
Stimulating Information:

Useful Resources to learn about and track the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)**

Note: This summary was prepared by René Bryce-Laporte (Aspen CSG). For more help with these sites or for help finding other sites focused on specific topics, please contact him directly at:

rene.laporte@aspeninstitute.org / 202-736-2908

ARRA Overview

In February 2009, the U.S. Congress passed and President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (H.R.1). The bill was introduced to provide a vigorous government response to a severe national (actually international) economic downturn.

The bill provides \$787 billion in spending (65%) and tax cuts (35%) designed to spur economic growth. The bill passed the House of Representatives on a party line vote, with not one Republican member of the House voting in favor of its passage, and with only three Republican votes in the Senate. All but 11 Democrats voted for ARRA in the House and all of the Democrats in the Senate voted for the bill.

The partisan divide has been less evident in the states, though it exists even there. Most Republican governors have accepted the offered funds and embraced the opportunity to fund programs, projects and people in their states.

Note: You will read and hear references to both ARRA and the Stimulus Package. Both of these terms refer to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. These terms may be used interchangeably.

The purpose of the bill is to:

- a) Preserve and create jobs and promote economic recovery
- b) Assist those most impacted by the recession
- c) Provide investments needed to increase economic efficiency by spurring technological advances
- d) Invest in transportation, environmental protection, and other infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits
- e) Stabilize state and local government budgets

The act seeks to get money flowing into the economy quickly and to push funding into the hands of projects that are ready to go – which tends to advantage organizations that already have existing relationships with state and local government. The funding is intended as a one-shot deal, not to start a continuous funding stream. All stimulus funds are to be committed by 2011. Applicants for funding must comply with both federal wage rates and Buy America provisions.

ARRA funds are being distributed in five ways:

- 1) Through federal agency **formula** programs to state agencies
- 2) Through federal agency **formula** programs to localities (through state agencies)
- 3) Through federal agency **discretionary** (competitive) grant programs to states and localities
- 4) Through **tax credits or rebates** to individuals and businesses
- 5) Through **bonds and loans** to businesses

The stimulus package funds distributed through the **formula** programs is automatic. Money sent to the states will be distributed through the various state agencies. Much of the formula funding is directed to specific purposes, but some flexibility and creativity might be applied to using these funds – both by the agencies, and by those trying to tap them. Again, because of the desire to spend the funds quickly, existing relationships with those agencies will be very helpful.

Other stimulus package funds are available through **competitive** grants. Local organizations, agencies or governments can in many cases apply directly to the federal government for this funding. Having programs ready to roll is helpful in accessing many of the discretionary grant funds.

Tax credits or rebates for businesses and individuals are available for whoever qualifies. But in most cases, if you don't apply, you will not get the credit or rebate, and the money will be left on the table.

Resources to Track ARRA

In these pages, we offer a quick guide to information and tracking websites provided by federal and state governments, as well as some key independent sources. The information and resources can help your organization or other organizations in your community identify and apply for funding. It can also arm you with information that will help you positively influence the distribution of funds in your state and communities.

But First, A Few Caveats: Note that not only for the federal government sites, but also the state government and especially the independent sites listed below, the information posted is subject to change. That means a few things:

1. **Resource Regeneration: Visit Often.** It is worth your while to revisit sites that you consider valuable to scan for new relevant information. **These are living sites**, and many are updated regularly as new decisions are made about the stimulus dollars, and as those dollars are rolled out.
2. **“Resource Poof”: Save for Your Life.** If you see information on the site that is of particular value to you, you may want to take steps to copy or save it – or risk what we call “resource poof” – in which you will never see the information the way you first saw it on that site ever again.
3. **Not All Sites Are Created Equal.** Just keep in mind that the quality and quantity of the information on these sites varies a great deal from site to site. Although the websites offer a very quick way to get information, it is probably best to check more than one site, and not to rely solely on any one of them. This is good advice when so much is happening so quickly!

▪ **Federal Government Website**

www.recovery.gov: The Obama Administration has launched an amazingly comprehensive website that is the best first-go-to-site for All Things Recovery. It:

- Explains ARRA
- Shows how, when and where funds are being spent
- Provides data that will allow citizens and organizations to evaluate the Act, its effects and its progress.
- Provides links to other federal agency and specialized sites where interested parties can access ARRA funds such as www.grants.gov or www.FedBizOpps.gov.

Each federal agency has its own recovery.gov website. If you visit the various federal agency recovery.gov sites, you will notice that they are of different style and quality. It is apparent that the

Administration mandated that the agencies launch a recovery website and then left the various agencies to their own devices.

A summary of federal recovery.gov websites is attached as Appendix I.

▪ State Government and State-Focused Websites

Every state has some type of website to address the opportunities provided by the stimulus package. These official state sites can be accessed from a map within the federal recovery.gov website – but each has its own address that you can use directly as well. (In general, every state uses either a stimulus.statename.gov site or a statename.recovery.gov site.

