



NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COALITION

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act  
Summer Program Implementation Survey Report &  
Summary**

September 2009

DRAFT



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In August 2009, the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) conducted an online survey of members' experiences implementing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth activities funding authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). NYEC also convened two conference calls on ARRA implementation, each featuring four NYEC members as panelists.

The two implementation calls featured the following panelists:

- Laura Shubilla, Co-President & CEO, Philadelphia Youth Network
- Kay Tracy, Director of the Minnesota Office of Youth Development, St. Paul, MN
- Pam Smith, Executive Director of Arizona Call-A-Teen Youth Resources Inc., Phoenix, AZ
- Alice Cole, Career Development Services Director, Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development
- Hector Rivera, Pathways to Success Vice President, Our Piece of the Pie, Hartford, CT
- Pete Gerharz, Director of Education and Employment at Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco, CA
- Marge Kuethe, Youth Program Coordinator at Workforce Development Inc., Rochester, MN
- Ellen Zinkiewicz, Director for Youth & Community Services, Nashville Career Advancement Center, Nashville, TN

NYEC received responses from 34 individual NYEC member organizations to eleven questions on ARRA implementation. The two implementation conference calls included approximately 100 participants. This report includes a summary of member responses and highlights strategies, challenges, innovations and other information regarding NYEC member experiences with ARRA program implementation.

### **Legislative Background & Federal Guidance**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was enacted (P.L. 111-5) on February 17, 2009. The Recovery Act allocated \$1.2 billion for "grants to the States for youth activities, including summer employment for youth."<sup>1</sup> In addition, the legislation increased the age of eligibility for recovery act funds from 21 to 24 and streamlined performance measures for summer programs, requiring only that programs report participant gains on the "work readiness indicator."

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<sup>1</sup> American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, p. 58

The U.S. Department of Labor issued Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 14-08 on March 18, 2009 providing greater detail on the implementation of ARRA funds.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the TEGL instructed organizations receiving funds to follow designated “program design considerations,” including 1) objective assessment and individual service strategies for each youth participant, 2) the use of age appropriate activities for youth and the need to develop specific methodology to measure work readiness indicator growth, 3) that a “work experience” should be the core of a summer employment program funded by ARRA, 4) selecting suitable worksites in the private, public and non-profit sectors that both provide proper worksite supervision and who are able to provide work experiences without unfavorably impacting existing employees, 5) integrate green work experiences, 6) connect where possible with registered apprenticeships, 7) integrate work experiences with classroom learning where possible, 8) allowing flexibility in linking summer youth employment work experiences with academic and occupational learning, 9) develop “innovative” strategies to engage older youth, ages 16-24, 10) focus on the neediest youth, and 11) only requiring follow-up services when “deemed appropriate for such individuals.”

### **Common Themes & Strategies**

From both the implementation conference calls and survey several common themes and strategies emerged as youth programs sought to provide meaningful work experiences for all youth engaging in summer programming as well as piloting innovative new ways to connect young people to career pathways and long-term education and career success.

#### *Implementation Success*

Most programs successfully expanded existing programs or developed new programs to serve large numbers of youth, in many cases doubling or tripling the numbers of youth served. The Minnesota Office of Youth Development indicated that by enrolling 5,572 youth, programs were able to triple the total number of youth served as compared to previous years. Arizona Call-A-Teen Youth Resources stated that ARRA funds allowed the program to reach out and serve rural youth in Maricopa County Arizona that previously had not been served. Survey results indicate that despite greatly increasing the numbers served, the demand for these services continued to exceed the supply. A sample of six different organizations providing full data in their implementation survey responses show that of 40,700 youth applying for summer employment spots, 7,312 applicants or 18 percent of all applicants were enrolled. (See Figure 1)

