2027-29

Biennial Budget Request

Part 1: Public Libraries and Agency Operations

September 15, 2026

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent
Madison, Wisconsin

Page left blank intentionally

2027-2029 Biennial Budget Request

Decision Item Narratives

Developed by:

Jill K. Underly, PhD
State Superintendent

Tom McCarthy
Deputy State Superintendent

Sara Knueve
Assistant Deputy State Superintendent

Rich Judge
Assistant State Superintendent

Erin Fath
Director, Office of Policy and Budget

Carl Bryan
Morgan Hau
Andrew Hoyer-Booth

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent
Madison, Wisconsin

This publication is available from:

OFFICE OF POLICY AND BUDGET
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
201 West Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53703

608-266-2804
https://dpi.wi.gov/policy-budget

SEPTEMBER 2026 Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, creed, age, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital status or parental status, sexual orientation, or ability and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction

Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent

September 15, 2026

To the Residents of Wisconsin:

Wisconsin has a proud history of leading the way in public education and has built a strong tradition of excellence in our public schools and libraries. But that legacy is at risk if we fail to provide Wisconsin's schools and libraries with the resources they need to thrive. For far too long, these institutions have been underfunded and expected to do more with less. It is beyond time to fix the funding systems Wisconsin's schools and libraries depend on to deliver the opportunities every student and community deserves. Investing in our schools and libraries is an investment in our kids, an investment in our communities, and an investment in the future of our entire state.

Today, I am submitting the first portion of my budget, which recommends critical funding to address essential needs within the Department of Public Instruction, as well as support for public libraries, and other critical programs like Deafblind Outreach.

This fall, I will submit the full budget request for investing in Wisconsin's public schools, which will focus on the areas of:

- Ensuring predictability, sustainability, and equity in school funding formulas to guarantee that every student has access to high-quality, transformative educational opportunities
- Strengthening schools' ability to implement innovative and highly effective instructional practices that are aligned with the department's state literacy and math plans
- Building capacity in schools to support students in their college and career pathway

Details on these areas are provided in the attached budget proposal and in the weeks to come. This budget proposal underscores the need to invest in education to ensure Wisconsin's schools and libraries have the resources they need to prepare our students for their future.

Sincerely,

Jill Underly

Jill Underly, Ph.D.
Wisconsin State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Page left blank intentionally

Table of Contents

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES iii
DECISION ITEM 4001 – DEAFBLIND OUTREACH 1
DECISION ITEM 4002 – INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR MILITARY CHILDREN 8
DECISION ITEM 4003 – ARTS FOR ALL 10
DECISION ITEM 4004 – SPECIAL OLYMPICS 12
DECISION ITEM 5001 – PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM AID 14
DECISION ITEM 5002 – LIBRARY SERVICE CONTRACTS 18
DECISION ITEM 5003 – BADGERLINK AND NEWSLINE FOR THE BLIND 21
DECISION ITEM 7030 – WISEDATA STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM 25
DECISION ITEM 7031 – IT SYSTEMS MODERNIZATIONS 28
DECISION ITEM 7032 – SUPPORT FOR STATE PROGRAMS 32
DECISION ITEM 7033 – OFFICE OF LITERACY 35
DECISION ITEM 7034 – LICENSING OPERATIONS 36
DECISION ITEM 7900 – CYBERSECURITY 41
DECISION ITEM 7910 – CENTRAL SERVICES ADJUSTMENT 48

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES

Commonly Used Acronyms

CESA – cooperative educational services agency
DIN – decision item narrative
FTE – full time equivalent (positions)
FY – fiscal year*
JCF – Joint Committee on Finance
LEA – local educational agency
SEA – state educational agency

Fund Sources
GPR – general purpose revenue
PR – program revenue
PR-S – program revenue-service**
SEG – segregated revenue
FED – federal revenue

**The state fiscal is the same as the school district fiscal year: July 1 – June 30*

***PR-S funding includes revenue from fee-generating activities and funding from revenue that is received from another state agency.*

FY27 Base – The total FY27 authorized funding level for an agency or program. The base equals FY27 appropriations, adjustments resulting from legislation in the 2025-2026 legislative sessions, pay plan modifications, and any other ongoing supplements provided by the Legislature. It is this "adjusted" base that serves as the beginning point for calculating budget changes for the 2027-29 biennium.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 4001 – DEAFBLIND OUTREACH

s. 20.255 (1) (db) - Deafblind outreach services
APN 112

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$250,000	$250,000
Less Base	$0	$0
Requested Change	**$250,000**	**$250,000**

Request

The department requests an increase of $250,000 GPR in FY28 and $250,000 GPR in FY29 in a new, biennial appropriation for statewide deafblind outreach services. The new appropriation would support contracts administered by the department, with providers delivering specialized outreach, consultation, training, family support, and technical assistance statewide.

