

## **NEW JERSEY RECOVERY ACCOUNTABILITY TASK FORCE**

The New Jersey Recovery Accountability Task Force (“Task Force”) was created by Governor Corzine in February 2009 to provide oversight of the distribution of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (“ARRA”) funds. The Task Force has met bi-weekly since its creation to carry out its mission of ensuring maximum transparency and accountability of Recovery Act funds in New Jersey. The Task Force’s activities have included the following:

### ***Review and approval of selection criteria for ARRA programs***

One of the critical roles of the Task Force has been to ensure that discretionary ARRA funds that flow through the state are distributed based upon merit so that they have the maximum impact for the residents of New Jersey. To that end, the Task Force has reviewed and approved selection criteria for each state program receiving discretionary ARRA funds to ensure that projects are selected based upon transparent, merit-based criteria. A description of each program and program criteria are available online at [www.recovery.nj.gov](http://www.recovery.nj.gov).

### ***Internal Controls Training***

In light of the unprecedented levels of funding made available by the Recovery Act, the Task Force concluded it was necessary to provide as much upfront training as possible to state and local entities regarding the controls necessary to ensure responsible spending of these dollars. A group of Task Force members that includes the State Inspector General, the State Medicaid Inspector General and the former State Auditor have provided such training to numerous government officials throughout the state. Specifically, these Task Force members have held dozens of training sessions with various state departments, authorities, local government entities, and community organizations. To date, more than 1,000 state and local officials who are responsible for spending or overseeing the expenditure of ARRA funds have received this training. Recordings of these training sessions will be made available online at <http://www.nj.gov/taskforceresources/>.

### ***Written Guidance for Local Units and State Agencies***

One of the key roles of the Task Force is to provide information to state agencies and local government units regarding best practices for the use of ARRA funds. To disseminate this information as efficiently and widely as possible, the Task Force has provided detailed written guidance to all state agencies and local government units. For example, the guidance:

- advised agencies of the requirement to utilize transparent, merit-based criteria to award funds;
- informed recipients of the impact of federal law on these funds, including the Buy American requirement for purchasing materials and Davis-Bacon wage requirements;
- provided detailed information regarding effective management of contracts and grants, including best practices set forth by the Government Accountability Office; and

- provided information regarding ARRA reporting requirements.

The written guidance can be found online at [www.recovery.nj.gov](http://www.recovery.nj.gov).

The Task Force also has held a series of meetings or conference calls with state agencies and local governments to ensure continued dissemination of critical information regarding best practices for the disbursement of ARRA funds.

### ***Recovery Act Website***

The State of New Jersey Recovery Act website ([www.recovery.nj.gov](http://www.recovery.nj.gov)) provides the public with critical information regarding the use of ARRA funds in New Jersey. On an ongoing basis, Task Force members have provided advice and recommendations regarding the website. These members, led by Chief Technology Officer Adel Ebeid, have been working with the Governor's office and the Office of Information Technology to ensure the website provides complete transparency regarding ARRA issues.

### ***Follow-up on Previous Audit Findings***

Part of the Task Force's effort to address potential waste in ARRA spending has been through working with state agencies to address issues that have been identified in previous audits. The Task Force has had a productive dialogue with these agencies regarding the remedial actions they are taking to ensure that previously identified issues are resolved.

### ***Coordination of Oversight***

The Task Force also has been engaged in an ongoing dialogue with relevant oversight agencies to assist in ensuring that oversight resources and efforts are being managed in a complementary manner and are directed where needs are most pressing. These oversight efforts include audits of ARRA funds on both the state and local levels as well as training efforts.

### ***Oversight of Program Implementation***

The Task Force has been meeting in person at its regular meetings with representatives of the various state departments that are receiving significant ARRA funds. At these meetings, the state agencies have provided updates regarding all of their ARRA programs to ensure the agencies are disbursing funds in an efficient, transparent manner and in accordance with the goals of the Recovery Act. Task Force members also have an opportunity at these meetings to ask questions directly of the agencies regarding their progress in implementing their programs, any challenges they have faced, and their progress in meeting federal reporting requirements.

### ***Government Accountability Office***

New Jersey is one of 16 states chosen based on population to receive close scrutiny from the federal government over its ARRA spending through bi-monthly reviews that are being performed by the Government Accountability Office. Task Force members have been meeting with representatives of the GAO typically on a bimonthly basis to discuss, among other topics, the Task Force's oversight role

throughout the State. The GAO reports available online at <http://www.gao.gov/recovery/bimonthly/nj> include a description of some of the specific work of the Task Force.

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Task Force meetings are open to the public and take place every other Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. in the Statehouse.

## **NEW JERSEY RECOVERY ACCOUNTABILITY TASK FORCE**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the New Jersey Recovery Accountability Task Force is to provide for transparency and accountability in the use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) resources in our State. Created by Governor Corzine, the Task Force will monitor the distribution of ARRA funds in New Jersey and promote the effective and efficient use of those funds.

Specifically, the Task Force will work in partnership with federal and state agencies to:

- Ensure public access to information concerning use of ARRA funds, including programmatic, financial, project, and vendor-related information, as well as criteria for project selection;
- Provide guidance to agencies receiving ARRA funds on merit-based project selection, internal controls, accounting practices, and best practices in contract management and grant administration;
- Review project-selection criteria and processes used by New Jersey government agencies receiving ARRA funds to ensure clarity and compliance with applicable standards;
- Perform a coordination role concerning ARRA-related efforts being carried out by state and local government agencies as well as relevant oversight bodies;
- Provide a means to receive and address concerns from New Jersey residents about uses of Recovery Act funds; and
- Ensure ongoing assessments of results, through agency self-analysis or reviews by State oversight entities.

The Task Force will not be involved in selecting or recommending particular projects for funding as project selection is the responsibility of the government agency implementing the particular program. The Task Force instead will provide guidance and review concerning agency use of merit-based project selection criteria to ensure clarity and compliance with applicable standards.

The Task Force is comprised of professionals with extensive backgrounds in government and government oversight. Its efforts are directed at creating a framework under which ARRA funds in New Jersey are spent transparently and effectively.