



Certified
Local Government
Communicator 

CAPSTONE TOOLKIT

CLGC Capstone Overview

The **Certified Local Government Communicator (CLGC)** capstone project brings together everything you've learned throughout the course, from fundamental laws and ethics to crisis messaging, writing, and the use of new technologies.

Participants will create a **strategic communications plan** representing their local government or a realistic scenario. This capstone simulates the day-to-day responsibilities of a local government communicator and demonstrates your ability to craft, manage, and defend a communications strategy.

Capstone projects should use real-world scenarios and be submitted with necessary approvals, redactions, and retention, as they may become public records.

Optional Strategic Communications Topics (Examples)

Choose an example scenario that fits your community or personal interests, or propose your own scenario. Each topic should include multiple layers of complexity (policy, public perception, timing, and legal/ethical considerations).

Note: This is your opportunity to work through a **difficult or complicated issue without the pressure of a real situation**. Select a topic that feels challenging and nuanced – something that tests your ability to balance competing priorities, manage risk, and build trust in a realistic setting.

You can choose from the examples below or create your own. If you choose to create your own, please include a description of your chosen scenario at the beginning of section 2.

1. Launching a **countywide flood resilience and stormwater management initiative** amid budget criticism
2. Communicating through a **major cybersecurity incident** affecting city services and public trust
3. Managing a **downtown redevelopment plan** with business disruption and community pushback
4. Explaining a **public safety consolidation or fire rescue merger** between the city and county departments
5. Introducing a **citywide smart technology or AI-powered public service system**, balancing innovation and privacy
6. Announcing a **new affordable housing ordinance or zoning change** that divides neighborhood sentiment
7. Responding to **misinformation about a millage renewal or sales surtax referendum**
8. Promoting a **rebranding campaign** following a high-profile controversy or leadership change
9. Restoring confidence after a **utility rate increase or infrastructure failure**
10. Launching a **civic engagement initiative** to rebuild trust after a Sunshine Law violation

Capstone Portfolio & Roundtable

Your capstone project is divided into **six parts**. Each section connects to course content and prepares you for the live **FMCA Annual Conference Roundtable**, where you'll share and discuss your work with peers.

1. Situation Overview

Provide a high-level explanation of your city or county to help the reader understand the community you represent. Summarize what your city cares about most – its mission, values, or key priorities – and describe its biggest strengths, weaknesses, and current goals. Include relevant contextual details such as population, geography, or major industries that shape communication needs. This section sets the stage for your entire portfolio and helps the reader see your community through your lens.

Draws From: Lesson 1

Word Count: 200-300 words

2. Communications Plan

Develop a strategic communications plan around a real or hypothetical municipal issue, event, or project (e.g., new park, tax proposal, infrastructure update). Include:

- ▶ Objectives
- ▶ Target audiences
- ▶ Key messages
- ▶ Communication tactics
- ▶ Evaluation methods

You may organize it using these recommended headings:

A. Situation Analysis

- ▶ Briefly summarize the issue or opportunity.
- ▶ Include relevant context such as community sentiment, past challenges, or public perception.
- ▶ Identify what triggered the need for communication (e.g., new program, crisis, controversy, misinformation, etc.).

B. Objectives

- ▶ Define 2-3 specific communication goals.
Example:
 - Increase public understanding of the new stormwater fee
 - Encourage recycling participation by 15% within six months
 - Rebuild public trust following a data breach
- ▶ Objectives should be **measurable** and linked to outcomes (awareness, participation, support, etc.).

C. Key Audiences

- ▶ Identify your primary and secondary audiences (if applicable).
Examples: residents, business owners, city employees, media, partner agencies, civic groups, elected officials
- ▶ Explain why each group matters and what level of engagement they require.

D. Core Messages

- ▶ List 3-5 concise, repeatable messages that align with city values and priorities.
- ▶ Include a short **message rationale** (why it matters, what emotion or fact it connects to).
- ▶ If applicable, include **supporting points** or FAQs that anticipate public concerns.

E. Strategies and Tactics

- ▶ Outline how you'll reach your audiences across earned, owned, shared, and paid channels.
- ▶ Include both proactive (education, outreach, partnerships) and reactive (crisis, corrections, clarification) tactics.

Examples:

- Launch community meetings or listening sessions
 - Issue news releases and briefings
 - Partner with local organizations or schools
 - Use SMS, website banners, and social media to push timely updates
- ▶ Include a brief timeline or phasing if relevant.