The department further requests statutory changes that: (1) expressly authorize the department to provide or contract for statewide outreach services for deafblind individuals; (2) use consistent birth to 3 language for services provided by Wisconsin's two residential schools to children who are not yet school age but have hearing loss or vision loss; (3) update the applicable statutes to use culturally accepted language concerning hearing and vision loss; and (4) create a deafblind advisory council that would bring together individuals to advise the department on statewide needs and ways to improve and coordinate services.

Background

Deafblindness is the combined presence of hearing and vision loss. The interaction of the two sensory losses creates educational and access needs that cannot be fully met by simply adding services that were designed for deafness or hearing loss to services that were designed for blindness or vision loss. An individual who is deafblind may require highly individualized communication methods, orientation and mobility support, environmental adaptations, assistive technology, accessible instructional materials, and coordinated transition planning.

Deafblindness is a low-incidence disability. A local educational agency (LEA) may serve only one student who is deafblind, then go several years without serving any student identified in the deafblind disability category or never serve a deafblind child again. This makes it impractical for each district to employ and retain the full range of deafblind-specific expertise it may need. When a student does require support, however, the need may be immediate and intensive. District staff and families need access to specialists who can observe the student, help the individualized education program team understand the effects of combined sensory loss, recommend appropriate strategies, and coach the adults who will implement those strategies.

A statewide outreach model addresses the challenges districts face when serving students with low incidence / high need disabilities. It allows specialized knowledge to be shared across district boundaries and deployed according to need. Statewide outreach can include consultation with local educational teams; educator and intervener[1] training; family engagement; transition assistance; early identification; access to assistive technology and specialized materials; and coordination with other state, regional, and national partners. These activities build local capacity but do not replace direct instruction or other services for which the LEA and the student's Individualize Education Program (IEP) team remain responsible.

Wisconsin's principal source of deafblind-specific technical assistance is the federally funded Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Project (WDBTAP) grant, which has been housed within the department since 2008. The federal grant supports individuals from birth through age 21 and their families, educators, interveners, related-service providers, and local educational agencies.

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)-Part B (subpart B) requires states to ensure that all children with disabilities residing in the state (including those who are unhoused or are wards of the State), whether attending public or private schools and regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated.[2] A state's system for accomplishing the identification, location, and evaluation of children with disabilities is referred to as "Child Find" or the "child count." Wisconsin's current child count includes approximately 170 children and young adults identified as deafblind. Because identification can be

[1] "Interveners" have specialized skills that are different from that of teachers of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired or low vision, or deafblind. Interveners are related service providers who are trained to provide access for a student with deafblindness so they can benefit from special education. They do not provide specially designed instruction, but school-based interveners can provide tutorial or carryover support under the direction of a licensed teacher. They are responsible for having a knowledge base on the content (knowledge and skills) taught in the academic setting to be able to provide reinforcement to the student. Interveners are not aides (i.e., not paraprofessionals, educational assistants, etc.).

[2] Federal IDEA law: Sec. 300.111 Child find - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (United States Department of Education; accessed September 4, 2026).

difficult, particularly when a child is initially identified as having multiple disabilities, the number of individuals who could benefit from specialized consultation and outreach may be greater than indicated by the child count.

Sections 115.52 and 115.525, Wis. Stats., authorize the Wisconsin Educational Services and Programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WESP-DHH) and the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI) to function as statewide educational resources relating to hearing loss and vision loss. The statutes authorize school programming and various statewide or additional services, but they do not expressly assign the department the responsibility for statewide deafblind outreach. The statutes also describe pre-school-age services provided by the two centers, albeit differently: the WESP-DHH state statute uses "birth to 3" language, while the WCBVI state statute refers to "birth to 2 services". In addition, portions of the statutes use terminology that does not consistently reflect current culturally accepted language for describing individuals with hearing loss or vision loss.

