
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 13, 2026

Contact:

Karen Mills, Director of Strategic Management
North Carolina Government Finance Officers Association (NCGFOA)
919-616-5726
karen.mills@Ncgfoa.org

NCGFOA Honors Outstanding Performance in Local Government Finance with Two Awards

Raleigh, NC — State Treasurer Brad Briner was on hand at the NCGFOA Spring Conference in Pinehurst, North Carolina to join NCGFOA recognize and celebrate the winners and nominees of its inaugural annual Awards of Excellence program. NCGFOA awards honor and elevate exceptional leadership, ethical stewardship, innovation and excellence in local government finance across North Carolina.

Hope Tally, Chief Financial Officer for Central Pines Regional Council has been named the 2026 Outstanding Finance Officer of the Year by the North Carolina Government Finance Officers Association (NCGFOA).

Since joining Central Pines Regional Council just over three years ago, Tally has led a comprehensive modernization of the organization's financial operations. She oversees tens of millions of dollars annually, including approximately \$20 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds administered on behalf of Wake County. Under her leadership, the organization implemented a new enterprise financial system, strengthened internal controls, improved reporting accuracy, and built a high-performing finance team.

In his nomination, Central Pines Regional Council Executive Director Lee Worsley praised Tally's impact:

"She is a consummate professional with unmatched finance knowledge and skills. But she is also compassionate and empathetic, with a unique ability to help people get what they need while maintaining financial compliance and excellence. Hope has built a top-notch staff of finance professionals who emulate the same qualities as their leader."

“Hope Tally exemplifies the highest standards of public finance,” said NCGFOA President Zachary Hewett, President of NCGFOA. “Her leadership reflects technical excellence, integrity, and a deep commitment to serving local governments and citizens across our state.” Hewett continued, “The judging process among eight nominations was extremely difficult. The nominations reflected a deep pool of excellence that deserves recognition, and we can learn from the submissions about what others value in our work. The award for Finance Officer of the Year considered leadership, tangible financial improvements, organizational and community impact and professional collaboration.”

At the same event, NCGFOA presented its second award to the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) for Innovation of the Year. This award recognizes individuals or teams who have successfully implemented innovative financial strategies, technologies, or processes that enhance public sector operations.

- The NCLM launched its Accounting Instruction and Mentorship Program, known as the AIM Program, to support small towns that often lack access to finance-specific resources.
- Led by Sharon Edmundson, NCLM Director of Municipal Finance Programs and Susan McCullen, NCLM Accounting Assistance Consultant, AIM provides one on one, tailored hands-on guidance, catch-up support, and monthly face-to-face mentoring to help local staff build self-reliance and establish strong financial practices.
- 44 governments have participated in the program.

Testaments to the success include representatives from the Towns of Liberty, Bailey and Aurora. Kathy Bond, liberty’s Finance Officer, appreciated the education tailored to small towns and all her questions were treated with respect and validation. The AIM program was a lifeline for Aurora Finance Officer Judi Lannon to help them with audits. The Bailey Town Administrator, Joel Killion, knows he has someone to call which makes all the difference in the world to him.

The AIM Program is just one of seven programs implemented by the NCLM’s Municipal Accounting Services Department in response to the significant financial stresses of small municipalities. It is an innovative program and unlike any other in the United States.

NCGFOA President Zachary Hewett said “Today we are honoring the AIM Program for the deep impact the program has played in our most challenged units. We are extremely proud to work alongside professionals with such sincere commitment to bettering local government finance where it is needed most.”

About the North Carolina Government Finance Officers Association

The North Carolina Government Finance Officers Association is a statewide professional association dedicated to advancing excellence in governmental finance through education, collaboration, and leadership.

About Central Pines Regional Council

Central Pines Regional Council is a council of governments serving local governments across central North Carolina. The organization provides regional planning, technical assistance, and collaborative services to support strong, sustainable communities.

About North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM)

The North Carolina League of Municipalities is a member-driven organization representing the interests of cities and towns in the state. Through their collective efforts, League member cities and towns better serve their residents and improve quality of life.