



TOGETHER WE ARE GFOA

MEMBERSHIP

“Rethinking” GFOA Membership for the Future

GFOA supports public finance professionals working in a field that is constantly evolving. Not only can it be challenging to stay current with the latest accounting standards, debt management regulations, budgeting trends, or technology innovations, GFOA members serve their communities in supporting critical services, ensuring sustainability, promoting transparency and accountability, and ultimately building trust. As a group, GFOA members are known for their collaboration, mentoring, sharing of best practices, and dedication to public service. As an organization, we are proud of the trust placed in us and our ability to support and advocate for GFOA members, governments, and the overall public finance profession.

Over the years, GFOA has experienced tremendous success reflected in our growing membership, robust training programs, updated certification program, innovative research and consulting, and high levels of member engagement across all program areas. While membership fees have remained unchanged for over a decade, we’ve continuously enhanced the value of GFOA membership to better serve our current members and attract new ones.

And with this success, we also find ourselves in the unique and advantageous position of continuing to ask how we can better serve our mission in advancing excellence in public finance, support finance professionals at all levels of their career in government and evolve our organization to better meet the needs of our members and the communities they serve. Like our research efforts for government budgeting, we sought to “rethink” our approach to membership. After years

of research, careful analysis, planning, and discussions among GFOA’s executive board, staff, members, consultants, and peer advisors, we are now able to announce a transformational change to GFOA’s membership model. This change is mission-driven and designed to greatly expand access to GFOA, strengthen our membership network, expand our reach, and allow GFOA to keep evolving to meet challenges today and in the future.

What is GFOA’s new membership model?

Beginning in August 2025, GFOA will transition to a simplified membership structure, a true organization-based membership model where most public-sector organizations will pay a single fee for membership—making all individuals who are either employed by or elected and who have responsibility for any aspect or function of public finance to be eligible for membership at no additional cost.

GFOA’s membership structure has long blended components of organization-based membership with individual membership. Government members could join either by base membership—where the first few members from a single government would be included in a fixed amount (governments received one to seven “base” members, depending on their size)—or by adding on additional memberships at a current rate of \$150 per member. Our change effectively eliminates the fee for additional memberships and opens up GFOA membership and the programs, services, and benefits to everyone within the organization.

Note: Individuals working for retirement systems, state/provincial governments, or the federal government will use an individual membership model.

What does this change mean for governments?

This change will have little impact on the way most members receive benefits. GFOA will continue to provide discounts for the annual conference and training, access to *GFR*, the weekly newsletter, online communities, and opportunities to participate in the CPFO program, affinity groups, standing committees, and more. For individuals who aren't currently members, we have removed some of the most significant barriers to joining. We also anticipate a much larger network of members, improved leadership opportunities, more resources, and stronger brand awareness driving improvements to financial management. Specifically, governments will benefit from:

- **More GFOA members per government.** By eliminating the \$150 “add-on” fee for membership, GFOA will remove barriers that require each add-on member to justify and gain approval for the cost of membership. A GFOA membership will enable each person access to GFOA's online communities, affinity groups, newsletter and member alerts, premium website content and more.
- **Support for individuals in entry-level positions.** Some of the individuals who are in the best position to take advantage of GFOA services are those least likely to be GFOA members under the current structure. Entry-level finance professionals or employees who want to move up in the organization will be able to join at no additional cost and take advantage of GFOA educational, networking, mentorship, certification, and other programs.
- **Financial skills being built outside of the finance department.** GFOA resources are valuable for individuals who have responsibilities for budget, procurement, capital planning, economic development, or other functions that may reside outside of the finance office. GFOA will be an attractive option for department directors and other staff members who routinely interact with finance, helping them build knowledge and skills.
- **More transparency and simplicity for GFOA membership fees.** The total price for current membership for each organization is the base fee plus the sum of all individual add-on memberships. For some of GFOA's largest members, this can add \$5,000 or more to the price of membership and require managing different memberships with different renewal periods. Under GFOA's new fee structure, each organization will have a single transparent price and one payment transaction that will provide benefits for the whole organization.

When will members see a change?

For any governments that have memberships expiring after August 1, 2025, renewal pricing will be at the new rates (this information is also available at gfoa.org/membership). New member benefits and expanded access to GFOA membership

without additional add-on fees will begin in August. For any individual who works for a government and has a membership renewal between April and August, the renewal fee will be waived and benefits will continue during this transition period until the new model takes effect and fees are eliminated.

