

In Brief



MEMBERSHIP

The Value of GFOA Membership

BY ALISON WUENSCH

Last August, GFOA transitioned to a simplified, organization-based membership structure in which most public-sector organizations pay a single fee for unlimited employee memberships. Since the new membership structure took effect, GFOA has added thousands of new individuals, bringing our membership to more than 32,000 people. The change was driven by GFOA's mission of advancing excellence in public finance by providing unlimited access to resources, professional development,

and networking opportunities for all of an organization's employees. The idea is to foster broader participation and engagement, meet the evolving needs of the public finance profession, and develop the next generation of leaders.

To evaluate the impact of the restructuring, GFOA sought input from all our members. In an anonymous February 2026 survey about how newer members were experiencing the change, GFOA got to know why they joined, how the unlimited membership structure influenced their decision to join, and what specific benefits the new unlimited

membership structure holds for them, as well as what they hope to get out of their membership.

Respondents cited the benefits the streamlined membership model has provided. Many indicated that they're excited about the expanded access for everyone on their team and in their organization, for a price that isn't cost-prohibitive. Some newer additions to their organization's membership had been interested in GFOA resources before the change, but they can now join without needing to justify the cost of an individual membership, which presents less



GFOA on track to increase membership by 50% in the first year of the new membership structure.

of a barrier to entry. For some, the new structure means getting others in their organization to truly understand the value of being a GFOA member instead of just hearing about it. An added benefit for some is that the process of managing membership is also streamlined, since they don't have to worry about making payments each year on the employee level. It also simplifies membership maintenance, as employees only need to renew at the organizational level and not at the individual level, reducing the administrative burden.

The change made joining GFOA easier or more attractive for nearly a quarter of respondents, but for most, that was not a primary reason for joining. The results indicated that 100 percent of respondents joined with professional development/training as the main reason. GFOA is proud to offer a variety of training sessions led by subject matter experts, and we put a great deal of time and effort into each training session, so it is an honor that so many members find that training valuable. Other reasons for joining included access to resources or tools, networking opportunities, being

new to the government sector, or a recommendation from a colleague or friend. Nearly 60 percent of respondents joined for access to resources or tools; 25 percent joined for networking opportunities; and nearly 20 percent joined based on a recommendation from a colleague or friend.


When asked what they wanted to get out of their GFOA membership the first year, professional development and training were at the top of the list. Members were also enthused about participating in member communities, connecting with colleagues, and learning about public finance in the public sector, for those new to public finance.

Most respondents were positive about the membership restructure, but they also had the opportunity to share challenges they've experienced and suggestions for improvement. As a membership organization with tens of thousands of members across the United States and Canada, GFOA understands that membership and membership needs are varied across organization type, size, region, and more.

With GFOA's new membership structure, organizational memberships

are available to all forms of local government and pricing depends on the size of the organization. This allows any employee or elected official with an interest in public finance to participate in GFOA services and engage with the GFOA community.

Members indicated that they're getting value from their GFOA memberships and are excited about the restructuring and how it expands the value of a GFOA membership to other people across their organizations. Members find value across GFOA's member benefits and programs, and expanding access to these benefits and programs across the United States and Canada will have lasting benefits for current public finance officers as well as the next generation of public finance officers and the future of public finance.

GFOA will conduct more extensive qualitative research about member experiences to include in an upcoming issue of *GFR*. 



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