

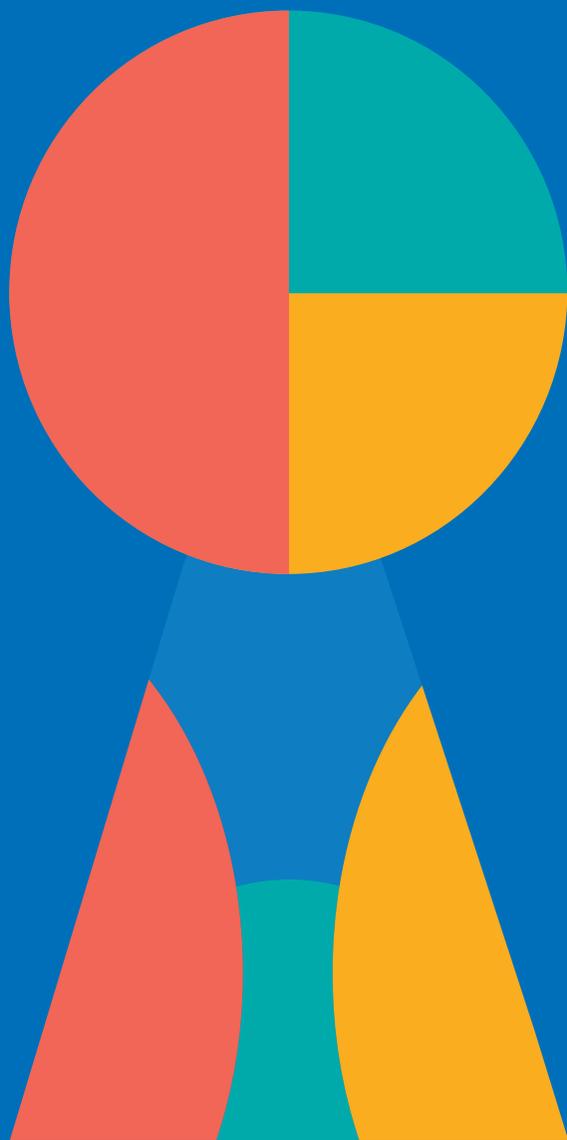
CPA

Open doors to new career possibilities



CPA

CHARTERED
PROFESSIONAL
ACCOUNTANTS
ALBERTA



The path to a successful career is rarely direct. Sometimes it takes a few stops, turns, and detours along the way to get there.

If you are looking to climb the corporate ladder, earn more, be your own boss, make a positive impact in the business community, or simply reinvent yourself, consider getting a CPA designation—it's the key that will open doors to new career opportunities.

The CPA designation—Canada's globally-recognized accounting and business credential—equips professionals with the skills most in demand by employers. Many CPAs work in traditional accounting roles while many also hold a variety of non-accounting (and unconventional) positions across different sectors of the economy. Regardless of where they work, all CPAs have the expertise to transform complex business problems into opportunities. Organizations rely on their insights to navigate economic highs and lows. This means a CPA's career can flourish in any industry and environment, and in all economic climates.

In addition to job security, the CPA designation offers flexibility, credibility, respect, and excellent compensation. (According to a 2019 CPA Profession Compensation Study, the average salary of an Alberta CPA in 2018 was \$175,000.)

Current and future entrepreneurs can leverage their CPA skills to carve out a niche; better understand their budgets, projections, and forecasts; and ultimately run successful businesses. Aspiring leaders and executives can quickly climb the corporate ladder by demonstrating the financial management and soft skills gained through the CPA Certification Program.

And professionals who enjoy living abroad and immersing themselves in different cultures can use their CPA credentials to work anywhere around the world.

The stories featured in the pages of this publication exemplify how the CPA designation can complement other skillsets and enable professionals to thrive in any role.

