

In Brief



MEMBERSHIP

Get to Know GFOA's Affinity Groups

BY NATALIE LAUDADIO

One of the benefits GFOA membership offers is the opportunity to engage and share insights in one—or more—of our nine affinity groups:

- Alliance for Smarter School Spending
- Black Caucus
- Community for Canadian Issues
- LGBTQIA+ Caucus
- Small Government Forum
- Urban Forum
- Utility Finance Forum
- Women's Public Finance Network
- Young Professionals Network

It's an exciting time to explore these groups. Some have been around for more than three decades; some are being revitalized; and some are newly launched. Wherever you find yourself in your career journey, we encourage you to join to be inspired, gain support, and learn about the experiences of fellow finance professionals and how they approach their work. It's easy to enroll at gfoa.org/gfoa-groups.

ALLIANCE FOR SMARTER SCHOOL SPENDING is for finance and academic school district professionals working on implementing GFOA's recommended approach for school budgeting that emphasizes collaboration among finance, academic, and administrative leaders within a school district. A part of GFOA's Smarter School Spending initiative, the alliance includes a diverse group of districts from across the United States. Member districts range from several hundred to several hundred thousand students, representing a broad range of student performance and other key demographics.



“Through active engagement in the Alliance, we improved our financial policies, long-range plan, and educational outcomes, which led to an increase in our bond rating.”

MATTHEW LENTZ, chief financial officer, Esperanza corporate offices and former chief financial officer for Upper Moreland Township School District, Pennsylvania



“The Alliance's structure of bringing together the teaching and learning team with the finance team fosters a sense

of ownership for budget decisions and peels away the layers of mystery that often exist for many participants in the annual budget development process.”

BILL SUTTER, chief financial officer, Boulder Valley School District, Colorado



“Networking with other districts across the nation is extremely beneficial. We share cost saving

strategies and talk about realigning those funds through a prioritizing and decision making lens.”

MICHELE TRONGAARD, associate superintendent of business and finance, Mansfield Independent School District, Texas

THE BLACK CAUCUS was established in 1991 and is dedicated to supporting the aspirations and achievements of African American public finance officers, pursuing professional development opportunities for our members, and sponsoring projects to help African Americans seeking careers in government finance. Through education and networking opportunities, the Black Caucus supports members in their careers and encourages members to participate and contribute at the national level and in the state associations.



"The Black Caucus encourages members to work together toward common goals and to uplift one another, creating a strong group of individuals who are dedicated to promoting equality and justice."

DAMEIN P. BAITY, chief financial officer, Birmingham Public Library, Alabama



"GFOA's affinity groups help you by providing diverse perspectives and financial insight on common issues

that affect our municipalities. They also give you a sense of belonging in such a large, professional organization like GFOA, by ensuring your voice is heard on issues that you are a subject matter expert in."

MATTHEW LUE, director of finance, City of Columbia, Missouri

THE COMMUNITY FOR CANADIAN ISSUES concentrates on meeting the needs of GFOA's Canadian members. The group offers participants a unique opportunity to share ideas, current trends, and best practices.

GFOA'S LGBTQIA+ CAUCUS was officially launched in May 2023. Through networking and education, this group advocates for LGBTQIA+ members within the profession and works to increase the visibility of LGBTQIA+ people within GFOA and the profession as a whole.



"The LGBTQIA+ Caucus has allowed me to get connected and network with members who share similar ideas. I

have benefited from getting outside my comfort zone by organizing and moderating a conference session, hosting multiple virtual networking sessions, and public speaking."

JENNIFER DAVIS, assistant finance director, City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

THE SMALL GOVERNMENT FORUM

allows members of small governments to network and exchange information about topics that are unique to managing a small government. The forum, which was created in 2015, is open to GFOA members in small jurisdictions from the United States and Canada—those with populations of 25,000 or less, or with employee counts of 500 or less.



"As small government professionals, not only do we have to comply with the same requirements of larger governments, but

we must do it while wearing many hats because of staffing levels. This group helps us navigate these challenges through thoughtful dialogue, webinars tailored to small governments, and communications about significant government finance issues and topics."

JENNIFER SIGNS, finance manager/treasurer, Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District, Washington



"The no-cost training opportunities, specifically crafted for the unique needs of smaller governmental entities, have proven

invaluable to GFOA's membership. The community group, which facilitates outreach for problem-solving, is another fantastic resource. Identifying with the Small Government Forum provides additional networking opportunities during in-person training sessions as well."

STEFFANIE DORN, county treasurer, Greenwood County, South Carolina

GFOA'S URBAN FORUM gives members of large governments an opportunity to network and exchange information on topics unique to the demands of managing their large and complex entities. The Urban Forum is open to GFOA members in urban jurisdictions from the United States and Canada—those with metropolitan area populations of 1 million or more.



"I am new to the public sector, and I was strongly encouraged by my colleagues to join GFOA and the affinity groups. Networking

within these groups has led to valuable professional connections that have helped in my professional development. I have access to a wealth of resources, including information, advice, and knowledge from individuals who have diverse experiences and expertise."

KIPHANI ALLEN, assistant finance director, City of Fort Worth, Texas

THE UTILITY FINANCE FORUM is made up of GFOA members from utility organizations and municipalities that operate utilities. In this forum, members engage in topics like rate setting, enterprise accounting, asset management, and understanding regulations.



WOMEN'S PUBLIC FINANCE

NETWORK is a voluntary association of female elected and appointed officials and other women finance professionals. WPFN was formed in 1990 to develop a core network of female GFOA members to coordinate communications and to foster the careers of women in public finance through education, networking, and mentoring opportunities.



"WPFN gives me the opportunity to strengthen my network and learn from others."

HOA VU, senior financial analyst, Multnomah County, Oregon



"I've had the opportunity to participate in the coordination and collaboration of webinars and networking events on topics that are

important to women finance professionals. My involvement has provided me the ability to sharpen my time management, organizational, and public speaking skills."

KIMBERLY WILLIAMS, deputy chief finance officer/controller, Government of the District of Columbia




"Participating in WPFN is an enriching and rewarding experience, offering the chance to learn from strong,

passionate colleagues across the country and from all walks of life."

FATIMA YOUSOFI, officer, state fiscal policy, the Pew Charitable Trusts


THE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

NETWORK encourages and promotes the careers of young professionals in public finance through education, networking, and mentoring opportunities. The group is open to any active GFOA member under 40 years old. 

Natalie Laudadio is GFOA's senior manager of member programs.



Ten Reasons to Join GFOA's Affinity Groups

- 1 Participate in focused online member community discussions and exchange resources, support, and encouragement.
 - 2 Access free virtual events throughout the year on topics tailored to your group's interests.
 - 3 Expand your professional network by connecting with peers from diverse backgrounds and career stages across the United States and Canada through meetings at GFOA's annual conference.
 - 4 Learn best practices, policies, and skills from fellow finance professionals.
 - 5 Build leadership skills by volunteering for committee or officer positions, contributing to educational events, and sharing industry insights by contributing articles.
 - 6 Advance your career by serving as a mentor and/or mentee in programs hosted by one of several GFOA affinity groups including the Women's Public Finance Network and Black Caucus
 - 7 Enhance self-awareness by learning new skills and better work habits.
 - 8 Get recognized through our online Member Spotlights.
 - 9 Do something new and change your routine!
 - 10 Unwind and have fun with activities like book clubs, trivia events, and team competitions like the upcoming 5k Run/Walk in Orlando as part of the annual conference.
-  Learn more and join at gfoa.org/gfoa-groups