

William C. Statler

Fiscal Policy ■ Financial Planning ■ Analysis ■ Training ■ Organizational Review

MEMORANDUM

September 26, 2019

TO: CSMFO Board

FROM: Bill Statler *W.C. Statler*

SUBJECT: CERTIFICATION PROGRAM: PHASE 1A ASSESSMENT

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of an in-depth review of programs in other states and subsequent membership survey, move forward with a “Phase 1B” assessment of a CSMFO-sponsored certification program that:

- Refines the proposed program format.
- Sets forth a detailed program plan and content recommendations.

As discussed in greater detail below, this report also recommends four key elements as the basis for moving forward with Phase 1B:

- Successfully passing examinations should be the sole basis for certification.
- Assistance in preparing for the examinations should be provided, including on-line study guides and on-line and onsite courses.
- There should be no prerequisites to taking examinations other than CSMFO membership.
- Given these recommendations, certification should be the only form of recognition.

OVERVIEW

This report provides the results of the “Phase 1A” assessment in considering implementation of a CSMFO-sponsored certification program. There are two main components of this assessment:

Review of Programs in Other States

Provided in Attachment 1 are the results of an in-depth review of certification programs in Texas, Florida and Virginia. Based on the success of programs in these three states, the report concludes that there is a strong basis for establishing a CSMFO-based certification program. Concerns that a CSMFO-sponsored program would duplicate the GFOA's "Certified Public Finance Officer" (CPFO) program are offset by the following key features that differentiate the program from the GFOA:

- ***Assistance with Examination Preparation.*** Like the GFOA program, it is likely that certification would be earned by passing examinations in key subject areas such as accounting, budgeting, debt management and cash management. However, the GFOA does not provide structured preparation for the exams through focused study materials or courses. It is likely that the CSMFO program would have focused preparation features.
- ***Focus on California-Specific Issues.*** While there are national financial management standards, California has distinct issues separate from these, such as revenue-raising limits, debt issuance requirements, CalPERS and Redevelopment Successor Agencies. A CSMFO-sponsored program would be "California-Centric."
- ***Career Development.*** Even with the most thorough of recruitment and vetting approaches, it is difficult for employers to fully evaluate the technical skills of their applicants. A CSMFO-sponsored certificate program could help both applicants and employers in assessing technical competency that is especially attuned to unique circumstances and challenges in California.

Membership Survey

Based on the results of the state review, an on-line membership survey, administered by Probolsky Research, was launched in August 2019 to assess member interest in a CSMFO-sponsored program. The results (Attachment 2) are very supportive of a CSMFO-sponsored certification program. Top findings from 307 responses include:

- Career development is the benefit that members would value the most (72%).
- 63% say that a California focus would be a benefit; and 51% say exam preparation.
- Only 4.9% say there would be no benefit in pursuing the program.
- 73% say that a certificate would likely have a positive effect on hiring (and after adjusting for those who do not have hiring responsibilities, this rises to 87%).

This is may be the most significant finding in terms of career development benefits for both applicants and employers.

- And almost 70% say they would be interested in pursuing this program based on what they have heard so far.

Additional comments overall were very supportive. The concern most often expressed is duplication with the GFOA program.

DISCUSSION

Background

Based on the recommendations of the Certification Program Working Group in May 24, 2018 (Attachment 3), the Board determined that a certification program would be of value to the CSMFO membership and directed the Working Group to issue a request for proposals to identify a consultant to further develop the curriculum and program format. In March 2019, the CSMFO entered into an agreement with William C. Statler for “Phase 1” services, organized into two steps:

Certification Program Assessment: Phase 1A

- Conduct a thorough review of Texas, Florida, Oregon, New York and Virginia certification programs.
- Contact other state programs to gain a thorough understanding of their programs.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in other state certification programs.
- Conduct an online survey of the membership to determine what they desire from a CSMFO certification program and the best way to benefit the largest cross section of members.
- Prepare a summary of progress and results for CSMFO Board review for approval before proceeding with Phase 1B.

This report reflects completion of the Phase 1A assessment.

Certification Program Assessment: Phase 1B

If the Phase 1A assessment shows support for a CSMFO-sponsored program:

- Refine proposed program format and outline.
- Provide detailed program plan and content recommendations for the program. This will incorporate lessons learned from the other state programs, the membership survey and interactions with the Career Development Committee and the Board.

Upon completion of Phase 1B, the Board will make a final go-no go decision regarding implementation the program (Phase 2), such as curriculum development, trainer recruitment and schedule.

Findings

Review of Other State Programs

Attachment 1 provides the report on certification programs in other states, which was provided to the Working Group composed of Margaret Moggia, Laura Nomura, Scott Catlett and Mary Bradley on June 20, 2019. Based on the success of programs in the three states

reviewed in depth – Texas, Virginia and Florida – the report concludes that there is a strong basis for establishing a CSMFO-based certification program.

Concerns that a CSMFO-sponsored program would duplicate the GFOA's certification program are offset by the three key features that differentiate the program from the GFOA:

- Assistance with examination preparation.
- Focus on California-specific issues.
- Career development.

Additionally, depending on its structure, a CSMFO-sponsored program may also be more accessible than the GFOA program.

State program summary. As reflected in Attachment 1, each of the three programs takes a different approach in its certification:

- Florida has extensive prerequisites for program eligibility; Texas and Virginia do not.
- In awarding the certificate, Texas provides for education, experience and professional involvement to be factors along with exam results (of the 375 points required, this could account for up to 150 of them); award in Florida and Virginia is based solely on passing examination scores.
- Review courses are provided in Florida and Virginia; Texas provides detailed study guides but does not offer specific preparation courses.
- Virginia requires that courses be taken (and then conducts an “open book” exam immediately following the course); Texas and Florida do not have specific “pre-exam” requirements.
- However, all programs require passage of examinations for certification.

Report recommendation. Based on the results of the state review, the June 2019 report recommended moving forward with the next step: surveying the membership (the report included draft survey questions). The Working Group agreed with this recommendation.

Membership Survey

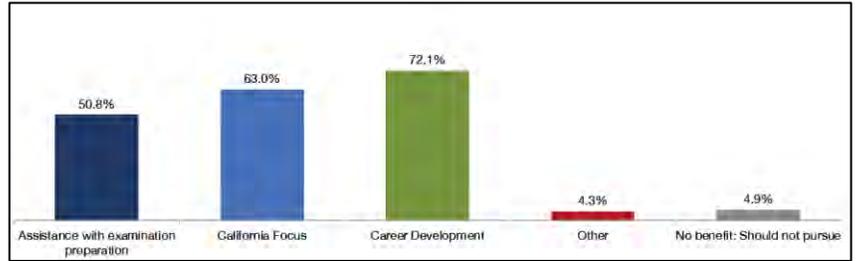
The Working Group reviewed several iterations of the survey questions. This effort was assisted by Probolsky Research (with whom the CSMFO has previously contracted for survey services) in helping refine survey questions and administering the on-line survey. As summarized below, eight focused questions were asked, with the goal of keeping responding to the survey under three minutes in encouraging participation.

The survey was targeted to municipal and other government members: 1,900 of 2,450 members (commercial, student and retired members were not surveyed). 307 responses were received by the September 16, 2019 closing date.

Report Highlights

1. What benefits of a CSMFO certificate program interest you the most? (Check as many as apply)

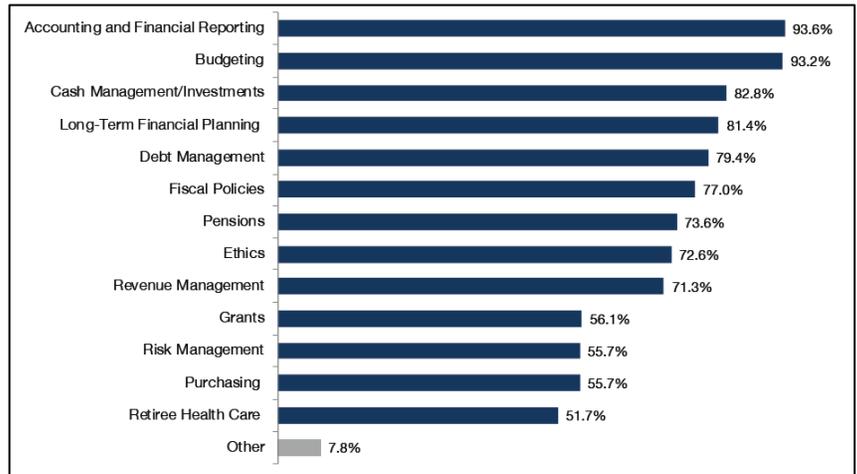
- All of the prelisted benefits gained majority support, with Career Development topping the list.
- Less than 5% saw no benefit to a CSMFO program.



Please review the comments provided in Appendix 2.

2. What topics should be covered by the certificate examinations? (Check as many as apply)

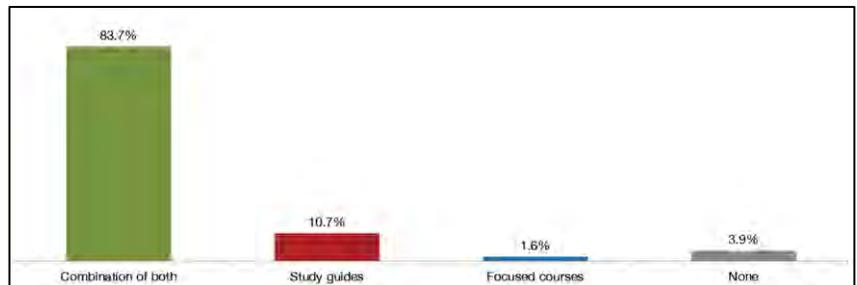
While all of the prelisted topics received majority support, Accounting/Financial Reporting and Budgeting were at the top of the list.



Please review the comments provided in Appendix 2.

3. What kind of preparation assistance should the CSMFO provide?

Almost 85% said it should include a combination of both study guides and focused courses.

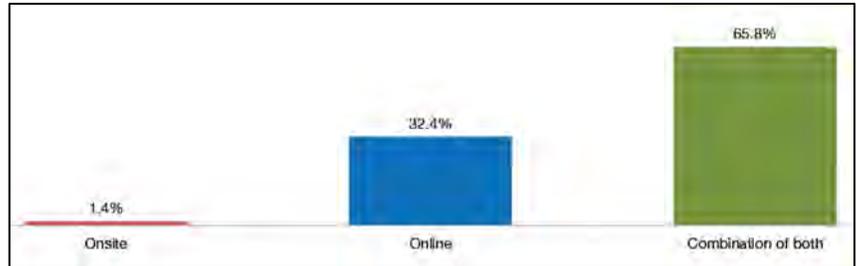


Please review the comments provided in Appendix 2.

Certification Program: Phase 1A Assessment

4. If focused courses are developed, should they be conducted:

Almost two-thirds said they should be conducted both on-line and on-site.

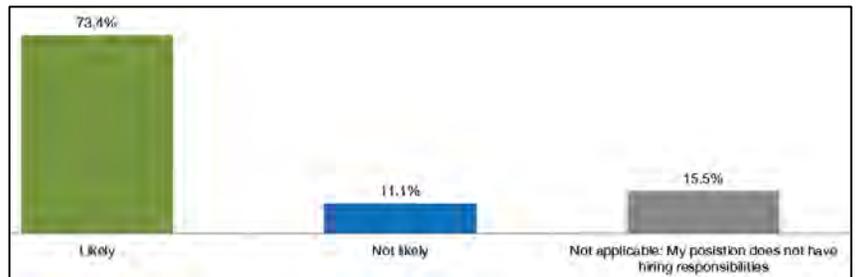


Please review the comments provided in Appendix 2.

5. If your position's responsibility within your organization includes hiring professional staff, how likely would an applicant's possession of "CGFO" certification positively affect your selection process?

