

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

The international economic downturn could have a curious by-product: more demand for top scientists — at least in the short term. In the United States, lawmakers are creeping closer to a stimulus package that would provide billions of dollars for the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation (see *Nature* **457**, 623; 2009). And in China, the government is offering top Chinese professors who are working overseas relocation packages of 1 million renminbi (US\$146,000) per person to lure them back to the mainland (see *Nature* **457**, 522; 2009). With college-educated Chinese students struggling with an increasingly tough job market, the timing of this initiative may be more than just a coincidence.

Governments are now looking to scientists to help them build solid investments for the future. A top-notch science workforce is viewed as a reliable path to innovation, economic growth and cutting-edge industries. In addition to the stimulus package, US President Barack Obama has touted aspirations to create 'green jobs' — setting aside billions of dollars a year for the next decade or so to invest in renewable energy. The idea is to create five million green jobs that have good salaries, can't be outsourced and will help to end the nation's dependence on foreign oil, says Obama.

As with many large, bulk investments, not all the money set aside will directly benefit scientists, and some researchers will benefit more than others (see page 750). In the United States, for instance, much of the funds will go towards infrastructure. And irrespective of how big they are, short-term infusions of cash do not always translate into sustained, decades-long successes in science, or even into sustainable budgets at science agencies.

But perhaps a window of opportunity is opening up. Some researchers will be able to benefit from governments seeking the best and the brightest science and engineering talent to help boost sluggish economies. And if the funds come through, scientists, especially young researchers, may have a better — albeit fleeting — chance to earn grants and establish themselves and their careers.

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