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The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: How It Pertains to Georgia's Libraries

by *Diana J. Very*

On Feb. 17, less than a month after President Barack Obama took office, his stimulus plan was signed and ready to hit the streets of America. Many people scrambled to read the 407-page document that outlines the plan designed to bring the United States to a more prosperous and stable economic time. Those of us in Georgia's library community are among them.

There's money out there and we want some!

Stimulus Public Law 111-5, The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) is intended to "make supplemental appropriations for job preservation and creation, infrastructure investment, energy efficiency and science, assistance to the unemployed, and State and local fiscal stabilization, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009" (Stimulus Public Law 111-5, 2009). This legislation opens several opportunities for Georgia libraries to provide Internet connections, library service projects, additions to collections, additional computer labs for patrons, and federally funded employment opportunities for special populations. The key for this funding, however, is to work with community partners at the local level.

One of the main features about ARRA is that it did not create new programs. The funding is added to existing programs that have provided measurable results in the past. This action means that new policies did not have to be approved and new agencies were not created. This saved considerable time and money, providing funds quickly to local governments.

The public is aware of ARRA because of the publicity and attention given it by the media. Not many people will take the time to read ARRA, however, depriving them of a fuller understanding of how it affects local-level

economies. The programs are not magic policies that will eliminate the economic woes of the country; their goal is to provide increased funding for programs that work.

The biggest challenge for library administrators at this time is to stay informed.

The Obama administration has created a Web site, www.recovery.gov, to provide up-to-date information about planning and implementation of ARRA. Additionally, the Web site www.grants.gov provides information about grant opportunities from federal agencies.

Funding opportunities that public libraries need to watch for are from:

- Department of Rural Development,
- Department of Commerce,
- Department of Energy (DOE),
- National Endowment for the Arts,
- Department of Labor (DOL),
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS),
and
- Department of Education (DOE).

Sign up for an e-mail subscription at http://www.grants.gov/applicants/email_subscription.jsp. This will provide you with daily notification of grant opportunities. The site includes links with information about the full solicitation process for each grant. Below are two examples of opportunities that were sent through this subscription e-mail.

Note that the second example states that this program is directly from ARRA legislation.

USDA

United States Department of Agriculture
Business and Cooperative Programs
Inviting Applications for Rural Business Opportunity
Grants
Modification 1
[http://www07.grants.gov/search/
search.do?&mode=VIEW&flag2006=false&oppld=46134](http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&flag2006=false&oppld=46134)

DOE

US Department of Energy
National Energy Technology Laboratory
Recovery Act - State Energy Program
Modification 2
[http://www07.grants.gov/search/
search.do?&mode=VIEW&flag2006=false&oppld=46184](http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&flag2006=false&oppld=46184)

The Office of the Governor for the State of Georgia created a Web site of state agency contacts for assistance with ARRA: http://stimulusaccountability.ga.gov/00/channel_modifieddate/0,2096,134245182_134289176,00.html. "Staff from the following state agencies will be glad to assist you with questions regarding funding, timelines, the grant process or any other inquiries you have regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act," it states. This is a great benefit to local agencies looking to stay informed.

The U.S. Department of Labor, at the time of this writing, is sending out instructions for state agencies to prepare their state plans to incorporate the activities for the ARRA funding (Small, 2009). Much of those funds will pass through the state level to local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) to distribute to career centers, training centers and other vendors who apply for grant funding of their programs. The local library systems can apply for grants from the WIB in their region. Programs that use library expertise, such as computer training and collection development, can be funded through DOL grants. The WIB executive director is a great resource of information about where and how to apply. One example is the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Workforce Investment Board (HGAWIB) in Region 9, which covers the counties of Appling, Bleckley, Candler, Dodge, Emanuel, Evans, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Montgomery, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Wayne, Wheeler, and Wilcox (HGAWIB, 2009). Gina Thomas from Ocmulgee Library System in Bleckley is a board member of this WIB. When libraries partner with local career centers, it benefits both agencies. Together, libraries and career centers offer computers and collections for researching job opportunities. Working together prevents duplication of services and provides alternative services as well as building knowledge of each other's abilities to serve the

community. School boards, regional agricultural agencies, and regional art organizations are also excellent partners for various programs.

Below are opportunities written in ARRA legislation, including the page number for quick reference. The items bulleted with the check mark are ideas for which public library programs are eligible. With creative planning and partnering, you may discover many more opportunities.

**Title IV – Energy and Water Development
Department of Energy**

Energy Programs
Page H.R. 1-24
Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability
\$100,000,000 shall be available for worker training activities.

- ✓ Possible use of computer labs at libraries for worker training, buy mobile training labs to be used for training sessions, buy materials for collection specific to career and occupation reference.
- ✓ Partner with Georgia Department of Labor/ Employment and Training to provide training sessions, computer labs, and materials.

