

How Title I and IDEA Funds From ARRA Were Used in Idaho Districts



Phase 2 Report
August 2010

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Summary

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided Idaho with more than \$280 million in federal stimulus money for education. The funds were intended to be spent quickly to create and save jobs while simultaneously aiding school improvement and reform efforts, ensuring transparency and accountability, and minimizing a funding cliff. Idaho's allocation included \$35 million for Title I programs (for students of families that live in poverty) and \$58 million for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In 2009, the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) commissioned Education Northwest to conduct a three-phase study of the use of Title I and IDEA ARRA funds by Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The Phase I report, issued in June 2010, summarized key findings from a survey of all Idaho LEAs. This Phase II report details findings from 29 in-depth interviews with LEA staff members. The five major findings from Phase II are:

Interviewed LEA staff members reported Title I and IDEA ARRA funds had a positive impact in their LEA and were grateful for the funds. Measuring the impact, however, was difficult. Many LEAs credited ARRA funds with paying for personnel and programs that helped bolster student achievement. While half of LEAs reported they were collecting data to measure impact, most interviewees said there were limitations to doing so, or described somewhat distal measures.

Saving jobs drove many ARRA spending decisions. However, funds also were used to purchase materials and services that will remain in LEAs after ARRA funding ends. Many of the LEA funds were used to maintain existing staff and education programs. While saving jobs was a priority, three out of four LEAs spent at least a portion of their funds on nonpersonnel items.

Interviewed LEA staff members feared that jobs would be lost when ARRA funding is gone. Unless additional funding from the state or federal government is secured, the majority of LEAs said they will have to lay off staff when funding ends in 2011. This includes teachers and paraprofessionals.

LEAs reported only minor challenges related to decision-making, management, and reporting for Title I and IDEA ARRA funds. LEAs were satisfied with guidance and assistance from the SDE and reported only minor challenges in deciding how to spend the funds. Contrary to the Phase I report, interviewees did not report problems with ARRA reporting requirements.

LEAs asked for additional funding for education as well as continued supports and guidance.

Interviewees voiced some concerns about state and local maintenance of effort. LEAs asked for an increase in the amount of funding and/or improving the stability of funding sources in the future. Some LEAs were concerned or confused about future maintenance of effort at the state and local levels.

A third and final report from this study will be available in December 2010. The report will include case studies from three LEAs.

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Introduction

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) was signed into law on February 17, 2009. A direct response to economic crisis, ARRA was intended to create and save jobs, spur economic activity, invest in long-term growth, and foster accountability and transparency in government spending.

ARRA invested more than \$100 billion in new funds for education—an unprecedented federal influx of funds designed to be invested quickly across the country. U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, outlined four principles for the use of ARRA funds:

- Spend quickly to create and save jobs in education
- Improve student achievement through school improvement and reform
- Ensure transparency and accountability
- Invest in one-time funding to minimize a “funding cliff,” meaning to avoid recurring costs that cannot be assumed when the funding ends

Like most states, Idaho made large budget cuts in education in 2009–2010 due to the economic crisis that continued across the country. ARRA provided Idaho with more than \$280 million in federal stimulus money for education. This allocation included \$35 million for Title I programs (for students of families that live in poverty) and \$58 million for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) received the Title I and IDEA ARRA funds and, in turn, allocated funds to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) using standard formulas. The decisions and management of Title I and IDEA ARRA funds were in the hands of each LEA; however, they received federal guidance documents as well as guidance and materials from the SDE.

Evaluating the use of ARRA funding in Idaho

This is the second in a series of three reports about the use of Title I and IDEA ARRA funds in Idaho. The three-phase study was commissioned by the SDE at the request of the superintendent in fall 2009. The first report (Nelsestuen & Roccograndi, 2010) summarized findings from a survey of all Idaho LEAs about their use of Title I and IDEA ARRA funding. The executive summary from the Phase I report is reproduced in Appendix A, and key findings are shown in a text box on this page.

