

G O V E R N A N C E I N A C T I O N



AN EXCITING, INNOVATIVE
CREDENTIALING PROGRAM

EXCLUSIVELY FOR TOWNSHIP
OFFICIALS AND LOCAL LEADERS

IN MICHIGAN

MTA
MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

Available through the
MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

MASTERING THE ROLE OF "ELECTED PUBLIC OFFICIAL"

A LETTER FROM MTA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Elected Township Official:

In response to the ever-expanding role and responsibility of township boards to make wise decisions that will shape their communities for years to come, the Michigan Townships Association is proud to offer the **Township Governance Academy (TGA)**.

In the **Academy**, we make a clear distinction between governance of the township versus the management of administrative functions. **TGA** focuses on the broad strategic and policy aspects of governance, rather than the administrative details of township functions.



Through an intensive series of courses, we tie together learning and practical application. We do this by applying facts and "best practices" to real life scenarios, and finally by practicing or trying out an idea or concept of your choosing in your township. **TGA** classes and electives also include opportunities for you to interact with other township officials and challenge yourself to a higher level of understanding through focused group discussions.

MTA is very excited about the outcomes that are being achieved through this program. We believe it has energized our membership—*both professionally and personally*. To date, more than 400 township officials have enrolled in the program, with over 70 officials earning the coveted credential since we debuted the program in late 2003.

While mastering the role of "elected public official" is never easy, the **Academy** offers an excellent path toward that mastery. We invite you to step onto that path, bringing township governance to a whole new level of effectiveness.

In the Spirit of Improved Governance,

G. Lawrence Merrill, Executive Director

"I am extremely pleased with the quality of the information offered through TGA. This program really moves beyond the traditional approaches of governance by PROVIDING OFFICIALS WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS that are needed to take on more dynamic leadership roles. In the 'New Economy,' this is absolutely vital as we position townships for the challenges of today and tomorrow."



Stuart Goodrich, Supervisor
Delhi Charter Township
(Ingham County)

"The TGA program has helped me LOOK BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL APPROACHES to township government. It has also helped me to become more of a leader and voice my opinions."



Linda Ruwersma, Clerk
Eureka Charter Township
(Montcalm County)

"I would encourage other officials to participate; THE TGA CLASSES ARE A BENEFIT even if you have been in office for some time."



James Davison, Trustee
Kawawlin Township
(Bay County)

"I am elated to have earned my TGA certificate. It has launched me into a new career after retirement by giving me THE KNOWLEDGE, TOOLS AND GAINED CONFIDENCE to make a difference in my community."



Jerome Burger, Chairman
Planning Commission
Freeman Township
(Clare County)



A HIGH-IMPACT LEARNING OPPORTUNITY AWAITS YOU

The **Township Governance Academy** (TGA) is a voluntary credentialing program intended to give township board members and other local leaders the knowledge and skills needed to make effective decisions for the benefit of their township.

Created and administered by the Michigan Townships Association Education Center, this program is designed to professionally challenge you and enhance your experiences in serving as an elected official. The **Academy** offers new ideas, shares “best practices” in township government and provides a hands-on approach to help you deal more effectively with everyday issues that your board faces.

Education that builds your boardmanship skills

By participating in this one-of-a-kind program, you’ll benefit from a comprehensive body of knowledge and learn how to apply advanced skills to be an effective board member and leader in your community.

The **Academy** will provide new ways of thinking and conducting business to make an elected official's experience on the board a more meaningful one—one that is outcome-based and results-oriented.

We’ve recruited a cadre of experienced instructors to lead the courses that make up the TGA core curriculum, which address the governance areas identified as essential within MTA’s core competencies. The coursework—which can be completed in as few as 18 months—is divided into three categories:

- **Foundations Courses (28 required credits)**
- **Boardmanship Courses (24 required credits)**
- **Electives (18 required credits)**

Foundations courses include topics such as “At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs,” “Land Use: Defining Your Township’s Future,” and “Managing Human Resources & Volunteers in the Township.” Boardmanship topics include “How Boards Make Decisions,” “Creating a Vision for Your Township,” and “Making Meetings Work More Effectively.”

