CONTINUING ACCREDITATION REPORT

ON

THE NEW MEXICO CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER PROGRAM

Presented to:

The National Certified Public Manager Consortium

By the Review committee:

 Liz Lundeen, Chair

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September 2023

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

1. Program administrators submitted all required program documentation, including a thorough report with supplemental materials detailing past, present, and future states of the program. During the site visit, additional documentation was provided and questions answered in a timely manner.
2. In the matter of general program requirements, the committee determined that:
	1. *Adequate linkages exist with institutions of higher education.* The New Mexico CPM Program is administered by New Mexico EDGE, which is an umbrella organization operated through New Mexico State University (NMSU) Cooperative Extension. Dr. Jon Boren, Associate Dean and Director of NMSU’s Cooperative Extension Service, is a staunch supporter of the program.
	2. *Adequate linkages exist with the levels of government served by the program*. This is demonstrated especially through the historic and continuing partnership between the NM EDGE and New Mexico Counties (NMC). The program, while emphasizing service to county government, is actively and successfully marketing to state and local government customers.
	3. *An advisory board is actively involved in promoting the program and serve as a sounding board to program staff*. Board members represent a variety of strategic partner organizations and government agencies served by the program. In the last year, advisory board members have helped promote the program to State Cabinet Deputies and Assistant Deputies in New Mexico. Several members of the advisory board are involved in the design and review of program curricula.
	4. *The program’s mission of “Better Government through Education” is well integrated throughout program and marketing materials*.
3. In the matter of program organization, we find:
	1. *Adequate financial support exists for the program*. NM EDGE is self-sustaining through program fees. Participants are billed $50 to $75 per three-hour class, based on a sliding scale. The total cost of obtaining a CPM certification ranges from $3,200 to $3,900 depending on the classes selected. Most classes that count towards the three levels of the CPM certification are also open to participants seeking other certifications with NM EDGE. Therefore, NM EDGE’s financial support does not come from the CPM program alone.

NM EDGE also receives support from NMSU and the College of ACES. Its staff are employees of NMSU and are entitled to all resources and benefits provided by NMSU. The Central New Mexico Community College-Montoya Campus provides NM EDGE office space and conference room space for in-person meetings and events.

* 1. *Program instruction is provided by well qualified contract instructors* *who represent a variety of areas of professional expertise*.
1. In the matter of administrative policies and procedures, we find:
	1. *An Operations Handbook for NM EDGE staff contains administrative policies and procedures for the program*. The handbook includes expectations for participants, instructors, curriculum advisory committee members, and the CPM advisory board. Staff proctor each class and communicate policies and expectations to participants.
	2. *NM EDGE provides instructors with guidelines that clearly explain what is expected of them before, during, and after each class*.
	3. *Participants are provided with checklists to help them track the classes they need to complete for each certification*. Additionally, the program provides a “honing roadmap” for quarterly training events to let participants know when the classes they need will be offered.
	4. *Program requirements for each level of CPM certification are clear*. Participants receive clear guidelines for their culminating experiences. The assessments at the end of Level 2 (CPS) and Level 3 (CPM) are particularly strong components of the program during which participants demonstrate knowledge of the core competencies through a series of team challenges. They are evaluated by program staff and advisors.

Requirements for capstone projects are introduced as part of the Level 3 (CPM) assessment. The guidelines are clear, and participants receive ongoing support from program staff and advisors to complete their capstone. Program graduates spoke positively about the capstone process.

