

# Qualifications for Key Roles in Your Accounting Department

## Learn About Accounting Staff Qualifications

Just as with any role in your company, you always want to make sure you are hiring



qualified people to serve in your accounting department.

As you begin to build your accounting department, this article will clearly define the specific educational and training requirements for each of the primary roles of your accounting staff, to ensure you are [hiring the right people](#) in your organization.

Reviewing the key roles in your accounting department, we will be focusing on the qualifications for these positions:

- Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
- Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- Controller
- Advanced Bookkeeper
- Bookkeeper

### Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Qualifications

The qualifications for your CFO can vary considerably depending upon the type of company and specific requirements for your organization. There is no specific licensure or certification requirement to attain the position of a CFO. In general, the lowest qualifications your company's CFO should hold is **at least a bachelor's or master's degree in business administration, finance or economics.**

Your CFO most certainly needs to have strong analytical and communication skills so he or she has the ability to not only effectively analyze the necessary data, but also then be able to clearly articulate the specific nature and ramifications of that data to others on your management team and

staff. Other CFO qualifications include: *being a strong leader and demonstrate determination, decisiveness, self-confidence and perhaps most importantly, accountability.* He or she needs to have experience in raising capital, and taking on the fiscal responsibility and financial health of the company if growth is the strategic goal. You will certainly want your CFO to have years of professional experience and ideally, he or she should have financial management experience in your specific industry.

### **Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Qualifications**

The CPA role is typically an outside professional and has more stringent qualifications, as CPA's are licensed and regulated by state and federal law. In California, in order to earn the title of Certified Public Accountant, a CPA is required to first pass the **Uniform CPA Exam**, after meeting the [necessary educational standards](#) and accumulating the required amount of general accounting experience.

The California Board of Accountancy also offers some excellent resources for [how to select a CPA](#) . Your CPA's qualifications should be carefully evaluated before you determine your hire.

### **Controller Qualifications**

Your financial controller serves the role of preparing, maintaining and reporting financial reports in your organization, along with budgeting and financial forecasting. The Controller will usually supervise your accounting staff as well, so strong management skills are an important qualification.

At minimum, the Controller's educational qualifications would be a **bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, business administration or management**, preferably with crossovers in those areas. Many Controllers take more advanced certification programs such as the CPA, Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) or Certified Management Accountant (CMA) exams.

### **Advanced Accountant Qualifications**

There is no specific training, certification or education requirement for an Advanced Accountant. You will find that bookkeepers become experts in skills such as inventory control or payroll and therefore gain higher experience and pay. Many organizations choose to advance their internal bookkeepers by providing additional training, courses and seminars in accounting principles and management.

### **Bookkeeper Qualifications**

A bookkeeper can be an entry-level position into your accounting department. Depending upon your business, it might be a strong enough qualification for a bookkeeping candidate to have a high school diploma with a strong foundation in mathematics, along with a working knowledge of

computers and accounting software.

A bookkeeper can raise the skill set bar a little higher by completing an associate's degree program in accounting or become even more qualified for the position by completing a bachelor's degree in accounting.

## **Accounting Staff Qualifications - Final Thoughts**

While there are no specific certification requirements, certification for bookkeepers is available through the American Institute of Professional Bookkeepers (AIPB) which awards the Certified Bookkeeper (CB) designation to candidates who meet their requirements, which include at least two years of bookkeeping experience just to be eligible. Hiring the right person for the right position is the key to building a successful accounting department for your business. Armed with the right information, you will be able to confidently step forward in hiring or [outsourcing these roles](#).