



GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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Contact: Jeffrey Esser  
Phone: 312/977-9700  
Fax: 312/977-4806  
E-mail: Awards for Excellence@gfoa.org

**GFOA's 2008 AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT FINANCE**

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS--The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) announced the winners of its 2008 Awards for Excellence in Government Finance. The GFOA's most prestigious award recognizes contributions to the practice of government finance exemplifying outstanding financial management. The awards stress practical, documented work that offers leadership to the profession and promotes improved public finance.

The Louisville Award for Innovation in Government Finance is given to governments in recognition of an exceptional accomplishment that introduces a new concept or technique with enduring value to the government finance profession. The last time an entity received a Louisville Award was in 2001.

This year seven jurisdictions are recognized for contributions to the profession of public finance, including one Louisville Award. This year's Awards for Excellence winning entries encompass innovations in areas of budgeting, debt management, e-government, management, and pensions. The winners of the 2008 Awards for Excellence will receive their awards at GFOA's annual conference in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, at the annual business meeting on Tuesday, June 17.

**Louisville Award for Innovation in Government Finance**

**Bank on San Francisco  
City and County of San Francisco, California**

Bank on San Francisco is the first program in the nation to address the needs of unbanked residents. Through a joint effort of the mayor, the treasurer's office, the Federal Reserve Bank, local grass-roots organizations, and the city's financial institutions, more than 10,000 lower-income San Franciscans without banking facilities have connected with financial institutions offering free or low-cost bank accounts. The city convinced area banks to develop starter account products that work for the low-income unbanked market and make financial education more easily available to low-income residents, while at the same time clamping down on the proliferation of check cashers and payday lenders. Bank on San Francisco demonstrates the power of public finance officers to use their influence to effect real change for low-income communities. It offers a new way to devote resources to benefit citizens and redefines what it means to produce a better quality of life for the community. The combination a high-impact/low-cost initiative has led several cities and states to begin replicating the Bank on San Francisco model.

Contact: José Cisneros, Treasurer, City Hall, Room 140, San Francisco, CA 94102 (415/554-4320; fax: 415/554-5507; [josé.cisneros@sfgov.org](mailto:josé.cisneros@sfgov.org))

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203 NORTH LASALLE STREET, SUITE 2700, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60601-1210

**City and County of Denver**  
**Public Stewardship for a City Beautiful**  
Category: Budgeting and Financial Planning

The City and County of Denver established two task forces to address the maintenance of the city's assets. One, the Infrastructure Task Force, assessed the condition of the current infrastructure, developed maintenance standards, and established priority-setting criteria. The finance committee of the other task force, Infrastructure Priorities, developed a capital funding policy to provide a long-term framework for maintaining and improving the city's infrastructure, while providing the ability to fund new infrastructure. The methodologies can provide a roadmap for other cities to use in addressing the intent of GASB 34. The project also developed a process for engaging city officials, civic leaders, and the public in understanding the issues of infrastructure maintenance. As a result, the city obtained voter approval to increase property taxes for capital maintenance and a major capital maintenance bond issue. The City and County of Denver highlighted the need for infrastructure maintenance and the need to include deferred maintenance in the budget process. While this idea is simple in its approach, it is well executed and the process could and should be emulated in other jurisdictions.

*Contact: Edward Scholz, Director of Budget and Management, 201 W. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO, 80202 (720/913-5522; fax: 720/913-5599; Edward.scholz@denvergov.org)*

**City of Scottsdale, Arizona**  
**Debt Management Analysis and Planning Model**  
Category: Capital Finance and Debt Administration

The City of Scottsdale Debt Management Guide and Model provides the city's policy and guidance regarding capital planning and financing, as well as a debt management and planning model, which can be used to monitor existing debt and plan for future debt issues. While many organizations have some type of debt analysis, the debt planning model component in Scottsdale's guide is a dynamic tool using the leverage of "what if" scenarios for decision making. It combines budgetary and financial information with economic and demographic data to create a series of local government indicators to provide consistent evaluation criteria to monitor changes in the city's financial condition and demonstrate the impact of decisions among competing priorities. Using the model's analysis allows management to interpret key trends and strategically plan the city's long-term debt. The process Scottsdale used will hold up over time and customization.

*Contact: Lee Guillory, Finance Manager, 7447 E. Indian School Rd., Ste. 210, Scottsdale, AZ 85251 (480/312-7084; fax: 480/312-7897; lguillory@scottsdaleaz.gov)*

**Johnson County, Kansas, Treasurer's Department**  
**Revenue Recovery Program: Developing a Governmental Collections Unit**  
Category: E-Government and Technology

The Collections Unit program is an innovative concept created to recover revenue, while creating a more successful and economical solution for collecting outstanding account balances. The program was originally created to solve the problem of more than \$2 million in outstanding accounts from utility user charges, delinquent personal property taxes, insufficient fund checks, and expired motor vehicle tags. The treasurer's department spearheaded the project but encompassed help from the wastewater department, legal services, the sheriff's office, the budget director and each department's budget analyst, and the accounting division. By automating systems to handle the manual collection of outstanding accounts, Johnson County was better able to monitor funds, track collection efforts, reconcile accounts, and do financial reporting. The architecture of the sys-

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tem allows departments with varying types of collections to be added. The functionality includes payment processing, balancing, receipting functions, account inquiry, an automatic status change function, and a legal process component. It is used by the sheriff's office, the courts, the division of motor vehicles, legal services, the treasurer's department, and the wastewater department. This is an example of leveraging technological resources; especially with tight budgets facing many governments, this project shows how an entity can meet challenges without spending a lot of money on new technology by leveraging the data and systems already place to obtain the best value out of existing technology.

