



Observations



A monthly publication of the Chicago Chapter, Association of Government Accountants

AGA – Dedicated to serving the community and promoting government accountability

March 2009

Issue 4

Upcoming Events

**Tuesday,
March 10, 2009
8:15 AM**

**Luncheon Speaker:
Sheila Weinberg,
*Truth in Accounting***

Location:
Weber Grill
539 N. State Street
Chicago

Price:
\$10 members
\$15 non-members

1 CPE Credit

RSVP by March 5th

**We need an accurate
head-count;
reservations will be
strictly enforced.
Sorry, no walk-ins
allowed**

Please RSVP to:

Raul.Nieto@ed.gov

Update your member information!

Please review and update your personal information at National's website, www.agacgfm.org. You can update your information in the 'Member's Only' page. This allows us to keep you better informed throughout the year!

Sponsors

Do you know a company looking to sponsor one of our events? It is a great way for them to get their name out to a large distribution list as well as get recognition at our Chapter meetings! For more information, please contact any of the Executive Officers for your Chicago Chapter.



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*Advancing
Government
Accountability*

Association
of Government
Accountants

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February 27, 2009

Dear AGA Chicago Members,

At our last meeting we had another great speaker in Craig Greene. Mr. Greene provided us with some interesting information on how individuals commit fraud. His presentation was based on his experience as a certified fraud examiner and white collar criminologist. Mr. Greene could have provided us with more information than the one hour he was given.

Our next meeting will be held on March 10, 2009 at Weber Grill Restaurant 539 N. State Street, Chicago, IL. This meeting will be a breakfast meeting starting at 8:15 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. The speaker for this meeting is Sheila A. Weinberg, Founder and CEO of the Institute for Truth in Accounting. The meeting will provide 1 hour of CPE for those who attend. In order to arrange for the appropriate room size we will need to determine 5 days in advance of the meeting how many are actually going to attend. Reservations will be cut off by March 5, 2009. If you are interested please send me an e-mail at raul.nieto@ed.gov before close of business March 5, 2009.

If you want to be a board member we still have some positions open. Although we are half way through our program year we still need additional members to be part of our chapter leadership and fill the five vacant Director Positions. The position of "Meetings Director" is still open and critical. The volunteer for that position will be reimbursed 100% of their AGA dues. The four other open positions are Community Service Director, Job Referral Director, Chapter Recognition Director, and Awards Director. Volunteers for each of those positions will be reimbursed 50% of their AGA dues.

Hope to see you at the breakfast meeting. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at 312-730-1634 or raul.nieto@ed.gov.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raul Nieto".

Raul Nieto, CGFM
President



March Breakfast

Please join us for an informative training event featuring:
Sheila Weinberg, Truth in Accounting

Date/ Time:

March 10, 2009

8:15 Check-in

9:00 Speaker Presentation

Location:

Weber Grill Restaurant
539 North State Street
Chicago, IL

CPEs: 1

Cost:

MEMBERS \$10

NON-MEMBERS: \$15

*We need an accurate head-count; reservations will be strictly enforced.
Sorry, no walk-ins allowed.*

Please RSVP to Raul Nieto at 312.730.1634 or raul.nieto@ed.gov
by March 5th to reserve a seat.



Speaker Biography

<http://truthinaccounting.blogs.com/about.html>

Sheila A. Weinberg founded the Institute for Truth in Accounting in 2002. With the Board of Directors, she is responsible for setting the strategic direction for the organization. For the past ten years, Weinberg has been active with the Concord Coalition, a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to maintaining fiscal responsibility within the Federal government, including the financial security of Social Security and Medicare funding. It was her involvement with the Concord Coalition and her accounting background that led to the founding of the Institute for Truth in Accounting. In 1998 Weinberg was honored with the Concord Coalition Outstanding Volunteer Award. She coordinated numerous Concord Coalition educational events, some of which were co-sponsored by members of Congress. She also developed Concord's Midwest college outreach program which brought a program of interactive budget exercises called Principles and Priorities into college classrooms across America.

Currently, Weinberg serves as an independent legislative advisor to members of Congressman for Federal budgeting and accounting issues. Her editorials about the Federal budget, Social Security, Medicare and other national issues have appeared in USA Today, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times and Pioneer Press. She has been a guest on national and local television and radio shows and is often engaged to speak on Federal budget issues. Weinberg earned her Bachelor of Accounting degree from the University of Denver, which she attended on an academic scholarship. She received her certified public accountant credential in 1981.

