

# COCTP

*County Officials  
Certificate  
Training  
Program*  
Handbook



INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE



Optimistic and  
visionary

Optimistic and  
visionary

**UT** THE UNIVERSITY  
TENNESSEE  
SYSTEM

## COCTP is sponsored by the University of Tennessee County Technical Assistance Service in cooperation with the Tennessee County Services Association and the County Officials Association of Tennessee.

### What is COCTP?

The County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP) is a comprehensive training program administered by the University of Tennessee (UT) County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS).

COCTP is designed to provide specialized, office-specific, technical, administrative, managerial, and leadership training to elected officials and their employees. The goal is to help them run their office more efficiently and effectively. It also offers a comprehensive knowledge of the inner workings of county government. CTAS believes that having a broader understanding of county government operations will help officials and their employees serve their constituencies better. In short, graduates of COCTP will obtain a thorough knowledge of county government and will be designated as Certified Public Administrators.

### Fee Structure



#### **\$300 Enrollment Fee**

Enrollment in the COCTP requires a one-time fee. To join the program, participants must fill out an online application available at [ctas.tennessee.edu/training/COCTP](https://ctas.tennessee.edu/training/COCTP). Please note that COCTP course credit will only be awarded for courses completed within 180 days of the enrollment fee payment.



#### **\$300 Capstone Fee**

A one-time fee is required to attend the COCTP Capstone event. Eligible participants will receive an invitation from CTAS.



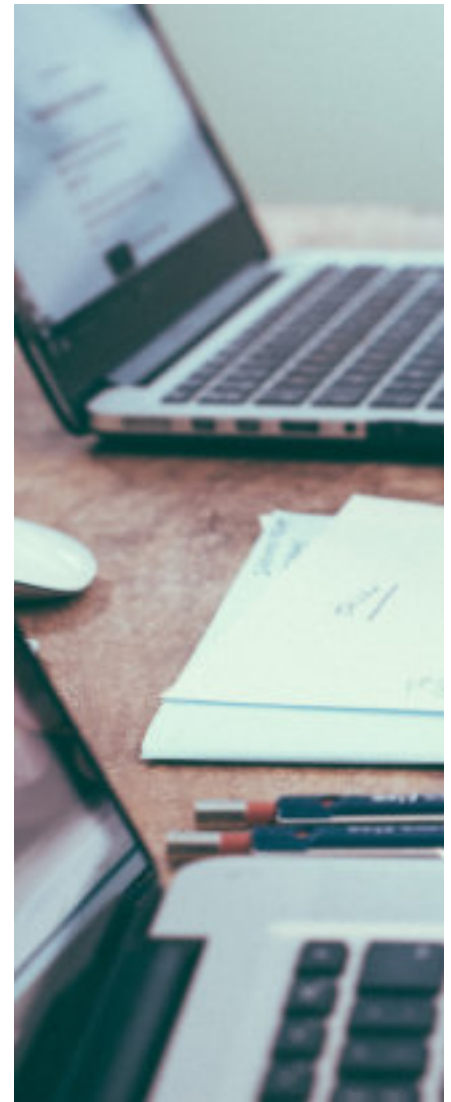
#### **\$100 Recertification Fee**

All officials and employees who obtain the Certified Public Administrator designation are required to pay a yearly fee. This fee is valid for one year and must be paid by September 1st of each year. However, during the first year of recertification, the fee is waived if the attendee has attended the Capstone event.

## What are the program benefits?

Earning a COCTP certificate can provide immense professional and personal benefits. No other program in the country offers the following advantages to county officials and their staff members:

- A salary supplement for full-time elected officials, including clerks and masters;
- A comprehensive program with courses custom-designed for the county government employee;
- An occasion to genuinely network with leaders in government and innovative colleagues;
- A nurturing environment where your learning style is taken into account;
- An opportunity to increase your earning potential;
- A chance to learn and use the latest approaches in county government; and
- An option to significantly impact county government.



## What are the program requirements?

To successfully fulfill the COCTP requirements, you must complete the following items:

- Complete 7 core classes, out of which 3 classes are mandatory, while 4 classes can be chosen by you.
- Complete 65 credits of electives  
(35 credits of County Electives; 30 credits of Choice Electives).
- Score at least 70% in the County Government Overview test.
- Score at least 70% in the Exit Exam.
- Attend a Capstone event.

