



AREA AGENCY ON AGING

San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM

Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT

Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION

Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

AREA AGENCY ON AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Wednesday May 14, 2025

10 a.m. – 12 Noon

**Hybrid in-person - Zoom Meeting
175 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA**

**Guests can also join via Zoom - *In person seating is limited*
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86490817703>**

**Meeting ID: 864 9081 7703
One tap mobile
+16699006833,,86490817703# US (San Jose)**

**Dial by your location
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86490817703>**

AGENDA

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 10 a.m. | 1. Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions |
| | 2. Additions & Deletions to the Agenda |
| | 3. Receive Announcements from Advisory Council Members |
| | 4. Comments from Members of the Public on <u>Items Not on the Agenda</u> |
| 10:10 | 5. Consent Agenda
Approve minutes of the April 2025 Advisory Council Meeting |

175 Westridge Drive, Watsonville, California 95076 www.seniorscouncil.org
PHONE: AAA – (831) 688-0400 • FG/SCP – (831) 475-0816 • SCOUT – 1-877-373-8297 • FAX: (831) 688-1225

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MONTEREY, SAN BENITO, & SANTA CRUZ COUNTIES & YOUR PRIVATE DONATIONS

- | | | |
|---------|-----|---|
| 10:15 | 6. | Committee Reports
1. Advocacy Committee
2. California Senior Legislature |
| 10:45 | 7. | Service Provider Transitions (2025-29 RFP Results)
1. Impacted Programs
2. Update |
| 11:00 | 8. | Invitations for Bid - Update |
| 11:05 | 9. | Program Reports
1. Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Program
2. Discussion of Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)
3. Project SCOUT |
| 11:45 | 10. | Executive Director's Report
1. Master Plan for Aging & Solutions Summits
2. State & Community Activities |
| 11:55 | 11. | Miscellaneous Correspondence & Other Items |
| 12 Noon | 13. | Adjourn |

Next Meeting:
Wednesday, June 18, 2025
175 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA

Questions, Clarifications or Additional Information:

If you have a question or wish clarification or additional information about any agenda item or attached materials, please telephone Seniors Council Executive Director Clay Kempf at 688-0400 ext. 115 before the meeting. If you get voicemail, please leave a detailed message so that a response can be made.

Distribution of Materials:

If you have information to share with members of the Board, a table or other suitable space will be provided on which you may make it available. It is the wish of the Executive Committee that meetings not be disrupted by distribution of paperwork or other items.

Accessibility:

This organization attempts to make meeting content understandable in languages other than English. All Meeting rooms are accessible for people with disabilities. If you wish to discuss reasonable modifications or accommodations for language or disability, please contact the Seniors Council office at 688-0400 at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Seniors Council Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Seniors Council to enable older persons to function with independence and dignity in their homes and in the community to their fullest capacity.

Area Agency on Aging Mission

To provide leadership in addressing issues that relate to older Californians; to develop community-based systems of care that provide services which support independence within California's interdependent society, and which protect the quality of life of older persons and persons with functional impairment; and to promote citizen involvement in the planning and delivery of services.



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Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

AREA AGENCY ON AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL
(Held in person at Watsonville office with hybrid Zoom broadcast)

April 16, 2025

MINUTES

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Gabriela Trigueiro (City of Santa Cruz)
Steve Clark (City of Scotts Valley)
Angela Curro (San Benito County Board of Supervisors)
Mindy Sotelo (San Benito County Board of Supervisors)
Mark Johannessen (At-large, Seniors Commission)
Stephanie Auld (At-large, Persons with Disabilities)
Jimmy Dutra (City of Watsonville)

ALTERNATES PRESENT:

Sandy Brown (alternate J. Cummings)

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Kimberly De Serpa (Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors)
Justin Cummings (Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors)
Gerry Jensen (City of Capitola)
Roxanne Stephens (Mayor, City of Hollister)
Scott Freels (City of San Juan Bautista)

VACANCIES: CSL Rep.; At Large Rep.

STAFF PRESENT:

Clay Kempf, Seniors Council Executive Director; Zach Johnson, Seniors Council Administrative Services Officer; Britt Bassoni, Special Projects Director, Corey Shaffer, Community Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jacque Bertrand, Regina Kelbert, Antonio Rivas

1. Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Gabriela Trigueiro called the meeting to order at 10:08AM.

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Receive Announcements from Advisory Council Members

Steve announced community grants reallocated to help offset Meals on Wheels cuts.

4. Comments from Members of the Public on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

5. Consent Agenda

Advisory Council members were referred to Pages 5-1 to 5-3, minutes of the March AAA Advisory Council meeting.

MOTION, Clark/Curro, to approve the minutes of the March 2025 AAA Advisory Council meeting.

PASSED. Gabriela abstains.

6. Public Hearing: 2024-28 Area Plan Update

Clay described four-year cycle of Area Plan, with dynamic updates each year to match needs and circumstances. Praised Patty's role in writing AP and noted positive feedback Pointed to summary in packet; goals starting on 6-7. Discussed Goals in packet and role of AAA in leadership for senior needs advocacy.

Mark asked about Project SCOUT re: cuts, Clay explained program is thriving and has new coordinator (less IRS support).

ADRC is requesting new money to expand, although unlikely. Britt said that ADRC programs are targeting service support enhancements (e.g. warm transfers, application assistance, etc.).

Stephanie asked about coordination with UCSC ADRC in terms of disability services; Clay said minimal contact, and would like to develop Santa Cruz County ADRC as well. Britt said Senior Network Services provides some similar services although limited funding for development.

Advantage of ADRC model is overlap of resources for seniors and people with disabilities, plus continuum between two groups.

Stephanie also asked about 211, which plans to expand into Enhanced Care Management (ECM), and what support Seniors Council can offer. Clay said our role has been to support SNS and CCCIL by providing their resource databases. Also said challenge of 211 is non-local call center supports, leading to 80% of seniors preferring SNS over 211 for assistance. Clay pointed to difference in available funding and resources vs. Orange County. Angela added that rural counties face this challenge in all aspects of service. Britt noted conflict between scaling up and desire for local service response. Mindy said that 211 needs updates from service providers to stay accurate. Mark suggested requiring funded agencies to update their 211 listing.

Discussion of Age-Friendly Community based on AARP Livability Index data. Stephanie noted that 30-40% of seniors have non-familial caregivers; Clay said that our programs support caregivers, including those who are not paid at all. OAA program eligibility starts at 60 (or caring for someone over 60). Breakdown of categories on 6-15.

Full plan will be submitted to CDA along with any comments/revisions, will be posted on website after CDA approves.

Jacques asked if part of caregiver program address needs of CG after their care recipient passes; Clay said its not part of required categories but a real need.

MOTION, Clark/Johannessen, to approve summary report including updated goals and objectives, and the estimated funding and service units. **PASSED.** The group expressed their appreciation for Patty's work on the update and in general.

7. Committee Reports

1. Advocacy Committee – Clay suggested a state senior center bond act. Mindy said more service locations would be helpful.

2. California Senior Legislature – Antonio reported on March in-service. May and July will review submitted proposals, then September CSL will vote on top 10 proposals. Discussed process of assessing needs in community and how proposals are developed.