The report, Phase II, summarizes findings from 29 in-depth telephone interviews with LEA staff members. The interview included questions about how and why spending decisions were made, what challenges were encountered, what impact the funds have had, how impact has been measured, and future needs in LEAs. Phase III will include case studies of three Idaho LEAs.

Key Findings from Phase I

1. The majority of reported Title I and IDEA ARRA funds (79 percent) was spent on personnel.
2. About one-fifth of all reported Title I and IDEA ARRA funds (21 percent) were spent on nonpersonnel categories, most commonly curriculum, professional development, and technology.
3. LEAs viewed ARRA as a crucial funding source. Most LEAs also believed the funds would improve results for students.
4. LEAs anticipated a “funding cliff” ahead.
5. LEAs felt burdened by reporting requirements.
6. LEAs reported different experiences based on their level of need and their size.

Methods

Phase II of the evaluation consisted of interviews with LEA staff members from 29 Idaho LEAs, conducted in spring and early summer 2010. Half of the LEAs were interviewed about Title I ARRA funds, and half were interviewed about IDEA ARRA funds. Questions for both groups were identical. The protocol was developed by evaluators after a preliminary analysis of Phase I survey data, and approved by SDE staff members (see Appendix B).

LEAs were selected for interview through a stratified random sample. All 123 districts in the state were sorted into high, medium, and low-need categories (need is based on a state formula that combines academic risk and financial resources). Thirty LEAs were chosen along with a list of alternates to be used, if selected interviewees did not respond after two e-mail and one telephone request to schedule an interview.

The final sample of interviewed LEAs had a very similar proportion of high, medium, and low need LEAs as the state overall. This is shown in Table 1, which also compares the interview sample to the state in terms of LEA size. There was a slightly lower percentage of small LEAs and a slightly larger percentage of large LEAs among those interviewed compared to the state overall.

Table 1
Characteristics of Interviewed LEAs

	All Idaho LEAs (n=130)	Interviewed LEAs (n=29)
District level of need		
High	41%	45%
Medium	41%	38%
Low	17%	17%
District size		
Small (<600 students)	49%	41%
Medium (601–2,500)	30%	28%
Large (>2,500)	21%	31%

Note: Level of need data are from the Idaho SDE database for 121 LEAs. District size data are from the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) database.

Four evaluators conducted the telephone interviews between May 15 and July 8, 2010. Each interview lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Evaluators took detailed notes during the interviews so quotes are as accurate as possible, but may not be verbatim. All quotes in the report come from these interviews. Of the LEA staff members interviewed, about two-thirds were program directors (e.g., special education, federal programs, special programs, Title I, and/or accountability and assessment). In addition, about one-fifth of interviewees were district superintendents, and a smaller number were business managers, principals, school psychologists, or clerks. Contact information came from contact lists provided by the SDE, although not all interviews were conducted with the individual on the SDE's list. In a few cases, that individual recommended that evaluators interview another, more knowledgeable, individual.

Findings

This section presents five key findings distilled from Phase II interviews.

FINDING 1: Interviewed LEA staff members reported Title I and IDEA ARRA funds had a positive impact in their LEA and were grateful for the funds. Measuring the impact, however, was difficult.

Almost all interviewed LEA staff members said that ARRA funds had helped bolster achievement for some students. Often student achievement increases were attributed to personnel funded through ARRA. These new or retained staff members had reduced class or group size, and/or provided special assistance for students through programs such as extended-day kindergarten or transition services.

The funds helped increase reading scores on tests because it gives their performance a boost by having extra help.

Improved success for students was also credited to nonpersonnel expenditures from ARRA. For example, several LEAs who purchased professional development for their staff reported that students benefited from improved teachers' skills and knowledge. Another interviewee said that replacing their old curriculum with newer, research-based materials had improved student learning.

A few interviewees indicated that ARRA had contributed to their success in meeting AYP requirements, increasing graduation rates, or improving school climate.

ARRA funds helped us make AYP in middle school because the Title I ARRA funds helped put Tier II interventions in place and helped us sustain research-based strategies we started in Reading First.

Many LEA staff members added that they were grateful for the ARRA funding and expressed a desire for continued funding in the future.

