

Ten Steps to Better Collaboration Between Finance and Fire

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Introductions

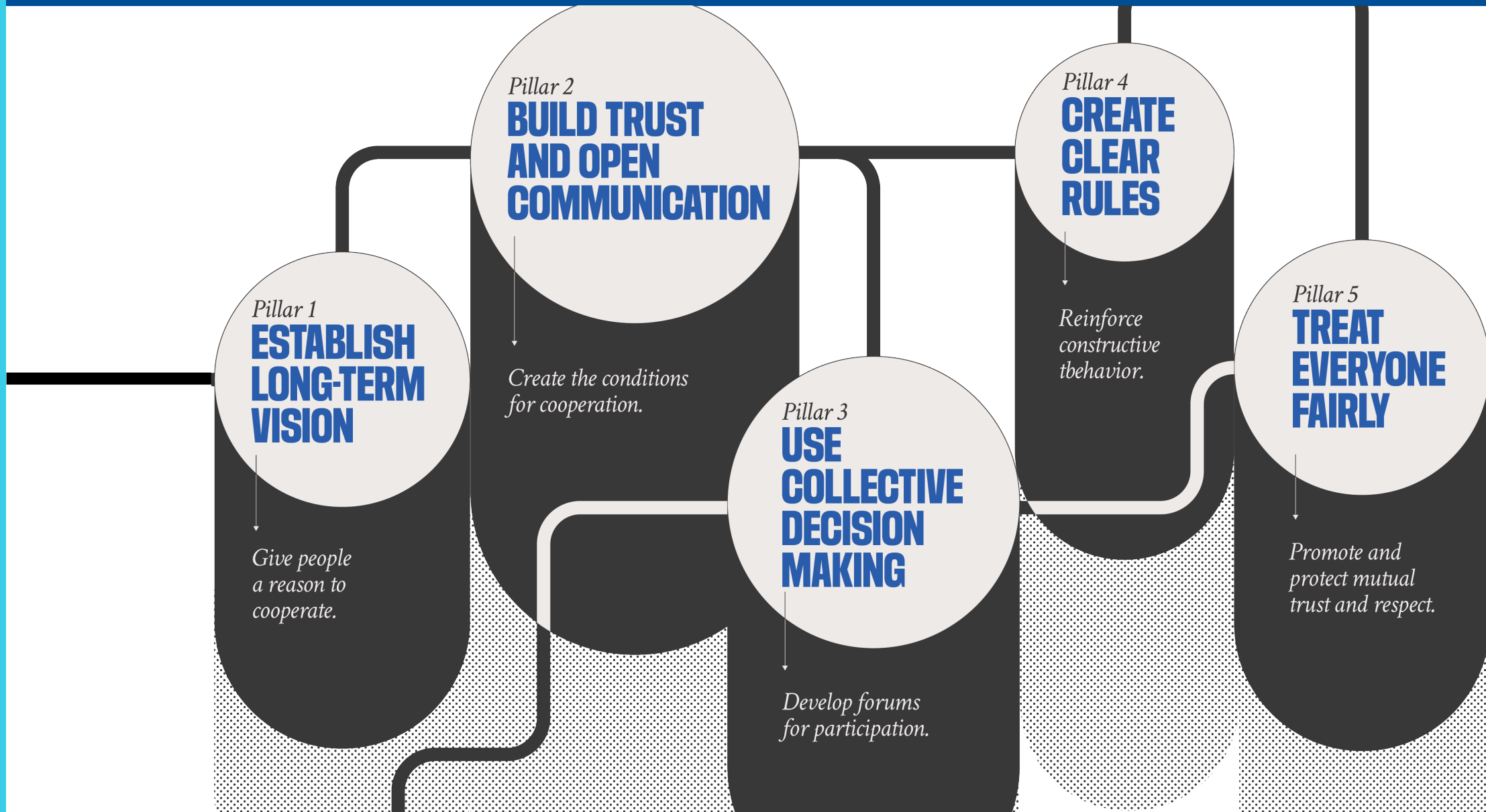


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About the GFOA and IAFC Partnership



Financial Foundations for Thriving Communities



1. Go to lunch...



...or have coffee together without specific work-based tasks in mind. Get to know each other as individuals, which allows you to build a relationship and earn each other's trust, an important precursor to effective collaboration.

2. Get Finance involved early...



...with purchases that are outside the norm. If you need to purchase a new fire engine or fire truck (yes, Finance folks, there is a difference), talk to your Finance colleagues as soon as the need arises. Even better, work with Finance to develop a long-term equipment replacement schedule for all gear and apparatus.

3. Ask questions...



...and do some basic due diligence to learn more about firefighting. Start by learning the difference between a fire engine and a fire truck!

In the simplest terms, an engine holds water and hoses, and a truck is a mobile toolbox that can include large ladders that extend from the truck and don't come off.

4. Express your gratitude...



...and appreciation for each other's work. It demonstrates that you're paying attention and genuinely appreciate each other's contributions.

5. Invite Finance Department staff...



...to get an up-close-and-personal view of your department. Invite them to come out and see new equipment when it arrives. Ask them to go on inspections with you. These efforts will give finance folks a much better understanding of your job and the challenges you face.

6. Build a more collaborative budget process...



...and involve the Fire Department early on. Ask them to provide a representative to participate in any multi-department committee work, opportunities, or initiatives. When a department makes you aware of a concern and wants to work together to develop solutions, embrace the opportunity. Make sure you understand the need and urgency, so you can assist with developing a plan.

7. Hold monthly meetings...



...with members of both departments. Review Fire Department budget reports and performance indicator reports to better understand how the money is being spent and how the community benefits. Also, share information about revenue collections, expenditures, and community priorities across the entire government so the Fire Department staff can see how they fit into the bigger picture.

8. Don't be afraid...



...to ask for advice from Finance staff when needed. If you anticipate a need for additional funding or foresee a decrease in revenue, reach out to Finance right away so they can help develop solutions.

9. Know your fire department's staffing model



Fire suppression, rescue, and emergency medicine are 24/7 jobs, and the Fire Department may need to use more overtime and acting pay than you'd expect. If you really want to see this schedule in action, ask to do an extended ride-along with a fire crew.

10. Be open to questions...



...and finding new ways of doing things. Don't be offended if someone asks questions about processes. Model this behavior at all levels of your department to promote an organizational culture that fosters curiosity, learning, and innovation.

For more information...



- Visit <https://www.gfoa.org/finance-fire-collab>
- Attend the GFOA pre-conference session “Understanding Fire and Finance” on June 7 in Orlando
 - <https://www.gfoa.org/preconference-seminars>
- Attend the GFOA conference session “Staffing and Stations and Trucks, Oh My! Fire Service Basics for Finance Officers” on June 10 at 10:30 a.m. ET
 - <https://www.gfoa.org/sessions/118th-annual-conference-sessions>
- Email: katie.ludwig@gfoa.org or kwedberg@gfoa.org