

Structural & Societal Impacts

Request for Proposals

Unprecedented capacity shifts in the U.S. federal workforce—driven by large-scale layoffs, incentivized early retirements, agency downsizing, budget cuts, executive orders, and unanticipated reductions in grants and contracts—are producing downstream effects on individuals, communities, and the systems that deliver public goods and services. Collectively, these changes raise fundamental questions about service equity, the quality of service delivery, citizen outcomes, administrative capacity, and public trust in government.

ARRC seeks proposals for research-based analyses that assess the structural and societal impacts of the generational shifts now underway in the federal workforce. Potential structural and societal impacts span multiple domains and can include, but are not limited to:

- **Devolution and preemption:** The shifting of service delivery and regulatory responsibility from the federal government to states, counties, and local governments, raising questions about intergovernmental capacity and authority
- **Privatization:** The extent to which federal downsizing is accelerating the privatization of public services
- **Nonprofit and contractor impacts:** Implications for nonprofit and for-profit organizations that depend on federal grants and contracts
- **Public health outcomes:** Effects on disease surveillance, research infrastructure, and disruptions to health service delivery
- **Benefits timeliness:** Delays in the receipt of government benefits, including Social Security, veterans' benefits, and tax refunds
- **Public safety and emergency response:** Diminished capacity for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery
- **Environmental and critical infrastructure implications:** Challenges faced by the managers of critical infrastructure in the areas of water, energy, food, communications, or transportation
- **Government responsiveness:** Reduced capacity during tax season and beyond; depleted capacity to respond to citizen-customer requests; failures to meet the needs of vulnerable or marginalized communities

- **Cutting layers of bureaucracy and red tape:** Testing agency statements justifying reorganization as a way to bring services closer to citizens, implication of cuts to and reorganization of field operations (loan officers, disaster response, federal TA providers, etc.)
- **Waste, fraud, and abuse:** Implications of federal actions on the reduction or exacerbation of waste, fraud and abuse
- **The federal research enterprise:** Disruptions to federally funded research at universities, national laboratories, and federal agencies
- **International consequences:** Outcomes resulting from the elimination of federal agencies and reduced U.S. engagement abroad

We seek PIs with completed or ongoing research relating to one or more of the following questions:

- How have recent federal government actions impacted individuals and communities, and to what extent have these impacts fallen disproportionately on particular types of communities (e.g., low-income, urban, farming, coastal, etc.)?
- How have reductions in the federal workforce impacted citizen outcomes in policy domains such as health care, emergency management, national parks, water resource management, affordable housing, etc.?
- What are the short- and long-term impacts of federal government restructuring and dismantling on service delivery across the federal, state, and local levels of government and the nonprofit sector?
- How are changes to the federal workforce influencing program and service delivery (e.g., veterans receiving benefits, taxpayers receiving refunds, emergency preparedness and response, national security, etc.)?
- How have recent policy changes impacted recruitment of early-career applicants for federal jobs, retention of recently hired federal employees, and enrollments in relevant graduate programs?
- How have recent policy changes impacted the flow of talent from one sector to another (e.g., from the federal government to academia, nonprofits, other levels of government, philanthropy, or the private sector) and what are the implications of these shifts? For example:

- How have changes in intergovernmental transfers affected state and local government capacity?
- How are federal cuts shifting responsibilities to fund and staff public service delivery to the nonprofit and philanthropic sector?
- How have cuts in federal grants and contracts impacted for-profit and nonprofit service providers?
- How have reductions in federal research funding affected university-based researchers, national laboratories, and the broader research enterprise?

We welcome diverse methodological approaches and encourage applicants to be explicit about the causal assumptions underlying their analyses.

Funding

Stipends of up to \$5,000 will support analysis, synthesis, data visualization, and the development of multiple research communications products. Funds are intended to support the dissemination and synthesis of existing or ongoing research rather than large-scale new data collection efforts. Empirical studies employing all types of methods are welcomed, including case studies, interviews and focus groups, large-n studies, and studies employing machine-learning techniques focusing on the downstream impacts of federal actions. Emphasis on pre- and post-2025 changes in conditions is essential. Advances in assessing and measuring impacts are welcomed.

Expected Deliverables for Each Awardee

- **Research brief:** 1,000 to 3,000 words using the ARRC template
- **Blog post:** 250 to 1,000 words for the ARRC Blog
- **Video presentation:** Recorded presentation for the ARRC webinar series
- **Community of Practice participation:** Contribute to one or more ARRC CoP meetings and discussions

Submissions are due Friday, March 13, 2026.

Application

Policy / Public Service Sector:

Research question(s):

Unit(s) of analysis (check all that apply):

- Federal government
- State government
- County government
- Local government
- Communities
- Individuals
- Occupational groups / Professional fields
- Nonprofit organizations
- For-profit organizations
- Philanthropy
- Academic institutions

Methods:

Please include a description of data sources and analytical methods employed.

Results / Anticipated Results:

Include a brief summary of findings. May include up to two tables and/or figures (not required).

Timeline:

Explain the timing of the research (if not yet completed). Ongoing projects are welcomed; please summarize when and what preliminary findings will be reported on.

Central themes to highlight in a blog post, research brief, and video presentation:

Describe the key messages stemming from your study.

Salient references:

Provide 3 to 6 references related to your study (may include other reports and studies, theoretical framings, etc.).