



County Technical  
Assistance Service

INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

**2024**

*Staff Directory*



*About Us*

# County Technical Assistance Service

County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS) was created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1973 at the urging of county officials and the Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA), who wanted an agency to provide prompt, accurate technical assistance for all aspects of county government on a daily basis to Tennessee's 95 counties.

CTAS helps fulfill the land-grant mission of the University of Tennessee by providing outreach, training, and research in all 95 counties across the state.

T.C.A. § 49-9-402, the authorizing legislation that established CTAS as part of the University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service (IPS), directs CTAS to

*“...provide studies and research in county government, publications, educational conferences and attendance at the conferences, and to furnish technical, consultative, and field services to counties of the state in problems relating to fiscal administration, accounting, tax assessment and collection, law enforcement, improvements and public works, and in any and all matters relating to county government.”*

CTAS is staffed by a group of talented professionals with expertise in a variety of diverse subjects. Each county is a part of a region served directly by a single county government consultant who acts as the initial contact with the agency. County government consultants leverage the skills and knowledge of other specialists within CTAS to address specific needs and problems of the county.



# What We Do

# Our Services

**Financial Services** CTAS offers assistance in every aspect of county government finance — budgeting, purchasing, investing, debt management, insurance and risk management.

**Legal Services** CTAS attorneys author many CTAS publications, draft and review legislative proposals, monitor General Assembly action, and compile the private acts of each county. These lawyers also respond to questions and issue written legal opinions.

**Public Safety Services** Officials across Tennessee turn to the CTAS public safety consultants for assistance in law enforcement, jail operations, facility and staffing needs evaluations, and public safety related training.

**Environmental Services** CTAS environmental consultants provide information on recycling, solid waste collection, and landfill management. This work has become more important as counties cope with an increased number of state and federal environmental regulations.

**Assessment Assistance** CTAS assists assessors of property and the property assessment community. Key areas of support include reappraisal review and guidance; budget assistance; training opportunities; certified tax rate; calculating a penny value; onsite assistance and guidance for day-to-day operations; appeal advice; and city cost-sharing calculations.

**Research & Analysis** CTAS provides statistical research and analysis of county revenues and expenditures, debt capabilities, state shared taxes, state appropriations, school funding and BEP, and other related financial matters pertaining to the operation of county governments.

**Highway Services** CTAS helps highway departments prepare certifications of county road revenues, develop and maintain computerized road lists, analyze project costing and inventory management, and develop bid specifications for needed equipment.

**Information Services** CTAS provides many information resources available to county officials and their staff. CTAS works with county officials to improve their information technology and cybersecurity resources through consultation and direct technical assistance.

**CTAS Electronic Library (e-Li)** The CTAS electronic library (e-Li) contains all the information formerly found in the CTAS county publications. The information is organized by topic and is easily searchable making it a great way to find answers to questions about Tennessee county government.

**Training Services** CTAS offers several training opportunities for county officials and their employees. Our programs cover a wide variety of topics related to county government, administrative operations, and technical skills.

**County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP)** The County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP) is a comprehensive training program administered by CTAS. COCTP is designed to provide specialized, technical, and managerial training to elected officials and their employees to help them run their offices more effectively. It also offers a comprehensive review of county government. Graduates of COCTP earn the Certified Public Administrator designation.

**Commissioner Training** Tennessee law requires newly elected or appointed county commissioners to complete orientation training provided by CTAS within 120 days of being elected or appointed. Training can be completed at the County Officials Orientation Program during election years or online through k@te.

**Certified County Finance Officer Program (CCFO)** The Comptroller of the Treasury and CTAS have developed the Certified County Finance Officer (CCFO) program that will provide Tennessee's county financial officers an opportunity to learn about accounting and financial reporting principles, understand how county governments are structured in Tennessee, and enhance their skills in order to carry out their responsibilities for the fiscal affairs of their county or department. CTAS administers the educational program and testing required to achieve the CCFO designation. The Comptroller's Office has been designated as the certification authority.

**Online Certificate Programs** CTAS offers several online certificate programs to meet county officials' needs for continuing education. Learn at your pace and on your time.





