

# **ARRA Implementation Strategies: *How change management expertise contributes to successful programs***



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## **INTRODUCTION:**

To date, much of the attention focused on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has been on fiscal matters such as how much money will be allocated, who will receive the money and when. Private businesses as well as state and local government are busy preparing, submitting their project proposals in the hopes of collecting government funds for stimulus programs.

The immediate goal of the ARRA, or the stimulus package as it is also called, is to jump-start the economy and create immediate jobs. Whether the public believes that will happen is debatable. A Gallop Poll earlier this year shows skepticism from taxpayers about the lasting effects of the stimulus program. According to the poll 44% of Americans say the plan will make their families' situations at least a little better, while the majority, or 53%, say the plan will not have an effect at all, or will actually make their financial situations worse.<sup>1</sup>

The government has earmarked programs across a wide range of industries including health care, energy, transportation and infrastructure, which will touch nearly every person in the country. For ARRA to live up to its promise of “laying the foundation for a robust and sustainable 21st century economy,” public perceptions and behaviors will have to change. The long-term success of the economic recovery package depends on behavior changes and adoption of new technologies. Change management experts and communication professionals will play a vital role in educating the public, retraining workers and demonstrating how this investment has made a positive impact on their lives and communities.

The purpose of this whitepaper is to show how specific change management expertise in program adoption and measurement, workforce and consumer training, and community engagement are critical to supporting the ultimate goals of ARRA. Only through thoughtful planning and execution and a focus on long-term impact in these areas can the public, taxpayers and political leaders get a true picture of the effectiveness of this record investment in the American economy.

## **KEY ARRA OPPORTUNITIES**

The long term success of any new ARRA initiative requires the rapid development of new skills and behaviors. Let's compare a group of specific goals outlined in the stimulus plan:<sup>2</sup>

- Weatherize one million homes and 75-percent of federal office buildings.
- Modernize and computerizing the nation's health care records.
- Double domestic renewable energy capacity.
- Invest in new roads, bridges infrastructure and deploy rapid transit.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gallup.com/poll/114097/americans-support-stimulus-major-changes.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> See an outline of ARRA goals at <http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/act>

	New Program Adoption/Rapid Deployment	Measurement/Key Performance Indicators	Workforce Training	Consumer Adoption/ Behavior Change	Community Engagement
National Weatherization and Energy Efficiency Project	X	X	X	X	X
National Health Care Database	X	X	X	X	X
Double Domestic Renewable Energy Capacity	X	X	X	X	X
Build Roads, Bridges and Deploy Rapid Transit	X	X	X	X	X

On the surface, this appears to be a very disparate group of projects with little overlap. However, some common strategies emerge when we begin to map out the steps necessary to achieve these goals across multiple stakeholder groups.

- All will require new products, processes and manufacturing techniques.
- Training and retraining of workers across industries will be critical – from the construction worker charged with weatherizing a home to the nurse or insurance adjuster who will have to learn new computer skills.
- Consumers will want to see the benefit in adopting energy efficient products and altering their transportation usage
- Communities will need to accept new forms of industry in their towns.

Continuous communication and meaningful metrics are at the core of all of these initiatives and it is vital that programs constantly assess their effectiveness and report the outcomes to ensure success.

For example:

Program Adoption and Rapid Deployment

Successful program adoption is created by strategic planning, strong project management and using lessons learned to develop a fresh approach and new solutions. New programs will require assessments and strategy based on the geographical locations of the audience. They also will require measurements that track the success of the program over time, solicit feedback during the process and incorporate

effective changes back into the process. The results are detailed and disciplined processes that reduce time by eliminating extra or duplicate steps and documented programs that can be adapted and reproduced in different geographic locations. Tracking, measuring, documenting, and communicating with all stakeholders will ensure overall acceptance by consumers and other stakeholders.

### Measurement

Demonstrating success will be critical to all programs funded under ARRA. Grant and loan recipients will be required to report metrics such as how funds are being used and the number of jobs created to the government, but more in-depth measures will need to be implemented. Each individual project and program must determine its own set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that help define its own success. By asking “what is important for long term adoption?” project managers use KPIs to drive the success of the program(s) by soliciting feedback, continuously communicating impacts and outcomes and can then incorporate lasting sustainable changes in the program or product.