Save the Date

The AGA Chicago Chapter Professional Development Conference will be held on April 17, 2009. We anticipate to offer 8 CPE hours.

Cost: \$65 for members/ \$95 for non-members

Please reserve your seat today!! Registration deadline is April 5, 2009

Early registration is available!!

If you reserve before March 27, 2009 you can save up to \$15!

Members get a \$15 savings - \$50 per attendee

Non-members get a \$10 savings - \$85 per attendee

AGA 2009 Survey

AGA is sponsoring an online survey to learn members' thoughts about current and future government financial management issues. AGA Corporate Partner Grant Thornton LLP is administering the survey. All responses are anonymous, and the results will be presented at the 2009 PDC in New Orleans.

To encourage responses, AGA will give the chapter with the highest response rate a cash award of \$300; second highest will receive \$200 and third will receive \$100. The award will be based on the number of responses received per chapter divided by the total registered membership of a chapter. Please be sure to enter your chapter's name when you [fill out the survey](#).

Thanks for your help in promoting the survey. If you have any questions about AGA's research initiatives, please contact AGA's Director of Research [Anna Miller](#).

AGA's Blog

Visit the AGA Blog at <http://aga.typepad.com/aga/>.

If you have questions about how to post a comment or subscribe to the feed that sends blog entries straight to your e-mail address, you can [find out more](#). Want to spend a day as our guest on the blog? Contact [Marie Force](#), communications director.



AGA Career Resource Center

<http://aga.careerbank.com/JS/CareerResources/>

Make use of all the great resources the network offers! Get a free career assessment, free magazines or read countless job descriptions to aid you in your job search. From personality tests to helpful articles and videos, we can help you prepare for your job search by giving you the tools you need. Take a look at the career resources our network offers and those that interest you.

CGFM Corner



The Mark of Excellence in Government Financial Management

Interviewing: The Power of Two by Sefton Boyars, CGFM, CPA

Many songs and sayings use the word “two”: *Two for Tea, It Takes Two to Tango*, two’s company, and two heads are better than one. That last saying also applies to conducting interviews.

Often, auditors conduct interviews without a partner. This requires a great deal of multi-tasking. The auditor must ask questions, record answers, repeat questions when receiving inadequate responses, follow-up on indications of problems, and be alert to inappropriate body language. While this is going on, the auditor should indicate that she is paying close attention to what the person is saying (I will assume the auditor is a woman for writing ease). Unfortunately, in practice, the interviewer spends much of the time looking at her notebook recording responses.

When you are looking down at a pad of paper, concentrating on recording what was said, you may find it difficult to consider the content of the answers and to think of unplanned questions. In addition, you may find it almost impossible to be aware of body language. For that reason, I recommend that if possible you have a second person at all interviews. The second person provides a number of advantages.

Accurately recording responses. The auditor who writes down the answers while also conducting the interview may abbreviate the response. If we don’t say anything for 30 seconds while we record what was said, we feel guilty (perhaps justifiably) about wasting the person’s time. As a result, we sometimes shortcut our notes, believing that we will expand them later. But later, we may not recall those points we did not write down.

Following up on inadequate answers. Occasionally, a person doesn’t answer the question asked, but manages to disguise the evasion. People rarely state that they won’t answer a question; they usually just talk around it. The auditor must be alert to word choices and recognize the failure to answer questions.

Of course, if people want to avoid a question, the auditor should be thinking of asking other questions to properly explore the subject. Again, unless the auditor is listening carefully to the responses, she may miss the fact that the person did not answer the question being asked.

Pursuing possible leads. When responding to questions during interviews, people sometimes mention something that warrants further follow-up. However, that something may not be highlighted during the discussion; it may just be noted casually. As a result, if the interviewer is not paying careful attention, she may not notice it. Again, when the auditor is concentrating on recording answers accurately, she may miss the comment.

Watching for body language. When the main interviewer can focus directly on the speaker, she notices hesitations, changes in speaking style, facial expressions, etc. Imagine the question: “How is morale in this organization?” Then imagine the response: “just fine.” Would you perceive that response differently if it were delivered with a nod and a smile, versus a grimace and a rolling of the eyes? If you are looking at your notes when you heard the response, you may have no idea of any nonverbal communication.

