



Strengthening OSPI’s Core Operations to Increase Capacity for Statewide Supports

2023–25 Biennial Operating Budget Decision Package

Recommendation Summary

The base operations funding for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has not kept up with the expanding programming requirements over the past decade. The lag in critical staffing in areas like fiscal, legal, policy and research, communications, contracting, human resources, compliance, civil rights, reporting, and information technology is undermining OSPI’s ability to be responsive to the ever-evolving needs and requirements of the K–12 system, the 1.1 million students it serves, and Washington’s taxpayers. OSPI requests \$2.4 million in the 2023–25 biennium, ongoing, to meet the expanding demands of providing the agency’s core services and meeting customer needs in a timely and targeted manner.

Fiscal Details (Funding, FTEs, Revenue, Objects)

Operating Expenditures	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Fund 001-1	\$1,220,000	\$1,173,000	\$1,173,000	\$1,173,000
Total Expenditures	\$1,220,000	\$1,173,000	\$1,173,000	\$1,173,000
Biennial Totals	\$2,393,000		\$2,346,000	
Staffing	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
FTEs	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8
Average Annual	7.8		7.8	
Revenue	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Biennial Totals	\$0		\$0	
Object of Expenditure	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Obj. A	\$656,000	\$656,000	\$656,000	\$656,000
Obj. B	\$233,000	\$233,000	\$233,000	\$233,000
Obj. E	\$237,000	\$232,000	\$232,000	\$232,000
Obj. G	\$52,000	\$52,000	\$52,000	\$52,000
Obj. J	\$42,000	\$0	\$0	\$0

Package Description

What is the problem, opportunity, or priority you are addressing with the request?

As Washington's state education agency, OSPI operates as an extension of our 295 school districts, often competing for the same staffing, expertise, experience, and content knowledge as those districts. State law (RCW 28A.400.205) provides for school district employees to automatically be granted an annual salary inflationary increase, calculated by applying the rate of the yearly increase in the inflationary adjustment index to any state-funded salary base used in state funding formulas for teachers and other school district employees. The Legislature is required to provide an inflationary adjustment allocation sufficient to grant this inflationary increase. OSPI's base operating costs are not adjusted annually for inflation. This results in frequent turnover as highly qualified and experienced staff often seek higher paying jobs with local school districts.

In addition to the inequity in market-rate salary adjustments, the base operations funding for OSPI has not kept up with the expanding programming requirements over the past decade. The lag in critical staffing continues to impact areas like fiscal, legal, policy and research, communications, reporting, contracting, human resources, compliance, civil rights, reporting, and information technology and continues to undermine OSPI's ability to be responsive to the ever-evolving needs and requirements of the K-12 system and the 1.1 million students it serves.

In the 2022 Legislative Session, OSPI requested an additional \$2 million to the agency's base operating proviso in fiscal year (FY) 2023, and an ongoing increase tied to the Implicit Price Deflator (IPD) for future years to meet the expanding demands of operating the agency's core services in a timely and targeted manner. The Legislature provided \$1.3 million which has been used to support increased targeted supports in the agency's core services of fiscal, human resources, and information technology, as well as to support the retention of existing staff through salary maintenance adjustments. However, OSPI continues to operate at a deficit that impacts the agency's capacity and ability to meet customer needs. The agency continues to be impacted in core areas such as legal services and public records management, transparent and timely communications, research-driven best practices, and coordinated efforts to close opportunity gaps through strong data structures and supports that connect program to practice.

Legal Services and Public Records Management

The Public Records Act (PRA) requires public access to records and materials from state and local agencies (Chapter 42.56 RCW). OSPI is responsible for and committed to providing the best assistance to requestors and full access to the agency's public records while protecting those records from damage or disorganization; preventing excessive interference with essential agency functions, including the agency's core mission of supervising all matters pertaining to public schools; and not unreasonably disrupting agency operations. Over the past three years, there has been a 24% increase in the number of public records requests (PRR) OSPI has received. At this rate, the agency is projected to surpass 1,000 requests in 2022.

