

Department of Commerce/OSPI

DEI Initiative Funding

Overview

Thanks to the generous funding from and collaboration with the Department of Commerce, OSPI's Educational Technology Department was able to allocate \$3 million to 58 districts across Washington State to support Digital Equity and Inclusionary (DEI) initiatives.

This funding supported ongoing DEI work by building on existing frameworks, and the OSPI Educational Technology Department DEI grants sponsored by HB 1365.

Funding Decisions and allocations

Seven (7) school districts applied for the original grants but missed the deadlines and allocations by a few days. These applications received the highest priority for the new funding because they had already completed technology plans as required by HB 1365. The average award for these districts was \$118,000 with a total of \$1.19M awarded to these first-time recipients of OSPI DEI grant funding.

Nineteen (19) districts were then explicitly targeted by OSPI's DEI program as having a readiness to benefit. These districts had previously reached out to apply for HB 1365 grants after the application deadline, had incomplete applications in the previous grants, or were districts targeted by OSPI as being districts in need of support.

These districts, on average, received a reward of \$40,000 and were capped at a max of \$50,000 to ensure grants could be successfully implemented given the funding time constraints. A total of \$770,000 was awarded to this sector of funded districts had the most significant impact since most of the applicants in this category were small rural districts where the investments often have the most significant return and effect. These districts were incredibly excited and grateful to receive unexpected support and resources at the time of year schools were making difficult decisions around funding.

Twenty-eight (28) districts previously received funding and utilized the funding from this source as a way to continue their existing DEI initiatives. Due to the high demand and applicants of the OSPI grants, funding decisions were made to ensure the grants were competitive, therefore most districts received reduced award amounts. The intent of this last funding category was to support districts with their initial grant program request, adjust for rising price increases or complete projects that need extra funding to fully conceptualize. The average award for this category was \$37,000, with a maximum award of \$50,000. The majority of this funding was used to shore up 1:1 device programs, support a few extra classrooms with inclusionary technology, and add sound systems to existing systems purchased during the core grants. One million dollars went to supporting this work.



Supporting Statewide Adaptive/Inclusive Technology

This grant also supported The Special Education Technology Center (SETC) by providing \$150,000. SETC supports districts across the state with guidance, consults and provides a loaner program for adaptive and inclusionary technology. This award has allowed SETC to expand their loaner program by adding more devices which allows for longer loan times and more devices to be in the hands of special education teachers and students.

Figure 1

Analysis

Please See the Excel Breakdowns for total allocations.

The SETC funding had the biggest impact upon rural districts with 67% of the applicants being rural. Thirty-nine (39) applicants out of fifty-eight (58) were classified rural districts. Eighteen (18) urban districts received funding because they were districts reduced the most during funding decisions of this fiscal year's OSPI DEI grants. See *Figure 1*.

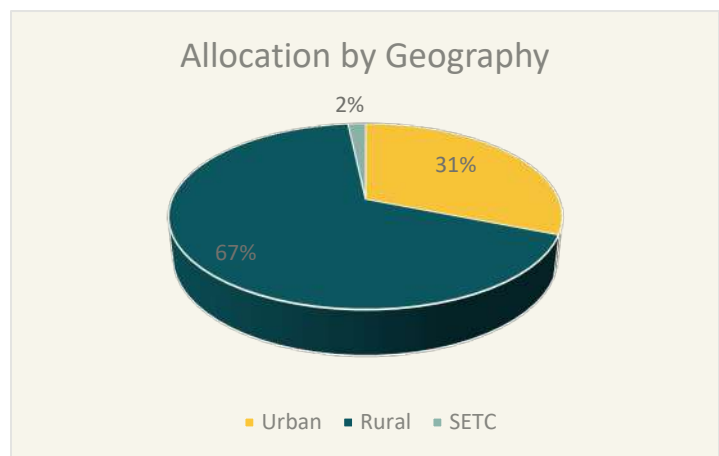


Figure 2 shows that about half the funding went towards 1:1 device programs, and the other half went towards inclusionary technology. However, breaking the data down by rural and urban shows a different story and is an indicator of inequities and demands of larger urban schools versus rural districts. Most rural districts are still working to complete their 1:1 programs, while urban districts already have those programs in place and have moved on to working on inclusionary technologies in the classrooms. (See figure 3, 4, next page).

