experience to enhance your professional competence?

## Appendix D: Other Experience Questionnaire

I am seeking:

- Full credit for a local government executive position that is not titled CAO or Assistant CAO
- Half credit for a local government department head position (when you have been asked to provide more information).
- Half credit for a military, non-profit or private sector executive position

**Instructions.** The burden is on you to demonstrate that the position served at the level indicated above. If the position was executive, that means broad management responsibilities and authority with significant political exposure akin to that of a chief administrative officer for the specific time period claimed. Include dates of service in the position, organizational charts, number and types of employees supervised, budget amounts under your control, testimonials or anything else that will document the executive responsibility and authority involved. Please make this documentation as complete as possible because, if you appeal the decision of the Credentialing Advisory Board, this documentation will be the basis for the appeal.

To understand what is expected for executive positions, review the nine specific executive experience criteria at [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org)>Career Development>Credentialing. Click the "Verify Today!" link and review the section under "Qualifications: How Do Members Earn The Credential?" This document is useful for department head level positions as well. Obviously, such positions will not meet all nine criteria, but you will get an idea of the level of experience required for both full credit and half credit. Positions below department head level are not eligible for any experience credit toward credentialing.

**A. To better understand the scope of your responsibility, please provide the following:**

1. Title of the position, dates occupied.

2. If the organization was not a local government, describe your employer and the unit, division, etc. in which you exercised executive authority.

3. Provide the name(s), title(s), date(s) & current contact info for those to whom you directly reported.

4. Provide a copy of the jurisdiction's organization chart(s) during your tenure. If it changed during your tenure, please explain the changes involving this position and dates of such.

5. Add any other information that will help explain your responsibility.

**B. To better understand the extent of your authority, please provide the following:**

1. Describe your responsibilities in the **organization-wide** budget process, long range financial plan, audit review and monitoring of the entity's financial condition.

2. Describe your authority to hire, fire, discipline or formally evaluate employees – for which employee positions did you have that authority; was this without prior review or only as a recommendation to another authority; if only as a recommendation, to what authority?

3. Describe your authority to authorize budgeted expenditures, including for what units of the **entire** organization and who had to approve such. Similarly, describe your authority to authorize or recommend authorization of unbudgeted expenditures.

4. If you made reports and recommendations to a governing body, describe your authority and latitude to do so, e.g. was approval from another authority required before doing so; was advance review of your report by another authority needed?

5. Did you also report to or serve as chief staff advisor or chief representative of your governmental jurisdiction to any standing governing body committee, any commission/committee appointed by your governing body, etc? If so, provide the title of such, who appointed/elected it, the number of its members, its function & authority, your duties to it and the dates you served in this capacity.

6. Describe any authority you had to speak internally and externally for your supervisor and the governing body.

7. Add any other information that will help explain the extent of your authority.

**C. To better understand the complexity of your responsibilities, please provide the following:**

1. List the operations that you managed, the approximate annual budget allocation for each and approximate number of personnel assigned to each. Provide the title(s) and number of each position that reported directly to you. Indicate the title(s) & approximate number of each position that reported to each of your direct reports. If additional levels of reporting existed, briefly describe the approximate number of personnel involved below this second level. If this changed significantly during your tenure, indicate the changes and associated dates.

2. Add any other information that will help explain the complexity of this position.

## Appendix E: Voluntary Credentialing Program Special Districts Questionnaire

If you wish for your experience in a special district to be considered as “local government experience,” please complete the following:

1) Describe how your special district is analogous to a general-purpose local government:

2) What is the primary purpose/service of the special district?

3) What other services does the special district directly provide?

- Police protection
- Fire protection
- Emergency medical service
- Construction/repair of streets, sidewalks, storm drainage
- Water service
- Sewer service
- Parks/recreation programs
- Transportation services
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

4) Please add any other comments you have about the special district or your experience in the special district:

5) Please attach any charter materials that will assist the Credentialing Advisory Board in determining your eligibility for the Voluntary Credentialing Program.

## Appendix F: Sample Professional Development Plan

### Section 1. Professional Development Needs Identified by the AKA Or Other Sources

- Staff Effectiveness
- Media Relations
- Presentation Skills

### Section 2. Learning Goal

*Instructions: The learning goal should relate to improving skills that will help your job performance, however, the professional development activities you plan should be study of those skill areas, not your actual work activities.*

Sample: Of the practice areas identified above, this year I plan to focus on media relations and presentation skills. My goal is to improve my ability to speak publicly and communicate with citizens so that I can, for example, do a better job of communicating the reasons for decisions that are made by the local government. Improving communications with citizens and the media will help to strengthen my confidence and will improve the credibility of the local government's decision making capability.

