

# Civics Education

## Statutory and/or Budget Language

\$373,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$373,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for implementation of chapter 127, Laws of 2018 (civics education). Of the amounts provided in this subsection (3)(b), \$10,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$10,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for grant programs to school districts to help cover travel costs associated with civics education competitions.

## Purpose

The Civic Education Initiative (CEI) is a multi-faceted education program administered by OSPI and its partners to expand support for civics education in Washington state. In its bill form, all components of the CEI were contained under SSHB 1896, but upon passage into law as "[Chapter 127, Laws of 2018](#)," each component became its own RCW. This "Civics Education" proviso continues to fund each of the following RCWs:

- [RCW 28A.230.094](#) - High School Civics Course
- [RCW 28A.300.485](#) - Enhanced Civics Education Demonstration Sites
- [RCW 28A.415.285](#) - Expanded Civics Education Teacher Training Program
- [RCW 28A.300.375](#) - Washington History Day Program

Additionally, budget language attached to this proviso also requires that \$10,000 is set aside for civic travel grants under [RCW 28A.300.480](#).

## Description of Services Provided

### High School Civics Course

The requirement that all high schools provide a mandatory, one-half credit stand-alone civics course for each high school student is still in effect. The teacher training program section below highlights ways in which OSPI supported the education community in meeting that requirement. Additionally, OSPI staff continue to provide technical support and serve as a resource to the education community as districts implement this requirement.

### Teacher Training Program

OSPI's service to social studies and civics educators included:

- Convening a workgroup to continue revisions to the classroom-based assessments in civics to align to the revised (2019) learning standards.
- Providing routine civics resources and professional development throughout the year, including at the Washington State Council for the Social Studies conferences.
- Collaborating with OSPI's Social Studies Cadre of Educators to provide regional support across the state and across grade bands.



- Maintaining collaborative relationships with state and national organizations that support social studies and civics educators, including the Washington State Council for the Social Studies, National Council for the Social Studies, Civic Learning Council, League of Women Voters, iCivics, and the Washington State Historical Society.

### **Washington History Day**

During the 2023–24 fiscal year, OSPI administered the Washington History Day program to approximately 2,000 students and teachers across Washington state. The program included lessons in historical research, student-led research projects, and a culminating contest series in which students shared their research with the public. Washington History Day staff provided leadership and support for eight regional contests around the state (typically hosted by local volunteers), hosted Washington History Day’s State Contest, and led the Washington delegation at the National History Day’s National Contest in Washington, D.C. at which Washington students were awarded one bronze and two gold medals, among other honors.

### **Civic Travel Grants**

During the 2023–24 fiscal year, OSPI awarded four civic travel grants totaling \$10,000:

- Sequim School District received \$1,500 to support student travel to the Washington State Mock Trials.
- The Institute for Workforce Development and Sustainability received \$1,000 to support student travel to their National Civics Bee event.
- Kamiak High School received \$2,000 to support student travel to several Washington State Mock Trial events.
- Chief Leschi Tribal Compact School received \$5,500 to support student travel to the Close Up Native Youth Summit. This student trip was eventually canceled, and the school was unable to use their grant funds.

## **Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants**

### **High School Civics Course**

OSPI-provided services under the High School Civics Course were largely informational and were available to all – including members of the public. Contact information for OSPI’s Associate Director of Social Studies, Dr. Andrew Miller, is available on OSPI’s public website. Portions of work under the Teacher Training Program also supported the High School Civics Course and are addressed below. Given the statewide scope of OSPI’s support for the High School Civics Course, the number of beneficiaries is indeterminate.

### **Teacher Training Program**

Services under the Teacher Training Program were targeted toward K–12 social studies and civics teachers but were not restricted to that audience. Services were advertised through educator-focused communication channels such as PdEnroller and the Open Educational

Resource Commons, but also through methods such as the OSPI Social Studies newsletter, which has a wider community readership and to which anyone can subscribe. Given the wide public availability of teacher training resources provided by this program (including posting resources on the Open Education Resource Commons online), the number of beneficiaries is indeterminate.

