



10. Support the Arizona America 250 Commission

Description of issue and how recommending the agency's request furthers the agency's mandates: Arizona's participation in the America 250 initiative offers a unique and historic opportunity to celebrate our state's integral role in the nation's 250th anniversary. Arizona's admission as the 48th state completed the contiguous United States. Its rich cultural heritage and contributions to democracy are vital to this national celebration. This initiative aligns with the AZSOS's mandate to promote civic engagement, historical awareness, economic prosperity, and statewide unity. By ensuring that Arizona is well-represented in this milestone celebration, the agency upholds its commitment to safeguarding Arizona's legacy, building public trust in the democratic process, and driving more economic opportunity to our state.

In 2022, the Arizona America 250 Commission was established by legislation sponsored by Sen. Vince Leach. Senate Bill 1497 (SB1497) empowers it to plan, develop, encourage and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States and the impact of this state's citizens on the nation's past, present and future. The Commission is composed of 11 members and is chaired by Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes. Its operations are supported by AZSOS and a single \$10,000 grant from the America 250 Foundation; however, AZSOS has not received any state funding for this purpose.

State funding will enable the commission to hire professionals to plan, coordinate, and execute statewide events, develop educational programs and foster community engagement initiatives. It will also be used to build partnerships with local businesses and national organizations, enhancing Arizona's participation in the semi-quincentennial and boosting tourism through events that highlight the state's historical contributions and iconic landmarks.

Proposal: Appropriate \$500,000 from the state general fund one-time, non-lapsing and five FTEs in FY2026 to support the Arizona America 250 Commission.

Alternatives considered and reasons for rejection: AZSOS considered two alternatives:

1. Relying on existing resources: Without additional funding and staff, Arizona risks underrepresentation in America 250, limiting its ability to engage the public and execute impactful statewide programming. It would not allow the commission to meet the demands of planning and executing events at the scale required for such a significant commemoration.
2. Private fundraising: While private fundraising may be a supplementary source, relying solely on it would hinder the commission's ability to create robust programming and support FTE positions in a timely manner. This option does not suffice due to the

unpredictability of fundraising and the necessity for secure and immediate funding to begin preparations.

Impact of not funding this fiscal year: If funding is not provided in this fiscal year, Arizona will fall behind in its preparations for the America 250 celebrations, while other states have been planning for years. Without adequate staff and resources, the commission will be unable to coordinate large-scale events, secure partnerships, or provide meaningful public and business engagement and educational opportunities. Arizona's absence from significant national and regional commemorations would diminish the state's legacy and its ability to capitalize on the economic benefits associated with increased tourism.

Statutory reference: This funding request is in accordance with Senate Bill 1497 (SB1497), which established the Arizona America 250 Commission during the Fifty-Fifth Legislature: Second Regular Session.

Equipment to be purchased: N/A

Classification of new positions: The request includes funding for five FTES to support the America 250 initiative. These positions will likely include roles such as:

- Executive Director
- Communications & Branding Director
- Events Coordinator
- Development Coordinator
- Community Engagement Coordinator

These roles are essential for planning and executing statewide events, managing public relations and securing partnerships and funding.

Annualization: N/A