#Stand4Service
HELP US PROTECT AMERICorps FUNDING
Welcome

• As you join, please introduce yourself, your program, and your state in the chat.

• Use the Q&A feature to submit your questions!

• This webinar is being recorded, and the link to the recording and the slides will be shared after.

• Many of the resources referenced today are already available at www.voicesforservice.org/urge-congress-to-invest-in-americorps/

• For any technical issues, please message or email Sarah Aldridge – sarah.aldridge@cityyear.org.
Why You Can and Should Engage Elected Officials

Congress’ most basic function is to translate what the public wants into law.

• Good stewardship of the taxpayer dollar starts with understanding how federal funds are being utilized on the ground.

• **Educating lawmakers is an allowable activity**; it is distinct from lobbying.

• We must explain how AmeriCorps is funding important work in their district.

• We must always remain non-partisan – the champions of AmeriCorps are many and diverse.
Agenda

1. Legislative Update on FY24 Appropriations
2. Messaging & Talking Points Guide
3. Advocacy Overview & Recommended Tactics
4. Wrap Up / Q&A
Legislative Update – FY2024 Appropriations
AmeriCorps Member Living Allowances

We have come a long way, but there is a lot at stake!
Between FY20-FY23 – the minimum **ASN living allowance has increased by 23% ($3,321)** and the **max cost/MSY by 49% ($7,521)**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>ASN Appropriations</th>
<th>Minimum Living Allowance</th>
<th>Maximum Cost Per Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY19</td>
<td>$425.0M</td>
<td>$13,992 (equivalent of $8.23/hour)</td>
<td>$15,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY20</td>
<td>$428.5M</td>
<td>$14,279 (equivalent of $8.40/hour)</td>
<td>$15,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY21</td>
<td>$455.1M + ARPA</td>
<td>$16,000 (equivalent of $9.41/hour)</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY22</td>
<td>$466.7M + ARPA</td>
<td>$16,502 (equivalent of $9.71/hour)</td>
<td>$21,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY23</td>
<td>$557.1M + ARPA</td>
<td>$17,600 (equivalent of $10.35/hour)</td>
<td>$23,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FY25

| White House Goal | $25,500 (equivalent of $15.00/hour) |

AmeriCorps plans to raise the AmeriCorps living allowances in FY24 to the equivalent of $11/hour.

The minimum living allowance for a full-time AmeriCorps State and National member will increase to $18,700 ($1,100 or 6% more than FY23). The VISTA living allowance has increased to $22,880. These raises will create parity between the two programs.

But without increased federal investment, AmeriCorps will be unable to fund the planned increases to the living allowance **AND** maintain corps size and service footprint.
The debt ceiling deal established framework for appropriations.

- Capped discretionary spending for 6 years.
- Congress must pass annual funding bills by Jan 1\textsuperscript{st}, or all spending is cut across the board \textbf{by 1\%}.
- Rescinded $28 billion in “unobligated pandemic relief” and IRS funds, including $70M from AmeriCorps. The agency had planned to use its remaining ARP funds to support approx. 5,000 AmeriCorps members in FY24.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Rescission Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMERICORPS STATE &amp; NATIONAL</td>
<td>$28,329,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICORPS VISTA</td>
<td>$37,712,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICORPS SENIORS (SENIOR SERVICE CORPS)</td>
<td>$3,745,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INNOVATION (VOLUNTEER GENERATION FUND)</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE COMMISSION</td>
<td>$350,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$70,139,349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- At the time, expectations were FY24 funding would be “roughly flat.”
Abandoning the debt limit deal, House majority marked up FY24 spending bills to FY22 level.

- Overall, FY24 Labor-HHS was cut of **$60.3 billion** (29% below FY23 enacted). Eliminated 61 federal programs and cut funding to 54 programs.
- Cuts the **AmeriCorps’ topline in half** ($660.94 million).
  - The lowest funding level for the agency since FY1997 – 26 years ago!
  - Eliminates all funding for new AmeriCorps Education Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>FY23 Enacted</th>
<th>House FY24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Operating</td>
<td>$975.53 million</td>
<td>$593.35 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National Service Trust</td>
<td>$230 million</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CNCS Salaries and Expenses</td>
<td>$99.69 million</td>
<td>$60 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inspector General</td>
<td>$7.595 million</td>
<td>$7.595 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total CNCS</td>
<td>$1.313 billion</td>
<td>$660.94 million</td>
</tr>
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</table>
July – Senate FY24 Labor-HHS Bill

The Senate’s bipartisan process is adhering to the spending cap set by debt limit deal.

