



GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS

Certificate Program 2025-2026

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UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina



INTRODUCTION

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

The certification program for government finance officers is administered and offered for the Government Finance Officers Association of South Carolina (GFOASC) by the University of South Carolina's [Office of Continuing Education and Conferences](#). Successful completion of all requirements of the program will result in the designation as a Certified Government Finance Officer (CGFO).

The following persons may apply for certification:

- A finance officer for a state, county, municipal or special purpose government, school district, institution of higher education, public authority, planning council or council of government
- A person who holds a supervisory or professional position in a state or local government, public authority, council of government, school district, college or university with administrative responsibility for one or more financial functions (e.g., audit, cash management, investments, budget, accounting, or inventory control).



To qualify for certification, an applicant must:

- Be a member of the GFOASC
- Hold a position as a government finance officer
- Meet minimum education and experience requirements
- Complete the core courses described in this brochure
- Pass five certification exams offered as a part of this program

Actual designation as a CGFO is awarded by the certification committee of the GFOASC. For complete information on the certification program, visit the [GFOASC website](#).

Assistance Award

GFOASC will offer one certification assistance award to a member of GFOASC who enrolls in one or more core courses. Please contact scholarship@gfoasc.org for information.

Questions?

Don't hesitate to contact us so we can help! You can reach us Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. at 803-777-9444 or pep@mailbox.sc.edu.

CORE COURSES

Candidates for certification will complete five core courses and pass five comprehensive examinations. Courses, dates, and fees are listed below. Participants will register for courses and exams separately. Course textbooks are not included.

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Sept. 25, 26, 29 and 30, 2025 • \$450

CAPITAL PLANNING AND FORECASTING

Oct. 9 and 10, 2025 • \$250

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Nov. 5 and 6, 2025 • \$250

GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTING

Jan. 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30, 2026 • \$575

FINANCIAL REPORTING AND AUDITING

March 18, 19 and 20, 2026 • \$350

Registration Information and Deadline

Option 1: Bundle all five courses for \$1,500.

Sept. 1, 2025 is the deadline to take advantage of the discounted rate. However, the program may reach max enrollment prior to the deadline. Exams are not included in bundle.

Option 2: Register for courses and exams individually.

Early registration is highly recommended, however, registration will be open until a class reaches max enrollment. First-time participants will be given priority over individuals wishing to audit the course.

Register online to conveniently secure your spot. Please note your space is not confirmed until payment is received.



**REGISTER
ONLINE**



CORE COURSES

CORE COURSE DETAILS

Attendance Policy

In order to receive credit for completion of the course and a certificate of participation, participants must attend a minimum of 75% of the course. Attendance is closely monitored.

Auditing

Persons who have previously attended a core course and have unexpired test scores may audit the same course on a space-available basis. The fee for auditing is \$75 per course.

Cancellations

Email cancellations received seven or more days before a course begins will receive the course fee less a 20% administrative fee. There will be no refunds issued for cancellations made less than seven days before the course begins. There will be no credits or refunds for class time missed by a participant and refunds will not be given for “no-shows.”

Location and Parking

Classes will be held on the Columbia campus of the University of South Carolina in the Close-Hipp Building (subject to change). General information, including parking, will be sent with an email reminder approximately one week before a course begins.

Times

(Instructor has the authority to adjust the starting/ending times after the first day.)

Check-in: 8:30 – 9 a.m.

Class Sessions: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Lunch (on your own): Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Transfers

With seven days notice, participants may transfer once to a future course within one year of the original program. Transfers are limited to one occurrence per course, after which participants must re-register and pay for their selected course.



CORE COURSES

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Dates

Sept. 25, 26, 29 and 30, 2025

Objectives

This course is designed to provide participants with the opportunity to develop an understanding and working knowledge of:

- The basics of the government budgeting process
- The design of budgeting and accounting structures
- Budget preparation and planning processes
- Current efforts to improve budgeting and to link budgets to plans
- Legislative review and approval of the budget; involvement of legislators and citizens in the process
- Elements of effective budget documents
- Budget execution and interim budget reviews

Faculty

James E. Kirk, former budget director, Georgia Tech

Textbooks or Handouts

- Recommended Budget Practices of the National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting (NACSLB) – published by GFOA and available for download at this website: <http://gfoa.org/services/nacslb>
- “GFOA Best Practices” in Budgeting and Financial Planning – to be furnished for download on first day of class.



CORE COURSES

CAPITAL PLANNING AND FORECASTING

Dates

Oct. 9 and 10, 2025

Objectives

This course is intended to provide participants a basic understanding of the process of planning and budgeting for major capital expenditures. Topics to be covered include the following:

- Basics of capital planning and budgeting: terminology, scope, and rationale for process
- Process for developing a capital improvement plan and for establishing priorities for projects
- Capital financing options and strategies
- State and local government capital planning and financing requirements in South Carolina
- Tax exempt borrowing: options for structuring debt and process leading to sale of debt instruments
- Long-range financial forecasting: determination of how much debt a jurisdiction can afford
- Creative financing options

Faculty

James E. Kirk, former budget director, Georgia Tech

Textbooks or Handouts

- Tax-Exempt Financing: A Primer, Public Finance Network – to be furnished the first day of class for download.
- Rowan Miranda and Ronald Picur, Benchmarking and Measuring Debt Capacity, GFOA – to be furnished the first day of class for download.
- “GFOA Best Practices” in Capital Planning and Debt Management – to be furnished the first day of class for download.



