

IGFOA Action Planning 2020

As you know, we traditionally end our IGFOA meetings with an action planning session. Each government is expected to lay out concrete tasks and plans to address both long-standing issues (overdue travel advances comes to mind) or new challenges which were highlighted during our training sessions. We'd like to suggest that you have an "all hands" action planning session in your office. Most of your offices have good action goals from the May 2019 and December 2019 meetings. As a start, you could update those plans.

In addition, during the next 6 months your office will be addressing both new and unresolved challenges, whether or not you have an action plan. By adding those challenges to a written action plan, you and your team will be able to a) give thought to how the problem can be addressed before it becomes too overwhelming and b) measure your progress towards resolution.

Redirect Budgeting focus

While the majority of the IGFOA members are from finance, not budget, finance officers should be and mostly are a critical part of the budget process. Since budgets are severely strained by the loss of tourism in most of the island governments, it is an ideal time to consider which government programs and services are of the highest priority. The GFOA has a couple of sessions: *Incremental Steps to Move Away from Incremental Budgeting and Prioritizing your Values: How to avoid slash and burn in an Economic Downturn*, which focus on how to move away from a simple, non-priority system of simply cutting line items in the budget. Consider adding a goal in your action plan to encourage your budget office (and political leaders) to review these sessions and move towards a priority-based budgeting.

Process Improvement, Technology and Cybersecurity

Most of your finance offices, at least initially, had to move very quickly to remote based operations. Many processes had to change quickly, perhaps without all the normal internal controls. Home based networking, electronic approvals and signatures, document flows using email, became "the new normal". Consider adding action plans which examine what features of the new process are positive and should become permanent changes, which may be open for improvement with better use of technology and/or security and which should not be tried again.

Encumbrance clean up

We picked up on this issue last December and a number of offices have made progress, but how much? Continue working on clearing out old and invalid encumbrances. Add a measure to see how much progress you are making. A simple measure is a ratio of encumbrances to expenditures by fund. Better would be a bar graph which shows encumbrance aging by month or quarter.

Finally, remember that action planning should be exactly as titled—actions. State your goal "Provide regular cybersecurity training to all employees" and then list out actions or tasks which are needed to accomplish that goal. Who is going to develop the training, when and where will it be held, how often, what are the policies needed for internet access, passwords, government documents or files attached to e-mail, etc.

As always, if you would like assistance or a review of your action plan, feel free to contact us.