

CONTINUING ACCREDITATION REPORT
ON
THE ARKANSAS CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER PROGRAM

Presented to:

The National Certified Public Manager Consortium

By the Review committee:

Alexandra Higl-Timms, Chair
Aaron Peterson, CPM Instructor
Adam Hawkins, CPM Graduate

October 2022

We, the members of the committee appointed to review the Arkansas Certified Public Manager program for continuing accreditation are pleased to report we have completed our review and recommend that the Arkansas CPM program be accredited for the maximum period authorized by the bylaws. Our recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. Arkansas program administrators submitted all required program documentation to each of the review committee membership. The Arkansas CPM team submitted a thorough report with supplemental materials detailing the past, current, and future states of the program.
2. After review by committee members all supplemental documentation was provided on a timely basis. the Arkansas CPM program submitted a well-organized report and answered the committee's questions in a timely manner.
3. In the matter of general program requirements, the committee determined that:
 - A. Adequate linkages exist with institutions of higher education. The Arkansas Certified Public Manager® Program is housed within the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium (APAC) based out of the School of Public Affairs at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. The Consortium consists of the following MPA Programs: University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, and University Arkansas in Fayetteville. APAC was founded in 1984 and contacted the National CPM Consortium in 1985 seeking accreditation for the Arkansas CPM Program. The Arkansas CPM program has a collaborative relationship all of the universities mentioned.
 - B. An advisory council is actively involved in dealing with appropriate program issues. Thirteen members comprise the advisory council, meeting two-four times per year. The council develops the mission statement, reviews project plans, participates in the graduation ceremony, and serve as program advocates.
 - C. The program, while emphasizing service to state government, is actively and successfully marketing to state customers. ACPM participants primarily hail from state agencies. ACPM closely partners with the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and the Arkansas Department of Human Services. Graduates from these agencies serve as advocate for the program and (informally) assist with recruitment. The APAC Office Staff seeks to implement a more formal recruitment system, identifying "ambassadors" within partner agencies to market the program. The team also hopes to diversify their participant pool by partnering with new agencies.

- D. Program requirements are clear and accessible to all applicants and candidate. The program requirements were included in the supplemental materials and are made available to all prospective applicants.
4. In the matter of program organization, we find:
- A. Adequate financial support exists from a combination of appropriated funds and fees. APAC receives a state allocation in the amount of \$150,000. Participants are billed \$225 for two-day workshops and \$125 for one-day workshops. The program also receives in-kind support. Overall, the program has overcome financial obstacles. Luckily, their state allocation remains the same. The team is optimistic about the program's growth and sustainability.
 - B. Program instruction is provided by a combination of well qualified state employees and contract instructors; Over 20 contract instructors are engaged in the program. The majority of instructors are college professors. The instructors are highly qualified subject-matter experts.
5. We find thorough documentation of administrative policies and procedures in a combination of administrative policy and formal regulations. Detailed handbooks exist for levels 1 and 2 of the program. The handbooks address program participation expectations, professional integrity, attendance policies, attendance verification, class cancellations, enrollment policies, and more.

We further find:

- A. A formal tracking system is in place. Students also have access to Canvas where they need to submit all assignments, complete their tests, upload their service forms, etc. The program not only tracks participants' progress internally, but sends program status updates to participants four times a year. Staff use Excel and TrainingManager to track participants' progress. Hard copies are locked in the APAC offices at UA Little Rock. This only pertains to participants enrolled prior to 2019. The team transitioned records to the Google Drive in 2019.
- B. Project requirements are clear. The project plan and service components are some of the strengths of the program. The capstone project (project plan) includes a written component. The project plan allows participants to apply what they've learned at the workshops to an area within their agency that could be improved upon/strengthened. After interviewing the participants, graduates, and advisory board council, the project plan appears to be one of the components that left a lasting impression on ACPM students and agencies. (Agencies benefitted from the project plans.) The ACPM staff provided the accreditation team with a list of project titles and a sample report. The diverse list of project titles

addressed various needs within the agencies and demonstrated the program's commitment to "innovation through action".

- C. Adequate security exists for student records. The program abides by FERPA guidelines. Participant records are held securely and confidentially.
 - D. Student evaluations are based on a series of formal tests. Participants must complete a pre and post-test assignment before and after each class. This not only serves as a baseline (illustrating what the participants know when before class), but also shows whether or not students have a better understanding of each concept after class. This is an excellent measurement to ensure students are learning the basic concepts outlined. Additionally, students must evaluate each workshop. Instructors receive the feedback shortly after the session. To ultimately receive the CPM credential, participants must pass a comprehensive exam scoring 70% or higher.
6. In the matter of course materials we find:
- A. Courses provided are balanced to adequately cover the required competencies. The program offers a wide variety of "core" and "elective-style" courses, allowing participants to build their basic toolkit, but also pick and choose which courses are best for them. These courses adequately address the national competencies.
 - B. The handbooks accurately outline the course overviews, relating them back to the core competencies.
 - C. The program, while responsive to the competencies, is well integrated. The interviews, core competency matrix, and supplemental materials showed that all courses integrate at least two of the core competencies.
 - D. The Arkansas CPM Program does not allow for substitutions. Rather, its curriculum incorporating core and elective classes allows for flexibility.
 - E. All requirements regarding hours of instruction are met. The Arkansas CPM program consists of two levels. Level 1 includes 140 hours of professional development workshops and 10 hours for the service project (150 hours in total). Once they complete Level 1, students receive the Arkansas Governmental Manager certification. Level 2 consists of 70 hours of profession development workshops, 40 hours devoted to the capstone/project plan, and 40 hours of self-selected professional development hours. This amounts to a total of 300 hours of structured learning activities.

