Washington Office of Superintendent of
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

# Statewide Individualized Education Program System Feasibility Study Report

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**Authorizing Legislation: SB 5950, Sec. 501(2)(d)**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with legislative direction, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) conducted a feasibility study to evaluate the implementation of a statewide Individualized Education Program (IEP) system. The study explored the current state of IEP systems in Washington, identified challenges to delivering high-quality, equitable special education services, assessed potential vendors and costs, and recommended a path forward to improve outcomes for students with disabilities across the state.

The study concludes that a unified statewide IEP system is both feasible and critical to advancing Washington's strategic priorities: ensuring equitable access, improving instructional quality, strengthening compliance, and increasing inclusionary practices. This paper serves as a summary of the longer feasibility study, pulling out the major findings and recommendations from that study.

# INTRODUCTION

OSPI is committed to strengthening educational outcomes for students with disabilities across Washington state. In response to legislative direction, OSPI conducted a feasibility study to explore the development and implementation of a statewide IEP system.

The current decentralized approach to IEP development across Washington's school districts has led to inconsistencies in quality, compliance, and family engagement. These disparities can contribute to inequitable experiences and outcomes for students with disabilities. A statewide IEP system offers the opportunity to create a unified, student-centered, and equity-driven platform that supports meaningful access to grade-level standards, improves instructional practices, strengthens compliance with federal and state laws, and empowers families through greater transparency and engagement.

This report provides a summary of the findings from the feasibility study, identifies key considerations for successful statewide implementation, and outlines a proposed path forward that aligns with Washington's broader priorities for inclusive, high-quality education for all students.

## Background and Need

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all eligible students with disabilities must have an IEP to support their access to and progress in the general education curriculum. In Washington, districts currently operate largely independent systems for IEP development and documentation, resulting in:

- Inconsistent experiences for students and families across districts.

- Limited real-time access to actionable data for educators and policymakers.

- Compliance challenges related to federal and state requirements.

- Time-intensive administrative processes undertaken at significant local cost.

- Barriers to family engagement, especially for multilingual and marginalized families.

While individual districts have developed strong practices, the absence of a statewide infrastructure means there is no consistent mechanism for ensuring high-quality IEP development and implementation statewide. These inconsistencies disproportionately impact historically underserved students, including students of color, multilingual learners, and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

A statewide IEP system would directly support Washington's broader educational priorities, including alignment with the Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN) efforts, whole child education, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), and data-driven decision-making for continuous improvement.

Prior to launching the statewide IEP system feasibility study, OSPI engaged in several foundational

efforts aimed at improving student outcomes and informing the future of IEP system modernization. These efforts focused on gathering data, identifying challenges, and establishing clear system requirements through research and partner engagement.

These efforts provided a robust foundation for the feasibility study by informing design, aligning partner expectations, and ensuring that future decisions would be grounded in real-world experience, legislative alignment, and user needs.

# Summary of Business Objectives

The primary objective of the statewide IEP system feasibility study was to provide a comprehensive recommendation for a centralized IEP platform that improves educational outcomes for students with disabilities and fosters stronger collaboration among educators, parents, and students. A secondary goal was to evaluate how a new system can enhance oversight capabilities for OSPI through real-time, data-driven insights, while also improving communication and collaboration at all levels of the education system.

The proposed system would be governed, maintained, and supported by OSPI, reinforcing its role as the central steward.

Key goals for investing in a statewide IEP system include:

- Strengthening instruction to ensure special education services support meaningful student progress in grade-level standards.

- Improving collaboration among special education teachers, general education teachers, parents, and students.

- Enhancing OSPI's governance through access to real-time data in partnership with Educational Service Districts (ESDs) and local school districts.

- Creating a comprehensive view of each student to better inform instructional decisions throughout their educational journey.

At a minimum, the statewide system should:

- Address existing gaps in data management and compliance.

- Provide accessible IEP data across the educational community.

- Integrate with other essential educational systems statewide to monitor and support student progress and facilitate state and federal reporting.

- Promote a student-centered approach where IEPs serve as active instructional tools, not just compliance documents.

These features are essential for creating a unified, efficient, and effective statewide system.

# Partner Engagement

As part of the statewide IEP feasibility study, OSPI and its partners conducted journey mapping with key user groups—including students and families, educators, and administrators—to deeply understand how people interact with current IEP systems and where those systems fall short. This human-centered approach ensured the proposed statewide IEP system would reflect real-world needs and experiences, not just technical requirements.

The study began by developing user personas that captured the perspectives of each group. Journey maps were then created to visualize their experiences, highlight pain points, and identify critical system features. These maps revealed widespread systemic issues:

- Students and parents often lack access to IEP information, with no digital tools to view progress or give feedback. They're invited late into the IEP process and rarely treated as co-creators, despite having valuable insights that could support student success.