#### *Income Eligibility*

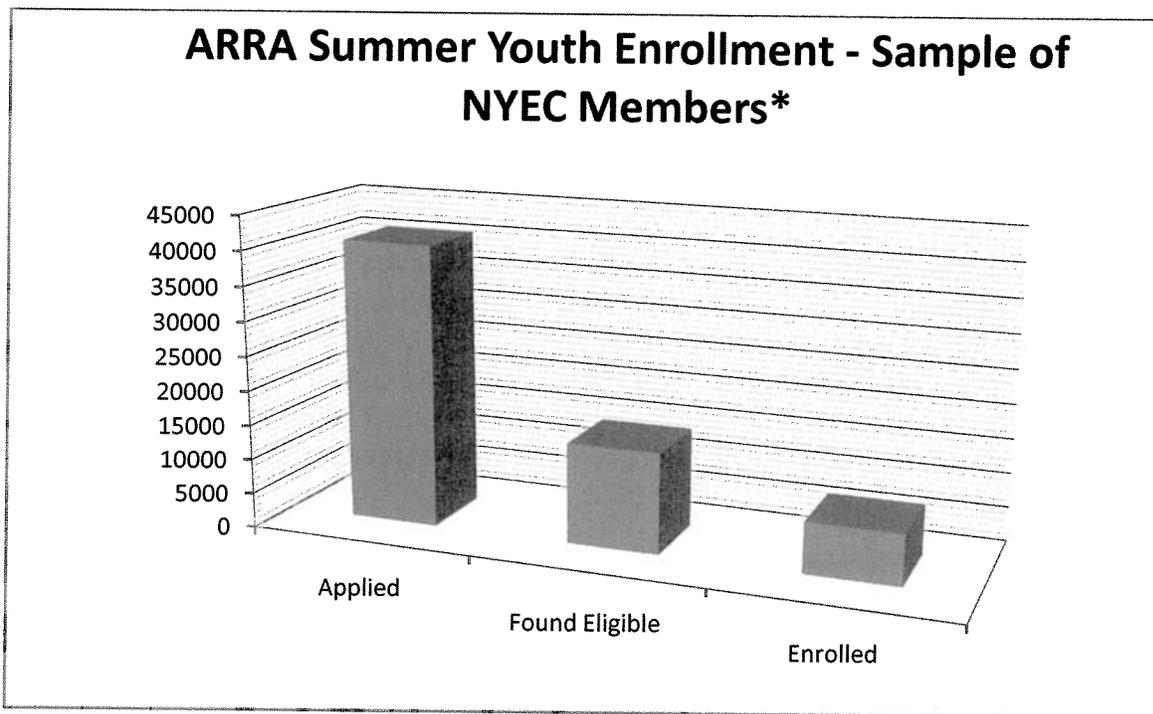
Despite success in enrollment, funding levels and eligibility limitations prevented programming from enrolling many youth in need. In the above sample, out of 40,700 applicants, only 14,515 or 35.6 percent were found to be eligible. (See Figure 1) Several programs reported that the WIA income reporting requirements prevented them from serving youth who clearly could have benefited from a summer employment experience. One respondent reported that the requirements are “unduly burdensome and unfair.” Programs reported that many applicants

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<sup>2</sup> US Department of Labor Training and Employment Guidance Letter 14-08, p. 22-31

were unable to produce the necessary income paperwork or could not be served because they were slightly over the WIA income cut-off line. (The Workforce Investment Act cuts off eligibility at the poverty line or 70 percent of the lower living standard income level. For a family of four in the Washington D.C. area in 2009, 70 percent of the LLISL is \$28,709 and the poverty guideline for that same family of four is \$22,050.)

**Figure 1**



*\*This sample consists of six NYEC organizations reporting 40,700 applicants of which 14,515 were found to be WIA eligible and 7,312 were enrolled in summer programs. As noted, many applicants were unable to produce the required documentation to prove WIA income eligibility.*

### Overcoming Challenges

Challenges confronted by programs implementing ARRA-funded summer programming varied from location to location, but it was universally acknowledged that only having approximately two months to develop or expand a summer program placed many providers in a difficult situation. Despite this time limitation, many programs were able to overcome enrollment challenges, capacity-building challenges, and data collection challenges to provide quality work experiences for youth and often leverage ARRA funds to innovate as well.

