

May 4, 2009

TO: The Colorado Library Community  
FR: Eugene hainer, Colorado State Library (CSL), Exec. Director  
RE: ARRA and Broadband update

Many of you are aware that funding for coordinated broadband initiatives is available under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), and that libraries are specifically mentioned in this legislation as being eligible to apply for funds.

Some of you may be involved in talks locally about applications for the competitive broadband grants. Others may have heard reports from in-state or national sources that have left you wondering what's being done at the state level.

To date rumors have been almost as plentiful as solid news from reliable sources. There have been few precise details about potential for funding, what the criteria might be, who from Colorado is—or should be—submitting applications, or what role libraries will have in the statewide internet infrastructure.

You can help by keeping the CSL informed of any conversations or application efforts that you might be part of or heard about.

**Several things to know:**

- 1) The first of three application windows is expected in June. Two more rounds for broadband funds are scheduled in October and next April. This timeline is handled by federal agencies and therefore subject to change.
- 2) Requests submitted by any group will be highly competitive. Those with the best chance of being funded—based on current information—are those that are innovative, address specific needs, and provide a high return on small investment.
- 3) It is important to be strategic about building or augmenting current access infrastructure. The best way for libraries to accomplish this may mean working locally.
- 4) Given Colorado's affinity for local control coupled with a tendency for individual or regional solutions for any statewide problem, it may make sense for libraries to seek inclusion in local or regional applications rather than building a library-only approach. Doing so means maintaining close communication with local officials and providers.
- 5) States usually take years to create and rollout wide-ranging internet infrastructure plans. The ARRA guidelines call for this to be accomplished in a matter of months.

**State Library Efforts**

- 1) The CSL staff has been gathering information from various sources, including attendance at statewide conferences, webcasts, and bi-monthly teleconferences. Updates from CDE, state, and national ARRA news is located in the announcements at [www.ColoradoStateLibrary.org](http://www.ColoradoStateLibrary.org).

- 2) Communication is underway with CDE staff that is negotiating with the Governor's office of information technology (OIT), and other state technology leaders about ARRA. The purpose of these discussions is to keep them aware of the importance of libraries in any applications or funding plans that are developed.
- 3) CSL will be present on May 12<sup>th</sup> at a gathering of state librarians and representatives from the B&M Gates' Foundation, ALA, and others to review broadband ideas and news. The results of that conversation may better inform future directions for library involvement in this state.
- 4) Recently the Front Range public library directors voiced interest in holding a meeting in partnership with the State Library to explore the current internet landscape and broadband needs. If held, interested people from the library community would be able to attend, with virtual attendance options created if feasible. Exact details are still being discussed about how to approach this statewide, and what a useful agenda would entail.
- 5) One goal of such an event, if held, would be to define innovative plans that could be integrated with applications being proposed by other state agencies. A secondary goal would be to include important non-library agencies so that resulting actions are communicated accurately beyond the walls of the state's libraries.

As with any large-scale, statewide plan it is important to get it right the first time so that workable, sustainable, broadband requests are achieved that benefit the state's library community and the Coloradans they serve. Accountability means time, effort, and funds can't be wasted on patchwork plans that don't accomplish the intended purpose of improving internet access for all.

Like most states we are finding it difficult establish what the best course of action is in the absence of clear directions for broadband funding, or any other ARRA-related initiative. Any attempt for a single agency to centrally "coordinate" anything is unlikely to be successful given the depth of players involved and the many uncertainties associated with ARRA so far.

We will continue to provide updates to you when known through appropriate communication channels, and work with relevant staff or leaders within and beyond the library community to ensure libraries have a voice at the table and can gain access to potential revenue streams whenever possible.

Comments may be directed to [www.coloradolibraries.org](http://www.coloradolibraries.org), or questions to [hainer\\_g@cde.state.co.us](mailto:hainer_g@cde.state.co.us), or 303-866-6900.