



**GFOA Policy Statement
Issued March 9, 2021**

**Proper Referencing of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report
– An Inclusivity Concern –**

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline an intentional change in the professional standards and expectations of government finance professionals and their industry affiliates as it relates to the formal and day-to-day discussion of Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports.

Applies To:

- All GFOA members
- All GFOA employees
- Media partners, especially those covering government and financial news and analysis
- The broader national bond management and government finance community

Overview:

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) is asking all industry affiliates to immediately stop using the common four-letter acronym most often associated with the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Instead, GFOA recommends referring to the report by either the full name or by using a shortened format that does not include the four-letter acronym. For instance, the “Annual Report” is advised, the four-letter acronym even pronounced by saying each letter individually is still not advised.

This policy change is the result of a new and evolving industry understanding that the acronym, when pronounced aloud, mimics the pronunciation of a deeply derogatory term often used in other parts of the world but readily recognized among certain populations in the United States as well.

As an organization made up of 21,000 finance professionals that serve diverse communities across the country, and a growing list of important partners around the world, GFOA believes it is the responsibility of all government finance professionals to embrace change that moves us towards becoming more thoughtful, responsible, and inclusive global citizens.

Background:

Recently it came to the attention of GFOA leadership that this four-letter acronym, frequently leveraged in the government financial accounting industry to shorten the name of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, is pronounced the same way as a profoundly offensive racial slur in South Africa. The offensive version of this term is most often associated with the atrocities of the apartheid regime. Separately, a similar pronunciation also has a deeply controversial meaning in Arabic for those who practice Islam.

While GFOA serves governments in the US and Canada, the organization has significant international partners, including in South Africa through the Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit and Risk Officers (CIGFARO).

Much of the research, best practices, and programs that GFOA produces are relevant to, and recognized by, government finance officers around the world. Through the years, GFOA has been a leading partner helping to build financial best practices in South Africa's emerging democracy.

GFOA's leadership team understands that there may always be biases and concerns of which we are unaware, but has determined, with significant member input, that when confronted with new information on how our words or actions may negatively impact a particular group, it is our collective professional responsibility to give that information serious consideration.

While GFOA recognizes that the spellings of the South African slur, the Arabic term, and the acronym are different – as are the contexts in which they are used – the organization has determined that as influential community leaders with a shared commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, there is a responsibility to act. While doing so, GFOA and our partners can demonstrate our values in action, become more inclusive, and create safer spaces for the important work that we conduct.

Timeline: Effective Immediately, no end-date identified

Resources:

[End the Acronym – Fact Sheet](#)
[FAQ Document](#)