



CERTIFIED ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE

the essential credential in association management

2010 CAE EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE

Periodic changes to ensure currency and relevance are a hallmark of a well-designed credentialing program. Therefore, the Certified Association Executive (CAE) credentialing program undertakes a periodic job analysis study every five years, as well as an ongoing review of policies and procedures.

The composition of the CAE exam is guided by extensive research on the job tasks performed and knowledge needed by association executives. During 2008–2009, the CAE Commission oversaw a methodical and comprehensive investigation into the skills required for successful association management. The research resulted in the identification of 156 essential association management competencies organized into nine knowledge domains. This outline presents the content covered on the CAE exam with the amount of the test devoted to each area indicated in parentheses.

The exam content outline below takes effect in 2010, and will first be used for the May 7, 2010 CAE exam. (If you are sitting for the December 4, 2009 exam, please refer to the [2009 exam content outline](#).)

DOMAIN 1: ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT (14-16%)

A. General Management

1. Define the association's core competencies and align operations and activities to capitalize on these competencies.
2. Identify and implement strategic mergers, acquisitions, and partnerships with other entities to position the association to most effectively accomplish its mission.
3. Develop and analyze internal (operational) and external (leadership and membership) performance metrics to optimize the association's operations and activities.
4. Institute a comprehensive leadership succession plan that builds on established strengths to position the association for the future.
5. Establish core values to provide a framework for effectively managing the association.
6. Develop and implement strategies to manage change and promote innovation.
7. Employ project management processes based on quantitative and qualitative measures so that activities can be conducted effectively and efficiently.
8. Implement quality control procedures to improve operations and stakeholder satisfaction.
9. Facilitate staff acquisition of state-of-the-art knowledge of association management practices to position the association to meet future challenges.

B. Branding and Positioning

1. Utilize environmental scan data to inform the development of branding and positioning strategies.
2. Identify the association's unique value proposition to correctly position the association.
3. Integrate the association's brand in all programs, services, and activities to reinforce the association's unique position.

C. Financial Management

1. Develop, recommend, and manage budgets to achieve strategic planning objectives.
2. Implement systems, metrics, and tools to monitor and manage financial performance.
3. Establish a user-friendly financial reporting system for the association, and any subsidiary corporations, to provide financial transparency to the board, staff, and members.
4. Implement a policy of independent periodic review and audit of the association's finances to identify weaknesses and capitalize on strengths.
5. Recommend, implement, and manage investment and reserve policies to enhance and protect the financial security of the association.
6. Evaluate the impact of economic and budget factors to effectively guide financial planning, investment policies, and financial performance.
7. Develop and establish policies and procedures to ensure strong internal financial controls to prevent financial/accounting irregularities and inappropriate funds accounting.

D. Globalization

1. Analyze, interpret, and communicate the impact of global macro trends (social, cultural, and economic) on the association and its key stakeholders to comprehend present position and to anticipate future needs.
2. Evaluate opportunities to grow the association's reach and impact, taking into consideration research, trends, and legal considerations, with the goal of identifying whether and how business should be expanded globally.
3. Assess the implications of globalization on the association's members, programs, and services to ensure relevance in the global marketplace.

E. Strategic Planning and Thinking

1. Establish and implement a strategic planning process based on sound methodological principles to advance the association's mission and vision.
2. Communicate the mission and vision to members, staff, and the public to gain support and encourage participation in association programs and services.
3. Assist the board in setting and implementing short- and long-term association priorities, based on a strategic planning process, to target and allocate resources.

4. Extrapolate data from a variety of sources to develop strategies and tactics that achieve business goals and objectives.
5. Identify and use performance metrics to evaluate, on an ongoing basis, the effectiveness of the strategic plan and revise plan as necessary.
6. Develop funding strategies to address current and future needs and requirements identified in the strategic plan.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP (14-16%)

A. General Leadership

1. Utilize qualitative and quantitative data to guide decision making.
2. Engage in collaborative leadership with stakeholders to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.
3. Establish an organizational culture that is sensitive and responsive to the needs, interests, and values of the entire membership.
4. Provide guidance to board members and volunteer leadership to assist them in fully executing their responsibilities.
5. Integrate strategic leadership and calculated risk taking to achieve the long-term goals of the organization.