### Section 3. Planned Professional Development Activities Related to My Practice Areas

*Instructions: This is the most important part of your professional development plan. Please be detailed. Tell which conferences and/or sessions you plan to attend. As in the sample below, identify some specific books. Do not include work activities. Only professional development counts to meet your credentialing requirements. For example, doing a strategic plan is work. Attending a workshop or studying a book to improve your strategic planning skills is professional development. If you are on a tight budget, remember that you can fulfill your 40-hour commitment through professional reading from the library coupled with book club discussions with colleagues.*

Sample: I will look for sessions on media relations and presentation skills when I register for the ICMA Annual Conference and state association meetings (the agenda has not yet been published). I will study at least two books and discuss with my colleagues. One of the books I have identified is ICMA's Ten Steps to Effective Presentations Training Workbook. I will also take a college-level course on media relations, and will identify what I have learned from all these activities when I submit my annual report.



## Appendix G: Sample Annual Report

### Instructions

An annual report **should**:

- Specifically address the professional development needs identified through assessments or other feedback (unless plans had to change)
- Report on at least 40 hours of professional development, even if some of that deviated from your original plan or practice areas
- Fully explain how you engaged in each professional development activity
- Give one specific example of something you learned from each activity (**this is the most important part of the annual report**)

An annual report **should not**:

- Provide a résumé listing
- Address work activities (from local government, consulting, or other work)
- Address professional development that cannot be related to local government management

*Note: Generally, professional development consists of structured learning, such as reading or workshops. The structured learning itself is the professional development activity and counts towards the 40-hour professional development requirement. For example, doing a strategic plan is not professional development. Attending a workshop or reading a book to improve your strategic planning skills is a professional development activity.*

Examples are shown below; they are not exhaustive, and they vary considerably as to how many continuing education hours each would represent.

### **Sample Annual Report**

**Activity Name:** *ICMA Annual Conference*

**Description:** At the ICMA Annual Conference, I participated in a facilitator workshop conducted by Study Circles Resource Center; participated in an ICMA University Workshop "Essential Management Skills;" participated in an ICMA University Forum "Ethics and the Public Trust;" and served as a facilitator for the ICMA University Forum .

**What I Learned:** From the facilitator workshop I learned a facilitator must be impartial, is responsible for creating a safe environment, manages expectations, models desired behaviors and keeps the discussion on purpose. From Essential Management Skills I learned the importance of being proactive in engaging citizens in assisting the elective governing body to develop the policy agenda for the community. As managers, we need to develop mechanisms to assure we put public in public policy. We need to develop and provide resources for automatically finding and engaging vested parties in the decision making process. From Ethics & the Public Trust I learned that a free lunch is rarely as innocent as we think. It is best to always pay for your own. The public expects your compensation is sufficient to cover your lunches. If it is a legitimate business expense, claim it on your taxes or seek reimbursement from your employer according to their policies or your contract.

**Activity Hours:** 19.5

**Activity Date:** September 17, 2016

**Activity Name: Teaching**

**Description:** I assisted John Nalbandian in team-teaching a 40-hour graduate course on infrastructure management to nineteen students. It involved preparing for sixteen 3-hour classes, reading over eighteen articles and two books, and evaluating class projects.

**What I Learned:** I refreshed my knowledge and learned new basic technical terms and issues related to infrastructure planning, financing, design, and management. One specific item learned was the importance of technology not only as a tool for managing infrastructure, but how important it is to consider technology itself as an element of a community's infrastructure.

**Activity Hours:** 40

**Activity Date:** August 6, 2016

**Activity Name: Reading**

**Description:** I read ICMA's *Media Relations for Local Governments* and discussed my findings with the city's PIO.

**What I Learned:** I learned more effective ways to improve my working relationships with the media, specifically to be proactive, after assuring my policy body is informed, about providing the media with breaking news; to not play favorites among the media; and to encourage elected officials to provide quotes.

**Activity Hours:** 10

**Activity Date:** October 1, 2016

**Activity Name: Local Government Visits**

**Description:** I visited several local governments and spent several weeks meeting with my counterparts in a foreign country to learn the key to their communities' long-term success; how they plan for their future; how they sustain themselves economically through redevelopment, etc.

**What I Learned:** I learned a new way to look at the process for building a new community. I began to search for what made these foreign cities successful for centuries. What makes them desirable places to live a thousand years after they started? Will my city be around 100 years from now? A thousand years from now? Are there things that I can do now to influence creation of this new city to make it more likely that it will be around 100 years from now? Also, I was very much encouraged and heartened by the astonishing redevelopment going on in Eastern Europe. One old industrial city, for example, is being turned into an exciting city ripe for new technology and the innovative young. I also spent some time learning about minority and immigration issues. Like a number of other European countries, the birth rate is less than what is necessary to sustain population. Therefore, they must have immigration to continue to succeed economically. However, the largest minority group is not assimilating as would be ideal. I also got to watch the Parliament of the EU in action. It is impressive the way the 25 countries have chosen to work together and consolidate.

