



SALGBA • Institute of Government  
113 McCreary Hall  
Eastern Kentucky University  
521 Lancaster Avenue  
Richmond, KY 40475-3102  
Phone: 859-622-2535; Fax: 859-622-4378

*The State and Local Government Benefits Association is composed of benefit administrators representing state, county and city governments in the United States, Virgin Islands and Canada.*

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# State and Local Government Benefits Association



## *Certified Government Benefits Administrator Program*

# **GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES**





## MENU OF CGBA GENERAL COURSE CATEGORIES

### Administration of Government:

1. Health and Related Insurance Benefit Programs
2. Life/AD&D Insurance Benefit Programs
3. Disability Benefit Programs
4. Wellness, Health Promotion, and Employee Assistance
5. Cafeteria/Flexible Benefits (IRC Section 125) Programs
6. Purchasing of Benefit Programs and Service Contracts
7. Benefit Plan Accounting Procedures and Financing
8. Specialized Programs  
(includes, but is not limited to the following sub-topics)
  - 8.1 Workers' Compensation
  - 8.2 Dental Insurance Benefit Programs
  - 8.3 Long Term Care Benefit Programs
  - 8.4 Vision Care Benefit Programs
  - 8.5 Retirement and Deferred Compensation

Each year, SALGBA will attempt to offer at least fourteen (14) points in creditable workshops at the annual conference. SALGBA will also attempt to offer at least two (2) creditable workshops at each Regional Conference. Points are awarded based on two points per hour of training and will be prorated accordingly (no less than 1/2 hour increments) for workshops that may be longer than one hour. (For example, a 90 minute session = 3 points.)

## 12.2. Lifetime Certification

After maintaining CGBA certification for ten (10) years, lifetime certification can be granted to a qualified applicant by the SALGBA Board of Directors upon request of the member. No additional points will be required after the Board grants lifetime certification.

## 13. Funding of Continuing Education

The SALGBA Board of Directors has voted in favor of the Association underwriting the Certified Government Benefits Administrator (CGBA) program as a continuing education and professional development opportunity for all members of the Association. It shall be the objective of the Association to fund approximately twenty per cent (20%) of the administrative costs associated with maintenance of the program on an annual basis through fees paid by the certification candidates themselves. There is a one-time initial fee of \$50.00, which candidates will pay when they file their enrollment application with SALGBA's Administrative Services Office. After obtaining certification, a recertification application fee will also be paid by the candidate for each five (5) year recertification period until lifetime certification is awarded. A re-certification fee equal to 50% of the certification application fee will be due at the time of application. The fees to be paid by candidates are set by the Board and are subject to change depending on SALGBA budget requirements and member participation in the continuing education program.



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**12.1. Application of Points Toward Re-certification**

All credit claimed for re-certification must have been earned subsequent to the completion of the credits applied to the original certification or most recent re-certification. In addition to education credit earned in accordance with the guidelines previously set forth, credit toward re-certification may be earned for five categories of activities related to professional membership, professional service and contributions, and approved transfer credit from other certification programs, as set forth below.

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**CATEGORIES**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Points Allowed Per Year or Activity</b>	<b>Maximum Points Allowed Over 5 Years</b>
<b>12.1.1. Membership in SALGBA</b>	1	5
<b>12.1.2. Service to SALGBA</b>		
12.1.2.1. Officer	3	3
12.1.2.2. Board Member	2	2
12.1.2.3. Committee Member (per committee)	1	5
<b>12.1.3. Professional Contributions</b>		
12.1.3.1 Development and presentation of a Workshop at Annual SALGBA Meeting or Regional Meeting	2 per hour + 2 prep	8
12.1.3.2 Attend Annual SALGBA Meeting or Regional Meeting	1 (per meeting)	10
12.1.3.3 Develop and Publish Article in SALGBA Newsletter	1 (per article)	5
<b>12.1.4. Special Achievement</b>		
12.1.4.1 Recognition by SALGBA Board of Directors for Special or Unique Contribution to the Association	5	10
<b>12.1.5. Transfer Credit for Other Certification Programs</b>		
12.1.5.1 Educational credit for classes completed in other qualifying certification programs	2	6

**Guidelines and Procedures  
 for the SALGBA  
 Certified Government Benefits Administrator Program**

**1. Statement of Policy**

The goal of the Certified Government Benefits Administrator (CGBA) program is to provide a coordinated continuing education program for the members of the State and Local Government Benefits Association (SALGBA). Certification can be achieved by eligible members of the association after completing a prescribed course of professional development which includes a combination of direct work experience and formal training. The training component is designed to provide a broad range of knowledge and skills appropriate to the administration of government benefit plans. The SALGBA certification program will be distinguished from other certification programs for benefits administrators by: (1) its focus on the public sector, and the particular problems and needs of public sector benefits and insurance administration; and (2) its emphasis on developing and maintaining familiarity with contemporary public sector problems and issues through professional interaction and exchange. The SALGBA certification program is not meant to replace other training and certification programs for benefit administrators, but to augment and complement them. In designing this program, SALGBA has drawn particular inspiration from the Certified Public Personnel Administrator program of the Kentucky Public Human Resources Association (KPHRA). SALGBA hereby acknowledges the important contribution that the work of KPHRA has made to its concept of the certification process and the design of the SALGBA program.