Funding History

WDBTAP has historically been supported through a competitive grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. During the last three years, the project leveraged approximately $183,644 annually in federal funds. That support financed approximately 0.7 FTE in grant-funded limited-term staffing, in-kind staff support, and up to eight micro-contractors who supplied specialized expertise. The project used these resources to provide consultation, professional development, family activities, transition support, intervener coaching, and other technical assistance.

In fall 2025, Wisconsin was not selected for federal funding for the first time in the project's history. A one-year subaward from the Helen Keller National Center temporarily prevented a disruption in services. The department later secured federal support for FY27 and FY28. Although the new award permits WDBTAP activities to continue in the short term, it does not establish ongoing funding or guarantee service capacity beyond the award period.

Need for State Support for Deafblind Outreach Services

The department requests $250,000 GPR annually beginning in FY28 in a new, biennial appropriation dedicated to statewide deafblind outreach. A dedicated appropriation would establish a dependable foundation for statewide deafblind outreach. It would allow the department to plan services across biennia, enter into stable contracts with qualified providers, preserve institutional knowledge, and respond to needs as they arise. Individuals who are deafblind, their families, and local educational agencies require access to specialized support on an ongoing basis, and a permanent state funding base would ensure that Wisconsin can maintain a consistent, foundational level of service.

State funding would also promote geographic equity. Larger districts may be able to purchase specialized assistance independently, while rural and smaller districts are less likely to have either local expertise or sufficient demand to warrant the purchase of specialized services. Because deafblindness is a low-incidence disability, individual districts cannot reasonably be expected to maintain the full range of specialized expertise they may need only occasionally. A statewide appropriation would provide access to specialized services based on the needs of the individual and local team rather than on district size, geographic location, or local resources.

Under this proposal, the department would utilize the requested state funding using a systems-based approach. Individuals who are deafblind and their families interact with multiple systems throughout their lives, including early intervention, schools, family supports, specialized service providers, assistive-technology programs, vocational rehabilitation, employment services, and independent-living supports. Each system contributes important expertise and resources, but families may experience gaps when responsibilities, information, and services do not transfer effectively between systems.

The new appropriation would support direct contracts with qualified service providers. Direct contracting would allow the department to define statewide deliverables, obtain specialized expertise, deploy assistance according to documented need, and adjust the mix of services as needs change. Contracting decisions would be based on statewide needs, available expertise, existing resources, and opportunities to improve coordination or address gaps, rather than on a predetermined allocation to specific organizations or programs.

The $250,000 annual appropriation would be used to strengthen capacity, coordination, connections, and infrastructure across the systems serving individuals who are deafblind and their families. Depending on the final funding level and documented needs, contracted activities could include:

- Specialized expertise and local capacity. Student observation, educational-team consultation, communication and sensory-access support, assistive-technology guidance, and follow-up coaching. Training and technical assistance could also strengthen the capacity of interveners, educators, related-service providers, administrators, and other adults who support individuals who are deafblind.

- Cross-system coordination and access. Development of shared resources, referral pathways, communication protocols, and partnerships connecting early intervention, schools, family-support networks, vocational rehabilitation, employment services, and independent-living supports. These activities would help families locate appropriate assistance and move more smoothly between systems.

- Family, youth, and transition support. Family engagement, accessible events and resources, youth-leadership opportunities, and specialized transition planning involving postsecondary institutions, employers, and adult-service partners.

- Early identification and support. Outreach to birth to 3 and early-learning partners, identification resources, family support, and coordination across early-intervention and school systems. Earlier identification would help families and local teams obtain appropriate assistance before needs become more difficult to address.

- Statewide infrastructure and accountability. Professional development, specialized materials and equipment, lending library resources, service data, needs assessments, evaluation, and outcome reporting. These activities would help the department identify emerging needs, monitor service delivery, evaluate results, and direct future investments.

This approach recognizes that no single organization or program can meet every need across an individual's lifespan. The purpose of a dedicated state funding stream would be to improve how existing systems connect and work together while building the specialized capacity necessary to address gaps. A systems-based approach would provide the department with flexibility to respond to emerging needs, develop partnerships across service systems, and direct resources where they can strengthen statewide capacity most effectively. The goal would be to ensure that individuals who are deafblind and their families can access appropriate expertise and support when they need it, regardless of where they live or which system they encounter first.