Programs in both Nashville and Baltimore described how they realized that, when the increase in numbers of new youth participating in summer programming became apparent, locating and matching youth with quality work sites would present an enormous challenge. Baltimore addressed this challenge by connecting with previous partners and aggressively canvassing the community for new partnerships, ending up with 526 separate work sites and 26 private sector

partners. To ensure that partners entered into the programming with sufficient ability to oversee participating youth, Baltimore held a day long mentor-training session and developed worksite curriculum. Like many other communities, Nashville, TN, had not implemented a summer employment program in several years and found it necessary to build a summer program from the ground up. Rather than simply developing a program on their own, Nashville successfully reached out to nonprofit organizations which had extensive experience providing year-round workforce and education experiences and additionally had experience leveraging multiple funding streams. The Nashville Career Advancement Center developed with their contractors an effective way to match young people to worksites through a mutually agreed upon set of youth characteristics. By using the data collected via their online applications, Nashville was able in the very short time period provided to efficiently match up worksite and youth.

### *Innovation and Older Youth*

ARRA made several small changes to the Workforce Investment Act to make summer employment implementation easier, but the ARRA provision changing the upper limit of WIA age-eligibility from 21 to 24 presented special challenges. This change also spurred some innovative programming by encouraging programs to consider how they would serve older youth for whom a four-week summer employment experience would not meet their needs if it did not provide connections to year-round education and employment services and provide entry into possible career pathways.

A program in Hartford, CT identified “Tier Three” youth who were college age and may have previously been enrolled in postsecondary institutions such as local community colleges, but were either struggling or had become disconnected from education and the workplace. Previously, these youth, though WIA eligible, could not be served during the summer months. Recovery Act funds provided the Hartford Program an opportunity to engage this population in the summer and follow-up the summer experience with services oriented towards reengaging these young people in postsecondary education and career pathways. The program put in place will connect these older youth with career expos, have offered the opportunity for many of these youth to use their summer work experience as an “extended tryout” for employment at their summer worksite, and provide career and education counseling with the goal of setting these young people on the road towards gaining additional skills that they could offer to future employers.

A Philadelphia program reserved approximately 30 percent of its ARRA funds for a competitive procurement process, similar to WIA year-round services that will identify high quality program providers to implement ARRA-funded programs for older youth starting October 1, 2009 and continuing through September 2010. This program will use the funds to implement four program types: 1) a GED-to-College Pilot blending skill building, remediation and test preparation with postsecondary preparation and enrollment, 2) an Urban Corps replicating the youth corps model found in other cities, 3) a Job Placement collaborative that works in partnership with other out-of-school youth serving programs to place qualified young people in long-term, unsubsidized employment, and 4) Occupational, industry-specific skills training in the renewable energy and energy efficiency job sectors.

Many programs provided examples of the innovative programming for older youth resulting in individual successes. In Baltimore, for example, a young woman engaged through the ARRA summer program was by the end of the program hired by the University of Maryland. Another young man, a high school dropout with no plans for the fall, was placed at Baltimore City Public Schools alternative learning office and in a diploma-plus academy, and has made significant progress towards attaining his high school diploma.

### *Green Jobs*

Many programs made an effort to connect youth with summer work experiences involving “green jobs.” For many, the extent of this was youth placements within departments of parks and recreation and involvement in recycling and beautification initiatives. But some programs were able to develop programs which more deeply connected youth, especially older youth, with jobs in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors.

A Baltimore program placed 22-24 year olds as team leaders at various worksites. These older youth started a week earlier in a special team leader orientations session and stayed a week later to participate in closeout activities. Baltimore intends to transition these older youth into a Green Job Corps, an intensive program which would provide extensive training in the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries. A San Francisco program reported a successful partnership with a local solar panel installation firm. This partnership lead to a “learning rich” employment experience for summer youth participants and the partnership is one that they expect to continue providing work experiences to youth as part of their year-round program after October 1.

**NYEC Implementation Survey – Question by Question Summary**

NYEC’s survey consisted of 11 questions. Below is a summary of responses to each question.

**Question 1**

*Has your program expanded summer employment services with ARRA funds to serve more youth than in previous years, and if so, by how much?*

Every respondent able to respond to this question reported expansion of summer employment services. In two cases, respondents reported the successful establishment of a summer program where none had existed for several years. Of those who did have summer programs in previous years, the largest increase in enrollment reported was 400 percent. Three respondents reported tripling the number of summer participants. The smallest increase reported was a 2 percent increase in summer enrollment. In this case, however, the respondent noted that the increase in federal funding for summer programs through ARRA coincided with a cut in state funding for summer programs.