Certification is determined by a point system. Points can be awarded based on experience in the field of benefits administration and through the accumulation of approved training activities. Credit for training activity may be earned (1) through Continuing Education Units (CEUs) achieved by candidates for training which is designated as a certification activity and offered during annual and/or regional SALGBA meetings in conjunction with the governing university for the certification program, or (2) through transfer of credit for classes completed in other reputable and nationally recognized certification programs for benefits administrators. Once obtained, certification must be maintained through a recertification procedure every five years. In addition to experiential and educational credit, a certain portion of credit for recertification may be earned for services rendered to SALGBA as a professional association, for professional contributions to the association, and for special achievements as recognized by the SALGBA Board of Directors.

**2. Eligibility**

To be eligible for certification, a candidate must be sponsored by and be a staff member of a Jurisdictional or Associate member of SALGBA in good standing. The candidate must devote all or a major part of his/her time to the administration of Insurance, Life Insurance, Health Benefits, Risk Management Programs, or Employee Health Promotion for the sponsoring SALGBA member entity. To ensure that all candidates for certification begin the program on an equal footing, and to ensure that all participants receive full value through their involvement, credit for experience prior to enrollment in the certification program will be limited to experience for the calendar year during which enrollment occurs.

### 3. Certification Requirement

Certification is determined by a point system. A total of at least eighty-one (81) points must be earned, including a minimum of forty-two (42) points in approved education and training, to include up to 20 points for transfer of other certification credit, and a minimum of twenty-four (24) points in approved work experience. After initial enrollment in the program, a maximum of five years is allowed for completion of certification requirements. Points which are older than five years will not be counted. *Certification calculation examples:*

#1	Total Educational Credit Points	42
	Total Experience Credit Points	<u>42</u>
	Cumulative Total of Points	84
<i>or</i>		
#2	Total Educational Credit Points	22
	Total Transfer Credit Points	20
	Total Experience Credit Points	<u>42</u>
	Cumulative Total of Points	84

*(refer to item #7 for further examples)*

Certification must be maintained through a recertification procedure. Recertification is required every five years. Twenty-five (25) points must be earned for recertification. At least seven of these points must be earned in approved training courses, other than transfer credits.

### 4. Educational Credits

To ensure quality in educational experiences and collegiality among certification candidates, educational credits for certification credit may be earned only through training workshops designed and provided for the certification program by SALGBA and the Institute of Government at Eastern Kentucky University, or through transfer of credit from other established and reputable certification programs. Standards for transfer credit are addressed in Section 5. Two points will be awarded for each hour of approved training organized by SALGBA. Points will be prorated accordingly (no less than 1/2 hour increments) for sessions longer than one hour. For example, a 90 minute session = 3 points. Approved workshops will be offered during the SALGBA annual national conference and during SALGBA regional meetings. The SALGBA annual meeting is normally held during the spring each year and will normally offer sufficient training hours to allow candidates to earn between ten (10) and sixteen (16) points at each meeting. During the five years allowed for completion of certification, candidates must attend at least two (2) SALGBA annual, national conferences.

Training workshops will normally be organized in blocks of one hour or more, and credit will be given only for unbroken attendance throughout the duration of a workshop. Participants are required to sign a roster for each session, which will be countersigned by the attending monitor to document full attendance.

CGBA Candidates for certification who prepare and present workshops approved for certification credit will receive two points for each hour of duration of the workshop for attendance (points will be prorated accordingly in increments of no less than 1/2 hour for sessions longer than one hour), and an additional two points for preparation of the workshop. This credit will be awarded for one presentation of the workshop, and candidates

### 9. Appeals

All actions and recommendations of the Continuing Education Committee may be appealed through the Committee to the Board of Directors. Decisions by the Board of Directors may be appealed directly to the Board.

### 10. Accuracy of Submissions

Candidates for certification must take reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of all information they submit in support of an application for certification. Any willful misrepresentation of work or educational experience may result in removal from the certification program and revocation of certification if it has already been granted.

### 11. The Certification Document

Upon certification, all candidates will receive a distinctive lapel pin and a printed certificate attesting to completion of the program requirements. Both the President of SALGBA and the appropriate representative of the governing university, which is currently Eastern Kentucky University, will sign the certificate.

