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Teach For America Chief Executive Officer Elisa Villanueva Beard Announces She Will Step Down as CEO in 2025

After 25 years with Teach For America (TFA), Villanueva Beard's announcement will launch a succession planning process that will lead to a leadership transition at TFA next year.

January 29, 2024—After 25 years of service to Teach for America (TFA), chief executive officer Elisa Villanueva Beard announced that she has decided to step down as CEO in 2025. Villanueva Beard will continue to serve as CEO for the next 18-24 months until a successor is chosen.

"2025 will mark significant milestones for Teach For America and our work for educational equity and excellence. It is our 35th anniversary, and we will be halfway to reaching our bold ten-year goal, working in partnership with communities to create the conditions for twice as many children to reach key educational milestones indicating they are on a path to economic mobility and futures filled with possibility," said Villanueva Beard, who has been with TFA for more than 25 years, including her time as a classroom teacher, and next year marks her 12th year as CEO.

"The work we're doing at TFA is urgent and important, and cannot be disrupted," said Villanueva Beard. "Young people are facing a learning and mental health crisis, and TFA has leaned all the way into the challenges and is responding with clarity, action, and possibility. I am confident about TFA's future and am committed to a thoughtful and careful transition, working alongside our exceptional staff and board members, to have the greatest impact for kids and communities."

Villanueva Beard first joined TFA as a corps member in 1998, teaching students in Phoenix for three years. Her first full-time role on staff was as executive director in the Rio Grande Valley, where she grew up, starting in 2001. After becoming chief operating officer of the national organization in 2005, she was named CEO in 2013. Under her leadership, Teach For America is optimizing for its scale, innovating, and deepening its impact to drive positive student outcomes and systems change. Last year TFA saw a close to 40% increase in new corps members in the classroom. Today's TFA corps is the most diverse in history - 60% identify as people of color and 45% are first-generation college students. They work in more than 300 communities across the country alongside over 65,000 alumni and participants in a new tutoring initiative, the Ignite Fellowship. Third-party studies continue to show the positive impact that TFA corps members and alumni make in the classroom, and the number of alumni in critical leadership roles who drive systems change at every level of the system continues to grow.

TFA's Board of Directors is undertaking a succession and transition planning process that will transparently engage stakeholders in seeking TFA's next CEO.

"In her 25 years of service to Teach For America, Elisa has been fiercely committed to kids and to the mission of educational excellence and equity," said David Kenny, chair of the Teach For America Board of Directors and chief executive officer at Nielsen. "For two and a half decades Elisa has centered on what is best for children and communities. In that same way, Elisa has asked the board to begin a succession planning process with an intentionally long runway, so that a thoughtful leadership transition can take place some time in 2025 without disrupting the important work underway."

Villanueva Beard helped build TFA as an early corps member, increased the scale of TFA's impact as COO, and grew the organization in new ways as CEO, positioning TFA for greater impact with kids and communities in its fourth decade.

As a TFA Phoenix corps member in 1998, Villanueva Beard became singularly focused on meeting her 36 first graders where they were. Villanueva Beard not only witnessed what her young scholars were up against—she witnessed what they were capable of. She recognized that when her students were held to the highest of expectations while having access to the support they needed, they were able to thrive.

That idea of offering brilliant students support to meet their capabilities—no matter who they are, no matter where they come from, no matter what their family lives look like—is what inspired Villanueva Beard to answer the call to become the executive director of TFA's Rio Grande Valley site in 2001. In her four years as executive director, Villanueva Beard responded to the growing local demand for TFA teachers by more than tripling the size of the teaching corps, and growing fundraising efforts by ten fold, setting a new precedent for investment and possibility in rural community partnerships.

In 2005 Villanueva Beard was named TFA's chief operating officer, at a time when TFA worked to meet increasing demand for its teachers from school and district partners across the country, leading with a focus on not just increasing the corps size, but also increasing impact and racial and ethnic diversity. By 2015, Villanueva Beard had led TFA as co-CEO for two years, and TFA had built a network of over 50,000 corps members and alumni working from all sectors to pursue educational excellence and equity.

Villanueva Beard's entire career has centered in a deep belief in all kids, and her more than decade of work as CEO has been marked by innovation, learning, and a commitment to transformational change through collaboration and community. She recognized early on that the public education system was never designed to set all students up for success, and it certainly was not built to equip students to meet the demands of the 21st century. Villanueva Beard is driven by a clear-eyed belief that in order to build stronger communities, we have to transform the education system to equip and ensure all young people can pursue choice-filled lives.

The urgent work that Villanueva Beard continues to lead at TFA, alongside a strong leadership team, board and staff is yielding clear signs of impact:

- This school year, over 2,200 new Teach For America teachers entered classrooms across rural and urban America.
- About 45% of new Teach For America teachers are first-generation college graduates, and about 60% identify as BIPOC.

- Teach For America's Ignite Fellowship is deepening its impact across communities, with the high-dosage tutoring program on track to grow by 40% from last year. Fellows are committed to accelerating student learning, with a clear focus on improving student outcomes in elementary reading and middle school math, while building relationships and fostering belonging and connection among students.
- These educators join TFA's 65,000 alumni, a group of exceptional and diverse leaders including state and national teachers of the year, principals, district leaders, state superintendents, elected officials, policymakers, nonprofit leaders, and entrepreneurs who are working alongside many others to transform education practices, policies, and culture to ensure all children have choice-filled lives.
- Recent evaluations of TFA corps members and alumni in [Texas](#), [Miami](#), [Indianapolis](#), and [New York City](#) show that TFA teachers (corps members and alumni) are as effective and sometimes more effective in improving student academic achievement when compared to their non-TFA peers. TFA teachers' instructional impact has remained consistent throughout the organization's history.
- Nine of out 10 principals who employ TFA corps members agree that they have a positive impact on students.
- Teach For America remains focused and is in pursuit of its ambitious 2030 goal of ensuring twice as many children in communities where it works are reaching key educational milestones indicating they are on a path to economic mobility and co-creating a life filled with possibility.

More about Teach For America's impact can be found [here](#).

About Teach For America

Teach For America works in partnership with communities across the country to expand educational opportunities for children. Founded in 1990, Teach For America finds, develops, and supports a diverse network of leaders who expand opportunity for children from classrooms, schools, and every sector and field that shapes the broader systems in which schools operate. Today, Teach For America is a force of 70,000 alumni, corps members, and Ignite fellows working in pursuit of profound systemic change so that one day every child has an equal opportunity to learn, lead, thrive, and co-create a future filled with possibility. Teach For America is a proud member of the AmeriCorps national service network. For more information, visit www.teachforamerica.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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