



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

E2SHB 1365 Tech Grants

1. **Purpose:**

Districts across the state rapidly moved to remote learning during the pandemic while at the same time many schools lacked enough devices and funding to provide 1:1 devices or specialized equipment to support universal student learning.

The primary goal of this grant program was aimed at attaining a universal 1:1 student to learning device ratio. The secondary goal of this program was to expand support and training of school and district staff in using technology to support student learning especially with a focus in the areas of inclusionary and adaptive technologies to address student inequities in their learning environments. The third goal was to develop district and school-based capacity to assist students and their families in accessing and using technology to support student learning.

OSPI has successfully worked to close the digital divide by supporting this Digital Equity & Inclusion (DEI) initiative. This program, along with federal programs such as the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF), have helped to ensure that majority of students across the state have one to one access to learning devices regardless of their geographic location or learning environment.

Through the DEI grant program, OSPI funded not only 1:1 device programs, it also supported the increase in inclusionary and adaptive devices along with staff support, and professional learning to support student learning. In addition, it ensured successful device rollouts, repairs and maintenance, training, and equitable access. A highlight of this funding is on the instructional equity work of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks which promote inclusive learning environments, especially using technology to achieve this goal.

2. **Description of services provided:**

The OSPI DEI grant program provided 9.8 million dollars of funding for Digital Equity & Inclusion initiatives which prioritized 1:1 device programs and staffing, and support for inclusive and adaptive technology and implementation.

With a focus on equity of access, OSPI explored barriers to grant accessibility and as a result, intentionally designed and streamlined the application process to

specifically meet the initiative requirements without adding unnecessary steps or conditions. In addition, we provided a grant consultant to directly work with districts alongside the Program Supervisor which resulted in an increase of successful applications from districts that had not historically applied for Educational Technology grants. Specifically, our rural and small districts.

Districts were also assisted through “How to” webinars, question scaffolding, and direct consults with the Program Supervisor and grant consultant on the applicant prior to final submission. These consults included intercepting districts before final review which often led to more internal collaboration within districts and produced higher quality grants. By providing this high level of service and support, a substantial number of applicants successfully received funding.

The Program Supervisor also reached out to districts that had stalled in the application process and to those that were unaware of the grant and encouraged them to apply. OSPI also urged applicants to contact nearby districts or entities to foster cooperation, collaboration, and best practices.

The Program Supervisor worked collaboratively with Educational Service District (ESD) Educational Technology Coordinators. Many smaller districts received support and guidance from their ESDs and larger nearby districts. Out of these connections, several coalitions between districts have formed to work on digital equity initiatives, and data gathering around equity and resource sharing. Sample templates, walkthrough presentations, and on-demand support ensured everyone who applied had the resources to complete the grant successfully. The newly formed Washington State Procurement Office also provided support around the use of state funds, especially regarding procurement.

Districts have expressed gratitude for this high level of assistance, support and consideration.

3. **Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:**

Criterion 1. The capability to administer and complete the proposed project within specified deadlines and within the specified budget.

Criterion 2. Recipient teams will attend scheduled OSPI digital equity meetings to develop strategic plans focused on goal and benchmark setting and establishing criteria for successful grant implementation.

Criterion 3. Recipient teams will attend professional learning community meetings focused on digital equity, inclusionary practices, and building a community to share successes and challenges.

Criterion 4. Recipient teams agree to give timely feedback regarding the implementation of this grant.

Criterion 5. Recipient teams agree to discuss the technology needs with key stakeholders (i.e., teachers, students, technology staff and principals) while developing and deploying this grant.

Criterion 6. Recipient teams agree that these grants will not be used towards upgrading teacher, administrator, or staff devices and will be aimed at addressing the needs of students. This funding will only be used on student focused learning, technology, and meeting unmet needs of students.

Criterion 7. Describe in the application detail your technology implementation plan as required by HB 1365.

Criterion 8. Ensure all contact information is current in EDS/iGrants. Applicants must have a valid designated point of contact registered in iGrants.

Number of OSPI staff associated with this funding (FTEs): 0

Number of contractors/other staff associated with this funding: 1

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|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| FY22 Funding: | State Appropriation: | \$9,850,000 |
| | Federal Appropriation: | \$0 |
| | Other Fund Sources: | \$0 |
| | TOTAL (FY22) | \$9,850,000 |

4. Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?

