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Bringing Members Together to Address the Pressing Challenges of Today and Tomorrow

As I speak with public finance officers throughout the United States and Canada, it's clear that our state, provincial, and local governments are facing many challenges. Obstacles related to balanced budgets, additional accounting standards, aging infrastructure, evolving technology, and ongoing pension shortfalls are perennial, but organizations are also grappling with the many issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps the main challenge I'm hearing about is significantly altered workforce expectations. This, combined with our ever-changing political environment and overall perception of local government—and its role in shaping our communities—adds to the stress of being a finance officer while creating a unique environment for change.

I believe GFOA plays an important role in addressing these issues by bringing members together to share ideas, provide diverse perspectives, and ultimately collaborate on strategies and solutions that will become the best practices of tomorrow. At GFOA, we prioritize member engagement, and we are implementing new strategies to connect members and encourage participation in our programs. We are also analyzing data and learning from our past experiences to find better ways to better serve you.

The annual conference is our signature event of the year, bringing together thousands of government finance professionals for a week of educational sessions, networking, and

social events, but equally important ways to engage and participate are still on the way. This fall, GFOA will host several major events that will provide opportunities not only for engagement but, even more importantly, for making contributions to the solutions that will guide the evolution of the public finance profession.

MiniMuni. GFOA's virtual event that highlights debt management best practices and industry trends is back on October 19 to 21, 2022, for the fourth consecutive year. Government entities have used debt to fund public infrastructure for more than 200 years, but regulations are constantly changing. This event provides GFOA members with firsthand knowledge from key leaders in Washington, D.C., and it allows our members to discuss the latest trends, best practices, and what to expect in the future. For more information, visit gfoa.org/minimuni.

Rethinking Public Engagement Summit. This virtual summit, scheduled for November 7 to 10, 2022, will bring together academics, researchers, and other thought leaders in public administration and engagement, along with civic technology experts and local government practitioners, to rethink public engagement. The budget is the most important policy document a local government produces, but we've known for decades that we need to do a better job of meaningfully engaging citizens in the budget process. In recent years, new forces—distrust of experts, loss of faith in institutions, and the politics of cynicism—have



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made it clearer than ever that local governments need to consider public engagement in a new light. The Rethinking Public Engagement Summit is connected to broader GFOA efforts to “rethink budgeting” and to address ways in which local governments can best prioritize and allocate limited funding to get the most for their community. For more information, visit gfoa.org/rethinking-public-engagement-summit.

Alliance for Excellence in School Budgeting Fall Meeting. The Alliance for Excellence in School Budgeting, which is open to all school districts, is an early adopter group of 100-plus organizations that are implementing GFOA's Best Practices in School Budgeting. The alliance—a part of the Smarter School Spending initiative—includes a diverse group of districts from across the United States. Each year since the group first met in 2015, finance and academic leaders from these districts have convened to discuss topics including academic return on investment, equity in school funding, strategic financial plans, cost-saving strategies, and more. This year, the alliance will meet in Chicago on December 1 and 2, 2022, to discuss strategies for improving student achievement and to address the realities of the new environment for public education. For more information and to get involved, visit gfoa.org/smarterschoolspending.

Local Government 2030—Lessons for the Future: A Convening of Practitioners. GFOA is working with 25 professional associations to sponsor a conference of public administration practitioners representing cities, counties, and regional councils across the United States. Delegates representing general administration, finance, public works, utilities, community services, public safety,



economic development, and more will come together November 4 to 6, 2022, at the University of Nebraska Omaha to provide leadership in implementing solutions to what the National Academy of Public Administration called the “Grand Challenges” facing our nation.

Work also continues on GFOA's Rethinking Revenue and Rethinking Budgeting initiatives. Both projects take a fresh look at how public funds are raised, focusing on innovative ideas for retooling local systems to align with modern economic realities and treat citizens more fairly. We are also looking at ways in which governments make decisions about resource allocation, as well as introducing concepts from behavioral science to improve key

elements of the traditional budget process. Information about both projects is available on GFOA's website at gfoa.org/rethinking-revenue and gfoa.org/rethinking-budgeting.

I'm excited about the future of public finance. GFOA members are a diverse group of leaders uniquely qualified to discuss, debate, and develop solutions to the many challenges that state, provincial, and local governments face. GFOA is committed to providing forums for discussion and resources for developing ideas and supporting their implementation. I look forward to working with all of you as we tackle these challenges together.

Sincerely,

Chris