Through these state sites you can generally gauge how much funding is coming to the state, find out which state agencies are distributing particular funds, and gain some guidance on how organizations, coalitions and individuals may apply for funding.

In addition, most U.S. senators have a recovery website that focuses on resources that will go to their respective states. The senatorial sites vary greatly. Some provide a great deal of guidance as to how local stakeholders may access funds. Some senators provide little or no information.

▪ Independent Websites

At least one new cottage industry has sprung up in this down economy: *Tracking the Stimulus!* Both non-profit organizations and associations as well as for-profit businesses have assembled websites to track the process for accessing stimulus funds and the flow of those funds. Most of these sites are focused on something: one type of policy or subject matter (e.g., helping microenterprise, business assistance, alleviating poverty, the green economy), or perhaps a region of the country.

We offer two appendixes to help you access some of the best of these websites, and some targeted to topics that concern your work.

Appendix 2 offers a listing of René's Fave Five – a small selection of relevant independent websites that are quite usable and helpful.

Appendix 3 provides a table of some leading websites focused on specific program and policy topic areas.

▪ Stimulus Actual and Virtual Informational Events

Finally, many states and organizations are hosting information sessions, application seminars and regular webinars to keep people abreast of what is happening, and to help them gain access to the funds. It makes sense for you to keep your eyes open and ears to the ground on events that are happening in your states, or regionally or nationally related to your topics of interest. It might also be something that you might want to think of organizing, especially focused on rural people and places.

Just to give you an idea of what is and might be out there, a sampling of these described in Appendix 4.

Appendix I– Summary of Federal Recovery.gov Websites

Federal Agency	Recovery Website
Agency for International Development (AID)	www.usaid.gov/recovery
Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)	www.nationalservice.org/recovery
Department of Agriculture (USDA)	www.usda.gov/wps/portal/?navid=USDA_ARRA
Department of Commerce (DOC)	www.commerce.gov/Recovery/
Department of Defense (DOD)	www.defenselink.mil/recovery/
Department of Education (ED)	www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html
Department of Energy (DOE)	www.energy.gov/recovery/
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	www.hhs.gov/recovery
Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	www.dhs.gov/xopnbiz/recovery.shtm
Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	www.hud.gov/recovery/
Department of Justice (DOJ)	www.usdoj.gov/recovery/
Department of Labor (DOL)	www.dol.gov/recovery/
Department of State (DOS)	www.state.gov/recovery/
Department of the Interior (DOI)	www.state.gov/recovery/
Department of Transportation (DOT)	www.cncs.gov/recovery
Department of the Treasury (TREAS)	www.cncs.gov/recovery
Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)	www.va.gov/recovery/
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	www.epa.gov/recovery/
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)	www.fcc.gov/recovery/
General Services Administration (GSA)	www.gsa.gov/recovery/
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)	www.nasa.gov/recovery/
National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)	www.nea.gov/recovery/
National Science Foundation (NSF)	www.nsf.gov/recovery/
Office of Personnel Management (OPM)	www.opm.gov/recovery/index.aspx
Railroad Retirement Board (RRB)	www.rrb.gov/recovery/
Small Business Administration (SBA)	www.sba.gov/recovery/
Smithsonian Institution (SI)	www.si.edu/recovery/
Social Security Administration (SSA)	ssa.gov/recovery/
US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	ssa.gov/recovery/

Appendix 2 – René’s Fave Five of the Independent Economic Recovery Websites

A small selection of relevant independent websites

1. Neighborhood Link – www.neighborhoodlink.com.

Neighborhood Link is an Internet-based community network that enables every neighborhood in participating metropolitan areas to create their own free, interactive Web sites.

- They have a very easy to read Executive Summary of the ARRA’s elements at: http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/article/Community/Executive_Summary_2009_Stimulus_Package.
- This site also links to their explanation of the package at http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/article/Community/The_2009_Stimulus_Package_Explained. This explanation provides a timeline, the context of the legislation and some of the debates involved in its passage. A link to a glossary of terms, a chart showing the breakdown of the funding by category.

2. National League of Cities – www.nlc.org

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the oldest and largest organization in the United States devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. The National League of Cities is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns, and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans. Do note that NLC partners not only with large cities, but also small and medium-sized cities and towns.

They have a series of webcasts on their site with information on the stimulus package. I would particularly point to the webcast of February 25, 2009. There is a free and simple registration required to view the webcast. You do not have to register to view the power point presentation for “*What’s In It for Cities and How to Access the Resources.*” Currently the webcast archives are referenced front and center on the NLC website.

3. National Conference of State Legislatures – www.ncsl.org

The National Conference of State Legislatures was founded in 1975 with the conviction that legislative service is one of democracy’s worthiest pursuits. NCSL is a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staffs of the nation’s 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. NCSL provides research, technical assistance and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on the most pressing state issues. NCSL is an effective and respected advocate for the interests of state governments before Congress and federal agencies.

