

The Skills You Need for a New Era of Finance



Christopher P. Morrill
Executive Director/CEO



November 13-18, 2022
College of Charleston

Registration Now Open:
gfoa.org/leadership-academy

On the surface, public finance is about numbers—making sure that journal entries balance, creating forecasts, calculating anticipated tax revenue, monitoring spending against the budget, investing excess funds, preparing a fiscal impact analysis analyzing a new capital project... But while finance officers will always need to be able to understand and explain the numbers, public finance is really about people. To be successful, a finance officer must be able to communicate, build relationships, lead teams, navigate uncertain situations, and adapt to an ever-changing world. Recent changes—some brought on by the pandemic and others caused by much larger changes to the environment in which we operate—threatens “the way that we’ve always done it” but provides opportunities to provide better services and build a more thriving community.

I believe that the public finance profession is at a critical juncture. It’s easy to be optimistic about the opportunities that are in sight, and the innovations they might bring, but we must also be realistic about two major threats to our profession. Local governments face workforce shortages and serious challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, challenges that many of us haven’t seen in our entire careers. And the extreme

level of political polarization at all levels of government is another risk we can’t ignore.

At GFOA, our mission is to help you to meet the challenges you face in your own communities, and to do that, we must provide tools not just in the technical areas of finance, but also to solve problems that I describe with the acronym “VUCA”—volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Many of these situations require the leadership capacity to foster strong relationships, build partnerships, and work through disagreements, all while remaining true to our core values and ethical principles. One person can’t do this alone, of course, which is why governments and the communities they serve are stronger when their finance officer is able to take on a collaborative leadership role.

We believe in working together, and over the past two years, we’ve been building partnerships with our peer organizations that you can use to better collaborate with your peers. We also redefined our code of ethics to focus on the leadership traits and positive values that all finance officers need to exhibit. We’ve launched a series of new research initiatives explaining how behavioral science can—and should!—be applied to public finance, and we continue to provide resources that will help you achieve better outcomes by challenging the status quo of outdated planning and budgeting processes.



Governments and the communities they serve are stronger when their finance officer is able to take on a collaborative leadership role.

We will also continue to serve as a platform you can use to share your own recommendations, case studies, and examples of leadership in practice.

In this spirit, we're happy to announce two educational initiatives to help finance officers go beyond the numbers. After pausing our in-person learning opportunities during the pandemic, GFOA is bringing back our popular leadership academy at the College of Charleston. We're accepting applications at gfoa.org/leadership-academy for this five-day retreat, scheduled for November 13 to 18, 2022. We've also introduced an eight-week online, asynchronous training program through GFOA's

partner OpenMind to further explore the applications of behavioral science for public finance. For more information and options for registration, please visit gfoa.org/openmind.

GFOA also has many other opportunities for engaging with our members and providing opportunities for ongoing skill development in traditional areas of finance and beyond. Please visit gfoa.org/events for a listing of upcoming events and gfoa.org/volunteer for opportunities to get involved.

Sincerely,

Chris