Jimmy asked about investment in senior services from other cities; Sandy said Santa Cruz no longer provides that funding. Angela said San Benito has committed funds with cost-of-living-adjustments but that is threatened by potential Board action. Steve said Scotts Valley P&R funds senior center. Clay pointed to CORE improvement recommendations from previous

meetings.

Watsonville Senior Prom will be held in October!

Mark brought up SB 239, which would adjust Brown Act requirements to facilitate video meetings.

8. AAA Request for Proposals 2025-29

1. Background – discussed at length at last meeting. Board made preliminary recommendation matching AC endorsement.
2. Update – no protests or appeals received. Clay recapped funding allocations.
3. Advisory Council Action – **MOTION, Brown/Clark**, approval of final recommendation as per last meeting. **PASSED**.

9. Invitations for Bid

Clay summarized Patty's work. Residential repairs and minor modifications to homes; addressing mental health.

10. Executive Director's Report

1. MPA & Solutions Summits – not discussed, included in packet
2. State & Community Activities – Monitoring and audits recently completed with no findings or recommendations. Audit report on 10-3 in packet.
Clay reported on ongoing situation with Jovenes de Antaño (JdA). Mark asked if Seniors Council has any exposure; Clay said no and funds being withheld at this point.
Trying to support new funding for Ombudsman, sourced from penalties assessed on nursing homes.
C4A attempting to strengthen ties between AAAs and service providers.

11. Program Reports

1. Discussion of ADRC – concern about current model (partnership with CCCIL, SC, and JdA). JdA has seen a lot of staff turnover in various forms, which impacts ability to provide service. Question about whether the services being paid for are being provided due to staff shortages, which is also complicating planning for the program. Also concerns about whether we can provide enough Spanish language assistance. Possibility of hiring ex-JdA staff to provide continuity, TBD. City of Hollister determining occupancy but will begin charging a fee. General discussion of relationship with JdA going forward.
2. Project SCOUT –
3. Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Program –

12. Miscellaneous Correspondence, Other Items

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 PM

Next Meeting: Wednesday May 14, 2025

Minutes prepared by: Zachary Johnson



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PROJECT SCOUT
Tax Counseling Assistance

FALLS PREVENTION PROGRAM
Emergency Response Systems, Assessments & Training

Date: 5-9-25

To: Seniors Council Board of Directors

From: Clay Kempf, Executive Director

RE: May Advocacy Committee Report

The May Advocacy Committee meeting date is Monday, May 12. However, as an organization, we are in the midst of a number of external threats calling for action and advocacy on various levels. Those are reported here.

DOGE ACTIONS

The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has taken several actions in recent weeks that directly affect our agency. These including the gutting of Americorps staff, reducing the agency by 80-85% of the previous workforce, and dismantling the Administration for Community Living (ACL) completely. Americorps is the oversight agency of our Foster Grandparent Program, and our Senior Companion Program. ACL oversees Aging & Disability programs under one roof; recognizing the close relationship between serving both populations, and that they're often one and the same.

Our Americorps/Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Programs are awarded in three-year blocks of single-year, renewable contracts. Our current grant cycle runs from July 1-June 30th each year, and is approved for 2023-24, 2024-25, and 2025-26. Award renewals typically take place late in the middle year or early in the final year of the cycle. Our proposal for 2026-27, 2027-28, and 2028-29 has been submitted, and, unofficially, is pending approval. HOWEVER, the DOGE reduction of the Americorps staff has delayed this process, and left potential applicants, including ourselves, in the dark.

Meanwhile, the ACL responsibilities have been split into parts of three different departments. Instead of a single agency, ACL's responsibilities were transferred to other Health and Human Services (HHS) offices, including the [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#), [Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation \(ASPE\)](#), and the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#).

Adding insult to injury in this reorganization different titles of the Older Americans Act have been assigned to different organizations, including Title IIIB (Supportive Services) not being in the same agency as Title IIIC (Senior Nutrition) - even though the Older Americans Act allows for funds to be transferred from IIIB to IIIC, and vice versa. How that will be facilitated in the coming year is anyone's guess. And, here at PSA-13, we make such transfers every year.

ACL is also responsible for providing oversight of State Units on Aging, including CDA. This function includes approval (or denial) of changes in the state's funding formula that is used for determining how federal dollars are distributed to the various AAAs within that state. This is part of why C4A is recommending that CDA NOT update its funding formulas, or other aspects of SB 1249, until the federal mess can be unraveled.

Much like the Americorps staff, widespread layoffs and furloughs have occurred with ACL staff. Some of them have been brought back to attempt to unravel the mess that now exists, but under orders to NOT discuss actions being taken internally.

2024-2025 FEDERAL BUDGET

A (October 1- September 30) Federal Budget for 2024-25 has never been passed. We are operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) for this entire year. I've attached a memo that we sent to our contracted service providers explaining some of the impacts and mitigations CR cause locally.

2025-26 FEDERAL BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Trump 2025-26 Proposed Federal Budget was released last week, and it includes the following information that directly impacts our operations:

Elimination of SHIP/HICAP funding	~\$85,000 locally
Elimination of Title VII Ombudsman Funding	~\$37,500 locally
Elimination of Americorps	
Foster Grandparent Program	~\$925,000 locally
Senior Companion Program	~\$180,000 locally

Budget justification for these cuts to Americorps is lumped with more than a dozen other programs and is stated as being part of the President's efforts to decrease the size of the Federal Government to enhance accountability, reduce waste, and reduce unnecessary governmental entities. Remaining funds account for costs of orderly shutdowns.

FGP/SCP Program Director Cristina Bañuelos and I are trying to get the word out about these cuts, and are advising supporters to reach out to the White House and our federal representatives to share the importance of these programs. We're trying to get some press coverage (thank you Lookout Santa Cruz!) of the situation, and working with local and state allies on many levels to counter the current direction.

6.1-2

NATIONAL THREATS TO SERVICE

The challenges of President Trump's Executive Orders to eliminate DEI program funding continues to loom large. Additional threats to programs such as Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare remain, with rumored action and non-action changing on a weekly basis, if not more often.



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DATE: May 9, 2025

TO: AAA Advisory Council
Seniors Council Board

FROM: Patty Talbott, AAA Administrator

RE: UPDATES

Invitation for Bids

Due to an especially busy month, the release of the Invitations for Bid was delayed. I will be preparing them and updating the calendar for approval at the June meeting.

Area Plan

Also due to the high volume of activity and the delay of Area Plan Guidance from CDA, the full Area Plan is still being finalized. The final full version will be posted to our website when its complete.

