



***An innovative credentialing program
designed exclusively for township officials
and leaders in Michigan***



Bringing township governance to a new level



The **Township Governance Academy (TGA)** is a voluntary credentialing program tailor-made for townships by the Michigan Townships Association. It's designed to provide township board members with next-level knowledge and skills needed to make effective decisions on behalf of their community.

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. It's an accessible program, completed by attending 11 required courses, submitting practical application homework and earning a few elective credits along the way.

Coursework is divided into three categories:

- **Foundations**—five courses (*28 credits*)
- **Boardsmanship**—six courses (*24 credits*)
- **Electives**—earned by attending MTA events and completing continuing education self-assessment articles in *Township Focus* (*18 credits*)

Courses are designed to help you measure where you're at in terms of your ability to effectively participate on (and contribute to!) your township board. After completing each course, you'll be asked to take the information you've learned a step further by trying out an idea or concept of your choosing right in your own township and then reporting the results to MTA. It's a simple process, but one that will engage your creative thinking around the betterment of both board relations and your community, helping put what you've learned into action. You'll walk away a much more confident and effective board member and leader in your community.

Relevant to the entire township board, regardless your position or level of experience

Each course was designed with the entire township board in mind. Whether you're a supervisor, clerk, treasurer or trustee, each course is relevant to your role. If you're new to township government, **TGA** will put you on the path to becoming an excellent board member. Even seasoned township officials gain a better understanding of their role and responsibilities and graduates report experiencing improved relationships with fellow board members after completion of the program.

It's true the **Academy** was tailored for elected township officials, however it's open to *any* appointed official, as well as managers and deputies. While courses are not focused on specific duties and operations, they do address topics valuable to other township team members and can help prepare them for the next step of serving on the township board or in another leadership position.

Building better boards

Our mission is to help each individual board member strive to reach their personal goals and help their fellow board members achieve a higher standard of governance. 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.

What are you waiting for? Enroll today!

Whether you want to earn your credential by completing **TGA** in one year or 10, the choice is yours. Your enrollment in the program will never "expire", you can complete the program at your pace and convenience. When you finish all the requirements, we'll celebrate your accomplishment on the main stage during our *Annual Conference & Expo*!

Courses repeat on a regular basis throughout the four-year election cycle, so you can enroll at any time and take courses whenever they work out in your schedule. They are even available online!

That's right—the *entire* **TGA** curriculum is available in our **Online Learning Center** so you can begin your journey online immediately after enrolling if you choose. Browse our virtual classroom by visiting <https://learn.michigantownships.org>. Please note that a requirement for graduation is to complete at least two of the 11 courses in person. Why? Graduates report that one of the most valuable parts of the program is the connection they develop with their peers in the classroom on their path to graduation—something that simply cannot be replicated online.



So, what's the cost?

There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$35 that covers your “**TGA** toolkit” which includes a binder—designed to help you track your learning journey and coursework—and a tote bag. Individual courses are currently priced at \$100 for a half-day course and \$125 for a full-day course. MTA offers sales and subscription options, too. You may even qualify for a scholarship.

Electives are priced according to the event that you choose to attend, whether that is MTA's *Annual Conference & Expo*, a *Professional Development Retreat* or *Regional Summit*. There is no charge to earn elective credit by completing continuing education self-assessment articles in *Township Focus*.

Tell me more about the cost-savings options

MTA offers two annual webcast specials featuring 50% discounts on every **TGA** online course, in March and November. You can buy then and watch later (up to one year after purchase) at your convenience.

We also offer annual subscriptions to our **Online Learning Center**, which boasts one year of access for *every* member of your township team for one low rate. A subscription at the **Premium** level includes online access to the required **TGA** courses, so if your township has purchased a **Premium** subscription, it's quite a cost savings. Learn more about that offer at www.michigantownships.org/learning/mta-online.

Scholarships are available thanks to our main sponsor—**BS&A Software**—along with our supporting sponsors, **Acrisure**, **ITC Holdings Corp.** and **Foresight Group**. Elected officials in member townships may qualify based on demonstrated financial need and other criteria. Scholarship applications are available at www.michigantownships.org/learning/TGA or you can call the MTA Education Center at (517) 321-6467, ext. 234.



