

# South Carolina Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute Capstone Project Guidelines

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Municipal clerks who are interested in pursuing a Certified Municipal Clerk designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks will need to complete the South Carolina Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute and a capstone project. Adopted in 2004, the capstone project serves as the method of assessment for MCTI. The purpose of the capstone project is to illustrate learning has occurred, provide a return on the municipality's investment, and meet the IIMC testing requirement.

## General Information

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As the South Carolina Institute Director for IIMC, the College of Charleston's Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities is responsible for coordinating with the Municipal Association of South Carolina to provide education to municipal clerks in South Carolina through MCTI, and also serves as the primary contact for the capstone project. Participants are eligible to begin working on his or her capstone project at the conclusion of his or her third MCTI session. All capstone candidates must:

- Submit an initial project proposal to be reviewed and approved by the Certification Committee
- Submit and present a final project summary to the Certification Committee

Capstone proposals will be accepted twice a year, in April and October. Eligible participants may submit a proposal by either deadline. However, candidates must adhere to the timeline he or she is assigned after the proposal is approved. The Riley Center will send all eligible participants information about the project and deadlines for completing the capstone project.

## Certification Committee

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The Certification Committee reviews and approves all project proposals, as well as provides feedback and assistance to clerks as they work on their projects. The committee may request additional information before approving a proposal. This committee serves in a supportive role and has proven invaluable to the clerks who have completed a project. Serving on the committee are:

- MFOCTA President/ Past President (Committee Chair)
- Two MCTI graduates who have either a CMC or MMC designation
- MCTI graduate who recently completed a Capstone project and is pursuing a CMC designation
- Riley Center representative
- Municipal Association of SC representative

## Step One: Select a Topic

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Capstone candidates should identify an issue or problem and develop a project to improve or address the issue. The issue should be of interest to the clerk and have a considerable positive impact on the clerk's office, municipality and/or citizens. Although others in the municipality may be involved, the candidate should be the primary person to design and implement the project. Projects should be able to be implemented within a year's time.

The example topics listed below are related to traditional clerk duties. Acceptable topics for a clerk/treasurer may involve more finance related duties.

This is not an exhaustive list, and candidates are encouraged to develop their own topic ideas based on the needs of their own position and municipality.

### Topic Examples:

- Scanning and Indexing Records
- Streamlining Council Meeting Processes by Developing and Implementing:
  - Rules of Procedure
  - Consent Agendas
  - New Member Orientation
  - Mayor/Staff Agenda Guide
- Streamlining Appointment Process for Municipal Boards and Commissions
- Automating Agenda Preparation and Council Packet Processes
- Creating Paperless Council Meetings
- Moving Municipal Elections to County Election Commissions
- Developing a Tracking System for Citizen Concerns

## Step Two: Submit a Capstone Project Proposal

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Submitting a project proposal indicates your interest in pursuing the CMC designation. The project proposal should be approximately one page in length and contain the following components:

- a description of the issue and why it is important to the candidate, the municipality, and/or community
- the goals you plan to accomplish by addressing this issue
- a brief action plan on how to address the issue, including steps and timeframes
- a brief description of how subjects covered in the MCTI curriculum will help address this issue
- signature of approval from supervisor

All project proposals must be reviewed and approved by the Certification Committee before significant work begins on the project.

## Step Three: Submit and Present a Capstone Project Summary

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Candidates will submit a written 2 – 3 page project summary to the Certification Committee. Candidates must also present his or her summary to the Committee, discussing his or her project, any challenges they overcame, and lessons they've learned throughout the process. The written summary should incorporate the items outlined in the project proposal and include the following:

- a description of the steps taken and results of each
- an explanation of whether the goals outlined in the proposal have been met
- answers to any questions the Certification Committee raised during the review of the proposal
- any unexpected challenges the candidate faced and strategies used to overcome these
- lessons learned or insight the candidate would share with others considering working on a similar type project
- any attachments that help illustrate the work accomplished during the project (e.g., newspaper announcements, information presented to council, ordinance changes, etc.)
- a supervisor's signature

Clerks have the option to make a brief presentation of their project summary during an MCTI session.

The Certification Committee understands that all issues addressed as part of the capstone project may not be completely resolved by the time the project summaries are due; however, candidates are expected to have implemented a significant portion of the project before being recognized as a capstone graduate. If a clerk needs council approval for implementation of the project recommendations and the council does not adopt or give approval, the clerk will not be penalized. Candidates are encouraged to select a project that will likely be approved.

## Capstone Project Timeline

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Capstone proposals will be accepted twice a year, in April and October. Once the project is approved, candidates will have approximately one year to implement the project. Clerks are eligible to submit a project proposal any time after their third MCTI session, including after graduation. However, they are encouraged to pursue the capstone project immediately after completing their third session so as to finish the project and be designated a capstone graduate upon completion of MCTI.

A project extension may be granted in extreme circumstances. An extension must be requested in writing and submitted to the Certification Committee for approval.

Timeline
Participant completes third MCTI session.
Participant verifies MCTI transcript to ensure three sessions have been completed.
Participant submits Capstone Project proposal one month after the third MCTI session is completed.
Certification Committee meets to review proposals.
Participant completes his/her fourth MCTI session.
Participant completes his/her fifth MCTI session.
Participant submits the Capstone Project Summary one month after the fifth MCTI session is completed.
Certification Committee meets one month after the Capstone Project summary is completed to review project summaries. <b>Candidates present summary to committee in person or via conference call.</b>
Participant attends sixth and final MCTI session.
Candidate is recognized as a capstone graduate and has the opportunity to present their project at MCTI.