I wish the funds could continue, they came along at a great time.

I am grateful for it, grateful that it was flexible, and I wish there was more.

We appreciated having it. It has helped us with two hard years.

While there was almost universal belief that ARRA had made a positive contribution to student learning, actually measuring impact was difficult. ARRA requires LEAs to report how many jobs (FTE) were purchased with ARRA funds. However, neither ARRA nor the Idaho SDE required LEAs to track impact in any other way. Half of interviewed LEAs (52%) reported they were not collecting any impact data while the other half (48%) said they were collecting some kind of data to measure impact.¹ Commonly, LEAs explained it was difficult—maybe even impossible—to attribute any change in student achievement only to ARRA funding in the presence of so many other factors.

¹ Survey results were slightly different; 60 percent of LEAs reported collecting data to measure impact.

It is impossible to attribute our improvement to just one thing like ARRA. I think, for example, some of the improvement had to do with Reading First, not just ARRA.

It is difficult to relate an impact to a funding source because so many other variables are in play in our school improvement efforts, like staff changes, programs, and students' home lives.

Some other LEAs added that, since they mostly funded the “status quo,” they didn’t necessarily expect to see measurable changes. Some of these LEAs also suggested looking at impact when ARRA money disappeared (e.g., 2011-2012) to see if things get worse.

The impact is hard to measure because we've just maintained what we've had. We would expect everything to stay on a level playing field.

We won't really know until next year, when the funding is gone and our paraprofessionals are gone, if we see a change [decline] in student achievement. We have test scores, but we can't really tell anything now.

LEAs that were collecting impact data were asked to describe their data sources. A few LEAs described very specifically how their inputs (ARRA-funded personnel and activities) were linked to specific impact measures they were collecting. For example, one small LEA funded a sixth-grade paraprofessional to work with four special education students and then examined the test scores from those four students. Another LEA examined assessment data from students in an ARRA-funding extended-day kindergarten program and compared them to students in a half-day kindergarten program. Reportedly, their data showed that student achievement was higher among extended-day kindergarteners.

In the majority of LEAs, however, interviewees’ answers about the nature of their data were much less specific or they described somewhat distal measures of impact. For example, some LEAs said they could examine their ISAT, IRI, or ITBS scores to see how ARRA had made a difference. Other interviewees only offered anecdotal evidence, or mentioned the *possibility* (not a plan) of examining impact. As previously mentioned, measuring impact was not a requirement of ARRA.

FINDING 2: Saving jobs drove many ARRA spending decisions. However, funds also were used to purchase materials and services that will remain in LEAs after ARRA funding ends.

The first federal guiding principle for ARRA was to “create and save jobs quickly.” Interviewees explained that, in many cases, this principle was the driving force behind their decisions about how to spend the money. In fact, many LEAs said their spending decisions were very “straightforward” because of the need to save jobs that would have otherwise been cut.

With budget cuts from the state, using the funds for personnel was the only way to maintain the previous staffing.

We have a real dedication to have quality education...to do so, we have to have staff and we have to pay them. We have no money, so what we have is spent on the basics, like salaries.

It was also common for interviewees to note that, because of budget shortfalls, ARRA was used to “maintain the status quo” of education programs in addition to staff members. In other words, funds were used to pay for some existing programs that might otherwise have been cut. For example, in one LEA, ARRA funds were used to continue a reading intervention program that had been previously funded through Reading First. Another district funded teacher professional development, which had been almost completely cut in the annual budget.

The scramble to “maintain the status quo” has been reported elsewhere as well. An early report on ARRA found that the funds were “simply filling budget holes” (Ellerson, 2010). Another recent report termed funding a “shell game” in which state budgets were cut after they knew what ARRA money would be realized (Ellerson, 2010).

Because so many funds were spent on personnel, interview data echo survey data in that two out of three LEAs believe that a funding cliff is ahead. Many characterized the cliff as being “delayed” or “postponed” for one or two years, since no additional funds for education have been identified to take the place of ARRA funds.

