

## Puerto Rico presses for more **ARRA** funding

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Volume: 37 | No: 34

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Issued : 08/27/2009

### *Officials say \$422 million in competitive proposals still outstanding*

Local government officials are submitting five to 10 proposals a week on average for competitive-funding opportunities under the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (**ARRA**), which promise to push Puerto Rico's take under the federal-stimulus plan even higher.

The government's **ARRA** interagency task, headed by Puerto Rico Aqueduct & Sewer Authority Executive Director José Ortiz, has made getting the maximum amount of federal funds under the stimulus plan a priority.

"We are trying to hit everything that moves," said Infrastructure Development Authority Executive Director Erwin Kiess. "We are constantly making applications. We have a team of people working on that."

Currently, Puerto Rico has about 182 proposals seeking \$422 million, in addition to the \$6.043 billion already approved that are pending an answer from the federal government.

Puerto Rico has just received approvals for 15 competitive applications worth more than \$11 million. These included some \$5 million to hire police officers and about \$1 million to beef up security on public transportation systems, especially the Urban Train.

Most of the pending competitive-grant applications are in the following areas: public safety, \$116 million; energy, \$103 million; housing, \$90 million; and health, \$55 million. The government is also seeking an additional \$24 million in transportation funding, \$22.5 million in border-security funding and \$12 million in agricultural funding.

The federal government is expected to put out to bid any additional competitive-funding assignments that have gone unrewarded in initial bidding. Kiess said the island government will seek to increase its catch of federal funds through the subsequent competitive bids.

Under Ortiz, the government task force is also placing priorities on injecting the **ARRA** funds into the economy as quickly as possible and providing appropriate oversight to ensure their use complies with strict requirements.

The latest government accounting shows the federal government has signed off on \$6.043 billion in **ARRA** funding for the island, more than \$1 billion above original estimates. More than half the money—some \$3.54

billion—will be injected into the economy over the next 12 months, with \$1.95 billion of that getting here by Christmas, local government officials say.