

In Brief



Introducing GFOA's Recognition for Outstanding Public Service Honorees

GFOA's Recognition for Outstanding Public Service honors individual GFOA members for their dedication to the profession, their colleagues, their organizations, and their communities. The work of finance professionals is critical to government's ability to serve, but often occurs behind the scenes. GFOA's membership network includes many individuals who exemplify the role of public servant, working to support others, lead organizations through both good times and bad, and make a positive impact on those they serve.

Lake Akinkugbe

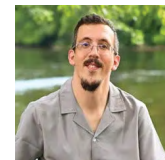
Director of Finance, AlexRenew, Virginia



Akinkugbe has made a significant impact on the wastewater treatment authority in just over a year, promoting transparency and simplifying complex reports. Accounting Manager Jason Moore at AlexRenew (who nominated Akinkugbe) said, "I couldn't ask for a better mentor and manager. Lake encourages thought-provoking conversation and listens to any idea that could further our department and organization. He is selfless and encouraging."

Dennis Click

Deputy Controller, County of Albemarle, Virginia



Click is leading the implementation of the county's financial management system, and his expertise in data readiness has streamlined processes. He has refined data structures and fostered collaboration with vendors and stakeholders to keep the project ahead of schedule. Controller Jian Lin (who nominated Click) called him "a role model with his broad financial knowledge, technical skillset, and his leadership."

Jessica Conley

Finance Director, Walworth County, Wisconsin



Conley has been a key figure in the county's financial success since 2003; her achievements include the feat of eliminating the county's debt. "Her dedication to the profession is unmatched," said Rich Abbott, recovery grants manager for the

county. [Abbot nominated Conley for this honor.] “She is constantly striving for improvement, efficiency, and taking the county to the next level of financial communication.”

Nikki Dickerson

Finance Director, Warren County, North Carolina

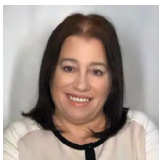


Dickerson has implemented technological and operational changes that have benefited both the department and its

employees. She recognized areas where staff were struggling and made changes to better align roles with individual strengths, resulting in a happier, more productive team. Deputy Finance Director Stevelyn Riggan, who nominated Dickerson, noted, “Her personal touch and thoughtfulness to ensure her employees are thriving creates such a positive work environment.”

Dawn Donovan

Town Comptroller, Town of Eastchester, New York



Donovan has more than 35 years of experience in municipal finance and is recognized for her expertise and

leadership. Deputy Comptroller Bing Morris, who nominated her, noted, “Dawn’s dedication and service to the public is outstanding.” Her government has consistently received GFOA’s Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, demonstrating her commitment to high standards. Donovan is also respected for her problem-solving abilities and mentorship.

Alex Fedak

Controller, City of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Fedak’s leadership has helped change the city’s workplace culture, fostering

a motivated team. His focus on clear financial reporting has strengthened the community’s trust in local government, and he’s created an environment where employees feel valued and empowered. “Alex’s leadership has not only elevated the reputation of Oklahoma City but has also contributed to its overall prosperity and well-being,” according to Assistant Controller Amy Parker, who nominated him.

Perla Fikter

Finance Director, Bear Valley Community Services District, California

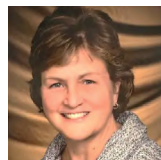


“Perla is a finance genius,” said Accounting Clerk Heather Peltier, who nominated Fikter.

Fikter’s habit of going above and beyond expectations has helped secure community grants and produce well-structured budgets. Fikter’s innovative approach has also generated additional revenue for the district, and she is also a patient and skilled mentor, continually educating her team on GASB updates and encouraging professional development across all aspects of public finance.

Beverly (Bev) Fitzsimmons

Deputy Comptroller, City of St. Louis, Missouri



Fitzsimmons, retired deputy comptroller for the City of St. Louis, Missouri, devoted 43 years to public service in municipal finance. “Bev has never avoided a tough financial problem,” said nominator Ryan Coleman, the city’s financial analyst. “She highlighted her commitment to mindful spending and responsible stewardship. Her legacy is marked by leadership, resilience, and dedication to colleagues and the St. Louis community.”

