

## FY25 AmeriCorps Messaging

### Key Messages

#### **The Challenge:**

AmeriCorps members provide critical services to communities in need across the nation, from responding to natural disasters and food insecurity to providing support for veterans, seniors, and students, and much more. Yet today, AmeriCorps faces an existential crisis.

Over the past three years, the AmeriCorps agency leveraged \$1 billion in supplemental funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to add AmeriCorps positions and increase AmeriCorps member living allowances. However, ARPA funds are winding down and without additional funds in fiscal year (FY) 2025, AmeriCorps will face a fiscal cliff leading to the elimination of more than 34,000 AmeriCorps and 6,000 AmeriCorps Seniors positions. This will wind back the clock to 1997 – the last time fewer than 50,000 Americans served with AmeriCorps – and will shrink participation by 44%. These cuts will cripple a national service infrastructure built over three decades and dramatically reduce services for people and communities in need.

#### **What's at Stake:**

This fiscal cliff comes at an already challenging time. In FY24, ARPA funds that the agency had planned to use to support tens of thousands of service roles were unexpectedly rescinded. Without those funds, the agency had to decrease the number of AmeriCorps positions available, impacting recruited service members, host organizations, service partners, and communities. The impact of these reductions is just beginning to be felt.

First, AmeriCorps discontinued the successful VISTA Summer Associate program, which would have deployed nearly 2,500 AmeriCorps members to 720 service sites this summer to help alleviate poverty through education, public health programming, and more. Then, in the national competition for AmeriCorps State and National funding, the agency had \$70 million less funds to award compared to last year and were able to grant funding to 50 fewer nonprofit, faith, and community-based organizations to support 7,000 fewer AmeriCorps member positions. This is just the beginning, and we are still assessing the full impact.

In the meantime, state service commissions and the AmeriCorps agency are looking at all the ways to stretch funds to support more service members and mitigate the impact in FY24. **But increased funding is necessary in FY25 to ensure the cuts do not become permanent or deeper.**

#### **The Solution:**

AmeriCorps needs an increase in FY25 appropriations. **An additional \$345 million above the FY24 enacted level will restore AmeriCorps positions to the 2023 levels (more than 75,000 AmeriCorps and 143,000 AmeriCorps Seniors positions) and protect the long overdue strategic investments that were made with the ARPA funds, such as increasing the AmeriCorps living allowance to a minimum of \$11/hour.** This additional investment will ensure communities can count on AmeriCorps for help where it is needed most – at the same level they receive today.

### Talking Points

*The budget and appropriations process is fluid, therefore Voices for National Service will be regularly updating the FY25 Appropriations messaging. Please sign up for action alerts from Voices for National Service or visit [voicesforservice.org](https://voicesforservice.org) to ensure you have the latest information.*

- Communities depend on AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps members are the “people power” that local nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations train and deploy to respond to our country’s most immediate and critical needs.
  - *[Explain how AmeriCorps funding and AmeriCorps members help your organization deliver tangible impact in the state or congressional district.]*
    - Because of AmeriCorps, we are able to ...
    - Without AmeriCorps, we would be unable to ...
  - With the explosion of needs in our community, now is the time to invest in AmeriCorps, not cut it.
- AmeriCorps is one of the federal government’s best investments. Unlike most federal programs, we match AmeriCorps grants with funds from philanthropic and local sources. For every \$1 Congress invests, this public-private partnership returns more than \$17 in community benefits.
- Since 2021, AmeriCorps has had access to \$1 billion in supplemental funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to make long-sought, critical gains. This funding allowed AmeriCorps to put more boots on the ground and raise the living allowance for AmeriCorps members from \$8.40/hour in FY20 to \$11/hour in FY24.
- **However, the ARPA funds have been largely spent or rescinded, leaving the AmeriCorps programs with a \$345 million funding gap in FY25.**
- Since the pandemic, we have seen increasing demand for services. But without an increased investment in FY25, local nonprofits stand to lose the AmeriCorps resources required to continue delivering critical services that benefit millions of Americans and their communities.
  - *[Explain how potential cuts in AmeriCorps positions would affect your organization. Speak to specific programs and community impact that you think may be affected and include data/anecdotes where able.]*  
  