Beginning in June, GFOA will also implement a member activation form that all members will have to complete. This form, which will ensure GFOA has accurate membership information, will ask for members' participation in completing a very short survey on the state of the public finance profession. All members will be required to complete this step by year's end. The information collected will be the same as for new members and will allow GFOA to better understand trends and, if necessary, modify services to meet current needs.

What does this change mean for GFOA?

These changes are strategic and mission-focused. Many peer organizations we contacted as part of this initiative recently implemented changes to their membership structure to overcome declining revenue or slumping membership numbers. Fortunately, that is not GFOA's situation. We anticipate that the changes created by our new model will drive three critical goals for GFOA.

- 1. Increase membership among finance professionals at all levels of existing member organizations.** GFOA's current “base” membership includes a limited number of memberships, but 65 percent of GFOA member organizations opt not to purchase additional memberships. GFOA membership is then held by only a small percentage of the finance professionals working for the organization, and official GFOA members are often the most senior staff in the department. Some benefits can be shared, and GFOA allows for non-members from member organizations to receive member pricing, but this creates barriers. Tying new member benefits to an online member account sharing benefits becomes difficult or impossible. We have realized that many of our programs designed to help finance officers early in their career, like some of our most popular education seminars, webinars, affinity groups, mentoring programs, and certification, are inaccessible to a large number of finance professionals who don't have formal GFOA membership.
- 2. Better target non-member organizations.** While GFOA continues to grow, there are still key government segments where membership numbers are low. We believe that a more attractive pitch to new member organizations about the scale of GFOA benefits and the overall impact to the entire organization will allow us to recruit new members.
- 3. Simplify GFOA internal process and modernize overall approach to membership.** Currently, approximately 6,000 members pay the additional \$150 fee, which creates

an administrative burden for both the government and GFOA. Each individual member could require a separate approval from management, be on a separate payment schedule, receive a separate invoice, and submit and process a separate payment. GFOA has had a long-standing “substitution” policy that extends member discounts to non-members from a member organization. This entirely manual administration process for GFOA has become more problematic as membership is tied to online accounts. Overall, the new structure simplifies the existing one, eliminates add-on fees, reduces the number of membership tiers, and avoids confusion among members who work for an organizational member but are not actually GFOA members.

How will pricing for membership change?

The new membership model eliminates add-on individual memberships while also maintaining the overall amount of revenue that membership generates for GFOA. This requires the \$1.2 million that is now collected through add-on fees to be reallocated to the base organizational fee. To complete this transition in a way that is fair and consistent with GFOA's approach to membership going forward, we used the following process:

- 1. Identified new membership tiers.** GFOA's new membership model reduces the total number of membership tiers by about 50 percent.
- 2. Determined equivalent organization-wide fees.** New fees were determined by calculating the average total amount currently paid by each government (base fee + add-on fee) for each new membership tier. And since GFOA had not yet increased fees since 2009, we applied a 10 percent increase to each tier.
- 3. Adjusted fees to resolve current quirks and align with membership recruitment goals.** We further modified the pricing structure to reduce the price for strategic membership targets or to provide overall alignment to GFOA's pricing. While analyzing current pricing, GFOA noticed and corrected for several anomalies with the current pricing structure that had evolved over time but no longer served GFOA's membership goals.

Overall, the membership structure was designed to make pricing consistent across all organizations, relative to their size and the potential for individual GFOA members. Among the organizations that opt to add on individual memberships currently, the quantity of memberships varies considerably. While many smaller organizations may only add a few, GFOA currently has a few larger cities and counties that add almost 100 additional people to their account.

What are the new fees that will be effective for renewals after August 1, 2025?

Information on new fees for organization-wide government membership is included below for each of GFOA's new membership tiers. Membership tiers are organized by both type of government and size of government. The information also provides transparency for the process GFOA used to adjust fees and helps communicate expected fee changes for each organization.

Note: The tables below show what governments currently pay under GFOA's existing membership structure for both the base fee and the average cost per organization after add-on members are included.

CITY/TOWN/VILLAGE

Fees for city government are based on population and will include six tiers. While approximately 95 percent of all city governments with populations of more than 300,000 are GFOA members, only 26 percent of city governments with populations between 5,000 and 25,000 are members. There are approximately 500 city governments with populations of more than 25,000 who are not members, representing significant opportunities for growth.