B. Ethics

1. Comply with the American Society of Association Executive's Standards of Conduct to model ethical behavior.
2. Maintain the highest degree of personal integrity in order to resolve ethical dilemmas.
3. Establish and implement conflict of interest policies for board and staff to insure transparency.

C. Diversity

1. Ensure that association communications, programs, products, and services reflect diversity to address and take into account the unique aspects of diverse populations.
2. Create a climate of inclusiveness to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

D. Interpersonal Skills and Group Facilitation

1. Advance staffs' professional and personal development through coaching, mentoring, career counseling and leadership development in order to build a stronger organization.
2. Coach and mentor volunteer leaders and association staff to develop their interpersonal skills to increase their effectiveness.

3. Facilitate individual participation and ownership in group decision-making and consensus building to increase board and staff effectiveness.
4. Facilitate board activities, process, and objectives to advance the organization's mission and vision.

E. Negotiating

1. Exercise effective and ethical negotiation skills to resolve conflicts and achieve consensus.
2. Utilize conflict resolution skills to productively resolve differences among parties.

DOMAIN 3: ADMINISTRATION (14-16%)

A. Human Resources

1. Establish and maintain a work environment that fosters staff teamwork, communications, efficiency, and effectiveness to retain quality staff and assure organizational efficiency.
2. Implement a clear delineation of job functions, organizational responsibilities, and chain of command within the office through documented policies and procedures that promote organizational efficiency.
3. Construct and implement legally compliant recruiting and hiring practices to mitigate exposure to risk and attract highly qualified staff.
4. Establish core competencies for job descriptions and provide adequate supervision, coaching and training for effective staff performance.
5. Implement a formal performance review process to maximize employees' potential.
6. Structure and implement disciplinary and termination policy and procedures to ensure fair and equitable treatment of staff and mitigate exposure to risk.
7. Develop, implement, and manage a strategic compensation program to attract and retain qualified association staff.
8. Enforce compliance with applicable employment laws to mitigate exposure to risk.

B. Technology

1. Identify and implement appropriate information technology systems and related policies and procedures to support association strategies and goals.
2. Supervise the selection, purchase, installation, maintenance, and upgrading of information technology systems to support strategic objectives.
3. Develop and implement secure systems to ensure data integrity and prevent unauthorized access.

C. Legal and Risk Management

1. Identify, retain, and manage legal counsel to aid the association in complying with relevant laws and regulations and mitigate risk.
2. Review and ensure proper use and execution of contracts to mitigate exposure to risk.
3. Develop policies and procedures in compliance with applicable laws to protect the association's reputation and assets.
4. Monitor association actions and activities to protect not-for-profit status and maintain compliance with antitrust laws.
5. Maintain required corporate and governance documents to ensure compliance with applicable laws.
6. Maintain appropriate insurance coverage to protect the fiduciary interests of the association, members, and staff.
7. Protect the association's intellectual property to maintain value and mitigate risk.

D. Facilities Management

1. Develop and implement an organization-wide crisis management program to protect and secure human and physical assets.
2. Evaluate association facilities and equipment to ensure fiscal responsibility and adequate resources.
3. Ensure that the work environment is compliant with applicable laws and regulations to create a safe and accessible workplace.

E. Vendor/Supplier Management

1. Evaluate the cost-benefit ratio and implications of outsourcing association functions to maximize operational efficiencies.
2. Establish and implement objective procedures to develop requests for proposals (RFPs), including performance evaluation criteria, to avoid vendor bias and conflict of interest.
3. Establish and implement conflict of interest and confidentiality policies, procedures, and supporting documentation to maintain organizational transparency and ensure that the association's interests and assets are protected.

F. Business Planning

1. Align the association's activities, operations, and business plan to support the strategic goals and resources of the organization.
2. Identify, retain, and/or manage accounting services to obtain the best financial information to support decision-making, to plan for financial sustainability, and for financial and legal protection.
3. Identify objectives, strategies, and tactics to achieve business goals.

4. Prepare business plans for new and existing programs, products, and services to guide operations and define criteria for outcome measures.
5. Develop long-range funding and needs plans to ensure adequate financial assets for the future management and development of the association.
6. Develop a business continuity plan to ensure continuation of the association's operations in the event of a disaster.

DOMAIN 4: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH (4-6%)

A. Knowledge Management System

1. Identify the information needs and preferences of stakeholders to leverage proprietary information and knowledge-based assets to develop a knowledge management program.
2. Transmit the knowledge management program through delivery of high-quality products and services with speed, efficiency, and effective customer service to share leading edge profession or industry learning, insight, and best practices.
3. Conduct ongoing evaluation of knowledge management systems to support continuous improvement.