ARRA moves the cliff, but it does not remove it unless there is another increase somewhere else to replace the ARRA funds.

It was absolutely a funding cliff and we knew it when we chose how to spend the money. It was a nice way to save people for a year.

Saving jobs and programs may have been the priority among many LEAs, but at least a portion of spending went to materials and services that will remain in LEA after ARRA funding ends. Three out of four LEAs spent at least a portion of their funds on nonpersonnel items, according to survey data. And one in three interviewed LEAs said they invested so heavily in nonpersonnel items that they did not believe they’d experience a funding cliff when ARRA ends.

We avoided the cliff because we chose to use our funding for extended learning instead of keeping staff. We didn't want to rely on the funding when we knew it wasn't always going to be there.

We avoided the cliff big time. We took the opportunity to get technology and new testing materials and curriculum. We were looking long term.

The types of materials and programs purchased by LEAs was very diverse, as described in the Phase I report. Some LEAs said they made purchasing choices based on what they thought would “give the most bang for the buck” or things that “we wouldn't have otherwise had money to do.”

We bought new software because we didn't like what we had and this was more up-to-date.

We bought Read Naturally because we thought it would be a good reading program for our reading interventions.

We looked at our achievement data and there was starting to be big growth in reading but we hadn't addressed math...so we decided now it was the time to address math.

Finding 3: Interviewed LEA staff members feared that jobs would be lost when ARRA funding is gone.

The vast majority of interviewees said their LEA will have to lay off staff members who support Title I and special education programs when ARRA funding ends in December 2011. This will occur because Idaho's education budget was cut for 2010-2011 and prospects for the 2011-2012 school year are unknown. The funding crisis is not unique to Idaho as many national reports have indicated that education jobs have been cut—and continue to be threatened—across the country (Husch, 2010; Ellerson, 2010; Naik, Yorkman, & Casserly, 2010; Kober, Scott, Stark, McMurrer, & Dietz, 2010).

In some LEAs, certified staff positions will reportedly be lost. However, according to interview data, those most affected by layoffs will be paraprofessionals. Interviewees described how cutting paraprofessional positions will result in less one-on-one and small group instruction, fewer interventions and fewer special services for students. As a result, struggling students will receive less individualized attention, which will hurt their chances of academic success.

The kids will not see the same individual attention and may not make the same progress, even though we have very good teachers. Academically, the kids might not do well. My teachers will be overwhelmed.

Teachers will be left without help in the classrooms. There will be less practice of effective instruction because there will be less direct instruction and more behavior control issues.

There was a particular concern voiced by some interviewees about decreased support and services for special education students.

Our lowest kids, who really need help, won't get the one-on-one help they need without the aides.

The learning disabled population will be affected the most. The loss of staff will put special education across from regular education again and they will think that special education only helps severely disabled students. I'm especially concerned about Tier 2 students.

Some LEAs reported that supplemental programs such as remediation summer school, extended learning and enrichment programs were also in jeopardy of being cut. A small number of interviewed LEAs said the end of ARRA would mean decreased ability to update technology, curriculum, and supplies and fewer professional development opportunities for staff in the future.

When asked about carryover funds for 2010-2011, the majority of interviewed LEAs said they will spend their remaining money in similar ways to last year. That is, most LEAs will use ARRA funds to support salaries. In a June 2010 webinar, the U.S. Department of Education urged states to do just that: use stimulus funds to hire personnel and alleviate the impact of staff layoffs. In this message, they backed away from the original goal of avoiding a funding cliff by investing in nonpersonnel expenses.

Finding 4: LEAs reported only minor challenges related to decision-making, management, and reporting for Title I and IDEA ARRA funds.

Interviewed LEA staff members were asked about guidance, decision-making, and reporting requirements related to Title I and IDEA ARRA funds, and reported only minor challenges. This finding reflects that of a recent national study on ARRA funding which concluded that ARRA has presented only minor logistical problems for a large share of districts (Kober, Scott, Stark, McMurrer, Dietz, 2010).

