



# Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

## *LASER Program*

### 1. **Purpose:**

The purpose of the LASER proviso funding is to support work in each region of the state around advancing science education reform in the PreK-12 system.

### 2. **Description of services provided:**

Washington State LASER is divided into nine regional Alliances, geographically aligned with Washington's Educational Service Districts. These Alliances offer leadership and technical assistance to school districts, schools, and educators, within and across the six components of the LASER framework: school/district operations, STEM pathways, community and administrator engagement, assessment, curriculum, and instructional materials support. This work also includes science/STEM strategic planning support for districts and schools.

LASER plays a key role in ensuring that state science leaders maintain a learning community and develop skills and capacity for removing barriers and creating opportunities to improve science/STEM education at the school and district levels.

Specific services provided include leadership and support for the nine Alliances, professional learning opportunities both in-person and virtual, providing and managing implementation grants to the nine Alliances.

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

Each Alliance sets goals and develops work plans that are responsive to local needs and aligned with LASER's commitments to OSPI and each Alliance receives implementation funding through a grant. All Washington districts and schools are eligible to participate in regional LASER activity.

#### **Beneficiaries in the 2022-23 School Year:**

<b>Number of School Districts:</b>	136
<b>Number of Schools:</b>	165
<b>Number of Students:</b>	52,385
<b>Number of Educators:</b>	1,331
<b>Other:</b> Counselors and Community Partners	62



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

No

## 5. State funding history:

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2023	\$500,000	\$500,000
2022	\$500,000	\$500,000
2021	\$500,000	\$500,000
2020	\$356,000	\$354,167
2019	\$356,000	\$365,000

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

Fiscal Year	Number of Schools
23	165
22	173
21	306
20	410

## 7. Programmatic changes since inception (if any):

In Spring 2023, the regional Alliances worked together to identify three focus areas for the 2023- 2024 school year, based on school and district needs: P-12 STEM Pathways, Administrator Engagement, and Professional Development for STEM Professional Development Providers.

Since LASER’s inception, the number of Regional Alliances grew from 4 to 10. In 2020-2021, the North Sound and South Sound LASER Alliances merged to form the Puget Sound LASER Alliance, in partnership with PSESD. There are currently 9 Alliances total.

In order to fully tap the capacity of the LASER network’s expertise, the LASER Executive Director position was eliminated in 2018. This change resulted in distributed leadership, increased resources to the field, and clearer alignment with Washington STEM’s strategic plan. LASER is now coordinated by 2-3 Co-Directors from different Alliances, and these roles rotate every 2-3 years. The Co-Directors provide leadership and consultation across Alliances and liaise with the LASER Advisory group and Washington STEM. This strategy continues to



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evolve with Co-Directors taking on more of the strategy and implementation work of LASER with strategic guidance and technical support from Washington STEM.

As systems became institutionalized (e.g. instructional materials co-operatives, Regional Science Coordinator positions) and the number of STEM-related initiatives increased since 1999, LASER's unique contributions to the ecosystem became more difficult to assess. Beginning in 2018, LASER changed how districts, schools, educators, and students were counted as beneficiaries to get a clearer assessment of impact. LASER work continues to be tightly woven with related regional and statewide STEM education efforts, but with clearer criteria for differentiating the impact. The resulting data (beginning FY 19) show an initial decline in the number of districts, schools, and educators engaged with LASER, however this conservative estimate is more accurate and backed up by stronger data. The program continues to refine the program evaluation strategy in partnership with Washington STEM and the regional Alliances.

## **8. Program evaluation or evaluation of major findings:**

The LASER program is shown to serve more elementary educators than secondary, with 56% being elementary, 13% being middle school, and 13% being high school. 14% of those served are administrators at a school or district. Data showing a breakdown of participants by regional Alliance as well as the work each Alliance engaged in during the 2023 year is found at the [LASER dashboard](#). Implementation engagement varies by region with 5 of the regions engaging in administrator or community engagement.

## **9. Major challenges faced by the program:**

At the end of the 2023 FY, this proviso was determined that it should more appropriately be served as a contract rather than a grant. The process of working through the contracts talks and procedures has greatly delayed implementing LASER for the 2024 FY, so the time available to execute the work will be truncated. The shift to a contract also led to WA STEM withdrawing as the key leader body for LASER, so leadership will be taken up by the remaining LASER Co-Directors, with NEWESD 101 managing the fiscal processes for one year only.

## **10. Future opportunities:**

An area of growth for LASER is to pursue stronger cohesiveness and coherence across Alliances. There is not currently a common goal that each Alliance can work together around for a larger system change for science reform. The Standards Review work underway at OSPI can provide one avenue of common coherence, with LASER members engaging in supporting the uptake of these improves standards working for equity and integration.



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## 11. **Statutory and/or budget language:**

\$500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the Washington state leadership and assistance for science education reform (LASER) regional partnership activities, including instructional material purchases, teacher and principal professional development, and school and community engagement events. The office may require the recipient of these funds to report the impacts of the recipient's efforts in alignment with the measures of the Washington school improvement framework.

## 12. **Other relevant information:**

All of the Alliance Directors hold multiple roles (e.g. Regional Science Coordinator, STEM Director, Career Connected Learning Coordinator). These leaders are responsible for several programs, initiatives, and administrative tasks, and are skilled at braiding together funding toward common goals. While this is good practice for creating coherence in a region, it presents a challenge to articulate LASER's unique contribution to the increasingly complex landscape of science/STEM education in Washington.

## 13. **Schools/districts receiving assistance:**

[preliminaryfy23state-fundedprovisograntawardsupdated-42823.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

## 14. **Program Contact Information:**

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