



Supporting Student Access to Summer EBT

2025–27 Operating Budget Decision Package

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

Summer EBT, also known as SUN Bucks, is a federal program that provides money to families to support children who lose access to free and reduced-price school meals during the summer months. It was initially created during the COVID-19 pandemic but became a permanent program in 2023. In Washington, the program is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). In summer 2024, SUN Bucks will have provided \$120 to the families of nearly 600,000 students in Washington state, bringing in \$72 million in federal funding to fight against food insecurity. For summer 2025, we estimate this will grow to 620,000 students. Along with funding the benefits for families, the federal government provides administrative funding to state agencies but requires a 50% match from state funding. This proposal funds the 50% match needed to access the administrative funding and the millions in federal benefits to students across the state.

FISCAL DETAIL

Operating Expenditures	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund 001-1 (State)	\$155,000	\$144,000	\$144,000	\$144,000
Fund 001-2 (Federal)	\$155,000	\$144,000	\$144,000	\$144,000
Total Expenditures	\$310,000	\$288,000	\$288,000	\$288,000
Biennial Totals	\$598,000		\$576,000	
Staffing	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
FTEs	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Average Annual	2.0		2.0	
Object of Expenditure	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Obj. A	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000
Obj. B	\$87,000	\$87,000	\$87,000	\$87,000
Obj. E	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Obj. G	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Obj. J	\$22,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund 001-2	\$155,000	\$144,000	\$144,000	\$144,000
Total Revenue	\$155,000	\$144,000	\$144,000	\$144,000
Biennial Totals	\$299,000		\$288,000	

PACKAGE DESCRIPTION

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

The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 ([P.L. 117-328](#)) authorized a permanent, nationwide Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT) program—also known as SUN Bucks—to support children who lose access to free and reduced-price school meals during the summer months.

OSPI and DSHS have been partnering on the administration of the program for the past few years while it was a pilot program created during the COVID-19 pandemic. New requirements under the permanent program require added support from OSPI resulting in the need for dedicated staff.

Specifically, OSPI is responsible for:

- Review and validation of student eligibility data, including case reviews.
- Review and interpretation of federal regulations and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policies and guidance.
- Provide guidance and technical assistance to school districts to correctly identify eligible students.
- Develop Summer EBT communications and promotional materials for school districts.
- Collaborate and coordinate with DSHS to meet federal program requirements, including the requirement to establish a state database and coordinate and execute sharing of data between agencies to ensure timely and accurate benefit issuance.

What is your proposal?

This proposal seeks 50% state funding and 50% federal spending authority for the cost of 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, which would ensure the successful operation of Summer EBT and meet the federal requirement. These staff would lead the program's implementation and work with DSHS to ensure timely access for all eligible students.

Dedicated staffing will be critical as federal regulations governing the program are set to change over the next year and beyond. In addition to implementation during the summer months, these staff will be important in informational campaigns for families and the larger community.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

1. The Summer EBT program provides funding to students who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals in order to support their access to food during the summer months when school is not in session. This proposal will ensure OSPI can administer the program smoothly and provide support to school districts and families.
2. While there was community input at the federal level during the creation of Summer EBT, this proposal has not received any community input as it's supporting capacity for an existing program.
3. See above answer.

4. This proposal will help support the administration of the Summer EBT program, which will support Washington's students with access to food during the summer months when school is not in session and students do not have access to school meals.

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

This proposal seeks 50% state funding and 50% federal spending authority for the cost of 2.0 FTE at OSPI. These positions would lead Summer EBT implementation at OSPI and work in conjunction with Summer EBT staff at DSHS.

Some duties include providing technical assistance to school districts, public outreach to families and communities, and data validation and coordination requirements outlined in federal law.

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

Not providing state funding would mean forgoing federal administrative funding. Without this funding, it would not be possible to successfully implement Summer EBT, especially when program regulations are set to change for summer 2025.

What resources does the agency already have that are dedicated to this purpose?