* 1. *Participant evaluations are based on a series of formal tests and assessments*. Participants complete a pre- and post-test before and after each class and must receive a score of 60% or above on the post-test to pass. At the end of Level 1 (CPO), participants write a short reflective essay. At the end of Levels 2 and 3 (CPS and CPM), participants must pass a one- and two-day assessment, respectively. At the end of Level 3 (CPM), participants complete a capstone paper and present their capstone project. Participants have the opportunity to evaluate each class using an electronic survey.
	2. *An adequate participant registration and tracking system is in place.* Steps are being taken to improve it and make it more user-friendly for participants and program staff.
	3. *Adequate security exists for student records*.
1. In the matter of course materials, we find:
	1. *Classes provided are balanced to adequately cover the required competencies and related seven educational tracks offered by the program*. The program offers a wide variety of core classes and electives, allowing participants to customize their certification experience. Because NM EDGE offers numerous certifications outside the CPM program, participants pursuing CPO, CPS, and CPM benefit from being able to choose elective classes designed for other certifications.
	2. *All classes offered align with one or more of the CPM core competencies*. This is demonstrated by the class catalogues and competency chart provided. Learning objectives were also provided for each class.
	3. *The program does not allow for class substitutions, but its curriculum, incorporating core and elective classes, allows for flexibility*. Required courses are offered several times per year and the schedule is published in advance, allowing participants time to determine their path to certification.
	4. *All requirements regarding hours of instruction are met*. NM EDGE takes a three-tiered approach to CPM: Level 1, leading to the Certified Public Official (CPO) credential, consists of 63 hours (21 three-hour classes and a brief essay). Level 2, leading to the Certified Public Supervisor (CPS) credential, requires 105 hours (33 three-hour classes and a 6-hour assessment). Some classes required for Level 2 may have already been completed as part of Level 1. Level 3, leading to the Certified Public Manager (CPM) credential, consists of 208 hours (30 three-hour classes, 18 hours of assessment, and a 100-hour capstone project). Some classes required for Level 3 may have already been completed as part of Levels 1 or 2. When duplicate classes are taken into count, the CPM certification consists of 313 hours of structured learning.
2. In regard to program evaluation, we find:
	1. *Numerous channels exist for program evaluation*: meetings of the program’s advisory board and curriculum advisory committee; instructor “huddles” in which instructors discuss issues in their classes with program staff; and participant surveys following classes and assessments. NM EDGE is exploring additional ways to evaluate the program more systemically.
	2. *Program staff recently participated in Strategic Doing and SWOT analysis*. They plan to continue strategic discussions to plan effectively for the future. A debrief session is held after each quarterly honing event. Biweekly staff meetings are held to discuss upcoming events and deadlines as well as any issues that need to be addressed.
	3. *Each course and instructor are adequately evaluated by participants*. The program provided examples of the evaluation form. Staff work with instructors to relay participant feedback and address issues as necessary.
	4. *NM EDGE meets periodically with stakeholders to gather informal feedback about the effectiveness of its certification programs*. County affiliate meetings and the New Mexico Counties Legislative and Annual Conferences provide two such opportunities. Feedback from the agency managers who met with the review team was overwhelmingly positive.
3. We examined a list of program graduates. Since its inception in 2008, the program has graduated 29 individuals with the CPM certification. A significantly higher number of individuals have completed Levels 1 and 2 of the program. Since 2008, 473 individuals have completed Level 1 (CPO) and 173 individuals have completed Level 2 (CPS).
4. Current participants and graduates were extremely supportive of the program. From our conversations with participants and graduates, we find:
	1. *Participants and graduates value the self-paced education and three-hour class blocks that NM EDGE provides*. Many participants work in high-demand positions that do not allow frequent or predictable time off. They appreciate the ability to take classes when they can and progress through thee requirements at their own pace.
	2. *Participants and graduates approve of current class delivery options*. Graduates in particular noted they prefer in-person classes for the networking opportunities but appreciate the necessity of online classes due to the geography of New Mexico. Participants recognize the benefits of NM EDGE staff proctoring their classes, whether in person or online.
	3. *Graduates spoke highly of the assessments at the end of Levels 2 and 3 and the capstone project*.
	4. *Participants and graduates remarked that NM EDGE certifications provide a valuable alternative to formal degree programs* *and a valuable supplement to on-the-job training*.
	5. *Participants and graduates reported that NM EDGE classes are applied*. They put to use what they learned immediately, and the employees they supervise benefitted as a result. Graduates also indicated they sent new hires to NM EDGE for training.
	6. *NM EDGE is currently piloting a cohort model with promising results*. Santa Fe County employees are completing Levels 1 and 2 of the CPM program by taking a class each Friday for a year. They are progressing as a cohort and should earn their CPO and CPS certifications at the same time. NM EDGE hopes this group will choose to participate in Level 3 and earn their CPM certifications as well. Members of the Santa Fe cohort spoke highly of their experience and appreciated their employers investing in them through this educational opportunity.
	7. *Many participants pursue multiple certifications with NM EDGE*. Indeed, some participants end up working towards the three levels of CPM simply because they take a sufficient number of related classes as part of other certification programs.
5. We find the following to be the strong points of the New Mexico program:
	1. *NM EDGE staff*: Conversations with participants, graduates, instructors, and advisors demonstrate the excellence of the NM EDGE staff. They are receptive to feedback and dedicated to serving participants.
	2. *Advisory Board:*The review team was particularly impressed with the commitment of advisory board members. The board sees the importance of NM EDGE to the state of New Mexico, and members are invested in expanding its reach.
	3. *Variety of classes:*The variety of classes offered is one of the program’s greatest strengths and worthy of emulation. Participants can customize their educational experience and take the classes most relevant to them.
	4. *Assessments and Projects:*Pre- and post-tests administered during each class and assessments administered at the end of Levels 2 and 3 are particularly effective. We saw the assessments as opportunities for participants to work as a team, apply what they learned in classes, and relate what they learned to the CPM core competencies. We were impressed by the capstone projects produced and the level of guidance provided to participants by NM EDGE staff and advisors.
6. We discussed the program’s perceived strengths and weaknesses. We are impressed by the efforts to address areas needing improvement, especially:
	1. *Modifications to or investment in a new registration and tracking system.*
	2. *Recruitment beyond NM EDGE’s traditional audience of county government employees*. Specifically, program staff and the advisory council are developing strategies to recruit more state employees.
	3. *Efforts to evaluate the CPM program more systematically, including the engagement of program graduates and stakeholders regarding the value of the CPM certification*.

