

GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award

Application Form Revised Criteria (2026)

INSTRUCTIONS: This application is organized around the primary criteria questions from GFOA's revised award criteria. For each question, provide a response that both identifies **where** the information can be found in your budget communication (e.g., page numbers, section titles, website links, video timestamps) **AND** explains, substantively and concisely, **how** that content answers the question; a location reference alone is not sufficient. Secondary questions listed under each primary question are optional considerations intended to help you develop a response; they do not all need to be addressed and should only be included in your budget communications where relevant to your specific context. You are not required to submit materials for every category. Applicants earning a total of more than 100 points will receive GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award.

SCORING OVERVIEW: Reviewers score each response on Completeness (0–2) and Quality (0–3) for a maximum of 5 points per question. Total points = (Score/5) × Points Possible for that category. Content categories total 150 points; Material Type categories total 50 points. Scoring more than 100 points overall is required to receive the award.

Applicant Information

Name of Government
Entity: _____

State / Province: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Primary Contact Role: _____

Contact Email: _____

Contact Phone: _____

First Submission?
Yes / No:

Fiscal Year of Budget:

Submission Materials

List all materials being submitted with this application (budget document, website URL, videos, newsletter, etc.):

PART 1: CONTENT CRITERIA (150 Points Possible)

1. Community Priorities and Organizational Challenges/Opportunities (20 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- What are the major challenges facing the organization?
- What are the major challenges facing the community?
- How does this budget address those challenges?
- Are results expected to improve within the budget period?

2. Value (20 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- What is the public getting from the government?
- How much does the government cost?

3. Long-Term Outlook (20 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- How do current budget decisions impact the long-term fiscal outlook for the government?
- How does the current budget impact reserve levels?
- Are any expenses deferred to future budgets (operating or capital)?
- Does the budget create any long-term spending obligations?
- What were trends from prior years and their impact on the future outlook?

4. Revenue Budget (20 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- How much revenue is anticipated?
- Where does your revenue come from?
- How much control does the government have over revenue?
- Is revenue restricted for specific purposes?
- How is revenue burden distributed among the community?

5. Personnel Budget (15 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- How many total staff are budgeted?
- Did personnel costs change from the prior year?
- Where were staffing numbers increased/reduced?
- What are the major drivers impacting personnel costs?

6. Department Budget (15 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- What services does each department provide?
- What are the costs for each department?
- How is the department held accountable for results?

7. Program/Services Budget (15 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- What are the major programs/services? (
 - Note: program or service is defined as a grouping of activities or resources with intent to achieve a specific outcome))
- What are costs for each major program/service?
- What are program/service level goals?
- How do programs/services align with priorities?
- Do programs/services generate revenue?

8. Capital Budget (15 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- How is capital spending defined?
- What is the level of capital spending?
- How is the capital budget funded?
- Is capital spending for new assets, replacement assets, or to rehabilitate existing assets?
- What are the major projects?

9. Budget Process (10 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- How is the budget developed?
- Who is involved in preparing the budget?
- How are community priorities considered?
- When are budget decisions made?
- When can the public engage in the budget process?

PART 2: MATERIAL TYPE CRITERIA (50 Points Possible)

10. Budget Document (10 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- Is the budget document accessible from the government's website? Is the budget document organized?
- Does the budget document provide a clear budget message that summarizes main themes?
- Does the budget document effectively use graphics and images?

11. Budget in Brief / Newsletter (10 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- Does the budget in brief provide a concise overview of the budget?
- Is the budget in brief free from non-relevant information?
- Was the budget in brief distributed to citizens?
- Is the design of the budget in brief attractive?

12. Budget Website / Dashboard (10 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- Is the budget website easily accessible from the government's primary website?
- Is the budget website interactive?
- Is the budget website accessible to a diverse audience?
- Is the budget website updated in a timely manner?

13. Videos (10 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- Does budget video highlight major budget message?
- Does the budget video explain key budget terms or provide a basic understanding of the importance of the government budget?
- Does the budget video reflect the priorities, preferences, or characteristics of the local community?
- Is the budget video highlighted on other communications and does it have a clear audience?

14. Other / Media Campaign (social media, etc.) (10 points possible)

Primary Questions:

- What other creative tools or strategies were used to communicate the budget?
- How do you measure the success of these strategies and tools?