**Marc Alley**  
Emergency/Fire Management  
Consultant

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Marc Alley, Emergency/Fire Management Consultant, joined CTAS in October 2023. Marc brings over 30 years' experience in emergency services at many state and local organizations including the Insurance Service Office (ISO), the Tennessee Fire Service and Code Enforcement Academy. During his extensive career, he has served in multiple emergency services positions in fire service, emergency management, communications, and emergency medical services. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Fire Administration from the University of Memphis and is a Licensed Financial Advisor.



**Stephen Austin**  
Legal Consultant

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Stephen joined UT CTAS in January 2003. Prior to joining UT CTAS, Steve served as an assistant attorney general for the State of Tennessee, assigned to the criminal justice division, handling federal and state capital case litigation. Before that, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps as a judge advocate, receiving the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal and Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal. He retired from the U.S. Marine Corps at the rank of major after 23 years of service. He received his law degree from the University of Memphis in 1989 and his bachelor's degree from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 1986.



**Nikki Ballentine**  
Manager of Training &  
Technology Service

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Nikki joined UT CTAS in October 2019. Prior to joining UT CTAS, she was a senior instructional developer for the Cizik School of Nursing at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston, Texas. She holds a master of science in instructional design & technology from Emporia State University, a master of education in workforce development education from the University of Arkansas; and a bachelor of arts in human development from Christian Brothers University. In 2021, Nikki earned the designation of Certified Professional in Training Management (CPTM).



**Wes Doyle**  
Communications Specialist

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Wes joined UT CTAS in November 2021. He has extensive experience in communications, media, event planning, and program management. Wes works with the Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA) assisting county mayors, commissioners, and highway officials. Wes graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in December 2023 with a master's degree in communication and information. He holds a Bachelor of Science in mass communication and a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Middle Tennessee State University. In his free time, Wes loves to cook, watch movies, read, listen to podcasts, and take local weekend trips around the region.



**Heather Duncan**  
County Government  
Consultant

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Heather joined UT CTAS in February 2021. Previously, Heather served as circuit court clerk in Coffee County from 1994 to 2021. Prior to being elected circuit court clerk, Heather was an accountant at the Arnold Air Force Base in Tullahoma. She holds a bachelor of science degree in business administration with a major in accounting from Tennessee Technological University. Heather earned a master's degree in business administration from Middle Tennessee State University with an emphasis in organizational management.



**Rachel Ellington**  
Training Consultant

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Rachel joined UT CTAS in February 2019. Previously, Rachel worked as the budget director for Haywood County and as a tax consultant for Deloitte Tax LLP. She graduated cum laude from the University of Mississippi with a bachelor of accountancy degree in 2013 and a Master of Taxation in 2014. Rachel is a licensed certified public accountant in Tennessee and a member of the American Institute for Certified Public Accounts and the Tennessee Society of CPAs. In 2021, she earned the designation of Certified Professional in Training Management (CPTM).



**Mike Galey**  
County Government  
Consultant

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Mike joined UT CTAS in March 2011. Prior to his service with UT CTAS, he worked for 20 years with the Local Government Corporation, providing software training and support to city and county governments in Tennessee, managing the implementation and support staff for the last 10 of those years. Mike earned his masters of business administration in 2022 and a bachelor of science in business administration in 1986, both from the University of Tennessee at Martin. In 2020, he earned the designation of Certified Public Manager. Mike is married to his wife Ginger and they reside in Weakley County.



**Kristy Godsey Brown**  
Manager of Legal Services

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Kristy joined UT CTAS in February 2007. Prior to joining UT CTAS, Kristy practiced real estate and regulatory law at a Nashville law firm. She received her bachelor's degree, summa cum laude, in political science from the University of Tennessee in 1999 and was the College of Arts and Sciences Top Graduate, graduating with a 4.0 GPA. She received her law degree from Vanderbilt University Law School in 2003 and was the Elliott E. Cheatham Scholar, a Dean's Scholar and on the Dean's List.



