

Certification
Program



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Professionals Managing Accounting Practices

What does the CPAFMA's PAFM™ program look like?

The CPA Firm Management Association (CPAFMA, formerly known as the Association for Accounting Administration or AAA) was founded on January 1, 1984, to enable those involved in the management of accounting firms to easily communicate with others in similar positions and to share experiences and best practices in what was then a new and emerging profession. CPAFMA is a leading authoritative voice regarding CPA firm management and the one authoritative voice supporting the management professionals guiding these firms. Our association puts forth a great deal of effort toward educating CPA firm owners about the benefits of hiring professional firm managers to run the business affairs of their respective firms. CPAFMA and our members have played a large role in shaping this profession, determining the direction for firm manager career pathing, and have been on the cutting edge of developments that impact the CPA firms we serve.

To further support the professionalization of the accounting firm manager position, CPAFMA created a credential for our professionals (Firm Administrators, Directors of Administration, Chief Operating Officers) to further enhance the importance, status and acceptance of the position within the industry. This credential (Public Accounting Firm Manager [PAFM™]) was created to recognize the roles, required scope of competencies and accomplishments of those actively managing accounting firms today.

What is credentialing?

Credentialing is defined as a process by which an organization grants recognition to an individual who meets certain predetermined qualifications within the profession they work. CPAFMA has created a process to assess and confirm the expertise and competency level of individuals who want to clearly set themselves apart as an accomplished professional within CPA firm management. The PAFM™ credential can be earned when one of our members meets those standards recognized by our profession, as set forth by CPAFMA.

Why did CPAFMA create this credential?

CPAFMA's Public Accounting Firm Manager (PAFM)™ credential program joins a growing trend within accounting and other professions to recognize and create value for those individuals who have achieved a high level of competency within the firm manager community. Competency and skills will be verified by a comprehensive process administered by the CPAFMA.

What does competency mean?

CPAFMA has created an Experience Matrix with 12 core competencies that covers all areas of firm manager duties and responsibilities (both performance and supervisory). To apply for this credential, each applicant needs to complete the PAFM™ Matrix to accurately reflect their experience within the listed competencies in order to assess their individual level of expertise in this field.

How does becoming credentialed help the professional managing an accounting firm?

Earning a PAFM™ recognizes that member as someone who is working at the top level within our profession and it exemplifies both their professional capabilities, experience and achievement. The PAFM™ is a recognized symbol that can be shared in correspondence and other materials which reflects demonstrated mastery of the skill sets necessary and an unparalleled level of competence to be an effective firm manager.

How does a firm manager becoming credentialed benefit the firm?

A primary benefit of the credentialing program is to demonstrate to the employer that the individual has a significant grasp of the duties of the profession and its responsibilities, and to create the opportunity for advancement within the firm, leading to an overall higher level of productivity for the firm and its associates. It also allows the firm to affirm that it is well-managed in its affairs by employing an accredited firm manager who meets exceptionally high standards within our profession.



The Association of Accounting Administrators (now CPA Firm Management Association) was founded on January 1, 1984, to enable accounting firm managers to communicate with one another and provide each other with the benefits of everyone's experiences in what was a new and emerging profession. CPAFMA is the one authoritative voice of the profession. Many CPAFMA members put forth a great deal of effort toward educating the public accounting profession about the benefits of hiring professional managers to run the business affairs of their respective firms. They have also largely shaped the profession, determined the direction of firm management career pathing, and have been on the cutting edge of developments in our profession.

Certification for Firm Managers will enhance the status and acceptance of the position within the industry, and will create a significant professional recognition for those managing accounting firms who achieve Public Accounting Firm Manager (PAFM) designation.

What are the eligibility requirements for the PAFM™ credential?

Employment and Experience

The minimum period of employment tenure required to seek our credential is a total of two consecutive years in the profession of accounting firm management. There is a brief application and a 12-competency PAFM™ Matrix requiring completion by the applicant including review and signature by an owner of the firm for which the applicant is working. The completed PAFM™ Matrix is forwarded to the CPAFMA Credentialing Committee for review and qualification assessment.

Education

There is no minimum educational requirement to seek certification. Education cannot be substituted for the employment tenure requirement above, or as a substitute for or supplement to successful completion of the PAFM™ Matrix.

Ethics

Those who wish to apply for the PAFM™ credential are expected to affirm in writing their planned adherence to the CPAFMA Core Values of a Firm Manager and will be held to that standard.

How long does my certification last?

The PAFM™ credential, if awarded, lasts two years from the date of notification by the CPAFMA Credentialing Committee that the applicant has successfully met all requirements to become a PAFM™. Upon expiration of the two-year term, the credential holder must meet the requirements of the credential renewal process.

Credential Renewal Process

The credential renewal process requires 40 hours of continuing professional education (CPE) in our field during any two-year period that an individual holds the PAFM™, with at least 16 hours of the CPE being acquired in each year during that two-year period.

The CPE can be acquired through CPAFMA webinars, within CPAFMA Chapter gatherings including presentation of CPAFMA national CPE-approved education, and at the annual National Practice Management Conference (attendance at which for two years would satisfy the CPE requirement). Other relevant CPE will be considered for credit. PAFMs are provided CPAFMA MAPCasts (webinars) at no cost and a holder should be able to achieve CPE hours through this medium.

How much does it cost to become certified?

The initial application fee is \$50 and is separate from any other credentialing fees that may be established; the application fee includes the processing of the PAFM™ Matrix. The current cost to become a PAFM™ is \$299 for CPAFMA members. The fee for non-members is \$650 and includes a one-year membership in the Association. An annual re-certification fee of \$99 applies to all PAFMs.

What happens if I don't pass the certification process?

Individuals who do not achieve certification may reapply in the next quarter or any quarter following the date of their original certification application. Following an unsuccessful application attempt, the applicant will be provided feedback on the areas in which to focus as well as competencies and experience needed in order to qualify.

Now that you are interested . . .

Applicants may visit the CPAFMA website at www.cpaafma.org to complete the PAFM™ application, pay the application fee, and complete the PAFM™ Matrix. Once approved, applicants will be charged applicable PAFM fees in addition to the application fee. Interested individuals may contact the national office of CPAFMA at (937) 222-0030 or by email at info@cpafma.org.



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