

YouthBuild USA
Memo on Accessing 2009 Recovery Act and
Stimulus Funding Opportunities

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A. Purpose of This Recovery Memo

This electronic publication is intended for YouthBuild USA and local affiliated YouthBuild program staff, program advisors, and board members and others who have a stake in linking YouthBuild participants with 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA or stimulus) opportunities—either direct funding, indirect funding, or work supports and social services.

Rather than repeating the plethora of information about RFPs and NOFAs out there now, we are offering a one-stop reference to other websites and documents that will answer a number of frequent questions about stimulus opportunities.

We also highlight the importance of developing a disciplined self-education process and participatory habits among local YouthBuild program staff and YouthBuild USA advisors. After all, federal recovery efforts are not just about funding, and where it is about funding, it will be fast and short-lived. Recovery efforts are also about testing innovations, discovering best practices, ramping up participation in public planning processes, and trend-making.

We encourage you to use this memo as an open document on your computer. Listed resources are embedded with hyperlinks (direct links to websites or resources that are in blue text.) With some exceptions, website addresses *are not* written out in long form. With your internet browser open, you should be able to click on any hyperlink to view the link, or, while hovering over the link, **press the CTRL key and left click your mouse.**

The information here does not represent the views or opinions of the U.S. Federal Government or any other public or private funder. We offer select references here rather than an exhaustive list. We will update this document from time to time and welcome your feedback and suggested additions to make it better and more user-friendly. Please send comments or suggestions to Scott Margeson at YouthBuild USA (smargeson@youthbuild.org). Check the date at the bottom of the page to know which edition you are referencing.

B. Key Recommendations

We know there are high expectations around stimulus funding, and YouthBuild USA has shown particular enthusiasm for the emphasis on green jobs in the stimulus package. But we also know that there is little direct cash flowing to non-profit agencies like local YouthBuild programs, as so much of the funding is formula-based block grants to states or is otherwise restricted. There are some exceptions, and we offer a short list of the most relevant open funding streams toward the end of this document. More to the point, however, are these general recommendations we prepared as we sought out the synergies between recovery funding and local YouthBuild programs:

- **Partnerships are more important than ever.** Workforce investment boards, housing authorities, and especially in rural areas, community action agencies will receive a great deal of new funding that must be spent rapidly. Some of them will be looking for ways to partner with other local programs that have the capacity to help them meet their mandates. Weatherization, green building, and summer employment funding are just some of the programs that local YouthBuild programs *might* tap into through subcontracts and other innovative partnership opportunities—if they can prove capacity. Even then, *might* is the operative word. We encourage you to read on, and then develop a relationship-building strategy that is the most appropriate for your program.
- **Funding guidance is not yet available in all cases.** Some federal funding guidance has not been determined yet—including very relevant employment-related funding for disconnected youth through the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). As a result, states have not yet determined how to spend certain funding (this then also applies to local communities, counties, and non-profit

agencies). Stay on top of your state processes. Be patient, but also be realistic and prepared to jump on any opportunities as they open to you.

- **Community Action Agencies (CAPs or CAAs) are inundated with requests for partnerships**, since certain weatherization and community services funds are flowing directly through them (or similar designated agencies.) As one rural CAP leader us recently: "Everyone hated us before we got the stimulus money. Now everyone is running to us for a cut." Sound familiar? If approaching your CAP for weatherization, WIA, or other opportunities that flow through them, we recommend taking an asset-based approach. Tell your CAP agency what your local YouthBuild program offers them—not what your local YouthBuild program *needs* from them.
- **Be prepared to meet high expectations.** Any support you get will come with deliverables that you must be able to meet. Getting, spending, and reporting on stimulus money is *serious business*. Agencies need to deploy it quickly and get results, whether in partnership with others or alone. This is why you will find many "picky" partners out there -- public agencies and non-profit recipients will go the easiest, highest-capacity and most reliable route to spend their money appropriately, even if this means turning to private sector contractors where this is allowed. Make a fair assessment of what you can offer and deliver before approaching funders or partners.
- **Now more than ever it is important that YouthBuild programs position themselves as opinion leaders.** Where there are listening sessions or comment periods, take the opportunity to weigh in on relevant spending priorities and systems. We highly recommend that YouthBuild staff find ways to be a part of on-going programmatic conversations while there are still windows open. These windows are closing fast.
- **Stimulus funding will set precedents.** While it is presented as "one-time" funding, how stimulus funds are deployed, the innovations that come from it, and the principles and priorities behind it likely will be consistent for years to come in general policy and budgeting settings. It also sets a high bar for future emergency funding systems. The more you can learn, prepare and participate now, the better off you will be to take part in future opportunities as they arise.
- **Stay strategically focused for the sake of your young people.** Find opportunities and linkages that best fit with their needs, capabilities and goals. It's not just about programmatic funding for local YouthBuild programs, but also about educating your young people about benefits they can accrue through this funding as well.
- **DON'T ignore 2010 national and state budgeting processes.** In some cases, this funding might be more appropriate for you than stimulus-related opportunities.

