



# OIG BULLETIN

*Official Newsletter of the Office of the Inspector General*

## MCPPO 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition

Greetings,

One of the most important things government can do to protect public resources is to educate public officials and employees about procurement, contracting, fraud awareness, ethics and governance. To carry out this essential function, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG or Office) created the Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) program. This issue of the *OIG Bulletin* celebrates the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MCPPO program and explores how it can help your jurisdiction.

The OIG received legislative authority to establish a training and certification program for public purchasing officials in 1996. By teaching public employees how to comply with procurement laws, the MCPPO program would support the OIG's statutory mandate to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse in the use of public funds. In 1997, the MCPPO program's first year of operation, instructors taught 13 classes to approximately 300 students.

Over the past 25 years, the MCPPO program has grown exponentially. Last year, the program welcomed more than 4,300 students to 85 classes. Today, the MCPPO program offers a wide array of educational resources, including core classes like *Public Contracting Overview*; more specific classes on topics such as emergency procurement, cybersecurity and promoting diversity in public procurement; and other resources, including free trainings and videos on our [YouTube channel](#).

As many of you know, the MCPPO program moved all of its classes online in 2020, so that students could continue to participate during the COVID-19 pandemic. For now, all classes remain online, and we will continue to offer remote instruction going forward. By the end of 2022, we hope to resume some in-person classes as well. As always, we will follow the guidance of state and local public health officials to ensure the safety of our students and instructors.

This issue of the *OIG Bulletin* highlights the individuals who make the MCPPO program work – both instructors and program staff. It is because of their hard work and dedication that the program continues to be an effective and popular resource for public employees. On page [12](#), we feature an interview with long-time MCPPO instructor Mark Till, who recently retired from state service. I would like to thank Mark and all MCPPO instructors and staff for the contributions they make to the program every day. For more information about our other instructors and staff, please see pages [8-10](#).

This *OIG Bulletin* also includes frequently asked questions about the MCPPO program. On page [14](#), you will find the answers to questions about MCPPO designations, class scheduling and registration information, and more.

Thank you for reading this edition of the *OIG Bulletin*. We hope to see you soon in one of our trainings!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Glenn A. Cunha".

Glenn A. Cunha

## In This Issue

The MCPPO Program: A Brief Overview .....	3
MCPPO Program Offerings: Beyond Designations .....	4
The MCPPO Program: By the Numbers .....	6
Meet the MCPPO Instructors .....	8
Meet the MCPPO Program Staff.....	10
MCPPO Student Feedback.....	11
An Interview with MCPPO Instructor Mark Till .....	12
MCPPO Program FAQs .....	14
The MCPPO Program: A Visual Retrospective .....	16
Contact and Subscription Information .....	17

### Protect Your Community

If you suspect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds or property, you can confidentially report your concerns



[OIG Fraud Reporting Form](#)



Send us an email at  
[IGO-FightFraud@mass.gov](mailto:IGO-FightFraud@mass.gov)

### Have a Question About Chapter 30B?



Send us an email at [30BHotline@mass.gov](mailto:30BHotline@mass.gov)

### Connect With the OIG



Follow [@MassOIG](#) on Twitter



Join us on [LinkedIn](#)



Subscribe to our [YouTube](#) channel

## The MCPPO Program: A Brief Overview

Embedded in the Regulatory and Compliance Division of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG or Office), the Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) program trains public employees and others on compliance with state public procurement laws and other statutes designed to promote government transparency and accountability. The educational opportunities offered by the MCPPO program aid in the prevention and detection of fraud, waste and abuse of public resources in a variety of ways. Indeed, over the past 25 years, the Office has refined and expanded the classes offered by the MCPPO program to ensure that students understand the laws that safeguard open and fair competition for all qualified vendors, thereby promoting equal opportunities for these vendors to secure contracts paid for with public funds.

In 1996, the OIG received authorization from the Massachusetts Legislature to create a public purchasing official certification program. Later that year, the OIG established the MCPPO program as a comprehensive education program for public purchasing officials and vendors who do business with the public sector. The OIG designed the program to include foundational core classes as well as electives on more specialized or advanced topics.

In 1997, the OIG offered the inaugural *MCPPO General Certification Seminar* to over 300 participants at the McCormack Building in Boston. The following year, this seminar became [Public Contracting Overview](#), which continues to be a foundational MCPPO class today. The MCPPO program also added the *Supplies and Services Seminar* (now [Supplies and Services Contracting](#)) and a seminar on designing and constructing public facilities that would later become the [Design and Construction Contracting](#) class. In 1999, the Office awarded the first 200 MCPPO designations.

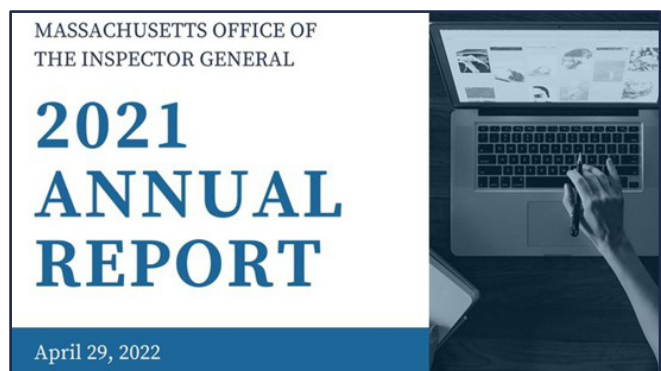
Since then, the MCPPO program has expanded its scope and outreach, reaching tens of thousands of students in locations across the Commonwealth. In the early 2000s, MCPPO instructors began speaking at outside engagements for government agencies, public universities and professional associations. In 2010, to increase access for students in other parts of the state, the MCPPO program began offering videoconferences and in-person instruction in areas beyond Boston. By

2014, the program had presented classes in Centerville, Lowell, Pittsfield, North Attleboro, Westfield and other locations. By the end of 2019, more than 25,000 students had participated in the MCPPO program.