This is the first state funding request for Summer EBT from OSPI.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

Expansion, reduction, elimination or alteration of a current program or service:

This is an expansion of a pilot program created by the federal government during the COVID-19 pandemic. State funds were not utilized in the pilot program.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

OSPI requests \$160,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$150,000 in fiscal year 2027 ongoing to support a 1.0 FTE Administrative Program Specialist. Fiscal year 2026 includes \$22,000 in one-time costs to prepare for the creation of this position. The position would be responsible for leading the Summer EBT program implementation, serving as OSPI's subject matter expert for Summer EBT, attending joint OSPI/DSHS program policy and implementation meetings, providing technical assistance to school districts, and coordinating review/approval of district data uploads and responding to case reviews and hearings.

OSPI requests \$150,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$138,000 in fiscal year 2027 ongoing to support a 1.0 FTE Data Consultant 3. Fiscal year 2026 includes \$22,000 in one-time costs to prepare for the creation of this position. The position would be responsible for providing assessment of data needs for program implementation based on regulations and policy guidance, coordinating and collaborating with DSHS to determine data requirements and data exchange between agencies, and assisting program operators in compiling and uploading data.

Each of these positions will be 50% funded by the USDA.

Workforce assumptions:

Fiscal Year 2026 (Total = \$310,000)

Administrative Program Specialist: 1.0 FTE

- Salary: \$92,068
- Benefits: \$44,446
- Goods/Services: \$6,678
- Travel: \$6,678
- Equipment: \$11,130

Data Consultant 3: 1.0 FTE

- Salary: \$82,512
- Benefits: \$42,002
- Goods/Services: \$6,678
- Travel: \$6,678
- Equipment: \$11,130

Fiscal Year 2027 and Ongoing (Total = \$288,000 Annually)

Administrative Program Specialist: 1.0 FTE

- Salary: \$92,068
- Benefits: \$44,576
- Goods/Services: \$6,678
- Travel: \$6,678

Data Consultant 3: 1.0 FTE

- Salary: \$82,512
- Benefits: \$42,132
- Goods/Services: \$6,678
- Travel: \$6,678

Historical funding:

Fiscal Year 2026

- FTE = 0
- Total Funds = \$0
- Near General Fund = \$0
- Other Funds = \$0

Fiscal Year 2027

- FTE = 0 FTE
- Total Funds = \$0

- Near General Fund = \$0
- Other Funds = \$0

STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Strategic framework:

This proposal supports the goals of Healthy and Safe Communities and Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government.

For Healthy and Safe Communities: The Summer EBT program has been shown to support low-income families in a safe and efficient manner. Families can choose to purchase the groceries that fit their needs both nutritionally and culturally. Reducing food insecurity is of vital importance.

For Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government: Summer EBT will bring in approximately \$72 million in federal benefits for Washington families each year. Administering the program takes considerable resources and planning, and funding 2.0 FTE at OSPI will support the program and unlock these federal benefits.

This proposal also fits with OSPI's Priority of Equitable Access to Strong Foundations. Hungry students cannot learn. This proposal directly reduces food insecurity for students, allowing them to show up to summer activities and school in the fall ready to learn.

Performance outcomes:

Funding this proposal will support implementation of the Summer EBT program, allowing for the smooth delivery of benefits to families across the state. For school districts, this looks like dedicated support for their questions and data uploads along with outreach materials for families and the community. For families, this means appropriately funded EBT cards being mailed to them in a timely manner and if there are issues with eligibility or enrollment, an efficient process to remedy any issues.

OTHER COLLATERAL CONNECTIONS

Intergovernmental:

OSPI partners with DSHS on Summer EBT implementation. Funding this proposal will ensure OSPI has the resources to continue collaborating with DSHS on this important program.

Stakeholder impacts:

Anti-hunger groups across the state and nation are in strong support of Summer EBT.

Legal or administrative mandates:

N/A

Changes from current law:

N/A

State workforce impacts:

N/A

State facilities impacts:

N/A

Puget Sound recovery:

N/A

Governor's salmon strategy:

N/A