Having a second set of eyes and ears. Even if the second person has the responsibility of taking notes, that auditor still hears and sees. Your colleague may very well notice something you missed, or connect the information with some other data with which you are not as familiar. Of course, the second person can also verify what was said in the event of a dispute.

In summary, I recommend that you always try to secure the services of another auditor when you conduct an interview. That second person frees you to concentrate on the real job at hand, asking questions and considering the answers. Even if you are conducting a one-person audit, try to borrow someone to go on interviews with you. You can always promise to repay the favor in the future. I think you will find that the power of two in interviews rewards you far more than the additional costs involved.

Sefton Boyars, CGFM, CPA, CIA, CFS, retired in 1996 from a 35-year career as a government auditor and audit manager. He had been the Regional Inspector General for Audit for the U.S. Department of Education for 16 years at the time of his retirement. He currently teaches continuing education classes for many organizations, including federal, state and local governments, professional associations, the USDA Graduate School, and Management Concepts, Incorporated. He received AGA's National Education and Training Award for 1998.

Sample CGFM Examination Questions Now Available

AGA's website now offers sample CGFM Examination questions. Go to ["What Do Exams Cover" page](#) and click on ["View CGFM Examinations Sample Questions" link](#). Looking for some guidance on the best way to prepare for the examinations? [Here are some tips to help you be more successful](#).

Active CGFMs to be Published on AGA's Website

To recognize the accomplishment of achieving the CGFM designation, AGA plans to publish a list of the active CGFMs on the website. The list will include the CGFM's name, state and AGA chapter (if applicable). Those CGFMs who do NOT want to have their name published as part of this listing should contact AGA's Office of Professional Certification [by e-mail](#) or fax (703.562.0361) by Feb. 28, 2009.

From the National Office

Get LinkedIn to the Network

AGA prides itself on its well-developed network of government financial managers. LinkedIn, a social networking tool, can help AGA members achieve the full potential of the Association's network of professionals. Unlike other opportunities, LinkedIn extends and strengthens your network of trusted contacts. The benefit of registering on LinkedIn and connecting with AGA is to maintain contact with people you know and trust within the field. This technology can also be very useful for chapters. Government agencies, companies and organizations including the Red Cross, AT&T and the U.S. Senate are actively using LinkedIn.

Members can access individuals in the field who are not a part of AGA through LinkedIn's network of 30 million professionals. AGA views the site as a potential way for the Association to bring new members into the fold, including students and new professionals. AGA's Group Page has a discussion tool that we encourage each of you to participate in. Discussions held on the group site serve as a quick and easy way to communicate ideas and gain broader perspectives on topics that interest you.

How to Get Started:

Visit www.linkedin.com and create a profile. After your profile is created, conduct a group search for "AGA." Click on the AGA logo and you will be directed to our invitation site. Start off your group connections and supercharge your networking efforts by going to the [AGA LinkedIn Group Page](#).

2009 Call for Scholarships

Please help us spread the word about AGA's 2009 scholarship program. Are you or a family member pursuing undergraduate or graduate studies in disciplines such as accounting, auditing, budgeting, economics, finance, information technology, public administration, etc.? Consider applying for an AGA national scholarship. Each year, AGA awards:

- Up to four \$3,000 academic scholarships for full-time study to AGA members and their family members.
- One \$1,000 academic scholarship for part-time study to AGA members and their family members.
- One \$3,000 scholarship for community service accomplishments to AGA members and nonmembers.

The deadline for receipt of AGA National scholarship nominations is **March 31, 2009**. [Visit the website](#) for more details and to download an application.

Looking for Training? AGA Comes to You!

Is the difficult economy affecting your ability to effectively and economically train your staff? No travel funds to send your staff to training programs? AGA can help by bringing any of its 19 courses to YOU! The course offerings are in the following fields of study:

- Auditing
- Accounting/Finance
- Management Services
- Ethics
- Communications
- Leadership

Taught at the location of your choice, the courses include lectures, group discussion, exercise and class problem-solving. They can be customized to meet your needs and participants are awarded CPEs based on the length of each course. For course pricing and additional information about course content, please contact [Joe Jozefczyk](#), AGA's director of Education, at 800.AGA.7211, ext. 307, or [Bekka Gehrmann](#), education manager, at ext. 309.

It's Renewal Time!