Federal WDBTAP funding would complement this state-supported foundation. When federal funds are available, the department could use them, consistent with federal requirements, to expand services, support innovation, strengthen data collection and evaluation, or address additional needs. The department would coordinate the state and federal funding sources to prevent duplication of services and ensure that each source is used for appropriate purposes.

A dedicated state appropriation is necessary regardless of whether Wisconsin receives a federal WDBTAP award. Federal funding is competitive, time-limited, and subject to federal priorities, performance requirements, allowable-cost rules, and the amount made available through each competition. Future awards are not assured, and an award may not support every identified need or activity outside the approved federal project scope. Receipt of federal funding would strengthen Wisconsin's outreach system, but the timing and conditions of a federal grant should not determine the core level of service available to Wisconsin residents.

Establishing a separate $250,000 annual appropriation would distinguish deafblind outreach from the existing operating budgets of WESP-DHH and WCBVI. It would

reserve the funding for its stated purpose, make the state's commitment transparent, and allow the department and policymakers to track expenditures, contracted services, and results independently. The department will submit the final requested funding level and detailed cost projections when those amounts are determined.

Statutory Language

In order to align state law with the intentions behind the department's proposal, changes would need to be made to the statutes addressing the WESP-DHH, the WCBVI, and the powers of the State Superintendent under subchapter III of Chapter 115, Wis. Statutes. The department therefore requests statutory changes to support and sustain this systems-based approach. Section 115.53, Wis. Stats., should be amended to expressly authorize the department to provide or contract for outreach services (consultation, technical assistance, training, family engagement, and related statewide services for individuals who are deafblind). Explicit authority would clarify the department's statewide role, support the use of the requested appropriation, and provide a durable statutory foundation for coordinating services across systems.

Additionally, aligning the statutory language governing services to children before school age would complement this systems-based approach by establishing clearer and more consistent expectations across WESP-DHH and WCBVI. Using "birth to 3" language for both programs will reduce administrative ambiguity and support smoother coordination among families, early-intervention providers, and school-based services. The principal benefit would be greater clarity and consistency; the revision should therefore not be interpreted as a substantial expansion of services by itself.

Outdated or inconsistent references concerning hearing and vision loss should be replaced with culturally accepted terminology, including "deaf and hard of hearing" and "blind or low vision," throughout the applicable provisions of ss. 115.52, 115.525, 115.37 and 115.372, Wis. Stats. Modernizing the terminology would improve clarity, align the statutes with current professional and community usage, and better reflect the individuals served.

Finally, the department requests creation of a deafblind education council similar in structure and advisory purpose to the councils established under ss. 115.37 and 115.372, Wis. Stats. The council would provide a formal mechanism for individuals who are deafblind, families, educators, service providers, and representatives of relevant systems to advise the department on statewide needs, service coordination, use of resources, and emerging priorities. Establishing the council would strengthen stakeholder participation, promote coordination across systems, and help ensure that implementation of the appropriation remains responsive to lived experience and documented statewide needs. The specific statutory language changes are as follows:

- Create a dedicated appropriation. Create a new appropriation under s. 20.255, Wis. Stats., for the amounts appropriated for statewide deafblind outreach services (GPR, biennial).
- Expressly authorize statewide deafblind outreach. Amend ss. 115.53, Wis. Stats., to give the department explicit authority to provide or contract for outreach, consultation, technical assistance, training, family engagement, and related statewide services for deafblind individuals.
- Align services for children before school age. Amend the applicable provisions of ss. 115.52 and 115.525, Wis. Stats., to use consistent "birth to 3" language for both WESP-DHH and WCBVI.
- Modernize terminology. Replace outdated or inconsistent references concerning hearing and vision loss with culturally accepted terminology, including "deaf and hard of hearing" and "blind or low vision," throughout the applicable provisions of ss. 115.52 and 115.525, Wis. Stats.
- Establish a deafblind education advisory council in ch. 115, Wis. Stats., allowing appointed individuals to advise the state superintendent on services, programs, activities, and research that could benefit individuals who are deafblind and their families. The council would review the availability, quality, accessibility, and coordination of services across the state and recommend improvements to deafblind outreach, consultation, technical assistance, training, family engagement, and related supports. It would also recommend ways to strengthen the preparation of teachers, interveners, related-service providers, and other professionals and improve coordination among the department, school districts, service providers, and other systems serving individuals who are deafblind.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 4002 – INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

s. 20.255 (3) (f) - Interstate compact on educational opportunity for military children APN 318

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$5,000	$5,000
Less Base	$900	$900
Requested Change	**$4,100**	**$4,100**

Request

The department requests an increase of $4,100 GPR in FY28 and $4,100 GPR in FY28 to the appropriation for the interstate compact on educational opportunity for military children. The department also requests that the maximum payment of $1,000 from this appropriation be eliminated, so that the department can pay the full invoice for the interstate compact with GPR from the dedicated appropriation.

