

GFOABC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Financial *Leadership*

Accelerating Local Government Excellence

A cohort-based leadership development program for local government finance professionals. Aligned with the GFOABC Leadership Competency Framework.

3 Days

IN-PERSON
RESIDENTIAL

6 Months

COACHING &
MENTORING

24 CPD

DEVELOPMENT
HOURS

**Summer
2026**

FIRST COHORT

THE CHALLENGE

The Financial Leadership Imperative

Local governments are facing unprecedented, concurrent, and interrelated challenges:

Aging infrastructure	High inflation
Climate change	Pandemic recovery
Community growth	Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples
Cost of living	Rapidly evolving technology
Evolving service expectations	Talent retention

These challenges demand strong leadership from local government finance professionals who sit at the intersection of the many facets of local government service delivery. Finance professionals need to be highly capable of being strategic, thinking holistically, innovating, leading change, developing talent, communicating effectively, and navigating complexity and ambiguity.

“Finance professionals sit at the intersection of every major decision a local government makes — from housing and infrastructure to reconciliation and climate resilience. Building leadership capacity in this role doesn’t just benefit the finance department; it strengthens the entire organization and the community it serves.”

— Kala Harris, Executive Director, GFOABC

GFOABC is leading this program to develop strategic financial leadership capacity across local government. The program is built to empower finance professionals to address today's complex challenges. It is a cohort-based model that delivers an outcomes-focused, high-impact experience, designed to maximize impact on teams and communities.

Tailored streams within the cohort are based on experience and competencies so content stays relevant and builds on itself as the program progresses.

PROGRAM HISTORY

A Decade of Development

Developed over years of research, iteration, and direct member partnership.

FOUNDATION

2016

Advanced Financial Leadership

First leadership-focused programming for GFOABC members.

2019

Next Level Finance Tool

Practical tools introduced for emerging finance leaders.

2021

Leadership Needs Assessment

Member survey identifies critical development gaps.

2022

Leadership Competency Framework Pilot Design & Launch

Cohort-based pilot launched with four local governments to test the framework alongside existing performance management processes.

LAUNCH

2023

SFL Cohort 1 — Pilot Launch

First cohort of 9 participants begins the 10-month program.

2024

SFL Cohort 2

Second cohort builds on lessons from the pilot year.

2025

Program Redesign

Relaunch planning underway — new format and delivery model developed.

2026

Strategic Financial Leadership — Relaunch

New 3-day residential intensive plus 6-month coaching model.

“Local government finance professionals have identified leadership development as a critical need, as the challenges are numerous and complex, and there are currently limited leadership development programs dedicated to local government finance professionals.”

— GFOABC Leadership Needs Assessment, 2021

10

Years of program development

2

Cohorts successfully completed

2026

Redesigned residential format launches

PROGRAM DESIGN

Understanding the Program

Strategic Financial Leadership is a cohort-based, applied leadership development program for local government finance professionals who are eager to advance their leadership competency while expanding their network, advancing an initiative of importance to their community, and positively contributing to others' experience in the program.

The 3-day in-person workshop is the launch pad for a 6-month developmental journey. Each day is approximately 9 hours of structured programming. Meals and breaks are designed as deliberate networking time — informal connections are treated as core curriculum, not ancillary.

<p>DAY 1</p> <h2>Lead From Within</h2> <p><i>Identity, Vision & Strategic Foundations</i></p>	<p>DAY 2</p> <h2>Lead Outward</h2> <p><i>Communication, Collaboration & Current Issues</i></p>	<p>DAY 3</p> <h2>Lead Forward</h2> <p><i>Innovation, Resilience & Personal Commitments</i></p>
<p>Before leaders can navigate complex systems, they must know who they are as leaders. Day 1 grounds participants in self-awareness, the GFOABC Leadership Competency Framework, and the strategic landscape of local government finance.</p>	<p>Attention shifts outward — to councils / boards, communities, Indigenous partners, and the broader public finance ecosystem. Participants develop communication mastery and navigate current issues.</p>	<p>Day 3 activates a forward orientation — building capacity for innovation, navigating change with resilience, and committing to a personal leadership development plan that extends well beyond the workshop.</p>

FOUNDATION

Guiding Principles

<p>1</p> <h3>Applied Learning</h3> <p>Learn through doing — not lectures</p>	<p>2</p> <h3>Service Learning</h3> <p>Be of service to others while you learn</p>	<p>3</p> <h3>Self as Agent</h3> <p>Grow yourself and be the change</p>
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Program Participant Outcomes

What you gain from this program depends on what you bring to it. Through active participation, you can expect to:

