

# Public Sector Employee Training Programs

By Mitchell Stern

EMPLOYMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT sector is very different from the private sector. Both sectors pose equally challenging work and their employees are motivated not solely by their paycheck, but their desire to be the best in everything they do. That said, public and private sector challenges can be quite dissimilar. So, too, is the availability of job-related training that enables employees to excel.

Historically, the private sector has done a better job investing in their employees through access to top-notch training, which companies have seen as a short-term cost that provides long term rewards. This point is very evident in the high fees that experts command when leading private sector training programs; many easily approach \$1,000 for a one-day seminar.

Private sector employers, and to lesser extent employees, are driven by profit margins. If a product or service does not produce a profit, or at least break even, then a business usually considers canceling the product or service, or modifying its operation to ensure profitability. After all, business owners are not working for free and employees are easily incentivized by monetary rewards. These dynamics aside, the private sector readily acknowledges the value of quality training for employees.

Notwithstanding specialty training in some public sector fields—such as police and fire academies that recruits must attend—very little professional-level training is offered to countless other divisions and units that comprise the public sector. A few half- or full-day seminars occasionally take place with the presenter usually working in government. The events often address one single issue, not the enormous challenges associated with government service. They address the narrow field of knowledge of the presenter.

There is a notable exception in the area of public sector employee development. The

nationally recognized Certified Public Manager® (CPM) program provides a curriculum vetted and approved by the National Certified Public Manager Consortium ([www.cpmconsortium.org](http://www.cpmconsortium.org)). Every accredited program in the more than 30 states where it exists has passed a very stringent accreditation process.

The CPM program focuses on seven core competences—personal and organizational integrity, managing work, leading people, developing self, systemic integration, public service focus and change leadership—and a capstone project that each student must complete. The hands-on capstone involves some aspect of the student's work unit and often covers ways to improve current workflows or create new ones. The classroom commitment to CPM is more than 250 hours plus more than 50 hours for the capstone.

The New Jersey CPM program, authorized by the State of New Jersey Civil Service Commission's Office of Administration and Training, is coordinated and taught by Rutgers University's School of Public Affairs and Administration faculty. Offered at locations throughout the state, including Newark, Mahwah, New Brunswick, Trenton and Camden, the program runs for approximately nine months. It is offered as either a weekday or weekend (one weekday and two Saturdays) per month option.

The program is not inexpensive in cost or resources; some organizations find it disruptive to "give up" an employee one day a week. But, CPM graduates and their unit supervisors and managers agree that the return on investment is seven fold and begins while the employee is in the program.

The CPM program often serves as the catalyst for an employee to pursue or continue formal higher education. Those who successfully complete it are eligible to receive up to 15 undergraduate credits or nine graduate credits toward the

completion of a bachelor's or master's degree.

"Verona has been very fortunate to avail itself of the Certified Public Manager® program since our Township Manager Joseph Martin introduced it to us more than 6 years ago," Verona Mayor Robert Manley said. "In that time, Verona has sent no less than ten employees through the program. Each has returned a better leader, better communicator, a more efficient manager of their own time and resources—as well as their staff's—and an all-around better member of Verona's already exemplary workforce."

"With the skills and expertise gained while taking part in the program, our department heads have markedly increased morale among their subordinates and affected a level of cooperation among and between the various departments that serves as a model for surrounding communities," Manley added. "I am thoroughly supportive of the New Jersey Certified Public Manager® program, and encourage all like municipalities to explore the possibility of incorporating it into their normal operating practices."

As government has been forced to scale back, supervisors, managers and, most important, taxpayers are demanding that public sector employees provide the best possible services in the most cost efficient way. To meet this expectation, public sector employers must provide the necessary training and best professional development opportunities to their employees. The Certified Public Manager® program is an effective way to accomplish this goal.

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Information about your state CPM program can be obtained through the Certified Public Manager Consortium at [www.cpmconsortium.org](http://www.cpmconsortium.org). For more information on New Jersey's CPM program, contact Ingrid Renderos, director, Certified Public Manager® Program, Rutgers University, at (973) 353-3979.

ASPA members also can participate in professional development and network with CPM alumni as members of the American Academy for Certified Public Managers, an ASPA section.