8-1

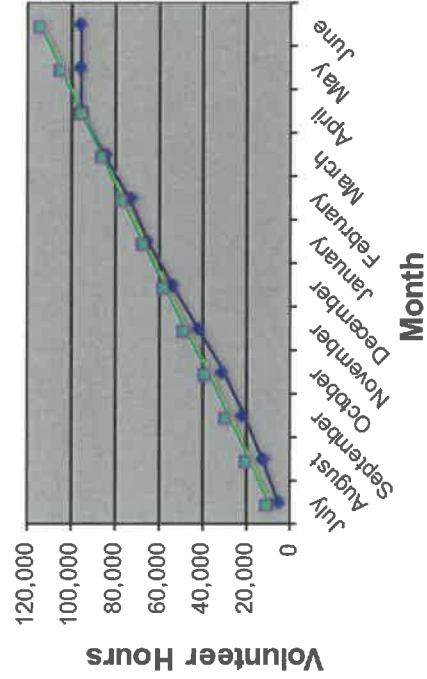
Project Name: Seniors Council Foster Grandparent Program

Grant Year: 7/1/24- 6/30/25

Month	Cumulative		Monthly		Monthly		Monthly		Monthly		Annual	
	Hours	Goal	Actual	VS	VS	Goal	Actual	Hours	VS	Active	FY 23-24 Actuals	VS
July	5,316	9,483		5.09	9.08	9.08	5,316	124	109	109	4,976	109
August	12,312	18,966		6.70	9.08	9.08	6,996	120	109	109	5,585	109
September	21,105	28,449		8.42	9.08	9.08	8,793	118	109	109	6,893	109
October	30,551	37,932		9.05	9.08	9.08	9,446	116	109	109	7,363	109
November	41,496	47,415		10.48	9.08	9.08	10,945	115	109	109	10,355	109
December	53,761	56,898		11.75	9.08	9.08	12,266	116	109	109	12,862	109
January	64,540	66,381		10.32	9.08	9.08	10,779	117	109	109	10,827	109
February	72,560	75,864		7.68	9.08	9.08	8,020	120	109	109	7,179	109
March	83,951	85,347		10.91	9.08	9.08	11,392	120	109	109	10,382	109
April	95,330	94,830		10.90	9.08	9.08	11,379	121	109	109	10,621	109
May	95,330	104,313		0.00	9.08	9.08			109	109	8,487	109
June	95,330	113,796		0.00	9.08	9.08			109	109	5,739	109
TOTAL				91.31			95,330				101,267	

Total VSYS
Achieved

VSYS Actual to Target (Cumulative)



9.1-2

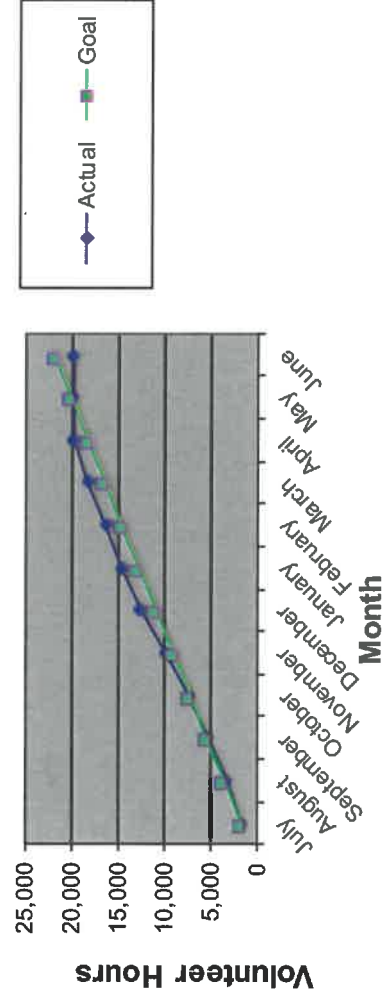
Project Name: Seniors Council Senior Companion Program

Grant Year: 7/1/24- 6/30/25

Month	Cumulative		Monthly		Monthly		Monthly		Monthly		Annual	
	Hours	Actual	Hours	Goal	VSY	Actual	VSY	Goal	Hours	Actual	Vols.	VSY
July		1,837	1,827	1,827	1.76	1,837	1.75	1,75	1,837	29	1,540	21
August		3,444	3,654	3,654	1.54	1,608	1.75	1,75	1,608	29	1,312	21
September		5,353	5,481	5,481	1.83	1,909	1.75	1,75	1,909	29	1,640	21
October		7,408	7,308	7,308	1.97	2,055	1.75	1,75	2,055	31	1,691	21
November		9,911	9,135	9,135	2.40	2,504	1.75	1,75	2,504	31	2,498	21
December		12,525	10,962	10,962	2.50	2,614	1.75	1,75	2,614	30	3,189	21
January		14,684	12,789	12,789	2.07	2,159	1.75	1,75	2,159	30	2,485	21
February		16,327	14,616	14,616	1.57	1,643	1.75	1,75	1,643	33	1,802	21
March		18,315	16,443	16,443	1.90	1,989	1.75	1,75	1,989	33	2,516	21
April		19,811	18,270	18,270	1.43	1,496	1.75	1,75	1,496	33	2,522	21
May		19,811	20,097	20,097	0.00		1.75	1,75			1,940	21
June		19,811	21,924	21,924	0.00		1.75	1,75			1,787	21
TOTAL					18.98	19,811			19,811		24,921	

Total VSYS
Achieved

VSY Actual to Target (Cumulative)





ADRC of San Benito County Staff Report - May 2025

ADRC Staff continue to assist with content and formatting in our effort to author a Local Area Playbook to guide Master Plan for Aging implementation in San Benito County. The Local Area Playbook, informed by the ideas and priorities of local MPA Workgroup sessions over the past ten months, will be a key component to local aging and disability planning and service development efforts for years to come. As a LADAP Grantee, Seniors Council has been working with local partners throughout and across the various MPA Workgroup sessions to identify local goals, prioritize those goals by subject, and then identify steps and activities to be undertaken in achieving these stated goals.

The ADRC of San Benito County had one of its own - - Kaitlyn Amador, ADRC Coordinator with Jovenes de Antaño - - resign her position with the project in early April. This came as a disappointing surprise, since Kaitlyn had developed into a very capable, compassionate, and enthusiastic employee, doing great work with our Spanish-speaking consumers and caregivers, in Hollister and San Benito County. Kaitlyn will be missed, and we wish her well.

ADRC Staff completed and submitted our local ADRC FY25/26 Annual Plan to CDA earlier this month. The plan enumerates nine (9) pre-selected areas across which local projects are asked to identify key activities and undertakings pursuant to the strategy, the milestones by which progress can be measured, and the anticipated outcomes or accomplishments stemming from the work. The focal areas are:

- Leadership & Governance
- Outreach & Marketing
- Person-Centered Practices
- Standardized Processes & Procedures
- Quality Review & Improvement
- Core Service Functions
- Sustainability
- Training & Staff Competencies
- Information Technology/Security

In addition to also asking for a description of planned activities, milestones, measurements, and results supporting these plans, CDA will ask for an assessment of related accomplishments at the close of the fiscal year. These changes represent a renewed State focus on both accountability for the expenditure of local funds, as well as an interest in having ADRCs begin to look and behave more similarly, or at least focus on the same critical developmental components for the work in which we are engaged. It can take several weeks, or more, to receive approval from CDA on these plans, and frequently, local projects are asked for greater detail, better measures, or more specific anticipated outcomes as a part of the iterative process with CDA. Once final approval is obtained, the finalized plan will be shared with this body.

ADRC Staff continue to work closely with Corey Shaffer on Seniors Council and the Community Foundation of San Benito County's effort to stand up a Senior Volunteer Services and Development program, helping to identify gaps in current services, pinpoint community volunteer needs, and promote

the idea that volunteerism is as good for the individual volunteer, as it is for the people and families receiving volunteer support and services. Since local programs and organizations frequently provide services staffed or supported by volunteers, a robust volunteer contribution to local services is essential to the successful delivery and sustainability of long term services and supports, as a substitute for institutional care.