Rex Gaither

Finance Director/Assistant Town Manager, Town of Smyrna, Tennessee



Under Gaither’s 30 years with Smyrna—the last 14 as finance director—the town secured a triple A credit rating, ensuring that its legacy pension plan will be fully funded. His leadership has led to stronger reserves and a revitalization of the water/sewer fund. Finance Manager Sierra Lowry (who nominated Gaither) noted, “Rex is the ultimate civil servant. His legacy will impact Smyrna citizens for generations to come.”

Jim Golden

Chief Finance Officer, City of Longmont, Colorado



“Jim hired me fresh out of college and was my boss and mentor during my eight plus years with the city,” said Jeff Hansen, finance director for the City of Golden, Colorado (who nominated Golden). “He has continued to be a mentor and resource for me and for others, across Colorado. His dedication to the city and the governmental finance profession for 43+ years deserves recognition.”

Leah Harris

Administrative Officer/Finance Officer, San Miguel Fire & Rescue



Leah exemplifies the versatility of public finance professionals. Battalion Chief Tobin Riley said, “Her advice is sound and has helped me tremendously,” while Finance Division Manager Alicea Caccavo at the Orange County Fire Authority, said Harris “is continuously requested by other fire agencies in San Diego County for information or clarification on the rules and regulations regarding compliance.” [Riley and Caccavo co-nominated Harris.]



Russell Hill

Assistant Finance Director, City of Waco, Texas

Hill oversees Waco's obligations and investment portfolio, and his role in managing economic development deals has been vital for the city's financial success and efforts to diversify its economy. According to Nicholas Sarpy, Hill's former supervisor and the person who nominated him, "Rusty's unwavering commitment to the organization through difficult and good times is why he is a role model for other finance professionals."

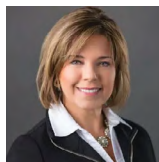
Sabrina Jackson

Senior Assistant Director, Public Works City of Houston, Texas

Jackson is responsible for preparing the annual comprehensive financial report for the City of Houston Public Works, while overseeing water plant accounting, budgets, capital plans, and contract management. As Samir Solanki, the utility's chief financial officer (who nominated Jackson), explained, "She puts her employees first and believes that when our people are taken care of, then our clients will also be taken care of."

Dawn Jindrich

Finance Director, Linn County, Iowa

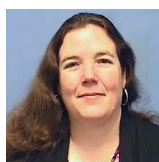


Jindrich led through a county-wide ERP conversion and continues to mentor others. As Linn County Budget

Director Sara Bearrows (who nominated Jindrich) said, "Dawn was able to successfully balance these major responsibilities thanks to her solid work ethic, mindful preparedness over the years, and her sheer motivation to do what was in the best interest of the county and its residents."

Melanie Keeton

Assistant Finance Director, City of San Antonio, Texas



Keeton has driven improvements in the city's financial reporting and accountability, helping reduce external audit findings from 22 in 2008 to zero since 2018. She fosters her team's professional growth, mentors

emerging leaders, and promotes diversity and inclusion. As Deputy Chief Financial Officer Troy Elliott (who nominated Keeton) noted, "Melanie embodies the qualities of an exceptional leader who can strategically drive results and is a committed public servant."

Natalya Krutova

Controller, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation



Natalya has been a driving force behind the financial success of the Wisconsin Economic Development

Corporation (WEDC), earning the organization consistent recognition for excellence in financial reporting. Her leadership has also led to improvements in budgeting and forecasting. As WEDC Chief Financial Officer Khadija Mims (who nominated Krutova) mentioned, "Her unwavering commitment to upholding the highest standards of ethics inspires others to emulate her dedication to principled behavior."