In the stories, you will get an idea of the kinds of doors the CPA designation opened for other Alberta CPAs. Stepping through those doors allowed an actor to become an auditor (and move up the pay scale); an entrepreneur to establish a social enterprise that empowers women across continents; a travel enthusiast to pursue their passion for accounting and music while living in Paris; and a professional to fulfill their lifelong calling of supporting Indigenous communities.

Keep reading to find out how the designation can take your career to new heights, and gain insights into some of the valuable services CPA Alberta offers to support the continuous professional development of CPAs.

The business environment is constantly changing. Technology is reshaping the way organizations do business and redefining the skills they value. If you want a solid foundation of skills that allows you to adapt to any future changes and disruptions, obtain the business credential that unlocks doors to exciting (and unexpected) opportunities. What's on the other side of the door for you? Find out by becoming a CPA.

BEING YOUR OWN BOSS

By Quinta Iticka | Photography by Laughing Dog Photography

LORNA MUTEGYEKI CPA, CGA

Lorna Mutegyeki runs a low-waste operation that benefits women across continents

LORNA Mutegyeki CPA, CGA doesn't believe in blending in. Through her sustainable fashion label, Msichana Inc., she empowers women to be self-sufficient, to be bold, and to bring their uniqueness to their workplaces.

The name "Msichana" (pronounced Mis-cha-na) embodies Lorna's pride in her African heritage and her passion to make a positive impact in women's lives. Msichana means "woman" in Swahili, a popular African language. (If you've watched the Disney movie *The Lion King*, you may already be familiar with a few Swahili words. Simba means "lion," Rafiki means "friend," and Hakuna Matata means "no worries.")

Despite studying molecular genetics in university, Lorna never lost sight of her true passion to eventually create a social enterprise and become her own boss. "I have always wanted to build a business that is self-sustaining and gets more people involved in the economy. I chose the CPA path because I knew the designation would provide me with the necessary skills to pursue my lifelong goals," says Lorna.

Msichana operates in Edmonton, Canada and in Uganda, Africa. In Edmonton, Lorna uses colourful African fabrics to design fashions for women from diverse backgrounds.

In Uganda, the company employs and trains local women to create the garments. "The idea is to equip Ugandan women with the skills to make a sustainable living," says Lorna. "We also partner with women-owned businesses in the region because they have the potential to hire more people."

Msichana fashions empower not only the women who make the clothing but also those who wear them. "I wanted the clothing to be bold and distinct. It's okay to turn heads," says Lorna. "Women often try to conform and go with the flow, but how do you add to the world if you're just trying to blend into it? We need to be comfortable in ourselves so that we can bring our uniqueness to the table."

Lorna's combination of skills makes her unique in the field of fashion. Her creativity and CPA designation enable her to make decisions with confidence, define fashion her own way, and stand out. "My fashion style says I belong here. It shows that I value quality, craftsmanship, and how my clothing is made," she says. "Beyond my social goals, I understand business because of my CPA training. I use these skills everyday. People comment that I really know my numbers. That's when it hits me that I have both the creative and business acumen. It is a huge advantage."



"Beyond my social goals, I understand business because of my CPA training.... I have both the creative and business acumen. It is a huge advantage."

LORNA MUTEGYEKI CPA, CGA



LEVERAGING ANALYTICAL AND CREATIVE SKILLS

TINA THOMAS CPA, CMA

By Sarah Maludzinski | Photography by Laughing Dog Photography



“There is a lot of focus on accountants sticking to data and analysis, but I have no doubt that there’s a lot to contribute on the creative side too.”

TINA THOMAS CPA, CMA

Tina Thomas attributes much of her success to being both analytical and creative—skills she gained from her CPA and other credentials

FOR Tina Thomas CPA, CMA, a big part of what drew her to the accounting designation was that it combines analytical thinking and creativity—two seemingly disparate attributes she knew would help her get a leg up on the competition, no matter what field she worked in.

“That was kind of the first thing that made me think an accounting designation has value outside of just doing traditional accounting,” she says. “I have never worked as an accountant, and realistically, I’m never going to work as an accountant. But that doesn’t mean the education wasn’t valuable.”