7. We find examinations and projects to be one of the strong points of the Arkansas program. As previously mentioned, the program provides a myriad of pre and post-tests to gauge participants knowledge before and after the sessions. Participants must complete a pre and post-test assignment before and after each class. This not only serves as a baseline (illustrating what the participants know when before class), but also shows whether or not students have a better understanding of each concept after class. The program also administers a comprehensive exam where participants must score a 70% or higher.
8. In regard to program evaluation we find:
 - A. Each course is adequately evaluated by students. Participants evaluate each session. The program provided examples of both hard copy and digital evaluation forms. The team analyzes the evaluation results, looks for trends, and then creates a plan to implement potential action items. Staff are attuned to feedback from participants. Evaluation results are continuously analyzed and used to improve sessions.
 - B. Each instructor is adequately evaluated by students. Once again, the program provided digital and hard copy examples of the evaluation form. The staff works with the instructors to relay participant feedback in a timely manner.
 - C. There is strong feedback from agency managers. Program leadership has developed a strong relationship with various state agencies.
9. We examined a detailed list of candidates in the program. The program provided participant rosters and partner agency lists. The current students and recent graduates were extremely supportive of the program.
10. We discussed the program's perceived strengths and weaknesses. We are impressed by the efforts to address areas needing improvement, especially:
 - A. Recruitment: The program recently recruited one of the largest classes to date (23 participants).
 - B. Building the administrative team: The program recently hired two new program coordinators.
 - C. The Advisory Council/partnerships: The program recruited new advisory board members assist with program recruitment and sustainability efforts.
 - D. Marketing: Leadership is examining platforms such as Constant Contact and MailChimp to increase their reach and streamline recruitment efforts.
11. The committee recommends the program review and consider examining three specific areas:

- A. Curriculum Connectivity: Instructors, students, and graduates identified a need for curriculum connectivity. The team should consider interweaving common themes for an optimal learning experience. It appeared that the instructors worked in silos and “stayed in their lanes”. Instructors expressed an interest in convening with one another to identify common themes within their courses and share best practices about what they’re teaching/how they’re teaching it. Instructors also identified an interest in integrating project work/support in their classes. The team should consider building out a portion of the course where they can integrate what they learn into their project plans.
- B. Diversify Instructor Pool: After perusing the website/supplemental materials and interviewing participants/graduates, the committee noticed that the majority of the instructors are academics as opposed to practitioners. The committee recommends engaging more practitioners to: 1) diversify the pool of instructors; 2) better deliver relevant and practical content.
- C. Marketing + Recruitment: As stated above, this is something the program is currently addressing. Although the program is financially solvent and enrollment is increasing, there is always room for improvement. The need for a more structured marketing and recruitment plan was discussed. Currently, most participants discover the ACPM program through word of mouth. The committee recommends a more formalized marketing and recruitment campaign. Social media, digital marketing, and relationships with agencies should be capitalized. Participants enjoyed seeing an increased Facebook presence, but identified a need/desire to see more of that. Leadership should also consider presenting at various local and state agencies to educate public/nonprofit practitioners on the benefits of the ACPM program. Leadership should consider leaning on the advisory council, program coordinators, and potential student interns to assist with these initiatives.

The program has many strong points. We were especially impressed by:

- A. Program Leadership: Perhaps the greatest asset of the program is its leadership. Every person the team interviewed spoke highly of the APAC Executive Director and the CPM Program Director. Participants and instructors noticed a plethora of positive changes when the CPM Director came onboard. Leadership is attuned to the strengths, weakness, and opportunities for improvement. All of the instructors felt extremely prepared and well-equipped for the sessions thanks to the CPM Program Director. The participants/instructors also applauded leadership for the smooth transition (from in-person to virtual programming) during the pandemic.
- B. Service Project: The service project differentiates the Arkansas CPM program from other programs. This is something other programs should

strive to emulate. The service project not only allows participants the opportunity to effect change, but also builds partnerships with community organizations.

The findings and recommendations are based on a review of all documentation by the committee and confirmed by a site visit by the chair on August 9-10, 2022.

Committee Recommendation:

Accredit ☒ Accredited Provisionally ☐ Not Accredited ☐

If either accredited provisionally or not accredited, please specify reasons or reference the relevant paragraph in the report.

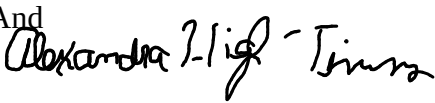
N/A

Recommendation endorsed by consensus of the committee and respectfully submitted by:

Adam Hawkins

Aaron Peterson

And



Alexandra Higl-Timms, Chair, for the Committee

Date 10/31/2022