

South Carolina Certified Public Manager® 2023 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 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 2023 George C. Askew Award, Alex Wilcox, Senior Human Resources Consultant, SC Department of Administration.

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. Nathan Strong had this to say about this year's Askew Award winner:

"Alex Wilcox's 2023 CPM project is an exceptional example of a research project with potentially far ranging benefits to South Carolina state government employees. His research into the potential benefits of procuring a single state government Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was thorough and compelling. Alex deftly painted the picture of a fragmented approach throughout state government. Some agencies provided access to EAPs while other agencies did not, or they provided access to a very limited array of services. He also pointed out just how much importance the current workforce places on access to services that support mental health and how the state could be at a disadvantage in recruiting and retaining talented workers without an EAP. His analysis indicated that South Carolina was one of the few states in the country that do not offer an EAP and that the average cost of providing EAP benefits, \$25.10 per employee, per year (PEPY), is minimal, when compared to the average salary of a state employee salary in South Carolina, \$59,833. Alex reviewed several potential agency structures that could support EAP administration and proposed four possible approaches. Essentially, Alex's CPM project provided the state with a feasibility study that saved our state well over \$50,000 not having to hire a consultant. There is no doubt his project is more than deserving of the 2023 Askew Award."

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

Brian Dix, SC Department of Transportation
Lauren Fennell, SC Criminal Justice Academy
Chrystal Laughlin, SC Department of Administration
Melanie Mobley, SC Department of Transportation
Scott Sharpe, SC Office of Resilience