C. Federal Websites

- Recovery.gov: The White House Recovery website is dedicated to "transparency and accountability" during the recovery period. You can monitor agency-level plans, investments in your state, and stay on top of recovery actions at the federal and state levels. We recommend that you check this site weekly.
- Grants.gov: If you have ever applied for federal funding, you are very familiar with this site. While recovery-related grant opportunities will be posted here, be advised that the Recovery Act does authorize that agencies use alternative systems for accepting grant applications. HUD, DOE, DOED, and other agencies have decided to take paper applications or in other ways accept applications, so be sure to read your NOFAs very carefully. You must still maintain a DUNS number and your updated status with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) regardless of whether you use Grants.gov as your application portal.

- Federal agency websites will also post NOFAs directly and may be easier to read than Grants.gov if you know exactly what you are looking for. Click on the agency name below to go directly to their recovery websites:
 - [Department of Labor](#) (Also check out the DOL-sponsored website, www.workforce3one.org for a clearinghouse of Recovery-related workforce development information, including a thorough webinar series.)
 - [Department of Education](#)
 - [Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)
 - [Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#)
 - [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#)
 - [Department of Justice](#)
- The [Corporation for National Service](#) received enough ARRA funding to add an additional 10,000 AmeriCorps and 3,000 VISTA slots, all of which were designated to current grantees across all categories of its awards. (YouthBuild USA was one such recipient for AmeriCorps awards. YouthBuild USA's VISTA slots, however, are not funded through ARRA). Check out the following press release, which includes a [link to recipients](#). If you do not have slots already through YouthBuild USA or otherwise, local YouthBuild programs may be able to access slots through state commissions or other providers.
- [FedBizOpps](#): Federally-funded recovery-related contract opportunities for businesses (non-profits included) are posted in a searchable database here. These are fee-for-service and vendor opportunities as opposed to grants and loans, and thus are unlikely to be applicable to local YouthBuild programs or their parent organizations. However, it may be worth exploring what opportunities are in your state or locality by agency and to think creatively about whether there are relevant subcontracting opportunities.

D. State Agency Websites and Analysis

- The White House Recovery page provides easy links to all [state recovery websites](#). Not all sites are created equal—some are comprehensive about all funding opportunities or spending priorities, while others direct you back to state agency home pages for detailed recovery information. We recommend that you check your state website weekly and explore the state agency homepages, including your departments of housing finance, education, health and human services, commerce, and energy.
- The **Center for Budget and Policy Priorities** (www.cbpp.org) offers a [state-by-state estimate of stimulus funding](#), a helpful outline of funding affecting low- to moderate income individuals, including training and employment services (19 pages if downloaded as PDF). May also be viewed by spending category through the same link.

E. Local Resources

- Block/formula grants and other funds will be distributed directly to county agencies, housing authorities, local school districts, development districts, and WIBs, who will deploy these resources according to state and/or federally-approved plans. Public input is required for many of these plans. Deadlines for public input for some agencies has already passed, but in some cases schedules, politics and a general lack of guidance has kept the planning window open.

- We recommend that you take the initiative to explore state and county websites, and make personal contacts with those you know in these agencies to find out about local plans. Even when funding is not available to your program directly, there are indirect ways in which you can benefit. The key is to be able to articulate what your program brings to the table—specifically an opportunity for public agencies to meet their goals around job training, creation and mobility for disadvantaged workers.