B. Research, Evaluation, and Statistics

1. Develop a research agenda to benefit the internal operations of the association, advance the profession or industry, and provide needed information for members and other stakeholders.
2. Use appropriate research and data collection methods to guide decisions and operations within the association.
3. Prepare customized research reports to meet the needs and interests of stakeholders.
4. Develop a customized data reporting system to support strategy and positioning.

DOMAIN 5: GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE (9-11%)

A. Governance

1. Conduct on-going review of governance documents to ensure they support the association's strategic direction.
2. Establish, integrate, and maintain an effective and representative governance system to guide the association in accomplishing its mission.
3. Establish and maintain governance structure for an effective system of components to develop and/or implement the mission of the association.
4. Serve as liaison with the board and executive committee to implement the board's policy and vision.

5. Facilitate the activities of the association's board of directors, committees, task forces, and special interest groups to support the accomplishment of the association's goals.

B. Volunteer Leadership Development

1. Establish and maintain a volunteer recruitment, training, recognition, and accountability system to attract and retain active and effective involvement of membership.
2. Work with the board to develop a volunteer leadership succession plan that facilitates the transition process.
3. Educate and orient board members, volunteers, and staff regarding their respective ethics and fiduciary responsibilities to mitigate exposure to risk and ensure governance and management are performed properly.

C. Component Relations

1. Establish policies and procedures to form association components to create entities that serve member needs.
2. Develop and implement affiliation agreements to delineate lines of authority and responsibility for the association's components.
3. Provide relevant and timely resources to support the success and activities of association components.
4. Facilitate relevant and accurate information exchange between the association and its components to promote ongoing communication and positive relationships.

DOMAIN 6: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, AND COALITION BUILDING (6-8%)

A. Public Policy

1. Identify and analyze the need for public policy development activities for the purpose of determining how to best support the organizational mission.
2. Create an inclusive advocacy agenda to support the profession or industry.
3. Implement a public policy program to educate key stakeholders.

B. Government Relations

1. Implement and evaluate government relations programs that are consistent with board-approved policies to promote the association's objectives and goals.
2. Monitor legislation and regulation to evaluate its impact on the profession or industry.
3. Manage association lobbying activities to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
4. Establish and manage political action committees (PACs) to advance the association's public policy agenda.

5. Implement a grassroots advocacy program to advance the association's public policy agenda.

C. Coalition Building

1. Develop a coalition-building model that is responsive and flexible and which may include partnerships, alliances, and/or informal and formal relationships to advance mutual goals.
2. Organize short- and long-term coalitions to address single issues of common interest that advance the association's public policy agenda.

DOMAIN 7: MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (10-12%)

A. Member Relations

1. Develop communication strategies to keep members engaged and informed.
2. Create a variety of volunteer opportunities to encourage member contributions to association activities and advancement.
3. Establish a member-relations strategy that addresses the diverse needs and views of current and potential members.
4. Develop and enforce a member privacy policy, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, to protect members' personal and financial data.
5. Analyze and implement, if appropriate, industry awards and member recognition programs to support association programs and strategic goals.

B. Membership Recruitment and Retention

1. Plan and implement membership recruitment and retention programs guided by the strategic plan and the results of a membership-needs analysis to expand and retain the membership base.
2. Utilize market segmentation and targeting to develop appropriate strategies, messages, and delivery vehicles for current and potential members.
3. Research and identify strategies and tactics that increase member return on investment (ROI).
4. Communicate the value and relevance of the association to diverse populations of members and potential members to enhance membership retention and recruitment.
5. Evaluate member recruitment and retention programs utilizing a variety of measures, including membership satisfaction and membership trends, to assure relevance of programs.

C. Ethics Program

1. Foster an environment in which members are encouraged to identify and adhere to high standards of ethical behavior.
2. Establish and manage an association ethics and discipline program to promote and enforce standards of ethical behavior.
3. Plan and implement procedures and preventive education to help members maintain compliance with the association's ethical standards.
4. Evaluate professional and industry practices to determine the impact on members and the public.