**Activity Hours:** 5

**Activity Date:** April 17, 2016

## Appendix H: Staff Communication to ICMA-CMs, Annual Report Reminder

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your commitment to professional development and lifelong learning, and thank you for participating in the Voluntary Credentialing Program.

You may renew your credential by signing in to [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org) and then clicking on My ICMA. You will see a Credentialing menu option on the My ICMA page. Click the option Credentialing Apply/Renew and then click on the Renew button. You will be prompted to enter in your new professional development plan, followed by your report of completed activities.

The Credentialing Advisory Board will review your annual report within 45 days of the deadline and let you know if they have any questions. Confirmation notices will go out after that.

Also, your multi-rater assessment is due to be started by \_\_\_\_\_. Credentialed Managers have the option of 1) choosing from a list of preapproved multi-rater assessment tools; or 2) completing another multi-rater assessment of their own choosing. If a manager does want to choose his or her own assessment, information on the assessment tool selected can be sent to [credentialing@icma.org](mailto:credentialing@icma.org) for pre-approval. If you cannot complete a multi-rater assessment for political or financial reasons, if you already completed a 360 or performance appraisal process that you'd rather use, if you do not work directly for a local government, or if you have other extenuating circumstances, let us know, and the CAB will work with you. See the Credentialing Assessments section of [icma.org](http://icma.org) for a list of frequently asked questions regarding the requirement, including information on alternatives.

Please reply if you have any questions or concerns or if you would like more information about the Retired Credentialed Manager designation.

Sincerely,

## Appendix I: Communication Tips When Asking for More Information

*Background: Over the years, we have accumulated a few good ideas on how to make sure credentialing advisory board e-mails are read and understood by busy credentialed managers. Here is a list:*

- Include a deadline in the subject line so the member will realize your message is not a form letter. For example, “ICMA Credentialing, pls reply by \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Include explicit instructions along with deadline at the **beginning** of the e-mail body. This will help to ensure that the member reads the entire e-mail and that there is no question about your intent.
- Avoid phrases like “it would be great if” and/or “please consider” when you require a revision in order to approve. This causes members to think your suggestion is for next year or that you do not really care whether they revise.
  - For example, say “Please edit and resubmit your annual report at <http://icma.org/credentialing> by November 15 instead of “Please think about adding some more substance.”
- Attach sample professional development plan or sample annual report as appropriate, but also reference that these can be found in the Credentialing Resources section of [icma.org](http://icma.org)
- Use bold font (sparingly) to highlight important messages, but remember that some member’s e-mail programs do not keep formatting. Important messages should appear close to the beginning of the e-mail. Busy members may miss important deadlines/requests if they appear at the end.
- Copy the Credentialing Program Manager.
- If a member does not understand what you are looking for or if a member has had same issue for several years, a phone call is probably in order (as opposed to e-mail).

## **Appendix J: Executive Board Policy Statement Regarding VCP**

(First approved by the ICMA Executive Board in July 2001 and amended September 2002, January 2003, June 2004, February 2005, July 2009)

### **Eligibility: Who Will Be Eligible To Apply For The Credential?**

To be eligible to receive the credential, an individual must be a Full Member of ICMA, adhering to the ICMA Code of Ethics and its rules of enforcement as a requirement of membership. A member must also be in service to local government or have clearly demonstrated a commitment and connection to the profession within the last five years.

Members who have received a private censure for violating the ICMA Code of Ethics are eligible to apply for the credential.

Members who have been publicly censured or have had their credential revoked as a result of an ethics violation should wait a period of time (five years is recommended) before being eligible to receive a credential, and must demonstrate focused professional development in ethics.

### **Qualifications: How Will Members Earn The Credential?**

A certain combination of education, experience, and continuing professional development will be required to earn the credential.

#### *Education:*

The credential requires a minimum of a baccalaureate degree. The degree must be from a regionally accredited or DETC-accredited university.

#### *Experience:*

Executive experience includes full-time, appointed service as a manager/CAO and/or service as a senior assistant or similar position. Although the nature of the duties and responsibilities are more important than the position title, generally speaking, department head, assistant to, and administrative assistant experience does not meet the criteria for full credit. Responsibilities limited to one functional area, for example, do not qualify for full credit, while responsibilities across several functions will be considered.

Other experience can count toward the requirement on a half credit basis if the applicant currently occupies an executive (full credit) position in local government. For example, local government department head experience receives half credit. An applicant whose primary experience has been in some area other than local government (such as significant executive experience in the private sector, the military, or in other levels of government) will be given the opportunity to demonstrate how the applicant's prior experience qualifies as executive experience based on the criteria defined below. For "other" experience to receive half credit, the applicant must have

been in a local government executive (full credit) position for the last three years to receive the credential or the last one year to receive Candidate status.