Guidance. Most interviewed LEA staff members reported that guidance from the SDE had been adequate and appreciated how quickly and precisely their questions were answered by personnel from the SDE.

It was helpful that they a) told us we could/should extend money into the second year, b) told us to consider investing in things that wouldn't require continued funding, and c) gave us a list of guidelines and recommendations so you can reflect on each idea they suggest and check off and see if you're following everything.

Sometimes I have questions on a specific items and I can always get answers. They are there to help. If I make a mistake, it's not 'gotcha,' but help and they make sure you do the right thing.

A few interviewees suggested that the state could have been more helpful by providing more suggestions for how to spend the money, making the information timelier and more specific.

Decision-making. Two-thirds of LEAs reported that they had encountered some challenge in deciding how to spend ARRA funds. However, none of the challenges they described were insurmountable. For example, the most commonly mentioned challenge was the tension between choosing to save jobs versus avoiding the funding cliff described in Finding 3.

A big challenge was knowing after two years of having special education staff on these funds they would be gone. What are we going to do after two years? The state warned us of that, but the district decided that this is something they had to do.

It is hard not to put the money into personnel. If you buy stuff and then you don't have people to use the stuff, you chase your own tail.

A few other LEA staff members reported that it was complicated to choose from many spending options, had difficulty staying “within the intent of the law,” and found it hard to make decisions that were supported by data.

ARRA spending decisions were made by a variety of people. According to interviewees, a team made decisions in the majority of LEAs (59%). One-fourth (25%) of LEAs reported that the decisions were made by one individual, such as the director of federal programs. An additional 17 percent of districts reported that two people made the decisions together (e.g., superintendent and business manager).

Teams commonly included superintendents, principals, and budget/business managers. They also included special education directors, teachers, school board psychologists, occupational and physical therapists, Title I advisory groups, and others. A lower percentage of high-need LEAs (38%) made team decisions, compared to medium- and low-need LEAs (60% and 50% respectively).

Reporting. The Phase I survey found that over half of LEAs (57%) agreed that they had encountered challenges in reporting the use of ARRA funds. Interviews contradicted this finding, however, since three-fourths of LEAs said they “hadn’t encountered challenges” or noted “no challenges so far” in reporting requirements.”² Challenges that were reported by one in four interviewees most often related to the amount of time and level of detail required in reports. A few others wanted to know requirements earlier, suggested shorter explanations, or asked that requirements not change. One district was concerned about the reimbursement process (spending money before being reimbursed). A few interviewees were also apprehensive about the future, believing that the requirements could change or become more burdensome.

² About one-quarter of interviewees who said they were not familiar with reporting requirements were excluded from analysis.

Finding 5: LEAs asked for additional funding for education as well as continued supports and guidance. Interviewees voiced some concerns about state and local maintenance of effort.

When asked how the SDE could support LEAs in the future, a frequent response was “money.” Many LEAs asked for an increase in the amount of funding and/or improving the stability of funding sources.

We need more money. The state just keeps cutting money but not expectations and that is frustrating. We can't keep doing more with less.

What we need is to know that we are going to have stable funding so we don't build a program where the money will go away. We need to know there is a good, stable funding source for Title I.

Among interviewees questioned about IDEA funds, there was a particular concern about maintenance of effort (MoE) in the future. MoE refers to how IDEA tries to insulate funding for children with disabilities from downturns in the economy. To do this, states and LEAs must fund special education at the same amount or more from year to year. If, however, an allocation exceeds the previous years, a district may reduce its expenditures for special education by up to 50 percent of the increase. Thus, increased funding through ARRA may reduce future MoE; a possibility that concerned, or sometimes confused, interviewees.

The worst thing about ARRA is how it will drastically reduce future state funding of special education. This has been an unexpected outcome.

I am confused about MoE issues. I'm not clear how it is all going to shake out in the end. We have decreased state funding but we still have to maintain our MoE so that is going to be a real issue.

MoE issues arose in other reports as well. One report called the MoE exceptions that have risen under ARRA a “unique and challenging issue” (Kober, Scott, Stark, McMurrer, Dietz, 2010). Another ARRA report criticized the ARRA law for how it handled the MoE provision (Naik, Yorkman, & Casserly, 2010).

