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Science, Stimulated: 7 Stimulus-Funded Research Projects [Slide Show]

From building robotic bees to studying real mosquitoes, these researchers were able to pursue their scientific dreams thanks to being banked by 2009 economic recovery act funding

By [Katherine Harmon](#)



BUZZING SCIENCE Thousands of researchers received funding for projects through the Recovery Act. Here are some of the things they are working on.

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Can you put a price on science? [The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) (ARRA), signed into law on February 17, 2009—a year ago today—sent some \$31 billion to scientific pursuits.

The money has been a welcome windfall, especially for those who work in [basic](#) and social science research and have been struggling to find substantial funding from other sources. "It really is stimulating," says [Ezra Zubrow](#), an [anthropology](#) professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, who is using an ARRA award to study the response of past human cultures to [climate](#) change. "It's not only stimulating the economy—it has stimulated the imagination and what is possible."

A long history of funding shortages had left many so-called "beaker-ready" projects shelved—or at least suspended in application limbo. So, for many funding agencies, such as the [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF), finding worthy projects to green-light was as simple as digging through piles of proposals.

This approach allowed many who had applied before the stimulus to finally get their proposals approved. [Melinda Wilson](#), an associate professor at the University of Kentucky who is studying the role of [estrogen](#) receptors in the brain, says that her group had applied for NSF funding several times. And each time the proposal was given "very high reviews," Wilson says, but owing to lack of funds it was not approved. But she kept trying and "luckily it was in there when the stimulus funds came up." Good thing, because, as she notes, given the research topic and approach, "it really was only going to have been funded by the NSF."

[Matthew Thomas](#), a professor at The Pennsylvania State University who is studying the impact of [climate change on the transmission of infectious diseases](#), says that his group had applied for funding in late 2008. For months he heard that his application for \$1,884,991 was still "under consideration." He notes that "it did seem to be rather a long time" before getting approval in June 2009. In the interim, his team was left wondering "when we could pop the [champagne](#)—not that we used NSF funds for that," he says.

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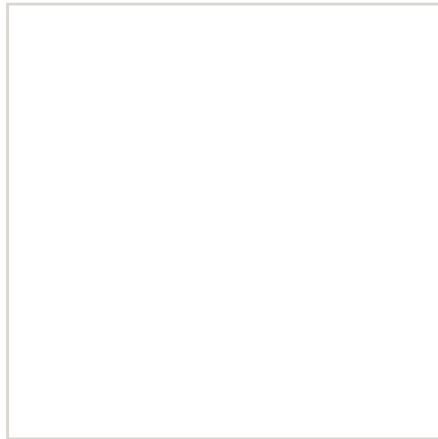
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