



PROTECTING STUDENT ACCESS TO SUMMER MEALS BY FUNDING SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION OF SUMMER EBT

2026 Supplemental Operating Budget Decision Package

Agency: 3500 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Budget period: 2026 Supplemental Budget

Budget level: PL

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

Summer EBT (SUN Bucks) provides \$120 per eligible child to purchase groceries during summer, supporting nearly 600,000 children in Washington in 2024. Working directly with the schools that serve these households ensures automatic enrollment for eligible children. Federal rules require schools to take additional steps to process applications, prepare and upload data, and conduct or support income verification. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) requests state funding for districts to support administration of Summer EBT, unlocking a 1:1 federal match, ensuring equitable access, maximizing federal funds, and minimizing administrative burden.

FISCAL DETAIL

Operating Expenditures	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund 001-1 (State)	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Fund 001-2 (Federal)	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Total Expenditures	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
Biennial Totals	\$1,200,000		\$1,200,000	
Staffing	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average Annual	0.0		0.0	
Object of Expenditure	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Obj. N	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
Revenue	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund 001-2 (Federal)	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Total Revenue	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000

Biennial Totals	\$600,000	\$600,000
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PACKAGE DESCRIPTION

OSPI and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) jointly administer the federal Summer EBT program in Washington State. Also known as SUN Bucks, this program helps families purchase food for their school-aged children during the summer months. Each eligible child receives a one-time benefit of \$120 per year to assist with grocery expenses.

The families of nearly 600,000 Washington children received SUN Bucks over the summer of 2024. Initially, administrative waivers reduced the burden on schools, but these waivers have now expired. Beginning in the 2025—26 school year, schools and districts must take on additional administrative responsibilities to comply with federal requirements and reduce the risk of incorrect benefit issuance. These processes support automatic and streamlined enrollment for eligible students.

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

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations (7 CFR § 292.14) require specific application and verification requirements. To meet these requirements schools must implement additional administrative processes, including: Reviewing and processing applications at Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools, where meal applications are not required; validating and uploading student eligibility data to DSHS; conducting or supporting income verification; following up on cases and providing documentation for case reviews and administrative hearings; and responding to inquiries and promoting the Summer EBT program. These tasks are essential to meet federal requirements and ensure streamlined enrollment for eligible students. However, they are not allowable uses of National School Lunch Program funding. Without additional support, districts may struggle to carry out these responsibilities, which could hinder student enrollment in Summer EBT.

Without streamlined Summer EBT enrollment families will need to apply separately through DSHS, adding complexity and potential confusion for families. In addition to the lower enrollment, failure to provide state funding will cut Washington off from a 1:1 federal funding match, further impacting the State's ability to support students' nutritional needs during the summer months, particularly for low-income, multilingual, rural, and BIPOC students.

What is your proposal?

To comply with federal program regulations and continue to provide streamlined enrollment for eligible families, OSPI proposes a modest, but helpful influx of funding to school districts to support administration of the Summer EBT program. Funds will help school districts manage administrative tasks such as application processing, data uploads, data validation, income

verification, and general program support. This investment of state dollars will also unlock a dollar-for-dollar federal match, and this approach has been approved by USDA in other states.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

Please describe in detail how this proposal is likely to benefit communities and populations who have historically been excluded by governmental decisions. Include both demographic and geographic information about communities.

The proposed investment keeps summer nutrition accessible for historically underserved students statewide. Funding will support students that qualify as 'low-income', by ensuring districts can implement processes that streamline eligibility for these students. By funding districts to conduct administrative functions the proposal ensures eligible students retain automatic enrollment in Summer EBT. Without funding, families would face an additional application step through DSHS—a barrier that disproportionately impacts historically marginalized populations, including families with limited English proficiency, lower literacy, or limited access to technology.

Describe how your agency engaged with communities and populations, particularly those who have been historically excluded and marginalized by governmental decisions?

While there was community input at the federal level during the creation of Summer EBT, this proposal has not received any community input as it's supporting capacity for an existing program. Implementation of the program during summer 2024 and 2025 has helped OSPI and DSHS identify processes needed to ensure federal regulations are met and minimize confusion and barriers for families.

What input did your agency receive and how was it incorporated into your proposal?

See above.

Explain why and how these equity impacts will be addressed, i.e., consider communities or populations excluded or disproportionately impacted by the proposal.

This proposal addresses equity by reducing barriers to this important benefit for families. Automatic enrollment prevents additional bureaucratic hurdles that disproportionately affect marginalized families.

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

State funding would be allocated to school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) based on enrollment size.