In addition to funding requests, there were other ways LEAs said the SDE could help support them in the future. These included:

- Continue the yearly trainings, webinars, and guidance updates for program officers
- Provide information on research-based strategies
- Create a web site that could summarize the tasks and timelines for Title I and other programs
- Keep expectations and instructions the same over time
- Advocate for students with disabilities
- Reduce and streamline paperwork
- Provide more supports for assessments and/or minimize the assessment burden

Discussion

Interview data from Phase II of this study found that Title I and IDEA ARRA funds were welcomed by LEAs because the resources helped save jobs and maintain or purchase new education programs. LEAs believed that the funding had a positive impact in LEAs and helped bolster student achievement, often for the neediest students, as these funds were intended. Some of the nonpersonnel expenditures, such as curriculum and software, will last into the future.

Since the passage of ARRA, however, the economy has not seen a full recovery. In fact, the Idaho state education budget has been further cut for 2010-2011 and the 2011-2012 budget is uncertain. Title I and IDEA ARRA funds will expire in December 2011. According to many interviewees, this means that ARRA offered only temporary relief. While a federal education jobs bill was passed in early August 2010, the funding is, again, temporary. Therefore, job loss in Title I and IDEA programs may still occur, as LEAs described, when ARRA funds expire in 2011. Some supplemental programs supported with ARRA funds may also be cut. Interviewees voiced a strong need for increased and stable funding in the future.

For Idaho LEA staff, the challenges associated with managing and reporting Title I and IDEA ARRA funds were viewed as minimal. On the other hand, many LEAs reported challenges related to assessing the impact the funds may have had in their schools. While LEAs were not required to track impact the shift in education towards stronger data-based decision making suggests that LEAs may need more encouragement or resources to think about and track impact. Whether decisions are made by teams or individuals, the process of deciding how to spend money could contain a more specific and clear model of how inputs are expected to lead to both intermediate and long-term outcomes.

To date, a handful of other reports have been issued about the use of Title I and IDEA ARRA funds across the country. Many of these reports highlight similar findings to both the Phase I and Phase II reports in Idaho. That is, ARRA provided an important source of funding and helped save jobs, but the relief has been temporary. This state-level study of the use of Title I and IDEA ARRA funds appears unique and perhaps reflects a commitment at the SDE to collect data to inform their own future decisions.

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Appendix A.

Summary of Phase I Report

Like most states, Idaho witnessed large budget cuts in education in 2009–2010 as the economic crisis continued across the country. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided Idaho with more than \$280 million in federal stimulus money for education. This allocation included \$35 million for Title I programs (for students of families that live in poverty) and \$58 million for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In 2009, the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) commissioned Education Northwest to conduct a three-phase study of the use of Title I and IDEA ARRA funds by Local Education Agencies (LEAs). In Phase I, 69 percent of all Idaho LEAs responded to a survey about their experiences with ARRA. The six major findings from Phase I are:

The majority of reported Title I and IDEA ARRA funds (79 percent) was spent on personnel, most commonly to pay for teachers and paraprofessionals. In the context of state budget cuts, this aligns with ARRA funding principles that the majority of funds be used to pay for educational jobs that might otherwise have been lost.

About one-fifth of all reported Title I and IDEA ARRA funds (21 percent) were spent on nonpersonnel categories, most commonly curriculum, professional development, and technology. LEAs reported spending more than \$4 million on materials and services for Title I and IDEA that they might not have otherwise acquired under current financial circumstances.

LEAs viewed ARRA as a crucial funding source. Most LEAs also believed the funds would improve results for students.

LEAs anticipated a “funding cliff” ahead. Only 1 in 10 respondents completely agreed that a funding cliff had been avoided. This perception likely reflects the further cuts to the Idaho education budget for fiscal year 2011, which coincides with the end of ARRA funding.

