

INTERVIEW

# A Team Effort

BY TIMOTHY MARTIN

Three finance professionals. Seven exams. One shared commitment to professional growth.

GFOA's **Timothy Martin** spoke with **Dané Galloway**, deputy finance director for the City of Owensboro, Kentucky, along with accountants **Deanna Glover** and **Carey Haynes**, about teamwork, professional growth, and earning the CPFO designation together.

**F**or three finance professionals in the City of Owensboro, Kentucky, earning GFOA's Certified Public Finance Officer (CPFO) designation became more than an individual achievement. It became a shared journey built on accountability, collaboration, and a commitment to strengthening both their careers and their organization.

In April 2026, three members of the City of Owensboro's Finance Department — Dané Galloway, deputy finance director; Deanna Glover, accountant; and Carey Haynes, accountant — all earned the CPFO designation after spending two years completing

the program together. While many governments encourage continuing education, multiple employees from the same finance department don't usually complete the rigorous certification process at the same time.

The experience not only deepened their technical knowledge of public finance but also strengthened the culture of learning and teamwork within the department.

"It demonstrates the magnitude and importance of teamwork," said Finance and Support Services Director Angela Waninger. "It signals that city leadership prioritizes professional standards and education. It also builds options for future leadership."

## A program designed for leadership

GFOA's Certified Public Finance Officer program is designed to prepare professionals for leadership positions in state and local government finance. The program enhances technical knowledge while reinforcing core competencies related to ethics, leadership, and best practices in public finance.

To earn the designation, candidates complete seven exams covering major functional areas of public finance:

- Accounting and financial reporting
- Planning and budgeting
- Debt management
- Treasury and investment management
- Procurement
- Compensation and benefits
- Risk assessment

The program is intended to strengthen decision-making skills and prepare professionals to lead projects, teams, and organizations in increasingly complex governmental environments.



The City of Owensboro sits on the Ohio River in western Kentucky, roughly two hours from both Louisville and Nashville. It is home to the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum, a revitalized riverfront highlighted by Smothers Park, and a longstanding bluegrass and barbecue tradition.

“This means more to me than having my master’s degree. This touches what I do every single day.”

DANÉ GALLOWAY, DEPUTY FINANCE DIRECTOR

For the City of Owensboro team, the breadth of the curriculum became one of the program’s greatest strengths. “There aren’t many governmental classes when you go to college,” Haynes said. “This really helped me to increase my knowledge of governmental accounting. I had one governmental class, and it was so broad and didn’t really hit everything. This hits all the areas and aspects.”

### Starting the journey together

The idea of pursuing the certification started with Galloway, who had worked in government finance for 27 years and spent several years considering the program before committing to it.

“I had the pamphlet on my desk for a couple of years,” Galloway said. “We do so much with the staff that we had, and I had kind of put it off. Then I saw articles and stories about the CPFO program, and I just felt like it would be something really good for us to do.”

When Glover and Haynes expressed interest, the team decided to pursue the certification together.

“When they acted interested in doing it, I thought, why not?” Galloway said. “We felt it would be good to do it as a group.”

The effort quickly became collaborative. The group watched instructional videos together, developed study materials, created flash cards, discussed difficult concepts, and maintained a shared timeline to help keep each other accountable.

“We started out watching helpful videos together,” Haynes said. “I would make flash cards, and we would all use them.”

“We also pushed each other,” Glover added. “Okay, which topic are we doing next? We held each other accountable like that.”

The support system became especially important during more challenging areas of the program.

“If someone was struggling in a certain area, we would talk it through together,” Haynes said.

### Balancing work, life, and seven exams

The CPFO program requires discipline and time management. Candidates must balance studying and exam preparation alongside full-time responsibilities and personal commitments. The group emphasized the importance of consistency and structure throughout the process.

“We tried to stay on the same schedule, at the same time, so we could help each other with the timeline,” Galloway said.

Both Galloway and Haynes stressed the importance of setting goals and maintaining momentum.

“Focus on time management, set goals, and stick to those goals,” Haynes said.

Glover encouraged future candidates to identify study methods that work best for them individually.

"It's important to figure out study methods that work best for you because not everyone learns the same," she said. "We got into our groove after a couple of tests."

All three also found support through the CPFO Candidates Forum, a place where those going through the certification journey can share advice and lean on each other for support.

## Learning beyond the exams

Although the program is academically rigorous, the Owensboro team repeatedly emphasized how applicable the content was to their day-to-day work. "It's a huge accomplishment and gives us the tools to use in our day-to-day job, not only now but in the future," Haynes said.

For Galloway, who supervises purchasing, tax operations, and finance functions, the program provided valuable exposure beyond her own primary areas of expertise. "While I'm very familiar with the purchasing side, the others aren't," she said. "It helped them understand."

Even after decades in public finance, Galloway said the program expanded her

perspective. "There are so many things I learned, even doing this as long as I've done it," she said.

Some subjects proved especially relevant in today's government environment. "The treasury management and the risk assessment were most interesting to me," Galloway said, "especially with the risk of fraud today."

The practical relevance of the curriculum helped reinforce the value of the experience for all three participants.

"For me personally, going through this, knowing that I am in governmental accounting, this means more to me than having my master's degree," Galloway said. "This touches what I do every single day."

## Building a stronger organization

The benefits of the certification extended beyond the individual participants. Waninger said having multiple CPFOs within the department strengthens operational resilience and improves organizational capacity. "It builds deeper bench strength, demonstrating that each CPFO has mastered multiple areas of public finance."

The experience also reinforced the importance of continuous learning within local government organizations.

"The more education and knowledge that you can have when you have that foundation, and you can benefit from it, it does nothing but help the organization," Galloway said.

## Confidence through commitment

By the end of the process, the group shared not only a professional designation but also a sense of accomplishment that came from completing a demanding, long-term goal together.

"Every time we would pass an exam, we would text each other and be like, 'Woo hoo!'" Galloway said.

For Glover, the program helped build confidence in her role and expand her understanding of public finance.

"It helped gain more knowledge on how things function in public finance," she said. "It helped provide additional detail and clarity that I felt I needed."

"I'm very proud of myself," she added. "Going through this for so long, I was able to discipline myself and learn a lot. I feel more confident in my job now."

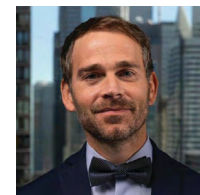
The group strongly encourages others to consider pursuing the CPFO designation, especially alongside colleagues, if possible.

"If you have the opportunity to do it as a team, I highly recommend it," Glover said. "It helps having someone to talk through things."

What began as a professional development goal ultimately became something larger: a shared investment in teamwork, continuous learning, and the future strength of public finance leadership.

For more information about GFOA's Certified Public Finance Officer program, visit [gfoa.org/cpfo](https://gfoa.org/cpfo).

From left, Dané Galloway, deputy finance director, and accountants Deanna Glover and Carey Haynes turned the challenge of earning the CPFO designation into a shared journey of teamwork and professional growth for the City of Owensboro's Finance Department.



**Timothy Martin**  
is senior manager  
for marketing and  
digital experiences.