In early 2020, in an effort to make training opportunities even more accessible, the MCPPO program offered its first self-paced, online classes. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck that same year, the MCPPO program transitioned all in-person and videoconferencing classes to an online platform. This new approach to teaching provided the opportunity for the MCPPO program to train more than 5,000 students in 2020 alone. Similarly, in 2021, the program trained more than 4,300 students.

Many MCPPO students have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in remote classes because they can save their jurisdictions time and money. Some students, however, have reported that they miss seeing their colleagues and networking in-person. To that end, the MCPPO program plans to offer both remote and in-person classes by the end of 2022. Students who enjoy the convenience of participating remotely will be able to do so while others who prefer in-person learning will be able to attend a class in the MCPPO classroom in Boston or at another venue in Massachusetts.

You can read more about the history of the MCPPO program in the October 2021 *OIG Bulletin* article, "[The MCPPO Program – Past, Present and Future](#)."



# MCPPO Program Offerings: Beyond Designations

The MCPPO program offered its first class, *MCPPO General Certification Seminar*, in January 1997. The class, which became *Public Contracting Overview* in 1998, focused on the legal requirements for public contracting by local government entities. In 1999, the MCPPO program created the MCPPO Certification (now the MCPPO Designation), a credential for students that demonstrates their familiarity with Massachusetts procurement laws and best practices. Today, individuals can earn an MCPPO Designation or Associate MCPPO Designation through the completion of three core MCPPO classes ([Public Contracting Overview](#), [Supplies and Services Contracting](#), and [Design and Construction Contracting](#)) and practical procurement-related experience.

The MCPPO Designation and renewal classes remain at the core of the MCPPO program's offerings. However, in the years since 1997, the MCPPO program has expanded significantly beyond its foundational procurement classes. For instance:

- For students who do not have the schedule or budget to attend the program's core classes, which are each three days long, or for students who may want a short overview of a specific topic, the MCPPO program developed a series of 60- to 90-minute webinars on a number of procurement-related topics. These include emergency procurement, detecting fraud in financial statements, navigating an investigation by an oversight agency, cybersecurity, prevailing wage law enforcement, promoting procurement diversity and public sector ethics. MCPPO instructors and staff develop new content every semester. Please see the MCPPO program's online [schedule](#) for information about upcoming webinars.
- The MCPPO program also offers a variety of free educational videos on the [OIG's YouTube channel](#). The OIG started the YouTube channel in 2018 as part of its commitment to public outreach and education, with 10 videos currently available. One video, entitled [Public Purchasing for Supplies and Services in Massachusetts: An Overview of Chapter](#)

[30B](#), teaches students the fundamentals of compliance with Chapter 30B of the Massachusetts General Laws, which governs the purchase and sale of supplies and services for municipal governmental bodies. Another video, [Fraud Awareness and Prevention in the Workplace](#), introduces viewers to basic fraud concepts and provides useful tools for identifying and preventing fraud at work. To date, these 10 YouTube videos have received nearly 20,000 views.

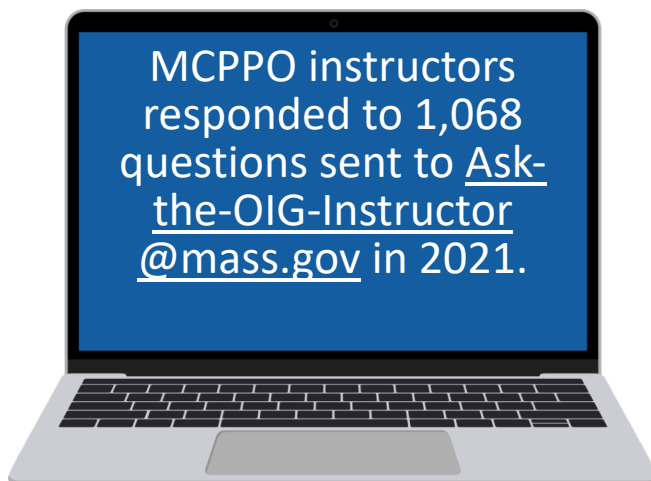
- In addition to MCPPO designations, the MCPPO program offers two certifications: the School Project Designers and Owner's Projects Managers Certification, and the Charter School Certification. The Office created the four-day [School Project Designers and Owner's Project Managers](#) class in 2007 in response to a Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) regulation requiring all public-school designers and owner's project managers to be certified to work on MSBA-funded school projects that trigger public procurement laws. See [963 CMR 2.11\(12\), 2.12\(6\)](#). Similarly, the Office developed the two-day [Charter School Procurement](#) class in 2006 in response to a statutory mandate requiring certification for charter school procurement staff. See [1997 Mass. Acts c. 46](#).
- MCPPO program leadership has worked hard to develop relationships and maintain accreditations with other state agencies, including the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy, the American Institute of Architects and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This means that employees of these agencies may count certain MCPPO classes toward their own agencies' continuing education requirements. Recently, the MCPPO program added accreditations from the Massachusetts Fire Commission and from the state Department of Environmental Protection. More accreditation applications are pending or in development.
- In response to an [OIG investigation](#) into former Westfield State University President Evan Dobelle,

*Continued on next page*

### *MCPPO Offerings: Beyond Designations (continued)*

the OIG developed a three-hour webinar to educate members of public boards and commissions about their duties, responsibilities and powers to help prevent fraud, waste and abuse of public funds by their chief executives. The MCPPO program offers this webinar multiple times each year.