No

5. State funding history:

| Fiscal Year | Amount Funded | Actual Expenditures |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 2022 | \$9,850,000 | \$9,741,941 |

6. Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:

| Fiscal Year 21-22 | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Number of School Districts: | 42 |
| Number of Schools: | 319 |
| Number of Students: | 99,920 |
| Number of Educators: | 7437 |
| Other: | 4 - ESDs |

7. Programmatic changes since inception (if any):

Program Supervisor was hired in September of 2021. This was the first year of this grant.

8. Evaluations of program/major findings:

HB 1365 was passed prior to the creation of the federal Emergency Connectivity Funding (ECF) program. This federal program provided an opportunity for districts to apply for student and staff device funding. The Program Supervisor worked closely with the ECF Coordinator and Federal Education Programs Optimization Program Specialist to maximize federal and state funding to support districts specific needs.

Due in a large part to the efforts of the ECF Coordinator and Program Specialist, ECF did much of the heavy lifting toward supporting districts with 1:1 device programs. And, while the DEI grant program did see a demand for 1:1 devices and support, we were able to focus on the larger demand for inclusive and assistive technology in the classroom which were not ECF eligible.

Our intentional efforts of support, communication and follow up had a positive impact and districts shared their appreciation for helping them through the entire grant process. Many districts applied for the DEI grant that had not historically applied in the past. Half of the applicants also applied for the next cycle of grants in this program. We believe that our high level of engagement has helped build trust with OSPI's Educational Technology department and districts statewide.

We found that hiring staff is still a major problem faced by many rural and isolated districts. Often districts would have to shift gears with their funding request because they were unable to find a suitable candidate.

Finally, rural and small districts need procurement guidance. Many small districts were not familiar with large purchases that required competitive bidding or did not know how to access purchasing agreements.

9. Major challenges faced by the program:

The biggest challenge to the program was time. This included the time to hire a program supervisor, research, develop and implement a grant focused on equity of access, review and approve applications, and then, the impact of supply chain issues.

When applying, districts were required to spend the funding by June 30, 2022. This requirement was complicated by the inability of vendors to supply devices/equipment by the deadline. As a result, the Program Supervisor had ongoing consultations with districts to make sure that the requested goods or services could be delivered by June 30th, and if not, were removed from the FY22 grant application. The Program Supervisor then encouraged these districts to apply for the FY23

funding cycle to meet their needs. In addition, applicants that applied too close to the end of the funding cycle were guided into using the FY23 application due to the supply chain issues.

Overall observations include:

The state fiscal year and school planning process make it hard for schools to utilize new state funding that becomes available in July. Districts typically start planning in May and start work in June. Districts use summer as a time to plan and get non-academic improvements completed in their schools. With grant funding timing, the application process and supply chain issues, the highest funding impact to districts could have come from grant carry over between fiscal years.

Small/rural districts need higher levels of support to access funds especially in shorter windows of funding availability. Larger districts with full-time grant personnel and large IT departments have an advantage for readiness to benefit from these grants. They have the experience, knowledge, and resources to take on bigger more complex projects. The grant process is a much bigger lift for our small and rural districts especially with the time and supply chain issues. We found that despite considerations of equity of access on the application process, smaller districts lacked the staff and resources to dedicate to the grant application process, and therefore could only take on more limited projects.

10. Future opportunities:

Looking ahead to the next biennium, our focus will continue to be on 1:1 device programs as well as inclusive and assistive technology initiatives that support equity of access for student learning. With the infusion of devices into districts, we will prioritize professional learning and training focused on digital equity & inclusion, staffing to support the extensive influx of devices into districts, and those districts focused on district-based digital navigator programs that build school-based capacity to assist students and their families in accessing and using technology to support student learning.

In addition, there is an increased demand for technology support within districts. Staffing is needed for device support, distribution, and repair. And IT staff training and instructional professional learning is needed to keep the momentum of the digital equity and inclusion initiatives.

Looking ahead, districts need to start preparing for device replacement cycles. We can anticipate that with the ECF and DEI grant funding, there will be a large number of devices that in 3-5 years will be end-of-life and districts will need to secure funding to keep their 1:1 programs in place.

We also made progress with district technology and strategic planning through the DEI grant requirement. Many districts did not have an updated technology plan before applying for grants and districts have requested ongoing support regarding multiyear technology planning.

11. Statutory and/or budget language:

ESSB 5693, Sec. 522(24) - \$9,850,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$9,850,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the office of the superintendent of public instruction to administer the technology grant program established under [Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill No. 1365](#) (schools/computers & devices).

12. Other relevant information:

Please visit the [Digital Equity & Inclusion website](#) to find more detail on grant awards and how schools and ESDs spent their funding.

13. Schools/districts receiving assistance:

See [OSPI's grantee list](#).

14. Program Contact Information:

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