* 1. *Long-term strategic planning for NM EDGE*. The program director, despite being new to the position, has already initiated strategic planning activities. Program staff are thinking deeply about how to continue to take NM EDGE forward.
1. We recommend the program examine three specific areas for growth:
	1. *Establish an identity for the CPM program within NM EDGE.* Conversations with participants, graduates, instructors, advisors, and advisory board members made clear that the three levels of CPM are seen as three certificates among many others offered by NM EDGE. Participants working towards Levels 1, 2, and 3 do not seem to consider themselves part of a CPM program. We would like to see NM EDGE focus on increasing recognition of and demand for the CPM certification. Here are some suggestions for doing so:
* **Address the significant participant drop off between Level 2 (CPS) and Level 3 (CPM).** Participants interested in pursuing CPS are already supervisors and therefore management and leadership focused. Graduates hypothesized that most CPS holders do not continue to CPM because of the time commitment, particularly the 100-hour capstone project. In comparison, NM EDGE’s other certificates appear less demanding. While there are benefits to the CPM certification being seen as the “top” certification offered, that prestige may serve as a barrier to increasing the number of CPM graduates. We encourage program staff to consider reallocating requirements between CPO, CPS, and CPM, such that CPM becomes an attractive and achievable next step after CPS.
* **Establish an application and orientation for the CPM program.** An application may help participants see themselves as part of a distinct program within NM EDGE and therefore increase the likelihood of them pursuing full CPM certification. Likewise, an orientation would provide participants with a clear understanding of program requirements and how they would progress through the various levels.
* **Expand the cohort model as a straightforward path to increase the number of CPM certifications.** Participants in the Santa Fe cohort noted Friday afternoons were not ideal for classes. The program could consider other days of the week and/or combining classes to create monthly retreats of two- or three-days where cohorts could focus on their certification. More focused time together would also facilitate cohort bonding and create greater opportunity for applying the content learned.
* **Continue to develop an alumni association for CPM graduates.** A CPM Alumni Association was launched in December 2022 and currently plays a role at program conferences and graduation ceremonies. Program staff are encouraged to invest in the alumni association and help connect graduates to the association. An active alumni association could be a great help in spreading the word about the value of CPM certification in New Mexico.
* **Consider streamlining the list of certifications offered.** The number of other certifications offered by NM EDGE may detract from the CPM program. Because all classes offered by NM EDGE already align with the CPM core competencies, it could be useful to consider folding other certifications into the CPM program as “concentrations” or “tracks” within CPM. A number of common “core” classes are already required of multiple certifications offered. Alternatively, staff could consider rebranding NM EDGE as a center that contains multiple programs, including CPM. Other certifications may be combined as part of other programs within NM EDGE.
	1. *Diversify the instructor pool***.** While NM EDGE’s instructor pool is impressive, the program would benefit from adding additional practitioners working in government and academic experts in public administration or related fields. Participants noted that examples given in class tended towards the instructor’s experience in the private sector instead of examples relevant to government employees.Graduates commented that some instructors teach multiple classes and having a variety of perspectives on certain topics would be useful.Experts in public administration, including some CPM graduates, would be well equipped to teach the CPM core competencies.
	2. *Review program materials and the NM EDGE website for user accessibility.*We had a difficult time understanding the various class and project requirements for each level of CPM. Discrepancies existed between the notebook, supplemental materials, and the website, which made it difficult to grasp the hours required.The number of classes that count for both CPO and CPS added to the confusion. We encourage staff to create a handbook for each level of CPM that is more descriptive than the current checklists provided.

The New Mexico CPM Program has many strong points, but the review team found the greatest strength of the program to be the commitment of its leadership and advocates. The program director and staff are dedicated to serving public sector professionals in New Mexico. Participants, graduates, instructors, and advisory board members speak very highly of NM EDGE and are wonderful spokespeople for the certifications offered.

The findings and recommendations are based on a review of all documentation by the committee and confirmed by a virtual site visit by the committee on August 16-17, 2023.

Committee Recommendation:

Accredit **ꭓ**  Accredit Provisionally **□** Not Accredit **□**

If either accredit provisionally or not accredit, please specify reasons or reference the relevant paragraph in the report. N/A

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

Linda Jimenez-Lopez

Loretta Tillery

And

Liz Lundeen, Chair, for the Committee Date: September 29, 2023