CORE COURSES

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Dates

Nov. 5 and 6, 2025

Objectives

This course is designed to equip students with a working knowledge of:

- A broad range of financial management functions
- Budgets as management tools
- Interim financial reporting and budget management
- Cash management and banking
- Debt/bond administration
- Risk management and insurance
- Cost allocation
- Internal controls

Faculty

Steve Blake, CPA, CFE, CICA, CGMA

Textbooks or Handouts

- The basic textbook for this class is Financial Management for Public, Health, and Not-for-Profit Organizations, 7th Edition. By: Steve Finkler. ISBN 13: 978-1071835333

CORE COURSES

GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTING

Dates

Jan. 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30, 2026

Note

The core courses are designed to challenge government finance professionals. The instructors assume all students have a basic educational background in finance and accounting. Participants in the Governmental Accounting core course who have not had any previous college level courses in accounting have had a difficult time keeping up with the material. We strongly recommend completing an entry-level college accounting course or its equivalent before enrolling in Governmental Accounting.

Objectives

This course is designed to provide participants with the opportunity to develop an understanding and working knowledge of:

- Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) applicable to state and local government
- Fund accounting to record, control and report financial resources
- Budget accounting controls and budget reporting requirements
- Debt and general fixed asset accounting and reporting
- Pending issues that may change state and local government accounting

Faculty

Martin Taylor, CPA

Textbooks or Handouts

- The basic textbook for this course is Governmental and Non-profit Accounting, 11th Edition, 2018, by Freeman and Shoulders. ISBN-9780133799569.



CORE COURSES

FINANCIAL REPORTING AND AUDITING

Dates

March 18, 19 and 20, 2026

Objectives

This course is designed to provide participants with the opportunity to develop an understanding and working knowledge of:

- Basic financial statements
- How to derive government-wide financial statements and required reconciliations
- The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and compliance reporting
- The financial reporting entity
- Auditing standards
- Audit procedures
- The financial statement audit
- The Single Audit

Faculty

Steve Blake, CPA, CFE, CICA, CGMA

Textbooks or Handouts

- The basic textbook for this course is Governmental and Non-profit Accounting, 11th Edition, 2018, by Freeman and Shoulders. ISBN-9780133799569.



CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS

Examinations are graded “blindly” by the course instructors. In other words, the instructors do not know whose exam they are grading. Any examination within five points of a passing grade is automatically reviewed by the instructors grading that examination.

The examinations are challenging and designed to assess mastery of course material. All exams must be successfully completed within three years from the date you take the first exam. You may take an examination up to six times in an attempt to pass. Once you have achieved current passing scores for all five examinations, you may apply for certification.

The examinations are administered online via Blackboard. Students must have a working webcam on the computer/laptop and internet connection to participate in GFOA exams.

Exam Registration Deadline

Participants must register for exams at least seven days prior to the exam.

Cancellations

Email cancellations received seven or more days before an exam begins will receive the exam fee less a 20% administrative fee. There will be no refunds issued for cancellations made less than seven days before the exam begins. There will be no credits or refunds for exams missed by a participant and refunds will not be given for “no-shows.”

Transfers

With seven days notice, participants may transfer once to a future exam within one year of the original program. Transfers are limited to one occurrence per exam, after which time participants must re-register and pay for their selected exam.

Questions?

Please email certification@gfoasc.org for certification questions.

CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS

Participants must register at least seven days prior to the exam. During each online exam session, participants will have the ability to take an exam for each of the five GFOA courses. A member of the professional education team will coordinate with participants individually to schedule an online exam time during the testing period.

Exam I Testing Period

Date: Sept. 29-Oct. 10, 2025

Fee: \$60 per exam

Exam II Testing Period

Date: Nov. 3-14, 2025

Fee: \$60 per exam

Exam III Testing Period

Date: Feb. 2-13, 2026

Fee: \$60 per exam

Exam IV Testing Period

Date: March 23-April 3, 2026

Fee: \$60 per exam



**REGISTER
ONLINE**

FACULTY



Steve Blake, CPA, CFE, CICA, CGMA. Steve is in public practice at his own firm. He received the Bachelor of Science, magna cum laude, in accounting from Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, TN. He is a special review committee member of GFOA – Chicago and is the longest standing active reviewer in South Carolina. Steve served as an adjunct faculty member at Limestone College in Gaffney, SC, where he taught classes in cost accounting.



James E. Kirk, former budget director at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, GA, and former budget director, Business and Finance Division, University of South Carolina. Jim earned a Bachelor of Arts in economics from Vanderbilt University and a Master of Public Administration from George Washington University. Jim was the deputy state director for fiscal management at the South Carolina Department of Social Services and also served as the deputy commissioner for fiscal affairs at the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs. His other government experience includes working as a budget analyst for the Governor's Office, the State Auditor's Office, and Arlington County, VA. Jim was a Research Associate with USC's Bureau of Governmental Research and Service (now the Institute for Public Service and Policy Research) from 1977 to 1980 and is the author of several publications on financial management and administration.



Martin K. Taylor, CPA. Martin is a Certified Public Accountant with over 36 years of experience in governmental accounting, auditing, and treasury management. A 1986 graduate of the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Science in accounting, he has served the citizens of South Carolina in numerous roles at the SC Tax Commission, the Office of the State Auditor, the Department of Health and Human Services, the State BCBD-CIO/SCEIS, the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, and the Office of the State Treasurer. His experiences include extensive auditing, healthcare finance, cost accounting, budgeting, controlling, and treasury management roles. He has been involved in several large financial system development, integration, and deployment projects and has been active in GFOASC since the early 90's. His extensive varied experiences provide him with a unique ability to see many angles to each challenge presented him and to be able to offer helpful assistance to those involved in seeking solutions and answers. His cordial and approachable manner provides him the ability to lead classroom discussions in such a manner that promotes student engagement and keeps all subjects interesting.