In contrast to MTA’s other, more office-specific workshops, **Academy** courses feature more interactive components, such as small-group discussion, as an integral part of the program. It is a comprehensive, intensive experience that will give participants a chance to really explore where they’re at in terms of their ability to effectively participate on their township board. The courses also include examples of “best practices” and ask you to experiment with implementing some of these in your township. After completing each course, **TGA** candidates will take the information they’ve learned a step further by trying out an idea or concept of their choosing in their township and then report the results to the MTA Education Center.

Electives, which can be obtained by attending MTA events or reading continuing education articles in the *Michigan Township News*, round out the coursework. For a complete list of courses, turn to the Course Description section.

Before graduation, **TGA** candidates must also have completed a fourth dimension—Boardmanship in Action, which is the application of a learned skill in township activity.

LEARN HOW
TO APPLY
ADVANCED
SKILLS TO BE
AN EFFECTIVE BOARD MEMBER.

*RELEVANT TO THE ENTIRE TOWNSHIP BOARD...
NO MATTER WHAT YOUR LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE*

If you're new to township government, **TGA** will put you on the right path to being an excellent board member. If you're a seasoned township government veteran, we promise that you'll gain a better understanding of your role and responsibility as a township official, plus learn how to improve your relationships with your fellow board members.

Regardless of your position on the township board or amount of experience, the **Academy** is designed to move you to a higher level of performance and make your service on the board a more rewarding one. The courses were selected, and the curricula developed, with the entire township board in mind. Whether you're a supervisor, clerk, treasurer or trustee, **Academy** courses will be relevant to you and your position. Township officials, regardless of their experience, will find **TGA** valuable because of its comprehensive and unique application of key elements that are essential for continued success as a local leader.

While the **Academy** was designed with elected township officials in mind, this program is also open to appointed township officials, such as managers, superintendents, planning and zoning chairs, deputy clerks, deputy treasurers and deputy supervisors. Although the courses will not focus on specific duties and operations, they will address topics that are valuable to some township employees. By providing these folks with the knowledge and skills to help them perform better in their current job, the Academy can also prepare them for the next step of serving on the township board or in another leadership position.

And remember that even if only one person on your township board is willing and/or able to participate in the program, the benefits the township will reap from **TGA** are enumerable. Our mission is to help each individual board member strive to reach his or her personal goals, **and** help fellow board members achieve a higher standard of governance.

*MAKE YOUR SERVICE ON THE BOARD
A MORE REWARDING ONE.*

***Experience better
board coherence***

Participation in the **Academy** can help make your township board a balanced one that works well together and makes effective decisions for the benefit of the township. You'll see the results of your investment in a board that's more cohesive, more motivated and even more productive.

Challenge yourself and enroll in the **Township Governance Academy** to experience the benefits that improved governance can bring to *your* township.



A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM THAT FITS YOUR LIFESTYLE... ...AND YOUR POCKETBOOK!

Whether you want to earn your credential by completing the **Academy** in as few as 18 months, or take courses at your leisure throughout your term—the choice is yours. The TGA curriculum repeats on a regular basis each year, so you can enroll in the program at any point in time and take courses whenever they work in your schedule.

Encourage others in your area to sign up for the **Academy**. Foundations and Boardmanship courses will be offered at various sites throughout the state, especially in areas which have the largest number of individuals enrolled in the program. Classes will be offered during the day, as well as in the evenings and on weekends, to better accommodate our members' schedules. Electives can be earned by attending MTA events, such as an MTA "On the Road" Regional Meeting and the MTA Annual Conference & Expo, or by successfully completing self-assessments for TGA continuing education articles published in the *Michigan Township News*. The final project is completed at home, right in your own township.

Individual courses are priced between \$89 and \$125, depending on the length of the workshop. Although prices are subject to change, MTA will work diligently to control costs to make this quality program affordable for our members. The electives are priced according to the event that you choose to attend. There is no charge to earn elective credit by completing continuing education articles in the *Michigan Township News*.

Thanks to our main sponsor—**BS&A Software**—along with our supporting sponsors—the **Burnham & Flower Insurance Group** and **Foresight Group**, several scholarships are available to assist officials from MTA-member townships, which may not be in a financial position to provide the funding necessary for completion of this program.



For an application or further information, please visit our Web site at www.michigantownships.org/tga/scholarships, or call the MTA Education Center at (517) 321-6467. To be considered for a scholarship, applications must be received at the MTA office by March 1 of each year.