- As the MCPPO program transitioned all classes to an online platform in 2020, it introduced new ways for participants to access staff and receive support. For example, the program established a dedicated email address, [Ask-the-OIG-Instructor@mass.gov](mailto:Ask-the-OIG-Instructor@mass.gov), that enables students to ask class-related questions to MCPPO instructors during and after class. In addition, MCPPO program staff members are available for individual advising services, to help current and prospective students choose their classes and navigate designation application and renewal requirements. Students can contact [MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov) to set up a one-on-one meeting with an MCPPO staff member.
- Over the past several years, the MCPPO program has created a variety of online forms to make communicating with program staff easier and more efficient. For instance, students can now [register and pay](#) for MCPPO classes and apply for MCPPO designations and designation renewals, all online. Similarly, the MCPPO program recently developed an [online form](#) for chief procurement officers of local jurisdictions to delegate their



**In 2021, MCPPO staff responded to 2,364 emails and 632 phone calls from students seeking help with class registration and participation.**



authority. The program will continue to develop online forms as part of its effort to streamline processes, making registration and compliance quicker and easier for MCPPO students, staff and public employees.

- In 2022, in response to the unprecedented wave of federal funding available to the state through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the MCPPO program began offering a series of free 90-minute webinars about ARPA. Topics include eligibility rules for fiscal recovery funds, limits on the use of ARPA funds and federal reporting requirements. The webinar has been incredibly popular; nearly 500 students attended one of the three ARPA webinars offered in March and May. The fourth and final [ARPA webinar](#) of the spring semester will take place on June 15, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. For more information about how to register for this webinar, please visit the MCPPO program's [registration page](#).

The MCPPO program will continue to grow and adapt to meet the needs of individuals interested in learning about compliance with public purchasing requirements in the Commonwealth.

