

# *E2SHB 1365 Tech Grants*

## Statutory and/or Budget Language

\$2,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for Fiscal Year 2024 and \$2,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for Fiscal Year 2025 are provided solely for the office to administer the technology grant program established under chapter 301, Laws of 2021.

## Purpose

Following with the intent of HB 1365, the Educational Technology grants focused on the following goals:

- Accelerate student access to learning devices and related goods and services.
- Expand training programs and technical assistance on using technology to support student learning.
- Build the capacity of schools and districts to support digital navigation services for students and their families.
- Close educational technology gaps by developing districts' capacity to support students and families by addressing equity of access issues.
- Provide equitable access to adaptive and inclusive technology and digital navigation, creating staff and family support networks around the use of technology.
- Ensure that students with achievement gaps have the necessary resources.
- Provide equitable access to Education Technology Program grants by creating non-competitive, easy-to-engage grants for school districts lacking the capacity or institutional knowledge required for engagement.

## Description of Services Provided

Funding to districts was provided via two different grants within iGrants: Form Package 280: Digital Navigation, and Form Package 282: Adaptive & Inclusive Technology.

In Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 24), OSPI introduced a grant program aimed at supporting school districts in building capacity for digital navigation. Districts could apply for funding to:

- Establish student-led digital navigator programs with staff oversight.
- Create community asset inventories for digital navigation, connectivity, and device acquisition.
- Establish accessible spaces for students and families.
- Host digital navigation events for families.

Applications were promoted through Gov Delivery, iGrants, and various OSPI departments, with a submission deadline of December 21, 2023. A total of 13 districts applied, representing eight of the nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs). Applicants represented four rural districts, one



rural/remote district, and eight urban districts. The grants ranged from \$8,214 to \$145,185, totaling \$607,436. Some specific examples of fund use are below:

**Walla Walla SD:** A family with English as their second language was given digital skills in online learning and safety, and they expressed feeling more connected to the school community due to the event.

**Warden SD:** Spanish-speaking parents learned essential digital skills in a supportive environment, empowering them to assist their children with schoolwork and write their first email by themselves.

**Burlington-Edison SD:** A collaboration between the Multi-Lingual Education/Migrant and Technology teams provided direct support to families on digital tools, including Skyward. Every parent left with Skyward on their phones.

**Sedro-Woolley SD:** An intergenerational learning event connected seniors and students, while family nights helped caregivers navigate the district's digital systems.

In FY 24, based on insights from the previous two years of Digital Equity grants, a grant directly focused on the adaptive and inclusive needs of students was developed. OSPI worked with the Special Education Technology Center (SETC) to funnel applicants to the grant, which funded recommendations and consultations around adaptive or inclusive technology. Districts primarily focused on the implementation of the following items:

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices and/or other types of communication tablets, along with the software licensing required to support these devices. These devices are for nonverbal or limited-verbal students.

Translation devices, such as translation pens or tablets, or services to support multi-language learners.

Touchscreen or larger screen 1:1 devices when the district only provides non-touch or limited-sized devices as default.

Classroom audio for direct student needs. This could include auditory technology to support students' learning and engagement, such as speakers or FM transmitters.

Software licenses for adaptive learning tools (Proloquo2go, Snap & Read, LAMP Words For Life).

Applications were promoted through previous engagements with the DEI program, OSPI's Special Education and English Language Learners divisions, the Special Education Technology Center, and Gov Delivery. This grant launched in November 2023 and funded all successfully completed applications until May 2024. The maximum award for this grant was \$25,000, and the average grant award was \$22,000 across 70 districts for a total of \$1.58 million. Focusing on equity of access, this grant reached 32 rural districts, 37 urban districts, and one tribal compact school. Of the 32 rural districts, half were classified as rural/remote districts that often need the

most support engaging with grant programs. 58% of the engaged districts had a Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) population higher than 30%, and 23 districts had FRPL populations higher than 70%. While the highest priority was given to districts with FRPL populations above 30%, there was enough funding and insight to ensure the awards were created with equitable access for all those who applied.

## Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

For FY 24, the Digital Navigation Grant was offered to ESDs, public school districts, and tribal compact schools. The Adaptive and Inclusive Technology Grant was only offered to public school districts and tribal compact schools. Because the grants were non-competitive, all previously mentioned entities that applied were eligible for funding.