Background

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (the Compact) addresses school transition issues that may be encountered by children of military families. Currently, all 50 States and the District of Columbia participate in the interstate compact, which provides a uniform policy platform for resolving the challenges experienced by military children. The Compact defines "child of a military family" as a school aged child who resides in the household of a person on active duty and is enrolled in a K-12 school (any of the grades from kindergarten through grade 12). The Compact contains provisions relating to:

- Educational records and enrollment
- Placement and attendance
- Eligibility for enrollment and extracurricular participation
- Graduation from high school.

The compact was formally adopted by the State of Wisconsin with the enactment of 2009 WI Act 329. As required by the compact, Act 329 created the State Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, comprised of several members appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (including the Compact Commissioner), one member each from the Wisconsin Assembly and Senate

(appointed by the leadership of the respective house), and a military family education liaison (non-voting member), appointed or designated by the state council.

The Compact also contains provisions setting forth the powers and duties of the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Commission) and provisions relating to member states to the Compact, such as the procedures for withdrawal from or dissolution of the compact. Under Act 329, the Commission is authorized to levy and collect an annual assessment from each state to cover the costs of the Commission's operations and activities.

Funding History

Act 239 created the appropriation under Wis. Stat. sec. 20.255 (3) (f), from which DPI makes payments for the assessment levied by the Commission. This is a GPR, sum sufficient appropriation; however, under Wis. Stat. sec. 115.28 (58), the payment from this appropriation is limited to $1,000: "the lesser of $1,000 or the amount calculated by multiplying $1 by the number of children of military families, as defined in s. 115.997 (2) (b), who are enrolled in public schools in this state". Thus, if the number of military children exceeds 1,000, the assessment levied by the Commission exceeds $1,000, and the assessment amount above $1,000 is absorbed by the department's general program operations appropriation under Wis. Stat. sec. 20.255 (1) (a).

From FY20 through FY26, the department was billed $2,300 each year by the Commission. Because payments from the ICMC appropriation [s. 20.255 (3) (f)] are limited to $1,000 each fiscal year, the department has had to absorb $1,300 annually of ICMI costs from its GPR appropriation for general program operations. For FY27, the department will be required to pay $3,000 from its GPR general program operations appropriation, as the FY27 invoice is $4,000.

The department requests that existing $1,000 cap on payments from the dedicated GPR appropriation for the ICMC be eliminated, so that the department can pay the full invoice for the interstate compact with dedicated GPR, rather than drawing down funding from its appropriation for general program operations. With the elimination of the $1,000 cap on payments, the dedicated sum sufficient appropriation for the ICMC will automatically pay the full the cost of the invoice. With the increase to $4,000 for FY27, and projecting that the assessment could increase in the next few years, the department proposes that the ICMC appropriation be raised to $5,000 in FY28 and FY29, to reflect potential increases in the assessment.

Statutory Language

The department is proposing statutory language related to this request.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 4003 – ARTS FOR ALL

s. 20.255 (3) (fa) - Arts for all*
APN 309

**Formerly, Very Special Arts*

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$150,000	$150,000
Less Base	$100,000	$100,000
Requested Change	**$50,000**	**$50,000**

Request

The department requests $50,000 GPR in FY28 and $50,000 GPR in FY29 to increase support for Arts for All (formerly Very Special Arts). The department also requests that the title of the appropriation under Wis. Stat. sec. 20.55 (3) (fa) be changed to "Arts for all" to reflect the current name of the organization.

Background

Arts for All, formerly known as Very Special Arts Wisconsin (i.e., AFA/VSA) is a nonprofit organization that uses dance, drama, creative writing, music, and visual art to celebrate the creative power and artistic accomplishments of children and adults with disabilities throughout Wisconsin. Incorporated in 1985, AFA/VSA programs began with a one-day festival for school-aged children. The program has grown through the years, and now statewide initiatives serve individuals across the age spectrum. The organization's choirs, artist residencies, and art classes and workshops provide an outlet for creative expression and unlimited possibilities for personal, academic, and professional success. Exhibitions, performances, and special events highlight the talents of people with disabilities.