Still undecided about **TGA**? Try it out! You don't have to be enrolled in the program to attend the classes. We'll apply credit retroactively up to six months from the date you enroll.

Be recognized for your work

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

Required coursework and electives at-a-glance

Remember, you'll need to complete a project following each course, but don't worry, our seasoned cadre of instructors have great ideas to share!



Foundations Courses: 28 Credits

- F-101: *At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs* (6 credits)
- F-102: *Land Use: Designing Your Township's Future* (6 credits)
- F-103: *Township Finances* (6 credits)
- F-104: *Managing Your Township Team* (6 credits)
- F-105: *Fundamentals of Assessment and Taxation* (4 credits)

Boardsmanship Courses: 24 Credits

- B-101: *Board Roles and Relations* (4 credits)
- B-102: *How Boards Make Decisions* (4 credits)
- B-103: *Creating a Vision for Your Township* (4 credits)
- B-104: *Strategic Planning for Townships* (4 credits)
- B-105: *Making Meetings Work More Effectively* (4 credits)
- B-106: *Linking with the Community* (4 credits)



Electives: 18 Credits *Select from the following*

- MTA Annual Conference & Expo (8 credits)
- MTA Professional Development Retreat (4 credits)
- MTA Regional Summit (3 credits)
- MTA Capital Conference (3 credits)
- Township Focus* CE articles (2 credits per article)



Final Project to Graduate: Application of learning in your own township

Use the final project form in your **TGA** binder to:

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



Foundations Course Descriptions (28 Credits)

F-101 At Your Service: Meeting Township Needs (6 credits)

Learn more about the role, authority and legal requirements of the township board in providing services for your residents. Explore funding options as well as the board's responsibility in assuring that the risk is properly managed. Learn techniques for evaluating whether your township's services are effectively serving your community and what considerations should be made to ensure future viability.

F-102 Defining Your Township's Land Use Future (6 credits)

How should land use decision-making work in your township? What roles do the board and the community play? Explore issues that must be confronted if your township planning efforts are to be successful. Learn the purpose, process and legal requirements of your township's master plan, and gain insights into a broad range of day-to-day and emerging land use issues.

F-103 Township Finances (6 credits)

Oversight of township finances is a fundamental statutory duty of township boards. Good governance demands that every board exercise effective oversight of all township assets, including human and physical resources. Explore in depth how township boards can achieve a greater degree of control over the township's financial position and assure that resources are directed to address the township's highest and greatest needs

F-104 Managing Your Township Team (6 credits)

Township board members, deputies, election workers, assessors and firefighters are employees for at least some employment purposes, and so are volunteers. Townships, large and small, need to be prepared to address human resource issues. Preparing and implementing appropriate policies can improve morale around your township hall, help you retain quality people and avoid employment (even volunteer!) related risks. Get the tools you need to better manage your township team.

F-105 Fundamentals of Assessment & Taxation (4 credits)

Property taxation and assessment administration are two cornerstones of township operations. From assessment and board of review meetings, all the way to tax collection—it's essential that board members have an understanding of how the process works. Learn more about the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A, as well as truth-in-taxation, assessing and equalization. Delve into a variety of revenue sources coming into the township, including millages, administrative fees and special assessments.

Boardsmanship Courses Descriptions (24 Credits)

B-101 Township Board Roles & Relations (4 credits)

Examine your role as a board member and how you fit into the board as a whole. Discuss the roles of watchdog, supporter, planner, communicator and manager, as well as the relationships among board members, appointed and elected officials, and the board with the community. Identify the fundamentals of leadership and the ethical standards specific to public servants.

B-102 How Boards Make Decisions (4 credits)

Maximize the effectiveness of group decisions and learn how “knowledge-based” governance will guide your board to make informed choices with improved outcomes (and less headaches)! This class challenges “old ways of thinking” and offers a refreshing look at the decision-making process to help 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 a critical component in serving your community. Learn strategies for evaluating township programs and services, and explore the need for innovation and change. By examining both adversity and opportunities, you can identify how to balance short-term issues with a long-term vision. Rekindle your township’s mission by examining your community’s past, present and future.

