

ARRA Funding Needs in Colorado Libraries

A recent online survey asked librarians and library administrators in Colorado if they were interested in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to help meet the increased demand for library resources in their community.

Identified ARRA Goal areas for libraries

- 1) Expanding or adding after-school programs,
- 2) Expanding broadband access and increasing the number of computers,
- 3) Supplementing resources for job seekers, businesses, and education
- 4) Completing renovations or facilities improvement projects.

Survey Responses Summary

1) Expanded or new afterschool programs

- \$1.1 million to start or expand after-school programming, indicated by 74%
- 100 staff (FTE) would be employed by libraries to implement proposed programs.

2) Library resources including broadband, programs, and staff

- \$7.37 million for staff, programs, additional resources

Broadband/increasing access speed only

- \$2 million. 47% report needing additional or faster speed.
- \$66,097 estimated average cost per library.

Computers

- \$2.4 million needed for 1,639 (31 per library).
- 82% (Eight out of ten) responding said the library needed additional computers.
- Many libraries need additional computing resources. Only 44% of public libraries in Colorado reported "always having adequate Internet connection speed."²

Estimates
for educational needs, job
assistance and library
infrastructure

- ▶ \$1.1 million: After-school programs.
- ▶ \$7.37m: Broadband improvements
- ▶ \$2.4m: increase computer availability
- ▶ \$1.8m: training programs
- ▶ \$1.2m: job-seeking tools
- ▶ \$7.9m: public library facilities improvements

3) Meet the information and access needs of job seekers, business, education

- \$1.8 million for programming and classes (54% of responding libraries), staff training in helping job seekers (44%), library staffing (42%), electronic materials (38%), and expanded hours (31%).
- \$750,000 (estimate) statewide live homework help license
- \$500,000 (estimate) business and job-related software packages

4) Facilities projects

- \$7.9 million estimated for 33 locations
- Two-thirds (67%) of those who responded could request funding.

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A recent online survey asked librarians and library administrators in Colorado if they were interested in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to help meet the increased demand for library resources in their community. Four areas of need were specified: 1) expanding or adding after-school programs, 2) expanding broadband access and increasing the number of computers, 3) supplementing resources for job seekers, businesses, and education 4) completing renovations or facilities improvement projects.

- Nine out of ten respondents said they were interested in ARRA funding for their libraries, identifying \$7.37 million for library resources including broadband, programs, and staff, and \$7.9 million for facilities.
- Nearly half (47%) of those responding to the question said their library needed additional or faster broadband for a projected cost of just over \$2 million. The average cost per library was estimated at \$66,097.
- Eight out of ten (82%) who responded said their library needed additional computers. Libraries said they needed a total of 1,639 (31 per library), at a total estimated cost of \$2.4 million.
- Three-quarters (75%) of those responding said they would like to start or expand after-school programming at a total estimated cost of \$1.1 million. These libraries would employ nearly 100 staff (FTE) to implement the proposed programs.
- To meet the information and access needs of job seekers, funding is most needed for programming and classes (54% of responding libraries), staff training in helping job seekers (44%), library staffing (42%), electronic materials (38%), and expanded hours (31%) at an estimated cost of \$1.8 million.
- Two-thirds (67%) of those who responded had facilities projects for which they could request funding. Thirty-three libraries provided an estimation of costs that totaled \$7.9 million.

Library Use Up

Libraries are an invaluable community resource and at no time is that more evident than during economic hard times. In the past year public libraries in Colorado have seen usage increase substantially. Given the current economic conditions, Colorado libraries expect usage to continue to increase through 2009.

Preliminary data¹ collected by the State Library indicates in 2008:

- Materials circulation was up by 4.6 million items, an increase of nearly 9% over 2007.
- Library visits were up 2.3 million, 8% higher than the previous year.
- The number of programs offered in public libraries was up 11% and attendance at those programs was up 15% - mainly due to increased use by adults.
- Reference questions answered by a librarian increased by 7%.
- Use of public libraries' Internet computers was up a staggering 30% over 2007. This increase is not surprising given that many activities associated with unemployment are done predominately online (e.g., filling out job applications, searching job listings, and applying for unemployment benefits).

"With adequate public support and funding, public libraries are uniquely positioned to play a central role in local economic development efforts by providing physical meeting and training space, information professionals, and free access to computers, office software, specialized databases and the Internet."

~*Job-seeking in U.S. Public Libraries*³

Libraries Bridging the Digital Divide

Everyone, from retail clerks to civil engineers, is applying for jobs online—and the public library may be the only place some job seekers have access to the Internet.

- In a recent study, more than 2 out of 3 Colorado public libraries (67%) reported that they were the only place in their community for free Internet access.²
- Less than 1 in 4 households with incomes below \$35,000 reported having broadband access at home. But, the public library is bridging the gap with nearly 9 out of ten (88%) of public libraries in high poverty areas providing broadband access to their community.³
- With 4 million job vacancies listed online, nearly 3 out of 4 job seekers use the Internet to look for work.⁴
- Many libraries need additional computing resources. For example, only 44% of public libraries in Colorado reported "always having adequate Internet connection speed."²

¹ Data from the 2008 Public Library Annual Report is preliminary. Final data will be available summer 2009.

² Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study at www.ala.org/plinternetfunding.

³ Data Notes from Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) at <http://www.ims.gov/>.

⁴ Job-seeking in U.S. Public Libraries at http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/ors/plftas/Issues_Briefs.cfm.