Science on Wheels

Budget Language

$500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2026 is 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.

Proviso Purpose

This proviso appropriated state funding to support the Pacific Science Center's Science on Wheels program.

Services Provided

The Pacific Science Center offers a number of hands-on science programs to K-12 students across the State. Programs include:

- **Science on Wheels (SOW)** delivers in-person STEM instruction to schools and community groups through Pacific Science Center educators. SOW programming is offered across five thematic areas — Math, Physics, Engineering, Space Odyssey, and Blood & Guts — and is structured as either a Whole Day Experience or a Partial Day Experience, providing flexibility to accommodate varying school schedules and instructional needs.
- **Digital Discovery Workshops** provide 40 minutes of live, educator-led virtual instruction to public and private schools and other community groups, extending Pacific Science Center's educational reach to communities across the state regardless of geographic proximity.
- **Field Trips** to Pacific Science Center are available to a broad range of academic and childcare institutions, including public and private schools, homeschool cooperatives, licensed daycares, and community organizations, offering students direct access to Pacific Science Center's exhibits, facilities, and programming.

This proviso focused on supporting access to the Science on Wheels program for students at Title I-eligible schools across the State.

Criteria for Receiving Services/Grants

The Pacific Science Center is the named recipient of these funds, and OPSI executed a sole source contract with the Center.

Beneficiaries in the 2025-26 School Year

Number of School Districts: Multiple

Number of Schools: Multiple

Number of Students: 44,092

Number of Educators: Multiple

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No.

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2026	$500,000	$500,000
2025	$750,000	$746,141
2024	$750,000	$746,000

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

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2026	44,092
2025	52,789
2024	61,987

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

Prior appropriations focused on program expansion, while this year's proviso, a smaller appropriation reflective of the current fiscal climate, focused on maintaining access to students at Title I-eligible schools.

Program(s) Evaluation or Major Findings

OSPI used the 2026 appropriation and subsequent contract to engage with the Pacific Science Center's education team to review and update several course offerings, better aligning them with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Through a series of fruitful meetings between Center staff and OSPI K-12 science content and instruction experts, the group discussed the grade-level standards alignment, content, and instructional practices of six Science on Wheel's units and reviewed updated versions of the offerings following OSPI feedback.

Major Challenges Faced by Program(s)

None.

Future Opportunities

The collaborative conversations between OSPI and the Pacific Science Center supported by this proviso provide a good model of how state dollars and state-funded contracts with non-profits and community partners not only sustain high-quality programs, but create opportunities for these organizations to engage with and better align their offerings with state standards.

Other Relevant Information

While this proviso focused on Title I-eligible schools and the Science on Wheels program in particular, the Pacific Science Center's programming served a total of 83,169 students in 90 school districts, with an additional 26,465 students from 61 school districts served through field trips to the Pacific Science Center itself.

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2026 Fiscal Year.

Program Contact Information

Name: Anna Hernandez-French

Title: Assistant Director of Policy and Implementation

Phone: 360-725-6177

Email: anna.hernandez-french@k12.wa.us