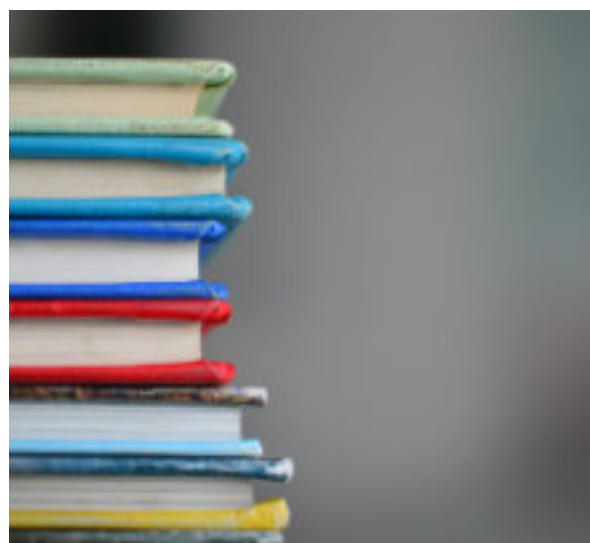
## Core Classes

The core classes are job-specific and technical training courses designed to assist county government officials in carrying out their duties of administering county services. Efficient county government administration requires a comprehensive understanding of the different types of services offered, advanced financial skills, a thorough knowledge of the legal environment, and proficiency in information technology. Participants are required to complete seven (7) core classes.

Core classes may include:

- *County Government Environment\**
- *County HR Issues\**
- *County Operating Budget\**
- Audit
- Capital Budgeting
- Debt Management
- Ethics
- Financial Issues
- Legal Issues - for each elected office
- Purchasing
- Risk Management

*\*Required Core class*



*These courses are offered in multiple locations across the state and virtually.*

## Elective Classes

There are two types of elective requirements that you need to complete under the COCTP: County Electives and Choice Electives. You are required to complete a total of 35 credit hours for County Electives. These courses are similar to the core classes and cover county-specific technical training for County Government. County Electives are available both online and in-person and can be identified by the (CO) designation next to the course name and credit hour. An example of a County Elective is Revenue Sources - (CO) 1 Credit.

For Choice Electives, you need to complete a total of 30 credit hours. These elective courses aim to help county officials enhance

their staff management skills and public service abilities. Effective county administrators are capable of managing change, leading people, building coalitions, and delivering results. Therefore, many elective courses on management and leadership are available. Choice Electives are available both online and in-person and can be identified by the (CH) designation next to the course name and credit hour. An example of a Choice Elective is Leading Effective Teams - (CH) 1 Credit.

Remember that you need to earn a total of 65 credits (35 hours of County Electives and 30 hours of Choice Electives) in this category to fulfill the elective component. You can choose any course you prefer under this category. Credit is given only once for each course, and you will not receive credit for the same course regardless of the time frame.

## Tennessee County Government Overview

The County Government Overview is a test designed to assess your general knowledge of the county government in Tennessee. It consists of 50 questions and is meant to prepare you for the Exit Exam. To pass the test, you must score a minimum of 70 percent or higher.

### Exit Exam

The Exit Exam tests your understanding of the key characteristics of an efficient county government, as well as your knowledge of various issues related to the delivery of county services, legal environment, and county finances. To be eligible for the exam, all class requirements must first be completed. The exam itself consists of 50 closed book questions and a minimum score of 70 percent is required to pass. The questions for the Exit Exam are directly related to information covered in the Tennessee County Government Overview using e-Li. The Exit Exam is available online in **k@te**.



## Capstone Event

Once you have successfully passed the Exit Exam, you will be invited to attend a Capstone event. However, it is important to note that a \$300 fee is required to participate in the Capstone event, which is mandatory for all three days.

The primary objective of the Capstone event is to provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate the administrative, leadership, and management skills that you have gained through your participation in the COCTP program.

Upon completion of the Capstone event, you will be designated by the University of Tennessee as a Certified Public Administrator. In addition, you will begin earning recertification credit in the next fiscal year and will be excused from the recertification payment for one year.

## Recertification

The final component of COCTP is recertification. To retain the designation of Certified Public Administrator, you are required to complete 16 credits of continuing education each fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). There is a \$100 recertification fee due on September 1 of every year. The fee is valid for one year. It is waived for the first year due to attendance at the Capstone event.

There are several ways you can earn the required 16 credits:

- Attend a CTAS Recertification Conference.
- Attend classroom or online training provided by CTAS throughout the year.
- Take training through other sources, including national, state, local, and professional associations.
- Take training offered at your county association meetings.
- Take training sessions offered by private sector organizations.

NOTE: You must submit documentation of training completed from other sources to receive credit.

## Rollover Credits

Rollover credits are designed to allow COCTP participants to use the extra credits earned in the previous fiscal year to supplement credits earned in the current fiscal year. The additional credits can be rolled into the current fiscal year if you earned more than the 16 required credits in the previous year. You may rollover a maximum of 8 credits. Rollover credits can be reported using the Help button on CTAS website.







## Virtual Training Overview

Virtual training courses are offered to accommodate the changing needs of our learners. Much like our elective in-person classroom courses, your active participation and engagement provide a more meaningful user experience. These virtual courses are designed to be a shared user experience that will influence the conversation and direction of the course.