### 12. Re-certification

The original certification for Certified Government Benefits Administrator (CGBA) is valid for five (5) years from the date of issue. In order to retain CGBA status, individuals must be re-certified every five (5) years, or fulfill the requirements for Lifetime Certification. Twenty-five (25) points must be earned for re-certification every five years, with at least seven (7) points being earned in approved educational workshops, other than transfer credits. Applicants for re-certification must apply using a Re-Certification Application Form to request eligible credit. Application forms may be submitted annually to the governing university. Applicants may initiate the application process at any time during the five (5) year period allowed for re-certification, but must submit the required documentation for all credit claimed.



*The State and Local Government Benefits Association  
Certified Government Benefits Administrator Program*

*is*

*The Pursuit of Excellence in Public Sector  
Benefits Management, Professional Development, and  
Continuing Education.*

3. CPPB and CPPO: The Certified Professional Public buyer and Certified Public Purchasing Officer programs of the National Institute of Government Purchasing (NIGP). (Only courses organized and delivered by NIGP may be transferred)
4. CLU (Charter Life Underwriter)
5. LUTC (Life Underwriter Training Course)
6. Other programs directly related to benefits administration which meet the standards set forth above.

Candidates may receive two (2) points for each course qualifying for transfer credit, up to a maximum of 20 points. All transfers must be reviewed and approved by the SALGBA Continuing Committee. The SALGBA Continuing Education Committee may require whatever information or documentation it considers necessary to verify that transfer courses meet the CGBA guidelines. To qualify for transfer, a course must have been completed within five (5) years of the date of enrollment in the CGBA program.

## 6. Experience Credits

Credit for experience will be provided for direct participation in relevant work, in accordance with the following formula:

- 6.1. 5 to 19 percent responsibility in benefit administration: 6 points per year
- 6.2. 20 to 39 per cent responsibility in benefits administration: 10 points per year
- 6.3. 40 to 100 per cent responsibility in benefits administration: 14 points per year

“Relevant Work” shall be evaluated and determined by SALGBA’s Continuing Education Committee. Varying types of experience will not be weighted. Credit will be granted based on the overall percentage of work responsibility devoted to insurance benefits administration functions of all types.

Credit will be given for experiences involving direct application of knowledge and skill in benefit administration. Experiences with transactions and processes that are associated with benefit administration, but do not involve direct application of knowledge and skill, will not be accepted for credit.

Credit for experience will be granted based on calendar years, beginning with the first year during which a candidate enrolls in a certification training workshop. Credit will be determined based on annual reports of experience to be submitted by candidates on a standard form developed by SALGBA and made available by the SALGBA Administrative Services Office. Candidates must submit at least three (3) annual reports to be eligible for certification. Instructions regarding estimation of time spent on benefits-related work and averaging of cyclical work loads will be approved by the Board of Directors and incorporated into the experience report form.

If a candidate has insurance benefit responsibility for only part of a year, credit will be determined by judging the average percentage of responsibility carried over the number of whole months during which the candidate was engaged in benefits administration work. This number of months will be divided by twelve, and the

resulting fraction will be multiplied against the number of points appropriate for one year's experience at the average level of responsibility carried during the months in which the candidate was employed in benefits administration work (6, 10, or 14 points). The credit for partial experience during a year will be the resulting number of points, rounded to the lowest whole point.

Experience reports should be submitted annually, covering the period from January 1 to December 31 of the given year, and should be sent to the Administrative Services Office no later than January 31 of the following year. The applicant and the applicant's supervisor must sign experience reports. In case of changes in employment circumstances, such as changes in jobs or supervisors, experience reports covering part of a year may be submitted to ensure accuracy, and the candidate should obtain the signature of the appropriate supervisor. The experience report will ask for the average number of work hours per month spent on all major duty or task areas, both related to benefits administration and apart from benefits administration. It is expected that candidates will have to estimate the number of hours spent on a particular duty area and that the estimate will reflect some degree of approximation. It is further expected that, in order to average the number of hours per month for a reporting year, candidates may have to average cyclical or project work loads that last less than 12 months out of an entire year. (e.g., 40 hours per month spent on a duty area for the 3 months only at the end of a year, giving a total of 120 hours worked, would be averaged out at 10 hours per month for the entire 12 month year.) A candidate employed for only part of a year in benefits administration would develop averages based on the assumption of a 12 month year, but would then be given credit for that portion of 12 months actually worked (i.e., if an individual worked 6 months in benefits administration and had a 120 hour project lasting 3 months, such as the one above, he would average the hours for that project out to 10 per month for a 12 month year, and then be given credit for 6 months worked at that rate.)