Adjusting for those who do not have hiring responsibilities, 87% said this would be likely to positively affect the selection process.

This is may be the most significant finding in terms of career development benefits for both applicants and employers.



Please review the comments provided in Appendix 2.

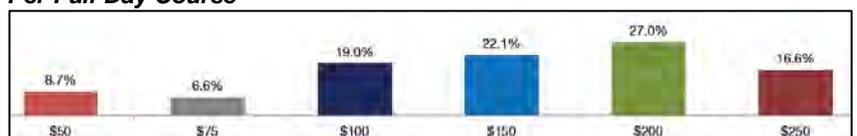
6. There will likely be a fee for participation in the program, either for courses or examinations. What do you think would be a reasonable fee?

- **Per Exam.** A fee up to \$100 gains the most support (30.6%).
- **Per Full-Day Course.** 49% would support a fee between \$150 and \$200.

Per Exam

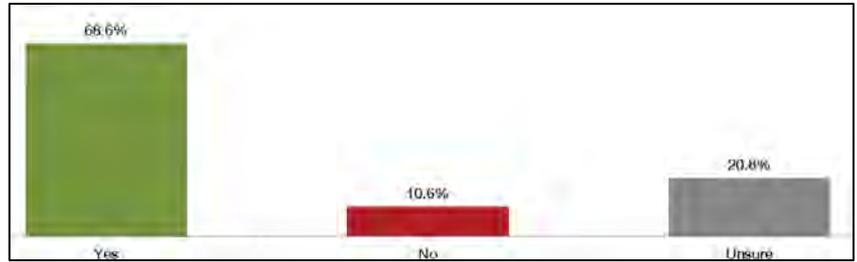


Per Full-Day Course



7. Based on what you've heard so far, do you think you might pursue certification under this program and/or encourage others in your organization to do so?

Almost 70% answered “yes” to this question.



8. Any other comments?

Please review the comments provided in Appendix 2.

As noted above, the comments in this section overall were very supportive. The concern most often expressed is duplication with the GFOA program. Based on the survey results and findings from similar state programs, there are likely to be benefits of a CSMFO-based program that are distinct from the GFOA program.

Membership survey summary. The survey results are very supportive of implementing a CSMFO-sponsored certification program. Accordingly, I recommend moving forward with Phase 1B of the program assessment.

However, based on concerns that surfaced before this assessment and reinforced by the survey results, it is important in developing the program that it offers distinct value from the GFOA program.

NEXT STEPS: MOVING FORWARD WITH A CSMFO PROGRAM

Key Elements

Based on the review of programs in other states and results of the membership survey, I recommend that the program reflect the following key elements as the basis in moving forward with Phase 1B:

- **Examinations sole basis for certification.** Successfully passing comprehensive examinations in eight to ten core subject areas should be the sole basis for earning certification.

For example, Texas allows education, experience and professional engagement to count towards certification on a “points” basis. Stated simply, these are things that can be assessed from a resume and do not require “certification.”

In providing the career development benefits of a CSMFO-based program, especially in helping employers assess technical skills (and thus helping qualified applicants in the recruitment process as well), a rigorous process is needed in earning the certificate. Relying solely on exam results like in Florida and Virginia (and the GFOA) will help provide the rigor this program should offer.

- **Examination preparation assistance.** Providing focused assistance in preparing for the examinations is one of the strongest features of a CSMFO-based program. While the

GFOA provides an extensive suggested reading list and courses, none of these are specifically focused on passing the CPFO exam. Offering focused assistance is one of the strong benefits of the other state programs and a key differentiating feature from the GFOA program. Based on survey results, I recommend that preparation include both on-line study guides and focused courses that are offered both on-line and on-site.

- **No prerequisites to take examinations other than CSMFO membership.** Course attendance is required in Virginia; and Florida has pre-exam experience and education requirements. Other than CSMFO membership, I do not recommend any prerequisites to taking the examinations. This means that besides municipal members, commercial, other government, student and other members would be eligible for certification if they can pass the examinations.
- **Only form of recognition.** In its May 2018 report on certification concepts, the Working Group suggested that in addition to a certification program, that upon completion of the curriculum, including in-person and online elements, participants would be entitled to receive a completion certificate. I do not recommend this for two reasons: 1) as noted above, I do not recommend prerequisites, including course attendance, to be able to take the examinations; and 2) passing them should be the sole basis for certification. Given this, a “certificate of completion” option does not make sense. However, if the Board determines that course attendance is required, this issued could be revisited.

Working with the GFOA

One survey respondent suggested working with GFOA in modifying its program to meet California needs.

How much energy do we want to expend in considering this option?

My recommendation is none. I believe that the changes in approach that would be needed to achieve CSMFO goals are too extensive to warrant this approach. Stated simply, if this was easy (or possible) to do, other states would have done this rather than create their own programs.

Phase 1B Assessment Questions

Along with other implementation issues, the Phase 1B assessment will address:

- What should be the eight to ten subject areas covered by the examination?
- What are the best approaches in developing study guides and focused courses (both on-line and on-site) for these areas?

For example, for study guides, should we build on what Texas has done (and what Florida is doing) and then negotiate a contract with others for revisions that make sense for California; or issue a request for proposals to a broader group of possible developers to develop the curriculum (as was done for the Budget training).

For on-line and on-site courses, we could develop new courses (perhaps contracting with a college or university, as Virginia and the GFOA have done); or use “core course”

offerings already in place – and modify them as needed? For example, we already offer the following on an ongoing basis that address many of the likely subject areas:

- Beginning and Intermediate Governmental Accounting
- Budgeting (in progress)
- Investment Accounting
- Revenue Management (Fundamentals of Tax Revenues and Fundamentals of Fees, Rates & Charges)
- Fiscal Policies and Long-Range Financial Planning

With modest modifications, we could ensure that each of these courses includes the specific content needed to pass examinations; and we could advertise these sessions as designed for assistance in passing “Certified Government Finance Officer” (CGFO) examinations as well as earning CPE credits. The Weekend Training Program may also be an opportunity to reinforce preparation assistance.

For other program areas, we could consider piggybacking onto programs already developed by others, such as the CMTA, CDIAC, League of California Cities or Institute for Local Government.

In short, how “freestanding” should courses designed for exam preparation assistance be from course offerings already provided by the CSMFO in similar areas?

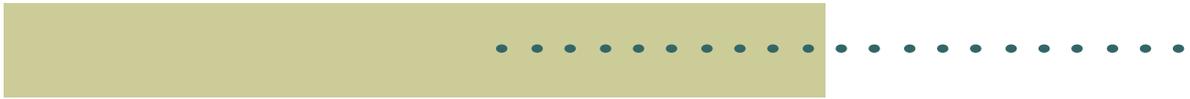
Whatever the approach, it makes sense for whoever develops the on-line and onsite courses to also develop the study guide.

- How often and where should onsite courses be provided? How should on-line training be provided: live webinars, pre-recorded downloads or other methods?
- How should we develop the examination questions? It may make sense for the organization/persons that developed the study guide and courses to prepare examination questions. All three of the states reviewed in the June 2019 report can provide an excellent template for these.
- How should the tests be administered? Should they be onsite and proctored? (And if so, how often and where will they be given?) Or should we follow the Texas model, and contract with a firm that provides and scores the tests on-line? (In this case, examinations can take place at any time).
- What happens if an applicant fails exam? Should they be allowed to retake it? And if so, under what conditions (ie, waiting period)?
- What time limits should there be (if any) between passing the first examination and the last one?
- What budget will be needed to develop the program and then support it annually? How self-supporting does the program have to be; and correspondingly, how much should fees be?

I will work closely with the Working Group in addressing these issues, with a target of returning to the Board by December 2019 with a Phase 1B assessment report.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Certification Program: Review of Other State Programs (June 2019)
2. Membership Survey Results (September 2019)
3. Direction on Certification Program Concept (May 2018)



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Fiscal Policy ■ Financial Planning ■ Analysis ■ Training ■ Organizational Review

MEMORANDUM

June 20, 2019

TO: Margaret Moggia, CSMFO

FROM: Bill Statler *W.C. Statler*

SUBJECT: CERTIFICATION PROGRAM: REVIEW OF OTHER STATE PROGRAMS
AND DRAFT MEMBER SURVEY

This report provides a review of certificate programs in Texas, Florida and Virginia; and based on these, concludes that there is a strong basis for establishing a CSMFO certificate program.

This report also provides draft concepts for a membership survey.

MOVING FORWARD WITH A CSMFO PROGRAM

Based on the results of the program review of certificate programs in Texas, Florida and Virginia, there is a strong basis for developing a CSMFO certificate program. Key features that would differentiate the program from the GFOA include:

- **Assistance with Examination Preparation.** Like the GFOA program, it is likely that certification would be earned by passing examinations in key subject areas such as accounting, budgeting, debt management and cash management. However, the GFOA does not provide structured preparation for the exams through focused study materials or courses. It is likely that the CSMFO program would have focused preparation features.
- **Focus on California-Specific Issues.** While there are national financial management standards, California has distinct issues separate from these, such as revenue-raising limits, debt issuance requirements, CalPERS and Redevelopment Successor Agencies. A CSMFO-sponsored program would be “California-Centric.”
- **Career Development.** Even with the most thorough of recruitment and vetting approaches, it is difficult for employers to fully evaluate the technical skills of their applicants. A CSMFO-sponsored certificate program could help both applicants and

Review of Other State Programs and Draft Member Survey

employers in assessing technical competency that is especially attuned to unique circumstances and challenges in California.

REVIEW OF OTHER STATE PROGRAMS

Overview

A summary of the certificate programs in Texas, Florida and Virginia is provided in Appendix A. As reflected in this summary, each program takes a different approach in its certification:

- Florida has extensive prerequisites for program eligibility; Texas and Virginia do not.
- In awarding the certificate, Texas provides for education, experience and professional involvement to be factors along with exam results (of the 375 points required, this could account for up to 150 of them); award in Florida and Virginia is based solely on passing examination scores.
- Review courses are provided in Florida and Virginia; Texas provides detailed study guides but does not offer specific preparation courses.
- Virginia requires that courses be taken (and then conducts an “open book” exam immediately following the course); Texas and Florida do not have specific “pre-exam” requirements.

However, all programs require passage of examinations for certification.

Background

As discussed in my March 15, 2019 status report, the initial review of other certification programs included an in-depth review of materials on web sites of the:

- GFOA (for contrast with State programs)
- Florida GFOA
- New York GFOA
- Oregon GFOA
- Texas GFOA
- Virginia GFOA

All the State programs have significant differences from each other in terms of qualifications for acceptance into the program, dedicated curriculum materials (some have them, some don't) and requirements for earning the certificate. The key conceptual differences in earning certification are:

- Florida, Texas and Virginia have formal examinations as part of the certification process.
- Oregon and New York do not: certification is based solely on course attendance.

Review of Other State Programs and Draft Member Survey

Because the more rigorous certification requirements via examination in Florida, Texas and Virginia are in closer alignment with the CSMFO's goals for this program, I focused my follow-up efforts on these three programs and held follow-up interviews with:

- Paul Shamoun, Executive Director: Florida GFOA
- Tristan Gideon, CGFO Administrator: Texas GFOA
- Bruce Chase, Program Director (Radford University): Virginia GFOA

Detailed program descriptions are provided in Appendix B.

Key Questions

In moving forward with the program assessment, the varying program features in Texas, Florida and Virginia raise the following questions:

- Should there be prerequisites for participating in the program? And if so, what should they be? Should commercial members be allowed to participate?
- Should education, experience and professional engagement count in some way towards certification as in Texas? Or should we rely solely on exam results like in Florida and Virginia?
- Do we need to develop online/onsite courses? Or rely upon developing focused study guides as in Texas (complemented by “core course” offerings already in place)?
- If we develop courses, should they be required to be attended, like in Virginia?