Immediately after receiving her accounting designation (which she pursued at the same time as her MBA while working at telecommunications company Nortel), Tina took on more responsibility, which exposed her to new technologies, new senior leaders in the organization, and new industry analyst firms.

At Nortel, she also had the opportunity to change roles from market analysis to business operations, and she says her accounting designation set her up with the skills required to succeed.

Now the Executive Director of Customer Experience at the Edmonton Public Library, Tina believes being a CPA in a non-

traditional CPA role has really enabled her to see all sides of an issue in a unique way. Her designation has helped her broaden her work experience and be more likely to work in various fields, gain promotions, and help her organizations succeed. “My designation reinforced my propensity to ask questions and broadened the type of questions I would ask before undertaking, recommending, or approving a project or initiative,” says Tina as she reflects on the progress in her career.

But it really all comes back to her biggest strength—leveraging both her creative and analytical sides. “I can come up with a really interesting concept, but I’ll also develop the evaluation plan to help my team understand if we were successful or not. I can look at data and help us determine what we should do in the first place,” says Tina. “And I think that is the kind of thing that a CPA can do. There is a lot of focus on accountants sticking to data and analysis, but I have no doubt that there’s a lot to contribute on the creative side too.

“I’ve been successful because I have both skillsets.... I think there is value in being both analytical and creative, and organizations should be looking for more opportunities for people to bring both together.”

IT ALL ADDS UP

The CPA designation + your degree (in any discipline) + existing credentials = success!

The CPA Certification Program—which consists of the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP), practical experience, and the Common Final Examination (CFE)—is designed to provide future CPAs with the knowledge and skills to succeed in any role they take on.

CPA PEP is a part-time, two-year, post-graduate program consisting of six modules. The modules are delivered through a blend of online and classroom learning, and self-study. The CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) delivers the program in Western Canada.

To qualify for admission to CPA PEP, an applicant must have an

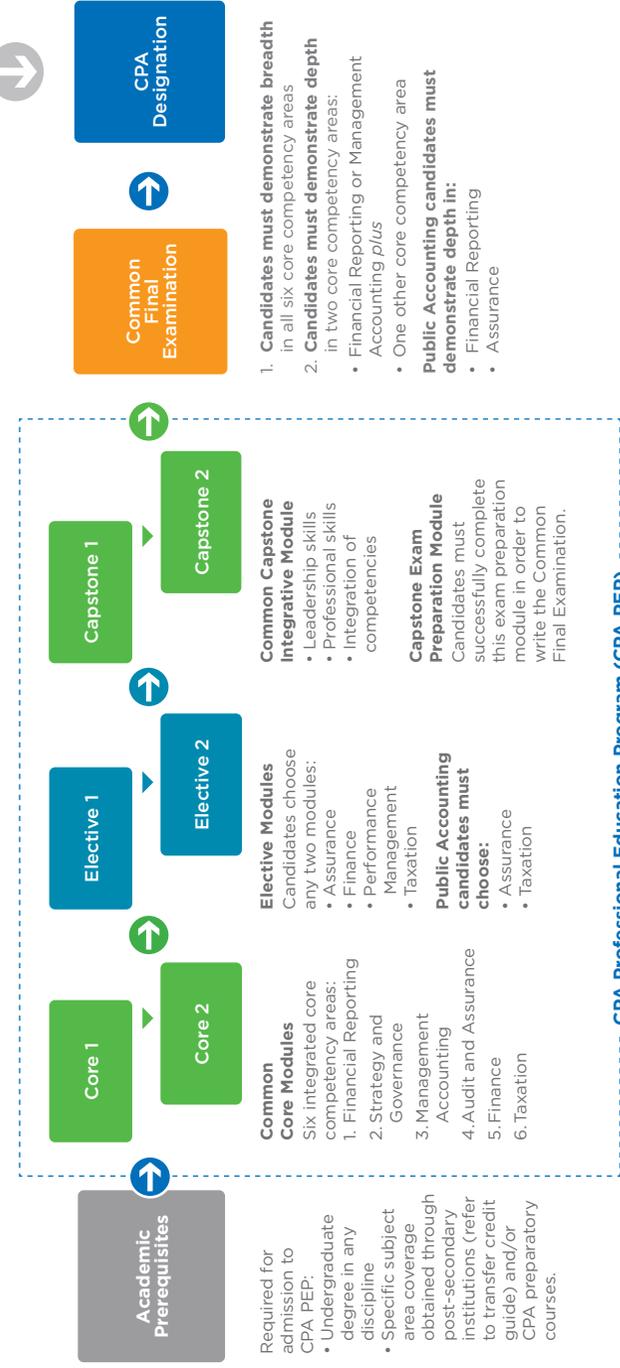
undergraduate degree (in any discipline) from a recognized post-secondary institution. Applicants also need to successfully complete any required prerequisites through CPA preparatory courses or a post-secondary institution.

