

GFOA Alberta Annual Survey Results 2023

The GFOA Alberta Board committed to providing feedback to members regarding our 2023 survey completed in September 2023. As part of that commitment, we are providing information on the results and some insight into what is planned to move forward. Response rate was approximately 19% of our active membership or 162 respondents.

Membership

Approximately 35% of respondents have been members for more than 5 years. 14% responded as having recently joined, the remainder are members for less than 5 years. This represents a shift from previous years where most respondents were members of GFOA Alberta for more than 5 years. Municipalities with populations under 10,000 accounted for 43% of the respondents. Municipalities with populations between 10,000 and 50,000 accounted for 28% of the respondents. Finally municipalities over 50,000 accounted for 29% of the respondents.

Newsletter

Of the respondents, 42% have read our newsletter monthly, and the remainder read them occasionally or less frequently. This result is a slight dip in monthly readership from previous surveys. It is not evident if this dip is a direct result of the increase in the interest we have received on social media. Our marketing/media approach is to use both the newsletter and social media to update members on issues and activities. The comments in the survey were encouraging and centered around continuing to identify emerging issues. We encourage everyone to read the newsletter to keep up on upcoming training sessions and emerging issues.

Communication

Regular email is the predominant method of communication preferred by 58% of respondents. Social media in conjunction with email was preferred by 42% of respondents. Although social media usage was rated moderate to low by 67% of respondents, we will continue to use both methods moving forward. An encouraging sign regarding social media acceptance is that our LinkedIn followers have increased from 630 people last survey to 1053 as of now. The benefit of social media is the ability for users to share, we encourage all our members to share our posts to ensure we reach as many people as possible. LinkedIn has fallen to second most preferred platform behind Facebook with Instagram emerging as a new platform of interest.

Website

The website is visited at least monthly by 39% of respondents. We recognize the importance of the website as our “storefront” and as such continually strive to improve the site. We appreciate that 83% of respondents found the website “friendly” to navigate through. This is a 17% increase from the



previous survey. The comments regarding the website were positive regarding ease of navigation, however many were encouraging us to add more content. We are working with sponsors to provide us content that is relevant to our membership.

Our job posting board provides an opportunity for municipalities and potential employees to connect. Similar to last year, 4% of respondents were not aware of this service. I encourage any office hiring in the upcoming year to take advantage of this service. Our site is open to the public and can be viewed by current municipal employees or candidates looking to enter municipal finance.

Our document library and discussion forum (Discord) have both been relaunched in 2023. The document library has been visited by 78% of the respondents. Policies was once again rated the most beneficial document to have on our website. Policies was closely followed by best practices and bylaws. The Communications Task Force and Professional Development Task Force are working on a strategy to ensure more documents are loaded in the library and kept current. If you have any documents that you are especially proud of please contact us to ensure all members can benefit from them.

Our discussion forum Discord is relatively new which is reflected in only 23% of our respondents accessing the forum. Many of the comments we received were requesting further training on access and use of Discord.

Emerging Issues

Respondents identified grants as an item that requires more coverage in the future. Public accounting standards came in as a close second in popularity for future updates. We are working with Alberta Municipal Affairs regarding grant updates and various sponsors regarding PSA updates. The Professional Development Task Force also has PSAB as a standing item on their agenda to regularly review any new developments from that organization which will then be provided to our membership. Also mentioned in the survey was regular updates from Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Professional Development

The 2023 survey has indicated that 75% of respondents felt we did very well to moderately well. Room for improvement and that's why we are working with our sponsors for webinar content. We hope to have webinar opportunities advertised a minimum of two months in advance and where possible even earlier.

The survey has indicated that live webinars is still the top choice for professional development delivery. Conference and in person delivery methods were the next choices. When asked about the best time for course delivery respondents chose May, June, September and August as the top choices, this is no different than last year. The worst months for training were December, February and March.

Areas of professional development interest to respondents were asset management, policy writing/development, performance measures, strategic financial planning and grants.

New to this survey was a question regarding non-technical training. Respondents indicated that leadership, communicating with nonfinancial stakeholders, project management and grant writing were areas of interest.



Another new question was in regard to locations for in person training sessions. Other than Leduc or Airdrie respondents overwhelmingly selected Red Deer as a location. Other locations mentioned were Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton and Camrose.

The Board thanks all respondents for their time in responding to our survey questionnaire. Although the survey is a significant source of data for GFOA Alberta we encourage anyone that has suggestions to contact Administration at any point throughout the year.