- Educators struggle with rigid systems that don't align with actual workflows. They're burdened by manual workarounds, duplicate data entry, and disconnected platforms—making it difficult to implement creative or individualized IEPs aligned with general education learning standards.

- Administrators face limited visibility into compliance or IEP performance. Without dashboards or integrated reports, they rely on manual data pulls from Student Information Systems (SIS), impeding their ability to provide timely support.

Insights from journey mapping shaped key elements of the feasibility study, from system requirements and vendor scoring to the recommended staffing model and implementation strategies. This process ensured that the future IEP system would be built not just for compliance, but for meaningful inclusion, instructional alignment, and family partnership.

# MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The feasibility study yielded several key findings that highlight both the promise and complexity of this improvement effort. The study identified a strong vendor landscape with experience implementing similar platforms in other states, along with powerful tools that support compliance, instruction, and family engagement. Cost projections were developed for implementation and long-term sustainability, and numerous benefits were outlined—ranging from improved instructional practices to enhanced data transparency and equity. At the same time, the study acknowledged important risks related to local control, data migration, and the need for sustained professional development. Included below are more specific findings broken down into different categories.

**Vendor Landscape**:
- Multiple vendors were identified that have experience implementing similar systems in other states, demonstrating strong technical and project management capacity.

- Vendors offer platforms with built-in compliance checks, user-friendly parent portals, progress monitoring tools, and integrated professional development.

**Cost Estimates**:
- First two years: Estimated between $12 million to $28 million (depending on vendor and scope) and what is learned through the RFP process.

- Over seven years: Total costs estimated between $53 million and $90 million, including licensing, professional development, and technical support.

**Benefits Identified**:
- Instructional improvement: A statewide IEP system would emphasize IEPs as instructional tools, helping ensure that students' goals are aligned to grade-level standards and meaningful access to general education is prioritized.

- Enhanced family engagement: Parent portals, real-time access to progress data, and built-in translation tools would remove longstanding barriers for families, especially multilingual families.

- Increased compliance and efficiency: Automated compliance checks and standard templates would support districts in meeting federal and state IDEA requirements consistently, reducing administrative burden.

- Data transparency and data-driven insights: Statewide access to non-personally identifiable data would allow OSPI, districts, and partners to monitor outcomes and target supports where needed.

- Equity and inclusion: By standardizing best practices and reducing local system disparities, the system would help dismantle systemic inequities in special education access and outcomes.

**Identified Risks and Mitigations**:
- Local control concerns: To be mitigated through phased implementation, customization options, and deep partner engagement at every stage.

- Data migration complexity: Addressed through careful transition planning and vendor support.

- Sustained training needs: Ongoing professional development to ensure that the system improves, not only compliance, but also instruction and student outcomes.

# Phased Implementation

Based on the findings and recommendations of the feasibility study, Washington state can take a strategic and responsive approach to implementing a statewide IEP system by beginning with a Year 0 planning phase followed by a phased rollout that builds momentum while ensuring strong infrastructure and responsiveness to community needs.

The feasibility study recommends the following steps:

1. **Vendor Procurement**: Procure a vendor through a transparent Request for Proposal (RFP) process.
2. **Pre-Implementation Study**: Conduct an Implementation Planning Study (IPS) to identify critical readiness factors, governance structures, and district supports.
3. **Center of Excellence**: Establish a centralized team, including external partners, to manage system governance, training, support, and continuous improvement.
4. **Phased Rollout**: Begin implementation with a small cohort of pilot districts (with diverse demographics and readiness), expanding statewide over time to allow for continuous learning and refinement.
5. **Ongoing Partner Engagement**: Collaborate actively with families, educators, students, and community organizations throughout planning, implementation, and evaluation phases.

These steps are supported by a phased timeline that balances continuous accountability with appropriately swift implementation, fostering broad engagement, while accounting for system readiness and all the essential components needed for statewide deployment.

**Figure 1: Phased Roll Out from Planning and Pre-Implementation to Full Implementation and Sustainment Activities**

| Year 0<br><br>Planning and Pre-Implementation | Years 1 – 3<br><br>Phased Implementation | Years 3 – 5<br><br>Implementation | Years 5 +<br><br>Sustainment |
|---|---|---|---|
| Establish relationships, roles, and expectations between partners<br><br>Process mapping and standardization<br><br>Data standardization<br><br>System Inventory<br><br>Risk Mapping and Planning<br><br>Phased Implementation Planning<br><br>RFP and vendor selection | OSPI governs and directs implementation<br><br>Non-profit consortium leads implementation operations<br><br>Third-party organization augments OSPI and Non-Profit consortium<br><br>Vendor focuses on product-specific resourcing to deliver implementation | OSPI governs and directs implementation<br><br>Nonprofit consortium supports all districts through IT, IS, feature requests and training<br><br>Third-party consultancy augments OSPI and Non-Profit consortium<br><br>Vendor delivers to SLA, MSA, and needed enhancements | OSPI will address technical, functional, statutory, professional development, and policy needs<br><br>System Performance Tracking to ensure stability and reliability<br><br>Structured Feedback Loop with input from districts, educators, and parents<br><br>Quarterly Training Repository to offer quarterly and annual training on best practices and system updates<br><br>Enhancement Roadmap and quarterly business reviews to evaluate system performance |

