Iowa Certified Public Manager® Program Project Handbook

(Revised September 2023)

Certified Public Manager®Program

Introduction to Iowa CPM Projects:

The Iowa Certified Public Manager® Program provides a unique opportunity for participants to apply and integrate classroom learning with the real world of public management in Iowa through the *project component* of the ICPM. The accrediting body for the CPM certificate, the CPM Consortium, requires that Certified Public Managers must provide a "written demonstration of…effectiveness in applying core materials to the job environment." The project described in this handbook fulfills this requirement while benefiting participants, their organizations, and the public at large.

The projects are designed to be job related but should not be a "regular job assignment." That is, we ask each group to develop a project that would be difficult for a single agency or organization to develop and complete. Project teams will benefit from diversity. Members from various entities will form project groups. This means groups will have a diverse and fresh perspective that will integrate the key management components from the coursework with the demands of the topic.

We also see the project component as a real opportunity to develop a program that will benefit the citizens of Iowa. Many CPM projects have advanced the welfare of the public by enhancing public services either through improving the quality of services and/or increasing efficiency. Projects demonstrate the tangible application of the knowledge and skills gained in the Iowa CPM Program through documented improvement in products, service, and/or work processes. Projects also provide the public with a more immediate positive return on investment for the training monies invested. Projects demonstrate that public management professionals are successfully applying each of the seven areas of core course competency: personal and organizational integrity, managing work, leading people, developing self, systemic integration, public service focus, and change leadership.

What follows is a plan for the successful completion of your Iowa CPM Project. We believe you will find the project to be a positive application of the materials presented in this program.
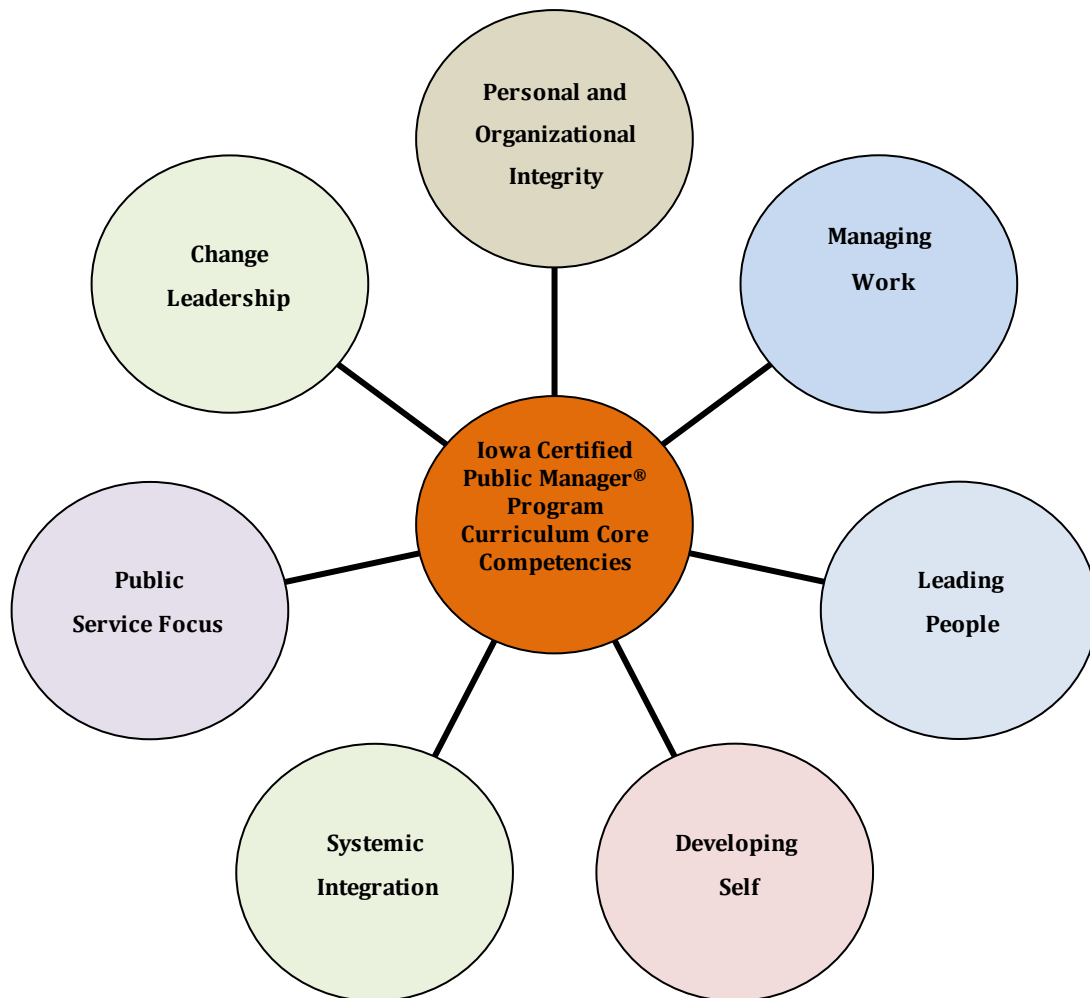
Iowa Certified Public Manager® Program