We will use Zoom to conduct our virtual training courses. The information provided below is intended to convey our requirements for participating in our virtual training courses as well as helpful resources so you can be prepared.

Note: Virtual courses are actively monitored by CTAS staff to assist with engagement and operation of the session.

## Virtual Training/Zoom Requirements

- Participants **MUST** have speakers, a webcam, and a microphone to join and participate in a virtual training session. No exceptions. You will not be allowed to attend a session without these items.
- Test your equipment a day before the session to ensure your speakers and microphone are working properly. You may contact us in advance of at [ctas.support@tennessee.edu](mailto:ctas.support@tennessee.edu) to request assistance with testing your equipment.
- It is recommended that you use a computer (laptop or desktop). If you need to use a tablet device such as an iPad, you will need to install the Zoom app prior to joining the webinar session.
- Stay engaged -- We expect participants to respond to facilitator questions and to chat inquiries.

## Learning How to Use Zoom

We offer a self-paced training course titled, [Learning Zoom](#), through our training system, **k@te**. If you complete it, you can be eligible for one (1) COCTP Recertification credit.

## Alternative Learning Opportunities

If you prefer not to participate in these live online courses actively, we have provided many alternative learning opportunities, including LinkedIn Learning and County Government Online Training. These courses are self-paced and do not require a microphone or camera for completion and credit.





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- It is a state of use the procedure in the state of Florida

Speaker: A man in a blue suit and white shirt, standing at a podium with a microphone, addressing the audience.

Audience: Several people are seated at round tables, facing the speaker. They are dressed in business casual attire. Some tables have water bottles and papers on them.



## COCTP Frequently Asked Questions

### **Who can participate in COCTP?**

COCTP is designed for elected and appointed county officials. However, any county employee may attend COCTP training programs.

### **How do I enroll in COCTP?**

You can enroll online on the CTAS Training webpage. You may elect to receive an invoice for the \$300 enrollment fee or choose to pay the enrollment fee online by credit card.

### **Do I have to pay a fee to attend COCTP classes?**

No, a fee is not required of any county official or employee to attend COCTP classes. However, if you desire to pursue the designation of Certified Public Administrator, some fees apply. Fees are due within 180 days of your first completed class.

### **How do I register to attend COCTP classes?**

You may register for classes by logging into **k@te** at <https://kate.tennessee.edu/ctas> and selecting Training from the menu at the top left corner of the page. Detailed instructions can be requested by using the Help button on the CTAS website.

### **How do I get a copy of my transcript?**

Please use the Help button to request the information. Fill in the Name, Email, County, and County Office fields; then use the “How can we help you?” text field to let us know what we can help with. Transcript requests should include “Transcript” in the text field.

## **Do I have to complete all Core credits before I complete Elective credits (or vice versa)?**

No, you may take Core or Elective classes in any order.

## **When am I eligible to attend the Capstone event?**

Participation in the capstone event is by invitation only. This invitation will be extended to you once you have met the following criteria:

1. Paid enrollment fee (\$300) within 6 months of completing first class;
2. Completed 7 Core classes;
3. Completed 65 credits of Elective classes;
4. Completed the County Government Overview with a minimum of 70 percent or higher;
5. Passed the COCTP Exit Exam with a score of 70 percent or higher; and
6. Paid the Capstone fee of \$300 and participated in the Capstone.

## **When and where are the Capstone events held?**

Capstones are usually scheduled in the months of April and May. Capstone events are typically held in Middle Tennessee, but this is subject to change. The exact dates and location will be included in your invitation to the Capstone event.

## **Can I get recertification credit from training I receive from sources other than CTAS?**

Yes. Recertification credit may be earned by taking other training programs or initiatives. If you believe you have attended something that may count as recertification credit, go to the CTAS website at [www.ctas.tennessee.edu](http://www.ctas.tennessee.edu), and use the Help button to submit your information.

Please attach a copy of the Recertification form from the Training page. Complete the instructions on the form and attach it to the Help request. Please include “Recertification” in your request. Effective July 1, 2020, recertification or elective credit will only be awarded once for online classes in k@te. (You will still have access to the online class but will only receive credit one time.)

## **When does recertification begin and end?**

Once you become a Certified Public Administrator, you must recertify by earning 16 credits of training every fiscal year, beginning July 1st and then ending June 30th.

## **What happens to my certification if I fail to recertify?**

Participants are required to:

1. Successfully complete the County Government Overview course;
2. Earn the credits they lack for the prior recertification cycle(s); and
3. Earn the required 16 credits for the current recertification cycle by June 30 and pay all outstanding fees.

