



Case Study

Building a Better City:

How the **City of Detroit's Office of Talent Development and Performance Management** Built a Scalable, Accredited Ecosystem



This case study explores how the City of Detroit's Office of Talent Development and Performance Management (TDPM) used IACET accreditation to standardize quality, strengthen internal capability, and scale learning across city government. Building on that accredited foundation, TDPM is expanding its vision beyond municipal employees and exploring programs designed to empower everyday Detroiters through accessible, high-quality professional development.

Overview

About IACET

The International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the global quality of continuing education and training. IACET developed the original Continuing Education Unit (CEU) and is the premier standards-setting body for quality in training and education. Organizations that earn IACET accreditation have demonstrated their commitment to excellence through adherence to rigorous, research-based standards that promote continuous improvement and learner success.

Learn more at www.iacet.org

About TDPM

Established in 2014, the City of Detroit's Office of Talent Development and Performance Management (TDPM) is the City's centralized training division, focused on building capacity and capability across the departments, agencies, boards, and commissions that serve Detroit's citizens. TDPM's mission is to equip employees with the tools and resources necessary to enhance service delivery and the quality of life for city residents.

The team strategically aligns individual employee and departmental goals with the city government's strategic priorities, ensuring each employee's success contributes to the department's success, which in turn supports the collective mission and vision.

Unsurprisingly, centralized governance, along with departmental specialization, requires a shared quality framework. After regaining IACET accreditation in December 2019, TDPM used the accreditation framework to ensure standardized processes, strengthen quality assurance, and validate its internal certification programs.

Today, TDPM is leveraging that foundation to scale access to learning, leadership development, and career growth, and to explore how accredited training can eventually serve audiences beyond City employees.

Learn more at <https://detroitmi.gov/node/12901>

Regaining Accreditation; Rebuilding Confidence

For years, the City's training department was accredited. Unfortunately, due to administrative changes, budgetary constraints, and the city's bankruptcy, centralized training was dismantled, and the City's accredited status lapsed.

During this time, the City faced several issues that limited scale and increased operational risk, including:

- **Incomplete Documentation:** Processes existed but were not consistently documented or applied.
- **Risk of Lost Institutional Knowledge:** When employees left, undocumented processes created gaps and forced teams to rebuild.
- **Inconsistent Practices:** Departments followed different training methods, resulting in variability in quality and delivery.
- **Limited Confidence in Internal Certification:** Leadership lacked confidence in the City's ability to certify its own programs.
- **Scalability Constraints:** In-person delivery capped reach.

Recognizing the value of cross-functional collaboration through high-quality programming, Dr. Iris Ware, the newly appointed Chief Learning Officer, established TDPM, which officially launched in September 2014. In late 2017, TDPM began pursuing renewal of its Accredited Provider status. Accreditation would enable the City to serve its audience by validating and improving existing processes, scaling quality programs through consistency, and strengthening the long-term impact of the City's learning experiences.

By the time that Tamiko Ogburn, M.Ed., M.A., Ph.D., joined TDPM as Manager II: Learning Design and Organizational Effectiveness in 2018, the City's reaccreditation efforts were well underway. Leveraging multiple perspectives in learning and talent leadership, the TDPM team pursued accreditation as a key component in their cross-functional training strategy and achieved IACET accreditation in late 2019.

"{The team} is really sold on the idea of improving and learning how our residents and employees learn. When we meet with our key accounts, it's 'what are your goals, what are you trying to accomplish, and how can we help you do that?'"

— Tamiko Ogburn

The IACET Solution: Rooted Clarity and Enabled Scale

"Applying for accreditation made us go back, look at the quality and structure of our processes and make refinements. It also allowed us to make sure everyone was using the processes properly and consistently across all departments. "

— Tamiko Ogburn

TDPM used the accreditation process as a structured catalyst for improvement rather than a box-checking exercise. Accreditation required the team to formalize workflows by answering practical questions such as who owns the process, what is done, when it is done, how is quality verified, and how do results feed continuous improvement.

"Accreditation pushed TDPM to document, standardize, and socialize core learning processes, growing the learning function beyond mere compliance to one of intentional, strategic fulfilment."

That's a Wrap Team Building Exercise during the Core Strengths follow-up workshop, facilitated by Dr. Tamiko Ogburn and Kimberly Randall (right).

2025 Strategic Planning Retreat for Housing and Revitalization Department (HRD), facilitated by Dr. Iris Ware (left).



From Confidence to Quality: Building City-wide Training Consistency through Signature Programs

Initially, leadership was uncomfortable with the City certifying programs, believing that independent, third-party validation would provide greater credibility. Over time, through a proven track record of success, accreditation, and learner feedback, the team and leadership have gained confidence that TDPM can design and certify signature experiences. TDPM currently offers three signature courses—T3, ELDP, and SOP—with plans to expand.



Completion Ceremony

Train-the-Trainer Certification Program (T3)

The Train-the-Trainer Certification Program (T3) is available to employees who have training responsibilities for their departments. A time intensive program, participants complete coursework, shadow current facilitators, design and develop a course for their department, submit training materials for review and approval, and then successfully facilitate that course.

Early cohorts quickly discovered the program was more than just learning presentation skills. Participants acquired theory, instructional design, and other learning fundamentals, all while building realistic, practical experiences aligning to TDPM's accredited policies. Upon completion, certified trainers are equipped with a complete standardized process for facilitation and course development

Executive Leadership Development Program

TDPM's Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP) is designed to strengthen the leadership bench across the City, supporting managers and emerging leaders with practical development that translates directly to day-to-day performance. Unsurprisingly, program graduates consistently describe growth in leadership mindset, communication, and performance habits, along with increased confidence navigating complex challenges and leading teams, empowering transformative reflection in how leaders think, listen, and act.