Along with stable, safe, and affordable housing, the biggest unmet or under resourced need which Core Service Staff continue to encounter is isolation, help at home, and navigation and services access. The ADRC-NWD Core Services Team continue to work collaboratively to meet these needs, information share, and provide referrals to resources among the ADRC's Extended Partners and other community service organizations. We are preparing for the publication of a newly updated edition of the San Benito County Aging & Disability Resource Directory for FY25/26, and will continue to keep digital versions of the Directory - - in both English and Spanish - - available on-line and in printable form, in whole or by section, there on the site.

Yet another reminder that the ***San Benito County Connect – Neighbor to Neighbor Volunteer Network*** program website has launched at www.sbcvolunteers.org. Register there to find opportunities to serve in your community, or tell organizations with whom you work about the site and encourage them to post their volunteer service opportunities there. Community volunteerism makes communities stronger and more resilient, and creates opportunities for everyone to do their part.

Also, and related to the ***San Benito County Connect – Neighbor to Neighbor Volunteer Network***, there are now County Express bus shelter ads promoting the effort currently running at several locations throughout Hollister.



Finally, ADRC Staff also just successfully submitted its FY24/25 ADRC Service Data Report for Quarter 3. While the number of unduplicated consumers and core service units continue to increase with time, the growth has been slower and more limited across several areas of service provision. Person-Centered Options Counseling has seen an increase in need and an increase in the complexity of those needs, while Short Term Care Management and Transition Assistance have slowed. These could certainly be seasonal trends, and may perhaps rebound into late spring and summer, but these data could also be indicative of a need to perform more extensive outreach and awareness-building.



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Emergency Response Systems, Assessments & Training

PROJECT SCOUT

End of April 2025 Report

We made it through regular tax season!..

April 15 is not just a significant date on Project SCOUT's calendar but a testament to the dedication our volunteers and staff showcase. It's a day that marks the culmination of long hours, meticulous attention to detail, and the collective determination poured into helping assist countless individuals in successfully filing their taxes for free, claiming their credits, and maximizing their refunds. We embarked on this season with ambitious goals, and as of the end of April, we can proudly say that we assisted at least **1,907** taxpayers with free tax preparation, and provided at least **\$2,235,178.00** in refunds in Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties!

Assisting those we serve not only means providing free tax returns, and this year, it has meant for some the opposite. For those with ITINs, many who have been filing and paying into our system since the nineties, have been dissuaded to file taxes with the threat of their information being shared intra-governmentally with the threat of possible deportation, breaking with long standing IRS bylaws and assurances of privacy and confidentiality, that should pose alarm not only to those who are directly affected, but to all of us who participate and pay into a tax system which has gone back on its word of protecting all of our taxpayer information. As of the end of April, no taxpayer information has been shared with other governmental offices, and there is litigation aiming to keep our information private and within the scope of the IRS. I suggest we all take the time to connect with our local representatives so they can make sure this continues being so.

Project SCOUT's efforts have real, meaningful outcomes for those we serve, and with the information that we provide those we do not. As Program Director I want to thank every single volunteer and staff that assisted us with tax preparation services during this tax season. From answering phones at the office, to setting up appointments, to supporting our IT needs, to actual tax prep. The work and the passion they bring to the work performed creates a community dedicated to making a difference, year after year!

Project SCOUT is shifting its main client focus in May to assisting those who came to us for tax preparation and who may qualify for CalFresh. Thanks to our dedicated staff, we will do a meticulous client search and connect with those seniors and disabled who due to income we know qualify for CalFresh. Some will already be recipients, others will not be interested, yet there will be others who may not be aware that they can qualify for this wonderful food resource that will put extra money in their wallet and up their ability to afford to live healthily.

As important, especially with the ever changing winds coming out of D.C. this is a month when re applying for our Federal IRS grants supporting the program is priority. allowing continuation of the free tax prep work we perform to continue. Deadlines for IRS grants are at the end of May. Besides this, there is reporting to do

9.3-1

to another 4 funders, and we are currently in talks of sponsorship with a non-profit with national reach. As of the writing of this report, we have signed up for continued, once-per-month services at the downtown Santa Cruz and Watsonville Libraries, La Manzana Community Resources in Watsonville, and our office at the Watsonville Senior Center. We have the goal of extending monthly services into San Benito County once a site becomes available.

Free Tax-Prep Sites in APRIL 2025

1. Project SCOUT Facilitated Self Assistance ALL Online: <http://tinyurl.com/SCOUTFSA>
2. Project SCOUT TCE ALL (Remote, in-home, and ad-hoc for at-risk seniors and disabled)
3. Highlands Park Senior Center Ben Lomond (Wed and Thurs 10:00-1:00)
4. Felton Public Library (Saturday 10am - 1pm)
5. Santa Cruz Public Library Downtown (Tues and Sat 10:00-3:00)
6. London Nelson Community Center Santa Cruz (Thurs 9:30-12:30)
7. Market Street Senior Center Santa Cruz (Wed 1:30-3:30)
8. Mid-County Senior Center Capitola (Wed 9:00-12:00)
9. Capitola Public Library (Wed 2:00-5:00)
10. Aptos Public Library (Tues 10:00-1:00)
11. La Manzana Community Center Watsonville (Tues 9:00-2:00)
12. Watsonville Public Library (Wed 11:00-7:00)
13. Jovenes de Antano Hollister (Wed 6pm-8:00pm, Fri 1:00-4:00)
14. La Posada Retirement Community Santa Cruz (ad-hoc)
15. Brookdale Assisted Living Scotts Valley (ad-hoc)
16. Garfield Senior Living Santa Cruz (ad-hoc)

Project SCOUT APRIL Tax Production Totals

Project SCOUT Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Tax Preparation Totals:

- Number of Federal returns prepared – 1907
- Dollar Amount of Federal refunds – \$1,421,999.00
- Dollar Amount of State refunds – \$336,429.00
- Dollar Amount of EITC Claimed – \$455,838.00
-

Dollar Amount of TOTAL refunds – **\$1,758,428.00**

Total money back in the wallets of our clients, including average return cost of \$250.00 – **\$2,235,178.00!**

9.3-2



AREA AGENCY ON AGING
San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM
Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT
Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION
Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

Date: 5-9-25

To: Seniors Council Board of Directors, AAA Advisory Council

From: Clay Kempf, Executive Director

RE: Executive Director's May Report

MASTER PLAN FOR AGING (MPA) & SOLUTIONS SUMMITS

Solutions Summit workgroups are developing the Master Plan for Aging Local Playbooks, per our previous report. Each of the ten workgroups continue, with those in San Benito County being chaired and organized by Corey Shafer, and Zach Johnson doing the same for the five groups in Santa Cruz County. Draft write-ups for each workgroup have been developed by Zach and Corey, and are in the process of being shared with the workgroup participants for input. We anticipate those workgroups seeing a second draft in June, and then a final version of the full documents being shared later in the month. And we're tentatively hoping we can bring all of the workgroups together in one meeting for the final review.

The Aging and Long Term Care Commission of San Benito County continues to embrace and engage in their role as the MPA Local Playbook Advisory Council.

