

Professional certification is the hallmark of the financial community, says Tom Roslewicz, Deputy Inspector General for Audit Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Individuals who hold professional certifications clearly demonstrate their commitment to possessing the knowledge and proficiency to compete in a rapidly changing environment. "Without certifications, how can we stand behind the quality of our work?" asks Mr. Roslewicz, himself both a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM).

Within the HHS Office of Inspector General, Office of Audit Services (OIG-OAS), staff are strongly encouraged and supported in their efforts to obtain professional certifications. As a result, over 35 percent of OIG-OAS auditors are CPAs and 22 percent now hold the CGFM designation.

Certification is so highly regarded in the OIG-OAS that a plaque listing every person who has obtained the CGFM designation hangs in the reception area of Mr. Roslewicz's office in Washington, D.C. A similar plaque listing CPAs hangs in the main OIG hallway.

At the HHS-OIG, the importance of professionalism, including certification and participation in the activities of professional organizations, is stressed during new employee training courses. AGA and its CGFM Program offered as prime examples of opportunities available to new staff. HHS-OIG instructors tell the new staff how certification and participation in professional activities have helped advance their own careers.

The CGFM is unique in that it is the first designation to cover all levels of government, says Mr. Roslewicz. It gives the staff a good understanding of the fundamentals of government accounting.

The CGFM designation also shows that employees are up-to-date on new approaches to government financial management practices, including the Chief Financial Officer's (CFO) Act and the Government Performance and Results (GPRA) Act. Over the last decade, these two Laws have shifted the emphasis from agency budget-driven systems to fully prepared and audited financial statements and accountability reports.

"The profession is changing so fast that I feel without certification, our auditors would be left in the dust," says Mr. Roslewicz.

In addition to the courses offered at universities, Roslewicz says there is a need to train government financial managers on the unique aspects of the government environment. AGA partners with Management Concepts, Inc. to offer three courses in government financial management. He is looking at ways to incorporate one or more of these courses into his agency's own training program.

Mr. Roslewicz believes that more people need to be exposed to the benefits of CGFM, including both Chief Financial Officer and Inspector General offices. As for his own career, Roslewicz said that after more than 33 years in the field, he views the CGFM certification as finally giving recognition to a specific body of knowledge and the unique skills needed by government financial management professionals.