Funkhouser & Associates and the National Academy of Public Administration Announce Joint Initiative Focused on Local Government Planning and Engagement

KANSAS CITY, MO/WASHINGTON, D.C. – Funkhouser & Associates (F&A) and the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) are pleased to announce a joint initiative to support strategic planning and community engagement in local government. At a time when localities are facing operational challenges amid social, economic and environmental uncertainty, this partnership will augment the capacity for governments to respond to this critical moment and become stronger in the process.

“The pandemic strained local government to its limits while exposing the deep-rooted inequities, widening social rifts and undermining trust in institutions,” said F&A President Mark Funkhouser. “But these trends also provide an opportunity to change how governments and people interact to build systems that are more transparent, accountable and equitable. F&A’s recent work in South Bend, IN designing a comprehensive plan roadmap based on hundreds of hours of stakeholder engagement crystalized this idea and process for us and we are thrilled to expand our resources with this new partnership.”

The Academy’s wealth of in-depth research and analysis, along with its large network of expert Fellows, will be marshaled with F&A’s expertise in municipal finance, extensive knowledge of government performance auditing and direct experience working in and with local governments. Together, their resources can provide the support and foundation for local government agencies to better anticipate and respond to community needs and strengthen democracy at the ground level.

"Amid the many shocks of the past few years, local governments have an opportunity to take a fresh look at their strategies to identify new, bold but achievable ideas that make the biggest impact on their residents' lives," said Academy President and CEO Terry Gerton. "We recently helped Baltimore County, MD identify new ideas to meet pressing needs, bring stakeholders together, and prioritize implementation steps. The Academy brings unmatched intergovernmental expertise, and we are excited to combine our efforts with F&A to help local governments plan for the future in an agile way."

In addition to working closely with individual government organizations or jurisdictions on their specific strategic planning goals and needs, this innovative partnership seeks to foster a learning community around strategic planning in local government. For example, local jurisdictions are
tasked with funneling a historic influx of federal dollars into investments that have the potential to generate long-term, inclusive prosperity across communities.

To effectively mobilize and support the changes that are needed, local governments must become more integrated into their community and their region; they must be more focused and coordinated around their mission; and they must empower organizational learning to become more adaptable and anti-fragile.

Rethinking strategic planning is at the core of building local governments’ capacity to operate efficiently and better serve their residents. New approaches should aim to overcome traditionally static and sporadic planning exercises and instead develop more dynamic planning processes that are collaborative, iterative and accept uncertainty.

“Often, a lack of capacity or leadership support prevents localities from implementing these types of meaningful, inclusive strategic planning and community engagement efforts,” said Funkhouser. “This joint strategic planning initiative with F&A and the Academy aims to bring added capacity, expertise and technical support to local governments to create best-in-practice strategic plans that are resident-informed and fiscally sustainable.”

To learn more about how to bring the F&A/Academy team to your community, contact us at https://napawash.org/connect or register for our May 17 webinar, Strategic Planning and Community Engagement in Local Government, with an expert panel of speakers.

**About Funkhouser & Associates**
Funkhouser & Associates is a consulting firm working to advance better local government through capacity-support, innovation and cross-sector collaboration. F&A supports local leaders and their allies to help them make decisions based on evidence, meaningful community engagement and smart fiscal policy and to translate those choices into strategic plans. The firm’s work reflects decades of experience in municipal finance and government performance improvement as well as rigorous policy analysis and community engagement efforts to inform their recommendations. Learn more at www.mayorfunk.com

**About the National Academy of Public Administration**
Chartered by Congress to provide non-partisan expert advice, the Academy is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan organization established in 1967 to assist government leaders in building more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. Learn more at www.napawash.org

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