Funding

Under 1991 Act 39 (the 1991-93 biennial budget), a state appropriation was created within the department's Chapter 20 appropriations schedule, in the amount of $75,000 GPR annually for AFA/VSA, beginning in FY92. The state appropriation for the organization remained at this level until it was reduced to $70,300 beginning in FY10, under the 2009 Act 28 (2009-11 biennial budget), as part of across-the-board reductions to most non-federal appropriations (reduction of $4,700, or 6.3 percent). The

appropriation was reduced once again, to $63,300 in FY12, under 2011 Act 32, again as part of across-the board reductions (reduction of $7,000, or 10 percent).

Despite the increase provided under 2019 Act 19, state funding support for VSA/AFA has not been significantly increased above its initial base level provided in FY92. Funding for the program has remained flat since FY20:

- FY12 – FY17: $63,300
- FY18 – FY19: $75,000
- FY20 – FY27: $100,000

The funding increase requested by the department will provide additional resources to allow AFA/VSA to continue their outstanding programs for children and adults throughout Wisconsin.

Statutory Language

The department is proposing statutory language related to this request.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 4004 – SPECIAL OLYMPICS

s. 20.255 (3) (fg) - Appropriation title
APN 308

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$400,000	$400,000
Less Base	$300,000	$300,000
Requested Change	**$100,000**	**$100,000**

Request

The department requests $100,000 GPR in FY28 and $100,000 GPR in FY29 for Special Olympics Wisconsin.

Background

Special Olympics Wisconsin provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. The organization gives athletes the opportunity to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics Wisconsin athletes, and the community.

Since 1979, Special Olympics Wisconsin has used its annual allocation to offset general administrative costs to fulfill its mission. It has grown from a grass-roots organization to a staff of 37 paid individuals in seven cities across Wisconsin. The staff manage over 10,000 volunteers; nearly 10,000 athletes from ages two to 80, with and without intellectual disabilities; nearly 200 local training programs run by volunteers; and nearly 80 competitions year-round.

Funding

The state has appropriated funding for Special Olympics Wisconsin in the department's Chapter 20 appropriations schedule since at least FY84. The initial appropriation was $75,000 and remained at that level through FY11. It was reduced to $67,500 beginning in FY12, under 2011 Act 32, as part of across-the board reductions (reduction of $7,500, or 10 percent). After being restored to $75,000 in FY14, the appropriation was subsequently increased by $25,000 under 2019 Act 9, by $100,000 under 2023 Act 19, and again by $100,000 under 2025 Act 15. The appropriation is now $300,000 annually:

- FY12 – FY13: $67,500
- FY14 – FY19: $75,000
- FY20 – FY23: $100,000
- FY24 – FY25: $200,000
- FY26 – FY27: $300,000

The funding increase requested by the department will provide additional resources that will help Special Olympics Wisconsin continue their outstanding programs for children and adults throughout the state.

Statutory Language

The department is not proposing statutory language related to this request.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 5001 – PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM AID

s. 20.255 (3) (qm), Aid to public library systems
APN 361

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$28,513,100	$31,013,100
Less Base	$26,013,100	$26,013,100
Requested Change	**$2,500,000**	**$5,000,000**

Request

The department requests an increase of $2,500,000 SEG in FY28 and $5,000,000 SEG in FY29, for the appropriation for aid to public library systems to support the operations and maintenance of public library services in Wisconsin. Public library system aid is supported with revenue transferred to the department from the Universal Service Fund (USF), one of the state's segregated (SEG) funds.

Background

There are 15 public library systems in Wisconsin. Over the past 30 years, these systems have developed strong programs of service for their member libraries, including resource sharing and unrestricted access for all state residents. The Public Library System Aid Program is the primary state mechanism to support public library services in Wisconsin. Aid is paid to library systems based on the formula specified in Wis. Stat. sec. 43.24. Each system must have on file a plan approved by the department for the use of state aid it will receive as a condition of receiving aid. No more than 20 percent of the aid received can be used for administrative purposes.

Prior to the passage of 2017 Wisconsin Act 59 (2017-19 biennial budget), state statutes required the department to include in its biennial budget submission a request for a funding adjustment for public library system aid equal to 13 percent of (estimated) prior year local and county expenditures for all public library systems in the state. This formula was referred to as "public library system aid indexing", framing state aid in relation to local and county expenditures.

