## SFO® Certification Program Article for Reprinting

#### SFO® Certification: Maintaining High Standards for the Profession

Can anyone walk in off the street and do your job?

Probably not! It requires a specific set of knowledge and skills to do the job you do each and every day. In recognition of that fact, the Certified Administrator of School Finance and Operations® (SFO®) program was designed by and for school business officials.

Whether you are looking for a way to set yourself apart or show your stakeholders that you have the know-how to manage the district’s resources, you should consider SFO certification.

The SFO certification has five components: eligibility, code of conduct, examination, annual renewal, and recertification. To demonstrate eligibility, candidates must submit an application documenting compliance with the following formal education, work experience, and professional conduct requirements:

***Pathway to Certification—Education***

Step 1: Take and pass SFO Exam *Part 1: Accounting.* There are no education prerequisites to take the SFO Exam Part 1.

Step 2: Take and pass SFO Exam *Part 2: School Business Management.* You must meet one of the three options below to take the SFO Exam Part 2.

* Hold a master’s degree in a field related to school business management plus two years of experience as a school business official with overall administrative responsibility for, or administrative experience in, the areas in the exam competencies; or
* Hold a bachelor’s degree plus three years of experience as a school business official with overall administrative responsibility for, or administrative experience in, the areas in the exam competencies; or
* If you are a professional who does not meet the educational requirements, but who believes you are a seasoned practitioner, you can request eligibility through the seasoned practitioner application process.

***Pathway to Certification—Experience***

Depending on education level, you must have at least 24 or 36 months of overall administrative responsibility at a K–12 or community college education system in each of these school business-related areas:

* Managing accounting systems
* Managing accounting functions
* Conducting financial planning and analysis
* Conducting budgeting and reporting activities.

Depending on education level, you must also have at least 24 or 36 months of administrative experience at a K–12 or community college education system in at least three of the following school business-related areas:

* Risk management activities
* School facilities
* Information systems
* Human resource functions
* Ancillary services.

***The SFO Examination***

The exam consists of two parts: *Part: 1 Accounting* and *Part 2: School Business Management*. The exam is multiple-choice (170 questions in total) and is offered as a computer-based test through the Pearson VUE network of testing centers in the United States and Canada. Questions in Part 1 of the exam are geared toward knowledge needed when you first start the job; Part 2 is focused on knowledge you should have when you have been in the position for at least three years. You can view the exam content outline and the rest of the program details on ASBO International’s SFO website at [www.asbointl.org/certification](http://www.asbointl.org/certification).

***Renewal and Recertification***

After you have earned the SFO designation, you will maintain it through annual renewal and a three-year recertification process. Annual renewal includes reviewing and agreeing to the Certification Code of Conduct and paying the annual fee. The three-year recertification includes earning 90 education contact hours; no additional fee is assessed at this time. You can view more details about maintaining the certification in the Candidate Handbook posted on the SFO website at www.asbointl.org/certification.

***The Importance of Certification***

Why is this program so critical for the profession? According to the 2004 study conducted by ASBO, *The State of State Certification for School Business Officials*, 23 states and provinces have no requirements or volunteer credentialing programs available. This certification was created by school business officials like you to provide a way for you to measure yourself against standards for the profession. The SFO program creates an international standard for the profession that can lead to greater visibility, credibility, and opportunity for its practitioners. You have an important job to do – creating a safe and reliable learning environment for students – so why not be recognized for your expertise and achievements?

Here’s what a few of your colleagues have to say:

“I consider my SFO certification as a symbol of professional accomplishment. It demonstrates that I have the knowledge and skills to do my job effectively and demonstrates my commitment to lifelong learning.”  - Janice DeMeuse, SFO, RSBA, Business Manager, Luxemburg Casco School District, Luxemburg, WI

“My SFO certification not only validates that I have the skills and knowledge to be an exemplary school business administrator, it motivates me to continue to grow and learn personally and professionally.”  - Debbie Fry, SFO, Chief Business Officer, Lassen Union High School District, Susanville, CA

“The SFO credential shows that I have the knowledge and skills required to be an effective school business leader, and in this job market, that’s a definite plus.  SFO certification has opened quite a few doors for me professionally.” – Christie Schaefbauer, CPA, SFO, Business Manager, Mandan School District, Mandan, ND

Look for more details about the program and how you can earn the SFO credential. Visit [www.asbointl.org/certification](http://www.asbointl.org/certification) or contact ASBO at certification@asbointl.org

Copyright 2012 ASBO International. Permission to reprint granted by ASBO.