NCSL’s website has a link to its Economic Stimulus summary on its front page. Legislators and legislative staff have access to a discussion board there.

<http://ncsl.org/statefed/2009economicstimulus.htm>

4. Fieldstone Alliance – www.fieldstonealliance.org

This is a 26-year-old consulting firm that provides a variety of services to non-profit organizations, collaborations, networks, and other joint efforts to help them become more effective and increase impact. Customers include grant-makers and grant-making affinity groups, large-scale initiatives, intermediaries, networks, associations, and collaboratives.

They have a user-friendly page dedicated to the stimulus package. This page includes a summary of the bill, funding available to non-profits, how the money will be distributed and references to other related legislation. Fieldstone also links to other useful national and state websites, and to information relevant to the various funding areas within the stimulus package

5. Independent Sector – www.independentsector.org

Independent Sector is the leadership forum for non-profits, foundations and corporate giving programs committed to advancing the common good in America and around the world. Their nonpartisan coalition of approximately 600 organizations leads, strengthens and mobilizes the charitable community to advance a just and inclusive society and a healthy democracy of active citizens, effective institutions, and vibrant communities.

- Independent Sector's (IS) stimulus webpage is located at:
http://www.independentsector.org/programs/gr/Recovery_Reinvestment.htm.
It has links to funding availability by state (the recovery.org sites) and by federal agency (see individual agency websites).
- There is a link to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities research on the state-by-state impact of many ARRA provisions on low and moderate income individuals. You can also link to that directly via: <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2355>
- The Independent Sector site also has a number of proposals for future action.

Appendix 3 – Websites focused on Specific Issue Topics

Subject	Agency	Website
Housing	National Low Income Housing Coalition	www.nlihc.org
Small Business	Small Business Administration	www.sba.gov/recovery
Job Training & Unemployment Assistance	The Workforce Alliance	http://www.workforcealliance.org
Job Training & Unemployment Assistance	American Association of Community Colleges	http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Advocacy/Pages/EconomicStimulus.aspx
Health	Center for Disease Control	http://www.cdc.gov/Partners/Archive/EconomicStimulus/20090213.html
Child Care	Center for Law & Social Policy (CLASP)	http://childcareandearlyed.clasp.org/reinvestinginchildcare.html#2
Education	American Association of Community Colleges	http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Advocacy/Pages/EconomicStimulus.aspx
Arts	National Endowment for the Arts	http://www.nea.gov/recovery/index.html
Rural Development	National Association of Development Organizations	http://www.nado.org/legaffair/issupdate/stimulus.php
Indian Country Investments	National Congress of American Indians	http://www.indiancountryworks.org/
Broadband	US Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service	http://www.usda.gov/rus/

Appendix 4 – Actual and Virtual Informational Events

Here is a sampling of seminars, webinars, conference call series, and the like that organizations and agencies are hosting to help communities and organizations learn about and access the stimulus funds. Again, this is a sample just to give you an idea – plenty more where these came from if you look for them!

- 1. The University of New Hampshire** hosted a three hour event that provided background information on how to access ARRA funds on April 7, 2009. You can access the video and power points for this event through New Hampshire's state recovery site at: http://www.nh.gov/recovery/news/info_meeting040709.htm. No registration is required. While the event was geared to a New Hampshire audience, this session can provide some general information useful to anyone interested in accessing stimulus funds or providing advice to organizations seeking stimulus funds.
- 2. Policy Link** is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works.® They are hosting call-in sessions on the stimulus package. This bi-weekly call-in series, held every other Friday at 1:00 p.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Pacific), focuses on ways to infuse equity into the nation's economic recovery. You may register for this series – *Demand Equity Now: A Recovery Briefing Series* – through a link on the front page of Policy Link webpage at www.policylink.org.

Policy Link has also posted a new report by in partnership with [Transportation Equity Network](#) to provide a roadmap for advocates to ensure stimulus-funded public transportation projects bring hope and economic opportunity to millions of Americans hit “first and worst” by the economic downturn.

The report, [An Engine of Opportunity: A User's Guide to Advocate for Transportation Equity in the 2009 Recovery Act](#), shows advocates how they can push local, state, and federal leaders to make fair and just transportation investments in low-income communities and communities of color.

- 3. eHealth Initiative.** The eHealth Initiative and the Foundation for eHealth Initiative are independent, non-profit affiliated organizations whose missions are the same: to drive improvement in the quality, safety, and efficiency of healthcare through information and information technology.

They have hosted a number of sessions on the health provisions of the stimulus package. Access to these sessions can be gained through the eHealth Initiative website. They cost \$25 and can be accessed at www.ehealthinitiative.org/store.
- 4. Mississippi Stimulus Summit.** On April 16th Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour hosted a summit on the ARRA. Several agency heads participated and presented their plans for the state. Their presentations can be accessed at: http://stimulus.ms.gov/msgo/mssr.nsf/webpages/LN_stimulussummit_Page_StimulusSummit?OpenDocument