You'll be shocked to learn that I have opinions on each of these, but I'd like to discuss these - and any other key issues – before sharing. It will also be interesting to see the survey results be taking too firm a stance.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Provided in Appendix C is the draft membership survey, which begins with some high-level background on the certificate concept and asks questions like those raised above. I plan to use Survey Monkey for this.

NEXT STEPS

- Hold “working group” teleconference to review state programs and draft survey.
- Finalize survey and issue survey to members (all or just government?) via Survey Monkey

APPENDIX

- A. Summary of State Programs
- B. Program Descriptions
- C. Draft Member Survey

Summary of State Certification Programs

Feature	Texas (GFOAT)	Florida (FGFOA)	Virginia (VGFOA)
Program Title	Certified Government Finance Officer (CGFO)	Certified Government Finance Officer (CGFO)	VGFOA Certificate Program
Why: How is Program Different than GFOA? <i>Note: While GFOA identifies recommended resources, it does not have a structured preparation program for passing its examinations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-line study guide in alignment with exams • Texas-centric • Facilitate recruitment • Well-accepted by city managers; required for professional staff in Fort Worth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-line and on-site review sessions • Focused study materials • Florida-centric • Facilitate recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-line and on-site review sessions • Virginia-centric • Facilitate recruitment • Preparation for GFOA certificate
Program Duration	At least 11 years (maybe longer)	25 years	15 years
Certifications	About 300	About 560	About 250
Who: Eligibility/Prerequisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GFOAT member • Application package but no specific education or experience requirements (other than government agency employee) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGFOA member • BA/BS degree in related field and 3 years government experience; or BA/BS degree on other fields and 5 years of government experience • Professional level position that has oversight/supervision responsibilities. • Pass open-book ethics exam (75 of 100 points) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VGFOA Member • No specific prerequisites
Award Requirements	<p>375 points from combination of education/experience and exam results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 points maximum from education, experience and professional leadership involvement (points vary depending on degree levels, 	Passage of 5 exams (75% score to pass)	<p>Passage of ten exams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 core exams (of 10) • 2 electives (of 11) <p><i>See content below</i></p>

Summary of State Certification Programs

Feature	Texas (GFOAT)	Florida (FGFOA)	Virginia (VGFOA)
	<p>positions and years, and types of involvement)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance from passage of up to 5 examinations (Maximum 100 points each: 75 points required to pass); if no points for education, experience and professional involvement points, could earn certificate with passing score on all 5 exams. 		
What: Certificate Preparation (Courses/Self-Study)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed self-study guides for each examination. <p><i>GFOAT has graciously made these available to me. They are excellent and I can provide them upon request.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific online or onsite courses. 	On-site review sessions (not required to take exams but recommended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online and on-site review courses • Required to take exams (50 questions each, open book)
Examination Features	On-line exam scored by “ExamSoft”	On-site exams offered 3 times per year scored by volunteers	Follows course (50 questions each, open book)
Examination Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting & Financial Reporting • Budgeting & Capital Planning • Cash Management • Debt Management • Public Finance (Mandatory) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting & Financial Reporting • Municipal Budgeting • Treasury Management • Debt Administration • Financial Administration (pensions, risk management, purchasing, IT, grants) 	<p>Core Exams (8 of 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate Governmental Accounting • Advanced Governmental Accounting • Internal Controls, Auditing and Fraud • Operating and Capital Budgeting • Retirement and Benefits, Risk Management and Procurement

Summary of State Certification Programs

Feature	Texas (GFOAT)	Florida (FGFOA)	Virginia (VGFOA)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Government and Law • Debt Management for Public Finance Officers* • Issuing Public Debt* • Short Term Investments* • Cash Management and Banking* <p style="text-align: center;"><i>* May be taken as electives</i></p> <p>Electives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 4 courses above • Human Resources • Leadership • Grants Reporting & Auditing • How to Prepare a CAFR • Responsibilities of the Treasurer • Delinquent Collections • Bankruptcy
Development	Study guide and exam developed by the University of Texas, Dallas	By committee members/volunteers <i>Update of review materials, course materials and exams in progress under contract with University of Georgia to provide better alignment of prep materials with exam</i>	Review courses and exams developed by Radford University (Used by GFOA for exams)
Continuing Education Requirements	75 CPE hours over 3 years (25 per year average)	None	None
Fees	Application Fee: \$100 Each Exam: \$150 Annual Renewal: \$50	Application Fee: \$50 Each Exam: \$30	Online course: \$150 Onsite course: \$250

Government Finance Officers Association of Texas (GFOAT)



Certified Government Finance Officers (CGFO)

Program Guidelines

Adopted October 24, 2018

Certified Government Finance Officers (CGFO)

Program Guidelines

Governance. The Certified Government Finance Officer program is sponsored by the Government Finance Officers Association of Texas (GFOAT), an Affiliate of the Texas Municipal League. GFOAT is a professional organization with more than 1000 members that operates under its own By-Laws and is governed by a Board elected by its members. The policies of the Board are carried out by Board Liaisons, a number of committees and designated CGFO Administrator. The CGFO Committee is charged with overseeing and administering the CGFO program. The CGFO Committee advises the GFOAT Board and recommends changes to certain guidelines and operating procedures to be approved by the Board. This document, referred to as the General Guidelines, is meant to establish a written representation of the philosophy and policy of the CGFO Committee, and by extension, the GFOAT Board. However, it is not meant to cover every feasible instance of operating procedures and, as such, the CGFO Administrator and the CGFO Committee are granted a reasonable amount of latitude to make decisions that in the judgment of the CGFO Administrator, and the CGFO Committee Co-Chairs, are in keeping with the spirit of these General Guidelines.

Description. The CGFO program is designed to establish a threshold of knowledge about a broad array of government finance topics and terminology. It does take experience into consideration and recognizes that a combination of knowledge and experience can set apart those persons in the profession who desire to demonstrate a level of competency. This threshold is measured by a point system that gives credit for academic education, experience, professional leadership and successful passage of examinations on a variety of governmental finance topics. The number of exams that must be taken and passed is dependent on the credits given for academic achievement and experience. Upon being awarded the CGFO credential, recipients must continue their professional education in order to sustain their certification each year.

Nomenclature. The proper reference to this credential is *Certified Government Finance Officer*. While this program has a number of specific aspects tied to Texas law, the credential is much broader. This program has been used by a number of state government finance officer credentialing programs with few changes, mainly those portions relating to Texas law. The phrase *Certified Government Finance Officer* refers to not only those persons initially qualifying for the credential but those persons considered Active and in good standing, having met their continuing education requirements and paid their annual dues. Those persons initially qualifying for the CGFO status but not sustaining their continuing education requirements or paying their annual dues are not considered Certified Government Finance Officers and should not reflect the title or abbreviations as part of their professional name. A list of active CGFOs can be obtained on the Web site provided by the Government Finance Officers Association of

Texas.

SECTION I: CGFO PROGRAM APPLICATION

To become a candidate for the CGFO designation, an individual must:

Be a current member of GFOAT.

Complete the online application form.

Pay the online application fee.

Submit the following **required** documentation to cgfo@tml.org:

- A current resume listing education, professional experience and key areas of responsibility
- A letter from the candidate's employer certifying employment capacity, tenure, and supervisory experience or referencing that the submitted resume is accurate (if applicable)
- A letter from a direct supervisor at a government finance agency verifying areas of responsibility and tenure (if applicable)
- Copies of all degrees awarded (if applicable)
- Copy of CPA certificate or CPA certificate number (if applicable)

Once materials and fees have been received and reviewed, the applicant will receive an email notice of application status.

If approved, applicant will receive an email with a link to the study materials and contact information for the CGFO Administrator.

If an application is not approved due to a condition not being met, the applicant will receive an email from the CGFO administrator identifying the issues and steps required to correct the problem. The application fee for those that submit an incomplete application will be held for maximum of six months without penalty. After this time, a \$50.00 administrative fee will be assessed and the remaining balance will be returned upon request within one-year of the initial application. After one-year of notice of ineligibility, the full application fee will be forfeited.

SECTION II: FEES

Application Fee

The processing fee for each candidate application is \$100.00.

- The application fee includes online access to CGFO record for review of status.

- The application fee **does not** cover the cost of exams; candidates must register separately for exams.

Exam Fee

The exam fee is \$150.00 per exam.

- If a candidate fails an exam, the candidate may take another attempt at the same exam for \$50.00. An additional fee of \$150.00 is required for a third sitting of the same exam and so forth.

The exam fee will be forfeited if the exam is not taken within four years of initial payment.

SECTION III: APPLICATION POINT SYSTEM

To achieve the CGFO designation, there is a 375-point requirement that can be met through a combination of four categories shown below. There is a maximum of 150 points that will be granted within the first three categories. *Points for professional experience will **only** be used for the application process and will not be reassessed annually. Point values claimed are subject to change in value at the discretion of the CGFO Administrator.

1. Academic Credentials

2. Professional Work Experience

3. Professional Leadership Involvement

4. Exam Scores With A Minimum Passing Grade Of 75% Per Exam

1. Academic Credentials Points

Related field points are programs that are recognized as a part of the College of Business for undergraduate/graduate credit. In addition, course programs in political science, public administration, and government will be considered to be a related field for graduate credit consideration.

Doctorate in a related field	100 points
MBA	75 points
MPA (masters in public admin)	75 points
CPA	75 points
Graduate degree in a related field	50 point
Graduate degree in an unrelated field	35 points
Undergraduate degree in related field	50 points
Undergraduate degree in unrelated field	25 points

2. Professional Work Experience Points

Points are awarded on the basis of each 12 month period from date of hire. Partial years will be awarded on the basis of the position held for 7 months or longer in the 12 month period. Value of points listed below are for years served for each position at the time of application.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	7 points
Division Head or Asst. CFO	5 points
Section Head (e.g., Chief Acct.)	4 points
General Practitioner (e.g., Acct.)	2 points

3. Professional Leadership Involvement Points

Points for leadership involvement will **only** be used for the application process and will not be reassessed annually. Points may only be claimed for one position on a committee. Items D-I requires at least one-year of membership in that position.

A	National Officer	50 points
B.	National Representative	35 points
C	National Committee Member	25 points
D	State Officer (per number of offices held)	25 points
E	State Regional Director	20 points
F	State Committee Member	10 points
G	State Committee Chairperson	20 points
H.	Certificate of Achievement Reviewer	35 points
I.	Budget Award Reviewer	25 points

The combined maximum number of non-testing points that can be claimed from categories 1, 2, and 3 is 150 points.

Points are verified and awarded per your application submission. Once the application process is completed no modifications are accepted.

A reassessment of points by the CGFO Administrator may occur when all exams have been passed and you have not yet met the required points to earn your certification.

If you withdraw before earning your CGFO certification, you must wait one year before re-applying to the program.

4. Exam Scores with A Minimum Passing Grade Of 75% Per Exam

See SECTION IV.

SECTION IV: SUBJECT AREAS FOR STUDY AND EXAMINATION

Study Guide Disciplines include the five categories listed below. In addition, a compiled glossary covering all of these five areas and a summary of key state statutes covering many of these five areas is provided as part of the study program.

Accounting & Financial Reporting
Budgeting & Capital Planning
Cash Management
Debt Management

Exams meet the following criteria:

- Multiple choice
- Each exam shall have 100 questions.
- Only recognized candidates may take tests.
- A maximum of two and one-half hours will be allowed for an exam sitting.
- Exams shall be based on study materials, practical knowledge and problem solving.
- Exams shall be offered as often as practical but at a minimum of twice yearly.
- Candidates may take no more than two exams per sitting and under no circumstances will the exam sitting period exceed two and one-half hours.
- The Public Finance exam is a requirement for all candidates. Other exams are elective and, may be taken in any combination to satisfy the candidate's point requirements.
- Candidates must provide their own laptop to use at testing locations to access the internet and obtain their exam link.
- A grade of 75 must be made on each exam taken in order for the exam points to count toward the 375-point minimum requirement to become a CGFO (point for point awards for 75 and over).