CHALLENGE YOURSELF! ENROLL IN TGA AND REAP THE MANY BENEFITS!

BE RECOGNIZED FOR YOUR WORK

Graduates of the *Academy* will receive a custom lapel pin and a prestigious framed certificate. A press release will be sent to your local media, announcing your accomplishment. Graduates of the program may also wish to use this information in their re-election campaign materials as well as on their resume.

In addition, graduates will be recognized at MTA's Annual Educational Conference & Expo, which is held in January.

AN INVESTMENT NOW... AND IN THE FUTURE

It's easy to get started in the *Township Governance Academy* by simply completing the TGA Enrollment Form in this brochure and paying a one-time enrollment fee of \$35. Upon enrollment, you'll receive a specially designed "toolkit," including a 3-ring binder with tabs and information that you'll use throughout the Academy. This binder also will provide you with an effective means of keeping track of your progress as well as serving as a valuable resource for many years to come.

As a special bonus, enrollees also will receive a \$10 coupon that can be used toward any upcoming *Academy* Foundations or Boardmanship course. Register for individual courses using the registration brochures, which are sent to all clerks and TGA candidates two months prior to each event. You may also register online or download a registration brochure by visiting MTA's Web site at www.michigantownships.org. Sign-up forms also appear in the *Michigan Township News*.

Still uncertain if TGA is right for you?

TGA workshops are open to all MTA members; you do not have to be enrolled in the Academy to attend. Learn more about the program by attending a workshop. Toolkits are available on-site at every TGA event should you decide you want to enroll right away. Or, take your time; you will still receive credit for that course if you decide to enroll in the Academy within six months of attending the event.



REQUIRED COURSEWORK AND ELECTIVES

Obtain credit for electives taken within the past six months

Chances are good that you have attended other MTA educational events during the past six months. If so, put that experience to work toward your TGA designation! Credit will be awarded six months' retroactively to TGA candidates, based upon their enrollment date in the Academy.

For a complete list of qualifying events, including credit earned for each, turn to the Course Description section.



PART I:

FOUNDATIONS COURSES

28 Credits

Focused on aspects of "Governing the Modern Township"

6 credits: At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs

6 credits: Land Use: Defining Your Township's Future

6 credits: Township Finances

6 credits: Managing Human Resources & Volunteers in the Township

4 credits: Fundamentals of Assessment and Taxation



**FINAL
PROJECT
TO
GRADUATE**



*On a prescribed form,
TGA candidates:*

- Define the skill they would like to practice and in what situation
- Determine the desired outcome
- Plan a strategy to make it happen
- Report the results

**PART II:
BOARDSMANSHIP COURSES
24 Credits**

Focused on aspects of group decision-making

4 credits: Township Board Roles and Relations:
Broadening the Scope

4 credits: How Boards Make Decisions

4 credits: Creating a Vision for Your Township

4 credits: Utilizing the Strategic Planning Process to
Achieve Results

4 credits: Making Meetings Work More Effectively

4 credits: Linking with the Community



**PART III:
ELECTIVES
18 Credits**

Select from the following:

8 credits: Attend MTA's Annual Educational Conference & Expo

5 credits: Attend NATA's "America's Town Meeting"

4 credits: Attend an MTA "On the Road" Regional Meeting

4 credits: Attend an MTA Professional Development Retreat

3 credits: Attend an MTA Capitol Conference

3 credits: Attend an MTA Summer Legislative Conference

2 credit: Complete *Michigan Township News'* Education
Self-Assessment (per continuing education article)

RECEIVE YOUR TOWNSHIP GOVERNANCE ACADEMY CREDENTIAL



FIVE EASY STEPS TO EARN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIAL

STEP 1 Enroll in the **Township Governance Academy** by completing the form on the right and paying a one-time enrollment fee of \$35.

STEP 2 Register for courses and electives using separate registration brochures that will be sent to all TGA-enrolled candidates as each class is made available. Classes are offered on a rotational basis at select locations throughout the state. It is possible to achieve your **TGA** designation within 18 months, or you may wish to obtain it over a longer period of time, depending upon your schedule.

STEP 3 Take each of the **Academy** courses and complete the required elective credits. Make sure to fill out a practical application commitment form after completing each required course, and give a copy to the MTA Education Center to keep in your file. Record your progress in your toolkit.