LEAs felt burdened by reporting requirements. Many LEAs believed reporting requirements were excessive and had encountered challenges with the system. About half of responding LEAs reported they were collecting data to monitor the impact of the funding while half were not.

LEAs reported different experiences based on their level of need and their size. LEAs categorized as “high-need” by the state were more likely to report difficulties with using and reporting on ARRA funds than low-need LEAs. Furthermore, large LEAs with more than 2,500 students were more concerned about a “funding cliff” and more frequently reported the short planning time was difficult than did medium or small LEAs.

A second report from this study will be available in August 2010. The report will summarize interview data from a sample of LEAs about funding decisions, challenges, expected outcomes, and needs.

Appendix B

Interview questions

Introduction: As I hope I explained in my e-mail, this study is being conducted on behalf of the Idaho State Department of Education because they are interested in learning about the use, outcomes, challenges, and needs related to ARRA Title I and IDEA funding. This interview is a follow-up to a survey Education Northwest conducted of LEAs in Idaho about their use of either Title I or IDEA ARRA funds. I believe you/your district [completed this survey/did not complete this survey].

I'm going to ask you questions about your district's use of ARRA funds, with some questions having particular emphasis on [Title I/IDEA] ARRA funds.

As a final note, what you say during this interview will remain anonymous. That is, nothing you say during the interview will be associated with your name or your LEA's name in reports.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewer Name:

Date:

1. Information
 - a. Name
 - b. District
 - c. Title
 - d. When did your district first receive ARRA [Title I/IDEA] funds? (estimate okay)

2. *If they submitted a survey: summarize their results from the survey (e.g., from your survey, it looks like you spent some money on X, Y, Z).*

Is this still an accurate representation of how you spent your funds?

If their LEA didn't complete a survey, ask:

Can you briefly describe the ways your LEA used the ARRA [Title I/IDEA] funds?

3. Decisions about funding
 - a. Why did you decide to spend the funds in those ways? See above
 - b. Who made the decisions? (titles, not proper names)
 - c. Did you receive any guidance or support from the State in making your decisions about spending?
 - d. *If yes:* Was there anything that was particularly helpful or particularly unhelpful about the guidance?
If no: What kind of guidance did you need?
 - e. What, if anything, was challenging about deciding how to spend the funds?

4. Carry-over funds
 - a. Will you carry over some of your ARRA [Title I/IDEA] funds to next year?
Yes. We knew it was two years. We didn't want to spend it all the first year.
 - b. Have you already determined how the carry-over funds will be spent?
 - c. How will the spending be similar to or different from last year?
(if they said "no" to B, they still might be able to predict this)

5. *I have a few questions about ARRA federal reporting requirements. By reporting, I'm referring to the ongoing, regular reporting you have to do related to the funding. I am not referring to the survey or this interview conducted by Education Northwest, although you can feel free to make any additional comments at the end of the interview.*
 - a. Are you the person who completes reporting for ARRA [Title I/IDEA] funds?
(if no, tell them you'll still ask the following questions but it is okay if they don't know)
 - b. Describe the report requirements for ARRA [Title I/IDEA] funds.
 - c. What challenges have you encountered in meeting these requirements?
 - d. What would you like to see change about the reporting requirements?
(if they say, "less reporting" probe to see what aspects seem especially burdensome)

6. Impacts
 - a. What impact(s) do you expect the ARRA [Title I/IDEA] funds to have in your district? On what?
 - b. Are you measuring and tracking these— —or any— —impacts?
 - c. *If yes:* How? What kind(s) of data are you collecting to measure what kind(s) of outcomes?
 - d. *If no:* Why not?

7. One of the goals of ARRA funding was to invest in things that would avoid a "funding cliff," which means to avoid recurring costs that cannot be covered when the funding ends.
 - a. To what extent was this goal realized in your LEA? Why?
 - b. What aspects of your [Title I/IDEA] program will be most affected when ARRA funds are gone? What are the implications for student learning?

8. What supports do you most need from the state right now in terms of [Title I/IDEA] funding in general?

9. Do you have any other comments related to ARRA funding?

Thank you very much for your time.