To be counted toward the required accumulation of experience, the professional role must include **all** of the following executive level responsibilities in local government:

- Staff management
  - Supervising the development and performance of staff in the organization.
    - Having a continuing direct relationship with operating department heads on the implementation and administration of programs.
  
- Financial management
  - Having significant responsibility for the preparation and administration of operating budgets.
  - Interpreting financial information to assess the fiscal condition of the community, determine the cost-effectiveness of programs, and compare alternative strategies.
  
- Policy facilitation and implementation
  - Having significant responsibility in the development and analysis of public policy alternatives and in the implementation of policy once adopted.
  - Helping elected officials and other community leaders identify, work toward, and achieve common goals and objectives.
  
- Service delivery
  - Ensuring effective performance in the delivery of local government services by anticipating future needs, organizing work operations, and establishing timetables for work units or projects.
  - Having responsibility for diverse, major staff and/or line functions
  - Having significant decision-making responsibility

*Combining Education and Experience:*

The credential requires a minimum number of years of executive service that varies depending on the education of the applicant. The minimum number of years of experience are:

- Masters degree in public administration or policy: 7 years
- Other masters degree: 8 years
- Baccalaureate: 9 years

*Continuing professional development:*

To qualify for the credential, the applicant must complete the ICMA Applied Knowledge Assessment to help identify professional strengths and areas for improvement.

Applicants will complete a short application describing what was learned from the Applied Knowledge Assessment and a plan for addressing, over the next year, the identified development needs. They will also report on how the 40-hour professional development obligation was met during the preceding year.

Within five years of obtaining the credential, holders of the credential must complete one of ICMA’s multi-rater assessments or submit a report of some independent evaluative experience.

**What if a Member Doesn’t Yet Meet the Credentialing Requirements?**

Members who do not yet meet the combined education/experience requirement but who expect to attain it within two years may apply for Credentialed Manager Candidate status. Benefits of candidate status include being able to receive the full credential as soon as an individual meets the requirements due to already being approved, as well as being able to plan more structured activities.

**EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS AS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE**

	<b>MPA/MPP</b>	<b>Other graduate degree</b>	<b>Bachelor’s</b>
<b>CM</b>	7 yrs	8 yrs	9 yrs
<b>CM Candidate</b>	5 yrs	6 yrs	7 yrs
<i>For those who wish to count executive experience from other sectors or local government department head experience on a two-for-one basis:</i>			
<b>CM</b>	3 yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs
	4 credit yrs (8+ yrs other experience)	5 credit yrs (10+ yrs other experience)	6 credit yrs (12+ yrs other experience)
<b>CM Candidate</b>	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
	4 credit yrs (8+ yrs other experience)	5 credit yrs (10+ yrs other experience)	6 credit yrs (12+ yrs other experience)

**The following appeals policy is available to members:**

For each applicant, the Credentialing Advisory Board must make a recommendation to grant or not grant the credential and to confer as needed if reviewers disagree on a recommendation. The Credentialing Advisory Board must notify any members who are not granted the credential of that fact and the reason in writing. The applicant may appeal the recommendation of the Credentialing Advisory Board to the Executive Director in writing within 60 days of notification. The Executive Director's decision is final.

### **Maintenance: How Will Members Maintain The Credential?**

The credential is renewable as long as ICMA membership is maintained, compliance with the ICMA Code of Ethics is maintained, an annual report describing 40 hours of professional development has been submitted, and an ICMA multi-rater assessment or alternative has been completed at least once during each five years.

The CA Board has the authority to grant an extension of up to one year if a member shows that a major, ongoing life event has interfered with his or her ability to meet the professional development requirement of 40 hours or his or her ability to submit the annual report.

In reviewing the program in December 2004, the board noted the importance of identifying additional ways in the future to provide value for members who have been in the program several years. One opportunity that was noted was for senior Credentialed Managers to focus more on coaching/mentoring others than on documenting professional development activities.

### **Title: What Will The Credential Be Called?**

ICMA-CM

ICMA Credentialed Manager

### **Ethics: How Will The Credential Relate To Enforcement Of The ICMA Code Of Ethics?**

The Committee on Professional Conduct (CPC) has the authority to review and recommend the removal of a member's credential. The CPC shall follow the Rules of Procedure for Enforcement (Rules) of the ICMA Code of Ethics for this review. The Executive Board in making its determination shall also follow the Rules. No loss of credentialing would become final without the consideration and approval of the Executive Board. The revocation of a member's credential shall be reviewed under the Rules simultaneously with any pending ethics complaint.

### **Administration: Who Will Administer The Program And How?**

A Credentialing Advisory Board of up to fifteen Credentialing Advisory Board members will advise on implementation issues and on granting credentials.

The Credentialing Advisory Board will work with state or affiliate associations interested in appointing peer review panels to advise on the granting of credentials.