

# Why I'm a Finance Officer



**Christopher P. Morrill**  
Executive Director/CEO

**O**f all the challenges local governments face, none is more pressing, more significant, more disruptive, and more

of a threat to long-term sustainability than the current workforce shortage. We've recognized the symptoms for years—an aging workforce, fewer college graduates looking for jobs in the public sector, and increased mobility among employees—but the Great Resignation has made the stress obvious. Governments are finding it extremely difficult to find candidates to fill openings.

In September 2021, the National Association of State Treasurers (NAST) released *The Public Finance Workforce Study* (available at [nast.org/workforce](https://nast.org/workforce)). This research confirmed many of our assumptions about workforce demographics, demand for public finance officers, ongoing challenges related to public- versus private-sector opportunities, and the public sector's challenges in recruiting new talent. At GFOA, we plan to build on NAST's work, and to continue devoting resources to this critical issue.

Our current strategic framework identifies talent attraction, development, and retention as one of two major initiatives we will pursue over the next few years (along with increasing member engagement). GFOA will conduct a comprehensive review of the factors that contribute to our current workforce issues—and the issues we anticipate in the future. Is public service attractive to a younger workforce? Are compensation structures appropriate? Do staffing

models fit the work that governments need? How can we make the best use of remote and hybrid offices? What skills are necessary in a modern finance office, and are colleges and universities adequately preparing the next generation of finance officers?

Overcoming this challenge won't be quick, and we don't expect an easy solution—but advancing excellence in public finance and building thriving communities rely on having the right resources. We must come together as a profession to make sure the next generation understands what a rewarding career public finance can be. We must also help our local governments by providing the best practices, tools, and strategies for recruiting, retaining, and developing our future leaders.

To get started, we're asking you for help. I strongly believe that being a government finance officer remains a unique opportunity for making an impact in our communities, and for real personal fulfillment. I knew I wanted to work in local government as a high school student. In college I studied political science and interned in a city manager's office, and I then pursued a Master of Public Administration degree and began my government career in a budget office. After a few years in local government finance, I had some second thoughts and became a Peace Corps volunteer in the first group to serve in Ukraine. That experience renewed my commitment to public service, and when I returned to the United States, I became fully engaged in GFOA and worked my way up to become a city



## FINE(ance) Fridays

GFOA's popular podcast series takes listeners "beyond the numbers" and dives into how GFOA members got to where they are today.

Listen to season one of the podcast at [gfoa.org/fineance-fridays](https://gfoa.org/fineance-fridays)



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manager. That's my story, but our membership is diverse and took many paths to get where they are. What is your story? Why are you a finance officer?

During our annual conference in June, we have planned a "Why I'm a Finance Officer" session in which we will interview several finance officers about their journey into local government. We also will be documenting stories from our members. If you are attending the annual conference, please consider recording your own short story about how you ended up where you are. In addition, all members are encouraged to share their example or upload a short video at [gfoa.org/why-finance](https://gfoa.org/why-finance). GFOA will collect stories about your journeys and use them in upcoming resources as we reach out to the prospective public finance officers of the future.

Sincerely,

*Chris*