

FLORIDA GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

CERTIFIED GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICER PROGRAM



PROGRAM INFORMATION – Revised January 2024

OFFICIAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

ABOUT THE CERTIFIED GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICER PROGRAM

The Certified Government Finance Officer (CGFO) Program is intended to encourage a level of knowledge and professionalism in the field of government finance. It is also intended to encourage development and maintenance of professional competence for practicing governmental finance officers. For purposes of the CGFO program, a finance officer is any individual occupying a professional level position that includes oversight and/or supervision of one or more financial functions in a government entity.

While the Florida Government Finance Officers Association, Inc. (FGFOA) certifies that individuals meeting the criteria in its professional certification program demonstrate certain competencies, the Florida Government Finance Officers Association expressly withholds an opinion as to the capability of any individual to successfully perform in a given position. Prospective employers and employees must make that decision. The Florida Government Finance Officers Association encourages prospective employers and employees to share information regarding the requirements of the position and the capabilities of the candidate in a forthright manner to promote sound employment and professional decisions.

CGFO CLASSIFICATIONS

Active CGFO – is defined as a CGFO who is an active, retiree, or associate member of the FGFOA, and is current with dues and other reporting requirements.

Suspended CGFO – is defined as a CGFO who is not current with their FGFOA membership dues or is out of compliance with their CPE reporting requirements, or has not successfully passed the Ethics exam, or completed Florida Commission on Ethics’ online training course titled “Florida’s Code of Ethics, Sunshine Law, and Public Records Acts”, or any other Board approved equivalent training course within the six-month grace period. While on suspended status, the CGFO designation cannot be used.

Retired CGFO – is defined as a CGFO who is currently bona fide retired. Retired CGFOs must denote their designation as “CGFO/Retired”.

MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CGFO PROGRAM

How do I apply?

The candidate must complete an official online application form, which outlines their education, government work experience, and includes a minimum of two (2) letters of recommendation. Once approved by the committee, the candidate will be notified. After acceptance into the program, candidates will request the link to the open book Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees Examination, which must be completed within fifteen days (15) days. Once the candidate has successfully passed (achieved a minimum score of 75%) the Ethics Exam, the candidate may sign up for one or more of the CGFO examinations. If the candidate does not successfully pass the Ethics examination within the 15 days, they may request an additional 15 days. Candidates who do not successfully pass the Ethics Examination after 30 days, will need to reapply to the program and re-pay the \$75 application fee.

What are the minimum requirements for sitting for the exam?

Three years of governmental work experience in a financial capacity; a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution in Accounting, Business Administration, Public Administration or a closely related field; and a minimum of two (2) letters of recommendation. In addition, all applicants must successfully complete an open book Ethics Exam. A minimum score of 75% is required for a passing score.

What is the Cost of the Program?

There is a non-refundable application fee of \$75.00 and a \$75.00 sitting fee for each exam.

What if I don't pass the exams on the first try?

You have up to three years to pass all five exams before you must reapply and re-pay the \$75.00 application fee. Each time you take an exam, you must pay the \$75.00 exam fee. This fee is to help defray the administrative costs associated with examinations.

After becoming a qualified candidate, when do I sit for the exam?

When you have qualified to sit for the exam, including successfully passing the Ethics exam, and have paid for your exams in advance, you may sit for any available exam session.

How frequently is the exam given and when?

Exams are offered online and on-demand 24/7 (except for major U.S. holidays)

What are the application deadlines?

With the new online on-demand platform, there are no application deadlines. After your application is approved and you pass the Ethics Exam, you may register to take your first exam anytime. You must wait at least five business after you have paid your exam fee before you can test to allow sufficient time for you to be registered with the online testing site and remote proctors.

Do I need to take the exam review sessions / webinars? How many times are these sessions offered?

While it is recommended that candidates take the review sessions / webinars, they are not required. The candidate should study sufficiently on their own using the suggested review material to help them pass the exam. The review classes / webinars are not intended to be a substitute for proper preparation for the exam. The CGFO review sessions are provided in conjunction with the School of Governmental Finance in the fall and webinars will be offered on-demand beginning in 2024.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Eligibility for acceptance into the Certified Government Finance Officer (CGFO) Program, sitting for the examination, and awarding of the CGFO designation is determined by the information provided on the official application form. Please be as complete and specific as possible.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible to participate in the program, an applicant must:

1. be an active member in good standing of the FGFOA
2. have a Bachelor of Science or a Bachelor of Arts Degree from an accredited college-level institution in Accounting, Finance, Business Administration, Public Administration or a closely related field and a minimum of three years, within the last five years, of governmental related experience; **or**

have a Bachelor of Science or a Bachelor of Arts Degree from an accredited college-level institution and a minimum of five years, within the last seven years, of governmental related experience and 20 hours within the last three years in local/state government related training sessions (i.e., FGFOA/GFOA etc.); or attend all the CGFO review courses prior to taking the exam.

