

CGFM Profile ...

## How to Get Ready for New Job? Earn CGFM

Earning the CGFM credential turned out to be an excellent way for Al Friedrich to prepare for his new job.

Friedrich was asked to serve as the assistant auditor-controller for the county of Monterey, CA, in March of last year after having spent 14 years in the county administrative office coordinating and managing the county's \$721 million budget. With 10 months to prepare for his new responsibilities, Friedrich started shopping for a certification program that would help him become a more effective member of the team that ensured the integrity of the county's financial records.

He considered many credentials, including the Government Finance Officers Association certification, but auditors in the office, who are members of AGA, advised him to check out the CGFM Program. "The reasons why I chose AGA are, number one it met my needs and it met my background, and number two it was obtainable because it was flexible."

Friedrich found that the CGFM material directly applied to the duties he would be taking on every day. He also liked the flexibility of scheduling the computerized exams, which are offered year-round at Prometric Testing Centers around the country. The helpful, supportive AGA National Office staff was another factor that led to his choosing the CGFM.

When he approached his soon-to-be boss, Auditor-Controller Michael J. Miller, about pursuing the CGFM, he received total support.

Friedrich found that despite his years of working closely with many county departments to put the entire budget package together, on-the-job experience alone was not enough to pass the exams. He decided to take the preparatory courses offered by Management Concepts. His employer paid for all three classes, which were offered in Denver and Washington, D.C. between March and September.

He decided to devote his entire fall to studying, and he never looked up, studying every night and weekend for months. He also relied on the auditor-controller's staff for testing tips, an explanation of the more complicated concepts and support to stay focused.

In September, he passed the first exam, The Government Environment, with time to spare, but he emerged convinced that he would have to study even harder to pass the others. A month later, he took the third exam, Governmental Financial Management and Control, and passed. The second exam, Governmental Accounting, Financial Reporting and Budgeting, is considered by many to be the most difficult. "That last test was unbelievable," Friedrich said. "It still frightens me when I talk about it." He recalled one question that could be calculated three ways, and all three answers were on the exam. He had to choose the best correct answer. "I have to compliment whoever wrote the exam. It was quite a journey."

The hard work paid off, not only because Friedrich earned his CGFM, but because he also earned more respect from his peers, many of whom are CPAs and CMAs who measure the worth of a certification by how difficult it is to earn it.

Now that Friedrich's name and CGFM certification are listed on the auditor-controller's letterhead, he has become an enthusiastic and vocal supporter of the CGFM Program. He gave a presentation on the CGFM Program at a Central Coast Chapter meeting, and he has offered to mentor anyone interested in taking the exams.

The connection between the material on the CGFM Examinations and his day-to-day duties is so strong that Friedrich knows he made a wise decision to pursue the CGFM. Passing the exams

just before he started his new position Jan. 6 gave him a fresh sense of confidence, a wider knowledge base, and the resources to find the answers if problems arise. "The information was absolutely timely," he said, adding that he was able to jump into his new responsibilities immediately, and staff was able to consult him two days into the job.

Earning the CGFM also showed the staff that he was serious about learning more about what they do, "and I have to say the staff was pleased that I had done it," he said. After all, he said, there were four deputies that could have had his job. The fact that he was appointed to the assistant position was a privilege he did not take lightly, and he was committed to becoming more knowledgeable about the workings of the office.

"It was absolutely the right decision," he said. "I'm glad I did it, and glad I studied as much as I did." - by Christina Camara