**Liz Gossett**  
Marketing Director

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Liz joined UT CTAS in September 2012. Prior to joining UT CTAS, Liz was a research associate for the Tennessee Department of Transportation's Long Range Planning Division. She received a bachelor of science in 2007 in urban policy studies and a bachelor of arts in sociology in 2005, both from Georgia State University in Atlanta. Liz graduated with a master of science in information science from the University of Tennessee in May 2015. She earned the Certified Knowledge Manager certification from KMI in 2022.



**Joe Griffin**  
Property Assessment  
Consultant

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Joe joined UT CTAS in 2016 to become one of two property assessment consultants. Joe has over 25 years of property assessment experience. Prior to joining CTAS, he worked for the Metro Nashville Davidson County Property Assessor's office and the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury's Division of Property Assessments. Joe carries several designation including Residential Evaluation Specialist Designation (RES), Tennessee Master Assessor, and the IAAO designation of Assessment Administration Specialist (AAS). In 2017, he became an IAAO instructor. He earned his BBA in business management with a minor in general business/marketing from Austin Peay in 1993.



**Rick Hall**  
County Government  
Consultant

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Rick joined UT CTAS in January 1992 as an assistant county field advisor, working with counties that have adopted the Financial Management Act of 1981. Before coming to UT CTAS, Rick was finance director in Scott County. He serves counties in northeast Tennessee (Region 1). He has a bachelor's degree in political science and sociology and a master's degree in city management from East Tennessee State University.



**Jim Hart**  
Manager of Field Services

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Jim joined UT CTAS in January 2008. He began his career in corrections in 1975 while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps. His 22-year career was spent working in Marine Corps corrections. Upon his retirement in 1997, Jim served initially as the Hamilton County jail captain and then promoted to chief of corrections. He is a Certified Jail Manager with the AJA and a Certified Corrections Executive with the ACA. He holds a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice from Park University and a Master of Arts in leadership and public service from Lipscomb University. Jim was named manager of field services in April 2022.





**Kimberly Henry**  
Training Consultant

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Kim joined UT CTAS in January 2004 with over 20 years of experience. She manages the County Officials Certificate Training Program and the Learning Management System and consults with county officials to determine their training needs. Kim holds a bachelor's degree in mass communications and earned the Certified Professional in Training Management (CPTM) designation in 2021. Recently, she completed her Master of Arts in Leadership and Public Service from Lipscomb University in August 2022. Lastly, she has a Mental Health First Aid certification from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing.



**Melisa Kelton**  
County Government  
Consultant

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Melisa joined UT CTAS in January 2017 as our finance and budget consultant. She was named county government consultant for the southern Middle Tennessee region in February 2020. She previously worked at the Center for Industrial Services, beginning in December 1996. She also has over 20 years of experience working in both private and public financial sectors. Melisa earned her undergraduate degree from Tennessee Technological University and her graduate degree from Middle Tennessee State University.



**Jacob Kennedy**  
Database Consultant

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Jacob joined UT CTAS in February 2020 as database consultant. Prior to UT CTAS, he worked seven years as an information systems auditor for the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury and three years as the database administrator for the enterprise resource planning system of Williamson County. He earned a master of business administration from Middle Tennessee State University in 2016. Jacob has been a Certified Information Systems Auditor since 2013.



**DeAnna Ledbetter**  
Administrative Coordinator

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DeAnna joined UT CTAS in March 2020. She previously worked as a service consultant at Forklift Systems. She is a Tennessee native who loves to travel and spending time with her nephews.



**Gabe Looney**  
Property Assessment  
Consultant

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Gabe joined CTAS in March 2017. Gabe has over 20 years of property assessment experience. Gabe previously worked for the Blount County Assessor's Office as a Chief Deputy and for an assessor in Clay County, Florida, as a commercial appraiser. He is an active member of the Tennessee Chapter of the International Association of Assessing Officers and in 2017 he was awarded the IAAO designation of Assessment Administration Specialist and the Tennessee Master Assessor from the State Board of Equalization. Gabe earned his Bachelor of Arts with an emphasis in Psychology and a minor in Criminal Justice from the University of North Florida in 1995.



