

## **Instructor Gets Confidence Boost From CGFM**

To show how the Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM) designation has made a difference for those who have been certified, AGA offers these personal insights into the CGFM Program.

You wouldn't think that a retired financial manager who had spent 33-plus years working in federal financial management would require additional certification. Not so, says Milo Hall.

Hall learned very quickly that earning the CGFM credential would be the resume builder he needed to move from the U.S. Department of the Navy to a new career in teaching. In fact, one of the first questions he faced in an interview was, "Are you a CGFM?"

Hall had to answer no, and although he was hired as an instructor with Management Concepts, he feels certain that if he were competing against a candidate who had already earned the CGFM, he would be out of luck.

Hall made it his mission to get the certification, and he dedicated the entire month of October to the task. He took the three preparatory courses, "studied like hell" and passed the three rigorous exams.

"I wanted the CGFM because I worked federal for 33 years," he said. "I was not all that knowledgeable on state and local. It gave me a tremendous insight. It broadened my knowledge." He also said it gave him a much clearer understanding of the financial connections among local, state and federal government operations.

When Hall retired from federal service, he was supervisor of the business and financial management operation for acquisition of submarine communications systems and had previously supervised business and financial management operations for acquisition of major weapons systems for the Department of the Navy.

He said that being a good civil servant, he thought he was too busy working to get the CGFM earlier, when he could have been granted the certification based on his experience. He was also looking for a change, and he wasn't sure he wanted to invest in another credential.

"I was very delighted to leave civil service, but I love teaching. I truly love it," he said. Hall was then faced with getting the certification the hard way, but he felt that it was the "ticket punch" he needed for his new career. "I did it specifically because it will open doors. It demonstrates that I really know that stuff."

Hall now teaches 10 financial management courses, including appropriation law, budget formulation, budget execution, federal financial management overview and Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS). He works a little more than half time, and travels around the country for Management Concepts, which offers the three Courses in Government Financial Management that Hall took to prepare for the CGFM Exams.

Hall said his students want that CGFM credential after their names to advance their careers. Some worry about downsizing and they want to become more valuable employees. "They want to make themselves more versatile in different applications," he said.

Hall described himself as a big-time promoter of training—he believes more knowledge will help employees do their jobs better, make them more attractive to their employers and make them feel good about their accomplishment.

Even though Hall teaches financial management and spent 33 years of day-to-day work experience in the field, the exams weren't easy. As he put it, he came out of the budgeting world, not the accounting world, so it took intense preparation.

"If you think, 'I'm a smart guy I'm just going to walk in and pass it,' well, you'd better think again." Hall took Courses 1 and 3—The Governmental Environment and Governmental Financial Management and Control—in the same week and studied by going over and over the book and the exercises. He passed those two exams and then took Course 2—Governmental Accounting, Financial Reporting and Budgeting—considered to be the most difficult of the three courses. "All I did was study, study, study." He felt less confident about that one, but passed it as well.

Now the extra knowledge has given him a confidence boost in the classroom.

"I feel more confident in my financial management experience," he concluded. "When I'm standing in front of a class of 25 people, I know I've taken the toughest class on government they can give me. It's a big confidence factor. Could I get better at things? Certainly I could get better, but I'm not going to be blindsided by things." – CGFM Profiles by Christina M. Camara