Overview of the Iowa CPM Project:

General Requirements for Projects

To receive the CPM designation, all participants are required to complete a single major group project. Participants are expected to apply the theories, principles, and techniques learned in the Iowa CPM classroom sessions to a specific situation, problem, or opportunity.

Integrating Seven Core Competencies

The Iowa CPM Program curriculum is designed to effectively engage participants in the *seven core competency areas* required by the National Certificate of Public Management Consortium. While groups may focus primarily on one or more, but not all, areas of core learning (see below), every project will have implications for a professional public manager relative to the intent of the core. As participants move through the curriculum, they will discover new perspectives from which to develop the project.

Personal and Organizational Integrity

Change Leadership

Managing Work

Iowa Certified Public Manager® Program Curriculum Core Competencies

Public Service Focus

Leading People

Systemic Integration

Developing Self

Project Process

The basic process for completing the group project is as follows:

1. Form project group (will occur 3-5 months following first session)
2. Groups organize and begin search process for project topic
3. Groups complete and submit project proposal to Drake facilitator (Lance Noe)
4. Groups gain approval for project
5. Complete project and prepare/submit a written report (see format recommendations near the end of this document)
6. Prepare formal project presentation
7. Presentation of project to CPM class, alumni and public
8. Receive feedback on project (ongoing feedback to be administered by ICPM facilitators throughout process)

Project Timeline

Phase One: Getting Started

Project groups will be formed early in the CPM program. Each group will then develop and submit a project proposal (in writing or verbally to facilitator). You will find that this time is needed to propose and reject ideas and meet with potential "clients," that is the agency(s) and/or organization(s) outside of your group that may be involved with the project. Once finalized, each group is advised to create a basic project proposal, which acts as a blueprint for the project.

Phase Two: Research and Development

During this phase, the actual research and development of your project will commence. Groups will be developing the project integrating the areas of study from the ICPM sessions. During this phase you will be given some time in class to meet and work on projects. However, it is expected that your group will develop a way to communicate and collaborate with each other outside of the formal session meetings.

Phase Three: Write up and Presentation

The final three months of the ICPM program (groups having completed nearly all the research and development phase of the project) is devoted to the write-up and presentation design phase. The final written product and presentation will be due at the last session where projects will be presented to the public.

Project Preparation Time

Limited time will be provided during the monthly sessions for group meetings. However, it is expected that your group will be in communication throughout the project process both in and out of the scheduled sessions. It is up to individuals to negotiate additional time with their supervisor if the project requires members meeting with other organizations vital to the development of the project.

Project Confidentiality

All project reports are public records. Your originally submitted report will not be returned to the group but will be kept in an online "projects library" that will be available to others. Please keep this in mind when using names of persons associated with your project. For example, if you develop a project that deals with clients, you should not include names and other identifiers in your report. This will also be true regarding projects that deal with the work environment. It is recommended that personnel issues be discussed in behavioral terms rather than as personal characteristics. The reports are not to be documents that assess a specific individual's personal characteristics or behaviors by name.

Projects Online Library

Information will be provided during the program of study that will enable project teams to gain access to past ICPM projects via an online source.

Project Models

The Iowa CPM Program may recommend that your project be used as a "Model" for classroom illustration, future project development, or to promote the benefits of the ICPM Program to others considering the merits of the Certificate Program.

