

Pacific Science Center Grant

Statutory and/or Budget Language

\$750,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$750,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for a grant to the Pacific Science Center to increase hands-on learning opportunities for Title I K–5 students statewide by increasing access to science on wheels and virtual field trips.

Purpose

The purpose of this proviso is to support the Pacific Science Center to provide the Science On Wheels program including virtual workshops to students in low-income schools.

Description of Services Provided

The provided student experiences include two components. The first is Science on Wheels experiences where Pacific Science Center educators lead students in assemblies, hands-on classroom workshops and pop-up exhibits on chemistry, engineering, human & animal biology, physics, and astronomy. The second component is Digital Discovery Workshops where Pacific Science Center educators lead students in live virtual programs on earth science, human biology, plants & animals, astronomy, engineering, physics, and chemistry.

Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

Programs were provided for free to low-income PreK–5th grade schools with 40% or more students utilizing Free or Reduced Lunch. Occasionally, students in grades 6–8 received programming if they attended an eligible K–8th grade school.

Beneficiaries in the 2023–24 School Year

Number of School Districts	77
Number of Schools	174
Number of Students	61,279
Number of Educators/Parents	8,900

Other

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$750,000	\$746,000



Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	70,430

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

N/A

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

Pacific Science Center collects survey data to evaluate program effectiveness and found that the majority of educators who responded found the program supported their classroom efforts, engaged students in science practices and thinking, was engaging to students, and was accessible to all students.

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

Impacts from Pacific Science Center's closure during the public health crisis continue to present challenges. One challenge is relaunching Science on Wheels with a nearly all new education team. There was a loss of institutional knowledge when the program paused, and employees were laid off due to COVID. The team is addressing this challenge by working to re-establish written processes and record learnings.

Pacific Science Center is also doing extensive work to rebuild partnerships with schools and communication channels that were well-established before COVID, but impacted by turnover in schools and the program pause. Pacific Science Center is working to develop training for their internal educators in trauma informed practices to ensure staff is prepared to support student learning while in schools.

Finally, the transition to a more environmentally sustainable vehicle fleet for Science on Wheels has proved more challenging than anticipated. Key issues include limited range and limited charging station availability in rural areas and vehicle configurations that do not meet cargo and passenger needs. This transition is outside the scope of the proviso funding but has impacts on program delivery funded by the proviso.

Future Opportunities

This year, through the proviso support, Pacific Science Center was able to bring hands-on STEM learning to 139% more students at low-income schools than in 2022-2023. With ongoing and increased support from the State of Washington and private investors, Pacific Science Center can continue to grow efforts to provide free Science on Wheels and Digital Discovery Workshops programs to low-income K-5th grade schools.

Science on Wheels exhibits are in need of refreshed curriculum and updated exhibit sets. Pacific Science Center is currently seeking funding opportunities for this work. Their plan is to update Science on Wheels curriculum based on years of aggregated learnings from teacher surveys and feedback, learnings from institutional racial equity and accessibility audits, trainings in universal design principles, and a timing and tracking study that helps Pacific Science Center better understand how students move through and learn in Science on Wheels exhibits. Final exhibits will utilize universal design principles to improve access for students of all abilities and will include both English and Spanish labels.

Other Relevant Information

This year, outside of OSPI's support, Pacific Science Center continued development of Science on Wheels classroom workshops and exhibit experiences that meet computer science standards. These workshops will be integrated across Science on Wheels experiences to demonstrate the real-world application of computer science across disciplines. Work will continue throughout the year, with the first computer science workshops and exhibit experiences available in Science on Wheels experiences starting in September 2024.

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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