



Communications Toolkit to Support the RARE Program

Purpose: This communications toolkit has been created by the RARE (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) Program for RARE alumni, host organizations (current and past), and other RARE partners to help highlight the local impacts of the RARE Program over the past 30+ years. If you have questions, please reach out to Titus Tomlinson: titust@uoregon.edu or 541-513-9989.

Background: The RARE AmeriCorps Program has been supported each year by a federal AmeriCorps grant. In late April of 2025, RARE staff received notice that its current AmeriCorps grant had suddenly been terminated by AmeriCorps—pausing this major source of funding for the current service year (September 2024 through July 2025). Thankfully, on June 6, 2025 a [preliminary injunction was granted](#) as part of a multi-state lawsuit and the grant termination was reversed. Given this sudden and jarring disruption in the service year, only 10 RARE members remain with the program to continue with the current (2024-25) service year (the other 21 members were either hired directly by their host organizations, or have moved on elsewhere). **Since it is very uncertain whether the RARE Program will receive an AmeriCorps grant for the next service year, RARE leadership has made the difficult decision to go on pause for the next service year (2025-26).**

Stay Engaged: Although the RARE Program will not move forward in its traditional form for the time being, we are committed to exploring what a future version of the program could look like—in order to continue the critical work of building capacity in rural Oregon and developing local change makers. This will likely only be possible with new, non-federal funding from sources like foundations and donors. If you would like to stay informed about future updates, potential program relaunches, or opportunities to contribute your voice to our rebuilding efforts (such as through surveys or listening sessions), please to fill out this brief form: https://oregon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3NMr8MbMQUTgUYK.

We need help from dedicated partners and members of the RARE family—like you—to tell the amazing story of RARE and its impacts, and build new avenues of support for the program!

Actions YOU Can Take TODAY to Support the RARE Program:

Tips, examples and resources for the first 3 action items below are included in the following pages

1. Send your RARE story to the RARE Program
2. Post on social media to spread the word about RARE
3. Tell your local media outlets about the impacts of RARE
4. [Additional action items](#) to support AmeriCorps in general

From everyone on the RARE team, we greatly appreciate your actions in support of the RARE Program!

1

Send your RARE story to the RARE Program

Did you have an amazing year of service as a RARE member? Did your community host a RARE member who made lasting local impacts? Please email us to share your story, highlighting the important impacts RARE has made, and we will use these stories as we build support for the future of the RARE Program. *If you do NOT want your full name associated with your story for public use, please indicate that when you email.*

Email your RARE story to: rare@uoregon.edu

2

Post on social media to spread the word about RARE

Spread the word on social media that the RARE Program is on pause and seeking to rebuild—and post about YOUR RARE experience and the important impacts that RARE has had on communities!

Please be sure to tag the RARE Program in any posts you share:

- [RARE Facebook](#) – tag @rareprogram
- [RARE Instagram](#) - tag @rareprogram
- [RARE LinkedIn](#) – tag @resource-assistance-for-rural-environments-rare

Sample post language: The RARE Program has been disrupted in recent months by the sudden termination of its federal AmeriCorps grant, and RARE leadership has made the difficult decision to go on pause for the upcoming service year (2025-26). Although the RARE Program will not move forward in its traditional form for the time being, RARE leadership is exploring what a future version of the program could look like with different sources of funding—in order to continue the critical work of building capacity in rural Oregon and developing local change makers. The RARE Program has been going strong for 30+ years, and we don't want to see it go away! Here is my RARE story: *insert your story of service, and include photos (if you don't have photos, see the end of this toolkit for RARE Program photos and videos you can use).*

3

Tell your local media outlets about the impacts of RARE

- Send a press release to local media outlets, OR ask a local media outlet (ideally one you already have a contact with) if they'd like to cover this issue (*pitch* it!)**

Examples & Resources:

