

# 2025 - 2026

## AML COURSE CATALOG



**NCLM**

ADVANCING MUNICIPAL LEADERS

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# INTRODUCTION

## About AML

Advancing Municipal Leaders (AML) is a member-driven education program designed to provide continuous learning opportunities and help local elected officials and municipal staff be successful in public office.

Through AML, municipal officials will learn how to meet—and exceed—the requirements of their role in office. Courses include a comprehensive overview of North Carolina municipal government and are presented by the League and our partners who are dedicated to the learning and development of municipal officials.

## Certificate Program Overview

Each learning category allows participants to move from introductory courses, through trainings on key fundamentals, and finally into hands-on intensive workshops. Select your level of involvement, based on your needs and the needs of your town.

**Introduction** —→ **Fundamentals** —→ **Workshops**

For those new to office or looking for a refresher, we have webinars and 101-level trainings always ready for you. For those looking to take the next step, there are a selection of facilitated workshops each year on topics such as strategic planning, budgeting and performance management.

Affordable, accessible, and designed for municipalities—AML meets you where you are in your professional development journey.



# AML CERTIFICATES

AML Certificates showcase your commitment to professional development and continuing education.

Both program-wide and topic-specific certificates are available. Our Certificate awardees will be honored each year at NCLM's annual conference, CityVision.

## Individual Certificates

<b>Certificate of Municipal Achievement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 12 AML Credits</li></ul>	<b>Certificate of Municipal Excellence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 25 AML Credits</li></ul>	<b>Certificate of Municipal Dedication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 40 AML Credits</li></ul>
<b>Financial Management Certificate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 AML Credits in Finance</li></ul>	<b>Financial Management Certificate, Level II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 12 AML Credits in Finance</li><li>• Required: One workshop</li></ul>	<b>Financial Management Certificate, Level III</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 12 AML Credits in Finance</li><li>• Required: Three workshops and CityVision attendance.</li></ul>
<b>Certificate of Local Government Employee Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completion of AML's HR curriculum</li></ul>		

## Municipal-Wide Certificates

*These certificates honor an entire municipality and their commitment to continuing education.*

<b>Commit to Civility Certificate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 75% of governing board attends training</li><li>• Sign the Commit to Civility pledge</li><li>• Governing board passes ordinance at future meeting</li></ul>	<b>A Municipality of Financial Excellence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At least 3 town representatives (two being elected) earn their Financial Management Certificate, Level III.</li></ul>
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# ELECTED OFFICIALS

## Council Academy: Fundamentals for Elected Office

2 credits

### Description

Council Academy is a dynamic and practical training designed to support elected municipal officials in their leadership journey. Whether you're newly elected or a seasoned public servant, this course offers essential insights into the core functions of local government and the responsibilities of elected office. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of governance, collaboration, and ethical leadership, empowering them to make informed decisions and serve their communities with integrity. Through engaging content and real-world examples, this session equips officials with the tools needed to navigate the complexities of municipal leadership and build trust in local government.

### Course Objectives

- Understand the fundamental roles and responsibilities of elected municipal officials
- Learn how to effectively create, review, and adopt local policies and procedures
- Gain foundational knowledge of local government administration and staff relationships
- Explore best practices for working with key municipal staff, including the town manager, attorney, and clerk
- Strengthen communication, governance, and ethical leadership skills to foster transparency and collaboration

## Ethics for Elected Officials

2 credits

### Description

Ethics for Elected Officials is a required and essential training designed to help elected leaders uphold the highest standards of public service. In accordance with North Carolina law, municipal elected officials must complete at least two hours of ethics education within 12 months of election or appointment. This course not only fulfills that requirement, but also deepens participants' understanding of the legal and ethical responsibilities that come with public office. Through practical examples and expert guidance, officials will explore key principles of ethical conduct, including transparency, integrity, and accountability, and learn how to apply them in everyday governance.