Note: Work experience will not substitute for an appropriate degree.

3. submit a minimum of two letters of recommendations
4. successfully pass an open book Ethics exam
5. accept the FGFOA Code of Ethics

The candidate has three years to pass all five exams in five subject areas in order to receive the CGFO designation.

EDUCATION – CGFO candidates must hold a bachelor's (or higher level) degree from an accredited college- level institution. Work experience will not substitute for an appropriate degree. A copy of the candidate's diploma, transcripts, or other written proof of completion of a degree program must accompany the candidate's application.

EXPERIENCE – The CGFO program is designed to distinguish professionals engaged in the field of government finance. Candidates for certification must complete either 36 or 60 months of governmental work experience with appropriate degree (see eligibility requirements number 2 above). Qualifying experience consists of employment in a governmental entity (city, county, school district, special district, state or federal) in a professional level non-clerical financial capacity. Employment in a financial capacity includes work involving treasury, debt administration, financial administration, accounting, auditing, budget, risk management, tax management, or purchasing. External auditors of governmental entities employed by non-governmental entities, i.e., CPA firms, IRS auditors of individual tax returns, internships, and trainees, clerical, or non-technical positions do not provide appropriate experience to fulfill this requirement.

REFERENCES – A minimum of two letters of recommendation are required. One reference must be from the candidate's employer (supervisor, manager or human resource official) verifying length of employment, summary of duties currently performed and a statement regarding applicant's eligibility into the CGFO Program. The second letter should be a character reference from a non-family member, preferably from a CGFO or person with another professional designation in the accounting industry. If the length of time with current employer is less than three (3) years, a letter from the applicant's previous employer verifying length of employment and a summary of duties performed is also required. References from employers current or past must document a minimum of three year's governmental work experience. Thus, to meet this criterion, more than two references may be required in some cases.

ETHICS - CGFO candidates must agree to abide by the Code of Ethics established by The FGFOA and successfully pass (achieve a minimum score of 75%) an open book Ethics exam.

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

Applications to the program are submitted online by logging onto the FGFOA website, selecting the CGFO Program page, then the “CLICK HERE” under the “To apply for the CGFO Program” section. To begin the application, enter your FGFOA member number, then click “Begin CGFO Application”. After entering your information, upload your letters of recommendation, and any other supporting documentation, then click SUBMIT. After submission, you will get the link to submit your application fee.

NOTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE

Once the certification committee approves the application, candidates will request the link to take an open book Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees Examination, which they must successfully complete (achieve a minimum score of 75%) within fifteen (15) days. Candidates may request an additional 15 days to complete the Ethics examination. Candidates will be notified of their acceptance in the Program by the Florida Government Finance Officers Association office. Upon acceptance, the candidate will be able to register to take their online exams.

REVIEW SESSIONS

Review sessions / webinars may be offered before the examination. Please check the FGFOA website at <http://www.fgfoa.org/> or call the Florida Government Finance Officers Association office for more information.

TESTING

Candidates must successfully complete all five (5) exams in the following subject areas within a three (3) year period:

- Accounting & Financial
- Reporting Municipal Budgeting
- Treasury Management
- Debt Administration
- Financial
- Administration

There is a list of suggested reading material for each of the five subject areas. The cost for each exam is \$75.00. You may sign up for as many exams at one time as you would like. Test results are provided to candidates on a pass or fail basis after tests have been graded and verified. A minimum score of 75% is required for a passing score.

CGFO of the Year:

In recognition of the hard work involved in becoming a CGFO, the FGFOA Board of Directors and Officers created the “CGFO of the Year Award”. The CGFO of the Year Award is given annually to the candidate that receives the highest cumulative score on all five parts from April to the following March. The recipient of the award is given a complimentary registration to the Annual Conference, and will receive a plaque recognizing this achievement during the Annual conference. The recipient will also be recognized in a newsletter article.

In the case of a tie, the candidate that passed all 5 parts in one sitting will receive the award.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or if you need any additional information, please contact our office at (850) 222-9684, or write to us at:

Florida Government Finance Officers Association,
Inc. Attention: Certification Program
Post Office Box 10270
Tallahassee, FL 32302-2270

REVOCACTION & DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

The FGFOA Certification Committee, referred to as the “Board” in this section, shall handle all review matters. When the appeals process is used, the FGFOA Board of Directors will act as the appeals board.

6. Board Review Procedures

After notice and hearing, the Board may revoke or may suspend, for a period not to exceed five years any designation and certificate issued under these regulations; or may revoke, suspend or refuse to renew any CGFO designation and certificate under these guidelines; or may reprimand the holder of any such designation or certificate for any one of the following causes:

- i. The certificate holder has been convicted of a felony;
- ii. The certificate holder has been adjudicated mentally incompetent;
- iii. The certificate holder obtained his/her certificate by use of fraud or misstatement of a material fact;
- iv. The certificate holder identified himself/herself as a CGFO before such certification has been granted him/her;
- v. The certificate holder has violated provisions of the CGFO program;
- vi. The certificate holder has failed to meet renewal requirements as set forth in the Requirements for Continuing Professional Education Reporting under the CGFO Program including passing the Ethics Exam; or
- vii. The certificate holder has failed to successfully pass an open book Ethics Exam;
- viii. The certificate holder has failed to accept the FGFOA Code of Ethics.