F. Funding Compilations and Analysis

There are dozens of resources out there highlighting funding opportunities for youth-centered organizations, workforce development programs, and others serving low-income or disconnected populations. We suggest that you explore each of the following resources:

- **Jobs for the Future** (www.jff.org) has published [The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: Selected Funding Streams for Struggling Students and Disconnected Youth](#) (2009, 6 pages) This document briefly highlights U.S. Departments of Education, Labor and Justice funding streams that affect the youth development environment.
- **Green for All** (www.greenforall.org) offers a [Recovery Users Guide](#) (60 pages) to assist local and state advocates, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and policymakers in making the best use of recovery dollars to help lower-income people and communities of color access green jobs. Its [Recovery Tool Kit](#) (14 pages) focuses on advocacy opportunities for individuals and community groups interested in pushing for a bigger green agenda locally.
- **The Workforce Alliance** (www.workforcealliance.org) has extensive resources relevant to workforce development on its [Recovery Legislation](#) page. Includes links to key federal and state resources and information about emerging best practices. Check out its [Green Jobs Training](#) summary and analysis (3 pages).
- **The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)** (www.clasp.org) also has an extensive [ARRA page](#). We suggest looking at three particularly relevant briefs:
 - [Preliminary Summary of Key Provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Aimed at Improving the Lives of Low-Income Americans](#) (5 pages) particularly relevant to local YouthBuild programs are the sections on Pell grants, WIA, and numerous income tax credits for which our young people may qualify.
 - [From Stimulus to System: Using the ARRA to Serve Disadvantaged Jobseekers](#) (8 pages) which explores community-benefit agreements, job linkage/first source hiring, and goals and standards for job creation and job quality as strategies to serve low-income and less educated populations.
 - [Recommendations to USDOL on Guidance to States on Implementing Youth Activities in the Recovery Act](#) (4 pages) delivered in partnership with the National Youth Employment Coalition, of which YouthBuild USA is a member.
- **National Low Income Housing Coalition** (www.nlihc.org) offers the best [clearinghouse for housing-related recovery information](#), including CDBG, weatherization, and neighborhood stabilization funding and formal HUD Notices, NOFAs, and analyses from other national organizations. We highly recommend that local YouthBuild programs who work with housing partners stay on top of these opportunities, and not leave it to your housing partner to do so.

G. CAP Agency Funding: Weatherization Assistance Program and CSBG

There are two funding streams that are relevant to YouthBuild programs that *in most cases* will flow through the states to local or regional **community action agencies** (CAAs or CAPs) or similar designated agencies, depending on the state. While we will use the term "CAP" here, you may need to verify who is the designated state and local agency that receives these funds in your area. We will tell you how under each category below.

- **Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and LIHEAP**

There are a number of weatherization-related funding streams out there, including Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block grants, the State Energy Program, the Public Housing Capital Fund and others that will pay for energy retrofits for qualified facilities and properties. Very few of these streams have open solicitation processes for which local YouthBuild programs could compete. Nonetheless, we suggest that programs be familiar with how these funds are being deployed in your state so you can inquire intelligently about local spending and opportunities to build relationships with subgrantees as appropriate. Details about a number of weatherization funding streams are described at the National Low Income Housing Coalition's [clearinghouse for housing-related recovery information](#).

The funding stream that is most likely to hold promise for local YouthBuild programs is the **Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)**, which also incorporates the **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**. In addition to the clearinghouse site listed above, the [Weatherization Assistance Program Technical Assistance Center](#) has detailed information about WAP funding, and its [Grantee Contacts](#) page will help you find your state agency contact and local grant recipients from past years. Most states deploy all of their WAP funds through designated CAPs or similar organizations that they have pre-selected based on legislated criteria.

Local YouthBuild programs who already partner with CAPs may have the best opportunities to subcontract or at least train with CAP agency weatherization teams. However, while there are some prescriptions about weatherization funding at the national level, some is prescribed at the state level—*not every state will handle weatherization in the same way*. Some states require all weatherization providers and subcontractors to be certified using particular curriculum, while others simply require that all providers have had some past weatherization or rehab experience.

Note that **many urban locations and a few rural locations may find their weatherization funding is managed directly through their housing authority, or a combination of their housing authority and a CAP**. In this case, you may be in luck, as housing authorities must follow certain hiring guidelines, including hiring people who live at YouthBuild housing authority properties, housing authority residents, and YouthBuild graduates. Proactive outreach to these housing authorities will be key to ensuring that YouthBuild students and graduates be included in weatherization projects.

For more information about weatherization opportunities, please see the prior communication from Dorothy Stoneman on this topic (attached).

- **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**

The **Administration for Children and Families -- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** has a must-read page on [Community Services Block Grant](#) funds, including links to eligible CSBG providers by state and a great fact sheet about the program.

This funding stream is essentially operating support for CAPs. Over the next two years there will be supplementary CSBG funding for CAPs that is extremely flexible but subject to a public input and planning period. As with regularly appropriated CSBG funds, Recovery Act funds may be used for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient. However, CAPs are

expected to focus assistance on activities geared towards *the preservation and creation of jobs to promote economic recovery and the provision of assistance to those most impacted by the recession*. Local YouthBuild programs and participants are a good fit here.