## The MCPPO Program: By the Numbers

**13**  
MCPPO  
classes  
offered in  
1997

**47**  
MCPPO  
classes  
offered in  
2012

**85**  
MCPPO  
classes  
offered in  
2021

*Cost of Public Contracting Overview*

**\$200**  
in 1999

**\$450/\$700**  
in 2010

**\$595**  
in 2022

**4,294**  
MCPPO  
designations  
awarded since  
1999

**1,745**  
Active MCPPO  
designations as of  
May 2022

**8** Free MCPPO  
webinars offered  
so far in 2022

**300**  
MCPPO  
students in 1997

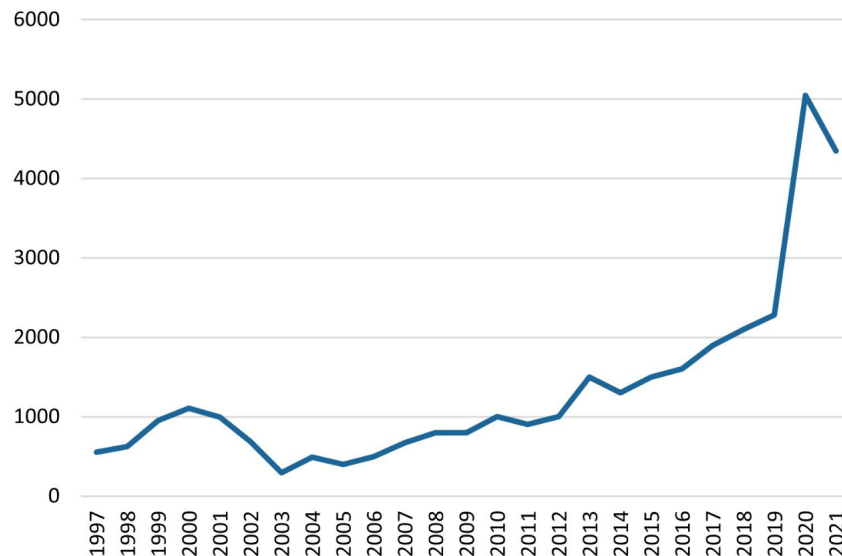
**1,000**  
MCPPO  
students in 2010

**4,347**  
MCPPO  
students in 2021

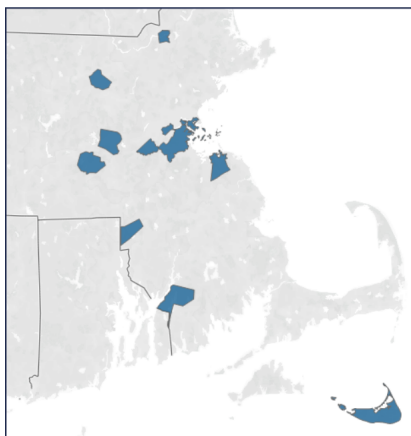
*Continued on next page*

## *The MCPPO Program: By the Numbers (continued)*

**Over the past 25 years, the MCPPO program has exponentially increased the number of students it has taught...**

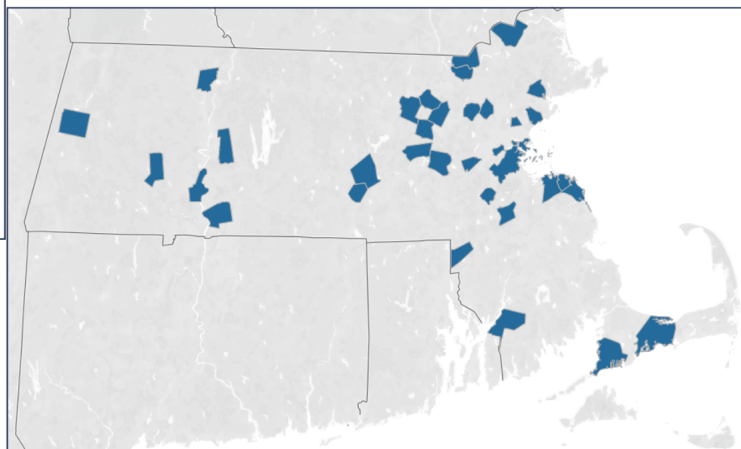


*Number of MCPPO students by year*



*Location of MCPPO  
Classes - 2012*

**... and has expanded beyond its Boston origins, teaching classes across the Commonwealth.**



*Location of MCPPO Classes - 2019*

## Meet the MCPPO Instructors

The OIG's Regulatory and Compliance (R&C) Division manages the Office's educational initiatives and provides guidance and technical assistance regarding public procurement. The trainings offered by the MCPPO program constitute the heart of the OIG's educational initiatives. By teaching public employees about their legal obligations and best practices for public purchasing, the MCPPO program helps the Office fulfill the prevention aspect of its statutory mandate "to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse in the expenditure of public funds." [M.G.L. c. 12A, § 7](#).

The core group of MCPPO program instructors, profiled below, are members of the R&C Division. These instructors devote significant time and energy to teaching: they instruct or moderate multiple classes each week, update materials and develop new training modules. OIG staff members from other divisions, including the Audit, Oversight and Investigations Division, the Civil Recovery Unit and the Policy and Government Division, teach certain MCPPO classes as well. In particular, the Office acknowledges the contributions of Will Bradford, Chrystal Cedenio, William Durkin, Michael Fieber, Miles Kaplow, Eric Knight, Mary Kolesar, Ashlee Logan and Jonathan Pitts, all of whom have taught multiple MCPPO classes. The MCPPO program also benefits from the expertise of instructors from other government agencies, including the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, the State Ethics Commission, the Secretary of the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts School Building Authority, the Operational Services Division and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, as well as individuals who work and consult in the public sector.

Please note that all instructors profiled in this article share teaching responsibilities for the MCPPO program's three core classes —



*Public Contracting Overview, Supplies and Services Contracting and Design and Construction Contracting* — as well as *Real Property*. Some of the other classes taught by each instructor are listed at the end of their biography.

**Debbie Bonaminio** joined the R&C Division as an Instructor in 2020.

Prior to joining the Office, Debbie spent many years in university administration and as adjunct faculty. She worked at numerous colleges and universities, including the University of Pennsylvania, New York University and, most recently, Maine Maritime Academy.

She has presented across the country at colleges and universities and at regional and national conferences on leadership, ethics, sports management and marketing, and organizational management.

Debbie received her B.A. in Communication and Theater Arts from Heidelberg College, her M.A. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Mississippi and her M.S. in Sport Management from Barry University.

Debbie teaches *Public Sector Ethics, Emergency Procurement, Invitations for Bids (IFB) and Requests for Proposals (RFP) Workshop, Chapter 30B Exemptions and Exceptions, Charter School Procurement and Spotlight on Schools*.



**Neil Cohen** has more than 36 years of public sector experience, including almost 30 years with the Massachusetts OIG. Neil joined the Office in 1993 as a Management Analyst for the former Contract, Audit and Oversight Division, now the Audit, Oversight and Investigations (AOI) Division. He became the Deputy Director of the AOI Division in 2012 and the Director of the R&C Division in 2018. As the R&C Division Director, Neil oversees the MCPPO program, the Chapter 30B Technical Assistance Hotline and Chapter 30B compliance activity.

Neil is adjunct faculty at Clark University and UMass Lowell. He is a frequent guest lecturer and presenter in academia and for professional organizations, civic groups and public agencies. He also volunteers for the AARP's Fraud Watch Network.

Neil received his B.A. from Vassar College and his M.A. in Public Administration from Columbia University. He holds several professional certifications, including Cer-

*Continued on next page*

### Meet the MCPPO Instructors (continued)

tified Fraud Examiner, Certified Inspector General and Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official.

Neil teaches *Boards and Commissions: Know Your Responsibilities*, *MCPPO Designation Renewal*, *American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Training*, *Spotlight on Schools*, *Fraud Awareness*, *Procurement Fraud* and *Contract Administration*.



**Maya French** joined the OIG's Legal Division in 2012 as part of the Hinton Drug Laboratory investigation team, which won a 2014 Manuel Carballo Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Service. Maya joined the R&C Division in 2016 as Senior Legal Counsel. In 2020, Maya became Deputy Director of the R&C Division. She now provides guidance to local officials on procurement-related matters while teaching and developing materials for the MCPPO program.