A transfer credit guide for Alberta post-secondary institutions is available online at www.cpaalberta.ca/Become-a-CPA/Transfer-Credit-Guide.

To inquire about your eligibility for CPA PEP and admission support, visit www.cpawsb.ca, call CPAWSB at 1-855-306-9390 (toll-free), or email cpaapplication@cpawsb.ca.

PATH TO BECOMING A CPA

Practical Experience Requirements (PER) 30 Months



SWITCHING FROM ACTOR TO AUDITOR



By Andrea Michaud | Photography by Trudie Lee Photography

GERALD MATTHEWS CPA, CMA



“Having [extended health and dental] benefits for my family is huge.... I love getting a regular paycheque, and I love the vacations.”

GERALD MATTHEWS CPA, CMA

It’s never too late to start a new career. Gerald Matthews traded costumes for calculators, and he hasn’t looked back

WHAT does an actor do when they have time to spare during a performance? They read a lot and let their imagination wander. At least that’s what Gerald Matthews CPA, CMA did when he played the role of Ghost of Christmas Future in a past performance of *A Christmas Carol*. One of the books he read was inspired by a line from the play: “Mr. Scrooge is taking the books home to go through the accounts.” Gerald wondered what Bob Cratchit, Mr. Scrooge’s clerk, was doing when he had to balance his boss’s books. Armed with Calgary Public Library books about Victorian-era accounting, Gerald embarked on a research trip that changed his career trajectory.

Motivated by the results of his research, Gerald decided to enrol in an accounting class at Bow Valley College. He realized a career in accounting would be more stable and pay better. Gerald quickly learned that he was good at accounting, just as he was at acting. Remembering his return to post-secondary in his then-early 40s, he says: “At that point, I had learned how to learn.... When I went to university the first time, I was clueless.”

As he started his accounting journey, he was impressed by the friendliness and helpfulness of

CPAs. “They will mentor you at the drop of a hat,” says Gerald, as he recalls meeting with a CPA early in his education and chatting about what it meant to be an accountant.

For Gerald, acting was a fun job but not a great career. Long hours with six-day workweeks barely paid above the poverty line. Transitioning into accounting gave him financial stability and Saturdays and Sundays off. “Actually having [extended health and dental] benefits for my family is huge,” says Gerald. “I love getting a regular paycheque, and I love the vacations.”

Even today, Gerald is impressed with how much of his accounting education he uses regularly. “Going into the education program, you know there are going to be a lot of different subjects, but you don’t know what you’re going to use when you get out into industry,” he says. “As it turns out, the only thing I haven’t used yet is pension accounting.”

For the last 12 years, Gerald has been an Internal Auditor at Enerflex Ltd. He is also on the board of a small theatre, where he uses his CPA skills to give back to his old profession. Today, he appreciates having a credential people recognize and being in a profession that people respect.

BLENDING PASSION AND PROFESSION

By Sonya Nguyen | Photography supplied



STEPH RUSHTON CPA, CA



Based in Paris, France, Steph Rushton proves that the CPA designation is globally portable

STEPH Rushton CPA, CA is the definition of multi-faceted. Whether you want to learn about new music from around the world or need some professional accounting advice, Steph is your go-to.

