
IRM Continuing Education Requirements

**for Information Resources Managers
of Texas State Agencies and Universities**

Texas Department of Information Resources

Austin, Texas

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Overview

Continuing education for Information Resources Managers (IRMs) supports skilled information resources management. The Continuing Education Requirements are designed to assist IRMs as they select and pursue professional development opportunities.

The Department of Information Resources (DIR) develops requirements regarding continuing education for IRMs and requires IRMs to report their compliance. DIR periodically analyzes IRM training needs and adjusts the requirements. DIR may also provide educational materials and seminars for state agencies and IRMs.

The roles of specific IRMs may vary significantly depending on the size and mission of their agencies. The Continuing Education Requirements accommodate different IRMs and agency sizes, first, by being based on agency biennial IR budgets. Additionally, IRMs select their own educational activities from broad areas of knowledge to meet their individual needs and expertise.

IRM Continuing Education Requirements

The Continuing Education Requirements are based on the premise that IRMs should strive for proficiency in key competency areas that will enable them to build expertise in the use and management of information resources.

To comply with the requirements, an IRM must

1. Complete a minimum number of hours of qualified training/education every fiscal year.
2. Complete an initial set of required topics within two years of being designated IRM.
3. Report the completion of qualified training to DIR by August 31 each fiscal year.

IRM Classification Levels and the IR Budget

For purposes of these requirements, IRM classification levels are based on agency biennial Information Resources (IR) budgets. Continuing education requirements increase as the level (i.e., budget) increases.

IRM Classification	Biennial IR Budget	Training Requirement
Level 1	Less than \$100,000	Exempt from Continuing Education requirements (voluntary participation encouraged)
Level 2	\$100,000–\$249,999	12 contact hours per fiscal year
Level 3	\$250,000–\$1,999,999	18 contact hours per fiscal year
Level 4	\$2,000,000–\$10,000,000	24 contact hours per fiscal year
Level 5	More than \$10,000,000	30 contact hours per fiscal year

The biennial IR budget is the total of all funds allocated to IR operations and projects, both development efforts and technology upgrades, for the entire organization during the two-year period. It consists of all:

- IR internal staff costs
- IR procurements (whether purchased, rented, leased, leased for purchase, or licensed) for all hardware, software, and services. This includes:
 - Computer hardware
 - Hardware maintenance
 - Software
 - Software maintenance
 - Contract services (consultant and non-consultant)
 - Disaster recovery services
 - Data center operations costs
 - Telecommunications (voice, data, hardware, maintenance)
 - Training (end-user or IT professional)
 - Supplies
 - Other

The IR budget alone does not provide a complete picture of the IRM's level of responsibility or training needs. Appendix A offers additional descriptive information to aid IRMs in determining the proper level of training to seek.

Note: If modifications to an agency's biennial IR budget affect the IRM classification level, the IRM should immediately contact DIR to determine how this change will impact compliance with the Continuing Education Requirements.

Core Competencies

Core competencies represent broad areas of knowledge that IRMs should possess and to which continuing education activities should be directed. IRMs are responsible for identifying courses and conferences within the core competency categories that meet their agencies' needs and their own level of expertise. An IRM with little experience in an area should seek introductory topics. An IRM with extensive expertise should seek advanced topics that supplement the knowledge already obtained.

IRMs select educational activities from the following set of competency areas.

- 1.0 Strategic Planning and Policy Issues
- 2.0 Managerial and Leadership Competencies
- 3.0 IT Performance Assessment
- 4.0 Project/Program Management
- 5.0 Capital Planning, Investment Assessment, and IT Acquisition
- 6.0 IT Topics and Trends

Appendix B provides a list of sample topics in each core competency area.

IRM Continuing Education Requirements

To comply with the continuing education requirements, an IRM must

1. Complete a minimum number of hours of qualified training/education every fiscal year.
2. Complete an initial set of required topics within two years of being designated IRM.
3. Report the completion of qualified training to DIR by August 31 each fiscal year.

Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Credit

In meeting the continuing education requirements, IRMs must attend qualified educational events or classes that support one or more of the core competency areas. Participants are awarded Continuing Professional Education (CPE) units for qualified activities. One CPE unit is equivalent to one contact hour of education.