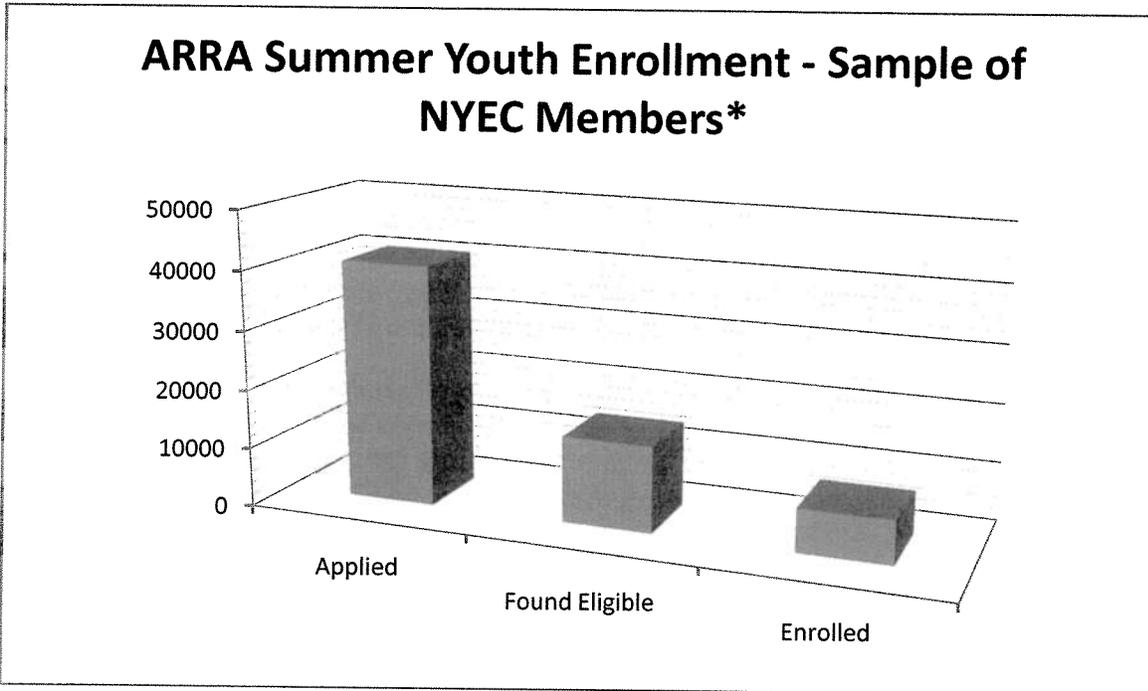
*How many youth has your program placed in summer jobs to date? How many do you plan to place before your ARRA funded activities end?*

The answers to this question varied depending on the respondent. Two respondents reported that statewide the Recovery Act funds allowed the enrollment of 5,653 and 6,000 additional participants.

*How many youth applied for positions and how many did you find to be WIA eligible?*

Programs universally reported having many times more summer program applicants than available spots. WIA eligibility requirements significantly reduced the number of enrollees. The table below reflects approximate numbers reported by a sample of respondents who supplied data.

<b>Sample ARRA Funded Summer Youth Enrollment Data</b>			
	<i>Number Applied</i>	<i>Number WIA Eligible</i>	<i>Number Enrolled</i>
Respondent 1	3700	2415	1100
Respondent 2	1000	500	450
Respondent 3	16,000	4900	2600
Respondent 4	10,000	3000	971
Respondent 5	8000	2200	2050
Respondent 6	2000	1500	141
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,700</b>	<b>14,515</b>	<b>7,312</b>



*\*This sample consists of six NYEC organizations reporting 40,700 applicants of which 14,515 were found to be WIA eligible and 7,312 were enrolled in summer programs. As noted, many applicants were unable to produce the required documentation to prove WIA income eligibility.*

This is a small preliminary sample representing six organizations of varying size and location, and the data reported is approximate at that, but nonetheless indicates the vast disparities between applicants and available spots. The sample shows that 18 percent of youth applicants and 50 percent of applicants found to be WIA eligible were enrolled in the program. One caveat of note, several respondents report that many applicants simply did not or were unable to complete the extensive paperwork necessary to prove WIA eligibility, though they may in fact meet eligibility requirements.

