



Education Options for Organizers: A Complicated Question

Kristie Demke, President

When asked about organizing classes and courses being offered outside of POC, I always reply that we would like every professional organizer to not only be a member of our organization but to avail themselves of the training that we offer as part of the Trained Professional Organizer program. As an organization, we are very proud of our education program, and I personally have found it to be of great value. However, POC's mission is *"To develop professional organizing through creating awareness of the industry amongst the public and to provide our members with support by giving them access to the tools, training and resources to build their own businesses."* We do not have a mandate or the resources to monitor training programs being offered outside of POC, whether by POC members, individuals, private businesses (such as QC Design School) or public institutions.

We are certainly aware of various training programs being offered, and we do our very best to educate our members as to what is available through POC, as well as our affiliates, [NAPO](#) and [NSGCD](#). We also make every effort to educate the members of the public as to how best to make an informed choice when choosing a professional organizer, including educational considerations. In the coming months, our FAQ section of our website will be expanded to more thoroughly address these as well as other questions.

Nonetheless, POC does not have the authority to determine or question what programs individuals and private institutions wish to offer, nor do we have exclusive rights to offer training to professional organizers. Even the [Board of Certification for Professional Organizers \(BCPO\)](#), which has gone to considerable effort and expense to develop a program of study that meets certification requirements, does not have exclusivity to offer training to professional organizers. BCPO describes itself as *"a voluntary, industry-led effort that benefits the members of the organizing profession, as well as the public. It recognizes professionals who have met specific minimum standards, and proven through examination and client interaction that they possess the body of knowledge and experience required for certification. This program recognizes and raises industry*

standards, practices and ethics. For the public, while the Certified Professional Organizer® (CPO®) designation is not an endorsement or recommendation, certification of professional organizers maximizes the value received from the products and services provided by a CPO®."

BCPO has indeed met the rigorous requirements necessary to bestow a designation, CPO®, which means that it has completed the certification process. POC's former Director of Education, Michelle Nichols, eloquently explains this.

"Certification programs try to identify individuals with a set of knowledge, skills and abilities that allow them to perform a particular role. Most try to align closely to prevailing practices in the field. But certification programs should aim higher and elevate practice in the field. Most certification exams are usually developed and administered by an organization separate from those who provide the education programs. They are vendor-neutral and distinct from professional associations. Exams are developed on the results of a job-task analysis (JTA). In a JTA, people in the role being tested participate in a structured exercise similar to what someone in a role should know and be able to do. The aim of a JTA is to describe the world as it is. Certification does not refer to the state of legally being able to practice or work in a profession. That is licensure. Usually, licensure is administered by a governmental entity for public protection purposes and certification by a professional association. However, they are similar in that they both require the demonstration of a certain level of knowledge or ability."

It is because the requirements of certification and the process to be able to bestow a designation are so onerous that POC's Trained Professional Organizer course of study is a "program" and does not result in "certification" or a "designation". On its website, QC Design School indicates that graduates from its professional organizing program will be "certified" as an "Advanced International Organizing Professional (AIOP)" but does not indicate that it has gone through an objective credentialing process. While this may raise a question about the credibility of the "AIOP", it is not an issue for POC to resolve. Students in this or any other program of study need to carry out their due diligence to ensure that they are enrolled in a program that has met standards required for certification or the bestowing of a designation.

BCPO may have an issue with QC Design School referring to its program as being "certified", since it has successfully completed the certification process, and it is unclear from the QC Design School website whether it has done the same with the "AIOP", but again, this is not a POC matter. As you are no doubt aware, NAPO, "as the oldest and

largest professional association for professional organizers in the world, supported the launch of BCPO and the CPO® examination, an independent certification program for the entire organizing industry" and is named by BCPO as an "affiliate" on its website, however POC is not.

POC's board of directors is working very hard to advance its mission, as stated above, to benefit both our members and the general public. We recognize this will be easier when professional organizing is officially recognized as a career and is granted an industry code by [Human Resources Canada](#). This particular initiative has been on our "to do" list for a while now and will continue to be pursued as resources permit. In the meantime, I hope the above information will serve to explain why POC does not have the mandate or standing to pursue the claims of institutions or individuals offering training to the organizing profession.

Kristie Demke, President
Professional Organizers in Canada
April 2010