



## Improving OSPI Customer Service Through Key Investments in Staffing

### *2024 Supplemental Operating Budget Decision Package*

#### Recommendation Summary

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) serves a wide customer base across the K–12 education system, from school districts to community partners, and to news media and state lawmakers. To maintain the high-quality service the agency provides to all of its customers, OSPI requests funding for salaries that are competitive with the other major employers of similarly skilled workers in the state: school districts. To further develop the level of service OSPI is able to provide, the agency requests funding to ensure staff salaries are competitive and for three positions focused on serving customers who need the agency’s data and fiscal expertise.

#### Fiscal Details (Funding, FTEs, Revenue, Objects)

Operating Expenditures	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
General Fund State - 01	\$0	\$5,200,000	\$5,261,000	\$5,356,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$0	\$5,200,000	\$5,261,000	\$5,356,000
<b>Biennial Totals</b>	<b>\$5,116,000</b>		<b>\$10,617,000</b>	
Staffing	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
FTEs	0	3.0	3.0	3.0
<b>Average Annual</b>	<b>3.0</b>		<b>3.0</b>	
Revenue	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
General Fund State - 01	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Biennial Totals</b>	<b>\$0</b>		<b>\$0</b>	
Object of Expenditure	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Obj. A	\$0	\$3,757,000	\$3,827,000	\$3,897,000
Obj. B	\$0	\$1,369,000	\$1,394,000	\$1,419,000
Obj. E	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Obj. G	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Obj. J	\$0	\$34,000	\$0	\$0

## Package Description

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

The base operations funding for OSPI has not kept up with expanding programming and reporting requirements over the past decade. The lag in critical staffing undermines OSPI's ability to respond to the ever-evolving needs and requirements of the K–12 system, the 1 million students it serves, Washington's taxpayers, and our state Legislature. To further complicate the problem, the agency is competing for the same staffing, expertise, experience, and content knowledge as school districts. Districts often pay higher rates than the state, and an internal analysis of staff salaries between school districts and OSPI demonstrated a salary growth differential of 8.35% over the past decade, with school districts offering higher salaries overall.

Limited staffing resources in fiscal, policy, and legislative support services have undermined OSPI's ability to respond to external stakeholders while operating core services. This problem is amplified during the legislative session when additional work is assigned to the same divisions struggling to balance their increased workload without the necessary staffing or resources.

The agency must provide our Legislature with data and responses to their questions promptly during the session. Maintaining core services is non-negotiable and must be done to continue providing quality public education.

### What is your proposed solution?

To ensure OSPI can continue to recruit qualified candidates with experience in K–12 education, the agency requests \$5.1 million in the 2024 Supplemental Budget to meet the expanding demands of providing the agency's core services and meeting customer needs in a timely and targeted manner.

This funding will help OSPI compete with school district and educational service district salaries by increasing the base salary of all positions in the agency by 8.35% in fiscal year (FY) 2025. This additional investment, adjusted by inflation, is calculated as \$4.6 million in FY 2025, \$4.7 million in FY 2026, and \$4.8 million in FY 2027, and beyond.

Additionally, OSPI requests \$596,000 in FY 2025 and \$563,000 in ongoing funding to support three new positions focused on providing additional fiscal, policy, and research support to external partners, with a particular emphasis on providing services and improving response times to the Legislature.

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

These funds will support OSPI in competing with school district and educational service district salaries for talented workers by increasing the base salary of all positions in the agency by 8.35%, beginning in FY 2025.

Additionally, funding will provide 3.0 new full-time equivalents (FTE), including one fiscal project manager, one policy and research project manager, and one school district data manager to help respond to daily queries regarding school district data and state policy. The intent and

design of this legislative request is to provide better and faster service to the Legislature, state and city governments, school districts, and external stakeholders, particularly during high volume times of the year such as during the legislative session. Examples of services that would be expanded by this proposal include increased research capacity and increased access to fiscal data maintained by the agency.

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

The only opportunity for OSPI to secure permanent and sustainable funding for continued operations is through a request of the Legislature. Appropriate staffing is needed to make progress on researching, communicating, collaborating across systems, and developing research-driven solutions that aim to close opportunity gaps so all students have an equitable opportunity to thrive at school.

Additionally, funding this request will provide targeted funding to ensure the Legislature and other customers receive quality service and quick responses from the agency, particularly during high volume periods.

## **Performance Measures**

### **Performance outcomes:**

First and foremost, funding the specific positions outlined in this proposal will result in OSPI being able to provide better, faster, and more agile service to external customers, including the Legislature. The base increase in existing staff salaries will keep the agency competitive against school districts when hiring top experts from across the K–12 system to lead statewide efforts and programs at OSPI.

## **Assumptions and Calculations**

### **Expansion or alteration of a current program or service:**

None.

### **Detailed assumptions and calculations:**

OSPI compared the percentage salary increase over the most recent 10-year period for positions that the agency most directly competes with school districts to recruit and retain talent. Over that 10-year period, salaries for school district employees increased by 8.35% more than they did for OSPI employees. That percentage was applied to OSPI salaries paid during state fiscal year 2024 for all employees to come up with the \$4.6 million initial requested investment. This figure was adjusted by projected Implicit Price Deflator (IPD) in future years to arrive at the ongoing requested investment level.

OSPI assumed that the three new requested positions would be funded at a level of project managers. The costs shown on the table reflect the total investment (i.e., salaries, benefits, and other costs) for these three positions.

### **Workforce assumptions:**

The agency will increase staff by 3.0 FTE at the salary and benefit level commensurate with a project manager. Combined costs across all 3.0 FTE for salary total \$357,000 per fiscal year. Combined costs for benefits total \$165,000. Combined costs for goods, services, capital outlay, and travel are approximately \$74,000 per fiscal year.

## **How our Proposal Impacts Equity in the State**

At the forefront of every program, policy, and decision, OSPI actively focuses on ensuring all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools. OSPI regularly engages with a wide array of partners and stakeholders to continuously connect with students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making. OSPI's ability to maintain this commitment lies within the agency's capacity to function and maintain core operations as the state's education agency.

## **Strategic and Performance Outcomes**

### **Strategic framework:**

This proposal aligns with the Governor's Results Washington Goal #1: World-class education. It also aligns with Results Washington Goal# 5: Efficient, effective and accountable Government. In addition, this request will allow OSPI to make progress on Superintendent Reykdal's Strategic Goal #4: A Committed, Unified, and Customer Focused OSPI.

## **Other Collateral Connections**

### **Intergovernmental:**

This proposal will strengthen OSPI's ability to support the Legislature and other customers.

### **Stakeholder response:**

Our state, education system, and Legislature depend on reliable, consistent, and qualified staff at OSPI. The system will benefit from additional staff focused on working with external stakeholders and providing crucial data to Legislators as they make decisions that impact Washington's future. OSPI believes stakeholders, legislators, and legislative staff will react positively to this effort.

### **Legal or administrative mandates:**

RCW 28A.300.040 provides that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall have supervision over all matters pertaining to the public schools of the state, and to report to the Governor and Legislature such information and data as may be required for the management and improvement of the schools.

### **Changes from current law:**

None.

**State workforce impacts:**

None.

**State facilities impacts:**

None.

**Puget Sound recovery:**

N/A