Steph is currently based in Paris—yes, *that* Paris—working as a Music Supervisor with Seven Seas Music and with independent film producers, all while running her own public practice. As a music supervisor, Steph sources and licenses authentic international music for film and television projects—not exactly what you’d expect of the stereotypical CPA.

There are many paths to the CPA designation—some pursue the designation right out of post-secondary while others discover they want to become a CPA later in their careers. Steph’s path was the former: she graduated from the University of Calgary with her Bachelor of Commerce in accounting and pursued her CPA designation shortly after. “I realized that taking this path would be a good foundation to have and be widely applicable, regardless of what direction I took in the future,” explains Steph.

Steph started her professional career as an accountant at EY, where she worked in Calgary and San Francisco while earning her CPA designation.

After becoming a manager in the San Francisco office, Steph knew she wanted to pursue other

interests and eventually relocate to Europe, so she contacted two music supervisors she admired.

“Both of them were super impressed that I had my CPA,” says Steph. “Even though it’s not directly related to the music industry, I think it spoke to the calibre of my experience, work ethic, and ability to critically think about issues.”

Steph was offered an internship and, later, a paid position. Then she relocated to Paris where she is now living her dream of having her own practice and being a freelance music supervisor.

Steph enjoys the flexibility of freelancing, as it allows her to work remotely, choose her clients, and dictate her own schedule. “The freedom and control my designation has given me is incredibly liberating and has allowed me to create the lifestyle I want,” she says.

Steph emphasizes—and proves!—that CPAs can pursue a variety of career paths. While the CPA designation opens many doors, you have to tune in to what makes you happy. Steph leveraged her designation to travel across the world and do what she’s most passionate about. “You can align your CPA designation with what you want in life. You just have to be brave enough to do it.”

“I realized that taking this path would be a good foundation to have, and be widely applicable regardless of what direction I took in the future.”

STEPH RUSHTON CPA, CA

CPA ALBERTA HELPS

PROFESSIONALS SUCCEED IN A CHANGING BUSINESS WORLD

With the business environment constantly changing and technology evolving at lightning speed, there are countless opportunities available for professionals who are ready to adapt. To help business professionals navigate and turn disruptive changes into opportunities, CPA Alberta offers informative professional development opportunities and valuable career services support to ensure CPAs remain up to date on emerging technologies while improving their soft skills. These opportunities supplement and reinforce the foundational skills and expertise CPAs gain from pursuing and achieving the designation.

DATA ANALYTICS

Organizations need professionals to mine and unlock the potential of big data

Data is everywhere, and with advances in digital technology, the impact of data continues to increase. In a *Straight From the CPA's Mouth* podcast episode titled *Dipping our toes into data analytics*, Adam Devenny CPA, Senior Manager at KPMG, stated that “Every 60 seconds, 150 million emails are sent and over 200 thousand hours of video are consumed on YouTube and Netflix.” But in this era of big data, quantity is not paramount. What matters most is an organization’s ability to transform large volumes of data into easily understandable insights that can improve business outcomes.

IMPORTANCE

Data analytics drill deeper into information to identify meaningful trends, analyze patterns, and obtain valuable details that can influence business decisions. It can be descriptive—tell what happened historically; diagnostic—reveal why something happened and how to avoid it from reoccurring; or predictive—help organizations forecast the probability of future events.

Employees can leverage data analytics to help their organizations gain a competitive advantage, improve customer experience, provide better products and services, enhance profit margins, and reduce cost.

REQUIRED SKILLS

To fill the emerging data analytics competency gap, professionals need to be knowledgeable in one or more of these areas: data visualization, business acumen, data intuition, data wrangling, math & statistics, machine learning, programming, and the utilization of business intelligence (BI) tools such as Power BI.