Selecting Your Projects:

Selection Criteria

The Iowa CPM Program is open to a wide variety of project proposals. Agencies, the Iowa CPM board, and governments may suggest projects for consideration. The following represents a general selection criterion intended to help your group develop a successful group project. Each project should:

1. have the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization or work unit

2. relate to the organizational mission of the entity that your project intends to address

3. have definable results that can be measured

4. be completed within the time limit of the ICPM Program

5. lend itself to be completed in a team format

6. have the support of the organization(s) impacted by your project

7. unitize the management principles, tools, and techniques from the ICPM Program

8. benefit the public at large

9. not be a part of an organization's regular activities—that is it is not to be "regular work"

10. take advantage of the diversity of your group—groups represent experiences that can provide a fresh "outside the box" perspective that will serve a practical and valuable purpose

Additional Project Information

Think of your project as a "consultancy" project to be completed for a specific public organization or consortium of organizations that are seeking a solution to a problem or who seek a new or improved method of action to meet the mission of the organization(s). Your Iowa CPM Project team would develop a collaborative improvement project such as a major process improvement, re-engineering, development, etc.

Your project may be directed toward a single agency or local government department. For example, an agency may be seeking to re-design an aspect of a service they provide either internally or externally. Your group could research and develop a proposal for that re-design. Your group might also serve as a group that bridges the gap between agencies or governments who seek to develop a joint program for providing a service or dealing with a public issue.

Projects should illustrate the application of the learning from the curriculum from the ICPM Program. The project should not be "make work," but should engage the knowledge, principles, theories, and techniques of the professional public manager.

Identifying Project Opportunities

Consider the strengths and weaknesses of your group. Can you develop a project that maximizes the effectiveness of your group? Can you develop a project that challenges the areas of improvement that members of your group seek? The ICPM course material should also provide your group with ideas that may connect with situations members have experienced or which the group is familiar with in state or local government. An open forum discussion within your group should help create a large list from which to seek potential projects.

Project Proposal

Once your group has developed a project topic, a project proposal must be made. The due date for this proposal will be discussed in class, but typically, the due date will be prior to the halfway point in the program. This is to allow time for the ICPM course material to be integrated into the search process. An email to the lead Drake University Director/Instructor is appropriate as is a meeting with Drake and confirmation via email. Your project proposal should address the following:

1. Topic of the project
2. Team members
3. Description of the topic
4. Scope of project assessment

5. Timeline

6. Outside partnership / sponsoring organizations

Executing Your Project:

Project Advising

It may be appropriate to have a project advisor or sponsor. The need for this support will be determined in meetings with the CPM program instructor. NOTE: Surveys and other forms of formal research outreach from your team must be previewed by the Drake University lead instructor.

Documenting Group Progress

It is recommended that you keep a log or journal of all progress and documents that your group develops. This documentation will be helpful in writing and presenting your project.

Project Completion Tips

Consider the following tips:

1. Schedule "project completion meetings" with your team. Focus the meetings on the remaining tasks to complete your project.

2. Schedule a *briefing meeting* early with the customer(s), sponsor(s), or agency leadership to discuss your project.

3. Identify a transitional opportunity such as moving from planning to implementation or from development to production.

4. Conduct a *project review* to determine what went well and what could have been done better.

Writing Your Project Report

Requirements for the Written Project

A written project report describing the organizational results of your work is required. Note: Alternative project formatting may be pursued in consultation with the Drake CPM instructor. The following aspects of your work are to include the following: (You may also have additional information that you may wish to include)

1. An executive summary to serve as a concise summary for the public or others outside of the target organization.

2. An explanation of the situation, problem, concern, or opportunity being addressed in your group project. Why it is important to group members, the target organization, and the public? NOTE: Use critical thinking skills and analysis from a managerial perspective when describing your situation.

3. A description of the expected purpose, goal, and/or outcomes. In other words—what did you intend to accomplish by addressing the situation, problem, concern, or opportunity?

4. A discussion section of the knowledge, theories, models, principles, or techniques from the ICPM Program that were utilized in your project. How did the coursework portion of the program help your group with this project?

5. A description of exactly what you did, including how you applied ICPM coursework. Include any data used for analysis and decision-making.

6. A discussion of the outcomes or results of the project. What did your project accomplish? Did the project result in the goals that were established? If not, why not? What did you learn from completing this project?

7. An explanation of the benefits to the organization and public from your project. Were any changes made because of your work? What was (or is) the potential impact of your project on the target organization?