- The Senate has cut funding for Labor-HHS accounts by $12 billion, 6% below FY23 enacted

- AmeriCorps agency is funded at $1.263 billion, 4% below FY23 enacted
  - Provides level funding for all the AmeriCorps programs
  - The National Service Trust Fund is reduced by $50 million

- Level funding for AmeriCorps will result in fewer members
  - From 66,900 ASN positions awarded in FY23 to 44,900 in FY24.
  - AmeriCorps VISTA will be reduced by 2,500 positions; no summer associate program in FY24
  - Cut is caused by loss of ARP funds, increase to the living allowance ($11/hr), and other costs impacts
  - AmeriCorps Seniors can be maintained with level funding; but agency will be unable to increase stipends to $4.50 as proposed in President’s budget.

- Includes language that advances parts of the Voices’ AmeriCorps modernization agenda -
  - Paves way to establish a 1,500-hour service term
  - Report language on match requirements, fixed grants, alumni engagement, outreach and recruitment
We are circulating a letter calling on Congress to reject cuts to AmeriCorps and fund at the level needed to maintain corps size and nationwide footprint.

Organizations, associations, coalitions, philanthropies, and businesses are invited to sign-on, but not individual signatories.

Please share with your affiliates and partner organizations!

Sign-on deadline is Friday, Sept. 8.

Questions? Contact Ray at raymond.alqaisi@cityyear.org
Voices for National Service is spearheading meetings in Washington with the members of the Appropriations Committee and the leaders of the National Service Congressional Caucus.
Engaging Lawmakers in DC

These AmeriCorps champions always remind us that they need to hear from more colleagues, and the best way to cultivate a meaningful relationship with a lawmaker and their office starts at home.
Messaging and Talking Points
Research Highlighted the Need to Emphasize Impact

Because many have a superficial understanding of the value of AmeriCorps…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We should:</th>
<th>What resonates:</th>
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</table>
| 1. Ground messages in how programs meet the country’s most immediate and critical needs. | ✓ AmeriCorps members are **deployed on the front lines** of the country’s most pressing challenges.  
   ✓ AmeriCorps is **addressing critical needs** in local communities.  
   ✓ AmeriCorps members are among the **first to respond to natural disasters**.  
   ✓ AmeriCorps provides critical **assistance to veterans**.  
   ✓ AmeriCorps service leads to **increased employability** for members. |
| 2. Always include AmeriCorps’ return on investment. | ✓ **Every $1 Congress puts into AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors returns more than $17** in benefits.  
   ✓ AmeriCorps has been proven to deliver a **greater return on investment** than most other Federal programs. |
| 3. Build and leverage more impact data.         | ✓ **Proof points that demonstrate community needs, program impact and outcomes, and financial stewardship** to validate value and move AmeriCorps up on the agenda. |
If you are speaking to someone unfamiliar with AmeriCorps start with an overview…

- The 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers are embedded in our communities, responding to the country’s most immediate and critical needs and supporting local nonprofit, faith-based, tribal, and community organizations.

- From natural disaster response to providing [services for veterans or those who your organization serves], AmeriCorps powers organizations like [the American Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs, Habitat for Humanity and your organization’s name].

- Through this public-private partnership, every $1 Congress invests in AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors returns more than $17 in benefits to our country.
If you are speaking to someone familiar with AmeriCorps… (or following the messaging on the previous slide), next move to the urgency of funding AmeriCorps.

• Our organization, and many others like us, rely on AmeriCorps members to serve our community every day.

• AmeriCorps is critical to our operations, but legislation moving through Congress would cut funding for the program and could significantly impact our work in this state.

• Because of AmeriCorps, we are able to…

  [OR]

• Without AmeriCorps, we would not be able to…

• It is therefore essential that Congress allocate robust 2024 funding for AmeriCorps in the final version of this legislation.
Ongoing Messaging Support as the Fight Evolves

Here’s the problem:

Congress is debating the fiscal year 2024 budget, and both the House and Senate have drafted sper
AmeriCorps. The House has recommended eliminating all funding for AmeriCorps Education Awarc
by 50% - the lowest levels in nearly three decades. While the Senate is seeking substantially more
what is needed to fund planned increases to the AmeriCorps member living allowances and mantai
country. If Congress doesn’t ultimately provide more funding for AmeriCorps in fiscal year 2024, th
service positions and a reduction in services that AmeriCorps members provide.

It is up to us to convince our lawmakers that funding for AmeriCorps is more than nice, it’s essenti
opportunity to communicate the impact of your service program through direct engagement with y
engagements, newsletters, social media, blog posts and more. It is critical that you proactively empl
AmeriCorps in all messages.