### Course Objectives

- Understand the laws and principles governing conflicts of interest and ethical standards in North Carolina local government
- Recognize the importance of legal compliance in all official actions taken as a board member
- Uphold the integrity, independence, and transparency of the governing board
- Identify and avoid impropriety in the exercise of official duties
- Build and enhance issue-spotting and ethical reasoning skills for effective decision-making

## Rules of Procedure: Legal Basics for Municipal Governing Boards

2 credits

### Description

Rules of Procedure: Legal Basics for Municipal Governing Boards is a foundational training designed to help municipal leaders conduct public meetings that are lawful, orderly, and effective. Every action taken by a governing board must be deliberate and defensible, and this session equips participants with the legal knowledge and procedural tools to meet that standard. Misunderstanding or overlooking key rules can lead to confusion, delays, or legal challenges. This course provides a clear overview of the laws, roles, and responsibilities that shape board meetings, making it ideal for mayors, council members, managers, clerks, and others involved in municipal governance.

### Course Objectives

- Identify and apply seven core legal principles that govern municipal board meetings
- Understand the distinct roles of the presiding officer (mayor) and council members during meetings
- Summarize key statutes and local rules that guide procedural conduct
- Recognize and avoid common procedural pitfalls that disrupt meetings or create legal risk
- Implement practical strategies and legal best practices to ensure meetings are efficient, transparent, and compliant

## Best Practices of Local Government Boards and Commissions

2 credits

### Description

Best Practices of Boards and Commissions is a training course designed to empower local government board and commission members—and the elected officials they support—with the skills needed to make informed, transparent, and impactful decisions. Participants will gain a clear understanding of the legal responsibilities tied to their roles and explore best practices for fostering focused deliberation and meaningful public engagement. This session emphasizes the importance of building trust, enhancing accountability, and strengthening democratic processes through thoughtful participation and collaboration.

### Course Objectives

- Understand the legal requirements and responsibilities of board and commission members
- Apply best practices for focused, clear, and effective deliberation during meetings
- Explore strategies to promote transparency and public trust in decision-making
- Learn techniques to encourage meaningful public engagement and participation
- Strengthening collaborative skills to support elected officials and enhance governance outcomes

## Individual Topics in Elected Leadership

1 credit each

### Description

The Individual Topics in Elected Leadership are one-hour, on-demand trainings that dig into specific aspects of elected office, taught by NCLM's legal team. Learn the rules and legal requirements associated key duties and procedures.

### Courses Include:

- Quasi-Judicial Hearings
- Open Meetings
- Public Records
- Land Acquisitions and Eminent Domain

# FINANCE

## Municipal Finance: Comprehensive Fiscal Training for Local Governments

6 credits

### Description

Municipal Finance: Comprehensive Fiscal Training for Local Governments is a comprehensive training designed to equip elected officials, managers, finance directors, and other municipal leaders with the essential knowledge and tools to manage public funds responsibly and effectively. Whether you're new to your role or a seasoned professional, this course offers a one-stop overview of North Carolina's financial regulations, best practices, and oversight strategies. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, ethical stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and the collaborative roles that support sound financial management. *Completion of this course fulfills the statutory training requirement under G.S. 160A-148 and contributes to both the NCLM Financial Management Certificate and the Certificate of Municipal Achievement.*

### Course Objectives

- Understand the local government finance environment and key legal requirements in North Carolina
- Learn the roles and responsibilities of finance officers and elected officials in financial operations
- Review essential components of budgeting, auditing, purchasing, and debt management
- Explore best practices for internal controls, utility finance, and ethical stewardship of public funds
- Apply 10 practical keys for effective board and management oversight of municipal finances

## Individual Topics in Municipal Finance

1 credit each

### Description

NCLM offers occasional webinars and on-demand courses designed to complement NCLM's comprehensive fiscal education offerings. These sessions provide targeted guidance on essential financial topics for local government leaders, including elected officials, managers, and finance staff. Whether you're new to municipal finance or looking to deepen your expertise, these offerings deliver practical insights and best practices to strengthen financial operations, improve oversight, and support informed decision-making in your municipality.