The Santa Cruz County Governance Committee performs that role in Santa Cruz County, and convened for the first time this year on April 16. The majority of the meeting involved an update on some of the local challenges of meeting the needs of seniors in Santa Cruz County under a restricted California Budget and anticipations of the Governor's May Budget release. The County also shared information from their recent needs assessment of County residents aged 40 and above. Patty, Pam Arnsberger and I met weekly with County staff and their consultant firm (Clarity Solutions) in the development of the survey, including not only its content but also in strategies for distributing the surveys.

The SCZ Governance Committee itself is undergoing a number of changes; with staff representatives at the City of Santa Cruz changing, along with the seats for County Board of Supervisor representation. I've added Zach Johnson to attend from the Seniors Council, and for the first time we were allowed to host the meeting via Zoom,

thereby creating access for Board members Pam Arnsberger and Wayne Norton. The Board of Supervisors appointees remain open at this time.

AGENCY OPERATIONS

Our internal operations have mainly been focused on federal actions impacting our programs, and continued efforts to address Jovenes de Antaño's current challenges and other aspects of our changing service provider network. Both of these items are addressed elsewhere on our agendas, so I won't repeat them here.

STATE & COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

California Department of Aging (CDA) continues with their series of webinars to address their Aging 2030 goals, including the implementation of SB 1249. Presentations regarding Revising the Intrastate Funding Formula, and Designation and de-designation of AAAs have occurred. Core AAA Services and Performance Measures are among the topics of the future.

California Association of Area Agencies on Aging (C4A) is encouraging CDA to delay their implementation of SB 1249 until the status of the Older Americans Act is updated and/or until clarity exists regarding how the OAA will be managed with the dissolution of ACL.

We continue to engage with the local community on many efforts that address the needs of older adults and people with disabilities. Staff will be reviewing community committee assignments in the coming months to make sure we have appropriate engagement to the extent that's reasonable.

URBAN WIRE

Sweeping HHS Cuts Will Put Disabled and Older Americans' Right to Live in Their Communities at Risk

Susan J. Popkin, Nina Russell, Barbara Butrica, Dana Ferrante

April 7, 2025



zeljkosantrac, Getty Images

This week, the Trump administration began [a large-scale reorganization](#) of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including laying off staff at the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Food and Drug Administration.

Among the hardest hit was the Administration for Community Living (ACL). A relatively small agency, the ACL coordinates federal policy on aging and disability and funds programs such as Meals on Wheels and centers for independent living across the US.

As part of the [HHS' reorganization](#), about [half of the ACL's staff of 200 were laid off](#), including most of the agency's leadership and policy staff, as well as budget staff and regional offices that coordinate with organizations across the country. Now, ACL programs will be split up among three different offices at the HHS: the Administration for Children and Families, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Together, the staff cuts and reorganization will make it more difficult to effectively administer the programs the ACL once oversaw.

11.1-1

The ACL is critical to ensuring adults with disabilities and older adults can access supports they need to live and fully participate in their communities, including as they age. Dismantling the ACL and its programs will make it more difficult and costly for communities across the US to serve disabled people and older adults and will put residents at risk of institutionalization and [food insecurity](#).

What is community living?

When asked, a majority of Americans—but especially [disabled people](#) (PDF) and [adults older than 65](#) (PDF)—say they want to live and age in their homes and communities, rather than live in a nursing home or other institutional setting.

Research shows independent living benefits all members of a community. It fosters [independence, social belonging, and well-being](#). Studies have found that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who transition from institutional settings to community living arrangements [see continued development of their daily living skills](#) (PDF).

Enabling people to live in their communities is also cost-effective, with home- and community-based services costing significantly less than [institutional care](#). Though the share of older adults and people with disabilities living in their communities [has increased in recent decades](#), disabled people and older adults still face challenges accessing the supports they need.

[Just 10 percent of homes](#) (PDF) in the US offer single-floor living and have an accessible bathroom. Many households [lack the financial resources](#) they need to modify their home, with many older adults and people with disabilities living on fixed incomes. Households with a disabled adult are more likely to experience [food insecurity](#). Inaccessible neighborhoods and communities also [pose barriers to people with mobility disabilities](#). These realities leave older adults and people with disabilities at higher risk of social isolation.

The ACL helps people across the US access the supports they need to live in their communities

Since 2012, states and localities have relied on funding and support from the ACL to help address these barriers to community living among their residents. A small agency with wide reach, the ACL operates on a [\\$2.6 billion](#) budget, part of HHS' overall [\\$1.7 trillion budget](#). These funds sustain local programs such as Meals on Wheels, senior centers, centers for independent living, Area Agencies on Aging, and others nationwide.

The ACL's \$2.6 Billion Budget Supports an Array of Programs for Older Adults, Disabled People, Caregivers, and Families

Snapshot of funding levels for the ACL's programs, by activity type, fiscal year 2024

Activity type:

Caregiver and family support services Health and independence for older adults

Disability programs, research, and services Consumer information, access, and outreach

Protection of vulnerable adults

Search in table

Page 1 of 2 >

Programs	Budget (in millions)
Nutrition services	\$1,067
Home and community-based services	\$410
Family caregiver support services	\$205
Independent living	\$128
National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research	\$119
State Councils on Developmental Disabilities	\$81
State Health Insurance Assistance Program	\$55
Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act	\$50
Program administration	\$47
Developmental disabilities protection and advocacy	\$45
University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities	\$43
Congressionally directed spending	\$42
Assistive technology	\$40
Native American nutrition and supportive services	\$38
Alzheimer's Disease Program	\$32
Aging network support activities	\$30

URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: ACL budget table for fiscal year 2024, accessed April 7, 2025, <https://acl.gov/about-acl/budget>.

Notes: ACL = Administration for Community Living. Table shows totals at the program level.

More than 10 million Americans ages 60 and older, including those in US territories, received personal care supports, home-delivered meals, congregate meals, adult day care services, or transportation services. Other ACL-supported services include homemaker services (e.g., preparing meals, light housework, etc.), help with chores (e.g., heavy housework and yard work), case management, and nutrition counseling.

However, there is large variation across the country. About 81 percent of older adults in Maine and 74 percent in Kansas received at least one of these services, but fewer than 5 percent of older adults in Delaware, Virginia, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia received them. This reflects, in part, [differences in the amount of funding](#) each state receives from the ACL for these services, which is based on a state's share of the national population ages 60 and over.