**Source:** ISG IEP Feasibility Study, May 2025.

### Year 0: Pre-Implementation Planning and Preparation

The first year, Year 0, would focus on foundational planning and readiness activities essential to the success of the system. This includes conducting a Pre-Implementation Study to identify district readiness factors, clarify system governance, and assess the technical and human capacity needed for adoption. It also includes completing a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select a vendor with proven success in developing accessible, compliant, and student-centered IEP platforms. During this planning year, OSPI would also establish a Center of Excellence[1], which would serve as the state's hub for coordinating system governance, managing communications, delivering professional development, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

### Years 1–3: Phased Implementation Phase with Continuous Learning

A phased implementation will begin with a cohort of pilot districts selected for their diversity in geography, demographics, and capacity. These districts will work closely with OSPI and the selected vendor to test and refine the system, while also identifying training, coaching, and technical assistance needs. Lessons learned from pilot implementation will inform each subsequent phase. As momentum builds, additional districts will be onboarded in cohorts, allowing time for support structures to scale while avoiding unnecessary delays in delivering benefits to students and educators.

### Years 3-5: Implementation Phase

During the Implementation Phase, OSPI will collaborate with other agencies to strategize, design, and deliver the IEP system to Washington districts. The work planning phases will be determined between OSPI and the selected IEP vendor, with several key efforts prioritized. These include validating detailed requirements with the vendor's technical expertise, ensuring accessibility and security through comprehensive planning, and developing a detailed data migration plan led by OSPI. Additionally, the post-implementation governance structure will be defined. The system will be configured and customized based on agreed-upon requirements, followed by the development and testing of integrations with existing OSPI and district systems. The data migration plan will be executed with thorough validation by OSPI, and User Acceptance Testing (UAT) will be conducted with district representatives and other partners to gather feedback and identify issues. Finally, each district will go live with the statewide IEP on the predetermined go-live date.

### Years 5 and onward: Sustainment Phase

During the sustainment phase, all participating districts will have fully implemented the IEP system, with OSPI leading efforts to address technical, functional, statutory, professional development and policy needs across the state. Key priorities include creating real-time system performance tracking to ensure stability and reliability in alignment with the vendor's Service Level Agreement (SLA). A

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[1] The Center of Excellence (COE) would be a collaborative governance and operational team led by OSPI, designed to manage, support, and continuously improve Washington's statewide IEP system. Representing a broad range of partners—including students, parents, educators, districts, regional and state agencies—the COE coordinates technical support, training, feedback, and policy alignment to ensure a unified and responsive system that drives better outcomes for students with disabilities.

structured feedback loop will be developed to gather input from districts, educators, and parents. Additionally, a centralized training repository will be maintained, offering quarterly and annual refreshers on IEP best practices and system updates. The sustainment phase will also involve managing a rolling 12- to 24-month system enhancement roadmap with the vendor to meet district needs and conducting Quarterly Business Reviews (QBRs) to evaluate system performance, incident resolution metrics, user rates, and training feedback.

### Ongoing Partner Engagement

Throughout planning and implementation, partner collaboration will be prioritized. Educators, families, students, and community partners will help guide system decisions and ensure the platform reflects the needs of the communities it serves. This inclusive approach will ensure that the new IEP system supports not only compliance, but instructional quality and improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

By starting with thoughtful planning and by building in mechanisms for continuous learning and feedback, Washington can ensure the statewide IEP system is well-designed, sustainable, and truly transformative.

# Projected Costs

Implementing a statewide IEP system represents a significant investment, with the 7-year total cost estimated between $53 million and $90 million, depending on the vendor selected. This includes all costs related to system implementation, staffing, maintenance, professional development and operations, and is designed to align with Washington's biennial budget cycle and WaTech guidelines for cost-benefit analysis.

## Implementation Costs

The implementation is designed as a 5-year phased rollout, with most districts brought online in the first three years and the remaining two years focused on sustainment and support. Implementation costs are non-recurring and front-loaded, reflecting the need to simultaneously support multiple districts. These costs include:

- Vendor implementation fees,

- Planning and procurement support,

- Technical architecture, integration, and data migration, and

- Change management and training.

Significant cost drivers during implementation include the simultaneous rollout effort, discovery and design phases, and the need for legacy system support during a six- to12-month transition period.

