



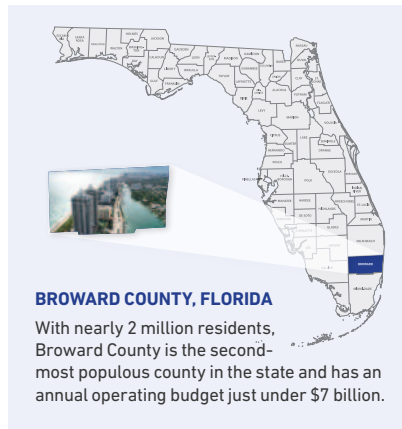
AN INTERVIEW WITH

Evan Zacharia

Max Pinchak interviews **Evan Zacharia**, investment finance coordinator for Broward County, Florida's Finance and Administrative Services Department.

Evan Zacharia has worked as an investment finance coordinator for Broward County, Florida, since November 2022. Located in the southeastern region of the state, Broward County encompasses the cities of Deerfield Beach, Hollywood, and Fort Lauderdale along the Atlantic Coast. The county includes the Everglades Wildlife Management Area, the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, Port Everglades, and the Broward County Convention Center. It is the second-most populous county in the state, after Miami-Dade County, and it has an annual operating budget just shy of \$7 billion. Zacharia, in collaboration with his colleagues, helps manage the county's multibillion-dollar investment portfolio. He's also an active member of GFOA's South Florida Chapter (SFGFOA) and is a member of GFOA's Young Professionals Network Leadership Committee.

As investment finance coordinator, Zacharia is primarily responsible for forecasting the county's cashflow and overseeing its liquidity levels. His daily work consists of analyzing market conditions, communicating with



brokers and trustees, tracking daily cash transactions, and investing in fixed assets. His goal is to understand the anticipated monthly and yearly inflows and outflows to maximize the value of county funds. The benefit is twofold, promoting sound investment practices and ensuring that the county has enough cash on hand to cover unexpected expenses.

This isn't the location, role, or sector Zacharia originally envisioned for himself. His story is one that is perhaps familiar to many of us,

with unanticipated professional leaps leading him to the public sector.

After graduating from the University of Florida in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in accounting, Zacharia landed a ten-week internship with the fifth largest accounting firm in the U.S., RSM US LLP, in New York City. Afterward, Zacharia pursued his master's degree in accounting at Florida Atlantic University and obtained his certified public accountant (CPA) license. Zacharia later accepted a remote position with the same firm while the world was still dealing with the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. This transition presented its own challenges, as the internship had been fully in-person. Zacharia found it increasingly challenging to learn and grow, or to build a rapport with colleagues. "It was different than being in person," he explained. Seeking a change, Zacharia transferred to the firm's satellite office in Fort Lauderdale.

Shortly after this transition, Zacharia developed a professional working relationship with a mentor, George Tablack, the chief financial officer of Broward County, who recruited him rather quickly to come work for the county's Accounting



Department. After a few months in the public sector, Zacharia jumped departments, swapping his accounting-focused job for his current role within the Finance and Administrative Services Department.

Discussing this chapter of his career, Zacharia said, “It was a unique experience and transition. I originally had all this expertise in accounting, and to go into a different finance role was maybe a bit challenging because I didn’t know what to expect. It wasn’t something I’d necessarily studied for, but I embraced the challenge.” This opportunity, he explained, has provided a means of professional development and growth that was previously unforeseen.

When asked about the advice he’d give to someone starting a career in the public sector, Zacharia reemphasized the benefits of embracing a new role, pointing out the dynamic nature of professional growth and goals. “Plans change all the time,” he commented. While it may not come naturally, developing a certain level of comfort with the changes that new opportunities require is imperative. Referencing Ted Lasso, Zacharia recalled

“ Instead of immediately judging things, take a step back and analyze it, and ask yourself what this opportunity could provide for you. Saying yes to something can open up so many doors.”

a scene in which the title character implores others to “be curious, not judgmental.” This is the mentality that has helped him grow. Sometimes, he said, “instead of immediately judging things [and saying no], take a step back and analyze it, and ask yourself what this opportunity could provide for you. Saying yes to something can open up so many doors.”

Though he hadn’t imagined himself working for government just a few years ago, Zacharia has been enjoying his public finance-related position with Broward County. From a day-to-day perspective, he has been able to refine his skills with various investment tools. Guidance and support from supervisors have made improvement a more comfortable experience for Zacharia, who said he is still learning and pushing himself to grow on

a weekly basis. Taking the initiative to enroll in online learning courses about using these investment tools has also been helpful. Not only has Zacharia strengthened his technical capacity, but his efforts have contributed to an increasing sense of professional confidence as well.

From a wider perspective, Zacharia said that being part of something bigger than himself and serving the community has been fulfilling. “The work really has a great purpose behind it,” he explained. Zacharia credits the county and the thoughtfulness of his colleagues with providing him the motivation and inspiration for his work every day. ■

Max Pinchak is a consultant with GFOA’s Research and Consulting Center.