Study materials and exams shall be updated and administered under the supervision of CGFO Committee.

Minor refinements and corrections shall be made as needed. Major revisions and additions shall be made periodically and upon the recommendation of the CGFO Committee and approval by the GFOAT Board.

Major changes may be accomplished with the help of outside assistance if deemed necessary by the CGFO Committee.

SECTION V: CLASSES OF CGFO

Active CGFO is a member of GFOAT who is current in accumulation of continuing professional education (CPE) units and renewal fees.

Retired-Emeritus CGFO is a member of GFOAT who is retired from a governmental entity (i.e. receiving a pension/annuity) not currently employed in any capacity and current in accumulation of continuing education at time of retirement. Their CGFO annual fees will be half of the current rate for active CGFO members. CPE requirements are waived.

Probation

An individual will go on probation by not meeting the standards of an Active CGFO. The probation is limited to one-year to become compliant. Once on probation and the standards of an Active CGFO have been met within the one-year, the individual will be reinstated to an Active CGFO classification. If after one-year the individual is not compliant, then the CGFO classification becomes inactive.

Inactive

An individual failing to meet standards of an Active CGFO after the allotted probationary period is Inactive. While inactive, the individual is forbidden to use CGFO credentials in any capacity.

Once classified as inactive, individual must meet all criteria of an Active CGFO.

Once classified as inactive, individual must pay and sit for 1 exam of administrators' choice and pass with a minimum score of 75. If individual does not pass, the same exam may be retaken one time for no additional fee.

If individual meets all qualifications of an Active CGFO and passes the exam, they will be reinstated as an Active CGFO.

If the individual does not pass the second attempt at the exam, the individual will be removed from the program and no longer be allowed to use the CGFO credential. Should the individual want to regain usage of the CGFO credential they will need to re-enter the program as a new applicant.

SECTION VI: CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION (CPE) REQUIREMENTS

The required number of CPEs is 75 total hours over a continuous, three-year period. (Jan 1-Dec 31).

One unit of continuing education is equal to 50 minutes of continuous participation in a group program. For example, a 100 minute training session will earn 2.0 CPE.

CPE training must conform to CGFO standards and be approved by GFOAT.

Records supporting individual CPE credits claimed must be kept by the CGFO for five years.

The process of accounting for CPE units of credit shall be self-administered by using the GFOAT website. CGFO certificate holders should post CPE credits throughout the year in order for progress to be monitored and reminders sent to the certificate holder.

Acceptable Types of Continuing Professional Education

Qualifying Events are conferences, seminars, schools sponsored by the following, but pertaining directly to job-related duties:

- United States Government (GAO, etc.)
- State of Texas (Comptroller, etc.)
- Texas Municipal League or any of its affiliate groups
- AICPA when directly related to governmental activities or issues
- A university directly related to governmental activities or issues
- Government Treasurers Organization of Texas
- An entity approved by the CGFO Committee

- GFOAT
- GFOA

Qualifying Activities

CGFOs involved in course or seminar instruction in an approved activity shall receive 2 CPEs per 50 minutes of instruction for the first presentation and 1.5x CPEs of credit thereafter, not to exceed 15 CPEs per calendar year.

Articles published for GFOAT use on the website are eligible for 2 CPE units for each 500-word article, not to exceed 15 CPEs in a calendar year.

Participation as a GFOA CAFR reviewer shall earn 2 CPE credits for each review with a maximum of 8 in one year.

Participation as a GFOA Budget reviewer shall earn 2 CPE credits for each review with a maximum of 8 in one year.

Proctoring GFOAT CGFO Exams shall earn 2 CPE credits per exam with a maximum of 8 in one year.

Chair or co-chair for the CGFO committee shall earn 8 CPE credits per calendar year. Chairs and co-chairs are also eligible to proctor exams and receive the allowed credit.

SECTION VII: CGFO RENEWAL FEES

CGFO renewal billing for each fiscal year shall be made part of the GFOAT membership renewal billing notices that are sent in July of the fiscal year. For example, the CGFO renewal billing of \$40 for fiscal year 2014-2015 shall be part of the GFOAT membership renewal billing sent in July 2014.

CGFO renewal payments that are not received by December 31 of the fiscal year shall be re-billed on January 1 at the rate of \$50 and will be due January 31.

SECTION VIII: ETHICS

All CGFOs are bound by the GFOA Code of Ethics and the GFOAT Code of Ethics and are subject to the disciplinary procedures (if any) established for violation of the respective Code of Ethics.

SECTION IX: DEADLINE FOR COMPLETION OF CGFO PROGRAM

Applicants must complete the program within four years of becoming a candidate.

FLORIDA GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

CERTIFIED GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICER PROGRAM



PROGRAM INFORMATION – Revised August 2014

OFFICIAL APPLICATION FORMS

INSTRUCTION SHEETS

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 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 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 sent an open book Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees Examination, which must be completed within thirty (30) 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.

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 \$50.00 and a \$30.00 sitting fee for each exam.

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

You have up to five years to pass all five exams before you must reapply and re-pay the \$50.00 application fee. Each time you take an exam, you must pay the \$30.00 exam fee. This fee is to help defray the administrative costs of providing proctors, exams, and setting-up exam sites.

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. A deferral of the exam is good for one session only, and it is assumed that you will take the exam at the next available date. If no advance notice is provided, exam fees are forfeited.

How frequently is the exam given and when?

The exam is given twice a year - once in conjunction with the School of Governmental Finance in November and at announced sites in the spring.

What are the application deadlines?

Applications must be received by September 15 for the November exam, and January 15 for the spring exam. This is to ensure that the applications and registrations can be processed in time to allow for adequate preparation for the exam and allow sufficient time for the Ethics exam to be distributed and graded.

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

While it is recommended that candidates take the review sessions, 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 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 November and right before the spring exam at central location such as Orlando.

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.
 - a. 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
 - b. 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
 - i. 20 hours within the last three years in local/state government related training sessions (i.e. FGFOA/GFOA etc.); or
 - ii. attend all the CGFO review courses prior to taking the exam.

Note: Work experience will not substitute for an appropriate degree in either a. or b. above.

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 five 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

After completing the application, attach payment in the amount of \$50.00 (*made payable to FGFOA*), all worksheets, letter of recommendations, and any other supporting documents to the official application form and mail to:

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

NOTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE

Once the certification committee approves the application, candidates will be sent an open book Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees Examination, which they must successfully complete (achieve a minimum score of 75%) within thirty (30) days. Candidates will be notified of their acceptance in the Program by the Florida Government Finance Officers Association office. Upon acceptance, the candidate will be sent information on testing dates and locations.

REVIEW SESSIONS

Review sessions may be offered before the examination. If a current schedule is not enclosed, 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 five (5) 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 \$30.00. 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 is given to the candidate that receives the highest cumulative score on all five parts between the November and spring exams. 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

REVOCATION & 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:

- a. The certificate holder has been convicted of a felony;
- b. The certificate holder has been adjudicated mentally incompetent;
- c. The certificate holder obtained his/her certificate by use of fraud or misstatement of a material fact;
- d. The certificate holder identified himself/herself as a CGFO before such certification has been granted him/her;
- e. The certificate holder has violated provisions of the CGFO program;
- f. 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
- g. The certificate holder has failed to successfully pass an open book Ethics Exam;
- h. 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 Certified Government Finance Officers Program

OFFICIAL APPLICATION FORM

Please Type or Print

Name _____ E-mail _____

Organization _____ Title _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (____) _____ Fax Number (____) _____

FGFOA Member: ____ Yes (Date joined: _____) ____ No

Application Checklist:

- Education Verification: Enclosed copy of transcripts or copy of diploma
- Governmental Finance Experience Verification: Enclosed Completed "Experience Worksheet"
- Two (2) Letters of Recommendation Enclosed: (Note; at least one additional letter is required if you are with your current employer less than three (3) years)
- Signed FGFOA Code of Ethics Page
- Payment Enclosed

STATEMENT OF ACCURACY

I hereby certify that my answers to all questions on this application are true and correct. I agree to comply with the Florida Government Finance Officers Associations' CGFO compliance guidelines and code of ethics set forth in this application booklet. I understand that failure to comply with these guidelines may result in revocation of the CGFO designation and certificate.

*BEFORE MAILING Please make sure your application and supporting documents are complete and accurate. STAPLE your check and all supporting documents to this application and mail to:
FGFOA
Certification Program
P.O. Box 10270
Tallahassee, FL 32302-2270*

Signature _____ Date _____

Florida Government Finance Officers Association

Code of Ethics

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 relationships with public officials, employees, 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 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.

STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE

I hereby certify that I have read and accept the FGFOA Code of Ethics. I further agree to comply with the Florida Government Finance Officers Associations' CGFO compliance guidelines and code of ethics set forth in this application booklet. I understand that failure to comply with these guidelines may result in revocation of the CGFO designation and certificate.

Signature _____

Printed Name and Date _____

Certificate Program

About the VGFOA & Radford University GNAC Certificate Program:

Virginia Government Finance Officers' Association (VGFOA) certification program provides training in many job-related areas and support for those wishing to pursue the national [Certified Public Finance Officer](#) (CPFO) designation. (See the [Calendar](#) for scheduled courses).

Purpose of the Certificate Program

- Provide training in the areas of accounting, budgeting, cash management, debt, administration, internal controls, Virginia law and other topics pertinent to state and local governments.

Requirements

- Member of the Virginia Government Finance Officers Association (VGFOA). All VGFOA Membership types shall be eligible to participate.

Technical Competencies

- Complete and pass the related exams of the eight core courses
- Complete and pass the related exam of two of the elective courses
- Complete the ten courses within a seven-year period unless an extension of time has been requested and granted by the Chairperson of the Education Committee
- Waivers for certain classes are noted below

Core Courses

- [Intermediate Governmental Accounting](#) (1)
- [Advanced Governmental Accounting](#) (1)
- [Internal Controls, Auditing and Fraud](#) (1)
- [Operating and Capital Budgeting](#) (3)
- [Retirement and Benefits, Risk Management and Procurement](#) (5)
- [Virginia Government and Law](#)
- * [Debt Management for Public Finance Officers](#) (4) **or**
- * [Issuing Public Debt](#) (4)
- * [Short Term Investments](#) (2) **or**
- * [Cash Management and Banking](#) (2)

*Note: Either class can count as a core class or as an elective, but 1 of the 2 classes must be completed for the core courses requirements. *

Numbers in parenthesis indicate a waiver is available for this course.

A number of courses are now offered on-line through Radford University. Visit the [Calendar](#) for the current list of course offerings.

Elective Courses

- * [Cash Management and Banking](#)
- * [Short Term Investments](#)
- * [Debt Management for Public Finance Officers](#)
- * [Issuing Public Debt](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Leadership](#)
- [Grants Reporting & Auditing](#)
- [How to Prepare a CAFR](#)
- Responsibilities of the Treasurer (offered by the TAV)
- Delinquent Collections (offered by the TAV)
- Bankruptcy (offered by the TAV)
- Other classes offered by the VGFOA and approved by the Chairperson of the Education/Certification and Other Courses Committee

Waivers

The Core Courses noted above with numbers in parenthesis may be waived upon passing the GFOA CPFO exam noted below with the corresponding number.

- (1) GFOA Governmental Accounting, Auditing and Financial Reporting
- (2) GFOA Cash Management and Investments
- (3) GFOA Operating and Capital Budgeting
- (4) GFOA Debt Management
- (5) GFOA Pension and Benefits, Risk Management and Procurement

The Core Course Intermediate Governmental Accounting may be waived if you are a Certified Public Accountant.

Cost of the Program

- Membership dues
- Registration fee for the classes

Certificate Program Scholarship

Members of VGFOA may be eligible for a Certificate Program Scholarship. [Learn more by clicking here.](#)

Questions?