Table 1: Number of Public Records Requests Received by OSPI, by Year

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total for the Year	411	498	435	589	680	828	Projected: 1026
Received by June 1	69	N/A	66	66	111	97	386

While the total number of requests received have increased year over year, the agency has also experienced a significant increase in the request complexity, number of items requested, and the number of responsive records. OSPI is authorized to charge fees associated with requests, however no fee shall be charged for the inspection of public records or locating public documents, which requires a significant amount of time from full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. To effectively manage agency records, the agency has relied on placing the burden of records management on programmatic and administrative staff which contributes to burnout and turnover across the agency, high risk for error, and a need to continuously train and maintain clear expectations for records management across the agency. In some divisions, up to 75% of the administrative assistant’s job is to manage public disclosure.

In an analysis of other agencies’ number of employees, number of public records office staff, and number of requests, the average staff-to-request ratio is approximately 400 requests per each employee dedicated to public disclosure fulfillment. Currently, OSPI has 1.0 dedicated FTE assigned solely to PRR duties. Using this statistic, OSPI should have at least 2.5 FTE employees whose only duties are processing and responding to public records requests (i.e., not records management or other duties).

Transparent, Meaningful, and Customer-Focused Communications

OSPI aims to provide excellent customer service and transparency to school districts, the Legislature, news media, parents and families, and the public at large. This includes the creation of communication materials that are audience-focused, clear, and timely as well as the management and maintenance of the agency’s website and social media channels.

In addition to keeping up with the programmatic growth at the agency, the pandemic has caused a shift in family and community involvement and interest in public education. Between 2019 and 2021, OSPI’s website saw a 101% increase in visitors and a 78% increase in page views. Between July 2019 and July 2022, OSPI’s Facebook page saw a 343% increase in page subscribers, as well as a 215% increase in posts made by OSPI.

As Washingtonians recover from the pandemic and prepare for the future, OSPI has become a go-to resource for openly sourced instructional materials, current updates, and guidance for school districts and communities. OSPI has also built stronger relationships with school districts and other education partners to elevate best practices through video and written storytelling, as well as webinars featuring education experts. Between March 2020 and August 2022, OSPI’s YouTube channel saw a 588% increase in subscribers.

OSPI is focused on and committed to supporting all of our state's learners by providing coordinated, data-driven resources and supports to school districts. Over the past three years, the Legislature has passed over 178 new pieces of education-related legislation, many of which created new or expanded programming, increased the need for technical assistance, and increased the need for clear and timely communication to school districts about expectations and requirements. In the 2022 Legislative Session alone, there were 56 new budget provisos requiring implementation by OSPI (contracts, grant administration, data collection, communication to districts and stakeholders, etc.). These new pieces of legislation and the specifically worded budget provisos often do not include resources to maintain the level of customer service, accuracy, and effectiveness needed from the agency's base operations – despite the increased workload the new assignments bring.

Research-based Practices and Supports to Drive Statewide Improvement

As the state education agency (SEA), OSPI is responsible for facilitating access to information and materials on educational improvement and research required to help school districts to identify and implement appropriate evidence-based activities, strategies, and interventions. The Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) serves as the agency's research office and lacks sufficient funding to carry out the duties and responsibilities required by law. There is an increased need to provide support for school districts to implement evidence-based practices to support learning recovery and interventions following the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze the effectiveness of state and local investments using emergency relief funds, and conduct original research and program evaluations to support programs.

In addition to the additional programs and projects administered by the agency, the level of detailed data collection made available publicly on the website, through reports to the Legislature, and through data requests continues to grow and evolve. As programs continue to grow and technology continues to evolve over time, there is a continually increasing expectation that the agency provide detailed and clear data visualizations and dashboards with more accountability and more analyses of what the data show.