CPA ALBERTA RESOURCES

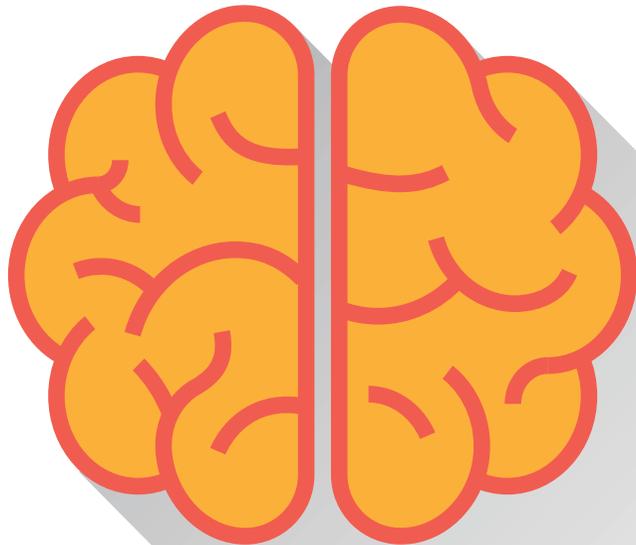
To help CPAs develop their skills in these areas, CPA Alberta offers the following seminars:

- Data Analytics for Finance Professionals
- Power BI Fundamentals
- Power BI Advanced Reporting
- Advanced Topics in Power BI
- Business Intelligence: Featuring Microsoft's Power BI Tools
- And more!

For more information about our resources, visit www.cpaalberta.ca/professionaldevelopment.

Psychometric

Assessments



The digital revolution is creating a need for business professionals to be highly skilled in the areas of emotional and intercultural intelligence, especially as they work with cross-functional teams from diverse backgrounds. Psychometric assessments measure a person's skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, personality traits, and educational achievements. These assessments can help professionals discover gaps in their skills, create development plans, and make important career decisions that can lead to success.

Assessments offered by CPA Alberta

CPA Alberta offers the below psychometric assessments exclusively to CPAs and candidates:

Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EQ-i 2.0)

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the set of emotional and social skills that influence the way we perceive and express ourselves, develop social relationships, cope with challenges, and use emotional information.

Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory (ICS)

ICS addresses how to deal with and overcome misunderstandings, misperceptions, and hostility. The assessment report helps professionals understand their default conflict style and leverage their style and self-awareness to effectively adapt to others during conflict situations, regardless of cultural differences.

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

The IDI tool helps evaluate presumptions a person may have about themselves and others. It provides a personalized development plan that can help a professional improve their interpersonal effectiveness.

For more information about CPA Alberta's psychometric assessment tools, visit www.cpaalberta.ca/Services/Career-Centre/Psychometric-Assessments or email careerservices@cpaalberta.ca.

LANDING A DREAM JOB

By Sharon Ruyter | Photography by Laughing Dog Photography



JAVED SOMMERS CPA, CMA

Javed Sommers shares how the CPA designation gave him a purpose-filled career at Indigenous Services Canada

WHEN Javed Sommers CPA, CMA started working at Indigenous Services Canada in 2014, he didn't immediately realize serving the First Nations community would become his lifelong calling. Early that same year, while pursuing his accounting designation, Javed attended a Truth and Reconciliation Commission event that ended up defining his career.

"I had a little awareness of the history of colonialism, but as a white settler, I didn't understand that colonialism is a contemporary reality that First Nations continue to face," says Javed.

The insights he gained from the eye-opening event compelled him to learn more about the relationships between settlers and First Nations. Immediately after successfully obtaining his designation, Javed applied to the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta to pursue his master's degree in Native Studies.

Javed is now the Field Manager of First Nations Relations for Treaty 6 West at Indigenous Services Canada, and his skills as a CPA are the perfect complement to his Native Studies education. His team works with ten First Nations communities located west of Edmonton. Their primary

responsibility is to manage relations around the funding agreements each First Nation has with Canada; these funding agreements facilitate the services provided on reserves, such as education, social assistance, community infrastructure, and health care.

