



## FUNDING PROJECTS AFTER ARRA

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Ok, so you missed out on the stimulus funding. Was it because you didn't have a shovel-ready project already in process? Could you not find the necessary funding in your already passed fiscal year's budget to get a preliminary engineering report for your project? Maybe you just didn't have the time to take a close look at all the needed projects in your system to be able to prioritize which one or ones you wanted to try to get involved with this unexpected funding opportunity. Whatever the reason, you need to know that it isn't the end of the world and you are still eligible for the normal funding opportunities that were and still are available after ARRA. One really big fact about the ARRA funding that you should know is that if the project isn't completely finished by September 2015 and all the funding completely drawn down, the money goes away. This was made perfectly clear to anyone receiving this funding up front and we as Circuit Riders were told to keep reminding the Systems of this fact as we visit them. I know this doesn't apply to you since you didn't get the funding, but think about what this could mean to those who did get it. We all know that things always come up to delay projects and each comes with its own set of reasons as to why. Under normal circumstances we try to understand and deal with these sorts of things. Again I stress, there is no gray area to work with in the ARRA funding, and the deadline is the deadline. There also is a lot of reporting that is tied into the ARRA funded projects. This having been said, has caused some projects that I have been made aware of in my travels that have gotten funded with ARRA money, in my opinion, to be rushed and not necessarily in the best interest of the communities they are being put into.

The point I am trying to make here is that any major project that a community has to fund for a very long period of time should never be rushed into. Time and time again, as a Circuit Rider, I see projects approved by uninformed community leaders. With normal non-rushed funding opportunities these community leaders should take the time to talk to their water and wastewater operators and perhaps our Circuit Riders to get their input as to what direction the project should go in; then give their ideas to a few different consultants to bid on before committing to any project. Keep in mind that your operators are the people that will have to make whatever the Engineers design and build work once the project is complete. These employees are also

trained professionals in their field with a lot of knowledge of your community's special needs that a consulting firm will not have any knowledge of at all. All too often this would save your community a lot of money that we see spent on projects being proposed to you by a consulting firm that as you know, work on a for-profit basis. New will work, but sometimes an upgrade to your existing facility will last just as long and save you a lot of money. Sorry for going off on a tangent but remember that just because you missed the boat on the AARRA funding, nothing has changed with the old funding. Sorry again, one thing has changed with the USDA funding; the interest rates have dropped. Start planning your next project and let us know if we can help you in any way. 💧💧

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