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The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 Is Your Language Learning Project Being Funded?

According to the U.S. Department of Education website, stimulus monies from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) are providing significant new funding for education programs. To date, some of the programs with accompanying grant opportunities have been announced and some deadlines have already passed. There are a several programs, however, which are still to be announced and districts should begin the preparation process now for these additional opportunities.

Funds made available under the ARRA provide an unprecedented opportunity for educators to implement innovative strategies to improve education. If you are considering projects related to real-world language learning with linguistic and cultural accuracy, identify those which can utilize SANS instructional technology to help language educators teach student learners of ANY language — ESL, World Languages, American Sign Language, and Native American languages. Take the time now to make good decisions about which products align with your proposed projects while also meeting the requirements of ARRA funding.

The U.S. Department of Education promotes four ARRA principles that should be carried out using stimulus funds. They are:

1. Spend funds quickly to save and create jobs. ARRA funds are being distributed quickly in order to avert layoffs and create jobs. In general, the turnaround time for grant applications to be submitted specific to the ARRA have been considerably shorter than the “normal” time for already existing grant programs. How short? In some cases, the applications for funds are due 30 days after the announcement is made. Districts are being urged to develop plans to use funds

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quickly and to be prepared to spend ARRA funds in a prompt manner as some of them have restrictions as to how quickly the funds must be used. Districts that wait for the announcements to be made to begin the planning process will run the risk of running out of time in order to create an application package and apply for grant funds. Now is the time to begin project development activities such as holding meetings with key stakeholders, engaging in conversations designed to create projects that will meet the needs of students and teachers, and identifying SANS technology offerings for language learning projects.

2. Improve student achievement through school improvement and reform. ARRA funds are designed to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap. District personnel should be developing potential ARRA-funded projects with this goal in mind.

Projects should make progress toward rigorous college and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable for all students. Projects should also make improvements in teacher effectiveness. And, projects should provide both support and effective interventions for students. Projects that include SANS technology products will meet this principle. SANS products provide student centered learning with features to develop communication skills. For teachers, they provide productivity tools to easily transition from one activity to another so their students have more opportunities to learn a language in a limited time frame. In addition, SANS products provide an environment to simulate standardized language testing and prepare students to focus on listening and speaking in a familiar setting.

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3. Ensure transparency, reporting and accountability. Districts should design projects with effective evaluation plans that will measure and track results and determine if the project’s goal(s) and objectives were attained. In addition, grantees who receive ARRA funds should be prepared for more rigorous reporting requirements than those that normally apply to non-ARRA grants. This means that grantees will probably be asked to submit additional and/or more frequent (i.e., quarterly as opposed to yearly) progress reports and may also be asked to collect new types of data that may require additional or brand new collection methods. The ability to collect and save student recordings and report capabilities in the SANS

language technology products can help you meet accountability and assessment requirements related to your language programs.

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4. Invest one-time ARRA funds thoughtfully to minimize the "funding cliff." ARRA funds have been identified as one-time, temporary funds being infused into the grants landscape. District personnel should keep in mind that some of the funds are only available for two to three years. This places the responsibility on the district to create well-thought out projects which can be sustained after all of the ARRA-funds have been distributed. Sony digital language lab technology is a sustainable investment. It is developed and supported in the United States by SANS Inc. and ongoing updates and enhancements are made based on input from educators. As part of the project development phase, district personnel need to discuss what future costs might be associated with projects and potential sources of funding for them. SANS technology is scalable. You can buy what you can fund now and if your needs change or additional monies become available in the future, more licenses or additional features may be added.

Districts have the responsibility to seek projects that can be sustained post-ARRA funding.

A new grant program, "**Race to the Top**" has been publicized on the Department of Education's website with a projected release date of late 2009. This program is designed to improve education quality and results statewide. Contact your state's Department of Education now to get specific guidelines and determine what plans they may have to apply for this program. Find out as much information as possible, and be sure that your state ED knows that your district is interested in being a part of a collaborative project if it fits with your district's education goals.

Race to the Top grants will be made in two rounds — late 2009 and in 2010.

The State Educational Technology Grants program also presents an opportunity to apply for funds using SANS offerings. The goal of the Ed Tech Grants program is to improve student achievement through the use of technology in schools. The ARRA and regular 2009 grants will enable districts to acquire new and emerging technologies, create new, state-of-the-art learning environments, and offer new training and more support to teachers so that students acquire the technological skills they need to compete in a global economy. The U.S. Department of Education is strongly encouraging States to award all of these funds competitively, rather than using the formula grant system.

If you are considering projects that include language learning technology, please contact the SANS team to learn how you can engage your students with the Sony Virtuoso® and Soloist™ digital language lab suite or the SANSSpace™ Virtual Language Learning Environment; both tools to help students develop language skills and global literacy essential for success in today's world. Contact SANS at info@sansinc.com or www.sansinc.com. Discuss your project ideas in detail with the representative and determine which product(s) make sense to include in your project that will enable your district to meet student achievement goals over the long term. Ask for some preliminary cost estimates so that you have some idea what amount to include in your project budget discussions. Investing time now in planning should provide the time needed to put together a competitive proposal when the next competitions are announced.

Ed Tech Funding will enable districts to acquire new and emerging technologies.

Sources for Additional Information & Updates on ARRA Funding

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov/recovery

JNCL-NCLIS
www.languagepolicy.org/

State Policy & Politics,
Updated Daily
www.stateline.org/live/



SOLOIST[™]
Digital PC Comparative Recorder

VIRTUOSO[™]
Instructional Control Software

The information contained in this paper was compiled by Deborah Ward, M.A., CFRE, a nationally recognized proposal writing consultant for education and nonprofit clients, with over 20 years experience in the development field. Ms. Ward provides grant seeking and proposal writing workshops across the United States and has presented at local, state, national and international conferences. She is a contributing monthly columnist for eSchool News and a former columnist for *Education Grants Alert*. Her articles have appeared in *Pro Principal*, *Board and Administrator*, *School Planning and Management*, *Technology and Learning*, *T.H.E. Funding Source*, and *Principal*. She has a Master of Arts degree in philanthropy and development from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota and the Certified Fund Raising Executive designation from the Association of Fund Raising Professionals.



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