### Workforce Training

In addition to sound educational design and accurate technical information, training programs will need to be tailored to the contemporary worker in order to be adopted quickly. For adults, oftentimes this means top-quality production techniques that utilize audio and visual aids. Kinesthetic training, or learning by doing, will also be critical, particularly when working with people in the deployment of new energy systems and technology. Training experts are skilled in assessing workers and consumers to tailor custom solutions for the specific needs of the group using the tools and media that are most relevant to them. As a result, new technologies and processes are adopted faster and have a more lasting effect.

### Consumer Behavior Change

Central to all major behavior change theories is a person’s need for feedback, communication and the ability to perceive the benefits and positive outcomes of change. To that end, continuous communication and case studies of how programs are working are a critical component of demonstrating how and why consumers should adopt new programs and technologies. We’ll call this the “stories behind the stimulus.” How has a weatherization program improved the lives of those in a rural community? How has the ability to track electricity usage and a smart-grid technology saved money, and reduced green house gas emissions? How has a national health care database improved the delivery of services? Communication, marketing and public relations professionals will be an integral part of telling these stories and selecting the media channels to reach the intended consumer. The benefits are “real world” results that individuals and communities will replicate. This communication will also reduce cynicism about government spending.

## Community Engagement

Communication professionals are a critical component when it comes to community outreach and explaining the impacts and details of new technologies. Communicators play a key role in bringing both groups together in order to express concerns, explain potential benefits and impacts, and find common ground that benefits all stakeholders. Many of the ARRA funds, particularly transportation and energy projects, have specific deadlines for which the funds must be put in use. These “shovel ready” projects require permitting by multiple agencies and outreach to communities. For example, a wind farm may be perceived as a positive new technology by a utility and the turbine manufacturer, but an eyesore to its neighbors. With strong communication and an ongoing dialogue about the new technology and local impacts, there is a greater chance that projects will be funded during the short window of a grant cycle, rather than lose out because of pushback by NIMBY groups.<sup>3</sup>

## **BEYOND REPORTING**

One final note. When President Obama and Congress created ARRA they promised an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability regarding how the funds are used. The government was quick to create a Recovery and Accountability Transparency Board made up of the Inspectors General from many different federal agencies and is building a web-based system to collect and share data.<sup>4</sup>

Tracking and reporting on dollars allocated to stimulus related projects and the number of jobs created is important. Watchdog groups will use this information to ensure that fraud and waste are eliminated or at least controlled. Taxpayers will need to be assured that their dollars are invested as promised.

However, the opportunity exists to build upon this accountability goal and work toward the meaningful and transformative change promised by ARRA. Projects and programs with a multi-disciplined approach to communication, measurement and continuous feedback will align business innovators, the workforce and general public in adopting new behaviors and meaningful changes that will lead to economic prosperity.

To that end, the overriding questions that ARRA programs should address include:

- What programs are working and why?
- What are the key measures that support change and growth?
- How can they be rapidly deployed across multiple communities for the best return on taxpayer investment?

When taxpayers, politicians and business owners can *see and feel* lasting change that is improving their lives, then they will believe the stimulus program is working and is a success.

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<sup>3</sup> NIMBY is an acronym for “Not in my backyard,” a phrase often used to describe organized grassroots efforts intended to kill or delay a project.

<sup>4</sup> Visit [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov) for information about the mission of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board and reporting guidelines.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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### Summary:

The long-term success of the economic recovery package depends on behavior changes and adoption of new technologies. Change management expertise in program adoption, measurement, workforce and communication are critical to supporting the needs and ultimate goals of ARRA and laying the foundation for a robust and sustainable economy.

### Challenges:

- The public is skeptical about impact of funds on their lives
- Programs and projects must prove lasting impact
- Workers need to be retrained to meet the goals of new programs and 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce
- Consumers and communities need to adopt new technologies and behaviors

### Key Skills:

- Detailed processes that are easily replicated
- Measurements that track outcomes and provide feedback for continuous improvement
- Adapting training programs for the adult learner
- Continuous communication that supports behavior change
- Selecting appropriate media and communication tools

### Benefits:

- Rapid deployment/adoption of successful programs
- Lasting behavior change that supports new products, programs and job creation
- Acceptance of new technologies by communities, workers, consumers and other stakeholder groups
- Less cynicism from taxpayers