### Washington History Day

RCW 28A.300.375 requires the Washington History Day program to be administered as an official affiliate of the National History Day program, which limits participation to students and teachers in grades 6–12. While only students in these grades may participate in a History Day contest, this represents only one portion of the Washington History Day program. Use of the History Day learning model, associated instructional resources, and enjoyment of its student events are available to all.

### Civic Travel Grants

In alignment with RCW 28A.300.480, all applicants for the Civic Travel Grants are restricted to the following criteria:

- Students must be residents of the State of Washington;
- Students must use the grants to fund travel to civic education-based competitions or events;
- Students must be participants in the civic education competition or event; and
- Students must be under the age of twenty-one and not yet have received their high school diploma.

OSPI also established the following procedures for administering the grant:

- Up to \$500 per student may be awarded for past and/or future travel.
- Districts must submit applications between July 1, 2023, and January 7, 2024.
- Any school district applying for these funds on behalf of one or more students must validate that the students meet the criteria outlined in the assurances documents.
- Districts are responsible for reimbursing student travel after it has occurred. In reviewing student applications for funding, districts will consider and score based on an evaluation of all application materials that may be requested of applicants.
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall consider the overall breadth and variety of the field of applicants to determine the projects that would best fulfill the program's goal.
- Final grant awards may be for the full amount of the grant request or for a portion of the grant request.

### Beneficiaries in the 2023-24 School Year

<b>Number of School Districts</b>	Approximately 289
<b>Number of Schools</b>	Approximately 853
<b>Number of Students</b>	Approximately 60,162
<b>Number of Educators</b>	Approximately 1,217
<b>Other</b>	Approximately 2,305

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

No

## State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$373,000	\$241,013
2023	\$373,000	\$288,070
2022	\$373,000	\$237,981
2021	\$363,000	\$234,932
2020	\$374,000	\$241,124

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

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	Given the statewide scope of these programs, including services that reach audiences such as families and members of the public, the number of beneficiaries is indeterminate. However, approximations made in previous sections suggest approximately 65,000 beneficiaries.
2023	
2022	
2021	
2020	

## Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

OSPI's focus shifted from curating resources, materials, and revised civics standards to supporting implementation of civics education K–12, promoting research-based civics education practices incorporating literacy and content knowledge, and supporting high schools as they continue to transition to the required stand-alone civics course. The Washington History Day program utilized a virtual format for its events during the pandemic, but fully returned to in-person contests by the 2022–23 school year.

## Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

### High School Civics Course

The State Board of Education reports 100% compliance of districts and schools in implementation of the half-credit stand-alone civics course. Educators continue to attend relevant webinars provided by OSPI to support their efforts.

### Teacher Training Program

OSPI continues to leverage partnerships with national, state, and local civics education providers to connect teachers to high quality K–12 civics materials. OSPI finds that virtual learning opportunities are accessible by educators across the state. These webinars share OSPI resources

and those of external partners. OSPI's social studies team also focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure its materials, resources, and professional development offer equity of access and are culturally responsive.

Washington State's Learning Standards in civics are designed in a progression that supports civic education and engagement from kindergarten through grade 12, including the required high school civics course. This progression is meant to ensure that students establish and engage with essential social studies and civics vocabulary and concepts early in their education and build on this learning over time. OSPI finds that teacher training and materials tailored to elementary educators are a significant statewide need. Administrators and educators across grade bands – but especially in the elementary grades – report struggling with time constraints and competing instructional priorities, as well as a desire for additional resources, training and supports focused on civics.

### **Washington History Day**

A standards-aligned, project-based social studies program, Washington History Day facilitated deep development and application of social studies skills—most specifically historical research, critical thinking, and civic engagement. OSPI finds that educators and students continue to utilize the Washington History Day program as a vehicle for deep exploration and engagement with topics of civic, social, and community importance. Further, OSPI finds that building sustainable foundations in the administrative side of the Washington History Day program directly benefits students, educators, and families. Examples include improved training for adults evaluating student work, increased connections with community organizations, and routine student financial support to reduce participation barriers.

OSPI also finds that educators and students are best centered and supported by the Washington History Day program when it is administered through a collaborative network of leaders at both the state and regional levels. Regional Coordinators are essential partners whose regional programs are uniquely poised to contribute to equitable outcomes for educators and students. OSPI further finds that several of Washington History Day's regional programs are exhausted to the point of collapse. Both OSPI's ability to administer the program and participants' ability to engage are increasingly impacted by this development.