### Courses Include:

- Financial Roles and Responsibilities
- Internal Controls
- How to Fill Out Required Forms
- Governmental Accounting
- Pre-Audit
- Cash Receipts, Centralized Cash and Investing
- Monthly Board Reporting
- Bank Reconciliations
- How to Read Financial Statements

## The 10 Keys to Effective Oversight of Your Financial System

2 credits

### Description

The 10 Keys to Effective Oversight of Your Financial System is a two-credit training course designed to help municipal leaders—both elected officials and staff fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities with confidence and clarity. Based on the “Ten Keys to Effective Board Oversight” booklet by Perry James of NCLM, this course outlines practical steps and best practices for managing financial oversight and safeguarding the fiscal health of your community. Participants will gain actionable insights into how to ensure public funds are used lawfully and effectively to enhance quality of life and community well-being.

### Course Objectives

- Understand the fiduciary responsibilities of municipal leaders in financial oversight
- Learn the ten key steps to managing and evaluating your financial system
- Explore best practices for transparency, accountability, and legal compliance
- Strengthen collaboration between elected officials and staff in financial decision-making
- Apply practical strategies to support long-term fiscal health and community trust



## The 7 Keys to Successful Financial Planning

2 credits

### Description

This course digs into the seven important steps of enhancing a government's financial management program and building overall capacity for handling future goals. This training builds on "The 10 Keys to Effective Oversight of Your Financial System."

After achieving a sustainable Financial Management Program developed around the "Ten Keys" guidelines, governing boards and management should find that this achievement now allows them to sharpen their focus on the vision and quality of life efforts desired for their communities long-term. With a sustainable, sound financial management system and an additional emphasis on these next steps, governments can achieve their vision and its meaningful goals for their communities.

### Course Objectives

- Learn how to further enhance your town's financial systems
- Create capacity and understand your ability to develop and pursue long-term strategic goals
- Explore best practices for cash management, auditing and other key financial functions

## Local Government Budgeting Workshop

5 credits

### Description

Local Government Budgeting Workshop is a full-day, in-person training designed to equip municipal leaders with the knowledge and tools to develop a budget that is fiscally sound, legally compliant, and strategically aligned with community goals. More than just a financial document, a well-crafted budget reflects a municipality's values, priorities, and long-term vision. This hands-on workshop walks participants through the entire budgeting process—from planning and development to adoption and oversight—while offering direct access to NCLM's experienced finance professionals. Ideal for elected officials, managers, and finance staff, this session supports effective budget preparation and financial stewardship.

### Course Objectives

- Understand legal requirements, timelines, and compliance responsibilities in North Carolina municipal budgeting
- Develop a structurally balanced budget aligned with strategic priorities and realistic financial projections
- Apply fund balance policies, pre-audit procedures, and procurement best practices
- Incorporate public input and council guidance into a transparent and inclusive budgeting process
- Monitor, adjust, and oversee the budget throughout the fiscal year to ensure audit-readiness and fiscal health

## Strategic Planning: A Workshop for Small Towns

6 credits

### Description

Strategic Planning: A Workshop for Small Towns is a two-day, facilitator-led session designed specifically for North Carolina municipalities with populations under 15,000. This hands-on workshop guides local leadership teams through a practical, step-by-step planning process using a proven, user-friendly template. Rather than just learning about strategic planning, participants will actively develop a working draft of a 3-to-5-year Strategic Plan tailored to their town's unique needs and priorities. Led by experienced NCLM staff, the session also includes guidance on governance strategies to ensure the plan is implemented, monitored, and updated as community needs evolve. The result: a practical, actionable, and affordable approach to long-term planning.

