



American Library Association - Office of Government Relations - [www.ala.org/washoff](http://www.ala.org/washoff)  
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## **The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act: What Librarians Can Do Now**

April 2009

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) offers libraries many opportunities – and challenges – to obtain new, one-time funds for library services projects to support the goals of the ARRA. The Act broadly provides for several categories of funds – the three most important for libraries include the broadband programs, state stabilization funds and the “Senior Community Service Employment Program.”

At this point in time, one of the biggest opportunities for libraries lies in the broadband stimulus funds to be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It’s not too early to start gathering information and developing strategies to assure that libraries are ready to participate in these programs, even though many details about the application processes have not yet been determined.

### **The Opportunities**

#### **\$7.2 Billion for Broadband Programs**

There are tremendous opportunities for libraries to benefit from the broadband provisions of the ARRA. \$4.5 billion has been designated for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and \$2.5 billion for the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), which includes no less than \$200 million set aside for community computing centers, including public libraries and community colleges. Unfortunately, specific details about these grant or loan programs are not yet defined.

#### **\$53.6 Billion for the State Stabilization Fund**

The purpose of this fund is to provide fiscal relief to the states to prevent tax increases and cutbacks to critical services. The ARRA directs governors to use 81.8 percent of the state’s allocation to support elementary, secondary and higher education. This funding is flexible and the control rests in the hands of the governor as to how the funding is allocated in the state. New construction is excluded; repairing or modernizing buildings is not.

#### **\$120 Million for the Senior Community Service Employment Program**

This funding will provide community service jobs at nonprofit and public facilities, including libraries, for an additional 24,000 older Americans. Program participants are placed in a wide variety of community service positions and public facilities, including public and higher education institutions. In most states, the governor has selected the State Office on Aging to administer the program.



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## **TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO ... TO GET BROADBAND STIMULUS FUNDING FOR YOUR LIBRARY**

- ▶ **Assess your library's telecommunications services and identify future needs.** Think about the library services that can be enhanced by broadband applications. Focus especially on your library's role in helping people gain new job and career skills, search for and apply for new jobs and support small businesses. Also start to identify resource people who might work with you to develop proposals to NTIA and RUS.
- ▶ **Inventory the connectivity at your library and in the surrounding community.** What types of telecommunications services are offered? What providers serve your library and your community, campus or school? What are your patrons' needs? [E-rate recipients: Build on your tech plans and other features of your E-rate applications.]
- ▶ **Talk with your campus or school administrators, local government officials, library boards, the governor's office and the state library agency in your state.** What plans do they have for broadband and the ARRA? Will you have to work through them or will your library be able to apply directly for ARRA programs? Check out their Web sites. Connect with your state library agency, any regional and/or multi-type library cooperatives to find out what they are doing.
- ▶ **Think creatively, collaboratively and aggregate.** Contact other libraries as well as other institutions in your community to find out what they may be planning. Can you work together to aggregate demand for broadband? As you learn more about what others are doing, identify potential models that you may want to adapt for your community.
- ▶ **Working with the key administrators in your organization, contact potential partners – public and private.** Talk to phone companies cable providers, ISPs and even power companies. Ask about their plans and needs while explaining to them how your library utilizes telecommunications and why expanded broadband services for libraries will help the whole community. Push for "fiber to the library" and other advanced technologies. Think of your library as an anchor tenant in your community's broadband network.

► **Identify the job/career, employment and small business needs and resources in your community.** While you are doing this research, share information about how your library is already helping people find and train for jobs, learn new career skills and serve small businesses. Describe how broadband will expand your services for “recovery and reinvestment.”

► **Start thinking about “sustainability.”** What will your library need to make sure that your broadband services are stable and robust? Will you need other human and software resources? (Although undetermined at this time, some parts of the NTIA and RUS programs may support “non-technology” resources.) Start strategizing now to obtain local funding for long-term continuation of projects and services started under ARRA grants.

► **Stay up-to-date on the status of ARRA programs.** Monitor the ALA Web site [www.ala.org/knowyourstimulus/](http://www.ala.org/knowyourstimulus/). As details become available, more information will be added to the web site – so please check often!

► **Think BIG!** Even a small fraction of \$7.2 billion dollars is a lot of money. We know that libraries need broadband to serve our users. The ARRA is a one-time opportunity to advance broadband build out to the underserved, the unserved and “special populations.” Libraries potentially fit into several parts of the NTIA and RUS programs. Think “fiber and other technologies to the library.”

► **Finally, say “thank you” to your U.S. senators and congressional representatives for passing the ARRA.** Make sure to keep them informed about your library services related to job growth and employment information – and share with them your concepts for ARRA grant applications and broadband deployment. Emphasize how your library services promote new jobs and employment skills, for example, through information and Internet literacy training.

Please be check out the ALA Washington Office blog: District Dispatch at <http://www.wo.ala.org/districtdispatch/>

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