D. Standard-Setting Programs

1. Establish and manage a voluntary standards program, if appropriate, to promote the profession or industry and assure the public of quality products/services.
2. Structure and administer standard-setting programs that are equitable while protecting the association and minimizing liability risks.

DOMAIN 8: PROGRAMS, PRODUCTS, AND SERVICES (12-14%)

A. Development of Programs, Products, and Services

1. Identify and determine the best methods for responding to the needs and interests of components and other stakeholders to develop relevant programs, products, and services.
2. Conduct needs assessment and market research to evaluate the feasibility of introducing, modifying, or discontinuing programs, products, and services.
3. Develop comprehensive implementation plans to ensure that programs, products, and services are developed and operated properly and cost effectively.
4. Formulate marketing plans for programs, products, and services to increase effective non-dues revenue streams.
5. Review metrics to evaluate programs, products, and services and make recommendations to maintain, improve, or discontinue.
6. Identify, develop, and monitor revenue streams to provide funding for the association's activities.

B. Fundraising, Sponsorships, and Development Programs

1. Utilize qualitative and quantitative data to identify appropriate revenue generating vehicles for accomplishing association goals.
2. Develop and execute a fundraising plan to improve the effectiveness of fundraising efforts.
3. Collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data associated with giving to evaluate the effectiveness of revenue generating initiatives.

4. Develop criteria for establishing foundations and endowments within the not-for-profit legal structure and the philosophy and strategies of the association to ensure funds are spent in accordance with the donors' intent.

C. Meeting and Events

1. Determine program and format based on meeting or event purpose, content and audience to effectively manage logistics and enhance the success of the meeting or event.
2. Manage planning, logistics, and operations to achieve successful meetings or events.
3. Conduct post-meeting or event evaluation to measure outcomes relative to objectives and improve future meetings and events.

D. Certification, Accreditation, and Licensure

1. Develop, implement, and manage credentialing programs to define and promote professional standards.
2. Investigate and evaluate relevant standards and legal implications and liabilities associated with credentialing programs to identify strategies for minimizing risk.
3. Ensure that credentialing programs meet technical standards to maintain validity and reliability.

E. Affinity Programs

1. Determine policies and criteria for selecting, promoting, and continuing affinity programs that are consistent with the association's vision and mission.
2. Develop, implement, manage, and evaluate affinity programs to maximize effectiveness.

F. Professional Development Programs and Delivery Systems

1. Develop and enhance the content of professional development products to ensure that the needs and requirements of members and industry are met.
2. Evaluate and plan the use of multiple methods and delivery systems to appropriately address member needs.
3. Incorporate an understanding of the conditions necessary for successful adult learning to guide the planning and development of professional development offerings.
4. Plan and implement procedures and preventive education to help members maintain compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

DOMAIN 9: MARKETING, PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS (8-10%)

A. Marketing

1. Define the scope of the market and identify target segments and key stakeholder groups to ensure that marketing strategies and tactics are targeted appropriately.
2. Use environmental scanning, marketplace tools, and research to guide and implement the development of the marketing strategy.
3. Develop and implement a marketing plan to support the association's position and branding, enhance membership recruitment and retention efforts, and promote programs, products, and services.

B. Public Relations Programs

1. Identify the target groups and individuals that must be positively influenced to ensure that PR efforts are targeted appropriately.
2. Plan, implement, and evaluate a public relations education and information program to positively influence groups and individuals and enhance public trust.
3. Develop a crisis communications and management plan to prepare a media spokesperson to communicate the association's position.
4. Formulate and articulate appropriate responses to inquiries from the media and the public to ensure that all relevant parties are properly informed.

C. Publications, Media, and Messages

1. Evaluate consumer and trade media outlets and develop and implement media approaches to advance the association's goals.
2. Integrate the communications delivery program to achieve the optimum messaging.
3. Develop a variety of publications (including technical journals), media programs and delivery systems to meet the diverse needs and interests of members and stakeholders.
4. Determine the most effective and feasible communication formats for accomplishing the association's goals and meeting the needs of members and stakeholders.
5. Monitor, review, and assess publications and communications quality, usefulness and relevance, and implement changes as appropriate to meet communications goals and objectives.
6. Plan, implement and monitor the strategy and applications associated with association web site development and maintenance to ensure the web site serves the mission of the association.
7. Develop an editorial and peer review structure, if appropriate, to ensure integrity of publications.
8. Provide effective communications strategies and interactive tools to engage members and stakeholders.