Talia Lomax-O'dneal

Finance Deputy Director, Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County, Tennessee

Lomax-O'dneal—the first woman and person of color to serve as finance director for Metro—has focused on ensuring that the department acts as a strategic partner in government while advocating for employee well-being. As Metro Finance Manager Loan Huynh (who nominated her) shares, "Talia has a superpower for recognizing strengths in others and encouraging them to elevate their best traits."

Kimberly Lord*Director of Finance, Town of Manchester, Connecticut*

Lord played a pivotal role in the merger of services between the Eighth Utilities District and the town, and she's led efforts to revamp the Tax Assessor, Collector's Office, and Procurement departments. Assistant Town Manager Kasia Purciello (who nominated Lord) praises the finance director's commitment, saying, "She truly has the taxpayers' best interests at heart and is a great listener and teacher, helping me grow professionally."

Timothy Manglicmot*Senior Finance Manager, San Diego Community Power, California*

Manglicmot—who was nominated by: Eric Washington, chief financial officer and treasurer; Christopher Do, senior financial analyst; and Julissa Mercedes, financial analyst, Manglicmot's colleagues at San Diego Community Power—encourages his staff to attend conferences, gain certifications, and engage with the community. His colleagues said, "We believe Timothy's combination of expertise, community engagement, ethics, adaptability, and mentorship make him an outstanding role model for finance professionals."

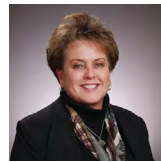
Dawn McGuire*Accounting Specialist, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, Minnesota*

McGuire manages accounting records and financial transactions, and she is also an expert in financial software. She has played a key role in training and mentoring several finance and accounting interns. MVTA Finance Director Elle Reichert, who nominated McGuire for this honor, describes McGuire as "a kind,

patient, and knowledgeable asset to the team," setting "an excellent example of what it means to be a team player."

Bill McHale*Controller, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas*

McHale has ensured transparent financial reporting, which contributes to maintaining public trust and securing top credit ratings and in turn helps lower borrowing costs. Known for his servant leadership and open-door policy, McHale prioritizes staff morale, career development, and fostering an environment of respect and integrity. Houston METRO Chief Financial Officer George Fotinos (who nominated McHale) said, "Bill McHale exemplifies the highest standard for public service."

Kelli Munroe*Chief Deputy Treasurer, Pinal County, Arizona*

Munroe's experience across various sectors enables her to bridge departments and streamline procedures, creating a proactive approach to efficiency. In addition, her open-door policy and commitment to staff development fosters a positive work environment. As Pinal County Treasurer Investment Administrator Lori Ashford (who nominated Munroe) said, "It has been my honor to witness her career and now work closely with her each day."

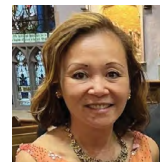
Claudia Orugbani*Grants Fiscal Manager, City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

Orugbani leads the city's annual single audit, plays a key role in the preparation of the annual comprehensive financial report, and she's been instrumental in monitoring federal programs like ARPA and CARES. Accounts Director Richard

Bare (who nominated Orugbani) said, "Her knowledge of grant accounting, federal, state, and local programs and reporting is second to none." Colleagues consistently turn to Claudia for guidance, making her an indispensable resource.

Catherine Piepho*Finance Director, Washington County, Minnesota*

Piepho is known for her leadership and commitment to public service. The former Steele County finance director stayed on the job for an additional seven months to work out a gap in leadership, and her successor, Candi Lemarr, (who nominated Piepho) said, "Cathy is selfless and a stellar example of what a true leader is." Piepho is dedicated to fostering growth, and she believes in the potential of others.

Jocelyn Quintos*Director, Accounting Operations, City & County of San Francisco, California*

Quintos has implemented professional development programs, and she's been instrumental in increasing the adoption of the city's ERP system and ensuring compliance with new accounting standards. As her colleague Beth Portman, managing director at Deloitte & Touche USA (and the person who nominated Quintos for this honor) said, "Jocelyn is one of the unsung heroes of our profession," consistently doing the right thing because it matters.

