

South Carolina Certified Public Manager® 2025 George C. Askew Award Winner

The George C. Askew Award is given annually to an individual (or individuals) deemed to have completed an exemplary Certified Public Manager Capstone Project.

It was created by the American Academy of Certified Public Managers® to recognize outstanding projects throughout the country and was named in honor of George C. Askew who, by virtue of being the first name called in the first CPM graduation ceremony in Georgia in 1976, became the first individual to be certified by a Certified Public Manager® program.

Each CPM Program, through its CPM director, may nominate a capstone project to be given the award for its local program.

The South Carolina Certified Public Manager® program congratulates the recipient of the 2025 George C. Askew Award, J. Cruz Wheeler, SC Department of Transportation.

The criteria for selection include the project should:

- be innovative in its approach.
- demonstrate an improvement in quality within the work unit as a result of the project.
- show cost savings as the result of the implementation of the project.
- be an outstanding demonstration of CPM principles.

Nathan Strong and Bill Tomes serve as project mentors for the program. They review each project in its entirety and provide feedback and guidance to the CPM candidates. There were many great projects that will positively impact agency processes and the citizens of our state. Selecting a winner each year is no small task. Bill Tomes had this to say about this year's Askew Award winner:

J. Cruz Wheeler's CPM project, The Feasibility of Reducing Material Costs of Statewide Traffic Sign Production, involved a study of SCDOT's program to recycle flat-sheet aluminum traffic signs removed at the end of their service life. The process involved stripping the reflective sheeting with high-pressure water so the aluminum could be reused in new sign production. This initiative generated significant cost savings, as refurbishing was considerably cheaper than purchasing new aluminum. Mr. Wheeler's research focused on quantifying cost-saving and efficiency opportunities in determining the most effective material purchasing strategy for statewide sign production operations. His extensive research resulted in a cost-benefit analysis of in-house SCDOT sign refurbishing operations vs. vendor-supported refurbishing operations. Due to the substantial initial investment costs, Mr. Wheeler recommended the vendor support option and had identified several vendors who were interested in providing this service. If vendor support cannot be secured within a reasonable timeframe, SCDOT can proceed with developing an in-house refurbishing operation, as the potential savings of over \$5 million outweigh the associated risks.

Three graduates were selected to receive an honorable mention for their projects:

Amber Hogan, Department of Revenue
Amy Hill, Department of Employment and Workforce
Emily Purcell, Department of Revenue

