

## **NRPA Funding Analysis of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan Proposed Funding to Benefit Public Parks and Recreation**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan has been created to stimulate and add balance to the economy by investing in job creation and important infrastructure improvements. There is adequate funding for parks and recreation programming and infrastructure in both the House and Senate infrastructure economic recovery bill. Park and Recreation agencies will benefit from various competitive grant programs, including: special education services, childcare services, and community development block grant programs. Additionally, there will be funds available to remove and clean up commercial sites, or brownfields which could benefit park and recreation agencies.

The LWCF stateside assistance program was considered through final deliberation of the bill, but unfortunately, the bill did not provide funding for this program or the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR). One of the challenges in advocating for the LWCF stateside assistance program is being able to quantify the job creation numbers of these projects both locally and nationally.

On January 28, 2009, the House passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan on a 244-188 vote, and in the upcoming week, the Senate will begin their process of securing the votes needed to take this bill to the floor of the Senate for a vote. Both the Senate and House versions of this bill are supported by the Democratic Administration and Congressional Democrats, but has not received the votes of Republicans. Future legislation may be proposed in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress that seeks to stimulate the economy by creating jobs. In an effort to promote government accountability and to remove government waste, the Obama Administration will allow citizens to track where their tax dollars are spent on this Recovery bill at [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov). The website will be available after the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan.

Moving forward, the Senate will take up their own version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan in the upcoming week, and if passed by the Senate, a conference committee representing select Members of Congress and Senators will meet to negotiate a compromise between the two bills. Once this compromise has been reached, both the House and Senate will vote on the final version. If the bill passes, it will be sent to President Obama for his signature.

### **INVESTING IN RURAL AND OTHER COMMUNITY NEEDS**

Department of Agriculture

**Rural Community Facilities Program:** In the House, **\$200 million** was included for the Rural Community Facilities Program, and in the Senate, **\$127 million** was included for the program, which provides financing to local governments, nonprofit corporations, and federally-recognized Indian tribes for the development of essential community facilities in rural areas. We are still awaiting USDA confirmation of public parks and recreation eligibility for the program, however most funds would likely be available for partnering with other local agencies if not directly eligible. Funds can be used for health care facilities; fire, rescue, and public safety buildings, vehicles, and equipment; libraries and other important community needs.

[http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/brief\\_cp\\_grant.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/brief_cp_grant.htm)

**Afterschool Meals:** In the House, **\$726 million** was included to increase the number of states that provide free dinners to children and to encourage participation by new institutions by increasing snack reimbursement rates. Park and Recreation agencies should benefit from this funding. Thousands of sites in hundreds of local public park and recreation agencies serve meals and snacks through several nutrition programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services (USDA) and by the Administration on Aging. Park and recreation agencies offer programs after school, over school holidays and vacations, on weekends, and over the summer. Food service is an important adjunct to public recreation. To receive federal nutrition program support, the activities that park and recreation agencies provide must include educational and enrichment activities. Sports and recreation can be part of these programs as long as participation is open to all and only limited based on space or other programmatic concerns. In the Senate, there were no provisions under Food and Nutrition Services.

## INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Department of Commerce

**Broadband Technology Opportunities Program:** The House bill provided **\$350 million** and the Senate bill provides **\$9 billion** for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, of which at least **\$200 million** is available for competitive grants for expanding public computer center capacity for local governments, including community colleges and public libraries. The Senate bill also requires at least 50 percent of funds to be used to support projects in rural communities. Park and recreation agencies find themselves at the crossroad of the information super-highway, and meeting the needs of their local users. Citizens are requiring more access opportunity from local government agencies in community recreation centers and through after-school programming. This is a newly revitalized program from a previous Presidential Administration, and once the program is reauthorized more details will be provided. Park and Recreation agencies should have the opportunity to apply for these competitive grants that can expand public computer centers in their recreation centers.

## INVESTING IN EDUCATION

Department of Education

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Recreation and therapeutic recreation is presently addressed under "related services" in IDEA. Therapeutic Recreation services may be included in a child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) to enable participation in recreational sports and activities, enrichment, social activities, and the exploration of career activities to raise the quality of life, enhance existing functioning levels, and slow the onset of degenerating conditions.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** In the House and Senate bill, **\$13 billion** was included for the IDEA Part B- Grants to States program, which provides formula grants to assist the States in meeting the excess costs of providing special education and related services to children with disabilities. As states begin tackling a projected 10 percent budget shortfall for FY 2009, with larger increases expected in FY 2010, education is an area that needs support. Although State funding for special education is mandatory, providing this funding will assist states and school districts and prevent them from reducing funding for general educational operations which can allow all education programs to receive adequate funding during difficult economic times. Park and recreation agencies should partner with school districts to develop student's individual education plans.