## 7. Illustrative Tracks to Completion of Certification

The following chart illustrates three basic tracks for completion of certification, based on degree of benefits administration responsibility carried. The chart assumes that the candidate for certification takes the complete educational program available in each year and carries the same level of responsibility throughout each year.

As this illustration shows, an individual carrying at least 40% of his/her job responsibility in benefits administration can complete the certification program in three years. The same individual can miss as many as two certification training conferences in the five-year period allowed for certification and still complete the program within the allowed period. An individual carrying 20 to 39 per cent responsibility for benefits administration will require four years to complete the program, but in the fourth year can complete the requirements with either the full workshop training for that year or the full year’s experience. The individual carrying only five to nineteen per cent responsibility for benefits administration functions will require nearly the full five years to meet the minimum experience standard.

		Level of Responsibility				
Years in Program		1	2	3	4	5
7.1.	<b>40% plus</b>					
	Education Points 14	14	14	14	14	
	Experience Points	14	14	14	14	14
	Cumulative Points	28	56	84	—	—
	8					
7.2.	<b>20 - 39%</b>					
	Education Points 14	14	14	14	14	
	Experience Points	10	10	10	10	10
	Cumulative Points	24	48	72	86/82	—
7.3.	<b>5-19%</b>					
	Education Points 14	14	14	14	14	
	Experience Points	6	6	6	6	6
	Cumulative Points	20	40	60	80	94/86

## 8. Administration

General oversight for the certification program and evaluation of applicant's credentials shall be the responsibility of a Continuing Education Committee appointed by the President of the Association and chaired by a Past President of the Association or a member of the Board of Directors. The members of the Continuing Education Committee shall be appointed for one-year terms and shall include at least one state jurisdictional member, at least one local jurisdictional member, at least one associate member, and a representative of the governing university for the certification program.

The Continuing Education Committee will review applications for certification and recertification at least once a year, following submission of experience reports for the preceding calendar year and before the Association's annual meeting held in April. The Continuing Education Committee will assess applications and recommend candidates for certification to the SALGBA Board of Directors.

In assessing candidates for certification, the Continuing Education Committee will judge the degree of responsibility for insurance benefits administration functions they carry based on their experience reports. The Continuing Education Committee may ask candidates to submit any additional information which may be needed to help resolve ambiguities. Candidates will be asked to judge the percentage of job responsibilities they carry for benefit administration functions in their experience reports. Where the judgement of the Continuing Education Committee differs from that of the certification candidate, the candidate will be notified promptly. Appeal procedures are set forth in these guidelines.

may count a maximum of eight points for development and presentation of workshops toward initial certification.

Transcripts of continuing education credits obtained through SALGBA approved workshops will be maintained for CGBA candidates by the Registrar at the governing university. Certification candidates may request copies of their personal transcripts. *Transcripts will not be maintained for anyone not enrolled in the CGBA program.*

## 5. Transfer Credit

Credit from certain other certification programs may be counted toward partial fulfillment of the educational requirements for CGBA certification. The programs from which the credit is to be transferred must be: (1) directly and specifically related to benefits administration and must provide training workshops, exercises, or classes which focus specifically on benefits administration or on directly related skills (e.g.: purchasing and contract administration; personnel and labor relations; or accounting); (2) classes must be equivalent to at least two full days of training time (i.e., at least 15 hours); and (3) satisfactory completion must be indicated by a passing score on an examination for each training workshop or class.

Internet based courses and distance learning courses not provided by SALGBA may be transferred if they meet the same standards set forth above for traditional courses, with the following qualifications:

- (1) the activities which comprise the two days or more of training experience may include reading, exercises, listening to audiovisual material, and interaction with the provider or other participants, when these activities are an intentional component of the training experience;
- (2) the total hours expended on these activities may count toward the requirement for two full days of training;
- (3) time spent on travel or administrative preparation (e.g., registering, purchasing materials, or setting up a work station or computer) will not count as training time;
- (4) measures must be taken by the provider of the training to ensure validity of all scores on examinations; this will normally mean that the examination is proctored by the provider or by a contractor of the provider;
- (5) receptivity to transfer of internet based training does not imply automatic acceptance of any internet-based credit by SALGBA. Any application for transfer of credit for internet and distance learning training are subject to review and approval by the Continuing Education Committee. It shall be the responsibility of the applicant to furnish sufficient documentation to describe the content of the training experience, with the clarity and precision that the committee may require to determine its eligibility for transfer. SALGBA will furnish application materials for requesting transfer of internet and distance-learning credit.

Other certification programs have been identified as appropriate sources of transfer credit. These are:

1. CEBS: The Certified Employee Benefit Specialist Program of the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.
2. ACA: The Certified Benefits Professional program of the American Compensation Association.