

COUNTY OFFICIALS CERTIFICATE TRAINING PROGRAM

Your roadmap to becoming a

Certified Public Administrator

A program of the University of Tennessee
County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS)



What you'll get from COCTP

- Salary supplement for full-time elected officials
- Specialized training designed for county government
- Networking with county leaders across Tennessee
- The Certified Public Administrator credential
- Continuing education that grows your earning potential

UT COUNTY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICE | INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

www.ctas.tennessee.edu/training/coctp • (615) 532 3555 • ctas.support@tennessee.edu

Welcome to COCTP

The County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP) is a comprehensive professional-development program administered by the University of Tennessee County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS), in cooperation with the Tennessee County Services Association and the County Officials Association of Tennessee.

Graduates earn the **Certified Public Administrator** designation — a credential that demonstrates mastery of county government operations, finance, leadership, and the legal environment.

Program at a Glance

Who it's for	Elected and appointed county officials, and any county employee who wants to attend.
What you earn	The Certified Public Administrator (CPA) designation from the University of Tennessee.
What it costs	\$300 enrollment + \$300 Capstone + \$100 annual recertification. Classes themselves are free.
How long	Self-paced. Most participants complete the program over two to four years.
Where	Classes offered statewide and online; Capstone event typically held in Middle Tennessee in April and May.

“COCTP gives Tennessee’s county officials a comprehensive understanding of how county government works — and the tools to run their offices more efficiently and effectively.”

About the Program

What is COCTP?

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 you run your office more efficiently and effectively while giving you a comprehensive understanding of how county government works.

CTAS believes that a broader understanding of county government operations helps officials and their employees serve their constituencies better. Graduates of COCTP are designated as **Certified Public Administrators**.

What are the program benefits?

Earning a COCTP certificate is invaluable both professionally and personally. No other program in the nation offers all of the following to its county employees:

- **A salary supplement** for full-time elected officials (including clerk and masters)
- **A comprehensive curriculum** with courses custom-designed for county government employees
- **Networking opportunities** with county leaders and innovative colleagues from across Tennessee
- **A nurturing learning environment** that takes your individual learning style into account
- **Increased earning potential** through the Certified Public Administrator credential
- **The latest approaches** in county government administration
- **An opportunity to significantly impact** county government in your community

Your Program Pathway

COCTP is self-paced, but every participant follows the same six-step path to becoming a Certified Public Administrator. Core and elective classes can be taken in any order.

1 **Enroll in COCTP**

Pay the one-time \$300 enrollment fee within six months of enrolling in the program.

2

Complete 7 Core Classes

Three are required for everyone; you choose the other four from the elective-core list (see next page).

3

Complete 65 Elective Credits

35 credits of County Electives (CO) plus 30 credits of Choice Electives (CH). Take them in any order.

4

Pass the County Government Overview

A 50-question online practice test covering Tennessee county government. Score at least 70% to continue.

5

Pass the Exit Exam

A 50-question, online exam. Score at least 70% to qualify for the Capstone.

6

Attend the 3-Day Capstone Event

Pay the \$300 Capstone fee, attend all three days (April or May), and graduate as a Certified Public Administrator.

After Graduation: Stay Certified

Maintain your CPA designation by completing 16 hours of continuing education each fiscal year (July 1–June 30) and paying the \$100 annual recertification fee by June 30.

Core Classes

Core classes are the job-specific, technical training courses at the heart of COCTP. They cover the financial skills, legal knowledge, and administrative competencies needed to run a county office well.

How the Core Classes work

You must complete 7 Core Classes total: 3 are REQUIRED for every participant, and you CHOOSE 4 more from the elective-core list below.

3 Required Core Classes (everyone takes these)

1.	County Government Environment
2.	County HR Issues
3.	County Operating Budget

Choose 4 More from this List

• Audit	• Capital Budgeting	• Debt Management
• Ethics	• Financial Issues	• Legal Issues <small>(for each Elected Office)</small>
• Personnel	• Purchasing	• Risk Management

Note: Core classes require a passing score of 70% or higher on a post-test taken at the end of the class. If you do not pass on the day of the class, you may retest at a later date — contact the CTAS training team for options.

Electives & Tests

Elective Classes

You must earn 65 elective credits in two categories. Both are available online and in person.

Category	Credits Required	Course Code	Focus
County Electives	35 credits	(CO)	County-specific technical training (similar to core classes). Example: Revenue Sources – (CO) 1 Credit.
Choice Electives	30 credits	(CH)	Management, leadership, and communications skills. Example: Leading Effective Teams – (CH) 1 Credit.
Total	65 credits		

Note: Each course earns credit only once, no matter how many times you take it.

The Two Tests

Test	Format	Passing Score	Purpose
County Government Overview	50 questions, online	70%	Practice test that prepares you for the Exit Exam.
Exit Exam	50 questions, online	70%	Final assessment of efficient county government, service delivery, the legal environment, and county finances. Questions are drawn directly from the Tennessee County Government Overview content in e-Li.

Capstone & Beyond

The Capstone Event

After passing the Exit Exam, you will be able to register for the three-day Capstone event — an intensive, highly personalized experience focused on working with other county officials from across Tennessee. At the end of the third day, the University of Tennessee will designate you a **Certified Public Administrator**.

	After you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paid the \$300 enrollment fee• Completed all 7 Core Classes• Earned all 65 elective credits• Passed the County Government Overview (70%+)• Passed the Exit Exam (70%+)• Paid the \$300 Capstone fee
	Typically held in April or May in Middle Tennessee. Exact dates and location will be announcement by email.
	Day 1: noon to evening Day 2: full day Day 3: morning to noon Attendance at every session on all three days is mandatory.