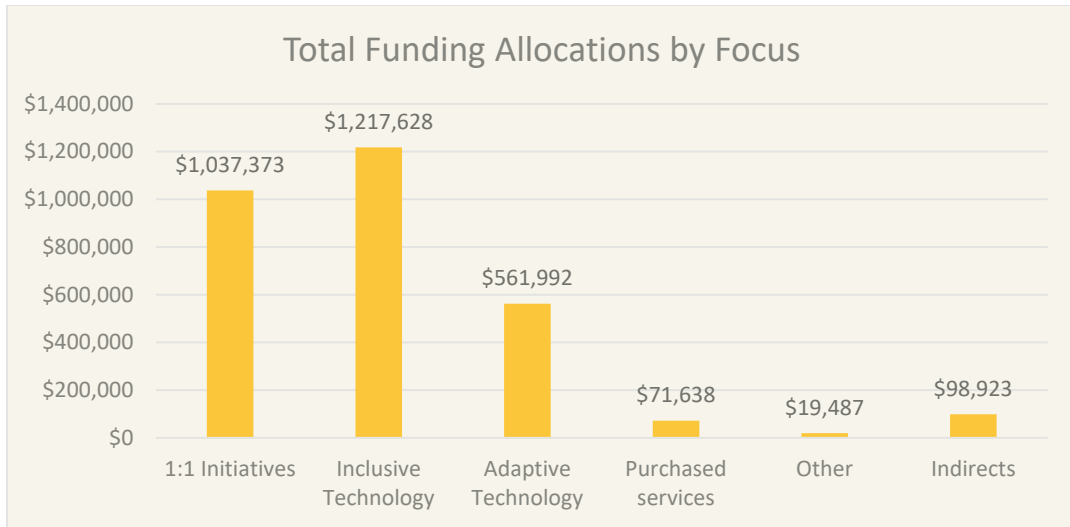


Figure 2

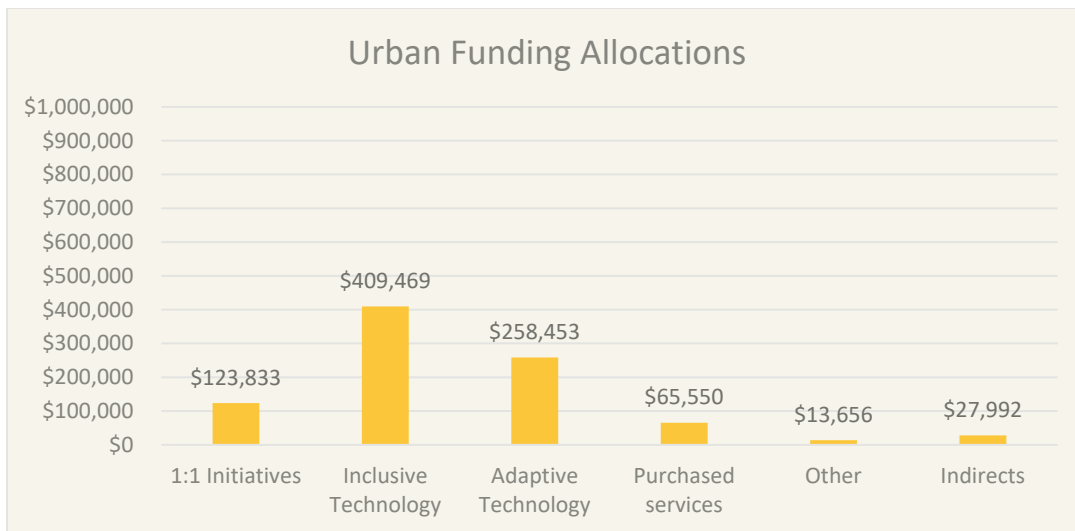


Figure 3

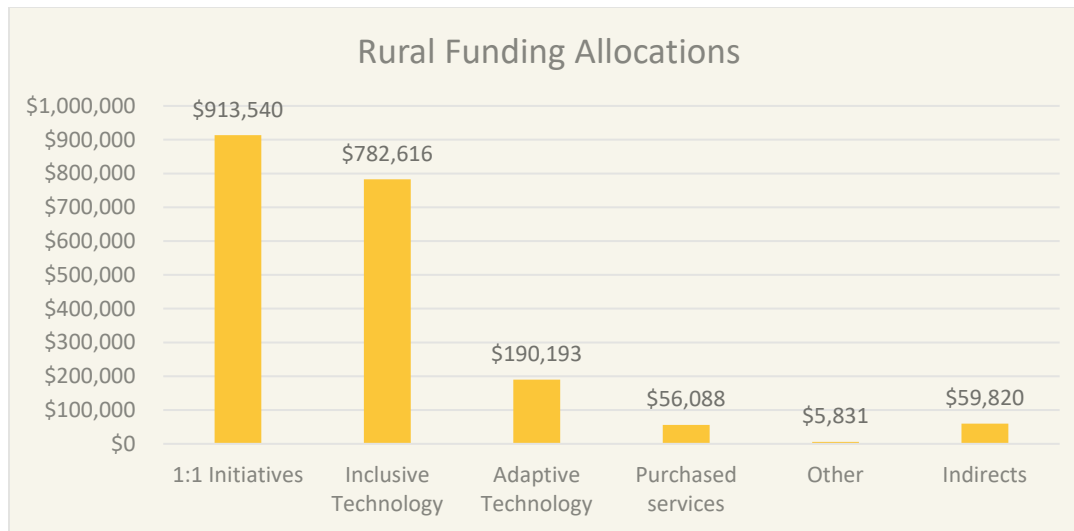


Figure 4

Final Observations

The program supervisor worked with all applicants to ensure that their requests were feasible and obtainable, given the time constraints. Districts had to ensure they could implement grants by the end of the fiscal year. Surprisingly larger districts had less capacity than smaller districts to implement this grant because of their own internal systems, and in return, this benefited smaller historically underfunded districts, which usually have limited capacity to implement.

While all districts that were targeted received priority funding, the grant was visible to all districts on the OSPI iGrants system. The grant had almost 60 applicants within two weeks of being open in the grant deployment software; this forced the program to limit funding amounts since all the districts across the state could submit applications. The demand was extremely high, especially around 1:1 and inclusionary technology. Districts that applied without working with the program supervisor were intercepted and received the support they needed to implement this grant properly, and their requests were feasible. Even after the funding window had closed, districts were still reaching out to access this program due to the fiscal cliff that districts are now facing. With the short notice of these funds, districts mostly only focused on "stuff" rather than supports. With another round of funding, districts that received mostly only hardware last minute could benefit from training, support, and professional development to fully benefit from this last-minute gift of funding.

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