#### **Question 2**

*Provide one or more examples of success stories from your summer experience thus far. These could involve a youth, employer, program staff, or just overall positive lessons learned.*

Each program reported one or more success stories. Common themes across many of the success stories include youth participation in environmental and renewable energy programs, attracting new employers who would be able to place summer youth in the future and the ability to offer an access point for older youth to enter services and continue past the summer months.

#### **Question 3**

*Provide the three most difficult challenges you have faced in implementing the summer program, and rank them in order from most difficult to least.*

Top challenges (ranked in order from most to least challenging) include: 1) WIA eligibility requirements preventing needy youth from entering into the program and delaying the

enrollment process, 2) Lack of time to plan for the program/short timeframe between ARRA authorization and program start date, 3) Difficulty of identifying employers/work sites willing and able to provide placements, 4) Locating and hiring additional qualified staff, 5) Locating funding for increased administrative needs, 5) Developing a uniform system of paperwork and processes for all contractors, 6) Managing data entry/paperwork requirements, and 7) Modifying state data systems to track and report Recovery Act participants.

#### **Question 4**

*What are some of the successes/challenges involved in enrolling youth into your ARRA funded program work for your organization? How have you addressed the WIA eligibility requirements?*

Most respondents found meeting WIA eligibility requirements when enrolling youth to be a challenge. Some common strategies for dealing with burdensome eligibility requirements included drawing on other funding streams (private funds, state funds) to fund placements for youth who could not meet WIA eligibility requirements, working directly with other state departments/agencies (such as health and human services) to streamline paperwork and prioritize the enrollment of populations of youth which meet one or more key WIA eligibility requirements (e.g. youth in foster care, youth offenders, youth with disabilities), hiring additional staff to handle eligibility paperwork, and partnering with schools to identify youth who would prove good candidates for eligibility.

#### **Question 5**

*What strategies/practices have you employed in partnering with employers to provide work experience positions for your summer youth participants?*

Common approaches taken to attracting and partnering with employers to host summer youth include 1) relying heavily on existing employer relationships (this proved especially important given the time constraints), 2) working with nonprofits (one respondent claimed that non-profits were “the easiest to access and the most flexible”, 3) partnering with city and county government departments/agencies, 4) targeted small businesses which, due to their size, could quickly make decisions regarding summer placements, 5) engaging apprenticeship training programs, 6) connecting with private sector champions and business organizations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce), 7) using the organization website as an effective tool to attract private sector involvement, 8) partnering with a private company with expertise in employer recruitment (e.g. Manpower Inc.), 9) working with afterschool programs, and 10) allowing employers to meet with youth ahead of time before committing so that they feel comfortable with the placements.

*What industries/type of employers proved most successful in helping you develop your ARRA program?*

The top responses to this question (from most often mentioned to least) are 1) all industries/no one particular industry sector, 2) city/county government, 2) nonprofits/community based organizations, 3) school districts, 4) small retail business (e.g. cafes, printing companies), 5) health care, 6) large companies able to place many youth (e.g. Qualcomm).

**Question 6**

*What strategies/practices have you employed in building the capacity of your organization to handle the influx of ARRA funds?*

Common strategies for building capacity for the ARRA summer program included 1) hiring contract or part-time employees to deal with the increase administration, with a focus on additional staff to handle recruitment, intake and other data-entry intensive work, 2) assigning additional duties to existing staff and extending staff work hours/overtime (One respondent stated that staff worked “above and beyond to serve more youth”, 3) leveraging other resources to pay for additional capacity (e.g. working with state Vocational Rehabilitation system), 4) implementing new training programs and developing training manuals to teach staff about WIA requirements, 5) diverting staff time from other work (one respondent stated that “given the high priority for mobilizing the organization to implement the WIA Youth ARRA Summer program, it did cause the other work of the organization to be put on ‘pause’ pending the development and implementation of ARRA.”, 6) contracting a private company to specific operations (e.g. payroll). Programs with a history of running summer youth programs stated that their existing organization structures and staff experience made ramping up services possible without adding significant additional resources.