Increased Resources to Support Analysis and Recommendations for Closing Opportunity Gaps Across Washington Schools

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) was created by the Legislature in 2009, charged under RCW 28A.300.136 to recommend policies and strategies to close the achievement gap to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), and the State Board of Education (SBE). The Committee relies on participation and expertise from across many of OSPI's programmatic experts as well as cross-agency collaboration with key partners in higher education, early learning, PESB, SBE, and community partners. Currently this work is being implemented through \$61,000 annual proviso.

The high-profile and rigorous work of the EOGOAC requires substantial staffing support from OSPI, statewide community engagement, and communication. Since its inception over a decade ago, the funds allocated to the EOGOAC have not reflected the increase in scope or level of

OSPI's support of the work of the Committee. This request reflects the level of work and funding required, had the EOGOAC been proposed today.

Education Commission of the States

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) serves as a partner to state policymakers by providing personalized support and helping education leaders across the nation come together to learn from one another. Through their programs and services, policymakers gain the insight and experience needed to create effective education policy. Currently, the annual fee for Washington state's participation in the Commission is \$91,800. This fee is currently split four ways between the Office of the Governor, OSPI, SBE, and Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).

State dues fund ECS activities including:

- Research: Compiling information on education policies from early childhood through postsecondary education and the workforce so state policymakers can make informed decisions.
- Counsel: Personalized state support, including unbiased advice on policy plans, consultation on proposed policy legislation and testimony, and presentations as third-party experts.
- Reports: Highlight state policy examples so policymakers in all states gain the insight needed to create effective education policy.
- Convenings: Bring education leaders together within states and across states through two annual national convenings, as well as multiple regional meetings and issue-specific or role-specific meetings.

Currently, each agency covers their own fees to participate in these activities.

What is your proposed solution?

1. Increase OSPI's ability to recruit, hire, and retain the skilled professionals needed to provide oversight of the program of basic education in Washington state by increasing the agency's base operating budget.

The additional investment in critical services to the K–12 system, policymakers, and community stakeholders will allow OSPI to expand services such as:

- Communicating, elevating, and highlighting K–12 best practices and successes through storytelling, data analyses and supports, and clear and timely guidance for school districts and educators.
- Increase capacity to manage and respond to increasing public records requests, ensuring transparency and access to information for taxpayers.
- Increased research capacity to support evidence-based best practices.

2. Provide state funds to support key tools and software needed for statistical quantitative and qualitative research, including access to academic literature through academic journals (such as JStor, DeepDyve, and Taylor and Francis) and licensing fees for Alchemer, a cloud-based survey management software that allows the agency to collect quantitative and qualitative data from schools, districts, families, and other stakeholders as needed to conduct evaluations and research. CISL manages this software and provides technical assistance to increase capacity in the agency and govern data collection and management.
3. Increase current funding to support the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGAOC) from \$61,000 per year to \$238,000 per year to support dedicated facilitation, research analysis, inter-departmental collaboration across program areas, community outreach, and other committee costs. Research support includes research on state and national education policies and practices on topics related to the work of the EOGOAC; writing research and policy briefs, legislative reports, and presentations; analyzing current, proposed, and new legislation (state and federal) to determine the policy impacts; and assisting in project management and facilitation of the EOGOAC.
4. Enable OSPI, through the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL), to leverage the educational expertise within the state educational agency (OSPI) to lead education research within Washington. Increased funds will support OSPI in carrying through the statutorily required work outlined in RCW 28A.300.130.

Provide increased funding for OSPI to:

- facilitate access to information and materials on educational improvement and research;
- serve as a clearinghouse for information regarding successful educational improvement; and
- collaborate across agency divisions, and with other state and national partners to provide best practices research that can be used to help schools develop and implement:
 - programs and practices to improve instruction;
 - systems to analyze student assessment data, with an emphasis on systems that will combine the use of state and local data to monitor the academic progress of each and every student in the school district;
 - comprehensive, school-wide improvement plans; school-based shared decision-making models;
 - programs to promote lifelong learning and community involvement in education;
 - school-to-work transition programs;
 - programs to meet the needs of highly capable students;
 - programs and practices to meet the needs of students with disabilities;
 - programs and practices to meet the diverse needs of students based on gender, racial, ethnic, economic, and special needs status;
 - research, information, and technology systems; and

- other programs and practices that will assist educators in helping students learn the Washington state learning standards.