Prior to joining the Office, Maya spent several years as a town legislator, approving operating budgets and capital expenditures and advocating for changes in local regulations and by-laws.

Maya received her B.A. in English from the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and her J.D. (*cum laude*) from Suffolk University Law School.

Maya teaches *Boards and Commissions: Know Your Responsibilities*, *MCPPO Designation Renewal*, *Promoting Procurement Diversity Using Chapter 30B*, *School Project Designers and Owner's Project Managers Certification and Recertification*, *Charter School Procurement*, *Spotlight on Schools* and *Contract Administration*.



**Christine Hezzey** joined the R&C Division as an Instructor in 2021. She began her career as a medical technologist and developed a medical technology program for the University of New Haven. She later successfully defended this program before the Connecticut State Board of Higher Education.

Prior to joining the Office, Christine worked as an instructional technologist in higher education, providing training and support to students and faculty who utilized Blackboard and other educational platforms. She taught for many years as adjunct faculty for various colleges and universities, including North Shore Community College, Salem State University and Quinnipiac University.

Christine received her B.S. in Medical Technology and her M.A. in Teaching from Quinnipiac University, her M.S. in Instructional Technology from Southern Connecticut State University and her Ed.D. from Nova Southeastern University.

Christine teaches *Charter School Procurement*, *MCPPO Designation Renewal* and *Spotlight on Schools*.



**Jonathan Simon** joined the R&C Division in 2019 as Associate Counsel/Instructor. Within a year, he became the OIG's Lead Counsel for Professional Training and Instructional Design.

Prior to joining the Office, Jonathan spent nearly 17 years as a high school teacher in Massachusetts. He also served as the president of his teacher's union. Before becoming an educator, Jonathan worked as an Assistant District Attorney in the Essex County District Attorney's Office. He is also a U.S. Navy veteran.

Jonathan received his B.A. from Duke University, his M.A. from UMass Boston and his J.D. from Boston University School of Law.

Jonathan teaches *IFB and RFP Workshop*, *Chapter 30B Exemptions and Exceptions*, *Winter Weather Procurement*, *MCPPO Designation Renewal*, *School Project Designers and Owner's Project Managers Certification and Recertification*, *Charter School Procurement* and *Spotlight on Schools*.

Jonathan will be leaving the OIG in June 2022 to pursue new opportunities in state government. We appreciate his years of service and the vital guidance and support he provided when the MCPPO program transitioned to an online instructional platform. We wish Jonathan all the best!

## Meet the MCPPO Program Staff

The MCPPO program is staffed by a small team of dedicated OIG employees who provide information and administrative support to students and instructors. Like MCPPO program instructors, MCPPO staff are members of the Office's Regulatory and Compliance Division. At the helm of the MCPPO program is Program Administrator **Ericka Florence**, who has been with the Office since 2019. Ericka is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program and oversees compliance with all accreditation standards. Working alongside Ericka are Assistant to the Program Administrator **Celia Gisleson**, Senior Program Coordinator **Judi Cimildoro**, Program Coordinator **Martine Yoyo** and Regulatory and Compliance Division Coordinator **Chrystal Cedeno**. (**Frank Baez**, who served as the program's Registrar, recently left the Office to attend graduate school. The program welcomed its new Registrar, **Jerry Samy**, at the end of May 2022.)

Together, MCPPO program staff members process all class registrations and payments. They also process all applications for MCPPO designations and Massachusetts School Building Authority and charter school certifications. Students may register for classes, apply for designations and certifications, and pay either online or by mail, although the program encourages students to take advantage of the online option, due to its ease, speed and security.

MCPPO staff track and update all student accounts to ensure that payments and class credits are accurate and up to date. They generate and share certificates of class completion to document student progress. They also assist students seeking class transfers or refunds. If students have questions about payment or credits, MCPPO staff are available to answer them and troubleshoot issues. They monitor the program's phone and email helplines throughout the day and are ready to respond and assist when needed.



*MCPPO program staff*

MCPPO staff are constantly adapting the program to address student needs and interests. For example, after the MCPPO program transitioned all classes to a fully online format in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff began providing technical support for the new platforms to both students and instructors. They continue to provide this support today. In addition, program staff now offer individual advising services for students and prospective students. MCPPO staff help students choose classes, apply for designations and certifications, and keep their credentials current.

MCPPO program staff also play a key role in managing the program's website. They update class schedules, clarify new registration requirements, and inform students and members of the public about the latest program developments.

The MCPPO program is able to successfully train thousands of students each year because of its focus on teamwork; staff members work together to support students, instructors and each other. They are flexible, diligent, innovative and optimistic, and the MCPPO program could not function without their hard work. As the program marks its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Office is grateful for the commitment and contributions of MCPPO program staff.

## MCPPO Student Feedback

*The following comments are excerpts from anonymous student evaluations of MCPPO program classes over the years. Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their feedback.*

All instructors were above average (or better), which is great for any three day learning session. Very good at keeping the group interested and focused.

Great video locations. Miss the MCPPO cookies.

It is wonderful to see the level of professionalism and excellence that the Inspector General has brought to the MCPPO Program. All the instructors are fantastic speakers who answer questions clearly, have rich career experience, and are subject matter experts with mastery of related procurement processes and statutory schemes.