Recertification

To keep your CPA designation, you must complete **16 hours of continuing education each fiscal year** (July 1 – June 30) and pay the **\$100 annual recertification fee by June 30**.

You can earn the 16 hours through any of the following:

- CTAS classroom training throughout the year
- Training from national, state, local, or professional associations
- Training offered at your county association meetings
- Training sessions from private-sector organizations
- Online training

Rollover Hours

Earn more than 16 hours in one fiscal year? You can roll up to 8 extra hours into the next fiscal year. Use the rollover form on the CTAS Training webpage to report them.

Fee Structure

Classes themselves are free. Fees apply only if you choose to pursue the Certified Public Administrator designation.

Fee	Amount	When	Notes
Enrollment	\$300	Within 6 months of enrolling in the program	One-time fee. Pay using the invoice sent after enrolling in the program.
Capstone	\$300	After you pass the Exit Exam and register for Capstone	One-time fee. Invoice are generated after you register for a Capstone event.
Recertification	\$100/year	Annually by June 30	Required of every Certified Public Administrator. Each payment is valid for one fiscal year.

Important deadline

If you choose to pursue certification, the \$300 enrollment fee is due within six months of enrolling in the program. Don't miss this window — missing it can affect your eligibility for the Capstone event.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who can participate in COCTP?

A. COCTP was designed for elected and appointed county office holders. However, any county employee may attend COCTP training programs.

Q. Do I have to pay a fee to attend COCTP classes?

A. No. There is no fee to attend COCTP classes. Fees apply only if you decide to pursue the Certified Public Administrator designation. If you do, the \$300 enrollment fee is due within six months of enrolling in the program.

Q. How do I register to attend COCTP classes?

A. Register through K@TE, our learning management system, at kate.tennessee.edu/ctas. Click any of the COCTP Training Class categories, choose a class, then click **Launch** for online classes or **View Details** → **Request** for in-person classes.

Q. How do I get a copy of my transcript?

A. Log in to K@TE and click the Transcript button on the welcome screen. If you have forgotten your username or password, email ctas.support@tennessee.edu for help.

Q. Do I have to complete all core classes before electives?

A. No. You may take core and elective classes in any order.

Q. If I have a conflict with a class date in my region, can I attend in another region?

A. Yes. You are not limited to attending open-enrollment classes in your own region.

Q. If a class is wait-listed, what should I do?

A. A wait-listed status means the class is full at that location or virtually. Most COCTP courses are offered at two or more sites across the state, so feel free to register for the same course at another location. Virtual sessions are usually recorded and posted in K@TE for review within 24-48 hours after the session ends.

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

Q. Do training courses require a passing test for credit?

A. Core classes do. You must score 70% or higher on the post-test given at the end of the class to receive credit. If you do not pass, you may retest at a later date — contact the CTAS training team for options.

Q. When is the Exit Exam offered?

A. The Exit Exam is available online after you have completed all required coursework, including the county government overview.

Q. Can I earn CEU credits for COCTP coursework?

A. Yes. All courses in the COCTP curriculum are approved for CEU credit unless specifically noted otherwise.

Q. Does COCTP credit count toward a college degree?

A. No. Courses taken through COCTP do not count toward a degree at the University of Tennessee. Check with your local college to see whether COCTP credits could apply to one of its programs.

Q. Can I receive COCTP credit for academic courses or training I've taken elsewhere?

A. No. Courses taken outside COCTP cannot be applied toward COCTP core or elective requirements. However, outside training may qualify for recertification credit when you are eligible.

Q. Can I get recertification credit from training other than CTAS?

A. Yes. To request recertification credit for outside training, go to the Training section of the CTAS website, click Credit Requests at the bottom, and choose Recertification Credit from the Type of Request dropdown.

Q. When does recertification begin and end?

A. Once you become a Certified Public Administrator, you must recertify by completing 16 hours of training each fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).

Q. I took classes years ago but became inactive. Does that credit still count?

A. Yes, if you paid the enrollment fee.

Q. What happens if I fail to recertify or leave my elected office?

A. Officials who leave office are placed on “inactive” status. To be reinstated as a Certified Public Administrator, you must (1) pay the recertification fee, (2) pass the 50-question, closed-book Exit Exam with a 70% or higher score, and (3) earn the 16 hours required for the current recertification cycle by June 30.

Program Tracking Chart

Use this chart to track your progress toward the Certified Public Administrator designation.

Step	Requirement	Done?
1. Enrollment	Pay \$300 enrollment fee after enrolling in the program	[]
2. Required Core (3)	[] County Government Environment [] County HR Issues [] County Operating Budget	___ / 3
3. Choose 4 Core	Choose 4 from: Audit, Capital Budgeting, Debt Management, Ethics, Financial Issues, Legal Issues, Personnel, Purchasing, Risk Management.	___ / 4
4. County Electives (CO)	Earn 35 credits of County Electives.	___ / 35
5. Choice Electives (CH)	Earn 30 credits of Choice Electives.	___ / 30
6. Govt. Overview Test	Score 70% or higher on the 50-question online test.	[]
7. Exit Exam	Score 70% or higher on the 50-question, closed-book exam.	[]
8. Capstone Fee	Pay \$300 Capstone fee after registering for an event.	[]
9. Capstone Event	Attend all 3 days. Become a Certified Public Administrator!	[]
10. Recertify	Each fiscal year (July 1 – June 30): 16 hours of training + \$100 fee by September 1.	Annual

Get Started Today

Ready to begin your path to becoming a Certified Public Administrator? Here's how to take the next step.

Register for classes	
Program website	www.ctas.tennessee.edu/training/coctp
Phone	(615) 532-3555
Email	ctas.support@tennessee.edu

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