Develop Leadership Competencies

- Greater self-awareness of your own leadership strengths and development opportunities
- Greater capacity to navigate complexity
- Greater capacity to effectively solve problems requiring collaboration
- Greater capacity to lead self and others and effect change

Build Relationships

- A broader network and deeper relationships with other local government finance professionals
- A broader network and deeper relationships with business partners and collaborators within your own local government organization

Impact Your Organization & Community

- By the end of the program, participants will have advanced an initiative of their choosing relevant to their own organization that benefits the community
- Time spent engaging in the program directly contributes to the advancement of an initiative or project derived from your existing workload

"Internal and external networks are critical for carrying out any kind of job today. The whole point of having organizations in the first place is to have people with different competencies and expertise come together to pursue something collectively important that they could never achieve on their own."

— Professor Tiziana Casciaro, Rotman School of Management, 2019

24

**Continuing Professional
Development Hours**

Ongoing mentoring credits also available.

PROGRAM ARC

The Full Journey

The 3-day workshop is the launchpad, not the destination. Strategic Financial Leadership is a 6-month program that transforms a powerful in-person experience into lasting growth through structured coaching, mentoring, and peer accountability.

- 1 3-Day In-Person Workshop**
Three days of workshops, keynotes, mentoring triads, case studies, and networking. Participants leave with a 6-month Personal Development Plan and confirmed triad and mentor relationships.
- 2 Post-Workshop Mentoring Cycle — Month 1–6**
Four 1:1 executive coaching sessions. Monthly mentoring triad virtual check-ins. Mid-cycle development plan progress survey. Triad final session and alumni transition.
- 3 Capstone & Alumni — Month 6+**
Capstone presentation delivered at the following year's GFOABC Annual Conference. Repeat competency self-assessment and employer feedback survey. Entry into the SFL alumni network for intergenerational mentoring and ongoing connection.

PEER SUPPORT

The Three-Layer Mentoring Model

LAYER	DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY
1:1 Executive Coaching	Paired with a certified coach for individual leadership development focused on specific growth edges. Uses the GROW coaching model adapted for public finance.	4 sessions over 6 months
Mentoring Triads	Cohort peers grouped in triads (mixed region) for peer mentoring, accountability, and shared problem-solving.	Monthly virtual check-ins (60 min)
Alumni Network	Matched with SFL graduates from prior cohorts for intergenerational connection and knowledge transfer through GFOABC.	Quarterly + annual SFL alumni gathering

Agenda Overview

DAY ONE

Lead From Within

Identity, Vision & Strategic Foundations

1

Before you can advise your council / board well, lead your team through uncertainty, or build the financial plan your community needs — you have to know what kind of leader you are. Day 1 grounds you in self-awareness, the GFOABC Leadership Competency Framework, and the strategic landscape of local government finance.

- **Welcome & Program Orientation**

Meet your cohort and get oriented to the GFOABC Leadership Competency Framework — the shared language for your growth across all three days.

- **Morning Movement & Mindfulness**

Wellbeing is a leadership competency — not an afterthought. We start here intentionally.

- **Keynote Address**

A senior finance professional on what strategic leadership actually looks like when the pressure is real and the council / board is waiting.

- **Leadership Identity & Competency Self-Assessment**

Honest, structured reflection on where you are today — your strengths, your growth edges, and what getting to the next level looks like for you.

- **Strategic Planning in a Shifting Landscape**

Housing mandates, infrastructure deficits, climate pressures, provincial downloads — work through how finance leaders navigate competing priorities without losing sight of long-term financial sustainability.

- **Vision Setting & Strategic Goal Alignment**

Translate strategic insight into a clear vision for your finance function — and share it with your mentoring triad for the first time.

- **Panel — CFO Perspectives on Leading in Complexity**

Unfiltered conversation with experienced local government CFOs on the moments that tested them — and what they learned about stewardship, accountability, and leading through it.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

CONTINUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT

INCLUSIVE COLLABORATION

Lead Outward

Communication, Collaboration & Current Issues

2

Day 2 shifts your attention outward — to councils / boards, communities, Indigenous partners, and the broader public finance ecosystem. The work here is communication mastery, collaborative practice, and honest engagement with the live issues shaping local government finance right now.

- **Mentoring Triad**

Reconnect with your triad, deepen the trust, and enter Day 2 grounded in peer accountability.

- **Financial Storytelling & Council / Board Communication**

Your five-year financial plan is only as good as your council / board's ability to understand it. Build the skills to translate complex financial information into decisions councils / boards can act on — with confidence.

- **Current Issues Roundtables**

Peer-led conversation on the issues that are actually on your desk — development cost charges, housing mandates, capacity pressures, and what's coming next for local government finance.