Annual membership and CGFM renewal packets should be arriving in mailboxes shortly. Members don't have to wait that long, though. You can renew online today. Please encourage your chapter members to use this quick and easy renewal method.

How to Renew Online: Access the [AGA website](#) and click on 'Members Only' on the left palette. Login using your membership ID number and password (your first initial followed by your last name—no spaces), click on the gray 'billing' button above your name. All you have to do is input your credit card information and hit 'submit.' The transaction will automatically process via our secure server and the renewal information will be automatically updated in AGA's in-house membership system. While you are logged into the Members Only section, be sure to take a look at your contact information and make any updates as necessary (especially your e-mail address).

Justice Department Putting New Focus on Combating Corporate Fraud

Ten years ago, a Justice Department official drafted a set of guidelines for prosecuting corporate crime. Little noticed at the time, the strategy ultimately transformed the way prosecutors pursue corrupt businesses--by exhorting them to hire their own investigators and share the results with the government in exchange for leniency in plea deals. The memo's author was Eric H. Holder Jr., who has become the nation's attorney general at the same time that a financial crisis is putting pressure on prosecutors to hold businesses accountable for fraud. Senators from both parties are advocating that more federal resources be devoted to investigating business fraud, pointing out that such prosecutions plunged after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, when more than 2,000 FBI agents were diverted to protect national security. Justice Department and FBI officials committed anew to weeding out fraud in the marketplace, telling lawmakers that they are looking into more than 530 cases of alleged corporate malfeasance. --Carrie Johnson, *The Washington Post*. [Read more.](#)

OMB Requiring 'Snapshots' of Financial Performance

Citizens should expect their federal government to spend their taxpayer dollars effectively and more efficiently each year. For FY08, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) required each of the 24 CFO Act agencies to produce a two-page

snapshot that summarizes its budget, financial and performance results. [View the snapshots.](#)

Federal Accounting Corner

Accounting for Capital Leases in an Appropriated Fund

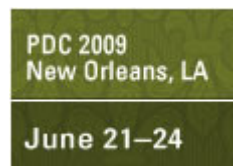
What is a capital lease? A lease provides an asset in exchange for a stream of cash over a number of months or years. If the terms of the lease substantially transfer the risks and benefits of ownership to the lessee (as described in SFFAS No. 5), then it is a capital lease, and the accounting should be the same as if the agency had purchased the asset and took out a loan to fund it. --Simcha Kuritzky, CGFM, CPA. [Read the entire column.](#)

CFO Academy Seeking Faculty

The U.S. Government CFO Academy sponsored by the CFO Council and Department of Defense (DoD) is recruiting applicants for two faculty positions in Government Financial Management and Leadership. The Academy, located at the National Defense University in Washington, provides accredited graduate education for mid-level managers leading to the CFO Leadership Certificate. Please visit usajobs.gov. For more details about the CFO Academy contact Elizabeth McDaniel at 202.685.3884 or Jackie Durkee at 202.685.2169.

Call for National Awards Nominations

AGA's National Awards Committee is now accepting nominations for 13 national awards that recognize the leaders advancing our profession and setting the standards of excellence. These awards will be presented during AGA's 58th Annual Professional Development Conference and Exposition in New Orleans, June 21-24, 2009. In many cases, individuals do not have to be members of AGA to be eligible. All nominations are due by **March 6, 2009**. [See a complete list of available awards and download nomination forms.](#) For more information, contact [Michiyo Wheeler](#).



Registration and Hotel Rooms Now Open for AGA's PDC in New Orleans

Join us in the "Big Easy" **June 21-24, 2009**, for AGA's 58th Annual Professional Development Conference & Exposition (PDC)--*the* premier education and networking event of the year!

At the PDC, you can hear from dynamic speakers, make new contacts, learn about the latest research, discover innovative management techniques and see the technological tools that can aid efficiency and improve effectiveness.

In addition to an excellent technical education program, the PDC is packed with opportunities to network with colleagues from around the country and make new friends. While you're here, please be sure to experience all the music, culture, history and fine dining New Orleans has to offer.

- [Register Online and Save!](#)

- [Download Registration Form](#)

Hotel Accommodations: This year's conference activities will take place at two hotels, the Marriott New Orleans and the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel. For your convenience, both hotels are located on Canal Street and are directly across the street from each other.