## Staffing Costs

Staffing accounts for a major portion of the total cost across both implementation and ongoing

operations. The proposed model includes:

- Dedicated OSPI staff full-time equivalents (FTEs) and third-party professional services for implementation and support;

- Project management, technical leads, data migration, information technology (IT) security, and change management personnel;

- Full-time change management staff in partnership with vendor teams; and

- Flexibility to shift from third-party to permanent FTEs over time to reduce long-term costs and build institutional knowledge.

Staffing is split annually between implementation and maintenance & operations (M&O), with implementation representing the majority in the early years. As more districts go live, M&O staffing costs will increase proportionally.

## Maintenance & Operations (M&O) Costs

Recurring costs begin modestly and grow as more users adopt the system. These costs include:

- Software licensing (with a five percent annual increase for inflation and vendor support growth);

- Ongoing maintenance, system support, and basic training; and

- An annual enhancements fee (five percent of license cost) to reflect growing demand for system upgrades and user-driven feature improvements.

## Incremental and Additional Costs

The feasibility study also highlights transition-related costs not captured in the core cost-benefit analysis, which may require separate funding or risk mitigation planning:

- Legacy system overlap (running both old and new systems during transition),

- Temporary staffing and educator stipends to support training and adoption,

- District-level customizations and training,

- Coaching and support for successful change management, and

- Infrastructure scalability and potential future legislative or policy-driven enhancements.

These incremental costs emphasize the importance of an Implementation Planning Study (IPS) to refine scope, roles, and responsibilities before launch.

# Feasibility to Action

Building upon the comprehensive findings and recommendations of the statewide IEP feasibility

study, OSPI is ready to start preparation to enter the next critical phase in advancing a centralized IEP system. The study affirms the readiness and need for a statewide solution and provides a clear roadmap for strategic procurement, planning, and partner collaboration. The following next steps will guide OSPI through the transition from feasibility to action:

## *1. Begin Pre-Implementation Year 0 Activities*

During this phase, OSPI will initiate foundational work to set the stage for successful implementation.

- Update and refine budget estimates based on the feasibility study's cost models, focusing on staffing, infrastructure contingencies, vendor licensing, training, and ongoing operations.

- Assemble contract templates and scopes of work for vendor partnerships, professional services, and third-party support.

- Identify potential incremental costs not included in the cost-benefit analysis (e.g., parallel system operations, educator workload impacts) and develop a mitigation plan.

## *2. Refine the Statewide Implementation Strategy*

OSPI will conduct a detailed review of the implementation plan proposed in the feasibility study, in addition to incorporating pre-implementation activities, using it as a foundation to:

- Formalize the statewide strategy, key milestones, and delivery approach;

- Align the implementation model with both OSPI's internal capacity and external partner needs; and

- Identify dependencies, constraints, and mitigation strategies, particularly around data migration, systems integration, and change management.

## *3. Launch a Competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) Process*

Leveraging the vendor evaluations and system requirements identified in the study, OSPI will initiate a formal RFP process. This competitive procurement approach will:

- Encourage vendor innovation and pricing transparency;

- Prioritize solutions with out-of-the-box capabilities suited to Washington's needs, reducing reliance on expensive customizations; and

- Ensure vendor alignment with OSPI's long-term goals, timelines, and scalability requirements;

## 4. Establish a Comprehensive Plan for Partner Engagement

Meaningful and sustained partner involvement is essential for adoption and long-term success. OSPI will:

- Develop a robust engagement strategy that includes educators, families, administrators, and advocates across all regions;

- Build a feedback loop for ongoing input into system design, training, and policy development; and

- Prepare districts for change through coordinated communications, professional learning opportunities, and support channels.

## 5. Establish a Center of Excellence (COE)

As recommended in the feasibility study, OSPI will lead the establishment of a Center of Excellence (COE) to guide system governance and operations. Early efforts will include:

- Defining COE structure, roles, and responsibilities;

- Recruiting diverse representatives from key stakeholder groups; and

- Operationalizing early COE functions to support system design validation, pilot feedback, and change management planning.

Together, these next steps ensure OSPI moves forward with a structured, inclusive, and sustainable approach to delivering a modernized IEP system that improves outcomes for students with disabilities across Washington state.

# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

With the findings from this feasibility study, Washington is well-positioned to move forward thoughtfully, centering student outcomes, accessibility, and collaboration across educational systems. This system provides the opportunity to streamline compliance, improve instructional outcomes, strengthen family partnerships, and build an educational system where every student is truly supported to succeed. A statewide IEP system is not just feasible, it has the potential to ensure that students with disabilities in Washington receive equitable, high-quality, and inclusive educational services. With careful investment, strategic leadership, and meaningful collaboration, Washington can build a statewide IEP system that centers students and families and supports the promise of high-quality instruction for all students.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# REFERENCES

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# LEGAL NOTICE

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