[Visit the Radford University Governmental and Nonprofit Assistance Center \(GNAC\) Website](#) or contact **Patty Hill**, Program Coordinator, by phone at (540) 831-6734 or by email at pthill@radford.edu.

[Login](#) | [Join VGFOA](#) | [Job Opportunities](#) | 



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8 East Canal Street | Richmond, Virginia 23219 | [\(804\) 249-4525](tel:(804)249-4525) | [Contact Us](#)

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Draft Member Survey

The CSMFO is considering the development of a “Certified Government Finance Officer” program that would encourage professional knowledge and competency. While the GFOA also provides a certification program, possible benefits of a CSMFO-sponsored program include:

- **Assistance with Examination Preparation.** Like the GFOA program, it is likely that certification would be earned by passing examinations in key subject areas such as accounting, budgeting, debt management and cash management. However, the GFOA does not provide structured preparation for the exams through focused study materials or courses. It is likely that the CSMFO program would have focused preparation features.
- **Focus on California-Specific Issues.** While there are national financial management standards, California has distinct issues separate from these, such as revenue-raising limits, debt issuance requirements, CalPERS and Redevelopment Successor Agencies. A CSMFO-sponsored program would be “California-Centric.”
- **Career Development.** Even with the most thorough of recruitment and vetting approaches, it is difficult for employers to fully evaluate the technical skills of their applicants. A CSMFO-sponsored certificate program could help both applicants and employers in assessing technical competency that is especially attuned to unique circumstances and challenges in California.

Many other state organizations, including Florida, New York, Oregon, Texas and Virginia, have developed certification programs for similar reasons. And based on their success, we have performed an initial analysis of what this type of program if sponsored by the CSMFO might look like.

However, before moving forward with further consideration of developing and implementing a “CGFO” program, we want to know what our members think about this. Please help us by taking a few minutes to respond to this survey. Thanks!

1. What do believe are the possible benefits of a CSMFO certificate program? (Check as many as apply)
 - Assistance with Examination Preparation
 - California Focus
 - Career Development
 - Other _____
 - No Benefit: Should Not Pursue

2. What topics should be covered by the examinations? (Check as many as apply)
 - Accounting & Financial Reporting
 - Budgeting
 - Cash Management/Investments
 - Debt Management
 - Revenue Management
 - Long-Term Financial Planning

Draft Member Survey

- Fiscal Policies
- Pensions
- Retiree Health Care
- Risk Management
- Purchasing
- Grants

3. What kind of preparation assistance should be provided?

- Study Guides in Alignment with Examination Topics
- Focused Courses
- Combination of Both

4. If focused courses are developed, should they be conducted:

- Onsite
- Online
- Combination of Both

5. There will likely be a fee for participation in the program, either for courses or examinations. What do you think would be a reasonable fee?

	Per Course (Select One)	Per Exam (Select One)
\$50		
\$75		
\$100		
\$150		
\$200		
\$250		

6. Based on what you've heard so far, do you think you might participate in this program?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

7. Any Other Comments?

California Society of Municipal Finance Officers

Certificate Survey Presentation

September 20, 2019



Opinion Research on
Elections and Public Policy

Probolsky Research
3990 Westerly Place Suite 185
Newport Beach CA 92660

Newport Beach (949) 855-6400
San Francisco (415) 870-8150
Washington DC (202) 559-0270

CSMFO — Certificate Survey

Survey Methodology*

From Friday, August 16, 2019 to Monday, September 16, 2019, Probolsky Research conducted an online survey among CSMFO members.

A total of 307 responses were collected. Below is a summary of the results.

Summary

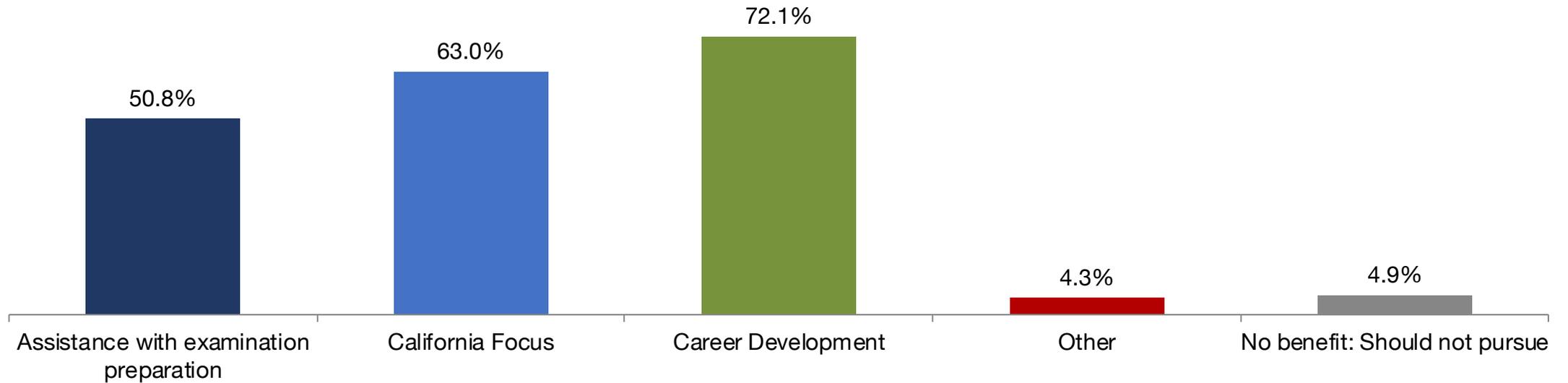
- Career development is the CSMFO Certificate Program benefit that members value the most
- Most members believe that Accounting and Financial Reporting are the most important topics that certificate examinations should cover
- The majority of members believe that focused courses should be conducted both onsite and online
- Larger majority says CGFO Certification would positively affect their selection process
- 65.7% said \$150 (or more) per full-day course is a reasonable fee for participation in the program
- 68.6% said they would pursue certification under this program based on what they've heard

Probolsky Research specializes in opinion research on behalf of corporate, election, government, non-profit, and special interest clients.



72.1% said career development is the benefit that interest them the most of a CSMFO certificate program

Question 1: What benefits of a CSMFO certificate program interest you the most? (Check as many as apply)



Responses from those who said “Other” to Q1

Question 1: What benefits of a CSMFO certificate program interest you the most? (Check as many as apply)

“Consolidates source of study material. CA specific is a bonus.”

“If the goal is to prepare for the CPFO examination, then why layer on another certificate?”

“It provides an alternative path for building skills for newly hired staff lacking governmental accounting knowledge.”

“Recognition for the Agency of such a certification.”

“CPE credits.”

“Training option for staff.”

“Unique designation in public finance.”

“I don't want to say no benefit, but it would be minimal in my opinion.”

“CPE”

“Don't know what this is and the website search turned up nothing. Can't get back to opening survey screen either.”

“None for me but should be pursued”

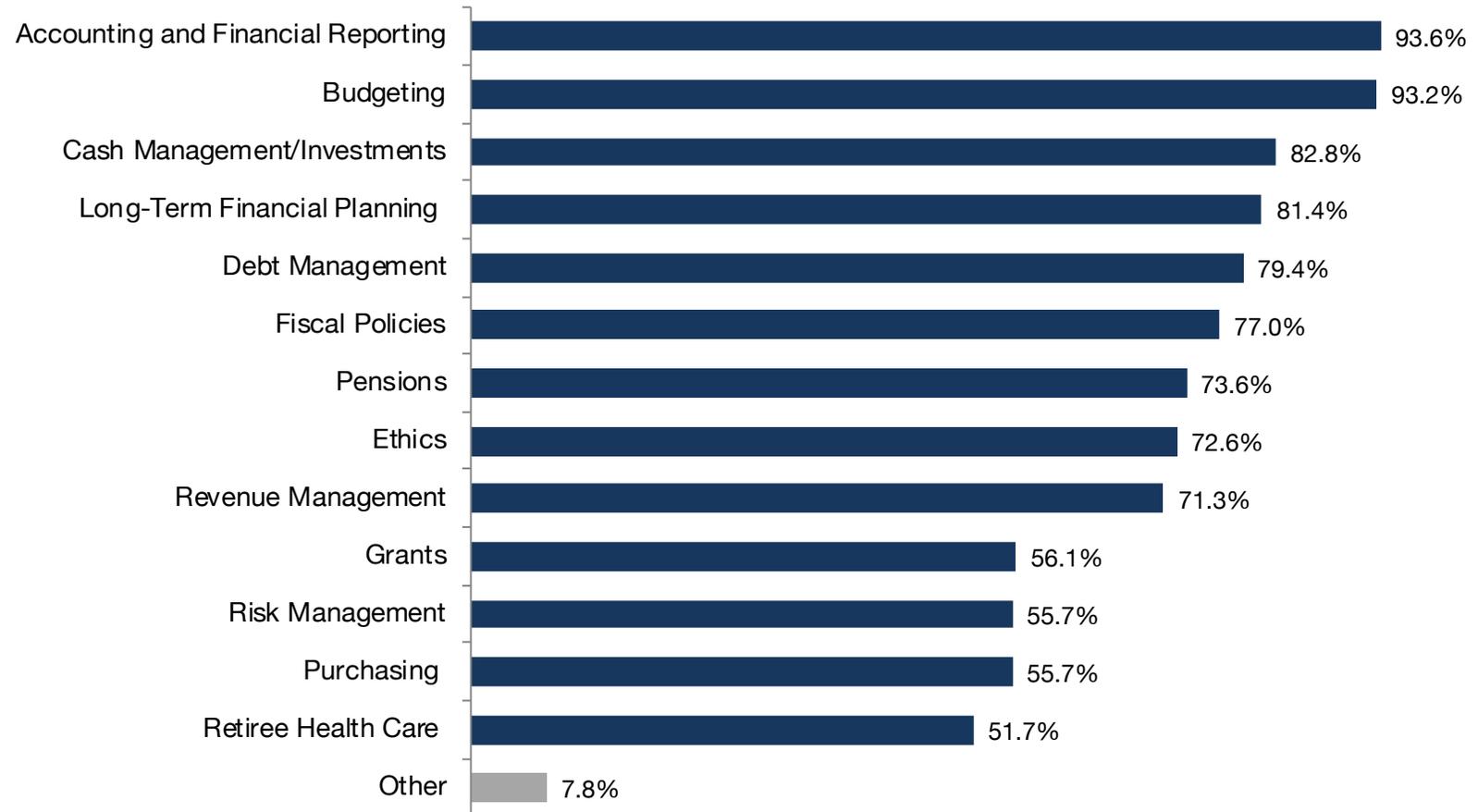
“While this may have benefits, it should not have significant overlap with the GFOA program. The value is in being California specific. Perhaps it should focus on completing certain coursework versus creating a separate exam, which GFOA already does.”