We have reserved a block of rooms at the New Orleans Marriott and the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel to accommodate PDC attendees. The AGA room rate is \$120 per night (plus tax) for single and double occupancy. Rates are only guaranteed until **May 29**, *or until the block is sold out*. We encourage you to make your hotel reservations early, for the best price and availability.

To make a reservation, please call your preferred hotel at 800.228.9290 (Marriott) or 888.627.7033 (Sheraton) and mention you are attending the "AGA PDC" to receive the discounted rate.



PDC 2009 Chapter Hotel Scholarships

The 58th Annual Professional Development Conference (PDC) will take place **June 21–24** in New Orleans, LA. This year, conference attendees will be housed in two headquarter hotels. Chapters wishing to participate in the hotel scholarship (two scholarships per chapter) will be housed in the Sheraton New Orleans. The Sheraton is now taking reservations and can be reached at 888.627.7033; be sure to mention that you are attending the “AGA PDC” to receive the discounted rate.

The AGA room rate is \$120 per night (plus tax) for single and double occupancy. Rates are only guaranteed until **May 29**, *or until the block is sold out*. We encourage you to make your hotel reservations early, for the best price and availability. Rooms booked at other hotels will not be covered under the hotel scholarship.

Case Challenge Award Recipients Announced

AGA would like to congratulate **The University of North Carolina at Pembroke** as the top award recipient in AGA's Second Government Finance Case Challenge. The Pembroke team, along with the other finalist, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, made 20-minute presentations at the NLC on designing a Citizen-Centric Report for a fictitious city in North Carolina. Team members **Brenda Eldridge**, **Sean Deruntz** and **Jeremiah Wyler** were chosen by a panel of judges as making an outstanding presentation. They will receive a free one-year membership to AGA, and the team will receive a cash prize.

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| <p>Executive Committee</p> <p>President Raul Nieto ED/OIG 312/ 730-1634 raul.nieto@ed.gov</p> <p>President – Elect Heath Wolfe HUD/OIG 312/353-6236 ext. 2674 wwolfe@hudoig.gov</p> <p>Past President Clemente Torres HHS/OIG 312/ 353-1656 clemente.torres@oig.hhs.gov</p> <p>Secretary Sandy Lawera HHS/OIG 312/ 353-3144 Sandy.Lawera@oig.hhs.gov</p> <p>Treasurer Thomas DiLisio DOL 312/ 596-5454 Dilisio.thomas@dol.gov</p> | <p>Program Director Steve Whitecotton HHS/ OIG 312/353-7886 steve.whitecotton@oig.hhs.gov</p> <p>Meetings Director Vacant</p> <p>Membership Director Janet Knauff RRB/OIG 312/ 751-4683 Janet.Knauff@rrb.gov</p> <p>Newsletter Editor Alexandria Hayden HHS/OIG 312/ 353-3033 Alexandria.Hayden@oig.hhs.gov</p> <p>Historian Aníbal Marrero HHS/OIG 312/ 353-3029 Anibal.marrero@oig.hhs.gov</p> <p>Education Director Frank Moy GSA/OIG 312/ 353-7781, Ext. 112 franklin.moy@gsa.gov</p> | <p>Webmaster Mark Knudson RRB/ OIG 312/751-4764 mark.knudson@rrb.gov</p> <p>Community Service Director Vacant</p> <p>CGFM Raul Nieto ED/OIG 312/ 730-1634 raul.nieto@ed.gov</p> <p>Early Careers Coordinator Jolanta Biskup ED/OIG 312/ 730-1619 Jolanta.biskup@ed.gov</p> <p>Job Referral Vacant</p> <p>Publicity Director Olga Gesell HHS/OIG 312/ 353-7907 Olga.Gesell@oig.hhs.gov</p> |
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Newsletter Information

Observations is the monthly newsletter of the Chicago Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants (AGA). Observations is published six times each year. Subscriptions to Observations may only be obtained by joining AGA. This is the fourth edition of Observations for the **2008-2009** chapter year. To submit material for upcoming issues, contact Alexandria Hayden at 312/353-3033 (phone) or 312/353-3814 (FAX). **The deadline for submissions to upcoming issues is the second Friday of each month. To update delivery information, contact Alexandria Hayden at 312/353-3033.** If you are not receiving the Chicago Chapter Newsletter electronically, please send your current e-mail address to: Alexandria.Hayden@oig.hhs.gov