



## Stimulus proposal: Skills Corps

Capsule: Direct stimulus funds to pay for tutors to teach, and to pay participants to participate in, Internet and computer skills training. Direct additional funds to recruit select participants who complete the course as volunteers and to pay them stipends when they teach further classes of the same type to others. The funds will be available for organizations, public or private, to bid on as they present a curriculum, implementation plan, and mechanism to assure quality of instructions, outcomes, and payments.

Rationale: If stimulus payments are well spent on infrastructure and capital formation, this principle should apply equally to human capital. While the Internet has provided substantial economic and social benefits, these are hampered, in aggregate, and skewed in distribution, by persistent gaps in skills. Skills can mean something as simple as being able to know what kinds of information can be found online, to how to tell the difference between a credible source email and an obvious phishing scheme.

Skills investment in particular has the benefit of being targeted towards groups that, by definition, would otherwise benefit less from investment in the highest quality technologies, because they do not know how to use them. This group includes a relatively high proportion of women.

Stimulus: Teaching is a labor intensive practice, and hence could provide stimulus payments to many tutors and participants on a short time frame. A hospital, for example, could dedicate a shared computer space as a teaching lab for tutoring staff, with relatively little infrastructure investment, as long as it found the appropriate tutors; it would also have the payment system in place. Local schools and libraries could do the same. Payments could be directed to motivated tutors and learners, and support human capital creation. The same organizations could expand their offerings by recruiting some of the graduates to teach later courses, on a volunteer-with-stipend model. Another pathway would be for companies and nonprofit organizations already engaged in tutoring and adult education to reorient their programs to Internet skills, and use their existing infrastructure to implement the training programs and stimulus payment distribution.

Model: Invite bids to organize Internet skills curriculum and classes; all comers, for profit and non-profit; private and local and state government. Bids will be judged by proposed curriculum, available infrastructure, tutor body, experience in running training programs, and capacity to disburse participant payments transparently and responsibly.

Advantages: Much of the expenditure will be on salaries and stipends that people can spend immediately; both tutors and participants are building immediately usable human capital; beneficiaries will be disproportionately populations that would benefit disproportionately less from a technology only stimulus, and that with local implementations, it may help build social capital.

The model is in principle applicable to other subjects, such as improving home energy efficiency.