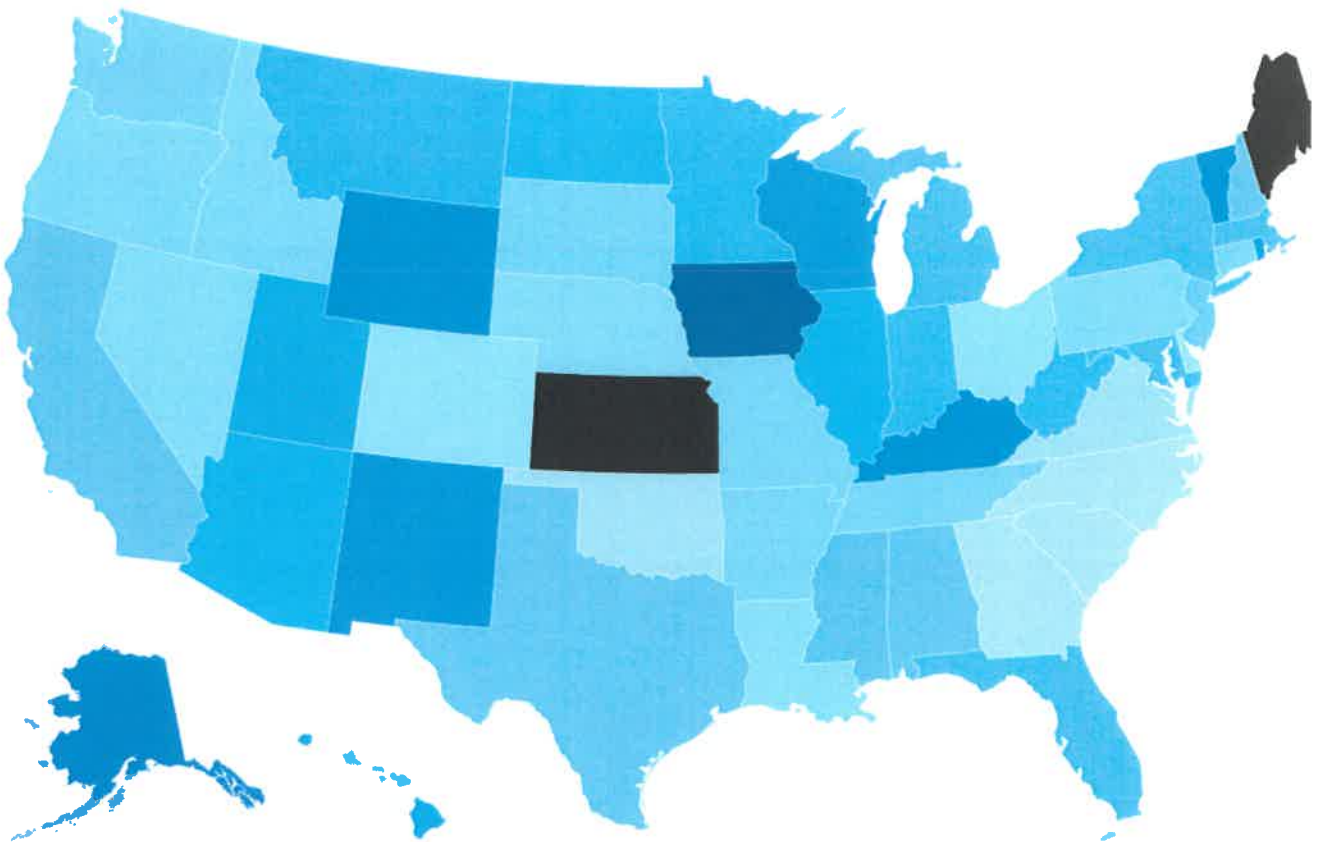
The ACL Helps Provide Services to About 10 Million Older Americans

Estimated share of people ages 60 and older served, fiscal year 2021

11.1-3

Share of population ages 60 and older receiving services

2% 81%



Get the data

URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Authors' calculations based on American Community Survey 2021 population counts and federal fiscal year 2021 (October 1, 2020–September 30, 2021) Older Americans Act Title III State Program Reports, sections I.A.3 and II.A.1–9, as of May 1, 2022, compiled by the US Administration on Aging.

Notes: ACL = Administration for Community Living. The US Administration on Aging estimates the unduplicated count of persons receiving Title III services, excluding those receiving only Title III-E caregiver services. These services are available for adults age 60 and over.

But the ACL doesn't just serve adults ages 60 and older. It also helps communities support disabled people and the more than [1 in 5 Americans who serve as informal caregivers](#) (PDF) to a loved one. Informal caregivers are often critical to a person's ability to live in the community. Without adequate supports, though, these informal caregivers can experience stress and [declines in physical and mental health](#).

In 2022, the ACL provided [more than 261 million meals to older adults](#), assistance such as respite care to more than 1.5 million family caregivers, and independent-living services to nearly 250,000 people with disabilities.

These services are administered at the state and local level through the ACL's [national network](#) of 56 state agencies on aging, 618 Area Agencies on Aging, nearly 20,000 service providers, 281 Tribal organizations, and one Native Hawaiian organization representing 400 Tribes.

Restructuring the ACL and cutting key staff undermines people's right to live in their community and will likely limit communities' capacity to deliver the critical programs needed to support their residents.

Dismantling the ACL will make it more difficult for communities to meet the needs of the nation's aging population

Reducing ACL staff and moving the agency's functions to different offices also ignores the reality of our aging population. Since 2012, the [number of older adults has increased by 34 percent](#) (PDF), compared with an increase of 2 percent in the population younger than 65. Older adults will [outnumber children in the US within the next decade](#).

11.1-4

The cuts to and reorganization of the ACL comes on the heels of other policy changes that could harm disabled people and older adults, including staffing cuts at the [Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#), [the proposed closure of SSA offices](#), [proposed cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid](#), and the elimination of the US Department of Education.

To ensure all people can live and age in the community of their choosing, federal policymakers should continue providing communities with the resources they need to support their residents.

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11.1-5



The Watsonville offices of the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties. Credit: Kevin Painchaud / Lookout Santa Cruz

POLITICS & POLICY

Trump's planned AmeriCorps cuts threaten Santa Cruz senior volunteer programs that bridge generations



BY MAX CHUN
4 hours ago

11.2-1

Quick Take

The Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties is facing the potential elimination of two programs — the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs — that aim to help older adults socialize and work in the community. Seniors Council leaders fear that losing the programs will harm both adults suffering from feelings of isolation and youth who benefit from their guidance.



Two programs that work to help older adults develop new friendships and allow them to mentor students are facing elimination under President Donald Trump's proposed federal budget cuts.



The two programs — the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs — are run by the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties and operate under AmeriCorps, a federal program that enrolls hundreds of thousands of adults in community service within various fields and causes. As the Trump administration works

to dismantle AmeriCorps, the Seniors Council faces a harsh reality that both programs could be eliminated.

The Foster Grandparent Program connects older volunteers with students between preschool and third grade who are struggling academically or socially. The volunteers, all low-income individuals aged 55 or over, work in a classroom under a teacher's guidance, where they connect with students and act as role models and mentors. Currently, the program has 150 volunteers who serve at 80 school sites across Santa Cruz, San Benito, Santa Clara and Monterey counties.

The Senior Companion Program builds friendships between older adults. Senior companions are also low-income people aged 55 or over who act as friendly, helpful visitors who provide friendship, emotional support and help with running errands.

