

# **Ohio Lobbying Association Certified Lobbyist Program**

## **Program Policy**

### *A. Certified Lobbyist Program*

In response to a member survey conducted in 2009, The Ohio Lobbying Association is beginning a voluntary Certified Lobbyist Program in 2011. The OLA Certified Lobbyist Program will be a standard for certifying members who are government relations professionals. The certification will mean that the “Certified Lobbyist” possesses in-depth knowledge of legislative, executive and regulatory procedures along with the rules, regulations and ethical standards to which all lobbyists must adhere in Ohio.

### *B. Value of the Certification Program*

The Certified Lobbyist Program will strengthen the aptitude and effectiveness of government relations personnel in lobbying firms, corporations, trade associations and not-for-profit organizations. The program will be useful for both new and veteran lobbyists. New lobbyists will be introduced into the lobbying world through the program, while experienced lobbyists will have the opportunity to hone existing skills. Additionally, the program will serve as an important tool in achieving the goal of the Ohio Lobbying Association to ensure its members comply with all ethical and legal standards. Members will earn professional certification and recognition as leaders in the Ohio lobbying community by earning the designation of “Certified Lobbyist.”

### *C. Program Requirements*

The Certified Lobbyist Program will require a lobbyist to complete a combination of educational and vocational requirements to become a certified lobbyist. A lobbyist will obtain the designation of “Certified Lobbyist” if the lobbyist completes 12 hours of coursework over the 2-year period running concurrent with the General Assembly. Hours may be earned in any number per year as long as the total number of hours is 12. Additionally, a certified lobbyist must attend at least 1 hour of an ethics class each year approved by the Ohio Lobbying Association which will count toward a lobbyist’s 12 hour requirement for the program. Hours can only be earned by attending a course approved by the OLA Ethics and Professionalism Committee.

Lobbyists will have the opportunity to earn hours through a combination of participation in required courses, additional course offerings, and electives. A participant may earn up to a maximum of 3 hours for each class offered. Participation in 2 electives will result in earning one credit hour per year and a maximum of 4 hours can be earned in a 2-year period from electives.

Hours earned in a 2 year period will be credited to a “Certified Lobbyist” designation in the following 2 year period. (Example: Hours earned in 2011 and 2012 will be credited to a 2013 to 2014 “Certified Lobbyist” designation). No credit will be given for the following 2 year period of certification if the lobbyist has exceeded the 12 hour requirement in a two year period.

### *D. Reporting*

Each participant is expected to report his or her hours earned under the program. Hours earned shall be reported to the Executive Secretary. The Executive Secretary will maintain a record of the hours earned by each participant. If there is a dispute regarding hours earned by a lobbyist, the Ethics and Professionalism Committee shall review the dispute and determine whether or not

the lobbyist has met the requirements to achieve the designation of “Certified Lobbyist.” The lobbyist requesting certification is the only person that can request a review of hours earned to earn the designation off “Certified Lobbyist.”

#### *E. Class Offerings*

The Ohio Lobbying Association will make every effort to offer a class at least every other month throughout the twenty four month certification period. Classes will be conducted by experts on each topic. These professionals will include recognized authorities from throughout the Ohio lobbying and government affairs arena. In addition, all Certified Lobbyist classes will be approved and backed by the expertise of the Ohio Lobbying Association.

#### *F. Fees*

OLA will offer the first set of certification classes as a benefit to the membership without a cost to the membership.

Any fees for subsequent certification programs will be determined by the OLA Board of Trustees.

#### *G. Curriculum*

##### 1. Required courses

- a. Ethics in Lobbying (Required) (JLEC)
- b. Lobbying 101 (Required for member that has been in the profession for less than 2 years. Legislative liaison experience does not count toward the 2 years). (OLA Board will be the Presenter).

##### 2. Additional Course Offerings

- a. Budget & Appropriations
- b. Communications and Media
- c. Grassroots & Coalitions
- d. Online Advocacy
- e. PACs & Campaign Finance
- f. Procurement

##### 3. Electives

- a. Participant (Mentor/Mentee) in OLA Mentoring Program.
- b. Serve on an OLA Committee with 80% attendance at meetings.
- c. Attendance at OLA Signature Series Luncheon.
- d. Give a presentation in OLA Speaker’s Bureau.
- e. Presenter at an OLA-approved class for the “Certified Lobbyist” program.

#### *H. Administration of Program*

The Program will be implemented by the Ethics and Professionalism Committee and the Executive Secretary. Under delegated authority from the Committee, the Executive Secretary will make decisions regarding the daily implementation of the Program and the development of resources for it, with regular updates to the Committee. The Executive Secretary will consult the Committee on issues with which he or she needs assistance. If significant revisions to Program policy are proposed, the Committee shall consider such proposals. Any significant changes that are made to Program policy shall be adopted by the Committee.

*I. Periodic Evaluation of the Program*

The Ethics and Professionalism Committees will develop detailed evaluations that attempt to measure the value and success of the Program. These evaluations will assess the program's administrative structure, curriculum, and facilitation.

The program will be reviewed by the Committee after the first year of the program and every two years after the first year of the program. After such review, the Committee will submit a report to the Board of Trustees providing statistics about program participants, an overview of feedback received from participant evaluations, and an assessment of the program's success.

*J. Verification of Certification*

All applicants that have completed the requirements to become a "Certified Lobbyist" shall submit an application for such designation when the required hours of the program have been met.

If an applicant claims to have completed the requirements to earn a "Certified Lobbyist" designation and that applicant has not received such a designation, the applicant may request that the Ethics and Professionalism committee review the application for certification.