"The program reinforced the power of empathy-driven communication, helping me further align messaging with the needs, emotions, and lived experiences of Detroiters."

— ELDP participant

Other participants echoed similar outcomes, as well as a stronger habit of self-accountability by regularly asking what more they can do to sustain results and serve the organization effectively.

ELDP participants also report stronger listening skills and more intentional relationship-building with senior leaders, which matters in an environment where alignment and execution depend on cross-department coordination and trust. Collectively, these outcomes position ELDP as a capability-building engine that supports both individual leader effectiveness and broader organizational performance, while keeping Detroit's public-service mission at the center of how leaders communicate and make decisions

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Certification Program

TDPM identified a continuity challenge that affects many organizations and can be especially pronounced in environments shaped by election cycles: transitions. When key staff and leadership change, departmental quality can erode if critical procedures are not documented, reviewed, and taught consistently. Built to reduce that risk by strengthening knowledge transfer and operational stability, TDPM's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Certification Program sought to reinforce that essential practices do not depend on individual memory or informal handoffs. The program was officially rolled out in January 2026, following a pilot in which five employees completed an early version of the course and helped validate its relevance and practical value.

Results to Impact: Scaling Experience Through Flexible Delivery

"Since we've been accredited through IACET, we've been able to offer programs via live, virtual, in-person, and online. Knowing that these were validated as quality programs, our employees had no problem attending, and the ratings we receive have been very high."

— Tamiko Ogburn

Prior to accreditation, City employees had limited training options, as courses were delivered exclusively in person with constrained capacity. Through IACET accreditation, TDPM strengthened its ability to expand delivery models, supporting a strategic shift to virtual and on-demand formats. This increased flexibility gives employees more opportunities to engage in certified learning experiences at times and in modalities that fit their schedules. The move toward more accessible, multi-format delivery has been the primary driver behind the significant growth in course registrations and participation across the City.

Despite operational complexities inherent in a large municipal environment, the City's annual learning statistics continue to reflect the pace and impact of this shift:

Year	Learners Awarded CEUs	Number of CEUs Awarded
2022	2510	738
2023	3758	881
2024	4223	945

Recognition, Innovation, and Continuous Improvement

Going beyond traditional annual report requirements, TDPM's continuous improvement approach includes annual training needs assessments, analysis of Individual Development Plans, and a monthly training forum. Together, these mechanisms provide multi-tiered support for learners across the City's infrastructure while reinforcing governance, alignment, and ongoing quality improvement.

TDPM's emphasis on structured development has translated into meaningful career outcomes. Post-accreditation, the team has documented multiple examples of internal mobility and expanded responsibility, including promotions from Transportation Terminal Supervisor to District Superintendent and from Desktop Support Supervisor to Mobility Garage Supervisor, as well as advancement into HR Director roles within DWSD and Operations General Manager roles within the City's Human Resources Department. These outcomes demonstrate that accredited learning assists in advancing talent progression and leadership readiness across critical operational functions.

Externally, TDPM's work has earned sustained national and international recognition, reinforcing the credibility of its learning strategy and the maturity of its training function. Since accreditation, the team has received:

- The **Distinction Award** during the Association for Talent Development's Employee Learning Week each year;
- The 2025 **OnCon Icon Award** as a Top 100 Learning and Development Team;
- The 2025 **Brandon Hall Technology Award** recognizing excellence in learning and talent technology innovation; and
- The 2025 **UKG Aspire Award** for leveraging workforce solutions to achieve measurable business results and foster strong workplace culture.

Collectively, these recognitions demonstrate TDPM's commitment to quality, innovation, and measurable workforce impact.

OnCon Icon Award - 2025 Top 100 L&D Team (left) and Vision Board Workshop Employee Learning Week (right)



Looking Beyond Detroit: From Internal Capability to Community Value

“IACET had definitely provided an opportunity for us as the City of Detroit to put ourselves out there, not just in the City, but beyond the City, even internationally, where people will learn what we’re doing.”

— Tamiko Ogburn

Looking ahead, TDPM is building on its accredited foundation to explore how high-quality learning can serve audiences beyond City employees. The team is considering professional development offerings for local businesses and expanding access across Michigan county governments and other states, with longer-term ambitions that could reach international learners as well. TDPM has already begun collaborating to offer courses through the Oakland County Aspiring Leaders program, signaling early momentum toward broader regional impact. As planning continues, future program areas for 2026 and 2027 are already under discussion, including English as a Second Language (ESL) offerings and certified conversational Spanish and French courses, which align with both workforce needs and community-facing service priorities. TDPM also sees a long-term opportunity to become a revenue-generating entity within the City while maintaining its public-service mission, using accreditation as the backbone for credibility, consistency, and scalable delivery.

Leaders should use the IACET process to strengthen operations by fully documenting workflows, clarifying ownership, and establishing review cycles that keep training current as needs change.

Learner feedback, career mobility, and clear metrics help sustain leadership support and build interest in accredited programs over time, turning training in to a trusted engine for organizational performance and growth. For the City of Detroit’s TDPM Team, that engine brought the City’s campaign of, “It’s Go Time” straight to the heart of government employees.

Core Strengths follow-up workshop, Kimberly Randall and Dr. Tamiko Ogburn Facilitators (left).
Team building retreat for Project Clean Slate, facilitated by Dr. Tamiko Ogburn, Kimberly Randall and Nanci Branch (right).