MORE TRUMP 2.0 COVERAGE

Days after cultural celebration, Trump administration revokes Senderos arts grant

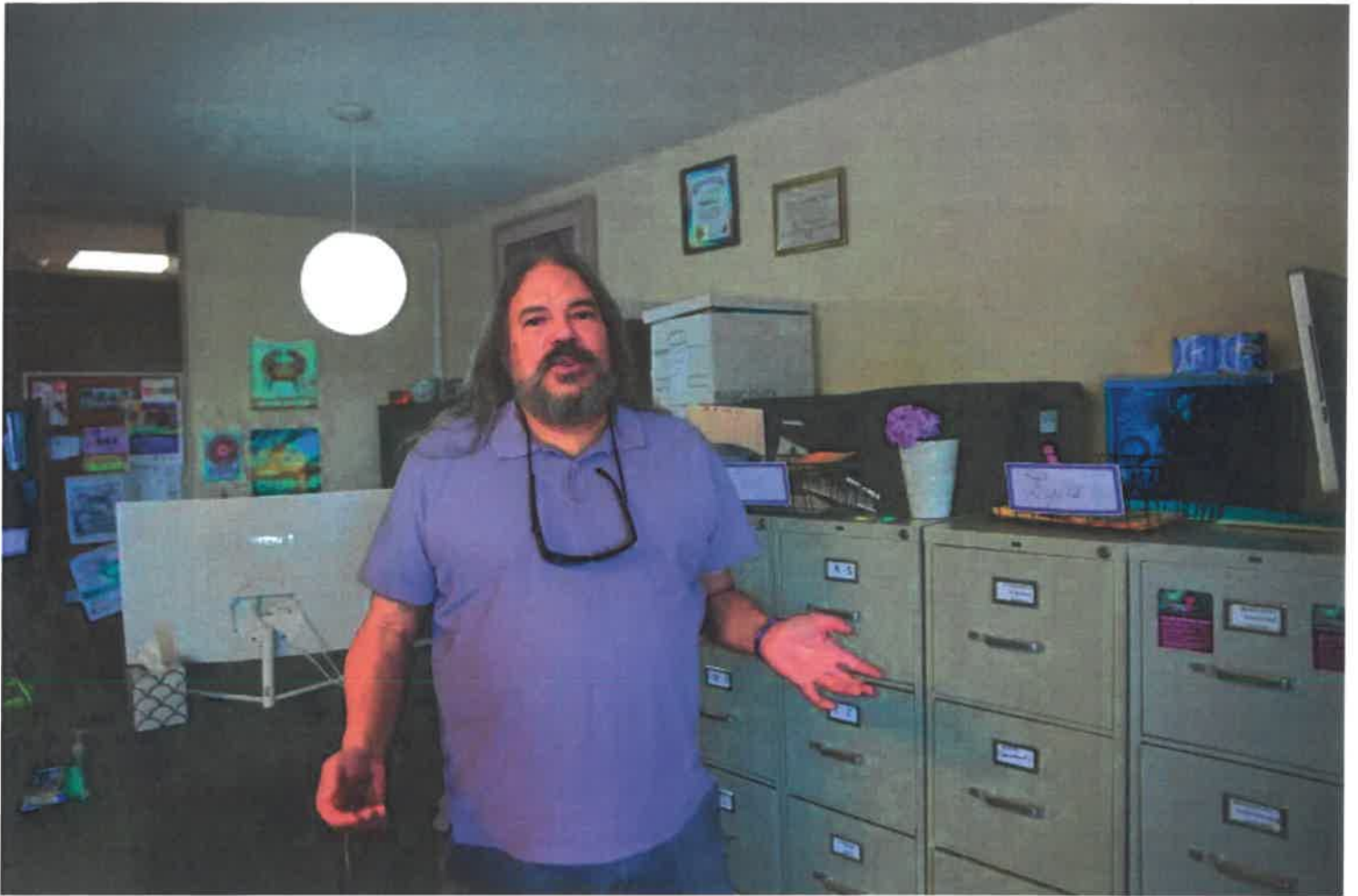
11.2-2

Clay Kempf, executive director of the Seniors Council, said the programs get about \$1 million from the federal government each year, and a few hundred thousand more from local sources, which currently comes from private foundations. He added that cuts to AmeriCorps budget puts the programs and all of the administrative staff for them in jeopardy. He said that he views the cuts as “another piece of the attack on social safety net programs.” The benefits from the Foster Grandparent Program in particular, he said, reach far beyond just the older community.

“It’s a classic intergenerational program where it benefits both kids and seniors,” he said. “In one case, it’s seniors helping seniors and in the other it’s seniors helping children.”

Kempf said the stipend that foster grandparent volunteers receive — about \$4 per hour for 15 to 25 hours per week — helps them do everything from paying rent and buying food to paying for medications. However, that isn’t what the volunteers usually cite as their motivation.

“I’ll quote one of my favorite foster grandparents ever, who said, ‘I love the smiles on the little children when they see me come to work each morning,’” said Kempf. “It gives them personal value and something for them to do in their later years that makes them feel like they’re still productive members of society.”



Clay Kempf, executive director of the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties, in 2023. Credit: Kevin Painchaud / Lookout Santa Cruz

One of the biggest ways that both programs help, said Kempf, is combatting loneliness among older adults.

“Maybe the best way to counter that, in fact, is to volunteer,” he said, adding that a 2023 report highlighting the effects of loneliness and isolation in the U.S. cited education and support programs, as well as volunteering and community service activities, as strong strategies to improve feelings of isolation.

Cristina Bañuelos, director of both the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs, said the volunteers are extremely committed to their duties. Many, she said, continue to volunteer until they physically cannot anymore. She recalls one woman who began as a foster grandparent in 1988 and stayed with the program until 2015, when she was 93 years old. Bañuelos added that many of the long-term volunteers become acquainted with teachers, too, adding to their social circle in their later years.



Cristina Bañuelos, director of the Seniors Council threatened the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs. Credit: Kevin Painchaud / Lookout Santa Cruz

“It benefits everybody. It benefits the teacher, the school, and the whole community,” she said. “Even the parents are grateful when the volunteer really makes a difference with the child. I love this program.”

Kempf said that teachers with foster grandparents in their classrooms give feedback surveys at the end of each semester, and they consistently report noticeable improvements in literacy, logic and math skills, and in social and emotional development. Bañuelos said the prospect of losing these resources is scary, sad and shortsighted.

“Whoever’s making these changes doesn’t realize what a big difference [the programs] make,” she said. “After this, who’s going to help these children who need someone to look after them and be there for them when nobody else is?”

Kempf said the Seniors Council is focusing on informing the public about how valuable the programs are, and urging legislators to vote against the approval of the federal budget. California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced in late April that the state will challenge the dismantling of AmeriCorps in court as well as speed up recruitment for the California Service Corps to attempt to fill the gap.

Kempf said his organization will also look for other resources and encourage local foundations to focus on funding existing programs like these rather than new projects. But still, relying on local dollars will likely not be enough.

“Then, of course, it’s a question of how do we shut the programs down?” he asked, adding that the programs have been a part of the organization for decades, which makes it hard to halt them immediately. “How do we pick among the volunteers, the schools, and the other seniors that are being served? It’s a tough one.”