STEP 4 Complete your final project: application of a learned skill in township activity. Report your results to the MTA Education Center.

STEP 5 Receive your **Township Governance Academy** credential upon verification by the MTA Education Center confirming that you have successfully completed all requirements necessary to earn this designation.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Program Administration: The Township Governance Academy is a voluntary certificate program created by the Michigan Townships Association (MTA)—a 501(c) 4, not-for-profit organization serving Michigan's 1,242 townships and 6,526 elected officials. Ultimate authority for governing the Academy resides with MTA's Board of Directors. The MTA Education Center is the chief administrator of the Academy as well as the scholarship program.

Obtaining Credit: Each course identifies the number of credits earned upon completion of the class. Elective credit is identified in the TGA tracking form, contained within the toolkit provided to each TGA candidate upon enrollment. Credit is given at the conclusion of each course or event, which is verified by MTA's master list. NOTE: Participants are expected to arrive on-time for all courses and remain until its conclusion. However, a 20-minute grace period for extenuating circumstances is allowed. Participants arriving or leaving beyond this time may not obtain credit and must repeat the course to obtain credit.

Refund Schedule: Written cancellation requests received at the MTA office at least two weeks prior to the event date will receive a full refund. No refunds will be issued thereafter. You may substitute another individual for your registration at any time without incurring a charge; please notify MTA of the change.

Cancellation/Rescheduling of Classes: MTA reserves the right to cancel any class, in which case a full refund will be issued to registrants. Classes may be rescheduled due to weather or other acts of God. For the latest information, call the MTA Education Hotline, available 24/7, by calling at (517) 321-6467, ext. 500.

Special Accommodations: Individuals needing special accommodations should contact the MTA Education Center at (517) 321-6467, ext. 230, at least one week prior to the class.

Attendance at TGA workshops will earn township clerks Experience Points toward their Certified Municipal Clerk designation awarded by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks.



ENROLLMENT FORM

FIRST NAME _____

LAST NAME _____

NICKNAME (FOR NAME BADGE) _____

TOWNSHIP _____ COUNTY _____

OFFICE: SUPERVISOR CLERK TREASURER TRUSTEE

OTHER (PLEASE INDICATE) _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

HOME PHONE _____

TOWNSHIP PHONE _____

FAX _____

E-MAIL _____

HOW LONG HAVE YOU SERVED ON THE TOWNSHIP BOARD? _____

ONE-TIME ENROLLMENT FEE: \$35

METHOD OF PAYMENT:

**NOTE: Payment must accompany form
in order to be processed.**

CHECK ENCLOSED (PAYABLE TO MTA)

CHARGE TO: (CIRCLE ONE)
MASTERCARD VISA

_____-_____-_____/_____
CARD NUMBER EXPIRES

PRINT CARDHOLDER'S NAME _____

SIGNATURE _____

TEAR OFF HERE

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: MTA

MAIL FORM TO: MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION • P.O. BOX 80078 • LANSING, MI 48908-0078

IF PAYING BY CREDIT CARD, FAX FORM TO: (517) 321-8908, ATTN: EDUCATION CENTER





FOUNDATIONS COURSES (28 CREDITS)

F-101 At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs

6 credits Transportation-related programs, water and sewer services, cemeteries, public safety, parks and nuisance control programs are just some of the many services that can be provided by townships. Each initiative comes with concerns of funding and risk management. Learn more about the role, authority and legal requirements of the township board in providing services, as well as funding options. We'll also look at the township board's responsibility in assuring that the risk inherent with these services is properly managed through policy development and monitoring. Find out how to evaluate whether your township's services are effectively serving the community and what considerations should be made today to ensure future viability.

F-102 Land Use: Defining Your Township's Future

6 credits This session will discuss growth philosophies and describe how you can galvanize your township to action to define your future. Key to this session will be an understanding of a township master plan, including its purpose, process, and its legal requirements. Explore many of the considerations that must be confronted if your master planning efforts are to be successful. Examine a broad range of day-to-day issues, including nonconforming uses, preserving rural character, managing growth, and infrastructure and roads. We'll also take a peek into the future with emerging zoning issues.

F-103 Township Finances

6 credits Township boards are responsible for ensuring that there are adequate resources to enable the township government to serve the community in a manner consistent with constituent expectations. This program focuses on the types of revenue sources available to townships and their appropriateness for various programs and services.