## **What happens to my recertification if I leave my elected office or government service?**

Officials who leave office will be put into an “inactive” status. If they return to office, they will be required to (1) pay the recertification fee, (2) successfully complete the 50-question COCTP Exit Exam, and (3) earn the 16 credits for the current recertification cycle by June 30th. Officials will then be reinstated as Certified Public Administrators.

## **Does COCTP credit count toward a college degree?**

No. Courses taken through COCTP will not count toward a degree at the University of Tennessee. Check with your local college to determine whether or not certificate credits count towards one of its degree seeking programs.

## **Can I receive COCTP credit for academic courses or training I have taken elsewhere?**

No. College courses or training outside of COCTP will not be accepted. However, these credits do apply for recertification credits.

## **If I receive a “wait-listed” registration confirmation for a class I want to attend, what should I do?**

Check back closer to the class date to see if any seats have become available.

## **I took classes years ago but have been inactive in COCTP. Does my previous credit still count toward certification?**

Yes, if you paid the enrollment fee.

## **If I have a schedule conflict with a class date in my region, can I attend an open enrollment class outside of my region?**

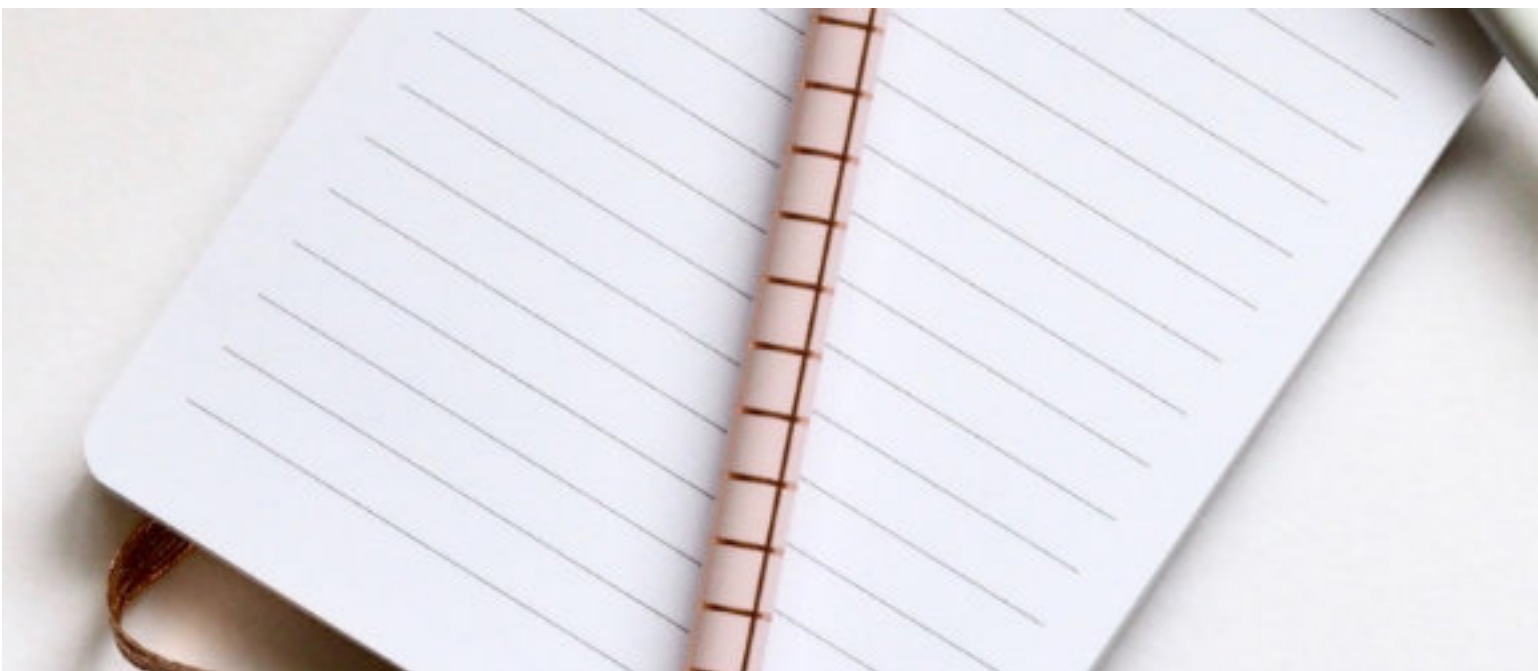
Yes, you are not limited to attending open enrollment classes in your region.

## **Do the training courses require you to pass a test to receive credit?**

The Core classes do require you to take a test and receive a minimum of 70 percent or higher in order to receive credit.

## **How are rollover credits administered?**

If you think you will need rollover credits to complete the current fiscal year, you can request rollover credits from your previous year. If you earned more than the 16 credits required for recertification, up to 8 credits can be rolled from the previous year to the current year. Rollover credits can be reported using the Help button on the CTAS Training webpage.





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