



# CERTIFIED MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL PROGRAM

## Frequently Asked Questions

The **Certified Municipal Official (CMO)** program offers municipal government training in one-day and multi-day events and online training designed for elected municipal officials – mayors and councilmembers – to comply with the Alabama Municipal Official Training Act, which was signed into law on May 3, 2024. In accordance with Alabama Act 2024-194, all mayors and councilmembers **MUST** complete 10 hours of training annually for a total of 40 hours during their first term in office **beginning January 1, 2025**. Officials must complete a core curriculum (see core curriculum section below) of 20 hours comprised of 20 specific trainings from an approved list and 20 additional hours of approved training to complete the basic certification. Officials who have already earned the basic CMO designation (40 hours) are required to earn five credit hours per year.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### Why should I participate in the CMO program?

By participating in the CMO program, officials will be better positioned to understand core subjects necessary to maintaining their operations, abiding by state laws and helping their communities prosper. Additionally, the League recognizes, commends and awards municipalities where each the mayor and all councilmembers have earned the professional designation of Certified Municipal Official thereby distinguishing the municipality as a Certified Municipality (see Certified Municipality Achievement Award section below).

#### How do I use the Certified Municipal Official designation?

The CMO designation signifies that you have completed a minimum of 40 credit hours of formal training on municipal government conducted or endorsed by the Alabama League of Municipalities. You are entitled to use the designation in your graduation press release, professional correspondence and in your curriculum vitae. Many officials also use the designation in re-election campaigns. A city/town may offer a stipend or pay increase for reaching the CMO program certification levels.

#### What is the Certified Municipality Achievement Award?

This annual award was created to recognize and commend cities and towns where the mayor and all councilmembers have earned the professional designation of Certified Municipal Official thereby distinguishing the municipality as a Certified Municipality. This designation represents the mayor and all councilmembers have completed a minimum of 40 credit hours of formal training on municipal government conducted or endorsed by the Alabama League of Municipalities. Qualifying municipalities will receive a Municipality Achievement Award certificate during ALM's annual graduation ceremonies and a digital seal for their municipal website to promote. Learn more at <https://www.almonline.org/CertifiedMunicipalAchievementAward.aspx>.

#### Where can I find a listing of Certified Municipalities?

<https://www.almonline.org/CertifiedMunicipalAchievementAward.aspx>

#### Do I receive a pay increase from my city or town for reaching a certification level?

Municipal salaries or stipends awarded to officials achieving certification levels in the CMO program are determined by each municipality. Compensation for an elected official must be addressed in a municipal salary ordinance.

### **Is my city/town required to pay for my training?**

Yes, the Alabama Municipal Official Training Act requires that the municipality reimburse any mayor or councilmember for any reasonable expenses incurred as a result of receiving the required training. However, the League recommends that officials obtain prior approval from the council, as a body, prior to attending any training, even virtual training. A municipal council has the authority to mandate that a portion of the hours required to satisfy the training requirements be virtual to cut down on costs.

## **CMO PROGRAM CREDIT HOURS AND TRANSCRIPTS**

### **How do I enroll in the CMO program and earn credit hours?**

Program enrollment is simple. Register and attend an event approved for CMO credit and submit the appropriate credit form.

### **How do I access my credit hours?**

Visit the member portal on the League's website to access CMO transcripts. A transcript is an individual's report reflecting the credit hour history in their current program level. Municipal officials can view and print their transcripts by signing in to the member portal on the ALM home page. You may also contact CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org) for assistance. If you need a username and password, please reach out to Member Services Associate Alexis Kelly at [akelly@almonline.org](mailto:akelly@almonline.org).

### **How many qualifying credit hours are available annually?**

The number of credit hours offered annually varies depending on the League's training calendar. There are approximately 30 credit hours available at in-person conferences and 20 credit hours available by online training. The basic certification can be completed within two years if the official is actively engaged in League training.

### **Can clerks or other municipal personnel earn credit hours in the CMO program?**

No. The CMO program is a certification program for elected officials only – mayor and councilmembers.

## **CMO PROGRAM ANNUAL GRADUATION**

### **When is CMO graduation?**

The annual CMO graduation is held in the fall. Most years it is held in conjunction with the Municipal Leadership Institute. On election years, the ceremony may be held as late as early December to accommodate deadlines and orientation trainings related to the elections.

### **When is the CMO graduation qualification deadline?**

The qualification deadline each year for CMO graduation is the end of July.

### **How am I notified of graduation status?**

Officials who qualify for CMO graduation are notified by email that their program requirements have been satisfied along with save the date information. A formal letter acknowledging and commending their achievement is emailed to each graduating official.

### **What if I cannot attend the graduation ceremony?**

If you are unable to attend the ceremony, notify CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org). Your award, pin, program and sample press release will be mailed to your attention at city/town hall following the graduation ceremony.

### **Where can I find a list of previous year's CMO graduates?**

Basic, advanced and emeritus graduates are posted on the League's website at <https://www.almonline.org/CMOGraduates.aspx>.

