



Ensuring Access to Early Literacy for Washington's Youngest Learners Statewide

Community Partner: Imagination Library of Washington Program via United Way of the Pacific Northwest

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Describe the specific need within the K–12 system

Literacy is a foundational skill and a key access point for engagement in all areas of learning, but not all families are able to give their children the early exposure to books and reading that is a proven link to high achievement in literacy, learning, and strong educational outcomes. To meet this need, the 2022 Washington State Legislature codified the Imagination Library of Washington program to provide age-appropriate, high-quality books each month to children birth to age five at no cost to families.¹

This state program partners with the Dollywood Foundation, a global nonprofit organization, to make these books available through 46 local programs across the state, with the Foundation taking on the administrative duties selecting and sending books to enrolled Washington children at no cost to families, and local community programs and partners focusing on outreach and enrollment. The Dollywood Foundation framework for a statewide program like Washington's is a 50/50 model where the state contributes 50% of the cost of the books and the local community program partners to raise the other 50%. In order for the Imagination Library of Washington program to continue serving all eligible families across the state, Washington must continue to fund its 50% share of the overall program cost.

How a state investment in community partnership meets this need

Funding the Imagination Library of Washington Program through the Department of Children, Youth, and Families' section of the state Operating Budget at levels that reflect the true cost of operating the program will ensure that the program continues to grow and thrive, with all Washington children birth to age five having access to age-appropriate, high-quality books to support their early literacy development.

Describe existing or previous state investment in this work

Washington lawmakers have funded the Imagination Library of Washington program in the state Operating Budget since its creation in 2022. Through this support, the program has grown to serve all 39 counties in the state and continues to grow through local partner organizations'

¹ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). (September, 2023). *Expanding the Imagination Library Early Literacy Program Statewide*. <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-08/p9-expanding-imagination-library-early-literacy-program-statewide.pdf>.

outreach to families with children birth to age five. The current investment can be found in the state Operating Budget, Senate Bill 5950, Sec. 229(40).

SUPPORTING DATA AND EVIDENCE OF POSITIVE IMPACT

A child with at least 25 books in their home is more likely to finish their K–12 education than those without. Currently, the Imagination Library of Washington program provides 113,000 Washington children with free books. According to a study done by the Program in partnership with Longview Public Schools, students who received books through the Imagination Library Program of Washington entered kindergarten with stronger scores on the fall 2023 WaKIDS Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. A parent/guardian survey in spring 2024 revealed that 92% of families believed that the program has helped their children prepare for kindergarten, and 85% reported increased vocabulary, listening, and social skills among child participants. Finally, 77% of participating families reported reading at least once a day with their child(ren).²

FISCAL DETAIL

Operating Expenditures	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund 001-1 within DCYF Budget (Program 05X)	\$3,559,000	\$4,335,000	\$5,014,000	\$5,348,000
Total Expenditures	\$3,559,000	\$4,335,000	\$5,014,000	\$5,348,000
Biennial Totals	\$7,894,000		\$10,362,000	
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. C	\$3,559,000	\$4,335,000	\$5,014,000	\$5,348,000
Revenue	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Revenue	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Biennial Totals	\$0.00		\$0.00	

² Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Washington Program. (Viewed 27 August, 2024). Early Childhood Literacy Matters. https://www.imaginationlibrarywashington.org/early_literacy_matters.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

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

The Imagination Library of Washington program has been included in the state Operating Budget since the program's creation in 2022.

Historical funding provided by the state Operating Budget is as follows:

- Fiscal year 2022: \$0
- Fiscal year 2023: \$26,000
- Fiscal year 2024: \$1,000,000
- Fiscal year 2025: \$1,500,000

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families will contract with the United Ways of the Pacific Northwest (UWPNW) to provide 5,546,167 books in the 2025–27 biennium and 7,460,915 books in the 2027–29 biennium. The cost per fiscal year is projected to be \$2,717,622 in fiscal year 2026, \$3,414,854 in fiscal year 2027, \$3,976,734 in fiscal year 2028, and \$4,276,491 in fiscal year 2029.

UWPNW's administrative costs will include advertising, subscriptions, supplies/miscellaneous, professional services-other (Advisory/Local Program Partner Exp.), travel, payroll, payroll taxes, employee benefits, technology; and UWPNW indirect which includes insurance, finance, professional development, audit, rent and contract oversight. The cost per fiscal year is projected to be \$480,000 in fiscal year 2026, \$480,000 in fiscal year 2027, \$528,000 in fiscal year 2028, and \$528,000 in fiscal year 2029.

Indirect costs valued at 11.3% have been added to the UWPNW costs detailed above. Indirect costs are projected to be \$361,331 in fiscal year 2026, \$440,119 in fiscal year 2027, \$509,035 in fiscal year 2028, and \$542,907 in fiscal year 2029.