7. Hearing and Review Procedures

The Board may, on its own motion or on the complaint of any person, initiate proceedings to determine the eligibility of any person for the application, examination and certification of the CGFO designation. If the Board determines that a hearing is necessary, the following procedures will guide the Board’s actions:

- a. A written notice stating the nature of the charge or charges against the individual and the time and place of the hearing before the Board on such charges shall be served to the individual not less than 30 days prior to the date of the hearing either personally or by mailing a copy of the notice by registered or certified mail to the last known address of the individual.
- b. At any hearing the individual may appeal in person, produce evidence and witness on his/her behalf, cross examine witnesses, and examine evidence produced against him/her.
- c. If, after having been served with the notice of hearing, the individual fails to appear at the hearing, the Board may proceed to hear evidence against him/her and may enter a temporary verdict as shall be justified by the evidence, and a copy of such verdict will be sent by registered or certified mail to the last known address of the individual. The Board may grant continuances upon written request and upon showing a good cause for failure to appear at such a hearing, set out in writing, signed by the individual and filed with the Board. The Board may reopen proceedings and permit the individual to submit evidence on his/her behalf, provided that the written request to reopen is filed with the Board within 30 days after the date of the copy of the verdict has been mailed to the individual.
- d. A recording of the hearing shall be kept, and if deemed necessary by the Board, a transcript shall be ordered.
- e. A decision of the Board shall be by majority vote of the Board.
- f. Any person in disagreement with any decision of the Board may file an appeal with the FGFOA Board of Directors. Such a motion must be filed within 15 days of the Board’s announcement. The Board of

Directors will file a reply to a motion for rehearing within the 30 days after the announcement of the decision. The Board of Directors will hear the appeal within 60 days from the time it is filed.

- g. If the certificate holder has been found guilty by the Board of any of the grounds set forth and circumstances concerning this matter have changed, he/she may petition the Board for a rehearing of his/her case. The

Board's decision on this rehearing shall be subject to the appeals process described above.

- h. A verdict is final when the motion for rehearing is denied or when the time for filing a motion has passed.
- i. Upon application in writing and after a hearing in accordance with notice, the Board may issue a new certificate number to a CGFO whose certificate has been revoked; or the Board may reissue or modify the suspension of any CGFO designation and certificate number that has been revoked or suspended.

8. Disciplinary Actions

When the Board finds any CGFO guilty of any of the grounds set forth, it may enter an order imposing one or more of the following penalties:

- a. Denial of an application for certificate;
- b. Revocation of certification;
- c. Suspension of certification, during which time continuing professional education must be earned on the same basis as if certification is in effect;
- d. Issuance of a reprimand; or
- e. Placement of the certificate holder on probation for a period of time and subject to such conditions as the Board may specify, including requiring the certificate holder to attend additional continuing education courses.

Florida Government Finance Officers Association Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct

The Florida Government Finance Officers Association is a professional organization dedicated to promote and improve the quality of financial accountability, management, and communications by and for all governmental units in the State of Florida by providing training and individual development for governmental financial professionals in technical finance related areas and other aspects of financial management.

To further these goals, we the members of the Florida Government Finance Officers Association are enjoined to adhere to legal, moral, and professional standards of conduct in the fulfillment of our professional responsibilities as set forth in this Code of Ethics in order to enhance the quality of our performance.

We shall conduct ourselves with integrity in all working and networking relationships with public officials, employees, peers and the citizens whom we serve.

We shall not condone or allow the issuance of any false or misleading financial information or omit any information that is essential to making an informed decision.

We shall prepare and present financial information in accordance with generally accepted governmental accounting principles.

We shall abide by all applicable laws and regulations of the State of Florida and those of our individual local jurisdictions.

We shall not be involved with or by our actions condone any illegal activity.

We, as members of the Florida Government Finance Officers Association, shall conduct ourselves in a professional and ethical manner.

We shall conduct ourselves objectively and not seek or accept personal gain that would influence the conduct of our official duties.

We shall not use public resources for personal gain.

We shall not reveal or improperly use confidential information.

We shall accurately represent our professional qualifications, education, and affiliations.

We shall promote equal employment opportunities and oppose any discrimination, harassment or other unfair employment practices.

It is the responsibility of the individual member to adhere to this Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct

and to report any suspected ethics or conduct violations to the Executive Director of the Association and notice shall be provided to the elected Board of Directors. Enforcement shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors shall timely review each reported ethics or conduct violation and shall determine if sanctions may be taken by the Board of Directors which may include the suspension of membership and/or the permanent expulsion of the member from the association.