Contact: Amy Meeker Berg, Chief Deputy Treasurer, 111 S. Cherry St., Ste. 1500, Olathe, KS (913/715-2601; fax: 913/791-5360; amy.meeker@jocogov.org)

**Washington State Transportation Improvement Board  
TIB Dashboard—True Transparency in Government Operations**

Category: Management and Service Delivery

The Washington Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) created a dashboard tool using real-time data, giving transparency to the organization's operations. The project started as a financial bellwether to gather information in one place showing the agency's financial stability and led to more in-depth analysis of the agency's financial position. The dashboard allows the TIB to project future commitments and predict payment schedules accurately. The TIB uses the dashboard to inform, document, and drive management decisions, thereby maintaining the integrity of the agency's finances. The dashboard is a reference point in daily operations as well as strategic decision making. The system was developed in-house on limited resources and has been copied by other agencies by modifying the performance measures that are included in the dashboard. This is an innovative use of metrics and using data to articulate performance enhancements.

Contact: Stevan Gorcester, Executive Director/Rhonda Reinke, Chief Administrative Officer, TIB, PO Box 40901, Olympia, WA 98504 (360/586-1140; fax: 360/586-1165; SteveG@tib.wa.gov or RhondaR@tib.wa.gov)

**Ohio Deferred Compensation  
Ohio Deferred Compensation on Ohio Business Gateway**

Category: Pensions and Benefits

Ohio Deferred Compensation established a strategic initiative to increase security of data and automation of data and contribution payments. Working with the Ohio Business Gateway, Ohio Deferred Compensation automated the process by which it notifies, bills, collects, and reconciles 457 plan contribution payments by employee participants at public-sector employers throughout the State of Ohio. The system uses a cooperative Web portal that interfaces with Ohio Deferred Compensation's internal recordkeeping system. The system reduces/eliminates postage expense, repetitious data entry, mathematical errors, and the potential for overlooking required data that can accompany paper-based systems. It also enhances the protection of participant data to prevent identity theft. The project demonstrates cooperation between jurisdictions; innovative use of technology; cost savings; data security; timely reporting; and improved timing for depositing and investing funds. The creative approach that Ohio Deferred Compensation utilized in leveraging existing technology greatly simplified its practices and will not only decrease workload because files are transmitted electronically, but will improve data security and increase response time, which will ultimately increase participant earnings.

Contact: Keith Overly, Executive Director, Ohio Deferred Compensation, 250 Civic Center Dr., Ste. 350, Columbus, OH 43215-5450 (614/466-7245; fax: 614/728-2601; koverly@opedc.net)

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**Gwinnett County, Georgia**  
**Funding an Eligibility Policy for Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB)**  
Category: Pension and Benefits

Gwinnett County established an OPEB Funding Policy, created an OPEB trust fund with an initial contribution of more than \$15 million, imposed service requirements for new hires, moved to a fixed rate on county contributions, and coordinated benefits with Medicare. A five-person team reviewed numerous plan design scenarios, sought funding sources, and championed state legislation that authorized counties to establish OPEB trust funds. The new irrevocable OPEB trust is managed by the county retirement board. Of the funds associated with OPEB, 100 percent flow through the OPEB trust, including funding to reduce OPEB liability accrued each year for future benefits of active employees. Beginning in 2008, employee health insurance premiums include a component to partially fund the OPEB liability. The project reduced the county unfunded actuarial accrued liability by more than 50 percent (from \$328,159,422 to \$163,210,867) and reduced its annual required contribution by a similar amount (from \$34,103,759 to \$15,305,080). Increases in monthly employee contributions were held to \$5/single and \$10/family. The county projects it will be able to hold retiree contribution rates at the 2007 level for at least five years on its two lower-cost options (a high-deductible health plan and a staff model HMO). Some of the plan's changes included moving from a DB plan with the county paying a percentage of the health insurance premium, to a set DC monthly contribution leaving the retiree to pay the difference in premiums for higher-cost plans; retirees paying full premium for dental and vision; vesting of health benefits after 10 years of service; requiring the retiree to retire directly from the county; decreasing benefit contributions once eligible for Medicare; and no age limit to begin receiving retiree health benefits. This is a comprehensive approach to managing OPEB liability and will likely become the "classic" strategy that many jurisdictions will utilize to resolve their OPEB challenges.

*Contact: Roger Pickens, Director of Risk Management, Gwinnett County, Risk Management, 75 Langley Dr., Lawrenceville, GA 30045 (770/822-7814; fax: 770/822-7775; roger.pickens@gwinnettcounty.com)*

For more information about the GFOA's Awards for Excellence in Government Finance, please visit [www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org); e-mail [AwardsforExcellence@gfoa.org](mailto:AwardsforExcellence@gfoa.org); or call 312/977-9700.

Government Finance Officers Association  
203 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2700  
Chicago, IL 60601-1210  
Phone: 312/977-9700  
Fax; 312/977-4806

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*The Government Finance Officers Association is the major professional association serving the needs of 17,500 appointed and elected local and state-level government officials and other finance practitioners. It provides top-quality publications, training programs, services, and products designed to enhance the skills and performance of those responsible for government finance policy and management. The association is headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, with offices in Washington, D.C.*