In addition to standard assurances, districts were required to follow the subsequent assurances listed within iGrants:

- Work with the grant program contact to develop strategic plans focused on goal and benchmark-setting and establishing criteria for successful grant implementation. This included the submission of a planning document.
- Provide timely feedback regarding the implementation of this grant.
- Discuss the technology needs with key stakeholders (i.e., teachers, students, technology staff, and principals) while developing and deploying this grant.
- Ensure that the funding will only be used on student-focused learning, technology, and meeting the unmet needs of students. The adaptive and inclusive funds will not be used towards upgrading teacher, administrator, or staff devices and will be aimed at addressing the diverse needs of all students.
- Follow all state procurement guidelines. (Districts were provided guidance and resources for purchasing.)

## Beneficiaries in the 2023–24 School Year

<b>Number of School Districts</b>	83
<b>Number of Students</b>	Digital Navigation Grant: 24,699 Assistive & Inclusive Technology Grant: 82,678
<b>Number of Educators</b>	Digital Navigation Grant: 1,129 Assistive & Inclusive Technology Grant: 8,069
<b>Other</b>	Digital Navigation Grant: 201 families

## Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No.

## State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$2,500,000	\$2,445,851
2023	\$9,845,000	\$9,527,361
2022	\$9,850,000	\$9,741,941

## Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	83 Districts
2023	66 Districts
2022	42 Districts

## Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

The first two years of the program focused heavily on 1:1 devices and had \$9.8 million per year to allocate across districts. With a reduction in funding for FY 23, the decision was made to split the grant into two more focused needs. Instead of one grant within iGrants that was open to all concepts of digital equity, two specific grants were created to focus on (1) digital navigation and (2) the high demand for adaptive and inclusionary technologies. By having two grant managers, each with their own focused grant, districts received direct support and guidance from submission to implementation.

## Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

Districts provided feedback on these grants via surveys. Facing failed levies, budget cuts, and the costs of expensive technologies, districts reported that they appreciated the availability of and flexibility of these grant programs.

Digital Navigation grantees reported positive outcomes, particularly in fostering digital literacy among families. Events helped families navigate online resources for school enrollment, job applications, and digital safety, and strengthened their connection to the district. Eight of the 13 districts had more than 57% FRPL populations, emphasizing the program's impact in underserved areas.

Some of the responses on the impact of the Digital Navigation Grant were:

*"This program has been a blessing for our family. We now understand how to help our children with their schoolwork and keep them safe online. The support we received was amazing, and we feel much more connected to the school community."*

Walla Walla School District

*"Our project was so exciting and successful for our parents. They were so proud of all that they had learned, and it was done in a very safe and supportive environment in the Spanish language (the first language of most of our attendees). The classes and people were at times very emotional for us all as the parents' gained skills that they had never had before. It was very freeing for them!"*

*Warden School District*

## Major Challenges Faced by the Program

Challenges experienced by the district recipients of the Digital Navigation grant were mostly local, including tech issues, scheduling difficulties with families in spring, and limited resources to manage event planning and implementation. The timeline was short for this grant, so we ensured an earlier summer launch for the 24–25 grant.

## Future Opportunities

Digital Navigation Grant: Feedback indicated increased digital confidence among families, with a strong demand for future sessions on topics like online safety. Districts plan to sustain digital navigation programs through additional funding, partnerships, and ongoing community engagement.

Our new round of grants in 24–25 have a smaller limit on awards to help serve and engage more districts. We are looking into other partnerships with non-profit organizations and collaboratively supporting districts with strong ESD/OSPI partnerships.

## Other Relevant Information

The impact of the Adaptive and Inclusive Technology Grant can be best reflected in the words of someone describing direct student impact:

*In Colville School District, several C-Pens were purchased to support students with reading difficulties. One fourth-grade student, initially hesitant to engage in reading due to his struggles, experienced a significant turnaround after being taught to use the device. The C-Pen has become a "game-changer," boosting his confidence and allowing him to access grade-appropriate texts successfully. His teacher noted the transformative impact of the device, leading to increased confidence and a gradual transition to more time in the general education setting, highlighting the unexpected yet magical difference it has made for him.*

Districts applying for the digital navigation grant had a high need for devices that were unfulfilled due to limited grant funds. We have created a third grant for the 24–25 grant period intended to assist districts in replacing their broken, lost and stolen devices. As of this writing,

we have a high response to this grant and cannot meet the entire need. There is much need for a more robust funding model to provide devices to schools as they break or age out.

## Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

[Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.](#)

## Program Contact Information

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