Given the scope of CISL, providing additional capacity will allow fulfillment of its purpose. CISL is uniquely positioned within OSPI to connect the program and data needs of researchers, center the needs of schools and families in research, and to bring stakeholders together to guide research and communicate findings.

5. Provide state funds for Washington’s education agencies—OSPI and the State Board of Education (SBE)—to participate in the Education Commission of the States.

What are you purchasing and how does it solve the problem?

OSPI is requesting additional funding for the base operations proviso in fiscal year (FY) 2024, expected to be ongoing. Specifically, this proposal requests:

- \$158,000 in FY 2024 and \$153,000 ongoing to support 1.0 FTE Communications Associate Director, including salary, benefits, goods and services, and one-time capital outlay
- \$195,000 in FY 2024 and \$186,000 ongoing to support 1.5 FTE Public Records Program Specialist 3 including salary, benefits, goods and services, and one-time capital outlay.
- \$629,000 in FY 2024 and \$606,000 ongoing to support 4.0 FTE to increase research capacity, including salary, benefits, goods and services, and one-time capital outlay
 - 3.0 FTE Research Associates
 - 1.0 FTE Statistician
- \$4,600 per year for access to academic literature through academic journals (subscriptions to JStor, DeepDyve, and Taylor and Francis)
- \$10,000 per year for licensing fees for Alchemer
- \$22,950 per year to support OSPI’s ongoing membership in the Education Commission of the States
- \$22,950 per year to support the State Board of Education’s ongoing membership in the Education Commission of the States

The additional investment in critical services will allow OSPI to expand services to the K–12 system, policymakers, and community stakeholders through:

- Communicating, elevating, and highlighting K–12 best practices and successes through storytelling, data analyses and supports, and clear and timely guidance for districts and educators.
- Increasing capacity to manage and respond to increasing public records requests, ensuring transparency and access to information for taxpayers.
- Increasing the agency’s research capacity to support evidence-based best practices and respond to inquiries and requests.

Finally, OSPI is requesting an increased allocation to support the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee:

- \$177,000 annual increase to the existing proviso on an ongoing basis. Funds will provide adequate staffing support for facilitation, communication, coordination, administration, research, statewide travel and meeting costs for committee and staff, stipends for qualifying members as newly authorized by [SB 5793 \(2022\)](#), interpretation, translation, and other costs for community forums and other outreach efforts.

What alternatives did you explore and why was this option chosen?

The only opportunity for OSPI to secure permanent and sustainable funding for continued operations is through request of the Legislature.

This approach best fits the needs of OSPI to have an adequate level of permanent resources with which we can hire staff to make progress on researching, communicating, collaborating across systems, and developing research-driven solutions that aim to close opportunity gaps so all students have an equitable opportunity to thrive.

Performance Measures

Performance outcomes:

This request will allow OSPI to make progress on OSPI's Strategic Goal #4: A Committed, Unified, and Customer Focused OSPI. This means supporting school districts through consistent, timely, and meaningful funding and supports that center the needs of students.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion or alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal provides additional support to the ongoing work of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGAOC), established by the Legislature in 2009 and codified in RCW 28A.300.136. In addition, this proposal supports activities outlined in RCW 28A.300.130, which fall under the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) at OSPI.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

- \$158,000 in FY24 and \$153,000 ongoing to support 1.0 FTE Communications Associate Director, including salary, benefits, goods and services, and one-time capital outlay.
- \$195,000 in FY 24 and \$186,000 ongoing to support 1.5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Public Records Program Specialist 3, including salary, benefits, goods and services, and one-time capital outlay.
- \$629,000 in FY 24 and \$606,000 ongoing to support 4.0 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) to increase research capacity, including salary, benefits, goods and services, and one-time capital outlay.