Talking points on AmeriCorps funding (PDF) (updated Augu
Advocacy Strategy and Tactics

Work your way up to high-impact activities

- Host a program site visit
- Meet with your member of Congress or their staff
- Engage local stakeholders to amplify your message
- Raise public awareness with an op-ed or letter to the editor
- Post on social media about AmeriCorps value & the importance of funding
Hosting a Service Site Visit

- Relationship-building, educate federal policymakers and show them the local impact of service first-hand.
- Invite local leaders, your board, and even funders who can speak to AmeriCorps’ impact.
- August recess is a perfect time to host, but site-visits are possible all year long.
- Site visits may not always be with a member of congress; the District/State Director is a great connection to have in a member’s office and will often do site visits.

- Voices’ Resources: Tips for Hosting a Site Visit, Template Request Letter, and Sample Site Visit request
Congressional Meetings – In-District

- High-impact interaction, great for relationship-building.
- Help educate federal policymakers on your local impact, thanks to AmeriCorps!
- Invite local leaders, your board, and even funders to join you.
- During August recess is the perfect time (also, possible throughout the year).

- Voices’ Resources: Tips for Requesting a Meeting, Template Meeting Request Letter, AmeriCorps Advocacy Starts at Home video series on the role of the district office.
Engaging Local Stakeholders

- Your program has a lot of influential stakeholders.
- These respected members of the community can be policy influencers, and if activated, they can validate your work and elevate your message.
- Ask your executive leadership or local champions to sign onto a letter in support of AmeriCorps funding.
- Asset map their relationships with your congressional delegation – identify anyone close enough to make a direct call or send an email to the legislator or senior member of their staff.

Voices’ Resource: Grass-tops Customized Letter Template
Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

An opinion piece or letter to the editor that speaks to a broader audience, and underscores AmeriCorps’ vital importance to the local community, is a great way to get legislators' attention and build public support.

Tips & Tricks:
• Make sure it communicates an opinion
• Grab the reader’s attention at the top
• Use vivid detail & real-life examples
• Once published, amplify it across platforms
• If it isn’t published – post it yourself and amplify it through your owned channels

Voices’ Resources:
➢ Tips for writing an op-ed or letter to the editor
➢ Op-ed Template
➢ Example Op-Ed
➢ Letter to the Editor Template

If you need assistance, reach out to Shanelle at soliver2@cityyear.org. The FGS team is available to provide 1:1 support on writing, editing, publication and amplification.
Social Media

- Use social media to raise awareness of the value of AmeriCorps – and the importance of fully funding AmeriCorps – across your comms channels.

- Where possible, emphasize “Because of AmeriCorps” or “Without AmeriCorps” using data or stories.

- Use the #Stand4Service or tag @Voices4Service – and we will amplify your social media posts.

Voices’ Resources: Social Media Toolkit, Tweet “at” Congress tool, (NEW) 118th Congress Social Media Spreadsheet
SAVE THE DATE 9/14: #BecauseofAmeriCorps Tweetstorm

Coming Soon! #BecauseofAmeriCorps social toolkit with sample tweets and graphics

- Be sure to use #BecauseofAmeriCorps and tag @AmeriCorps in your posts.
- You can tag your Member of Congress to drive home the importance of AmeriCorps in your community.
  - Use our new 118th Congress Social Media spreadsheet to find their handles.
- Toolkit will include options and tips to “Create your own tweet” to highlight the local impact AmeriCorps has in your community.
- Help us promote the upcoming tweetstorm and encourage engagement!
Share Your Efforts. Together, Let’s Build Momentum!

We want to hear from you! Please report back to us about your activity (upcoming and completed). Understanding the full scope of engagement helps us help you and connect the dots, nationally.

Thank you in advance! Please send information to Ray at raymond.alqaisi@cityyear.org.
Working Your Way Up the Advocacy Ladder

• Big Picture: Relationships matter! We are working towards developing meaningful relationships with our lawmakers that will benefit our organizations and AmeriCorps for the long term.

• Whether you have a few minutes or a few hours – everyone can (and needs to) engage!

• Voices has the tools and templates to get you started and keep you active.

• Work your way up the “ladder” of high-impact activity.

- Host a program site visit
- Meet with your member of Congress or their staff
- Engage local stakeholders to amplify your message
- Raise public awareness with an op-ed or letter to the editor
- Post on social media about AmeriCorps value & the importance of funding
Q & A

Please submit your questions in the Q&A box!
Closing