**Brandon Marks**  
Training Consultant

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Brandon started with CTAS in March 2022. Prior to joining CTAS, Brandon worked as a legislative auditor with the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury for nine years. He holds a bachelor of science in business administration with a major in accounting from the University of North Alabama. Brandon earned a master's degree in business administration from Tennessee Technological University in 2012.



**Kelley McNeal**  
Training Consultant

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Prior to joining UT CTAS in July 2018, Kelley worked as an information systems auditor with the Comptroller of the Treasury's Division of Local Government Audit for 23 years. Kelley has a bachelor of business administration in accounting and a master of business administration from Tennessee Technological University. She has served as an adjunct faculty member at Nashville State Community College and Tennessee Technological University. Kelley is a licensed certified public accountant and certified government financial manager and has earned the designation of Certified Professional in Training Management. She is a member of the AGA, AICPA, TSCPA, and TGFOA.



**Chandra McPherson**  
Training Consultant

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Chandra joined UT CTAS in April 2023. Prior to joining UT CTAS, she worked in the areas of education, non-profit, and private sectors providing educational, operational, and training support. She holds a bachelor of arts and sciences in social sciences and a master of education K-12 from Tennessee State University; and a master of education in educational leadership and administration and a doctorate of education (Ed.D.) in leadership and professional practices from Trevecca Nazarene University. Chandra is passionate about process and operational improvement, and helping individuals grow as leaders. In 2023, Chandra earned the designation of Certified Professional in Training Management (CPTM).



**Jeff Metzger**  
Legal Consultant

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Jeff joined UT CTAS in 2007. Prior to joining UT CTAS, Jeff was an associate at Waller Lansden Dortch & Davis. He graduated magna cum laude from Tennessee Technological University with a bachelor of science degree in 2001. He received his law degree from the University of Tennessee College of Law in 2005, graduating summa cum laude. While at the University of Tennessee College of Law, he received a Chancellor's Citation for Extraordinary Professional Promise.



**Chris Payne**  
Manager of Customer Service  
& Operations

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Chris has been with CTAS since July 1999. He became Manager of Customer Service & Operations in December 2022. Before Chris began working in the CTAS Training Department, he provided IT and GIS consulting to Tennessee counties. In addition, Chris has worked with the County Officials Certificate Training Program for more than twelve years. Chris has a bachelor's degree in geography from the University of Alabama. In 2021, Chris earned the designation of Certified Professional in Training Management (CPTM). He earned his master of arts in leadership & public service from Lipscomb University in August 2022.



**Kim Raia**  
Environmental Management  
Consultant

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Kim has been with UT CTAS since 2000. Kim has worked in environmental services since the early 1980s. She has worked with federal, state and local officials on environmental issues related to GIS and land use planning, solid waste management, water quality, education, and environmental compliance. Kim holds three degrees from the University of Tennessee — bachelor's degrees in biology and geography and a master's degree in geography. She is a certified GIS Professional.



**Wesley Robertson**  
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Consultant

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Wesley joined CTAS in 2011. Wesley received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Middle Tennessee State University and a master's degree in business administration from Tennessee Technological University. Prior to joining CTAS he served as the executive director of Local Finance with the Tennessee Department of Education. Wesley is also a Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM).



**Rachel Ruble**  
Budget & Human Resource  
Specialist

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Rachel joined CTAS in August 2021. Prior to joining CTAS, Rachel worked in higher education throughout the middle Tennessee area for over 11 years, including 8 years as an Admissions Advisor for Volunteer State Community College, helping students from application to graduation. She also worked previously in customer service within the private sector. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Advertising from the University of Tennessee as well as an Associate of Science degree in Communication from Volunteer State Community College. Rachel is a native Tennessean and loves to travel with her family.



**Kelsey Schweitzer**  
County Government  
Consultant

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Kelsey joined UT CTAS in October 2017 as county government consultant for the southern West Tennessee region. He previously worked for the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury as a legislative auditor and in the banking industry. He earned a Master of Business Administration degree in 2017 and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, summa cum laude, in 2010, both from the University of Tennessee at Martin. Kelsey also earned the Certified Government Financial Manager designation in 2019.