Funding would be used to support school district administration and support of Summer EBT including:

- Reviewing and processing of Child Nutrition Eligibility and Education Benefits (CNEEB) applications, including applications for students enrolled in CEP or Provision 2 (non-base year) schools;
- Approval or denial of CNEEBs;
- Notification of households of approval or denial in accordance with requirements;
- Responding to DSHS requests related to verification requirements OR conduct verification on CNEEB applications in CEP/Provision 2 non-base year schools;
- Compiling and review Summer EBT eligibility data;
- Uploading Summer EBT eligibility data to DSHS 4x/year;
- Promoting Summer EBT information to households;
- Developing processes and safeguards for handling and distribution of Summer EBT cards to students without secure mailing addresses;
- Receiving, securely storing and distributing Summer EBT cards for students without secure mailing addresses;
- Answering household questions regarding Summer EBT; and
- Responding to data requests from DSHS in connection with case reviews or appeals.

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

OSPI and DSHS have collaborated on the implementation and administration of Summer EBT over the last two summers. Through this experience the agency has determined that support and certain administrative duties are best conducted by school districts as they already collect enrollment data and other information from households. It makes practical sense to leverage this data for administration of Summer EBT. Additionally, local schools' existing relationships with households facilitates application submission and verification document requests and reduces barriers to program participation.

What resources does the agency already have that are dedicated to this purpose?

OSPI received funding for administrative staff to support Summer EBT in the 2025 legislative session; however there is no other funding available for school district administrative support.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

Expansion, reduction, elimination or alteration of a current program or service:

This request expands state support for Summer EBT, but the program design itself will not change. OSPI received funding for administrative staff in the 2025 legislative session; however, there is no funding available to support the school districts with the additional administrative support required under federal regulation.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

OSPI requests \$600,000 in fiscal year 2026 ongoing to support a flat rate paid to school districts based on the total number of students enrolled at NSLP sites.

School districts with enrollment between 1 – 1,999 would receive a flat rate of \$1,500 per year. There are 207 districts that would receive this rate, for a total of \$310,500 ($207 \times \$1,500 = \$310,500$).

School districts with enrollment between 2,000 – 10,000 would receive a flat rate of \$2,500 per year. There are 77 districts that would receive this rate, for a total of \$192,500 ($77 \times \$2,500 = \$192,500$).

School districts with enrollment between 10,001 – 51,134 would receive a flat rate of \$3,000 per year. There are 32 districts that would receive this rate, for a total of \$96,000 ($32 \times \$3,000 = \$96,000$).

The numbers above add to \$599,000 but the request by fund type needs to be rounded to the nearest \$1,000. We are requesting \$300,000 general fund-state and \$300,000 general fund-federal in lieu of \$299,500 of each.

Workforce assumptions:

The funding requested would be a flat rate based on enrollment and would not require additional FTE.

See section “what are you purchasing” for a list of administrative functions to be conducted by school districts.

Historical funding:

Fiscal Year 2026

- FTE = 2.0 FTE
- Total Funds = \$300,000
- Near General Fund = \$150,000
- Other Funds = \$150,000

Fiscal Year 2027

- FTE = 2.0 FTE
- Total Funds = \$280,000
- Near General Fund = \$140,000
- Other Funds = \$140,000

STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Strategic framework:

This proposal supports the goals of Healthy and Safe Communities and Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government.

For Healthy and Safe Communities: The Summer EBT program has been shown to support low-income families in a safe and efficient manner. Families can choose to purchase the groceries that fit their needs both nutritionally and culturally. Reducing food insecurity is of vital importance.

For Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government: Summer EBT will bring in approximately an estimated \$74.4 million in federal benefits for Washington families during the Summer of 2025.

This proposal also aligns with OSPI's Strategic Goals #1 Equitable Access to Strong Foundations. Hungry students cannot learn. This proposal directly reduces food insecurity for students, allowing them to show up to summer activities and school in the fall ready to learn.

Performance outcomes:

By funding districts to support administration of Summer EBT, the program ensures automatic and streamlined enrollment of all eligible students, reducing barriers for low-income, multilingual, and rural families.

Success will be measured by the number and percentage of eligible students streamline enrolled, the timeliness of benefit distribution, and federal funds leveraged through the 1:1 match. Ultimately, the outcome supports equitable access to summer nutrition, mitigating food insecurity for historically underserved populations across Washington State.

OTHER COLLATERAL CONNECTIONS

Intergovernmental:

OSPI partners with DSHS on Summer EBT implementation. Funding this proposal will ensure families can easily access Summer EBT supports.

Stakeholder impacts:

N/A

Legal or administrative mandates:

N/A

Changes from current law:

None

State workforce impacts:

None

State facilities impacts:

None

Puget Sound recovery:

N/A

Governor's salmon strategy:

N/A

OTHER SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Information technology (IT):

N/A