### Course Objectives

- Develop a first-draft Strategic Plan aligned with your town's specific needs and priorities
- Define clear strategic focus areas, objectives, and action steps for the next 3 to 5 years
- Learn how to engage community members and stakeholders in the planning and adoption process
- Gain tools for monitoring progress and using governance strategies to keep the plan active and effective
- Understand how to integrate strategic planning into everyday decision-making and long-term goal setting

## Capital Planning Workshop

4 credits

*Coming soon!*



# EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT

## HR 101: A Comprehensive Overview of Municipal Employee Management

2 credits

### Description

Managing employees effectively is one of the most essential—and often most challenging—responsibilities in municipal government. HR 101 is designed to equip local government leaders and staff with a solid foundation in public sector human resources. Whether you're new to personnel management or simply looking for a refresher, this course will help you confidently navigate the entire employee lifecycle, from recruitment and onboarding to separation and everything in between.

This session offers a clear and practical overview of both the legal landscape and everyday best practices in HR management. With an emphasis on risk reduction and accountability, participants will explore how strong HR practices support organizational health, morale, and public trust.

### Course Objectives

- Creating a successful onboarding experience
- Understanding employee classifications, wages, and benefits
- Legal requirements for hiring, discipline, and termination
- Avoiding common liabilities and HR pitfalls
- Core employment laws and key definitions
- How to read, apply, and communicate your town's personnel policies

## Making Effective Hiring Decisions

1 credit

### Description

Making Effective Hiring Decisions is a practical training designed for local government leaders and HR professionals seeking to strengthen their recruitment and selection processes. Hiring the right people is critical to building high-performing teams that support community goals and improve organizational performance. This course provides actionable strategies to attract top talent, evaluate candidates effectively, and avoid common hiring pitfalls. Participants will leave with tools and insights to align hiring decisions with organizational needs and foster a resilient, mission-driven workforce.

### Course Objectives

- Learn best practices for attracting and selecting qualified candidates
- Improve candidate evaluation and interview techniques
- Gain tools to align hiring decisions with organizational goals and staffing needs
- Understand how to avoid common hiring mistakes and legal missteps
- Build strong, high-performing teams that enhance local government effectiveness

## HR 201: Performance Management Workshop

5 credits

### Description

Performance Management Workshop is a full-day interactive training designed for local government leaders and supervisors who want to strengthen their performance management practices. Performance management is more than an annual evaluation, it's a continuous, strategic process that drives employee development, team alignment, and organizational success. Whether you're new to supervision or looking to refine your approach, this workshop provides the tools, techniques, and confidence to lead with purpose. Through real-world examples, group discussions, and hands-on exercises, participants will learn how to create a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

### Course Objectives

- Understand the full performance management cycle—from onboarding to evaluation to development
- Learn how to set clear, measurable goals that align with organizational priorities
- Practice giving meaningful, constructive feedback that motivates and develops staff
- Gain strategies for addressing underperformance and navigating difficult conversations
- Create an action plan to implement effective performance management practices in their workplace

## HR 202: Leaves of Absence

2 credits

*Coming soon!*

# LEADERSHIP

## Commit to Civility

2 credits

### Description

Commit to Civility is the introductory session in NCLM's multi-step Commit to Civility program, which promotes respectful, solutions-oriented leadership in local government. This training helps municipal officials understand the importance of civil conduct in public service and equips them with the tools to lead with composure, especially in emotionally charged or high-conflict situations. Designed for elected boards and staff, the session encourages participants to embrace civility as a guiding principle in governance and community engagement.

### Course Objectives

- Understand civility as the practice of disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground, and listening beyond personal biases
- Explore civility as a political and civic tool for ensuring inclusive dialogue and equitable participation
- Learn strategies to maintain professionalism and composure during difficult conversations and public meetings
- Reflect on the role of civility in building trust, fostering collaboration, and modeling leadership
- Begin the certificate process by completing the training, signing the individual pledge, and preparing to adopt the Commit to Civility Resolution.