There was a lot of material to cover, and I was very impressed with the amount of knowledge, focus and expertise of the subject matter that all of the instructors possessed. Very valuable information. Thank you.

Excellent class! I particularly want to note how open and receptive each presenter was to responding to the group's questions.

“ Overall, I had a wonderful, engaging experience. You all work so hard and still manage to be funny and very effective imparting your considerable knowledge to all of us. Thank you. ”

I think this class was very insightful. There is a lot of information that needs to be retained and your instructors do a very good job.

## An Interview with MCPPO Instructor Mark Till

*Mark Till, a long-time member of the R&C Division and MCPPO Instructor, retired in 2021. In addition to teaching for the MCPPO program, Mark also served as the Coordinator of the Office's Chapter 30B Technical Assistance Hotline and as an Editor for the OIG Bulletin. Since his retirement, Mark has continued to do some work for the R&C Division, including teaching, on a part-time basis. This interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.*



### **What was your background before you started working for the OIG?**

I went to Babson and studied Business Administration. After college, I worked at Connecticut Bank and Trust. I literally started two floors underground in the cash vault. Then I worked in the internal audit department. I sold insurance and investments, then I went back to auditing at New Hampshire Savings Bank. Later, I was Director of Audits at Elliot Savings Bank in Boston. And then I was a photographer for 20 years.

### **When did you start your photography career?**

From 1990-2010, I photographed weddings and social events. I wrote a book, *The Lucrative Photographer* [about photography business practices]. I launched my speaking career as a result of writing the book. I lectured all over, starting in New England. As I became more popular, I lectured throughout the U.S., Mexico and Canada. It was fun.

### **How did you end up at the OIG?**

In 2010, the Office was looking for someone with audit experience to do a review of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. Due to the recession, the photography industry was really starting to crash then. I was only going to work for the Office for a couple months. Eleven years later, I retire.

### **When did you become an instructor?**

In 2012, the new Inspector General asked me to help on the Chapter 30B Hotline, and I joined the MCPPO team in 2013 when the Office began to expand its education program. In addition to my banking and financial background, my professional speaking experience was a good fit.

Neil Cohen [Director of the R&C Division] and I were the first non-lawyers on the Chapter 30B Hotline. The group has gotten better and better every year.

Same thing with the classes. Since 2013, the MCPPO program has grown exponentially, both in the number of classes offered and students who attend. The quality of MCPPO classes has improved, and the team constantly reviews class content and looks for additional ways to improve. People who've left the public procurement field to work in the private sector tell me the classes in the private sector aren't nearly as good as ours – and they're much more expensive.

### **The COVID-19 pandemic was the catalyst for moving the MCPPO program online. In your opinion, how has this changed the program?**

The move to remote learning is an unqualified success. During the first year of the pandemic, the program doubled student attendance. One key to the program's success was the development of one- and two-hour webinars, which makes it easier for students to set aside time for education.

There were a few hiccups along the way. In the beginning, internet connectivity was a challenge. The online systems would freeze, and students had issues logging in and staying connected.

As an instructor, I initially missed seeing students' faces. Over time, students and instructors alike adapted to the new learning environment. Today, students enjoy the remote learning experience, and student class evaluations have never been higher.

Remote learning is here to stay. Just as employees have grown accustomed to working remotely, so have our students. Remote learning saves students time (travel) and local jurisdictions money (travel, food and lodging). Of course, some students miss traveling to Boston and networking with their colleagues.

### **What would you say is your teaching philosophy?**

I view MCPPO classes as part professional development and part adult education. Students are not getting their bachelor's degree or law degree. It's meant to be practical. For most of the people attending these

*Continued on next page*

### *An Interview with MCPPO Instructor Mark Till (continued)*

classes, it has been decades since they've been in school, so I want it to be enjoyable. People learn more when they enjoy the process. I also like to use real world examples, so I use [deidentified] calls from the 30B Hotline as examples.

My philosophy is, life is short. You've got to have a little fun.

**What would you say has been your favorite MCPPO class to teach?**

That's easy. It's [\*IFB and RFP Workshop\*](#). I found examples on public websites where people would share their bids and proposals. Sometimes, one jurisdiction would submit a bid, and another jurisdiction would submit a proposal. Same service, completely different approaches to it. I thought, this is a great idea for a class.

What I like about the class is that students have to read examples: one is a bid, and one is a proposal. Students describe which one they would use and why.

Once, the Office received a complaint about a proposal. It was just a bad proposal. It didn't have any evaluative criteria. The jurisdiction didn't have a chief procurement officer. The proposal had fatal flaws on multiple levels. The first time we used it in a class [as an example], students would say, "Mark, no one could be that bad. You have to be making this stuff up." What I always tell people is, the more outrageous the example, the more likely it is true.

I think it's a good class because it's an advanced class. We have learning objectives in all our classes. Often, a class will help students identify issues. In the bids and proposals class, we help students apply knowledge they already have. That's why I think it's my favorite class. It's more engaging to the students, especially the ones who have been here for 20 years.

**What do you like about teaching?**

I like engaging with people. I find it interesting what people zero in on. Sometimes people zero in on exactly the right thing, and it's great. And sometimes it's interesting to see where they get sidetracked.

I have to understand what I'm talking about when I'm teaching. I have to learn something in order to explain it. I try to come up with examples that are kind of weird but memorable. I'm always trying to come up with ways to make it easier for people to understand. You know, where people can say, "Aha!" A lightbulb goes off.