Category	Base Fee (Current)	Average Cost Per Org (Current)	New Fee
Population 0-10K	\$160 - \$170	\$206	\$250
Population 10-50K	\$190 - \$305	\$321	\$500
Population 50-100K	\$595 - \$640	\$823	\$1,000
Population 100-300K	\$840 - \$1,145	\$1,362	\$1,750
Population 300-750K	\$1,305 - \$3,050	\$2,871	\$3,500
Population 750K+	\$3,050 - \$4,620	\$6,800	\$7,500

COUNTY

Fees for county government are based on population and will include five tiers. County governments represent a large growth opportunity for GFOA because of the many rural counties that aren't currently part of GFOA's network. The new pricing structure also creates a different scale for tiers than is used for city governments (currently both cities and counties use the same scale); this reflects the much larger land area counties cover and the different ratio of finance professionals typically found within county government relative to population.

Category	Base Fee (Current)	Average Cost Per Org (Current)	New Fee
Population 0-50K	\$160 - \$305	\$309	\$250
Population 50-200K	\$595 - \$840	\$869	\$1,000
Population 200-500K	\$1,145 - \$1,305	\$1,727	\$2,500
Population 500-1000K	\$1,775 - \$3,050	\$3,318	\$4,000
Population 1000K+	\$4,620	\$6,668	\$7,500

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SPECIAL DISTRICT

Fees for special districts, which include water districts, park districts, transit districts, community colleges, and other forms of local government, are organized into five membership categories based on employee count. With this change GFOA is also creating new tiers for small special districts, which make up the majority of member organizations within this category.

Category	Base Fee (Current)	Average Cost Per Org (Current)	New Fee
Employee 0-20	\$160	\$225	\$200
Employee 20-50	\$160	\$225	\$250
Employee 50-100	\$160	\$225	\$350
Employee 100-500	\$280	\$447	\$500
Employee 500+	\$500 - \$1,605	\$898	\$1,500

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Fees for [K-12] school districts are organized into five tiers based on student enrollment at the district. School districts remain a huge growth opportunity for GFOA. While we currently represent only about 5 percent of school districts in the United States (700 out of 13,000), we also have very few school districts that have extended membership beyond their base amount. Increasing both the number of school districts and the number of individuals from each school district for GFOA's membership network will be an ongoing priority.

Category	Base Fee (Current)	Average Cost Per Org (Current)	New Fee
Enrollment 0-4K	\$160 - \$280	\$243	\$250
Enrollment 4-10K	\$280 - \$500	\$513	\$375
Enrollment 10-30K	\$500 - \$885	\$828	\$750
Enrollment 30-50K	\$700 - \$1,080	\$1,082	\$1,000
Enrollment 50K+	\$1,295 - \$1,605	\$1,409	\$1,500

NATIVE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

GFOA will create a tier for Native American Governments. These organizations provide services like those of a local government,

and they currently join GFOA as individuals. New pricing will provide membership benefits for the entire organization for a fee similar to what GFOA was charging each individual under the current structure. This should greatly enhance opportunities for education, networking, and career development among members from these organizations.

Category	Base Fee (Current)	Average Cost Per Org (Current)	New Fee
All Native American Governments	\$200	\$265	\$200

CANADIAN GOVERNMENTS

In the past, GFOA has struggled to attract new Canadian members, with only approximately 170 member organizations from Canada currently (about 2 percent of GFOA membership). Many provincial GFOA associations in Canada are quite strong, however. Our approach to fees for Canadian membership represents a growth opportunity for GFOA, but also one executed in partnership with our provincial GFOA association peers. GFOA's new pricing structure for Canadian governments reflects the fact that Canadian governments do not experience full benefits from GFOA because of regulatory or structural differences between U.S. and Canadian Governments. It also reflects our anticipated role of helping our partners by providing resources, research, relevant subject matter expertise, and cross-provincial and international networking. Fees for Canadian governments will be made up of five membership tiers based on size. In almost all cases, the fees for Canadian governments will be decreased significantly.

Category*	Base Fee (Current) (\$USD)	Average Cost Per Org (Current) (\$USD)	Proposed Fee (\$CAD)
Canada-1	\$160 - \$280	\$196	\$150
Canada-2	\$190 - \$305	\$276	\$250
Canada-3	\$595 - \$1,145	\$815	\$500
Canada-4	\$1,775 - \$3,050	\$1,568	\$1,000
Canada-5	\$3,050 - \$4,620	\$4,052	\$2,000

Canadian governments will also be classified by type of government and size tier for the overall GFOA membership structure.