F. Evaluation & Metrics

- ▶ Identify how you'll measure success.

Examples: social engagement, media coverage, survey results, event attendance, sentiment analysis, or reduced misinformation

G. Challenges & Mitigation

- ▶ Acknowledge potential risks, controversies, or obstacles.
- ▶ Briefly explain how you would manage them, emphasizing transparency, ethics, and responsiveness.

Draws From: Lessons 3 & 7

Word Count: 500-1000 words

3. Legal & Ethical Considerations

Identify at least two potential Sunshine Law or Public Records considerations relevant to your communications plan. Explain how you would ensure compliance and maintain transparency while protecting sensitive information.

Draws From: Lesson 2

Word Count: 250-350 words

4. Writing Samples

Showcase your ability to communicate across multiple platforms. Include the following:

- ▶ Press Release or Major Announcement (300-400 words)
- ▶ Crisis Statement – choose one: infrastructure failure, staff misconduct, or safety issue (150-250 words)
- ▶ Platform Adaptations – one SMS text, two social media posts, and one owned media channel (e.g., email or newsletter blurb) (200-300 words total)

Each sample should demonstrate tone consistency, clarity, and appropriateness for the intended audience.

Draws From: Lessons 3, 5, & 6

5. AI Integration Exercise

Demonstrate responsible and effective AI use. Choose one piece of content from your portfolio that you drafted or refined using an AI tool (e.g., ChatGPT, CoPilot, Canva Magic Write). Include a brief explanation of:

- ▶ How the AI tool supported your writing or research
- ▶ What edits or improvements you made for accuracy, tone, and ethics
- ▶ How you ensured compliance with public communication standards

Draws From: Lesson 4

Word Count: 200-400 words

6. Reflection & Strategy (Roundtable Preparation)

Reflect on what you’ve learned and how you’ll apply it in your role. This section doubles as preparation for the **FMCA Annual Conference Roundtable** discussion. Write a one-page reflection responding to the prompts below.

Roundtable Reflection Prompts

1. What was your biggest “aha” moment from the course or from creating your portfolio?
2. Which lesson was most challenging to apply in practice, and why?
3. How has your understanding of Sunshine Law or public records changed your approach to communication?
4. What AI tool or new technology did you find most helpful (or most concerning)?
5. How will this course change the way you communicate on behalf of your city or county, if at all?
6. What would you tell someone considering enrolling in the CLGC program?
7. What would you tell someone considering going into local government?

Draws From: All Lessons

Word Count: 300-500 words

Total Target Word Count: ~1,800-2,700 words across the full portfolio

Design & Formatting Guidelines

File Format

- ▶ Submit as a **single PDF** or **digital presentation** (PowerPoint, Canva, or Google Slides).
- ▶ Name your file: **Lastname_Firstname_CLGC_Capstone.pdf**

Visual Layout

- ▶ Use your city's internal **branding/style guide**.
- ▶ Maintain **clear hierarchy**: use consistent headers, subheaders, and bullet styles.
- ▶ Include your **municipality name or project title** on the cover page.
- ▶ Use **page numbers** and **section headers** throughout.
- ▶ Incorporate **visuals** as needed, such as photos, mock posts, charts, or graphics, to illustrate your work, especially for writing samples and communications plans.

Conference Roundtable

At the FMCA Annual Conference, participants will meet in small, facilitated groups to discuss their portfolios and share insights.

Roundtable Flow

- 1. Introductions (5 min)** – Each participant shares their city/county and the focus of their capstone.
- 2. Portfolio Exchange (20 min)** – Review and discuss projects in small groups; each participant gives a quick walkthrough of one section they're most proud of.
- 3. Reflection Discussion (25 min)** – Discussion is guided by your Reflection & Strategy section.
- 4. Group Takeaways (10 min)** – Each group selects a spokesperson to summarize themes and share insights with the full room.

Submission Details

- ▶ **Format:** Single PDF
- ▶ **Deadline:** April 1, 2026
- ▶ **Submission:** Upload your final product in Kajabi via the Capstone Project lesson
- ▶ **Bring to Roundtable:** A digital or printed copy for discussion

If you cannot attend the Annual Conference, please submit a 3-5 minute recorded video presentation discussing your Strategic Communications Plan.

Questions?

Contact Selina Smith at ssmith@flcities.com.