Ten Steps to Better Collaboration Between Finance and Fire

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Introductions



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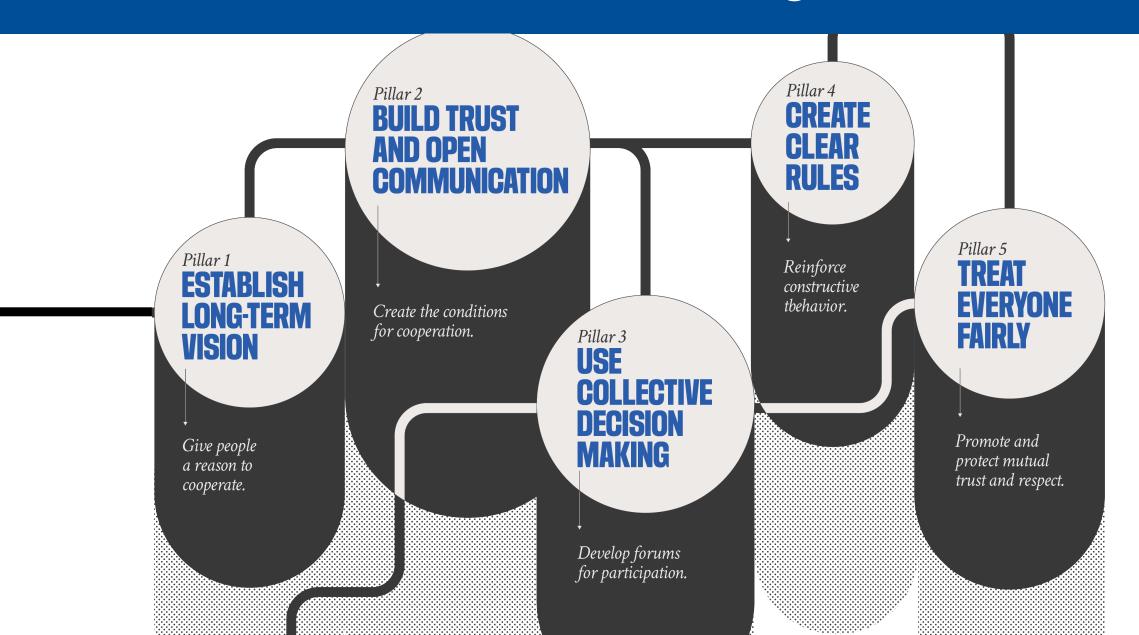
About the GFOA and IAFC Partnership





Financial Foundations for Thriving Communities





1. Go to lunch...



...or have coffee together without specific workbased 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 longterm 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.





FIRE & FINANCE

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE FINANCE/BUDGET DIRECTOR

Use this guide, developed as part of a partnership between Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) to build a better relationship with other leaders from your government.

1. How do we prepare our budget?	NOTES
What is our fiscal year?	
When does the process begin?	
Do we only budget for one year or do we look further into the future?	
How do we plan for major capital expenditures?	
 How should the fire chief be involved in planning and budgeting? 	
2. Can you provide an overview of spending in the last budget period?	
Was spending significantly greater or less than expected in any areas?	
3. What are the most significant sources of revenue for the overall organization?	
How is the fire budget funded?	
What percentage of the entire budget is the fire department budget?	
4. Do we charge fees for any services (EMS, Permits, Inspections, Special Events)?	
What is the billing process?	
How are fees calculated?	
What is this revenue used for?	
 Do we participate in Public Emergency Medical Transportation Program Distribution (PEMT)? 	
5. What is our overtime budget? How is the overtime budget developed?	
6. How many full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) are included in our budget?	
 How many are currently filled? How do we budget for vacancies? 	
 What is the process for requesting additional FTEs? 	
 What is the process for filling vacant positions? 	
7. Does the overall organization have a strategic plan?	
 What is the connection between the strategic plan and the budget? 	
 How does the organization prioritize programs and services when making decisions about budget allocations? 	





FIRE & FINANCE

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE FIRE CHIEF

Use this guide, developed as part of a partnership between Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) to build a better relationship with other leaders from your government.

1.	What services does your department provide?	NOTES
	Fire and Rescue? 1-tier, 2-tier or 3-tier service?	
	 Specialty disciplines? Haz-Mat, Technical Rescue, Confined Space, or Dive Rescue? Do we receive additional funding from the county or state for these services? 	
	Does the department provide any community outreach programs?	
2.	How many locations do you have?	
	Are all facilities owned by our organization?	
	If not, who owns them and what agreements for use are in place?	
3.	Does your department have paid firefighters, volunteer firefighters, or a mix of both?	
4.	How is your department organized? Do you have a specific staffing model?	
	What are the staffing requirements for the apparatuses?	
	Do you have minimum staffing requirements?	
	What is the staffing at each station?	
	 How do you use volunteers as part of the necessary staffing for an apparatus? 	
5.	Are you having any difficulties recruiting new firefighters?	
	What is our employee retention?	
6.	What training is required to become a firefighter?	
	Where do our firefighters receive this training?	
	 How long are recruits in training before they can begin working as firefighters? 	
	 Does your department require or encourage staff to obtain any particular certifications? 	
	What are financial startup costs associated with new employees?	
7.	What performance metrics do you track?	
	How do you collect and verify this data?	

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-conferencesessions
- Email: katie.ludwig@gfoa.org or kwedberg@gfoa.org