**What's one thing you think the public should know about the MCPPO program?**

The people who go through the program have a high level of professionalism and integrity. We do background checks on people who apply for designations and renewals because many employers rely on our credentials.

**Where do you see the MCPPO program heading in the future?**

The MCPPO program has long had a reputation for quality content and knowledgeable instructional staff.

Remote learning allows the MCPPO program to capitalize on its reputation by offering classes to numerous municipal trade and professional associations. I expect the relationship with the associations to continue and potentially result in additional MCPPO designations.

**Is there anything you miss about working full-time for the Office?**

Do I miss the comradery? Absolutely. We have a good group. On the *Bulletin* team, there weren't any egos. We sink or swim as a team.

Everybody in the R&C Division works really, really hard. The fact that people want to do this work for this long says that it's a nice place to work.

**One final question. Your music knowledge is legendary in the Office. Mark Till, what is the greatest band of all time?**

The Beatles – no question!

## MCPPO Program FAQs

**Q: When do you post MCPPO class schedules?**

A: The MCPPO program posts a winter/spring, summer and fall semester schedule each year. We generally post the summer schedule in May, the fall schedule in early summer and the winter/spring schedule in November.

Please note that our class schedule may change several times each semester, based on training demand and other needs. Because of this, we encourage those interested in our trainings to periodically review the schedule for updates and sign up for our email distribution list at [MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov).

**Q: Do you offer any classes in my area?**

A: The MCPPO program currently offers all trainings in a virtual environment. By the end of 2022, we hope to host some in-person classes again while continuing the virtual option. When we provide in-person instruction, we use a designated classroom in Boston with videoconferencing capabilities. We also plan to offer in-person classes periodically at different locations throughout the Commonwealth. Check the online MCPPO schedule for training locations. Please contact us at [MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov) if you would like to host a class or would like us to consider holding a training in your area for your jurisdiction or organization.

**Q: I am a vendor. Are MCPPO classes open to vendor participation?**

A: Yes. Understanding state and local procurement laws is a sound investment. Vendors will receive a certificate of attendance for each class taken and are welcome to earn an MCPPO designation.

**Q: I am new to public procurement. Which class should I take?**

A: We highly recommend that you first take [Public Contracting Overview](#) as a prerequisite to our other core classes ([Supplies and Services Contracting](#) and [Design and Construction Contracting](#)) or any of our other classes.

In addition, you can watch our 22-minute [Chapter 30B overview video](#) on our [YouTube channel](#) for basic information. We also plan to offer an online self-paced procurement primer called *Bidding Basics* by the end of 2022 that can be completed in about four hours and outlines the basics of public procurement in Massachusetts.

**Q: I am registered for an upcoming class, but I am unable to attend. Am I allowed to transfer my registration?**

A: Yes. You may request to transfer your registration to another class or to someone else within your organization. Due to the limited number of space available in each class, registrants must send a notice of non-attendance to [MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov) at least two business days before the start of a class (unless an emergency causes non-attendance) to request a transfer or to receive a refund. Note, you may transfer your registration to another scheduled class of the same cost (if it is not at maximum capacity) **one time** within the same fiscal year. If we cannot accommodate your transfer request, we will issue a full refund. Please refer to our updated [class cancellation and attendance policy](#) for additional information.

**Q: What are the different MCPPO designations?**

A: The MCPPO program offers two designations: MCPPO and Associate MCPPO. New applicants for one of these designations must successfully complete our three core classes – [Public Contracting Overview](#), [Supplies and Services Contracting](#) and [Design and Construction Contracting](#) – within a three-year period and pass an assessment in each class with a score of 70% or higher. Students must also have the requisite amount of procurement-related work experience. The difference between the two designations is the number of years of procurement-related work experience required. The MCPPO Designation requires three or more years of relevant work experience, while the Associate MCPPO Designation can be awarded to students with less than three years of relevant work experience.

*Continued on next page*

### *MCPPO Program FAQs (continued)*

**Q: What is the difference between an MCPPO certification and an MCPPO designation?**

A: The core accreditations the MCPPO program offers are the MCCPO Designation and MCCPO Associate Designation, described in the previous FAQ. Although there is no general accreditation called the “MCPPO Certification,” the MCPPO program does offer certifications in two specific areas: the School Project Designers and Owner’s Projects Managers Certification, and the Charter School Certification. To earn the School Project Designers and Owner’s Project Manager Certification, students must complete the [\*School Project Designers and Owner’s Project Managers Certification\*](#) class. To earn the Charter School Certification, students must successfully complete the [\*Charter School Procurement\*](#) class. Each of these classes also requires students to obtain a score of 70% or higher on an assessment.

**Q: Why should I obtain an MCPPO designation?**

A: Local jurisdictions in Massachusetts widely recognize the MCPPO designation as an indication that the holder is familiar with Massachusetts procurement law and best practices. Recipients of an MCPPO designation have passed three examinations, completed at least 60 hours of professional training, and complied with the program’s work experience and continuing education requirements. Furthermore, all MCPPO designation holders have undergone a CORI (criminal record) check. For these reasons, municipal job postings often require that applicants hold or earn an MCPPO designation.

**Q: How do I apply for and obtain an MCPPO designation?**

A: The MCPPO designations are available to individuals who have successfully completed the required classes and have met certain experience requirements.

