

Implementing ARRA

Design Snapshot

Facilitating Regional Stimulus Applications: Puget Sound's ARRA Coordination

July 2009

The [Puget Sound Regional Council \(PSRC\)](#) is taking a lead role in helping the region successfully apply for ARRA competitive awards to maximize the flow of stimulus dollars into the region and support effective regional implementation. A series of new web-based tools, including a clearinghouse of competitive ARRA funding opportunities and regional project ideas, a blog, a message board, and an ARRA tutorial, facilitate information sharing and connections between disparate groups, while regular, formally-organized meetings between regional stakeholders encourage collaborative work on potential joint applications.

Puget Sound ARRA Coordination	
Purpose:	Enhance regional coordination to boost regional ARRA applications and implementation
Lead entity:	MPO
Partners:	Federal, state, and local officials, area business leaders
ARRA focus:	Energy Efficiency Block Grants, Health Information Regional Extension Centers, Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy (ARPA-E), Energy Training Partnership Grants, Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2
Scale:	4-county region
Strategies:	Adopts multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral approaches
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The Puget Sound Regional Council facilitates truly regional decision-making around ARRA opportunities. A regional body charged by state and federal laws to work on transportation, land use, and economic development issues for the four-county central Puget Sound area, PSRC is diligently acting on the notion that regionalism can be an important element in winning ARRA funds by creating new mechanisms to connect disparate local institutions around competitive grants available through the stimulus package.

First, PSRC's newly established [ARRA Regional Project Clearinghouse](#) is a web-based tool that facilitates matching potential partners interested in joint applications for stimulus-funded projects of regional significance. The clearinghouse both lists select ARRA competitive grants and accepts submissions of stimulus project ideas from any Puget Sound institution seeking partners. Second, [PSRC-convened ARRA meetings](#), initiated soon after

the stimulus package passed in February 2009, bring together roughly 80 people on a bi-weekly basis to learn about the stimulus process and work together on joint regional applications. Augmenting both are a

new [ARRA message board](#) and [blog](#) initiated by PSRC as vehicles to further discuss the stimulus process and exchange information about funding and implementation opportunities.

The PSRC frames its ARRA coordination around broad, pre-existing regional priorities to motivate alignment of any new recovery initiatives with long-held concerns. For example, both the online clearinghouse and message board and PSRC's biweekly stimulus working sessions are organized around seven major focus areas that define Puget Sound's economic development work and also track many ARRA priorities: aerospace; clean energy and environment; housing and infrastructure; information technology and broadband; life sciences and basic sciences; workforce and education; and other economic development. Divided along these categories, the clearinghouse lists summaries of roughly 50 competitive ARRA awards, from the [Neighborhood Stabilization Program](#) and [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants \(EECBGs\)](#) to funding for broadband and electronic health records. It also posts every stimulus project idea it receives—43 of them to date.

The PSRC approach to facilitating regional ARRA projects encourages bottom-up, self organizing. Rather than mandate participation or issue top-down directives, PSRC fosters relationship building to boost the region's number of successful competitive ARRA grant applications that are multi-jurisdictional, multi-institutional, and cross-disciplinary. The clearinghouse, for example, enables matches between different, perhaps previously unconnected, regional stakeholders interested in similar sorts of recovery initiatives so that they might work jointly for ARRA competitive awards and avoid duplicative efforts. It is not a regional application system entailing new organizational layers for a formal regional project selection process. Posting planned recovery initiatives on the clearinghouse does not preclude local jurisdictions from submitting ARRA grant applications on their own, but rather facilitates their ability to shape collaborative, regional applications if they are so inclined. Accordingly, the regional ARRA project ideas listed in the clearinghouse are only in the planning and development phases, with each entry indicating intended goals, planned activities, lead contacts, and the sort of regional partners sought to successfully realize the concept.

Further, at the PSRC-convened stimulus working sessions, regional stakeholders have been able to gradually self-identify those ARRA project ideas that are shaping up to be Puget Sound's leading regional proposals for competitive stimulus dollars. With no projects pre-determined, working session participants are reaching their own consensus on which two or three proposals in each topical area would be most regional and collaborative in scope; most competitive nationally; best reflective of PSRC's long-term economic strategy while having short-term applications; and likely to be practical in implementation. These leading project ideas deserving regional focus include the [Washington Health Worker Training Initiative](#) (see #12), a workforce development partnership between the [Washington State Hospital Association](#) and [SEIU Healthcare](#), and Puget Sound New Energy Solutions, a new regional clean energy initiative (described in "Scaling Up for Regional Sustainability," another profile in this Brookings series).

Broad, multi-institutional collaborations and partnerships help drive PSRC's ARRA coordinating activities. Much of its success owes to [PSRC's Prosperity Partnership](#)—a coalition of 300 business, labor, government, and nonprofit leaders engaged in long-range economic development planning and implementation for the Puget Sound region. Without the Prosperity Partnership's member organizations volunteering significant time, resources, and staff to organize the web-based database, catalogue the various ARRA competitive awards, and develop the process for submitting regional project plans, the clearinghouse would not have been up and running by April 2009. Also, at the regularly held stimulus meetings, different invited speakers, including representatives from federal and state agencies and

members of the region's congressional delegation, play important roles in strengthening the regional ARRA knowledge-base by speaking on specific recovery topics and answering stakeholder concerns.

The Implementing ARRA Series

America's current economic crisis is not only a national crisis. It is also a metropolitan crisis. Therefore, it is critical to monitor the progress of creative metropolitan leaders who are leveraging the myriad resources provided by the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). To that end, the Metropolitan Policy Program's Implementing ARRA Series is tracking the implementation work of metropolitan leaders, assessing their progress and struggles, and extracting from the innovators' experiences ideas for short- and long-term federal policy reforms. Ultimately it is hoped the series will serve as a resource for best-practice exchange among regions and a source of ideas for designing the next generation of metro-friendly federal policies.

For More Information

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