### **Civic Travel Grants**

OSPI finds that connecting students with real-world, hands-on civic experiences is an effective practice in authentically engaging students. This grant program continues to provide meaningful support in mitigating one barrier to student participation in civic events and experiences: the cost of travel. This year's grantees reported that their students:

- Connected with Washington State's civic leaders, including Lt. Governor Denny Heck
- Wrote and spoke about civics issues in their communities
- Visited and toured government buildings, including the State Capitol
- Participated in mock trials against teams from other schools

- Shared their civic learning with their school, district, and/or community, including making presentations to their local School Board

## Major Challenges Faced by the Program

### High School Civics Course and Teacher Training Program

While districts report 100% implementation of the half-credit stand-alone civics through the State Board of Education, further data on civics education in Washington state is largely absent. OSPI lacks both quantitative and qualitative data on educator's implementation of the half-credit stand-alone civics course and what resources educators at all grade levels need to deliver civics content effectively. This lack of formal, statewide data makes it difficult to design services and supports that address specific problems and circumstances within Washington's civics education community. While OSPI will provide virtual webinars on key resources and topics to support implementation of the half-credit stand-alone civics course, more data-informed resources would provide support for districts.

### Washington History Day

Equitable access to strong foundations in social studies requires educational service at the local level. However, there are currently no social studies positions in the nine Educational Service Districts for OSPI to engage as its regional partners, nor are there any other formalized, regional-level systems or supports for educators and students. This circumstance impacts social studies education in general but is particularly impactful for Washington History Day given that so much of its learning takes place outside of the classroom and within local communities. Attempts to supplement this regional service gap through state-level leadership are understandably inefficient, as well as taxing on state-level resources and capacity.

Washington History Day's regional programs are run by educator volunteers, with operations funded through student fees and logistical support dependent on the generosity of school/district administrators. This has resulted in an extremely limited scope of regional service, frequent turnover, and burdens for families, educators, and schools. While other states have responded to similar pressures by formalizing and funding their History Day organizational structures, Washington History Day's current funding model is insufficient to implement such a change.

### Civic Travel Grants

The major challenge of the Civic Travel Grants program is that the popularity and expense of travel to civics events vastly exceeds the budget of this grant program. This year's ten applicants submitted 14 requests totaling \$109,314 – more than ten times the grant program's \$10,000 budget. Of these ten applicants, at least five noted that the overall cost of their travel event would be more than \$10,000, with at least two events in the \$20,000 range and at least two events in the \$30,000 range. Of the 14 applications submitted, only four had secured any additional sources of funding, and only one of those four was at a "matching" level.

OSPI experienced some staffing transitions during this fiscal year which impacted the actual amount expended. Positions have been filled and right-sized for the scope of work.

## Future Opportunities

### High School Civics Course and Teacher Training Program

The structure of this proviso and its related legislation, which pairs the half-credit stand-alone civics course with an educator training program, provides a solid structure for future opportunities. As mentioned in previous sections, the most urgent areas of need can be summarized as follows:

- Immediate focus on providing materials, resources, supports, and advocacy for elementary educators in teaching civics;
- Collection of quantitative and qualitative data on implementation of the high school civics course;
- Collection of statewide data from educators across all grade levels regarding the materials, resources, and supports they need to teach civics effectively;
- Expanded funding under the Teacher Training Program to design and deliver tailored materials, resources, and supports that address specific problems and circumstances within Washington's civics education community.

### Washington History Day

The Washington History Day program would provide its most equitable, responsive, and student-centered service by expanding and decentralizing its organizational model. Formalizing local partnerships through seasonal contracts and funding their service with modest operational budgets would best equip the Washington History Day program to meet the needs of its educators, students, and families. This shift would build sustainability around local educational leaders' ongoing work to engage student historians in research and civic action in communities statewide.

### Civic Travel Grants

As noted in previous sections, the Civic Travel Grants program is poised for expansion. During the 2022-23 fiscal year, six applicants requested a total of \$64,866 in funding (more than six times the program budget) and this year, ten applicants requested a total of \$109,314 in funding (more than ten times the program budget).

## Other Relevant Information

N/A

## 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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