Canadian membership tiers are made up of the following:

- **Canada-1** *[City-1, County-1, Special District-1 and 2, School District-1 and 2, and all Indigenous Canadian organizations]*
- **Canada-2** *[City-2, County-2, Special District-3 and 4, School District-3 and 4]*
- **Canada-3** *[City-3 and 4, County-3, Special District-5, School District-5]*
- **Canada-4** *[City-5 and County-4]*
- **Canada-5** *[City-6 and County-5]*

RETIREMENT SYSTEMS (INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP)

GFOA currently has fewer than 200 retirement system organizations as members, with an average of average 2.8 members per organization. Because the finance structure of retirement system organizations is different than general purpose governments and the type of resources these organizations use from GFOA is different, it is very difficult to price membership based on an organization-wide model. To provide a more consistent pricing, GFOA is changing retirement system membership to an individual model, to align with state/provincial membership. As a result, fees for most of the organizations in this tier will be reduced.

Category	Base Fee (Current)	Average Cost Per Org (Current)	New Fee (Individual)
Individuals	\$160 - \$1,655 (Per Organization)	\$265	\$175

STATE/PROVINCIAL, TERRITORIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS (INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS)

GFOA will maintain individual based membership for state and territorial governments of the United States and provincial and territorial governments in Canada. Federal government employees within both countries would have the same treatment.

Category	Individual Fee (Current)	Average Cost Per Individual (Current)	New Fee
US – State/Territory	\$160 - \$250	\$205	\$175
Canada – Province/Territory	\$160 - \$250	\$191	\$150 (CAD)
US – Federal Government	\$150	\$150	\$175
Canada – Federal Government	\$150	\$150	\$175 (CAD)

Are fees for associate (private-sector) members changing?

GFOA's membership includes categories for government employees [referred to as “active” members] and all other individual members [referred to as “associate” members.] The new model for associate membership pricing will stay the same, except for simplifying pricing for international associate members. Within the category of associate members, GFOA has special pricing for retired individuals, academic faculty who

teach public finance, and students. Any individual who works for a government but isn't able to join GFOA as part of an organization-wide membership would be eligible for associate membership. Fees for individual associate members are listed below.

Category	Base Fee (Current)	Average Cost Per Org (Current)	New Fee
Associate	\$225	\$225	\$225
Canadian – Associate	\$225	\$225	\$200 (CAD)
Retired	\$35	\$35	\$35
Faculty	\$40	\$40	\$50
Student	\$25	\$25	\$25
International	\$160 - \$250	\$150	\$150


How will these changes affect GFOA's overall membership?

GFOA's growth rate has more than doubled in the past five years over its historical average, and this past year adds to a string of 15 years in a row (and counting) of growth. But we believe that these changes to our membership structure will remove barriers that keep early and mid-career professionals from joining GFOA.

The current membership structure, and the number of governments that don't purchase additional individual memberships, means that only a portion of finance professionals have formal membership in GFOA. For example, a city with a population of 35,000 receives two base memberships but may have five or more people in the finance or budget departments. Similarly, a city with a population of 175,000 only receives four memberships, although it could have a staff of 15 or 20. Extrapolating these numbers and combining them with more aggressive marketing for new members, it's not unreasonable to assume that GFOA's member network could double or triple in size. This growth won't happen overnight, but we will work to communicate the value of GFOA membership and ensure that we have appropriate programming to serve GFOA's new members and growing overall membership.

How can members learn more and get involved?

For details about the new membership model, visit gfoa.org/membership. GFOA will also showcase these changes at the Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. [June 29 to July 2, 2025], where there will be special events designed to give members an insider's look at all the new opportunities. Plus, GFOA staff is always here for you—ready to answer questions and provide guidance through this transition, or to help new members take advantage of their member benefits. Please reach out to us anytime about these changes at feedback@gfoa.org.

Together, we are shaping the future of public finance. These changes are just the beginning of what we can achieve working together. As we move forward, we're excited to partner with you, build stronger networks, and create new opportunities that benefit you and the communities you serve. The best is yet to come, and with your engagement, we will continue to thrive—together. 

 Visit gfoa.org/membership for more information.