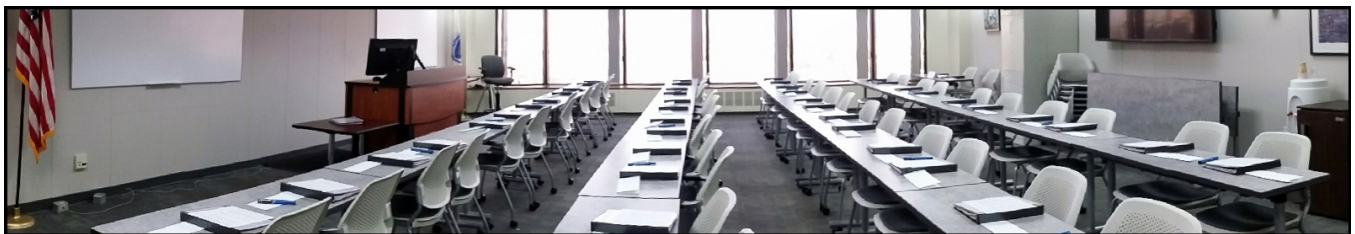
After you complete the required classes, please fill out the [application form](#) and [pay the required processing fee](#). We encourage students to apply and pay online.

**Q: How long is an MCPPO designation valid?**

A: A designation is valid for three years, and you must renew it every three years from the date of issue. You can email the MCPPO program to request your designation expiration status at [MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov).

**Q: How can I renew my MCPPO designation?**

A: To renew your designation, you must complete the *MCPPO Designation Renewal* class and earn 11 additional continuing education credits. After completing the class and continuing education requirements, you must submit a renewal application along with the application processing fee. Again, we encourage students to complete their designation renewal applications and make payments online.

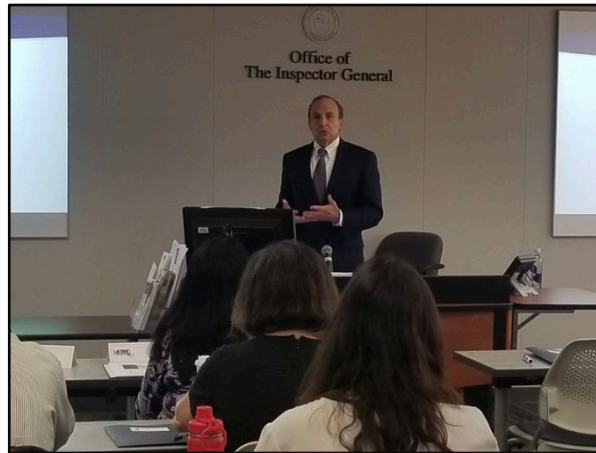


*MCPPO classroom – One Ashburton Place, Boston*

## The MCPPO Program: A Visual Retrospective



*First Assistant Inspector General Dan Ahern addresses students circa 1999*



*Inspector General Glenn Cunha addresses students in the MCPPO classroom in Boston circa 2020*



*OIG attorney Helen Flaherty converses with a seminar participant circa 1999*



*OIG attorneys and MCPPO instructors Lisa Price and Helen Flaherty review information with students circa 1999*



*OIG attorney and MCPPO instructor Natasha Bizaros teaches students in the MCPPO classroom in Boston circa 2018*



*OIG investigator Will Bradford teaches fraud awareness to students in the MCPPO classroom in Boston circa 2018*



*OIG Operations Manager and IT Specialist Eric Knight teaches cybersecurity to students circa 2020*

## Contact and Subscription Information



### Contact the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General

One Ashburton Place,  
Room 1311, Boston, MA 02108



**MCPPO**  
Excellence in Public Procurement

### Phone

- Main Office (617) 727-9140
- Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline (800) 322-1323
- MassDOT Fraud Hotline (855) 963-2580
- MCPPO Training (617) 722-8884
- Chapter 30B Technical Assistance Hotline (617) 722-8838
- Media Inquiries (617) 722-8822

### Fax

- (617) 723-2334

### Email

- Main Office  
[MA-IGO-General-Mail@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-General-Mail@mass.gov)
- Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline  
[IGO-FightFraud@mass.gov](mailto:IGO-FightFraud@mass.gov)
- MassDOT Fraud Hotline  
[MassDOTFraudHotline@mass.gov](mailto:MassDOTFraudHotline@mass.gov)
- Chapter 30B Assistance Hotline  
[30BHotline@mass.gov](mailto:30BHotline@mass.gov)
- Training/MCPPO Inquiries  
[MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov)
- Employment Inquiries  
[IGO-Employment@mass.gov](mailto:IGO-Employment@mass.gov)

### Attorney General's Office

For questions related to public construction, public works or designer selection, please contact the AGO at (617) 963-2371.

To view the current MCPPO class schedule or to register for a class electronically, click the links below. If you have any other questions, please contact us at (617) 722-8884.

- [Class schedule](#)
- [Class registration](#)

### Subscribe to the *OIG Bulletin*

The Office of the Inspector General publishes the *OIG Bulletin* on a periodic basis. There is no charge to subscribe.

To receive the *OIG Bulletin* electronically, please send an email containing your first and last name to [MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov). Alternatively, you may use our [online form](#) to sign up to receive the *OIG Bulletin*.

**THANK  
YOU**

As the MCPPO program commemorates 25 years of promoting public procurement excellence, we would like to thank everyone who helped make the program a success. We look forward to continuing our work to make government more efficient, transparent and accountable!