



REMEDIATING LEAD-CONTAMINATION OF SCHOOL DRINKING WATER

2026 Supplemental Capital Budget Decision Package

Agency: 3500 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Budget period: 2026 Supplemental Budget

Budget level: PL

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) requests \$2.5 million to continue the Healthy Kids–Healthy Schools Lead in Water Remediation Grant Program. In the 2025–27 Biennial Capital Budget, the Legislature appropriated \$1,000,000 for this program, which has been fully allocated to school districts for lead remediation projects as of September 2025. The additional funding requested will allow the program to continue providing grants to districts to address outstanding lead in water remediation needs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Healthy Kids–Healthy Schools Grant Program supports Washington’s efforts to create learning environments that help children maintain a healthy weight, stay active, and develop lifelong healthy eating habits. First funded in the 2015–17 Biennial Capital Budget, the program has provided grants for projects such as installing water bottle filling stations in schools and renovating school facilities to improve student health. In subsequent biennia, funding has also supported the replacement of lead-contaminated drinking water fixtures, as well as fixture and pipe replacement projects.

The legislature has consistently supported this program through capital budget appropriations. This 2026 supplemental capital budget request will continue that commitment by funding projects aligned with the Healthiest Next Generation Initiative and Superintendent Reykdal’s priority of supporting the whole child.

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

The 2021 Legislature passed ESSHB 1139 requiring all schools built before 2016 to have their drinking water outlets tested for lead by the Department of Health (DOH). As DOH expands testing and makes testing results publicly available, school districts require funding to address identified lead contamination. Remediation measures may include replacing fixtures in schools that test above five parts per billion, replacing pipes that carry drinking water, installing automated flushing systems for water fountains and sinks, and adding certified water filters or bottle-filling stations.

The grant awards made to school districts will help build safer and healthier schools and learning environments in the state of Washington. The improvements made by this program address multiple student health concerns by targeting specific facility improvements. Students have better access to lead-free water which will support a better learning experience.

The need to continue funding is well established. In the 2019–21 biennium, the grant program was only able to award funding to nine districts due to limited resources. In the 2023–25 biennium, OSPI awarded grants to 19 school districts, including one that successfully completed a pipe replacement project after testing confirmed contamination in the water lines.

In the 2025–27 Biennial Capital Budget, the legislature provided \$1,000,000 for this program, which is expected to be fully allocated to school districts by September 2025. The Department of Health plans to test more than 260 schools during the 2025–26 school year and an additional 260 schools in 2026–27. To meet the anticipated remediation needs identified through this testing, OSPI requests \$2,500,000 in the 2026 Supplemental Capital Budget to continue supporting school district remediation projects to address lead in drinking water.

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

The Superintendent supports this grant program and its alignment with the Governor's Healthiest Next Generation Initiative and asks the legislature to meet the growing and urgent need of school districts to implement lead-contaminated drinking water remediation projects. The grants awarded through this program will continue to help schools provide access to fresh drinking water, and not funding the program would result in a significant setback to schools in providing safe and healthy learning environments and supporting the healthy physical and mental development of Washington students.

What will the request produce or construct?

This request will help build healthy schools and learning environments in the state of Washington. The grants awarded under this program will give students better access to safer drinking water for a better learning experience.

Which clientele would be impacted by the budget request? Where and how many units would be added, people, or communities served, etc.?

All public schools, including charter schools and state-tribal education compact schools will be better equipped to carry out the Healthiest Next Generation Initiative and reduce environmental pollutants and safety concerns in their buildings.

Does this project or program leverage non-state funding?

This project does not leverage non-state funding.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

Grant applications for the 2023–25 biennium mostly included schools unable to provide safe and healthy learning environments for their students through capital levies or bond dollars. Continuing to fund grant awards to financially vulnerable schools will help bring them on par

with the other schools in the state and provide safe and equitable learning environment to all Washington students.

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

While Washington could require voter approved capital levies to fund projects that address lead contamination in school drinking water following passage of 2021 ESSHB 1139, continuing to fund this existing program is the most reliable, efficient, and expedient option. Local levy and bond funding is not a dependable, reliable, or equitable funding model for programs that target critical health and safety issues in Washington schools.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

Funding Requested:

Fiscal Year 2026

- \$2,500,000

2027-29 Biennium

- \$0

2029-31 Biennium

- \$0

2031-33 Biennium

- \$0

2033-35 Biennium

- \$0

STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Strategic framework:

This project supports Superintendent Reykdal's K–12 Education Vision of his goal for Washington's public education system to prepare every student who walks through our school doors for post-secondary aspirations, careers, and life. By addressing lead-contaminated drinking water in schools, which is known to have lifelong harmful and detrimental effects on students' abilities to learn and thrive in the classroom, this project supports OSPI's Strategic Goal #1, Equitable Access to Strong Foundations.

OTHER COLLATERAL CONNECTIONS

Greenhouse gas emission limits (RCW 70A.45.050):

N/A

Is this project eligible for direct pay:

N/A

Is there additional information you would like decision makers to know when evaluating this request?

No.

If the project was originally funded prior to the 2021-23 biennium describe the project and each subproject:

N/A

Governor's salmon strategy:

N/A

Historical significance:

No

Location:

Statewide.

Growth management impacts:

N/A

Grant recipient organizations:

Local School Districts.

Application process used:

OSPI will continue to administer a competitive grant process to ensure all school districts have an opportunity to apply for grant funds.

OTHER SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Information technology (IT):

N/A