*What were the challenges/successes involving staffing, resources, facilities, etc.?*

The most often cited challenge regarding building capacity involved the lack of funds for the additional administrative time associated with staffing and running the summer youth employment program and serving a greater number of youth. One respondent stated “The compensation for ARRA was based on a per placement model and did not account for the actual time that required to develop, coordinate, and sustain a placement.”

**Question 7**

*What strategies/practices have you employed to fulfill ARRA youth reporting requirements? Has your organization identified post-test success rate goals? If so, what are they?*

Though the assessment tools used varied widely, respondents generally reported that they developed in-house a pre and post-test assessment tool or adopted an existing tool to the purpose, often assessing summer youth participants on more than just work readiness criteria.

*Has your organization identified post-test success rate goals? If so, what are they?*

Most respondents did not specify a success rate for the summer program as a whole, and some may not even consider work readiness the most important measure of success. One respondent stated “our success rate will be determined by the number of youth, number of project hours and amount of money earned.” Two respondents who did specify a success rate indicated that they expected “75% of participants to finish the program with positive results on their post-tests” and “80% of students will have a work readiness goal and achieve a minimum of 20 hours of academics and 60 hours of work experience.”

**Question 8**

*How have you been able to use your ARRA funds to enhance existing WIA youth services?*

Though several of the respondents replied that they intend to only spend ARRA funds on summer services, many believed that the summer spending enhanced their programs overall,

including year-round service delivery. One respondent stated, “the follow through and engagement of program applicants is much higher when they can make the direct connection between participating in program services and a real paycheck for real work.” Another stated “we anticipate an increase in WIA Older Youth and Adult programs due to using the Summer Program Work Experience ARRA program as a feeder into year round programs.” The vast majority of respondents reported that new relationships and partnerships forged through the ARRA summer program would prove beneficial for years to come.

*What other funding streams have you leveraged to serve WIA ARRA participants and what additional services has this allowed you to provide?*

Top responses include: 1) in-kind contributions from community partners/vendors (e.g. partner schools providing space and staff), 2) private donations, grants and sponsorships, and 3) other government funding streams (e.g. state Department of Transportation training funds, discretionary TANF non-assistance funds, community development block grants, WIA Adult and Wagner-Peyser CORE funding)

### **Question 9**

*What services have you provided to older youth with ARRA funds?*

Many respondents mentioned that they provided similar ARRA funded services to older youth that were provided to younger youth. The main difference is in organizational efforts to transition older youth to year-round services and programs beyond the summer months. However, some services mentioned specific to older youth include 1) hiring older youth as team/crew leaders, 2) matching older youth with employers in their field of interest with the potential to hire, and 3) providing work experiences that include more skill-specific training.

*Do you plan to provide follow-up services or post-ARRA transition plans for older youth? If so, what are they?*

According to the varied responses to this question, a great deal of innovation occurred as providers worked to transition youth out of ARRA funded summer programs to year-round programs. Some of the common themes include 1) helping older youth to develop career plans and offering job placement assistance, 2) transitioning older youth to other year-round employment services (e.g. One-Stops, WIA Adult), and 3) transitioning older youth to programs that provide industry-specific training.

### **Question 10**

*As a result of the ARRA funds, have you been able to develop innovations in programming? If so, please describe.*

Several respondents described innovative programming in previous survey questions. One respondent described moving to a career academy model for the summer, including academies for early childhood and youth education, healthcare, science-technology-engineering-math (STEM) industries, liberal arts & journalism, construction, and natural resources. Another described developing a program around career pathways in the video game industry. Multiple respondents described new or enhanced partnerships with the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries, such as one that connected with solar panel installers to provide work experience.

**Question 11**

*How are you planning to build upon the ARRA investment as you look at future WIA year-round and summer programming?*

The most common response to this question was sustaining new relationships and collaborations with local governments, foundations, school districts and regional employers that were created through the implementation of ARRA funds. Respondents without pre-ARRA experience for summer programming indicated that they would be able to build upon the successes of the 2009 summer by offering similar summer programming in future years depending on funding. However, many of these same programs cautioned that much of their hard work would not be sustainable if federal funding or another significant funding stream was not available in the future.