Contact Hours

A *contact hour* is defined as a 60-minute interval in which interactive learning takes place as part of a structured educational or training experience. A course or session must be at least 50 minutes long to count as one full hour of CPE credit. The IRM should make sure that any event attended, especially one of very short duration, is of sufficient quality and depth to provide appropriate benefit.

To calculate contact hours

1. Calculate the total length of the class in hours
2. Subtract any time spent on breaks, meals, or non-educational activities
3. Round the remainder up or down to the nearest half hour

Example: Calculating contact hours

A one-day class lasting from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with a 30-minute morning break, a one-hour lunch, and a 30-minute afternoon break would equate to **6.0** contact hours.

Requirement 1: Complete the minimum number of training hours annually.

IRMs must complete the following minimum CPE credit hours each fiscal year.

Level	Minimum Total CPEs per Fiscal Year
1	0
2	12
3	18
4	24
5	30

IRMs Designated Mid-Year

If a new IRM is appointed during a fiscal year, the IRM must complete a portion of the annual CPE requirements, as identified in the following table.

Starting Quarter	Percent of Fiscal Year CPEs to Complete
First	75%
Second	50%
Third	25%
Fourth	0%

Requirement 2: Complete required topics within first two years.

An IRM (Level 2–5) must complete a one-time set of required topics within the first two years of being designated. Level 1 IRMs are exempt from this requirement.

Required Topics List

Depending on the classification level, the required topics include:

- **Strategic Planning** – understanding strategic planning and steps involved in the planning effort
- **Communication** – communicating technical information to non-technical stakeholders
- **Training** – topics supporting the importance of training the people who use the agency’s information resources and IR technologies
- **Quality Assurance** – implementing quality assurance programs and minimizing risk on IT projects

- **Business Value of IT** – balancing the technical aspects of information resources and IR technologies with the agency’s business needs
- **Contracting** – topics on contract negotiation or contract management

Required topics are based on legislative mandates, trends affecting both technology and government, and critical knowledge areas needed for successful IR management. IRMs will be notified of any changes or additions to the list of required topics.

The following table identifies required topics for each competency area and the minimum number of hours required.

One-Time Required Topics by Core Competency Area	Required Hours per Level			
	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
1.0 Strategic Planning and Policy Issues ◆ Strategic planning (level as needed based on current experience)	6	6	6	6
2.0 Managerial and Leadership Competencies IRM must have CPEs in <u>both</u> areas below. The combined total should at least equal the required hours stated. ◆ Communication of technical information to non-technical staff ◆ Training of staff who use the agency's information technology resources	–	–	6	6
3.0 IT Performance Assessment ◆ Business value of information technology.	–	3	3	3
4.0 Project/Program Management ◆ Quality Assurance and/or Risk Management	–	–	3	3
5.0 Capital Planning, Investment Assessment, and IT Acquisition ◆ Contract Negotiation and/or Contract Management	–	3	3	6
6.0 Information Technology Topics and Trends ◆ No required topics in this competency	–	–	–	–
Total, Required-Topic CPEs To be completed within two years of an individual's designation as agency IRM	6	12	21	24

The required topic hours represent a portion of the minimum annual CPE hours during the first two years. The remainder of the minimum CPE hours is completed with elective topics. Any qualified courses/events that do not contribute toward the required topics are considered elective. IRMs select elective topics that support the core competencies to complete the educational requirements for the first two fiscal years.

Example: Calculating required topic hours

A newly designated Level 5 IRM must complete 60 hours of training in the first two years (30 hours each fiscal year). Of these 60 hours, at least 24 should be required topics.

Requirement 3: Report completion of qualified training to DIR by August 31 annually.

IRMs are required to report the completion of qualified training to DIR by August 31 each fiscal year to receive continuing education credit for a course. The head of each agency or university is responsible for ensuring that their appointed IRM remains qualified to serve in the position by fulfilling the continuing education requirements.

Reporting CPE Hours

IRMs report completed courses to DIR via the online [Report CPE Hours](#) form. The form must be fully completed in order for an IRM to receive continuing education credit for a course.

The online form requests information that may include, but is not limited to:

- IRM name, agency, contact information, IRM level
- Course/conference name, begin/end dates, location, sponsor
- Brief course/conference description, CPE hours
- Competency area fulfilled, required topics satisfied

A printable [IRM CPE Submission Form](#) is provided to help IRMs track their continuing education activities throughout the fiscal year. This form can also be submitted to DIR to report the completion of qualified training if the online system is unavailable.

