

# The Committee on Governmental Budgeting and Fiscal Policy

BY JOHN FISHBIEN

**G**FOA's Committee on Governmental Budgeting and Fiscal Policy advises and guides GFOA best practices and recommendations on a range of topics related to the budget process, financial policies, and budget presentation. The Budget Committee also provides advice on broader financial management topics. The committee has 25 active members, two ex-officio members, five advisors, and two GFOA support staff members. The committee is chaired by Scott Huizenga, director, Office of Management and Budget for the City of San Antonio, Texas. Its vice-chair is Judith Marte, chief financial officer, Broward County School Board, Florida. Committee members have a diversity of experiences and organizations that provide a well-rounded perspective in developing guidance for GFOA members and beyond and makes for interesting discussion at the committee's twice-annual meetings.

## Best Practices

The 35 best practices the committee has developed or been actively involved in are organized in four major categories: budget policies, budget process, budget document, and monitoring and performance management. These documents are meant to serve as checklists and practical advice that government professionals can use to evaluate current policies and processes.

The committee is working on a new best practice on budgetary control, being developed jointly with the Accounting, Auditing, and Financial Reporting Committee. Some of the key items to be covered include: the intent of budget controls; primary methods for modifying budgets, including budget transfers and amendments; a system for implementing budgetary

controls; the inclusion of budgetary controls in financial policies; position control mechanisms; how changes are requested and who can make them; and movement to other classifications.

Another best practice the committee is working on with the Accounting, Auditing, and Financial Reporting Committee involves measuring the full cost of government services. Measuring the cost of government services is useful for a variety of purposes, including performance measurement, comparative analysis, grant administration, disaster recovery cost documentation, establishing government charges and fees, and evaluating service delivery alternatives. Cost data can be extremely useful in identifying situations where governments should evaluate service delivery alternatives. The full cost of a service encompasses all direct and indirect costs related to that service.

A third best practice, which will be going to GFOA's Executive Board for approval, is Communicating the Budget. The traditional way of communicating the budget has focused on producing a large budget document. However, through newer technologies and better understanding of citizens' needs related to understanding budget information, better methods have emerged. Communication strategies are always evolving, and a budget communications plan should include outreach for different audiences and diverse approaches. Finance officers need to find methods of communicating the budget processes, performance measures, and outcomes and results that engage stakeholders in ways that are natural to their communication styles. ■



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