Indexing was recommended by a Legislative Council study committee in 1978 at a level of 20 percent. The legislature adopted system aid at 11.25 percent beginning in 1981. The indexing level was then increased to 13 percent in 1986 by the legislature, in response to the state superintendent's Task Force on Library Legislation.

The indexing mechanism was eliminated as part of the 1993-95 biennial budget bill (1993 Wisconsin Act 16) but then reinstated under 1997 Wisconsin Act 150. The department was required to include, as part of its biennial budget request, a proposal to raise state funding for public library systems to the 13 percent index level. Finally, under 2017 Act 59, the indexing requirement was eliminated.

Funding History

Prior to the passage of 2003 Wisconsin Act 33 (2003-05 biennial state budget), public library aids were fully funded with GPR. Under Act 33, a supplemental public library aid appropriation was created and supported by revenue from the Universal Services Fund (USF), one of the state's segregated (SEG) funds. Public library systems were funded from a combination of the two appropriations through FY09. At that time, approximately 15 percent of the total library system aid came from SEG funding; however, over the course of the next two biennia, the share of state aid funded with SEG funds increased to 33 percent, as the legislature shifted more funding from GPR to SEG.

The 2009-11 biennial budget (2009 Wisconsin Act 28) removed the GPR appropriation entirely, and the SEG appropriation was increased, becoming the sole funding source for state aid to library systems. Under the 2011-13 biennial budget (2011 Wisconsin Act 32), funding was decreased, by $1,668,100 SEG in both FY12 and FY13, representing a 10 percent cut to the appropriation. In addition, Act 32 removed the requirement that municipalities, counties, and joint public libraries meet a maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement to maintain annual local expenditures for public libraries at the average of the prior three years as a condition for being a member of a public library system.

The legislature continued to fund state aid for public libraries at a constant level throughout the 2013-15 and 2015-17 biennia. Finally, 2017 Act 59 provided additional funding, on a one-time basis, of $500,000 SEG in FY18 and $1,000,000 in FY19 (above the FY17 base). As directed by Act 59, the FY19 base appropriation for Public Library System Aid reverted to the FY17 level of $15,013,100 for purposes of the adjusted base going into the 2019-21 biennium. However, the legislature made the FY19 increase of $1,000,000 permanent, as part of the 2019-21 biennial budget process, so that funding was steady at $16,013,100 in FY20 and FY21. State funding increased in subsequent biennial budget Acts. See the Appendix at the end of this paper for historical data on public library system expenditures and state aid.

Estimated Cost Increases

Despite the elimination of the requirement that the department request state funding according to the indexing mechanism from prior law, there is still a tendency to frame state aid for public libraries relative to prior year local and county expenditures.

Generally, local and county expenditures have increased over time. The state aid appropriation was flat for several years (FY12 through FY18), resulting in state aid being at or below seven percent of local and county expenditures. The modest increases in state aid that were provided in FY18 and FY19 amounted to a little more than three percent annually. Due to the growth in local and county funded expenditures, state aid remained below seven percent of local and county expenditures through FY23.

With the Legislature's approval of additional funding for the 2025-27 biennium, the appropriation for public library system aid has increased, to $25,013,100 in FY26 and $26,013,100 in FY27 – annual increases of 4.16 percent and 4.00 percent, respectively. State aid as a percent of prior year public library expenditures remained at approximately 8.1 percent for FY24 (actual expenditures), for FY25 and FY26 (preliminary expenditure data), and will remain at that level for FY27 (projected expenditures). If the appropriation stays at its current level, state aid will provide less than 8 percent of prior year public library expenditures beginning in FY28 (see the Appendix to this paper).

Need for Additional State Funding

Participation in public library systems by member libraries is voluntary. To ensure continued participation by all public libraries, public library systems must provide a level of service that makes participation desirable and beneficial to its member libraries. As local and county library expenditures grow, state aid increases will help public library systems maintain optimal service levels.