B-104 Strategic Planning for Townships (4 credits)

Strategic planning is critical to achieving real results in your township. Yet creating (and maintaining) a strategic plan may be a delicate matter in a politically charged environment. Review what strategic exploration entails, as well as the voices that must be heard, in order to develop a solid plan that aligns the township’s resources and creates favorable outcomes.

B-105 Making Meetings More Effective (4 credits)

Learn strategies for structuring your meetings to achieve more in less time, with fewer headaches! Uncover techniques for tackling differences around the board table while staying focused on results. Explore practical ways for your board to define and implement its own “rules of engagement” so your meetings will be orderly and productive.

B-106 Linking with the Community (4 credits)

Enhancing credibility in the public eye begins with your board. Examine ways of being more transparent to your community—a great exercise to increase trust at the local level. Explore ways of determining what your constituents want and how to keep them informed about your township’s activities. Includes discussion on cultivating emerging leaders in your community.

How does it work?

Credit is assigned at the conclusion of each course, event or article after verification by MTA. Participants are expected to arrive on-time for all in-person courses; however, a 20-minute grace period for extenuating circumstances is allowed. Participants arriving or leaving beyond this may not obtain credit.

Step 1: Enroll in **TGA** by completing the form included here and return to MTA with the one-time enrollment fee of \$35.

Step 2: Register for **TGA** courses or electives using individual registration forms as each in-person event is made available OR complete **TGA** courses online. Remember at least two of the 11 courses must be completed in-person.

Step 3: Take each **TGA** course and submit a project of your choosing. Complete the required elective credits. You can use the helpful tracking forms in your toolkit to record your progress. Be sure to send copies to MTA for your file.

Step 4: Complete your final project and report your results to MTA using the form provided in your toolkit. The MTA Education Center will verify your coursework, projects, electives and final project have met graduation requirements.

Step 5: That's it, you did it! We'll recognize your accomplishment on the main stage at our *Annual Conference & Expo* and provide your **TGA** credential.



2022 TGA Graduates honored at an MTA *Annual Conference*

TGA Enrollment Form



Which office do you hold?

☐ Clerk ☐ Supervisor ☐ Treasurer ☐ Trustee ☐ Other _____

Name

Township

County

Mailing address

Email address

Telephone

One time enrollment fee of \$35

☐ Invoice township

☐ Check enclosed (payable to MTA)

☐ Charge to: (circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card #

CSV (3-digit code)

Expires

Print Card Holder's Name

Cardholder Signature

TGA Toolkit instructions—MTA Staff initials _____

☐ Received onsite ☐ Ship to above address



You don't have to take our word for it, here's what your colleagues are saying after completing **TGA**:

"By completing the program, I feel I have a great knowledge base to work from. Being a public servant is a continually changing and challenging position. As a graduate of TGA, I hope to tap into the education I have gained to help my board and residents move through these challenging times in government. The more information we gain and the contacts you make along the way can only strengthen the community."

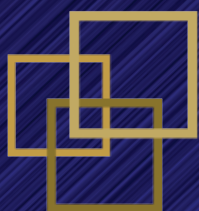
"In today's day and age, it is vital that every township official in Michigan become as knowledgeable as possible about his or her statutory duties, legal obligations and financial responsibilities. Equally important is becoming skilled in the art of boardsmanship."

"This innovative program offers you a chance to move beyond the traditional approaches to governance and into a more dynamic leadership role—one that prepares you well for the challenges of tomorrow."

"Making effective decisions for your community can be a high-stakes business, and local leaders need to have the ability to successfully carry out this responsibility. There's a big difference between being elected to serve on a board and actually performing the tasks effectively. MTA's Township Governance Academy provides the professional skills to help public officials maximize their performance."

"The Academy was very informative and interesting. Sessions were well-rounded and covered so much we need to know. They have helped me become a much better local official and listener as well. I learned much in the classes and met so many interesting and great people in the process. Sharing information and ideas with them were as useful as the classes themselves. MTA does a great job and TGA is a great idea. I highly recommend the Academy to all township officials!"





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