8. An explanation of the benefits of the project for public managers. What did each member of the group learn from this experience? In retrospect, what would the group have done differently?

Sample Format (alternative formats will be considered)

Title Page should include:

1. Project Title (title should present the target organization and describe the project)
2. Names and job titles of team. Suggest listing alphabetically by last name
3. E-mail/work phone for each member
4. Date Submitted

Style:

1. Typed, #11 Font, standard paper, with 1" margins. Utilize page numbers beginning with the first page following the title page. Table of contents is recommended.
2. Materials such as charts, graphs, etc. should be integrated into the project when appropriate on the page immediately following your first reference to the material in your text. When quoting or using supplementary material, please cite the source in your writing at the end of the paragraph. List your sources at the end of the project using a reference page. You may also wish to include an appendix section for materials that add value to the report, but which are too long or otherwise not essential to appear within the narrative.

Length:

Setting a page numbers requirement is difficult as projects will differ in the length of printed material required to adequate tell the story of your project experience. Please work with your project advisor regarding amount of detail that is appropriate for a project report of this nature. It is necessary for your report to be complete, clear, and concise. If you are using terms and acronyms not familiar to the public, you should be sure to provide a glossary of these terms and keep specialized words use to a minimum. Public Management/Administration has a habit of developing its own language that seems to the public to be a way to avoid direct and clear communication—let us try to break that tradition!

Quality:

This project is a permanent record of your work in this professional program. Others will likely read the report besides those who will assess the work. Your report should follow all standard guidelines for English grammar, spelling, punctuation, and layout. Projects that have errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation will be returned for revision to ensure that your final copy reflects this standard.

Electronic Submission of Project:

Each project should be submitted electronically so it may be placed in the online CPM project library. See Drake CPM leaders for final directions.

Preparing your Project Presentation

Near the end of the program, each group will make a formal project presentation. The audience will consist of your cohort, CPM alumni, program advisors, project advisors, supervisors, and other public guests.

NOTE: Project may be presented virtually rather than in-person on the Drake University Campus. A decision will be made during the cohort experience.

The Presentation

Your audience did not participate in your project. It is your mission to tell them the story of your project in a way that provides them a complete picture.

Presentation Tips:

1. Identify the key points that should be covered. You need not tell the audience *everything*—rather give focus to the portions of your project directly relative to the points you seek to make.
2. Utilize visual aids and materials that help tell the story. However, do not give the audience more information than they can easily comprehend—or you will lose them in the details. It is recommended that you utilize PowerPoint to make your group presentation.
3. While you will utilize your written project report as the outline for your presentation, do not be afraid to alter or eliminate portions of that report if they do not lend themselves to the presentation format. Your allotted time (including discussion) will go by very quickly as you attempt to tell us the story of your group work.
4. All group members must participate in some substantive way in the presentation. While this would not be standard practice in most presentations of this sort, one mission of the Iowa CPM requires that all Certified Public Managers demonstrate professional presentation skills.
5. Practice your group presentation. The only thing less fun than watching an unorganized and disjointed presentation is being a member of the group making such a presentation! The goal is to develop an effective,

professional group presentation that matches the level of effort and expertise that went into the written project. Presentations are critical. Often in the professional setting, a manager will have only one chance to make the case for a program or policy. Others may determine the strength of your argument in large part from the level of professionalism demonstrated in the presentation itself. They may also determine your ability to follow through with a project proposal based on your ability to create an effective presentation of your plans.

Evaluation of the Group Project

Each project will be evaluated utilizing the criteria presented in this document

Submitting the Completed Project for Evaluation

1. Your original project report submitted electronically in an appropriate professional format to a designated recipient at Drake University. You will want to provide hard copies each for Drake University, each member of your team, plus copies for stakeholders identified by your team.
2. Documents for distribution to other class members and audience will be discussed in class

Checklist for Evaluation—What Constitutes a Satisfactory Project?

In addition to the previously stated requirements and recommendations presented in this document, the project will be evaluated to ensure that the following:

1. A clear and complete description of exactly what was accomplished
2. A clear relationship between project activities and ICPM course material
3. A clear demonstration that you completed the mission that was communicated and agreed upon during the project proposal

If problems are discovered because of the review, a process will be developed to address the issues of concern and allow for a resubmission of the work.

The group project has proven to be one of the most rewarding aspects of the CPM program. We hope your experience mirrors that history!