The IRM should retain proof of attendance/completion for each educational event. Examples of documentation include a certificate of completion, statement by the sponsoring body, or copy of registration confirmation with actual course materials. The documentation is not submitted to DIR unless specifically requested.

IRMs are encouraged to record all qualified continuing education events that benefit them in their role as the IRM (not just the courses that meet the minimum CPE requirement). This information is used to refine the IRM Continuing Education Requirements and identify particular areas of interest to IRMs.

Only an agency's designated IRM is to report continuing education hours to DIR. Other IR staff members may voluntarily follow these guidelines but do not report to DIR.

DIR informs IRMs of their continuing education status midway through each fiscal year. IRMs can also view their status anytime at [Check Continuing Education Status](#).

Qualified Educational Events

Qualified educational events are those that meet the requirements and enhance the IRM's management of information resources. The IRM must attend the entire module, session, or event as is appropriate to meet the learning objectives.

To qualify for credit an event must meet *all* of the following criteria:

- Supports one or more of the competencies identified in the requirements
- Meets generally accepted standards as an educational event
- Provides some type of attendee interaction (exercises, discussion, group work, question & answer, etc.)
- Provides proof of attendance (sign in sheet, evaluation, attendance roster, etc.)

Generally Accepted Standards—Educational Event

An event that qualifies for CPE credit:

- Is planned in response to an identified educational need
- Has legitimate educational objectives
- Is designed/conducted by qualified personnel
- Has content/delivery methods that support the intended learning outcomes
- Is evaluated by participants in some manner
- Lasts at least 50 minutes

Examples of Qualified Educational Events

- Appropriate classroom training, including classes held via *interactive* videoconferencing
- Coursework taken as part of a professional certification, if it falls into one of the core competency categories
- Participation in conferences

Rules, Restrictions, and Exceptions

The following section outlines some of the detailed points of the rules, provides examples for specific situations, and answers some commonly asked questions regarding compliance with the IRM Continuing Education Guidelines.

General Rules

- IRMs must complete the minimum number of CPE hours specified during each fiscal year (Level 2 = 12, Level 3 = 18, Level 4 = 24, Level 5 = 30).
- Hours may contribute towards required topics or elective topics that support the IRM core competencies.
- Events that qualify for credit must meet all of the following criteria. They:
 - support one or more of the competencies identified in the guidelines
 - meet generally accepted standards as an educational event
 - provide for some type of attendee interaction (exercises, discussion, group work, or question & answer)
 - provide some proof of attendance (sign in sheet, evaluation, attendance roster, etc.)
- Qualified educational events are those that meet the guidelines and enhance the IRM's *management* of information resources.
- An IRM must attend the entire module, session, or event as is appropriate to meet the learning objectives.
- Appropriate classroom training and participation in conferences qualify for the IRM educational program. Classes held via *interactive* videoconferencing qualify as classroom training.
- An IRM appointed during the fiscal year may count any education completed during the fiscal year towards satisfying requirements, including that completed before the IRM designation date.
- IRMs may claim credit for coursework taken as part of a professional certification if it falls into one of the core competency categories.
- An IRM transferring from one agency to another as the IRM may transfer his/her educational records/hours.

Year Zero Grandfather Clause

Educational activities completed in the year immediately prior to designation qualify for CPE credit, if those activities satisfy a *required topic*.

Only hours taken within the fiscal year may count toward the year's CPE requirement; however, the grandfather clause allows IRMs to satisfy required topics with recently taken educational activities, freeing more hours for elective topics.

Example: IRM designated on September 1

A Level 4 IRM who attended a one-day (6 CPE) strategic planning course the previous summer may report the requirement for that topic has been met. However, it would not count toward the 24 CPEs needed for the current fiscal year, because the training occurred in the previous fiscal year.

Single Course Covering Multiple Requirements

A single educational activity that covers multiple topics may be used to satisfy more than one requirement. However, the total hours reported cannot exceed the total hours in the class/conference.