*[Without AmeriCorps funding] or [With less AmeriCorps funding], our organization would not be able to ...]*
- A significant reduction in AmeriCorps’ footprint would destabilize – or close – hundreds of nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations that utilize AmeriCorps members.
- We know that Congress faces challenging budget choices, but cutting AmeriCorps is short-sighted for a program that has a 1:17 return on investment for local communities.
- **To protect AmeriCorps service positions, \$1.5 billion is needed in FY25 for the program operating accounts and the National Service Trust Fund. This is \$345 million above FY24 funding. This additional investment will ensure communities can count on AmeriCorps for help where it is needed most – at the same level they receive today.**
  - The AmeriCorps Operating Accounts include AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC, Foster Grandparents, Senior

- Companions, RSVP, the Volunteer Generation Fund, and State Commission Grants.
- The National Service Trust Fund provides AmeriCorps education awards, a post-service benefit earned at the completion of one's service term that can be used to repay qualified student loans or to pay current educational expenses at eligible colleges and training programs.

## **Detailed Messages**

*These messages provide additional details and policy information related to funding for AmeriCorps. Depending on your audience, they can be used to supplement the talking points above.*

- In fiscal year 2023, the AmeriCorps agency used a combination of annual appropriations and American Rescue Plan Act funds to support more than 75,000 AmeriCorps and 143,000 AmeriCorps Seniors positions.
- The final fiscal year 2024 spending package passed by Congress provided \$1.26 billion for the AmeriCorps agency -- \$50 million less than the agency had available in FY23. The agency increased the AmeriCorps member living allowance to \$11 per hour in FY24, but with constrained funds, the agency projected that they could support approximately **50,000 AmeriCorps service member positions with their FY24 appropriations – a reduction of approximately 30,000 AmeriCorps positions.** To mitigate the impact, state service commissions and the AmeriCorps agency are looking at all the ways they can maximize available resources and fund more positions for one year. **But without additional appropriations in FY25, the agency has projected they can fund approximately 44,500 AmeriCorps positions next year, a 44% reduction from one year ago.**
  - AmeriCorps has not been funded below 50,000 members since 1997. During AmeriCorps' 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year, **we are facing a historic 44% cut in service opportunities. This would rollback AmeriCorps' footprint and contributions 25 years.**
- Congress can reverse these cuts by increasing funds for AmeriCorps in FY25. With an additional \$345 million above the FY24 enacted level, we can protect our current member positions and sustain the \$11/hour minimum living allowance.

## **Possible Q/A**

- How does the Voices for National Service FY25 ask compare to President Biden's FY25 budget request?
  - Voices for National Service is calling for an increase in AmeriCorps funding above President Biden's FY25 budget request.
  - The President's budget, which was \$29 million over FY24 enacted levels, would prioritize increasing the member's living allowance from \$11/hour to \$13/hour and would support approximately 51,000 AmeriCorps members. The President's request would cement a loss of over 30,000 AmeriCorps and 3,500 AmeriCorps

Seniors positions. This significant reduction in AmeriCorps' footprint would destabilize – or close – countless nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations that utilize AmeriCorps members.

- The Voices for National Service ask of \$345 million over FY24 enacted levels is the amount needed to restore the number of funded AmeriCorps slots to 2023 levels and to protect long and overdue strategic investments that were made with the ARPA funds.
- Is your program having trouble filling its AmeriCorps slots? Or ... Why does the agency claim that President Biden's budget request will reduce corps size by only 10,000 positions, not the nearly 34,000 positions projected by Voices for National Service?
  - The agency is comparing the administration's FY25 request to the number of *enrolled* AmeriCorps members serving during the COVID-19 recovery period (2021 and 2022). This was after mandatory social distancing, stay at home orders, and the 'great resignation' – all of which reshaped the way Americans work and participate in service. During this two-year period, AmeriCorps programs faced a decline in applications and enrollment dipped. But interest started to rebound in 2023 and programs are reporting year over year gains in AmeriCorps applications.
  - Voices for National Service has surveyed AmeriCorps programs and found most are on the path back to their pre-pandemic outcomes and demand for AmeriCorps service opportunities has grown by 68% in the last two years.
  - In FY23 – one year ago – the agency awarded funding to support over 75,000 AmeriCorps and 143,000 AmeriCorps Seniors positions. If it must eliminate close to 30,000 service positions this year, tens of thousands of Americans – recruited to serve – will be turned away.
  - The administration and agency's framing unfortunately downplays the full impact that a reduction of AmeriCorps positions will have on communities and the nonprofit sector.