Robert Scott*Director of Finance and Administration, City of Brookfield, Wisconsin*

Scott is dedicated to financial accuracy and can clearly communicate complex plans, making him a trusted mentor in the finance community. As City Clerk Michelle

Luedtke (who nominated Scott) said, "He is a great listener who provides clear guidance on how tasks should be done and why, ensuring the best outcomes." His deep analytical skills and wealth of knowledge are matched by his passion for the profession.

Courtney Shearer

Controller, Virginia Lottery, Virginia

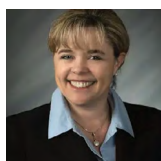


Shearer has overseen improvements in finance and operations to enhance efficiency and accuracy. She

has modernized outdated financial policies and introduced new ones, and she is known for driving positive change, fostering collaboration, and is always ready to support her team. As a CPA, she emphasizes professional development for her staff. "She always looks for the positive in any negative," said Courtney Goad, who nominated Shearer.

Donna Silva

Director of Finance and Human Resources, San Juan Water District, California



Silva's leadership has helped transform the district over the past decade. The district had undergone

numerous leadership changes and was struggling financially, and Silva addressed the issues by implementing a new ERP system and introducing accounting policies and procedures that stabilized the district's operations. Senior Accountant Entela Fallstead (who nominated her) said, "Donna is always open and looks forward to employees that want to learn and grow."

Molly Talkington

Finance Director, City of Rolling Meadows, Illinois



Talkington is dedicated to collaboration, transparency, and public engagement—which is why she was nominated for this

honor by Carrie Marckess, assistant finance director for the Village of Bloomingdale, Illinois; and Courtney Kouzmanoff, budget officer for the City of Champaign, Illinois. Kouzmanoff said, "Molly's mentoring mindset, characterized by her willingness to provide guidance and support, is truly admirable." Marckess credits Molly's encouragement for inspiring her to pursue GFOA's CPFO designation and a master's program.

Marcia Tannian

Director of Finance and Investor Relations, New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New York

Tannian oversees MTA's annual debt issuance, manages its debt portfolio, ensures that the agency's disclosure is thorough, accessible, and well-presented, and develops financing plan strategy and the structure of bond issuances—earning MTA recognition for exemplary disclosure practices. MTA Deputy Chief Olga Chernat, who nominated Tannian, remarks, "Marcia brings her A-game every day with maximum effort, focus, and undeniable commitment."

Steve Webb

Finance Director, City of Covington, Kentucky



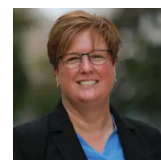
Webb developed a financing plan for the city's investment portfolio, debt structure, capital needs, and declining

revenues. As City of Covington Budget Director Joel Baker (who nominated Webb) notes, "Steve is a natural leader." Under Webb's guidance, the city achieved

a clean audit with no findings in FY23, the first since FY96. Steve has also increased collections and boosted income while improving income.

Darlene Wildes

Deputy Auditor, City of Columbus, Ohio, Auditor's Office



Under Wildes' leadership, Columbus became the largest city in the country to maintain AAA/Aaa/AAA credit ratings. As

City Auditor Megan Kilgore (who nominated her) said, "The citizens of Columbus likely do not know the name Darlene Wildes, but they have most certainly benefited from her 28 years with the city." Darlene has modernized systems, created a Transparency Portal that makes information accessible to the public, and started AI initiatives.


Nancy Young-Oliver

Chief Financial Officer, TriMet, Oregon



Young-Oliver has played a pivotal role in achieving the district's AAA bond rating, leading initiatives including

an energy credit program and the first fare increase in nearly a decade. Young-Oliver is also committed to fostering talent. Michael Dohn, Budget and Forecasting Director at TriMet (who nominated Young-Oliver), said, "Although I am the one submitting this nomination, there is a long line of colleagues behind me endorsing it."

All GFOA members are eligible to be recognized with this program or nominate someone who has made a difference, exemplified the values in GFOA's code of ethics, or served as a role model for the public finance profession. Nominations for 2025 will open in January 2025. 

 Read more at gfoa.org/publicservice