“Yes! this is great for so many reasons”

Accounting and Finance Reporting and Budgeting

top the list

Question 2: What topics should be covered by the certificate examinations? (Check as many as apply)



Responses from those who said “Other” to Q2

Question 2: What benefits of a CSMFO certificate program interest you the most? (Check as many as apply)

“All of the above”

“Another certification program is not needed”

“Any California-specific topics relevant to our industry”

“Asset Replacement Management”

“Auditing and Data Analytics”

“CPFO already does”

“Compliance”

“Enterprise Fund Acct v Governmental Acctg”

“Extrapolating financial health through financial Indicators, interpreting the CAFR and budget, comparing amongst cities”

“Financial Communication with Public/Elected Reps”

“Financial forecasting, land and economic forecasts”

“Internal Controls”

“Internal audit, IT systems”

Responses from those who said “Other” to Q2

(Continued)

Question 2: What benefits of a CSMFO certificate program interest you the most? (Check as many as apply)

“PAYROLL”

“Payroll, utility billing, business license”

“Project Financing”

“Rates and Fees”

“Shaping the role of Finance in a public organization”

“State mandated reports”

“Technology/Systems”

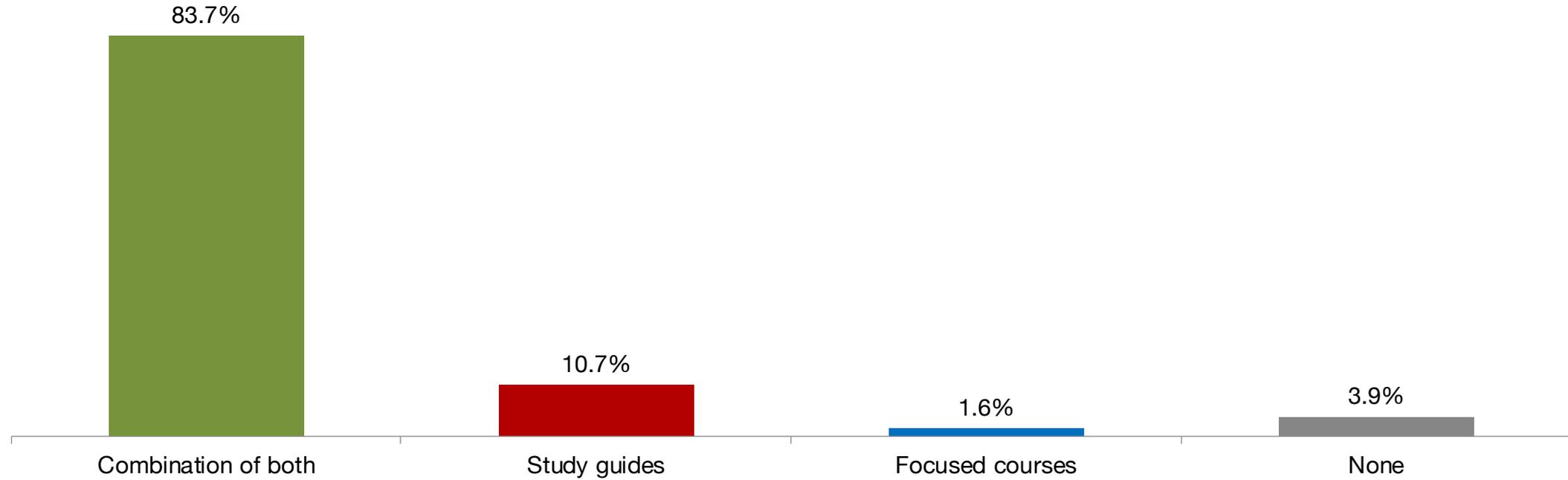
“all the above”

“financing mechanisms, fees, economic development, etc.”

“maybe some as electives”

83.7% said CSMFO should provide preparation assistance in both study guides and focused courses

Question 3: What kind of preparation assistance should the CSMFO provide?



Responses from those who said “Other” to Q3

Question 3: What benefits of a CSMFO certificate program interest you the most? (Check as many as apply)

“webinars”

“Join with CFOA”

“Resource center with sample policies and reports”

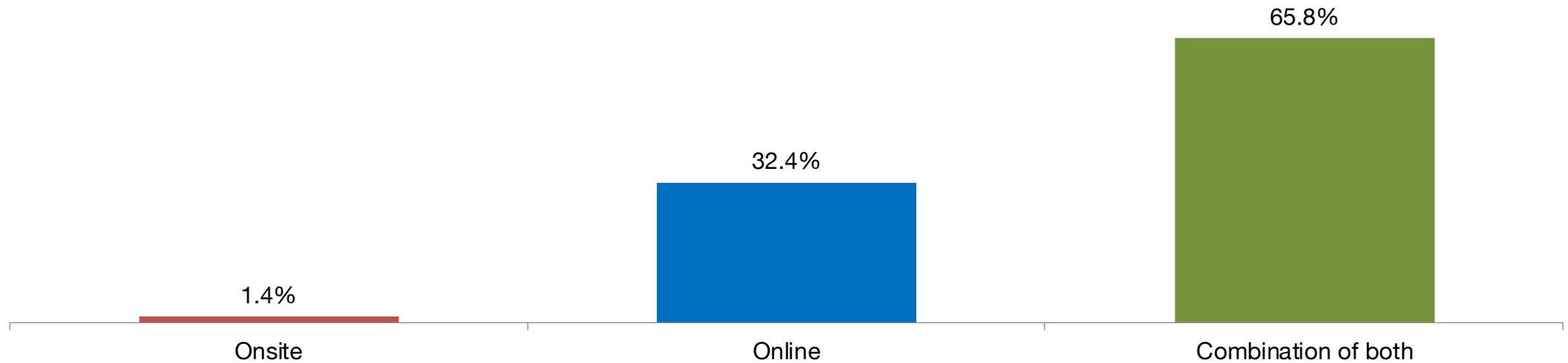
“Study teams”

“Work in conjunction with GFOA to provide preparation for their exam online study, an app would be amazing”

Conduct focused courses online and onsite, says

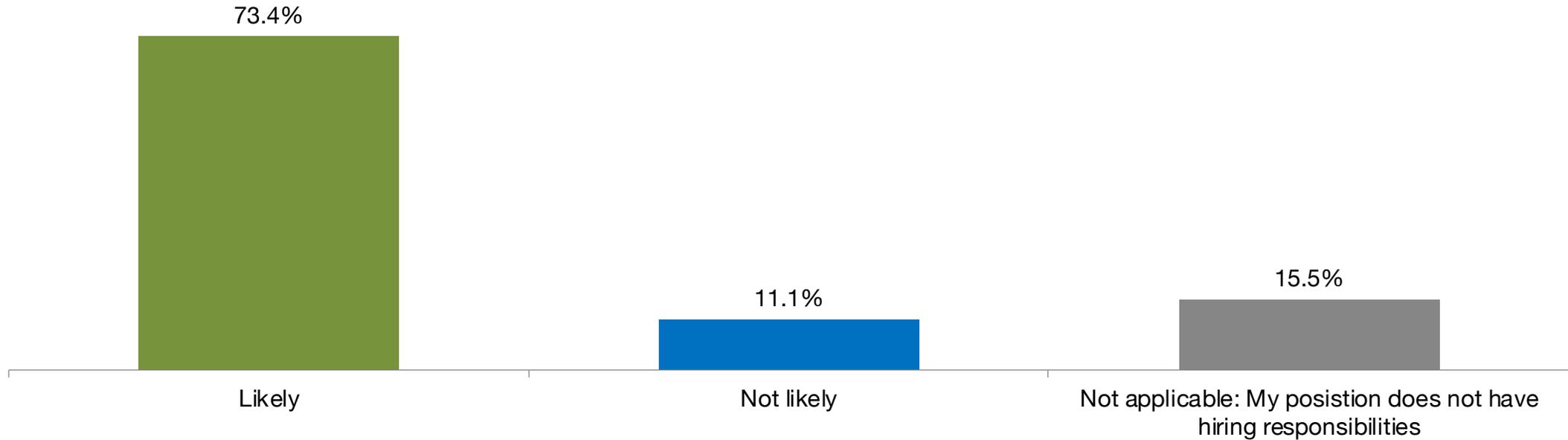
65.8% of members

Question 4: If focused courses are developed, should they be conducted:



Large majority says CGFO Cert. would positively affect their selection process

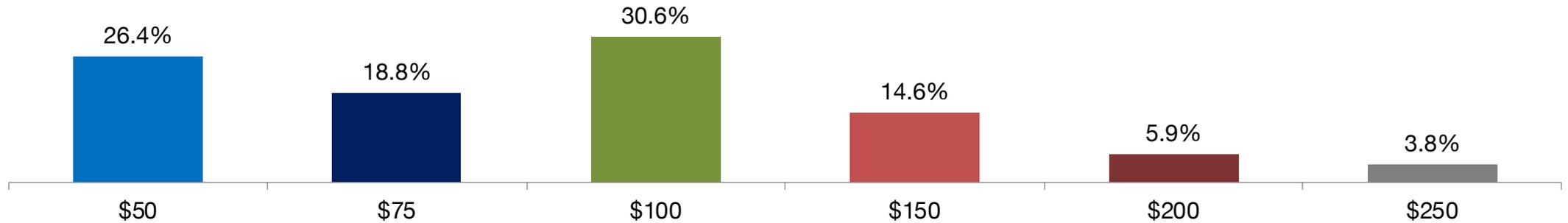
Question 5: If your position's responsibility within your organization includes hiring professional staff, how likely would an applicant's possession of "CGFO" certification positively affect your selection process?



54.9% said \$100 or more per exam is a reasonable fee for participation in the program

Question 6: There will likely be a fee for participation in the program, either for courses or examinations. What do you think would be a reasonable fee?

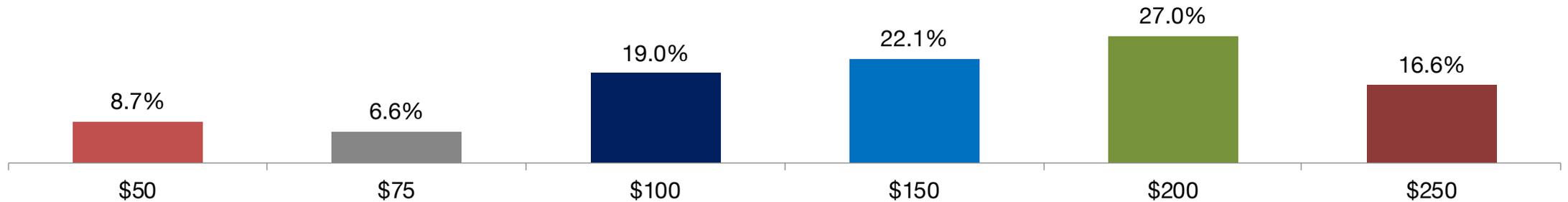
Per Exam



65.7% said \$150 or more per full-day course is a reasonable fee for participation in the program

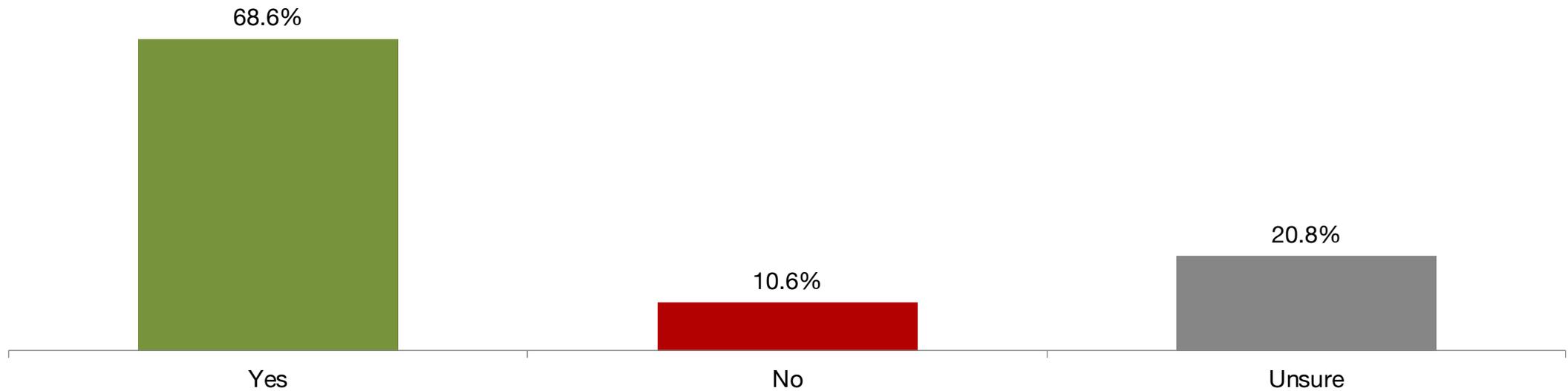
Question 6: There will likely be a fee for participation in the program, either for courses or examinations. What do you think would be a reasonable fee?