- 3.0 FTE Research Associates
- 1.0 FTE Statistician
- \$4,600 per year access to academic literature through academic journals (such as subscriptions to JStor, DeepDyve, and Taylor and Francis).
- \$10,000 per year for licensing fees for Alchemer.
- \$22,950 per year to support OSPI's ongoing membership in the Education Commission of the States.
- \$22,950 per year to support the State Board of Education's ongoing membership in the Education Commission of the States.
- \$177,000 in FY 24 and \$167,000 increase to the existing proviso, ongoing. Funds will provide adequate staffing support for facilitation, communication, coordination, administration, research, statewide travel and meeting costs for committee and staff, stipends for qualifying members as newly authorized by [SB 5793 \(2022\)](#), interpretation, translation, and other costs for community forums and other outreach efforts.

Workforce assumptions:

This proposal would result in 7.8 FTE additional personnel within the agency. The flexibility provided in this proposal will allow OSPI to staff the agency in a manner that can create efficiencies in the hiring and duties of employees. For example, no longer would a proviso funded staff be limited to work in that single area because of mixed fund sources.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

At the forefront of every program, policy, and decision, OSPI actively focuses on ensuring all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools. OSPI regularly engages with a wide array of partners and stakeholders to continuously connect with students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making. OSPI's ability to maintain this commitment lies within the agency's capacity to function and maintain core operations as the state's education agency.

This request will impact OSPI's ability to recruit and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce that is reflective of the communities we serve. In addition, this request creates more flexibility and capacity within OSPI to be responsive to the needs of the agency's customers: students, educators, school districts, families, policymakers, news media, and other stakeholders and community members. The agency's core functions and operations directly impact school districts' ability to ensure students have access to the instruction and supports they need to succeed in school.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic framework:

This proposal aligns with the Governor's Results Washington Goal #1: World-class education: Providing every Washingtonian a world-class education that prepared him or her for a healthy and productive life, including success in job or career, in the community and as a lifelong learner. It also aligns with Results Washington Goal# 5: Efficient, effective and accountable

Government: Fostering a Lean culture that drives accountability and results for the people of Washington.

This request will allow OSPI to make progress on OSPI's Strategic Goal #4: A Committed, Unified, and Customer Focused OSPI. This means supporting school districts through consistent, timely, and meaningful funding and supports that center the needs of students.

Other Collateral Connections

Intergovernmental:

This proposal will strengthen OSPI's ability to support partnerships with other agencies, educational service districts, and school districts.

Stakeholder response:

The K–12 system in Washington state depends on reliable, consistent, and qualified staff at OSPI. The system will benefit when the agency has more flexibility for using funds and the ability to recruit and retain staff with permanent funding. OSPI believes stakeholders will react positively to this effort.

Legal or administrative mandates:

RCW 28A.300.040 provides that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall have supervision over all matters pertaining to the public schools of the state, and to report to the Governor and Legislature such information and data as may be required for the management and improvement of the schools.

RCW 28A.300.130 defines the role of the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) within OSPI.

Chapter 42.56 RCW describes the Public Records Act, which requires public access to records and materials from state and local agencies.

Changes from current law:

In addition to the funding requested in this proposal, OSPI is considering statutory changes to state law (RCW 28A.400.205) that would require OSPI employees to be considered equivalent to the category of school district employees, and for OSPI employees to be automatically granted an annual salary inflationary increase, calculated by applying the rate of the yearly increase in the inflationary adjustment index to any state-funded salary base used in state funding formulas for teachers and other school district employees.

State workforce impacts:

None.

State facilities impacts:

None.

Puget Sound recovery:

None.

Other Documents

Reference documents:

None.