**Title VII – Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies**

Other Related Agencies

Page H.R. 1-57
National Endowment for the Arts
Grants and Administration
\$50,000,000 to be distributed in direct grants to fund arts projects and activities that preserve jobs in non-profit arts sector threatened by declines in philanthropic and other support during the current economic downturn. Forty percent distributed to state art agencies and regional arts organizations, 60 percent for competitive projects.

- ✓ Folk art projects in rural Georgia, art festivals in partnership with community organizations, galleries provided in library buildings.
- ✓ Possible library projects, paintings, murals, etc., from local artists through grant funding.
- ✓ Library programs of art instruction, art appreciation, etc., grant paying for professional instruction from local artists.

General Provisions – This Title

Section 702

Page H.R. 1-58

In carrying out the work for which funds in this title are

being made available, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall utilize, where practicable, the Public Lands Corps, Youth Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association, Job Corps, and other related partnerships with federal, state, local, tribal or nonprofit groups that serve young adults.

- ✓ Libraries partner with these youth organizations to provide teen programs.

Title VIII – Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies

Department of Labor

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Training and Employment Services

\$500,000,000 for grants to states for adult employment and training activities, including supportive services and needs-related payments described in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

\$1,200,000,000 for grants to the states for youth activities, including summer employment for youth.

\$1,250,000,000 for grants to states for dislocated worker employment and training activities.

- ✓ Partner with local Workforce Development Centers for use of computer lab for training. They supply the money for computer lab and collection materials, library supplies space for training.
- ✓ Summer employment of teens at the library paid through federal funds. Get painting, clean-up and landscaping projects done with teen workers.
- ✓ Possible staff opportunities or work training opportunities.

Community Service Employment for Older Americans

\$120,000,000 for grants to carry out Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965.

- ✓ Work with the local employment office to hire older citizens who can provide assistance with circulation desk, monitoring services, shelving, etc.

Department of Education

Page H.R. 1-69

Rehabilitation Service and Disability Research

\$34,300,000 shall be for services for older blind individuals.

- ✓ Funding for additional programs for this population through GLASS and subregionals.

Title XIV – State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Department of Education

Page H.R. 1-166

Section 14002 – State Use of Funds

(a) Education Fund

In general, for each fiscal year, the governor shall use 81.8 percent of the state's allocation under section 14001(d) for the support of elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education and, as applicable, early childhood education programs and services.

- ✓ Expanded Prime Time and Summer Reading Programs are early childhood education and may qualify in the state allocation.

(b) Other Government Services

In general, the Governor shall use 18.2 percent of the state's allocation under section 14001 for public safety and other government services, which may include assistance for elementary and secondary education and public institutions of higher education, and for modernization, renovation, or repair of public school facilities and institutions of higher education facilities, including modernization, renovation, and repairs that are consistent with a recognized green building rating system.

- ✓ "Available for other government services," may include funding for "green" libraries

Section 14005 - State Application

Page H.R. 1-168

(a) The governor of a state desiring to receive an allocation under section 14001 shall submit an application at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may reasonable require.

- ✓ Need to make sure that public libraries are included in State Application for Funding.

(d)(4)(C) The state will take steps to improve state academic content standards and student academic achievement standards consistent with America COMPETES Act.

- ✓ Work with Education Department programs to improve test scores by providing practice tests, SAT prep workshops in cooperation with area colleges.
- ✓ Partner with schools for homework help, collection materials for class projects, and other partnership programs.

Section 14007 – Innovation Fund

Page H.R. 1-170

\$650,000,000 to establish Innovation Fund, which shall consist of academic achievement awards that recognize eligible entities that make significant gains in closing the achievement gap.

- ✓ Partner with schools to provide programs that will qualify for awards.

Division B – Tax, Unemployment, Health, State Fiscal Relief, and Other Provisions

Title VI – Broadband Technology and Opportunities Program

Page H.R. 1-398

Section 6001 – Broadband Technology Opportunities Program

(b)(3)(A) Purpose to provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to schools, libraries, medical and healthcare providers, community colleges and other institutions of higher education, and other community support organizations and entities to facilitate greater use of broadband service by or through these organizations.

- ✓ Multiple opportunities to provide access to broadband services.

One of the purposes of the Obama stimulus plan is to provide state and local fiscal stabilization. Georgia libraries have been hit with losses from both state and local budgets, but the federal government is offering a provision of support until states and local governments can support themselves.

Use of stimulus funds will highlight the initiative and creativity of library personnel. Partnering with other

agencies at this time with programs directed toward communities and the families that live in them will highlight the crucial need for libraries in an economic downturn. Participation in these opportunities is optional, but using the funds as investments in Georgia's communities is a defining mission of library service. ►►



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