Example: Course covering multiple topics

An IRM attends a 6-hour course covering topics relating to both *Quality Assurance* and *Contract Management*. The IRM may report hours to each, as long as the total does not exceed six:

Acceptable	QA = 3 hours, Contracting = 3 hours
Acceptable	QA = 2 hours, Contracting = 4 hours
NOT Acceptable	QA = 6 hours, Contracting = 6 hours

Distance Learning Alternatives

- Programs delivered via distance learning technologies may be considered for inclusion as long as (1) they provide for participant interaction and (2) there is an objective means of verifying program completion. This could include computer-based training (CBT), Internet programs, and Web-based programs.
- For self-paced educational activities that meet all other program requirements, the creator or sponsor of the activity must establish a standard number of contact hours based upon the average completion time. The IRM may count stated contact hours or the actual completion time, whichever is less, toward IRM credit.

Activities for which CPE Credit is not Awarded

Many of the activities below are worthy endeavors and should be encouraged. However, they do not fall within the scope of the IRM Continuing Education Guidelines for the purpose of CPE credit.

- Any educational activity that does not support the IRM competencies
- End-user courses in software applications used for general office automation (word processing, spreadsheets, etc.). While training to increase one's productivity in these tools is certainly encouraged, this type of training is not recognized within the scope of this program.
- Any educational program that is not completed by the participant. To meet the educational objectives of a program, the participant must attend/complete all modules that relate to the program objectives.
- Reading technical journals, newsletters, magazines, and books.
- Focus group, advisory group, and/or committee meetings.
Note: Educational presentations scheduled within such meetings *may count* if they meet the program guidelines.
- Mass media programs presented via television, radio, newspaper, etc.
- Meetings/events designed for information sharing or training on administrative functions rather than educational purposes.
Example: An IRM attends an internal training session on how to use the organization's timekeeping system. This would not qualify for CPE credit.
- Participating in professional organizations. While the general meeting and networking activities do not apply, educational components may qualify.
For example: a one-hour educational program embedded in a meeting or a conference hosted by the group may qualify.
- Any educational activity does not meet generally accepted standards for a continuation educational event.

Waiver from Continuing Education Requirements

Continuing education is a critical piece of successful technology management, so it is imperative that Texas IRMs stay abreast of current technology and continue to develop their knowledge areas. This program is designed to help IRMs obtain ongoing training, while at the same time, enabling them to choose courses and conferences that meet their individual needs.

Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 201, Sec. 201.9 allows DIR's Executive Director to grant compliance waivers to state agencies:

The executive director is hereby delegated authority by the board to grant a requesting state agency a compliance waiver from administrative rule, statewide standards, or other board policies. A state agency may request a compliance waiver from administrative rule, statewide standards or other board policy. The agency must clearly demonstrate to the department through written justification any performance or cost advantages to be gained and that the overall economic interests of the state are best served by granting the compliance waiver. The executive director of the department will notify the board when requests for waivers are received.

If an agency believes there is a compelling reason that its IRM should not have to comply with the mandatory Continuing Education Guidelines, the agency may submit this request in writing to DIR. Requests for waivers will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Appendix A: IRM Classification Levels

The IR budget alone does not provide a complete picture of the IRM's level of responsibility or training needs. The following information offers additional descriptions of typical IRM responsibilities at the various levels.

Level 1 (Biennial IR Budget less than \$100,000)

Exempt from Continuing Education requirements

Level 1 has no dedicated IR staff. The IRM role is generally an additional assignment for a person whose primary job responsibility is not related to information resources. IR services for this agency generally consist of minimal support for basic off-the-shelf applications. The agency may depend upon another agency or contracted resources to provide these IR services.

Although IRMs for Level 1 agencies are exempt from continuing education requirements, these IRMs are encouraged to participate voluntarily.

Level 2 (Biennial IR Budget \$100,000–\$249,999)

Level 2 agencies may have one person assigned responsibility for IR. The IRM role may be an additional assignment for a person whose primary job responsibility is not related to information resources. IR services are generally limited to support for off-the-shelf applications.

Level 3 (Biennial IR Budget \$250,000–\$1,999,999)

Level 3 agencies generally have a small- to medium-sized IR staff. Management of the IR function may be a full-time responsibility for the IRM. The IR environment for agencies at the lower end of this level is often limited to particular platforms. The IR environment becomes more complex in Level 3 agencies with larger budgets. Some systems development work may be done in-house or contracted, but is highly limited. The IR function may provide some support beyond the off-the-shelf applications supported at Levels 1 and 2.