Javed credits his designation as the key to landing his dream job. "One thing I noticed after attaining the designation was the amount of respect I received in terms of people looking to me for my opinion and analysis. In the past six years, I have held 11 roles within my department, and four of them have been substantive roles," he says. "Very quickly, this has become what I want to spend my life doing, and I am very happy I ended up at Indigenous Services Canada."

The same realizations that inspired Javed to pursue his master's degree in Native Studies are the same ones that drive him in his work. "I am passionate about working towards fiscal relationships between Canada and First Nations that are based on treaty relationships. A critical element of treaties is that relationships between settlers and First Nations should be mutually beneficial. Sadly, we are a long way from seeing that reality, but it is what I intend to work towards for the rest of my career."



"Very quickly, this has become what I want to spend my life doing, and I am very happy I ended up at Indigenous Services Canada."

JAVED SOMMERS CPA, CMA



**CPA SNACK
& CHAT INFO
SESSIONS**

(Now available in a remote format!)

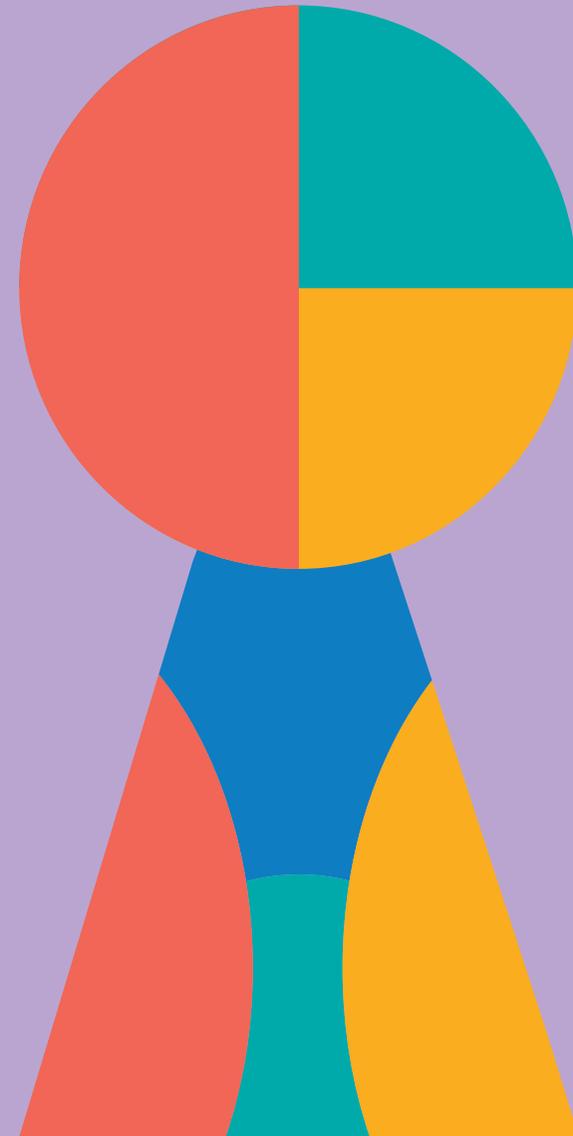
You've got questions, we've got answers! Our virtual Snack & Chat Info Sessions are an excellent opportunity for your staff to become familiar with the requirements of the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP).

Unfortunately, as these are online sessions, we're currently unable to bring snacks, but we still have lots of great info to share.

Snack & Chat Info Sessions typically cover program prerequisites, the admission process, the CPA PEP structure, practical experience requirements, and resources available to CPAs, candidates, and employers.

Book your session today!

Email EmployerRelations@cpaalberta.ca to get started.





CPA

CHARTERED
PROFESSIONAL
ACCOUNTANTS
ALBERTA

cpaalberta.ca/EmployerRelations
EmployerRelations@cpaalberta.ca

 CPAAlberta

 CPA Alberta

 @CPA_AB

 CPA_AB