**Clint Shrum**  
Criminal Justice Consultant

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Clint joined UT CTAS in Jan. 2023 after serving 30 years in law enforcement, including two terms as sheriff of Grundy County. He received several awards and served on various boards during his career. Clint holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice administration and is a certified jail manager through the American Jail Association.



**Brianna Simmons**  
Administrative Intern

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Brianna joined CTAS as an administrative intern in July 2023. She works closely with the Tennessee County Services Association, providing timely and accurate administrative support. Prior to CTAS, Brianna graduated from UT Knoxville with a degree in political science. She served as a Tennessee Legislative intern in the spring of 2022 for Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally and Representative Dave Wright. She also interned with the city of Bolivar and Mayor Julian McTizic Sr. in 2022.



**Laylah Smith**  
Legal Consultant

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Laylah joined UT CTAS in September 2020. Prior to joining UT CTAS, Laylah was the chief legal counsel for the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC), where she focused primarily on legal issues affecting local government, government contracts, and employment law. Before joining GNRC, Laylah was a solo practitioner focusing mainly on elder and family law. Laylah received a bachelor's degree in business administration from Belmont University in 2004 and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, in 2008. She received her law degree from Nashville School of Law in 2013.



**John Sutton**  
CCFO Program Manager

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John joined UT CTAS in July 2019 with 35 years of governmental accounting & finance experience. Previously, John was a senior audit manager with two certified public accounting firms. After graduating with a bachelor of business administration degree with a major in accounting from Middle Tennessee State University, he began his career as a staff auditor with the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury Division of Local Government Audit. John has been a licensed certified public accountant in Tennessee since 1987 and in April 2021 he became a Certified Professional in Training Management. John earned a master of business administration from UT Martin in May 2024.



**Jon Walden**  
Executive Director

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Jon Walden, executive director, has been with UT CTAS since October 1993 as administrator of information technology. He was named executive director on December 1, 2021. Jon served as interim executive director from May 1, 2020, to November 30, 2021. Prior to serving as Interim executive director, Jon served as manager of information technology & environmental services from October 2002 until May 1, 2020. Jon holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from Tennessee State University, a master's degree in leadership and public service from Lipscomb University, and a certificate in business management from Vanderbilt University Owen School of Management.



**Kaley Walker**  
County Government  
Consultant

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Kaley joined UT CTAS in November 2017 as our Region 2 county government consultant, serving southern East Tennessee. Prior to joining UT CTAS, Kaley was the Rhea County finance director. She brings extensive experience in accounting, budgeting, and auditing. Prior to her position as finance director, Kaley worked in the private sector as an accountant and financial analyst. Kaley is a certified government financial manager and a graduate of Leadership Roane County and the Naifeh Center. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in Communications from Michigan State University and an MBA in Finance from Walsh College.



**Kerry Watkins**  
Budget & Finance Consultant

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Kerry joined UT CTAS in June 2021. He is a graduate of Memphis State University with a bachelor's degree in finance. Kerry previously worked with Memphis School System for 20 years and five years with the City of Memphis. In the last few years of Kerry's role with the school system, he was responsible for leading the accounting department and managing a yearly budget of \$70M for the division of Nutrition Services. Kerry is also a Certified Municipal Finance Officer.



**Karisma Williams**  
Operations Specialist

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Karisma joined UT CTAS in February 2019. Prior to joining UT CTAS, she worked as the UT CTAS administrative intern at the Tennessee County Services Association. She holds a bachelor of science degree in business administration management from the University of Southern Mississippi and a master of public administration management degree from Arkansas State University. In 2021, Karisma earned the designation of Certified Professional in Training Management (CPTM). She earned a doctorate of education degree at the University of Southern Mississippi in September 2023.



**Ramona Wilson**  
Administrative Coordinator

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Ramona joined UT CTAS in August 2023. She previously worked as an administrative coordinator at the Tennessee Language Center, an agency of the University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service. Ramona holds a bachelors degree in family and human development from the University of Tennessee Knoxville. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, cooking, reading, bike riding, and volunteering.