Level 4 (Biennial IR Budget \$2,000,000–\$10,000,000)

Level 4 agencies usually have a medium-sized IR staff. IR is an established department within the organization, and the IRM position is a full-time job. The IR environment for this agency is varied, possibly with a mixture of different platforms. Systems development work may be done in-house or contracted. The IR division typically provides functional support of IR applications as well as technical support for the underlying technology required for agency operations.

Level 5 (Biennial IR Budget more than \$10,000,000)

In a Level 5 agency, Information Resources is a key department within the organization. Management of the IR function is a major responsibility for the IRM, who fills the role of Chief Information Officer for the organization. All issues faced by Level 4 agencies are a part of the Level 5 agency's IR operations. In addition, this agency level has an even more varied and complex environment.

Appendix B: Core Competency Areas and Sample Topics

Texas IRMs should strive for proficiency in key IR competency areas that will enable them to increase expertise in the use and management of information resources. The core competency areas with sample competencies are listed below.

1.0 Strategic Planning and Policy Issues

- Understanding of mission, organization, functions, policies, procedures as well as linkages and interrelationships among departments and levels of government
- Governing laws and regulations
- ✓ **Strategic planning**
- IT planning methodologies
- Operational planning
- Information management
- IT baseline assessment analysis
- Legal and policy issues for management
- Business process redesign/reengineering models and methods
- Security, privacy, and information assurance

2.0 Managerial and Leadership Competencies

- Defining roles, skill sets, and responsibilities of the IRM, IR staff, and stakeholders relative to IT
- ✓ **Methods for building and evaluating expertise of IT management and technical staff**
- ✓ **Effective communication and presentation skills, especially as related to non-technical stakeholders**
- Negotiation skills
- Problem solving
- Partnership/team-building techniques
- Personnel performance management techniques
- Practices which attract and retain qualified IT personnel
- Process and change management

3.0 IT Performance Assessment

- ✓ **Measuring the business value of IT**
- Monitoring and measuring new system development
- Measuring IT success: practical and impractical approaches
- Managing IT reviews and oversight processes
- Monitoring and evaluation methods and techniques

4.0 Project/Program Management

- Project Management Methodology
- Project Business Case
- Project Integration Management
- Project Scope Management
- Project Requirements Management
- Project Time Management
- Project Cost Management
- ✓ **Project Quality Management**
- Project Resource Management
- Project Communications Management
- Project Configuration Management
- ✓ **Project Risk Management**
- Project Procurement Management

5.0 Capital Planning, Investment Assessment, and IT Acquisition

- IT acquisition best practices
- Cost benefit, economic, and risk analysis
- Business case analysis
- Integrating performance with mission and budget process
- Investment review process
- Alternative acquisition models
- ✓ **Contract Negotiation**
- Streamlined acquisition methodologies
- ✓ **Contract Management**
- ✓ **Vendor Management**

6.0 IT Topics and Trends

- Emerging/developing technologies
- E-Government, electronic business, electronic commerce
- Information systems architectures
- Information delivery technologies
- Enterprise architecture
- System life cycle
- Software development
- Data management
- Telecommunications
- IT as it relates to specialized fields (medicine, engineering, environmental, etc.)

✓ **Items that may indicate a required topic for newly designated IRMs.**

Appendix C: Background

The State of Texas invests approximately \$1.8 billion per year in information resources and technology to support government functions to serve the needs of its citizens. Information and information resources are strategic assets of the State of Texas that must be managed as valuable resources.

Section 2054.076 of the Information Resources Management Act directs the Department of Information Resources to provide mandatory guidelines to state agencies and universities regarding initial and continuing education requirements for Information Resources Managers.

Development of the IRM Continuing Education Requirements

These requirements were developed using information and feedback from multiple sources, including:

- Survey of IRMs regarding educational needs.
- IRM focus group meetings to discuss educational needs and program objectives.
- Interviews with individual IRMs (those unable to attend the focus groups) to discuss specific areas, such as the applicability of the program to very small agencies.
- Interviews with analysts, managers, and Quality Assurance Team staff within DIR regarding training needs.
- Research into similar programs in other states and at the federal level.
- Exploration of requirements for other professional continuing education.
- Establishment of an IRM Education Advisory Committee, consisting of agency and university IRMs, whose members participated in the development of these guidelines.