- **Approaching Your CAP or Other Designated Agency**

Local YouthBuild programs that do not already have a relationship with their local CAP (or other designated agency) are advised to educate themselves about their state's weatherization and CSBG rules before approaching them with an idea or offer for partnership. In addition, we recommend that you review the following:

- **National Community Action Foundation's** (www.ncaf.org) section on weatherization is very thorough and includes information on WAP rules regarding public notice and public hearings; changes to income eligibility and amount of per-unit assistance, and preferences in [choosing sub grantees to Community Action Agencies](#). However, NCAF's link to CSBG information is lacking.
- **Community Action Program Legal Services** (www.caplaws.org) [Stimulus Package Legal News](#) offers readable interpretations of weatherization and CSBG funding to CAP agencies and considerations CAPs must make in spending these funds.
- For general information about **Community Action Agencies**, visit the [Community Action Partnership](#), a trade association for CAAs/CAPs.

It is worth noting that CAP agencies have very strict guidelines under which their boards are structured, as they are essentially extensions of public funding streams. Representatives of low-income communities or other populations to be served can challenge the lack of representation on a CAA board, and also must be engaged (and this engagement must be documented) in multiple ways in program planning, implementation and evaluation. In this regard, CAP agencies can be held accountable by local citizens who are mobilized to advocate about these issues.

Many CAP agencies are known for being very effective, yet these organizations vary in resource capacity. In some areas, CAP agencies do not actually exist, and states may or may not have designated other kinds of agencies to receive weatherization or CSBG funds in their stead. This is why it is vitally important that local YouthBuild programs stay abreast of local CAP activity, and cultivate positive relationships as a representative of one of the populations that CAPs are mandated to serve. While it may turn out your program cannot participate in stimulus-supported activities this year, it could be that in future years you will benefit by virtue of staying informed, showing up to CAP public input meetings, offering your partnership, and even putting your hat in the ring for open CAP board seats.

H. Immediate or Pending Funding Opportunities

Below are links to three agencies with funding opportunities posted or expected soon, but please do not limit yourself to these (see section C), and continue to check Grants.gov weekly.

- [DOL-ETA Competitive Grants for Green Job Training](#): Funding announcement is expected by June 30, 2009. Please check Grants.gov weekly.
- [HUD Opportunities](#), including Neighborhood Stabilization Program Round 2; Native American Housing Block Grant Program; and Green retrofit program. Some details not yet available—please check weekly.
- [US Department of Justice](#) opportunities will include new funding for mentor activities. Check under Recovery grants as well as Bureau of Justice Assistance.

I. YouthBuild USA's Recovery Activities

YouthBuild USA will continue to stay on top of Recovery Act funding opportunities and trends, and we hope that you will share with us your own learnings and experience locally. In the meantime, YouthBuild USA will:

- Continue to publish the monthly Funding Opportunities E-News, which is distributed by e-mail and can also be accessed on-line by registered users of the YouthBuild USA Extranet (www.youthbuild.org) on the Marketing and Fundraising resources page.
- Offer a series of webinars that address sustainability. On June 15, you received email notification and registration information about the first two webinars from YouthBuild USA. The first webinar to be scheduled this summer will address the Recovery Act in general and the second will address Green Initiatives and stimulus-related support for them:
 - **Wednesday, June 24, 3 pm EST:** General Information about Stimulus Funding Opportunities
 - **Monday, July 6, 3 pm EST:** Green Recovery Program Funding Opportunities
- Where technical assistance strategies can be developed to assist you with your recovery-related strategies, we are happy to assist. Contact your program advisor, cluster leader, or Jennifer Clammer, YouthBuild USA's Director of Technical Assistance, if you have a training or webinar idea or a specific technical assistance need.
- Will soon deploy new AmeriCorps resources to the Affiliated network, as mentioned in previous communications to the field. These resources are a direct result of the Recovery Act and will offer significant opportunity for organizational capacity-building over the coming year. Note that VISTA slots that have been awarded through YouthBuild USA are not funded through ARRA, but are nonetheless part of the big picture here.

We hope this guidance memo has been useful to you. Please tell us how you are faring, what you are finding, and where you have met with successes or barriers as related to stimulus activity and funding locally. We all can learn together and strengthen our field this way. We look forward to hearing from you!