## EMAIL ADDRESSES AND THE CMO PROGRAM

### How do I update my email address for the CMO program?

Email Member Services Associate Alexis Kelly at [akelly@almonline.org](mailto:akelly@almonline.org).

### What is ALM's email privacy policy?

We are committed to keeping your email address confidential. We do not sell, rent, or lease our contact data or lists to third parties, and we will not provide your personal information to any third-party individual, government agency, or company at any time without your permission unless compelled to do so by law.

## CORE CURRICULUM

### What is the core curriculum?

The core curriculum consists of courses containing selected topics from the League's publication, *Selected Readings for the Municipal Official*. The core curriculum is specifically designed to educate elected officials on the fundamentals of municipal government.

### Do I have to complete the core curriculum?

To comply with the Alabama Municipal Official Training Act (Act 2024-194) all mayors and councilmembers **MUST** complete 10 hours of training annually for a total of 40 hours during their first term in office **beginning January 1, 2025**. A total of 40 credit hours of training are required for basic certification. The core curriculum would satisfy the training requirement in the act. Officials must complete a core curriculum of 20 hours comprised of 20 specific trainings from an approved list and 20 additional hours of approved training to complete the basic certification. All core curriculum training is offered at League training events and through online training available on the website at <https://almonline.org/OnlineTraining.aspx>.

### I was an elected official active in the CMO program prior to January 1, 2025, and left the office. I have been appointed or elected again. Am I required to complete the core curriculum?

The core curriculum would satisfy the training requirement in the Alabama Mandatory Official Training Act. In accordance with the act, all mayors and councilmembers **MUST** complete 10 hours of training annually for a total of 40 hours during their first term in office beginning after January 1, 2025. Each mayor and councilmember who has successfully completed and received their basic Certified Municipal Official (CMO) certification from the Alabama League of Municipalities is exempt from the 10-hour annual requirement. However, starting January 1, 2025, those that are CMO certified still must complete five hours of training annually.

All core curriculum training is offered at League training events and through online training available on the website at <https://almonline.org/OnlineTraining.aspx>.

## BASIC CERTIFICATION

### Where do I find information on the CMO basic certification?

<https://www.almonline.org/CMOProgram.aspx>.

### How many hours are required for the basic certification?

A total of 40 credit hours of training are required for basic certification. Officials must complete a core curriculum consisting of 20 hours of required topics from an approved list and 20 additional hours of approved training to complete the basic certification (see core curriculum information above).

### I have more than 40 hours of training, yet I have not received basic certification. Why?

To receive the basic certification, you must complete 20 hours of core curriculum hours. You cannot receive the basic certification until those hours are completed. Hours earned over those needed for the basic certification roll into the advanced certification credit hours. To see which coursework needs to be completed, contact CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org).

**I have taken training twice, but credit hours are posted only one time. Why is my second attendance not reflected?**

For core curriculum hours, duplicate credit is not awarded for completing a core curriculum course. We recommend keeping track of your completed core curriculum coursework to avoid duplicating training. For all other credit hours, a two-year period is required for receiving credit hours on the same training topic. The best way to track completed training is by reviewing your CMO transcript.

**What happens to earned credit hours after I complete the basic certification?**

All credit hours earned are applied to your CMO record. Hours over those needed for the basic certification are posted to your advanced program.

**If I receive municipal training from another meeting, can I earn credit hours in the CMO program?**

Yes. Five credit hours per calendar year may be attained by attending non-League training, if approved by the League. A copy of the agenda, certificate if applicable, and event registration confirmation must be submitted to the program administrator for approval and evaluation for credit hours in the CMO program. No more than 10 hours of non-League training credit hours may be used toward the 40 credit hours needed for CMO certification.

**I lost my basic CMO pin. Can I get a replacement?**

Yes. Replacement pins are \$5.00 each. Contact CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org).

**ADVANCED CERTIFICATION**

**Where do I find information on the advanced CMO certification?**

<https://www.almonline.org/CMOProgram.aspx>

**How many hours are required for the advanced CMO certification?**

Forty hours of approved League training.

**What happens to credit hours after I complete the advanced certification?**

All credit hours earned are applied to your CMO record. Hours earned over 40 for the advanced certification roll into the emeritus certification credit hours. Hours and points are tracked to verify requirements for active status and to track progress toward the emeritus certification.

**I lost my advanced CMO pin. Can I get a replacement?**

Yes. Replacement pins are \$5.00 each. Contact CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org).

**If I receive municipal training from another meeting, can I earn credit hours in the CMO program?**

Yes. Five credit hours per calendar year may be attained by attending non-League training if approved by the League. A copy of the agenda and event registration confirmation must be submitted to the program administrator for approval and evaluation for credit hours in the CMO program. No more than 10 hours of non-League training credit hours may be used toward the 40 credit hours needed for a certification level.

