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We welcome your questions!
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Jim Phillips
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The Government Finance Officers Association’s (GFOA) Certified Public Finance Officer (CPFO) designation is a self-study certification program designed to prepare individuals for financial leadership positions in state and local government by enhancing fundamental skills and increasing knowledge of best practices and the latest trends in government finance.

How do I achieve the CPFO designation?

To be eligible to take the certification examinations a candidate must:
- Hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution
- Accept and observe the GFOA Code of Professional Ethics.

To receive the CPFO designation a candidate must meet three additional criteria:
- **Current Employment:** Candidates must have a government as their primary employer.* Candidates that are currently unemployed must have had a government as their most recent primary employer and must be actively seeking government employment.
- **Employment History:** Candidates must have had at least three years of experience with a government as their primary employer during the previous ten years.
- **GFOA Membership:** Candidates employed with a government must be active members of the GFOA or be eligible for active membership when they apply for each exam. (Visit www.gfoa.org for membership benefits and to download an application and fee schedule.)
  * Primary employment is defined as a full-time government employee working an average of at least 32 hours a week.

The CPFO program offers certification exams three times a year at sites around the country: Fall, early Spring, and at the GFOA annual conference. Most sites offer both a morning and afternoon session to allow candidates the opportunity to take two exams on the same day if they so choose. To achieve the CPFO designation, a candidate must successfully complete five exams in seven years in the following disciplines:
- governmental accounting, auditing, and financial reporting
- operating and capital budgeting
- debt management
- treasury and investment management
- retirement and benefits, risk management, and procurement

Each exam comprises 175 multiple-choice questions that must be completed in 3-1/2 hours. The passing standard is 75 percent.

Exams are primarily based on a suggested reading list that is included with the Candidate’s Guide.

If you have questions on a specific section, call the GFOA offices at 312.977.9700 or Radford University at 540.831.6734.

Please refer to the Candidate’s Guide and application of exam fees. Visit www.gfoa.org to order the suggested reading materials. The GFOA offers a 50 percent discount on publications for CPFO candidates. The publications are not only helpful in preparing for the CPFO exams, but provide future benefit as well.

Once earned, the CPFO designation is maintained by participating in 30 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) each year or 60 hours over a two-year period.

Did you know?
- The CPFO program was started by GFOA in 1997 to help standardize the core knowledge needed for public finance.
- There are nearly 600 CPFOs in the United States.
- Almost 350 people took the exam in 2014.
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