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>

**IDEA Infants and Families:** In the House bill, **\$600 million** was included and in the Senate bill, **\$500 million** was included for the Grants for Infants and Families program that provides formula grants to the States, including D.C., Puerto Rico and the Outlying Areas to assist them in implementing coordinated systems of comprehensive programs and making early intervention services available to children with disabilities from birth through 2 years of age and their families. Parks and recreation agencies should partner with childcare and preschool entities to provide therapeutic recreation interventions and programs.

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>

**AmeriCorps:** In the House and Senate bills, **\$160 million** was provided for AmeriCorps with \$10 million going to the National Civilian Community Corps. The Senate encourages the Corps to give priority to applications that propose to alter the built environment and promotes healthy behavior such as biking and walking trails. Parks and recreation agencies are eligible to receive AmeriCorps projects and volunteers.

## INVESTING IN CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Department of Education

Public park and recreation departments provide quality programs to children and youth, and are the number one public daycare provider nationwide. These services include child care provided by trained staff and licensed by state agencies. These programs are generally designed to meet the developmental needs of young children through recreation to improve dexterity and cognitive processes. Park and recreation agencies should coordinate with other public agencies that administer public daycare funds and identify programs for which they may be eligible according to federal and municipal guidelines.

**Child Care Development Block Grant Recovery Funding:** In the House and Senate bills, **\$2 billion** was included for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to support quality child care services for low-income families. The Department of Health and Human Services distributes these funds to states through a formula based on population. With the additional economic recovery funding, states will be able to provide child care assistance for an additional 300,000 children in low-income working families who have been hit by hard economic times, and creates paid work for an estimated 125,000 caregivers.

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html>

## INVESTING IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Protection Agency

**Brownfields:** In the House and Senate, **\$100 million** was included for competitive grants for evaluation and cleanup of former industrial and commercial sites - turning them from problem properties to productive community use. According to the EPA, Brownfields Program provides direct funding for brownfields assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, and environmental job training. To facilitate the leveraging of public resources, EPA's Brownfields Program collaborates with other EPA programs, other federal partners, and state agencies to identify and make available resources that can be used for brownfields activities. Local governments, regional councils, redevelopment agencies, tribes, coalitions of eligible organizations and other government entities are eligible to apply for this funding.

There are three types of brownfield grants: assessment, environmental cleanup and revolving loan funds and these grants are also available to non-profit organizations.

<http://epa.gov/brownfields/pilot.htm>

**Local Government Energy Efficiency Block Grants:** The House provided **\$6.9 billion** and the Senate provided **\$4.2 billion** to help state and local governments make investments that make them more energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions. This program, created by the Energy Independence and Security Act, provides for grants intended to reduce fossil-fuel emission and total energy use, and improves energy efficiency and conservation in the transportation and building sectors. Of the \$2 billion in funding provided for such grants, 68 percent is distributed directly to counties and cities.

The grants can be used for a variety of purposes, from planning and building to providing incentives for efficient energy use. Among the program-eligible uses are: developing and implementing efficient energy and conservation strategies; developing programs to conserve energy used in transportation, such as flex time for workers, satellite work centers, bike paths, and pedestrian walkways; updating building codes and inspection procedures; installing renewable energy technology on or in government buildings; replacing traffic signals and street lighting with energy-efficient technology; energy audits; conservation programs; retrofitting to increase energy efficiency; smart-growth planning and zoning; and installing technology designed to capture greenhouse gases.

<http://www.nlc.org/ARTICLES/articleItems/NCW122407/energybillsigned.aspx>

## INVESTING IN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Federal Highway Administration

**Highway Infrastructure Investment:** The House provided **\$30 billion** and the Senate provided **\$27 billion** for highway infrastructure investments through formula grants for highway investments that will be allocated through competitive grants for projects including highway rehabilitation and restoration, bridge repair, and infrastructure investments that improve highway safety and resurfacing. The Senate has also proposed **\$5.5 billion** for competitive grants to state and local governments for surface transportation investment, and **\$3.4 billion** for the repair, restoration and improvement of public facilities at parks, refuges and on other public and tribal lands.

**Transportation Enhancements:** In the House, **\$1.35 billion** was included to provide opportunities for park and recreation agencies to directly apply for funding that will provide opportunities for trail, bike and pedestrian projects. **In the Senate, no funds were provided for transportation enhancements.**

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/)

## INVESTING IN HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

Department of Health and Human Services

**Head Start to Early Head Start:** In the House and Senate bills, **\$2.1 billion** was included for Head Start to provide comprehensive education, health and nutrition, and social/emotional development services that ensure that low-income children can succeed in school. The Department of Health and Human Services distributes funds to Head Start centers based on need. Currently, 910,000 low-income children participate in Head Start, which is only about half of all eligible preschoolers and less than 3 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. With the economic recovery funds, approximately 110,000 additional children will be served annually. Communities use early child development and preschool funds in various ways. In many communities, park and recreation agencies partner with community entities to provide early childhood development and preschool programming.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/hsweb/index.jsp>

**Healthy Communities:** In the House bill, **\$500 million** was included and in the Senate bill, **\$400 million** was provided for the Healthy Communities Program. The program, administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, implements evidence-based clinical and community-based prevention and wellness strategies, and public health workforce development activities authorized by the Public Health Service Act. A portion of these funds will go to a cooperative agreement awarded to NRPA for a period of 5 years. The ACHIEVE program funds national organizations to work through local affiliates to advance community leadership in the nation's efforts to prevent chronic diseases and related risk factors. Community action plans are developed to address chronic disease prevention through policy, systems, and environmental change strategies.

<http://www.nrpa.org/achieve>

**Senior Nutrition Programs:** In the House bill, **\$200 million** was included for formula grants to states for elderly nutrition services including Meals on Wheels and Congregate Meals. The Senate provided **\$100 million** of meals to seniors, **\$67 million** of which is available for congregate locations and **\$33 million** is available for home delivery. These funds can help relieve the burden from budget cuts. Most public agencies operating senior centers are eligible for this funding.

[www.mowaa.org](http://www.mowaa.org)

**Community Services Block Grant:** In the House, **\$1 billion** was included for grants to local communities to support employment, food, housing, and healthcare efforts serving those hardest hit by the recession, and in the Senate, **\$200 million** was included for community services block grants. The grants can provide funding to assist areas hardest hit by poverty and can be used to provide programs that develop character building and physical fitness activities. Community action agencies have seen

dramatic increases in requests for their assistance due to rising unemployment, housing foreclosures, and high food and fuel prices.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/csbg/>

## **INVESTING IN NEIGHBORHOODS**

Department of Housing and Urban Development

**Neighborhood Stabilization Program:** In the House, **\$4.19 billion** was included for local governments and states with high levels of foreclosures as a way for the local community to purchase and rehabilitate vacant housing. Up to \$750 million may be used for a competition for nonprofit entities to enhance the funding included under this heading through capitalization of the funds. In the Senate, **\$2.25 billion** was included for the redevelopment of abandoned and foreclosed homes. Park and recreation agencies should contact their city or county planners to identify possible uses of vacated or abandon properties, including public green space, parks, and community gathering places or other community recreation resource.

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/neighborhoodspg/>  
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/neighborhoodspg/nspfaq.cfm>

**Community Development Block Grants:** In the House, **\$1 billion** was included for community and economic development projects including housing and services for those hit hard by tough economic times. **In the Senate, no funds for CDBG were included in the bill.** The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) which provides block grants to eligible cities and urban areas. According to community development organizations, approximately \$100 million of CDBG funds are utilized annually for park and recreation projects which often are initiated along with more comprehensive community redevelopment initiatives.

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/>

## **INVESTING IN JOB CREATION**

Department of Labor

**Workforce Investment Act, Training and Employment Services:** In the House and Senate, **\$4 billion** and **\$3.2 billion** were included for job training including formula grants for adults, dislocated worker, and youth services. In both the House and Senate bills **\$1.2 billion** was included to create up to one million summer jobs for youth. Additionally, **\$120 million** is available for "Community Service Employment for Older Americans." The needs of workers also will be met through dislocated worker national emergency grants, and new competitive grants for worker training in high growth and emerging industry sectors (with priority consideration to "green" jobs and healthcare). The House provided **\$50 million** for the YouthBuild program, and the Senate provided **\$100 million**. Green jobs training will include preparing workers for activities supported by other economic recovery funds, such as retrofitting of buildings, green construction, and the production of renewable electric power.

[http://www.dol.gov/DOL/allcfr/ETA/Title\\_20/Part\\_671/toc.htm](http://www.dol.gov/DOL/allcfr/ETA/Title_20/Part_671/toc.htm)  
<http://www.doleta.gov/etainfo/>  
<http://www.youthbuild.org/site/c.htlRI3PIKoG/b.1223921/k.BD3C/Home.htm>  
[http://www.doleta.gov/youth\\_services/](http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/)

*For more information on advocacy efforts, please contact the NRPA Public Policy Office at 202-887-0290.*