Participants will also gain insight into their fiduciary duties and the task many consider the most important of a governmental board member—to allocate resources and evaluate results through the budget process.

F-104 Managing Human Resources & Volunteers in the Township

6 credits Human resource issues need to be addressed in all townships—even small townships with only a few employees or volunteers. Hiring, firing, discipline, compensation, and recruiting and managing volunteers are just a few of the myriad of human resource-related issues about which all township officials must be knowledgeable. Preparing and implementing appropriate policies can improve employee morale, help you retain quality employees, and avoid employment-related risks. This course addresses all of these critical issues, providing you with the tools to better manage your employees and volunteers.

F-105 Fundamentals of Assessment and Taxation

4 credits Property taxation and assessment administration are two of the cornerstones of township operations. From assessment through board of review meetings, all the way to tax collection—it's essential that all board members have an understanding of how the process works. This session will also explore how millages can be established and renewed, as well as how they are affected by the Headlee rollback. Scheduling millage questions and identifying what must be included in the ballot language will also be addressed. Learn more about the various revenue sources coming into the township, including property taxes versus user fees.



BOARDSMANSHIP COURSES (24 CREDITS)

B-101 Township Board Roles and Relations: Broadening the Scope

4 credits As the major policy-making body in the township, the board has the broadest range of authority when it comes to setting policy. But what other roles must the board play? How does the concept of governance impact the traditional view of the role of the board member and the board as a whole? Discussion includes wearing the various hats of watchdog, supporter, planner, communicator, and manager, as well as the interrelationships among board members, appointed and elected officials, and the board with the community. Participants will explore the fundamentals of leadership and the ethical standards specific to public servants.

B-102 How Boards Make Decisions

4 credits How do five or seven individuals collectively provide leadership to your township? Maximize the effectiveness of group decisions made by your board, learn how “knowledge-based” governance will guide your board to make more informed choices with improved outcomes. This course challenges “old ways of thinking” and gives a refreshing look at the decision-making process that will meld various viewpoints into a consensus decision that everyone is more likely to support.

B-103 Creating a Vision for Your Township

4 credits Identifying core community values and expectations is perhaps the most critical component in serving your community. Why then do so many township boards fail to address this key element, which can provide direction and serve as a springboard from which decisions can be made? This workshop gives elected leaders the insight into how this powerful tool can assist in defining your future direction as a township and in regional placemaking. By examining both adversity and opportunities, your township will learn how to resolve short-term issues with a long-term vision.

B-104 Utilizing the Strategic Planning Process to Achieve Results

4 credits Strategic planning is critical to achieving real results in your township and the larger region in which you live. Yet the creation of a strategic plan may be a delicate matter in a politically-charged environment, especially when dealing with entities outside of your jurisdiction but which can positively or negatively impact your community. Discover what strategic exploration entails as well as all the voices that must be heard in the planning process in order to develop a solid plan that aligns the township’s resources and creates favorable outcomes.

B-105 Making Meetings Work More Effectively

4 credits Do your township board meetings “work” to the benefit of the township and your constituents? Are your board members active participants, contributing to the discussion and decision-making in constructive ways? This course focuses on how the board might define its “rules of engagement” so that the meetings will be orderly and productive. Learn how to deal with differences around the board table while staying focused on results. Conflict resolution techniques are also incorporated as part of the training.

B-106 Linking with the Community

4 credits As important as relationships are among the board itself, the relationship that your board has with the residents you serve and other organizations are equally important. Enhancing credibility in the public eye begins with your township board. Discover ways of being more open and transparent to the community—a valuable exercise to increase trust at the local level. Explore the value of public participation, and learn ways of determining what your constituents need and want as well as how to use various media tools to keep them informed about your township’s activities. Discussion includes Web site outreach, the media and other social networking tools.



ELECTIVES (18 CREDITS)

E-101

3 credits MTA Capitol Conference

E-102

3 credits MTA Summer Legislative Conference

E-103

8 credits MTA Annual Educational Conference & Expo

E-104

4 credits MTA "On the Road" Regional Meeting

E-105

5 credits NATaT "America's Town Meeting"

E-106

2 credits/article Michigan Township News' Article Continuing Education Assessment

E-107

4 credits MTA Professional Development Retreat



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