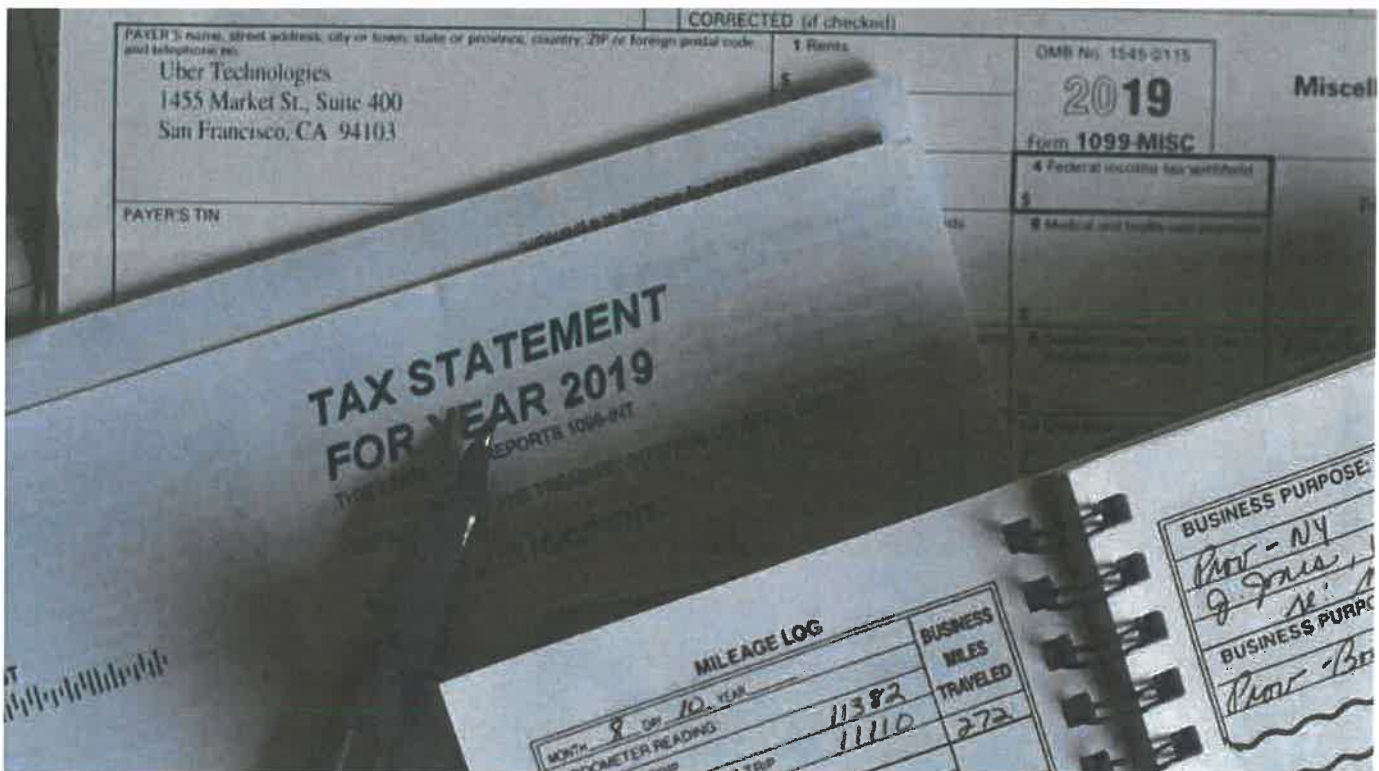


A group of volunteers and program staff. Credit: Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties

Have something to say? Lookout welcomes letters to the editor, within our policies, from readers. Guidelines [here](#).

Lawmakers move to eliminate age cap on earned income tax credit

By Thérèse Boudreaux | The Center Square
Apr 23, 2025



Olga DeLawrence | Unsplash

(The Center Square) – As Republicans work to draft tax legislation for the 2025 federal budget package, lawmakers have introduced bipartisan legislation to eliminate the age cap on eligibility for the earned-income tax credit.

The bill, introduced Tuesday by Reps. Mike Carey, R-Ohio, and Danny Davis, D-Ill., would expand eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit to workers over the age of 65. Currently, only workers between the ages of 25 and 65 may claim the credit.

"America's workforce has changed since the EITC was established in 1975. Many Americans are working longer, and a rising retirement age should be reflected in the program," Carey said. "Certain Americans should not be prevented from accessing critical tax provisions because of their age."

Worker advocacy organizations including Golden State Opportunity and the Critical Labor Coalition have endorsed the bill, with Misty Chally from CLC saying the legislation "encourages those with experience and a strong work ethic to reenter the workforce at a time when employers need them the most."

But tax policy experts have raised concerns that expanding the EITC, which is 95% spending outlays, is a fiscally risky move, particularly as Congress plans to spend trillions **expanding other Trump-era tax policies.**

Adam Michel, director of tax policy studies at the Cato Institute, told The Center Square Wednesday that the "countervailing incentives" of the EITC, coupled with the cost of the program, "lead to ambiguous total economic effects."

"The EITC is usually described as creating an incentive to work, however, as the credit phases out it also disincentivizes additional work hours and the pursuit of higher-paying jobs," Michel said. "Rather than expanding the credit, Congress should repeal it in favor of lower tax rates for everyone."

Thérèse Boudreaux

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 23, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to express our strong support for AmeriCorps and urge you to reverse both the recall of all NCCC AmeriCorps members and the recently implemented drastic reductions in force across the AmeriCorps agency. We are deeply concerned these actions will prevent the agency from continuing to deliver critical services, which include supporting veterans, fighting wildfires, tutoring in schools, combatting the fentanyl epidemic, and much more.

For more than thirty years, AmeriCorps has been our nation's leading provider of grants that support and promote national service and volunteerism. Through programs like AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors, more than 200,000 Americans participate in results-driven service projects at more than 35,000 locations across the country each year. Working hand in hand with thousands of nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations, these dedicated Americans recruit and manage millions of additional volunteers as they work to promote employment opportunities, prepare a better-trained workforce, and provide essential services to veterans, children, and seniors. AmeriCorps' track record of delivering for Americans has earned broad and longstanding support from business leaders, mayors, and governors of both parties.

AmeriCorps is a public-private partnership that leverages approximately \$1 billion in matched resources from the private sector, foundations, and local agencies to support organizations across the country working in creative ways to tackle our most persistent and costly challenges. While it is important the agency continues to make measurable progress toward an improved audit performance, federal investments in AmeriCorps already deliver returns for the American people. A 2020 study found that for every one dollar that Congress appropriates to AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors programs, they return over \$17 in benefits to society, program members, and the government. Further, the AmeriCorps programs are a smart investment in our country's future. AmeriCorps service allows members to gain marketable job skills in high-demand fields and pursue higher education, preparing more Americans to succeed in the workforce.

We have seen firsthand the critical impact these programs have across the states we represent. We urge the administration to continue implementing the statutory requirements of the national service laws:

- Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, Public Law 93-113.
- National and Community Service Act of 1990, Public Law 101-610.
- National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, Public Law 103-82.

11.4 - 1

- Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009, Public Law 111-13.

Additionally, Congress recently passed the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act of 2025, which maintained funding for AmeriCorps at its Fiscal Year 2024 level. We expect that the administration will implement this law in a manner consistent with the allocations enacted in Fiscal Year 2024. However, we have grave concerns that significant reductions in force will prevent AmeriCorps from being able to effectively and efficiently award appropriated funding to programs operating in communities across the country.

We are deeply concerned by reports that a majority of AmeriCorps staff have been placed on administrative leave and that more than 750 NCCC members have already been recalled from their field assignments. Many of these volunteers were working in disaster response roles, including building homes for individuals who lost theirs in the wake of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. If not reversed, these recent actions will both stop current programs and prevent timely and efficient execution of the agency's fiscal year 2025 appropriations, delaying or even halting the recruitment and deployment of new AmeriCorps members around the country. We are deeply concerned that is the goal: to eliminate AmeriCorps, in direct conflict with recently enacted appropriations. However, even delays will disrupt programs Americans rely on for their health, education, and safety. We urge you to reverse these actions and instead work with Congress on bipartisan improvements to AmeriCorps so that more Americans have the opportunity to serve their communities.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress