

## ARRA Experience:

# Denver Regional Council of Governments

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*Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), a nonprofit association of local governments, is dedicated to making the nine-county Denver region a great place to live, work and play.*

*Did your state include you in ARRA discussions? Were you briefed, given up-to-date information and kept aware of the opportunities for your organization(s) and members (i.e. local governments)? Please describe your overall experience on ARRA coordination with your state.*

The State of Colorado, especially the Department of Transportation (CDOT), coordinated with DRCOG even before the ARRA was signed by the President. The state urged DRCOG and other parties to begin thinking about transportation projects that would likely receive ARRA funds.

The Colorado State Unit on Aging kept us informed, as an Area Agency on Aging (AAA), of timelines and processes and provided us with information as soon as they received it from the Administration on Aging (AOA). They also acted as a liaison between the AOA and the area agencies on aging when questions were asked or concerns were expressed. ARRA dollars that the DRCOG AAA will receive have been designated to provide nutrition services.

The Colorado Department of Public Health received ARRA dollars which go toward water quality planning. Due to these new dollars, the department was able to contribute \$15,000 more to DRCOG's water quality planning program (typical amount is \$10,000).

Colorado's Department of Local Affairs also has been communicating with regional councils, in particular, regarding Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and other funds available to local governments.

The Governor has set up a website which provides information and links to a variety of state programs that will receive ARRA funds.

*What types of outreach/educational tools did your organization use or is using for ARRA? Please describe any website, public outreach, surveys, email blasts, newsletters, social networking tools, etc. that you may have used and if it was effective.*

Email was used extensively to reach our member governments' staff to solicit their transportation applications for ARRA funding allocated by DRCOG. Applications from our member governments (we received over 150) for transportation money were submitted electronically. We will continue to use email to communicate with our member governments on this issue. DRCOG has also set up its own [website regarding ARRA](#) funding and will track progress with transportation projects receiving ARRA monies. The DRCOG ARRA website also links to the State's and the Regional Transportation District's websites. Additionally, DRCOG issued a press release about its project selections which received significant play throughout the region.



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*Please describe the ARRA funding or tax initiatives your organization or member local governments are directly receiving or involved with.*

**D**RCOG made the programming decisions for the sub-allocated STP funds (\$55.9 million). CDOT also delegated the responsibility for ARRA enhancement projects within the region to DRCOG (\$4.7 million). All such funds were programmed to local governments; DRCOG itself has received no ARRA funds. DRCOG's AAA will receive \$500,000 for nutrition services including home delivered meals and congregate meals. That money will be passed through to the non-profit nutrition provider.

*How is your organization or member local governments tracking all of the ARRA opportunities? How will you meet the reporting requirements of ARRA if you receive funding?*

**T**he accountability for tracking/reporting has been placed on the Governor, who in turn (for transportation) has placed it on CDOT. Much of that, in turn, will be placed on the local governments and their contractors. DRCOG's ARRA website will track progress on DRCOG-selected projects that receive ARRA monies using the information compiled by CDOT. In addition, the DRCOG AAA will track the monies provided using the current statewide tracking system called SAMS. The State Unit on Aging has modified the system and is requiring monthly documentation for ARRA funds.

*Are you or have you been in contact with your Congressional delegation? If so, please describe the context of this correspondence, which offices you reached out to and what staff you contacted.*

**D**RCOG only spoke about ARRA specifically with one member of Congress who wanted assurances that the DRCOG Board would be awarding some ARRA funds to a particular project. ***Please share any relevant details of your ARRA experience. Your story is important in measuring progress and overall success!***

**T**he DRCOG Board has taken a thoughtful and serious approach to the award of ARRA monies for projects over which the Board has purview. The DRCOG Board held two emergency meetings in order to draft criteria for the applications and to make the selections for transportation funding. There was high interest on the part of the Board and the community as evidenced by a lengthy public hearing. The DRCOG Board committed many additional hours to the selection of projects that best met the spirit of ARRA funding and the Board expects DRCOG staff to monitor these projects closely for successful completion.

**T**he ARRA dollars to the AAA will provide critical relief for older adults in the region. The Colorado legislature recently cut service dollars to older adults and there are currently over 600 people waiting for nutrition services in the metro Denver area. The ARRA dollars will allow us to address the waiting list. For several DRCOG staff members, ARRA became a nearly 100% commitment from late January to late April.