Per Full-Day Course



68.6% said they would pursue certification under this program based on what they've heard so far

Question 7: Based on what you've heard so far, do you think you might pursue certification under this program and/or encourage others in your organization to do so?



Comments from Q8

Question 8: Any other comments?

"I already have my CPFO through GFOA so it is unlikely I would pursue this certificate. I am a bit concerned it would take away from the certificate I have received through GFOA. It is worth noting that your survey states that the GFOA does not provide training courses for the exam. This was not my experience as they did provide online courses for each topic."

"I might not personally participate since I am now nearing retirement, but have staff that would perhaps."

"GFOA is changing the CPFO program and likely bringing it in-house. I'd encourage CSMFO to work with GFOA to develop the preparation materials and courses (and a group of good instructors) to successfully achieve that certification, rather than creating a whole new program."

"I think this is a step in the right direction regarding Finance, any and all certification are GREAT to me. You can never LEARN to much."

"I think having a local, California specific, course to make well-rounded finance individuals is a great idea. I have always encouraged my peers and supervisees to pursue further education and learning in any way they can to make their knowledge as well rounded as possible. At this point in my career, I would not be pursuing the certification for myself, although if the price for the exam was low enough, I might take it to see what I know or areas I need to improve my knowledge of. I have the CPFO app on my phone and use the test questions to keep me thinking."

"It was a little difficult to answer the per exam cost not knowing how many exam segments would be required or if any would be combined. I think I would pay as much as \$1,000 per employee not including full-day courses. I would encourage as much self-study or online study material as possible."

"The certificate programs have been far too focused on accounting and GASB, which are of secondary importance to a successful Finance Director in a medium to large sized municipality. Feel free to call me to discuss further—Jim Steele (408) 771-1131."

"Perhaps CSMFO could encourage the development of cohort groups to study and prepare for GFOA's CPFO program. This could also include specialized training class development. Muni finance is my second career after retiring from private industry. I see a need for better educated finance professionals. While it is nice to have CSMFO as a resource I have see too many in our profession that are just not qualified due to lack of knowledge/experience."

"Any additional certification is worthy of exploration, but there has to be an understanding that issuance is difficult to enhance the validity of the program."

Comments from Q8 (Continued)

Question 8: Any other comments?

"I have already passed the GFOA CPFO exams, and am not sure about a California-specific program. I am willing to provide more feedback as the idea is developed. Also, the acronyms will get very confusing with the "C" meaning Certified in GFOA's program and California in CSMFO's program."

"Difficult to assess a reasonable fee for the exam and course"

"Excellent idea. Please continue to bring this idea to fruition for the benefit of our members."

"I am too close to retiring to care about any more certifications. I think it would be good for younger up and coming finance officers, though."

"I earned the CGFM designation and am excited about the prospect of a certification emphasizing local governments."

"Full day class is suggested at affordability due to the number of courses expected per topic. Same logic for the per exam fee, it needs to be affordable multiply that by number of exams and class. This certification is not yet widely recognized, accepted, and very specific to the industry."

"CASBO has a similar program for school business officials. They charged an all-inclusive flat fee of \$1800. This might be better accepted rather than a "per exam" or "per course" fee."

"I think this is a great idea/goal and really hope you are able to make it come to reality. Look forward to hearing more about this. Thank you"

"This will be a valuable program which will have great benefit to CSMFO members. important to align materials and courses with GFOA CPFO program, so candidates can do both successfully."

"I am within 5 years of retirement and am a retired CPA, but I do think this might be a nice addition to someone who has already passed the CPA exam. It shows that the person has taken an interest in Government accounting and has put forward the effort to gain the skills needed to perform the basic function of finance in government"

"There are a lot of certificate programs so that is a challenge. I've seen some success with programs that include a mentor assignment as well."

Comments from Q8 (Continued)

Question 8: Any other comments?

"Would be especially helpful for new hires just coming into the public finance world. It might make sense to have those with a CPFO start assistance with the CGFO program and then eventually have CGFO's assist with the exam development (with a professional exam organization). It seems to work fine for HRCI (I volunteer there and you need an SPHR to assist with the exam development of the SPHR test)."

"For Question 6 a reasonable per exam fee depends on the total number of exams in the program. So hard to answer without that assumption"

"Complete duplication of effort. Support GFOA with staffing and testing sites. In my opinion this duplicates a lot of the material and effort of the GFOA CPFO. I have been interested in exploring the CPFO. Is it considered inadequate for any reason? Just state-specific material doesn't seem compelling enough to create an entirely new credential. Can it be an add-on to GFOA's effort? Can CSMFO put its time and resources behind making GFOA's program even better? There are so many credentials out there. Adding another one that is mostly recognized within only one state does not seem like the best use of resources and risks being under used. Thanks for the chance to provide my opinion!"

"I am a firm believer that a robust California-specific certificate is necessary. I've been presenting for a Municipal Finance training program, and the budgeting course I teach is the most popular in California."

"I think there are already enough certification programs and you erode the value of them when there are so many. Instead, maybe CSMFO should focus on working with GFOA to create training programs for the GFOA certification, and perhaps add a state-specific chapter to their program (then every state could participate). Also, you could work with CMTA and have a joint program with them, they also offer certifications. Or you could work with AGA regarding their CGFM. Or with the AFP, the FMA, I could go on. Point is, I don't think our profession needs yet another certification. I think all of the organizations would be better served in offering one or two certifications that are endorsed by everyone so that they hold value and meaning."

"Wasn't sure how best to respond to Question 6. The "Per Exam" cost really depends on the number of exams required for the certification (i.e. more required exams; lower the cost to encourage participation)"

"I think this is a great idea."

"May consider instead of pursuing CPA"

Comments from Q8 (Continued)

Question 8: Any other comments?

"I like the idea of a CA focused certificate program. We definitely have issues and topics that are unique to us. I have a "slight" concern that since the CPFO designation is widely recognized, would the CGFO gain the same recognition and hold the same value for those seeking these certifications? I would probably be inclined to choose one over the other just due to time constraints of studying and testing. I love the idea of test prep for the CGFO and feel like it would be great review on topics I may not have touched in a while. I suppose these proposed classes could help prepare candidates for the CPFO if they so desired to take both exams. Just some random thoughts/discussion points. What would the continuing education requirements be? The requirements for GFOA's CPFO are pretty significant and could be a hindrance to people looking to pick one over the other if too high."

"I think "California" should be in the name of the certification, if significant focus of the content is on California-specific topics and issues. I understand that the certification may be sought by professionals from other states, but for Californians I think having California in the title helps explain why someone might get both the GFOA and CSMFO certifications."

"Why do this? GFOA has a program. Just offer more online CPE classes."

"There wouldn't be much benefit for those with existing certifications other than a California specific focus. It would, however, be beneficial for those without certification to provide a comprehensive and CA based focus for those spending their career in CA."

"I think something in alignment to the GFOA program would be good but with a focus on CA specifics."

"Please add CAFR preparation in the training course."

"Would love to participate in this!!!"

"I think it's a great idea; I'm at the tail end of my career so I wouldn't participate but i think it would serve folks starting off or switching careers."

"There are so many professional certifications, these may just dilute any program."

"Per Exam fee should be based on the number of exams. If it is a comprehensive exam the price could be more versus exams that are taken in parts."

Comments from Q8 (Continued)

Question 8: Any other comments?

“Proposal appears to duplicate the GFOA CPFO and provides limited additional benefit. I don't think CSMFO should invest effort in a certification program that would probably be 95% the same as GFOA.”

“Between the existing CFGM and CPFO, most topics listed are already covered in depth. Focus on those areas not covered in as much depth, to make getting yet a third certificate meaningful and more than just more letters on a signature line. A certificate that focus on data and financial/budget report interpretation (fiscal health indicators), monitoring during the FY (ongoing indicators/trends), projecting available fund balance/working capital, external factors in revenue and expenditure projections, and communicating the data in layman's terms is an area not so well covered and would lend itself to California-specific issues.”

“I really like the California focus. I also think that so many of these programs are City/County focused, and there needs to be at least some focus on special districts and their uniqueness.”

“Very good idea!”

“Even with the reasons stated, this is a duplicative effort to the CPFO exam offered by GFOA. CSMFO would better serve its members by providing educational and materials in support of the GFOA certification, instead of having its own certification. (Certifications that are competency-based require significant resources to maintain and keep validated - resources better spent in support of education and training materials for the CPFO certification.)”

“I did the GFOA / CPFO program on my own and this would augment that program well. It would be great to get GFOA onboard and combine the two.”

“If this isn't pursued, I think it would be good to offer test prep courses for GFOA's certification for CSMFO members. In my opinion the materials they offer and the study program for the certification is very vague. It is hard to know when you are ready for the exams. “

“Good idea!”

Comments from Q8 (Continued)

Question 8: Any other comments?

“A lot of us in the lower financial positions would like to increase our education, but sometimes find it hard to get the time off and it can be expensive. Such as the upcoming governmental accounting class in Gilroy. I would have to fly, and that makes it hard financially, if it were an online as well as in-class session that would be fantastic.”

“This comes too late in my career to be a benefit for myself, but I would have pursued it if it was available years ago”

“The whole reason I enjoy CSMFO is the focus on California issues particularly smaller cities and districts. GFOA has become too broad nationally. This certification would further that aspect.”

“For small agencies the cost may be prohibitive, I would suggest a scholarship option.”

“I'm at the end of my career so would not incur the cost at this point. Additionally, I believe my CPA is my primary validation of my experience, and membership in other organizations help me stay on top of topics, but additional certificates have never been necessary in my government career.”

“This is a great idea!”

“Although I currently have the CPFO through GFOA, this is something that I'd still be interested in.”

“Why not combine efforts with GFOA and do a CA only sub-certification or concentration? Why the duplicate effort to develop a similar program?”

“CPFO is the current standard that I would like to see CGFO rise to. I am deterred from CPFO by it's self-study nature and it's relevance to California issues and terminology. It simply isn't very accessible.”

“I am a current CPFO through the GFOA. The CPE requirements are 30 hours per year, which is manageable with my workload. Any idea if CPE will be required to maintain and will it be a similar requirement?”

“I do not believe there is a need for another certification in this area when the GFOA already offers one.”

Comments from Q8 (Continued)

Question 8: Any other comments?

“The availability for courses and resources should be broad. Some employees may not be able to attend courses during the work week due to their duties which limits their ability to learn and advance in their career.”

“This is an excellent initiative. As someone new to the public sector, I would expect pursuing this type of certificate to accelerate my pace of learning the particulars of public agency finance, as well as an important indicator of commitment to the role and the agency.”

“What value would this provide that is different or enhances GFOA's version?”

“I think this would be a huge benefit to members. I have passes one exam but find it difficult to study certain topics on my own.”

“Sounds interesting. Always interested in further professional growth and development. Looking forward to hearing more about this. thanks!”

“I'm a comfortable point in my career and not looking to advance professionally beyond my current position.”

“GFOA already has a CPFO program. This seems redundant and unnecessary.”

“I haven't heard anything about this certificate so my responses are uneducated and could be better if I knew how many exams and what the thoughts are so far for this certificate. I think finding creative ways to finance projects, linking finance and planning/economic development programs would be more helpful than some of the basics of budgeting, purchasing and financial reporting.”

“Precise and updated material for the examination.”

“I think this will be a great benefit to our professional community and add to the organization's existing credibility.”

“This is a good idea. I hope you are successful in implementing the program.”

Comments from Q8 (Continued)

Question 8: Any other comments?

"I am very excited if this program is created. I feel that California is unique to the nation and a program focused on California issues, laws, and policies is just what we need. Looking forward to hearing more about it in the future and at the conference."