- [Local Organizations Feel the Loss of AmeriCorps Programs](#) – May 7 (*features RARE!*)
- [How Federal Funding Cuts Have Hit Nonprofits and the Communities they Serve](#) – May 19
- [General Press Release Templates & Examples, from PR Newswire](#)

b. Submit a letter to the editor or op-ed piece

Examples & Resources:

- [Letter to the Editor Tips, from Voices for National Service](#)
- [Op-Ed Submission Tips, from The Op-Ed Project](#)

Tips for Working with the Media:

- Email press release out with **NO attachments**—include the release in the body of the email
- **Gather compelling photos and/or videos** showing your impacts in the local community that can be shared publicly, for media outlets to use if they choose (don't attach items to an initial email to a media outlet); also there are RARE Programs photos and videos linked at the end of this toolkit.
- Be ready to **respond quickly** to media requests, since their staff often work on tight deadlines
- **Emphasize the local impacts** and good work that's been done, rather than getting into politics
 - Even if you're asked a political or controversial question, you don't have to directly answer it! You can "redirect" by noting something from your talking points (see below)
 - It is of course your prerogative if you wish to make political statements from yourself personally, or from your organization; please ensure that you don't make political statements on behalf of the RARE Program or a RARE member
- **Work in stating the "RARE Program" when you can** in your answers and messages, since your words might be cut/spliced and name/brand recognition for the program is good
- If on camera for an interview, **wear something that looks professional/appropriate and ensure your background is not distracting** from you and your message
- If doing an interview for radio, online, or TV—which will likely be recorded (rather than live)—know that **you can "re-do" an answer** if you don't like how something sounded the first time

Talking Points to Highlight:

- **Specific impacts and stories from your community or service year with the RARE Program:**
 - How many local people benefitted from RARE projects (and what types of audiences—students, elders, housing insecure, etc.)
 - Programs, plans, projects, or services that continue and have made a lasting impact
- **Make it timely:** Explain the sudden loss of AmeriCorps funding, using language from further above in this toolkit, to show why this is newsworthy and critical for the media to cover now.
- **More generally about the RARE Program:**
 - The **mission** of the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments Program is to increase the capacity of rural communities to improve their economic, social, and environmental conditions, through the assistance of trained members who live and work in communities for 11 months.
 - The RARE Program has been empowering rural Oregon leaders since 1994 and has placed **600+ members in every county in the state.**
 - Members assist host organizations (government agencies, nonprofits, special districts, and Tribes) with various levels of planning and implementation of **critical projects across Oregon** on a wide range of topics, including: community and economic development, food systems, and environmental and sustainability planning.
 - The RARE Program completed its **30th year** of serving rural Oregon communities in August of 2024! Collectively, these are the impacts made in rural Oregon communities by RARE AmeriCorps members during the 2023-2024 service year:
 - Leveraged nearly **\$2.6 million** in grant funding for community-specific projects

- Organized **430+** community volunteers for a total of **990+** additional service hours in their communities
 - Provided **540+** educational/training opportunities to small business owners, entrepreneurs, and residents
 - [Additional community impacts from last service year can be found here](#)
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RARE Program Content You Can Share (credit the RARE Program when possible):

1. Album of [Favorite RARE Program Photos](#) – includes RARE Program logo
2. Short Videos from the RARE YouTube Channel:
 - a. [30 Years of the RARE Program](#)
 - b. [Holiday Farm Fire & RARE Alum Braden](#)
 - c. [Food Systems Work & RARE Alum Taylor](#)
 - d. [RARE Alum Christian's Story from Roseburg](#)
3. [RARE Impact Numbers & Map](#) – map shows visually where throughout Oregon RARE members have completed projects, plus a list of impact numbers from the most recent service year
4. RARE [Blog Posts \(Stories from the Field\)](#) and [News Pieces Featuring RARE Members](#) – scroll to view posts and stories from the past several years
5. [Year 31 RARE Placements Map](#) – shows the 31 RARE placements for service year 31, *before* AmeriCorps funding cuts resulted in 22 members leaving the program early
6. [Past RARE Projects and Members](#) – archive of alumni and projects, which can be linked to