**EMERITUS CERTIFICATION**

**Where do I find information on the CMO emeritus certification?**

<https://www.almonline.org/CMOProgram.aspx>

### **What are the requirements for emeritus certification?**

Emeritus certification requires completing 120 credit hours of and earning 15 points in the emeritus certification. Note: Credit hours received in the basic and advanced certifications do not transfer to the emeritus certification. *Also see what are emeritus points.*

In 2024, ALM expanded recognition for officials who have excelled in the emeritus certification to receive tiered lapel pins corresponding with each emeritus level obtained.

<b>Tiered Emeritus Level Recognitions:</b>	
CMO Emeritus	120 credit hours and 15 points
CMO Emeritus II	200+ credit hours and 20 points
CMO Emeritus III	300+ credit hours and 30 points
CMO Emeritus IV	400+ credit hours and 40 points

### **What are emeritus points?**

Each in-person event listed below is eligible for one emeritus point. Upon completion of one of the qualifying events, an official is awarded one point toward their emeritus certification. Up to six points per year can be earned. All other training events are eligible for credit hours only.

- ALM Standing Committee Membership and Meeting Attendance
- Attendance at the ALM Convention
- Attendance at the NLC City Summit
- Attendance at the NLC Congressional City Conference
- Attendance at the Municipal Legislative Advocacy Session and Meeting with Legislators
- Attendance at the Municipal Leadership Institute

### **Do my credit hours from the basic and advanced certifications carry over to the emeritus certification?**

No. The emeritus certification requires an additional 120 credit hours and 15 points. The emeritus certification generally takes over five years to complete.

### **I lost my emeritus CMO pin. Can I get a replacement?**

Yes. Replacement pins are \$5.00 each. Contact CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org).

### **If I receive municipal training from another meeting, can I earn credit hours in the CMO program?**

No. The CMO emeritus certification does not permit credit hours from non-League events except for National League of Cities' meetings: NLC City Summit and NLC Congressional City Conference. These two meetings qualify for one emeritus point each.

## **CMO PROGRAM ONLINE TRAINING**

### **Does the League offer online training from the CMO program?**

The League offers online training for core curriculum. The addition of training at your fingertips is a valuable resource for elected officials and municipal personnel. All the training courses offered meet core curriculum requirements. Training is fee based and CMO credit hours can be earned by mayors and councilmembers by submitting a test on the material presented.

### **I registered for a CMO online training and cannot attend. Can I receive a refund?**

No. Online registration fees are not refundable. Substitutes are not permitted due to registration platform.

## REGISTERING FOR CMO TRAINING EVENTS

### How do I register for CMO training events?

All League events require online registration. Each registrant is required to have a unique email address that is routinely checked. Registration confirmations, important updates and other timely event information are sent by email.

### I do not have an email address, so how do I register for a CMO training event?

All League events require an online registration using a unique email address that is routinely checked. Registration confirmations, important updates and other timely event information are sent by email. The CMO program uses email addresses to notify municipal officials of upcoming training, send credit hour reports and share timely and important information. You are encouraged to provide an active and routinely checked email address for these purposes. We are committed to keeping your email address confidential. We do not sell, rent or lease our contact data or lists to third parties, and we will not provide your personal information to any third-party individual, government agency or company at any time without your permission unless compelled to do so by law.

### Can clerks or other municipal personnel register for CMO training events?

Yes. The CMO program offers training each year that is excellent for clerks and municipal personnel. Clerks and municipal personnel routinely register for online training, CMO training events and the League's annual convention. The CMO program does not request or obtain pre-certification credit hours for other certification programs. If you have a certification program, we are happy to provide an attendance verification letter for your records.

### I registered for a CMO training event and cannot attend. Can I get a refund?

All ALM in-person events include a refund policy as part of the event registration information.

## OFFICIALS NO LONGER IN OFFICE AND THE CMO PROGRAM

### Can I complete the basic certification program if I am no longer in the office?

Yes. Elected municipal officials who participated in the basic certification program during their term of office but left office before completing the requirements will have one year to utilize online training. Upon successful completion of program requirements within the ascribed time, the participant may earn the official designation of Certified Municipal Official. An award letter, pin and graduation certificate will be mailed to the address provided by the participant. **Contact CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org) for assistance in completing the basic certification.**

### Can I attend in person League training events if I no longer hold an elected municipal office but want to complete the basic certification?

Only if you are a municipal employee and you are within one year of your date of separation from elected office. As a municipal employee you are permitted to register and attend training events. CMO credit hours must be earned and posted to your records within one year of your date of separation from the elected office. **This requires pre-approval! For assistance, please contact CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org).**

### Can I register for CMO program online training if I am no longer in the office?

Yes, but participation must be pre-approved. Officials who enrolled and participated in the basic certification during their term of office but left office before completing the requirements will have one year to earn credit hours via online training and non-League training to complete the program after they leave office. **For assistance, please contact CMO Program Administrator Cindy Price at [cprice@almonline.org](mailto:cprice@almonline.org) or Director of Professional and Community Development Mary Jackson at [mjackson@almonline.org](mailto:mjackson@almonline.org).**

Updated 10/10/2024