"Further explanation for Q6. Lower cost daily course would encourage those who are pursuing the certification and those who aren't to participate. Of course, if it includes food, then the price can be \$75."

"I would make this a condition for my replacement, to either have the certification already or to be willing to acquire it within a certain time-frame."

"We need a way to get more people certification! Thank you for the survey, its a great way to start the engagement process!"

"I recently passed two of three CGFM certification exams and taking another one late August. CGFM is sponsored by AGA. Perhaps CSMFO should partner with AGA instead of going on its own. Your certification seems to cover the same topics but the main difference is AGA is federal, State and local. The advantage I see is your certification is CA centric. But would there be enough differences to justify establishment of a separate certification? Elizabeth Lee City of Los Angeles"

"Not sure it really would provide that much more value than the GFOA's CPFO certification. This is an idea whose time has come! I would fully support this program. This should be setup to be difficult and comprehensive. If it is too easy to achieve the certificate, it won't have much value. People should have to dedicate themselves and come away with actual knowledge for it to be a benefit."

"I tried to answer this survey through the eyes of a finance official not so close to retirement as myself!"

Questions?

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CSMFO BOARD REPORT

Date May 24, 2018

FROM: Scott Catlett, Board Member, on behalf of the Certification Program Working Group

SUBJECT: Request for Feedback and Direction on Certification Program Concept

Background:

Several times in the last 10 years, concepts have been discussed for a CSMFO certification program, with ideas ranging from an internally-administered program to a partnership with a university. Various format ideas have also been discussed, ranging from an in-person multi-week program or a program of university courses to an entirely online or written self-study program. This year, the CSMFO President has tasked Board Members with various special projects in an effort to keep the Board members involved in moving CSMFO forward and addressing various elements of the strategic plan. The Certification Program issue was assigned to me for further study with the goal of offering recommendations to the Board as to how to move forward, presuming that the Board wishes to continue to pursue such a program after reviewing and discussing the information contained in this report.

In order to bring together ideas from a variety of members (including several with CPFO certification), I formed a working group comprised of the following individuals to assist in developing this proposal:

- Margaret Moggia, West Basin Municipal Water District and CSMFO President
- Mary Bradley, Retired Finance Director and Past CSMFO President
- Stephen Parker, City of Stanton
- David Persselin, City of Fremont
- Brent Mason, City of San Bernardino
- David Cain, Retired Finance Director
- Dennis Kauffman, City of Roseville

Over the last several months, this group has met a total of four times via conference call to discuss various concepts and refine the proposal that is before the Board today. We are seeking the Board's input on two principal questions:

1. Does the Board wish to move forward with a Certification Program? We feel that we've developed a sufficiently detailed proposal to answer this question.
2. If the answer to the first question is yes, what modifications, if any, would the Board like to see to the proposed program prior to moving forward with development of the curriculum and the infrastructure necessary to administer the program? The Board would be involved multiple times in the future as the concept is further refined, but preliminary thoughts on changes would be very helpful.

We have recognized that moving forward with this effort is a significant task, and there are many unanswered questions and concepts that are not yet fully developed. We felt it best to bring forward to the Board our thoughts to date, to determine if and how we should move forward. At the earliest, we would anticipate that the program will be ready for presentation to the membership at the 2020 Annual Conference.

Program Format

Our working group began its discussions with determining what the program should and should not be. We agreed that CSMFO should not repeat what GFOA already does well with the CPFO program, while recognizing that California government finance is quite complex and there are significant gaps in what California finance officers need to know versus what is covered in the CPFO curriculum. We also looked to other states, and learned that Texas, Florida, and Oregon all have certification programs, while New York and Virginia have significant educational programs that are not structured as certification programs. You can read more about these programs here:

- Texas – <https://gfoat.org/certified-government-finance-officer-cgfo-committee/>
- Florida – http://www.fgfoa.org/Training_Education/cgfo
- Oregon – <http://ogfoa.org/content.php?page=Certification>
- New York – <https://www.nysgfoa.org/training/gfi>
- Virginia – <https://www.vgfoa.org/page/certificate-program>

It is worth noting that both the Texas and Florida program are very successful, with more than 260 and 560 designation holders, respectively. This may give us some indication of how broadly accepted and valued a well-crafted CSMFO certification program could be. Attached to this report is a matrix outlining key elements of these two states' programs, as well as the one offered in Oregon. We have built upon what we've learned from these other programs as a starting point, while adding some unique elements that we feel would benefit our membership. Some general thoughts about program format are as follows:

- Coverage of non-California, general government topics should be included at a high level, but participants should be directed to the CPFO program and other

resources (such as GFOA and CSMFO core courses) should they wish to undertake further study in these areas.

- The program should primarily focus on what is unique to California (described in the following section).
- CPFO certification should not be a prerequisite. Some may find value in the CSMFO program while not seeing value in the CPFO program.
- We believe that there should be two levels of recognition:
 1. Certificate – completion of the curriculum, including in-person and online elements, would entitle a participant to receive a completion certificate.
 2. CGFO Designation – obtaining a certificate, successfully passing an examination (or examinations), and obtaining the required number of experience points (described below) would entitle a finance officer to use the CGFO (Certified Government Finance Officer) designation. Texas and Florida have selected CGFO, but the actual designation could be whatever the Board feels is appropriate.
- Certificate recipients and new designation holders would be recognized at the Annual Conference, in the CSMFO Magazine, and on the CSMFO website.
- Designation holders would be required to maintain certain levels of CPE in the future to remain able to use the designation. The attachment illustrates the CPE requirements in the other states' programs.
- Experience points would be calculated based on education, years working in the industry, participation as a CSMFO volunteer, and participation in the CSMFO One-On-One Coaching Program. This is designed to ensure that designation holders have experience and education in addition to having passed the exam. A certain number of points would be required to receive the designation.
- We believe that a mentoring component to the program has value but did not feel that it should be mandatory. Participants would be encouraged to participate in the One-On-One Coaching Program without this being a requirement of the program. Participants wishing to be paired with a coach would have one assigned and would receive extra experience points for participation. They would also be encouraged to become coaches upon graduation from the program.
- We recommend that the CSMFO staff administer the program in terms of registration, certificates, exams, etc., while the Career Development and Professional Standards Committees would jointly be responsible for the technical aspects of the curriculum maintenance in the future.
- The cost to participate in the program would be designed to generally recover the costs of administration and of any in-person instructors. We recommend that the cost of developing the materials be underwritten by available CSMFO reserves, consistent with other similar special initiatives of the Board recently undertaken.
- Program duration will depend on the final course content but allowing two years for completion (with the possibility of requesting an extension) seems reasonable

unless the Board feels that the program should include significant additional content in non-California-specific topic areas.

Course Content and Instruction Methods

We believe that moving participants through the program in a group has merit. We therefore propose that program participants begin the program in a single “class” each year, which would commence at the Annual Conference and end at the Annual Conference two years following. There would be mandatory in-person sessions (likely on Tuesday) at the conference at the beginning and end of the program to discuss the program, cover certain topics, allow participants to network, debrief on lessons learned, etc. Beyond these two in-person sessions, we have not determined whether additional in-person sessions are needed. We are mindful of the need not to discourage busy professionals with a burdensome number of in-person sessions that may require travel. We therefore anticipate that additional course instruction would be through written self-study materials, supplemented with video elements utilizing technology similar to the Career Development Committee’s new Quick Hits program.

The Working Group has developed the following high-level outline for the program after reviewing the other states’ programs and the CSMFO skills matrix, as well as after identifying some additional topics that we felt should be included.

- Key Concepts in Government Finance (high-level with references to learn more)
 - we would include limited questions on these topics on the exam
 1. Accounting and Financial Reporting
 2. Budgeting, Capital Planning, and Grant Management
 3. Investing, Cash Management, Revenue Collection, and Banking
 4. Debt Administration and Issuance
 5. Payroll and Human Resources
 6. Fiscal Policies
 7. Risk Management
 8. Procurement
 9. Internal Controls
- Ethics for Government Finance Officers
- Revenues and California-Specific Limitations, Propositions, etc.
 1. Overview / Limitations Under State Law
 2. Revenue Fundamentals I & II Core Courses (maybe) or Equivalent
 3. Setting User Fees and Impact Fees in California
 4. Raising New Revenues in California
- Governance and the Role of the Finance Director
 1. Critical Elements of the Finance Director’s Role in Agency Leadership
 2. Brown Act, Public Records Act, etc.

3. Agenda Process
 4. Navigating the Political Landscape
 5. Promoting Financial Transparency
- Other California-Specific Topics
 1. California Government Code Limitations on Investments
 2. SB 90 Mandated Costs
 3. Gann Limit
 4. State Controller's Reports / Compensation Reports, etc.
 5. State Debt Reporting Requirements
 6. Establishing LLMDs, BIDs, CFDs, ADs, and Other Special Districts
 7. Procurement Requirements in California Including the Uniform Cost Accounting Act
 8. Understanding CalPERS Actuarial Reports and Pension Terminology
 9. State Programs and Agencies of Benefit to Finance Officers (e.g. DOF, LAO, CSCDA, etc.)
 10. Types of Consultants of Use to Finance Officers and Their Uses
 11. Miscellaneous Government Code Provisions Impacting Finance Officers

Next Steps

Following feedback from the Board regarding the topics covered in this report, the Working Group proposes issuing an RFP to several people familiar to the CSMFO leadership (additional names are welcome). After receiving responses to that RFP, the Working Group would select a recommended consultant, agree to a proposed fee, and then seek Board approval of a contract and fee amount to proceed with development of the program materials and finalized structure.

Parallel to the RFP process, we also recommend surveying the membership to gauge interest in the proposed program and to seek validation of the proposed program format and content outlined in this report.

Over the next year, the course and exam materials from other states would be evaluated to determine if they can be used for a portion of our program, the program outline would be refined, additional Board feedback would be solicited, and ultimately a final program design and course materials would be developed. Again, we expect this to be a lengthy process and anticipate launching this program no earlier than the 2020 Annual Conference.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the CSMFO Board of Directors:

1. Determine whether this program should move forward, and if so provide feedback as to any modifications that the Board would like to see to the preliminary concept outlined in this report;

2. Concur with the use of reserve funds for the development of this program;
3. Authorize the Certification Working Group to conduct a survey of the membership;
4. Authorize the issuance of an RFP to identify a consultant to further develop the curriculum and program format; and
5. Direct the Certification Working Group to return to the Board as soon as practicable with a recommended consultant, scope, and fee, as well as the results of the survey of the membership.

Attachments:

1. Matrix of Existing State Certification Programs

Attachment 1
Matrix of Key Elements of Existing State Certification Programs

Program Element	Florida	Texas	Oregon
Designation	CGFO	CGFO	OGFOA CPFO
Letters of Recommendation Required	2	None	None
Education required	BS/BA+	BS/BA+	No degree required
Experience required	Relevant degree + 3 recent years or other degree + 5 recent years 20 hours of continuing education	Point system for work experience, GFOAT experience, and degree(s)	Point system for experience and education
Code of Ethics Exam	Yes	No	No
Program Cost	\$50 application + \$30/exam	\$100 application + \$100/exam / \$40/year renewal fee	\$50 application / \$25/2 years renewal fee
CPE	80 hours / 2 years	75 hours / 3 years	65 points / 2 years
Org. Volunteer Activities Eligible for CPE?	Yes	Yes	Yes
How long to pass exam?	3 years	4 years	4 years
Exam materials source	TX GFOA (now 4 th version)	Self-Developed	N/A
Current designation holders	560+	260+	Unknown
Number of exams	5	5	N/A
Exam topics	Accounting & Financial Reporting Municipal Budgeting Treasury Management Debt Administration Financial Administration	Accounting & Financial Reporting Budgeting & Capital Planning Cash Management Debt Management Public Finance	None – they require 3 “core courses” – 3 quarters of accounting, a governmental accounting class, and a finance course. They also require points in five categories achieved through attending continuing education