**Derrick Woods**  
Criminal Justice Consultant

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Derrick Woods, Criminal Justice Consultant, joined CTAS in February 2023. Prior to coming to CTAS, Derrick served with the Tennessee Highway Safety. He also served over 32 years with the Cocke County sheriff's office, reaching the rank of chief deputy. Derrick is a three-time recipient of Officer of the Year, awardee as Professional of the Month, and a recipient of the 2019 Distinguished Service Award as Professional of the Year. He has held a police instructor certification since 1997 and has trained thousands of public safety professionals. Derrick is a graduate of the University of Tennessee National Forensic Academy as well as a graduate of Liberty University with a Bachelor of Science degree.



# *Connect with Us* **Service Areas**

We have a staff devoted to helping county governments in Tennessee receive prompt, accurate technical assistance so they can better serve their citizens. The maps displayed on the following pages indicate which staff person is responsible for providing certain technical assistance to various counties. If you ever need assistance, give your consultant a call.



# County Government Consultants

**Mike Galey**  
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Benton, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Lauderdale, Obion, Shelby, Tipton, Weakley



**Wesley Robertson**  
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Cheatham, Clay, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, Jackson, Macon, Montgomery, Robertson, Rutherford, Smith, Stewart, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson, Wilson



**Rick Hall**  
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Carter, Claiborne, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Sullivan, Union, Washington, Wayne



**Kelsey Schweitzer**  
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Carroll, Chester, Decatur, Fayette, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McNairy



**Melisa Kelton**  
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Bedford, Cannon, Davidson, DeKalb, Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Moore, Perry, Putnam, Wayne



**Heather Duncan**  
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**Kaley Walker**  
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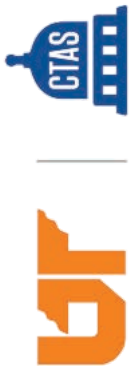
kaley.walker@tennessee.edu

Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Cocke, Cumberland, Fentress, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Overton, Pickett, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Union









# Property Assessment Consultants



**Joe Griffin**  
West Tennessee  
Western Middle Tennessee

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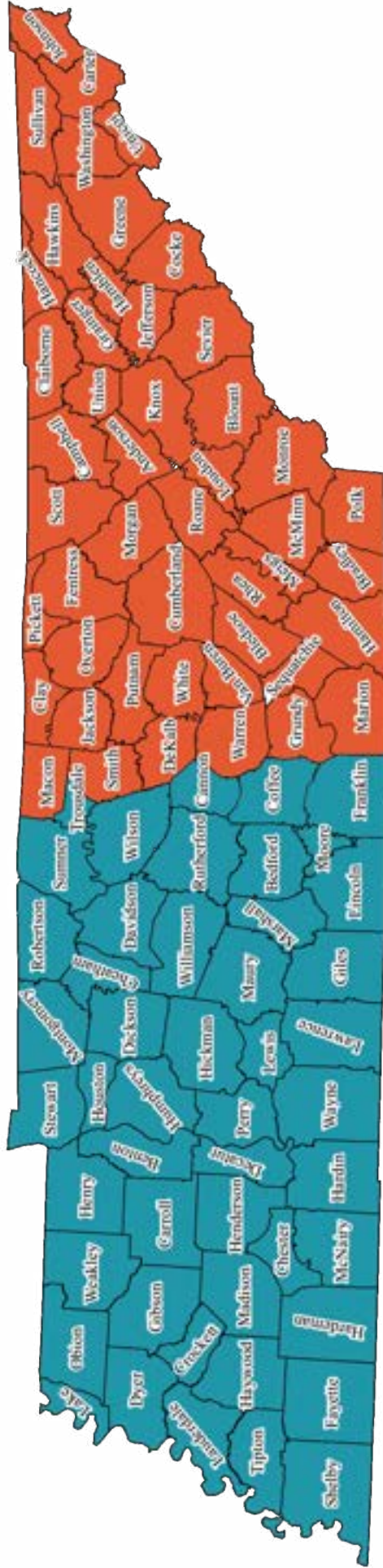
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# Public Safety Consultants



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**Marc Alley**  
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**Clint Shrum**  
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**Derrick Woods**  
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County Technical Assistance Service  
INSTITUTE for PUBLIC SERVICE

# Environmental Consultants



**Mike Stooksberry, contractor**  
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