- **Inclusive Collaboration & Breaking Down Silos**

The best financial plans fail when Finance, Planning, and Engineering aren't aligned. Build the cross-departmental relationships that turn good numbers into good decisions.

- **Ethical Leadership in Public Finance**

Fiduciary responsibility meets political reality. Explore where the duty to give sound advice, serve the public interest, and maintain good governance gets complicated — and how finance leaders hold the line.

- **Media, Public Transparency & Sensitive Communications**

Tax increases, deficits, cost overruns — practice the conversations you can't afford to get wrong, in a room where it's safe to stumble.

- **Mentoring Triad — GROW Coaching Session**

Every triad member takes a turn as coach, sharer, and witness. Bring a real challenge. Leave with clarity and a peer who knows your leadership context.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

HOLISTIC CRITICAL THINKING

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

INCLUSIVE COLLABORATION

Lead Forward

Innovation, Resilience & Personal Commitments

Day 3 looks forward. You'll build your capacity for innovation, develop practical tools for leading through fiscal stress and uncertainty, and leave with a concrete 6-month leadership development plan — not a good intention, but a real commitment.

- **Morning Movement & Mindfulness**

Affirming our wellbeing — before we close out, we take a moment to honour the people doing this work.

- **Innovative Value Creation in Local Government Finance**

Design thinking applied to the problems that don't fit neatly into your financial plan — practical creative problem-solving for real local government finance challenges.

- **Leading Through Uncertainty & Fiscal Stress**

Wildfire recovery, revenue shortfalls, grant program cancellations — when the financial plan meets reality, what does sound financial management actually look like? Build the adaptive leadership tools to find out.

- **Mentoring Triad Session 2 — Development Plans & 6-Month Commitments**

Share your development plan with your triad and coach. Make specific, time-bound commitments — then schedule your first three check-ins before you leave the room.

- **Personalized Leadership Development**

The synthesis session — everything from the past three days comes together into your personal plan for the year ahead.

- **Your Legacy as a Finance Leader**

A closing reflection on what it means to serve your community with prudence, transparency, and genuine public purpose — and what kind of finance leader you want to be remembered as.

- **Commitment Ceremony & Certificate Presentation**

Every participant reads their leadership commitment aloud to the cohort. Not a formality — a public declaration that this work continues.

INNOVATIVE VALUE CREATION

CONTINUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

WHO SHOULD APPLY

Participant Profile

Strategic Financial Leadership is for participants from all types of local governments.

Representation is sought from local governments of all types and geographies.

This program is for local government finance professionals who:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the local government context
- Demonstrate a growth mindset
- Demonstrate a desire to develop themselves and others with the goal of continuously improving service delivery
- Are in a leadership position where they are leading themselves and others (no minimum requirements for the number of direct reports)
- Want to build their network and relationships internally within their organization and externally with other local government finance professionals
- Are willing to invest themselves, and commit to the entire program

QUICK REFERENCE

Program at a Glance

Target Participants	Directors of Finance, CFOs, Deputy Directors, high-potential senior finance managers and finance officers in local governments
Cohort Size	10–15 participants per cohort (optimal for depth of engagement and mentoring triads)
Format	3-day in-person workshop + 6-month structured mentoring program
CPD Credits	24 continuing professional development hours; ongoing mentoring credits available
Prerequisites	Local government finance role or management responsibility

TUITION & REGISTRATION

A Shared Investment

Participation in Strategic Financial Leadership will be a shared investment between participants and GFOABC.

Depending on individual circumstances, financial investment may be shared between participants and their employer, or it may be a personal investment in your development.

RECOMMENDED

EARLY BIRD

\$6,375

plus GST

REGULAR

\$7,100

plus GST

WHAT'S COVERED

What's Included

Included in Tuition — Materials, Accommodation & Meals

- ✓ University of Victoria Session — 3 days (breakfasts, lunches, breaks, dinners)
- ✓ All workshop materials, workbooks, and pre-read packages
- ✓ Competency self-assessment tools
- ✓ Access to GFOABC MemberLINK SFL cohort platform
- ✓ 4 sessions of 1:1 executive coaching over 6 months
- ✓ ICF-certified coaches with public sector experience
- ✓ GROW coaching model tailored to public finance leadership
- ✓ Coaching intake form and goal alignment

⚠ Not Included in Tuition

Travel expenses to and from in-person sessions

GET STARTED

Registration

Registration is now open for the 2026 Strategic Financial Leadership program. Secure your spot in the upcoming cohort and take the next step in your leadership development journey.

[REGISTER NOW](#)