### Certificate Requirements

- Ensure at least 75% of the board attends the two-hour Commit to Civility training session
- Have all course participants sign the individual Commit to Civility pledge
- Adopt the Commit to Civility Resolution at an upcoming council meeting (a resolution template is provided during the training)
- Submit signed copies of the resolution and individual pledge forms for at least 75% of the governing board to [learning@nclm.org](mailto:learning@nclm.org)

## Ethics for Municipal Staff

2 credits

### Description

Ethics for Municipal Staff is practical training designed to help municipal employees understand the unique ethical and legal responsibilities of working in local government. Unlike the private sector, municipal operations are governed by transparency mandates, legal constraints, and public accountability. This course provides staff with the knowledge and tools to navigate these challenges confidently and responsibly. Participants will explore key concepts such as contracts, emoluments, and public trust, and learn how to act ethically and legally on behalf of their municipality.

### Course Objectives

- Understand the ethical standards and legal requirements that apply to municipal staff
- Learn how public sector responsibilities differ from private sector norms
- Explore best practices for transparency, accountability, and responsible conduct
- Gain insight into common challenges such as conflicts of interest and contract compliance
- Build confidence in making ethical decisions that support the municipality's mission and public trust

## Excellence in Municipal Customer Service

2 credits

### Description

Excellence in Municipal Customer Service is a dynamic, hands-on training course designed to help municipal staff and leaders elevate their approach to serving the public. In local government, every interaction, whether with residents or internal colleagues—is an opportunity to build trust, foster engagement, and improve operational effectiveness. This course goes beyond basic customer service to explore the principles, behaviors, and systems that support outstanding service in a government context. Participants will gain practical strategies for handling difficult situations, improving communication, and identifying opportunities to enhance service delivery across departments.

### Course Objectives

- Define the role and value of customer service excellence in municipal government
- Identify internal and external municipal customers and understand their expectations
- Apply best practices for managing difficult conversations and de-escalating tense situations
- Evaluate how internal policies, procedures, and culture impact service outcomes
- Analyze current customer service practices and identify opportunities for improvement

## Cyber Security 101: Understanding the Threat and Protecting Your Town

1 credit

### Description

Cyber Security 101 is a one-hour online training designed specifically for local government officials and staff. In today's digital landscape, cybersecurity is essential to protecting sensitive data, public funds, and critical infrastructure. Municipalities face increasing threats from cyber-attacks, and this course provides a clear, practical foundation in cyber defense tailored to the public sector. Whether you're an elected official, manager, IT professional, or department head, this session will help you understand the risks and responsibilities of maintaining a secure digital environment.

### Course Objectives

- Learn about the most common types of cyber-attacks targeting local governments, including phishing, ransomware, and business email compromise.
- Review real-world examples of breaches and their consequences
- Identify red flags and warning signs of potential vulnerabilities
- Gain strategies to foster a “cyber aware” culture across departments and teams
- Understand basic steps municipalities can take to strengthen cybersecurity and reduce risk

## Municipal Supervisory Basics

2 credits

### Description

Municipal Supervisory Basics is an interactive training course designed to support local government employees as they transition into supervisory roles. Moving from technical expert to team leader requires a shift in mindset and the development of new skills—yet this critical career step is often overlooked or unsupported. This course bridges that gap by introducing the core principles of effective supervision in a municipal context. Through practical instruction, real-world examples, and hands-on exercises, participants will gain the tools and confidence needed to lead teams, foster a positive work environment, and contribute to organizational success.

### Course Objectives

- Explore the foundations of effective leadership and the supervisor's role in local government
- Learn communication strategies that build trust, clarity, and team cohesion
- Practice delegation techniques that empower staff and improve productivity
- Develop conflict resolution skills for managing difficult situations professionally
- Discover ways to encourage collaboration, accountability, and a positive workplace culture

## Municipal Supervisory Basics II

2 credits

*Coming soon!*