Public libraries are essential pillars of their communities, providing reliable information, workforce development and information for job seekers, government information, public-use computers, access to the internet, library materials, library programs, and many more services. According to the Wisconsin Library Association, libraries have identified several priorities for which funding increases would be directed: addressing workforce development, bolstering technology infrastructure, and promotion of lifelong learning. For example, funds could be used to expand online course offerings and technology training opportunities to help people with new careers and mid-career changes. Funding could be leveraged to expand technology services to all areas of the state, such as rural or low-income communities, and to include wireless hotpots, local area networks, technology equipment for maker spaces, and digitization services. Funding would also support the various activities that libraries offer to residents of all ages that promote lifetime learning, such as early literacy, summer reading, and STEM programs.

Statutory Language

The department is not proposing statutory language changes related to this request.

Appendix

Public Library System Expenditures and Aid Appropriations (FY11 – FY28)

Calendar Year (CY)	Local Expenditures	% Change from Prior Year	State Fiscal Year (Aid)	Chapter 20 Appropriation	% Change in Appropriation	Aid as Percent of Prior CY Expenditures
2011	$215,123,445	1.89%	**FY11**	$16,681,200	3.19%	7.75%
2012	$216,886,354	0.82%	**FY12**	$15,513,100	-7.00%	7.15%
2013	$213,620,201	-1.51%	**FY13**	$15,513,100	0.00%	7.26%
2014	$217,095,564	1.63%	**FY14**	$15,513,100	0.00%	7.15%
2015	$223,379,348	2.89%	**FY15**	$15,513,100	0.00%	6.94%
2016	$232,086,772	3.90%	**FY16**	$15,513,100	0.00%	6.68%
2017	$225,878,850	-2.67%	**FY17**	$15,513,100	0.00%	6.87%
2018	$243,725,991	7.90%	**FY18**	$15,513,100	0.00%	6.36%
2019	$254,868,395	2.52%	**FY20**	$16,013,100	0.00%	6.28%
2020	$245,560,681	-3.65%	**FY21**	$16,013,100	0.00%	6.52%
2021	$248,554,384	1.22%	**FY22**	$18,513,100	15.61%	7.45%
2022	$262,079,342	5.44%	**FY23**	$20,013,100	8.10%	7.64%
2023	$271,143,774	3.46%	**FY24**	$22,013,100	9.99%	8.12%
2024-Prelim.*	$296,671,979	9.42%	**FY25**	$24,013,100	9.09%	8.09%
2025-Prelim.*	$307,288,233	3.58%	**FY26**	$25,013,100	4.16%	8.14%
2026-Est.*	$322,652,645	5.00%	**FY27**	$26,013,100	4.00%	8.06%
2027-Est.*	$338,785,277	5.00%	**FY28**	$26,013,100	0.00%	7.68%
2028-Est.*	$355,724,541	5.00%	**FY29**	$26,013,100	0.00%	7.31%

*Preliminary total local expenditures for calendar years 2024 and 2025; estimated local expenditures for calendar years 2026 through 2028, based on five percent annual growth in expenditures.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 5002 – LIBRARY SERVICE CONTRACTS

s. 20.255 (3) (r) - Library Service Contracts
APN 362

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$2,354,100	$2,433,300
Less Base	$2,064,100	$2,064,100
Requested Change	**$290,000**	**$369,200**

Request

The department requests $290,000 SEG in FY28 and $369,200 SEG in FY29 to fully fund the estimated costs of the library service contracts maintained by the department. The library service contracts are supported with funds transferred to the department from the Universal Service Fund (USF), one of the state's segregated (SEG) funds.

Background

The department's request is intended to fully fund estimated costs of the library service contracts that the department is required to maintain pursuant to Wis. Stat. sec. 43.03 (6) and (7). Under current law, the department is required to contract for services with libraries and other resource providers inside and outside of the state to serve as resources of specialized library materials and information that are not available in public libraries or the library operated by the department's Bureau of Library Services. The department contracts with five providers: the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL), the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison), the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL), the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), and Auto-Graphics (AG).

The UW-Madison and MPL lend materials to residents living in all parts of the state in response to requests forwarded by the RL&LL staff or public library systems. The contracts with UW-Madison and MPL ensure access to the major collections and unique materials held by these libraries for patrons statewide. Funds are used to pay for staff to locate, retrieve, ship and shelve materials, and supplies and postage to ship to those libraries that are not participating in the statewide delivery service.

Under current law, the department is required to enter into a contract annually with the public library in a first class city (Milwaukee), for the provision of library services to physically handicapped persons, including the blind and physically handicapped. Since

1961, this contract has been maintained with the WTBBL located in the MPL, which provides its space without charge. WTBBL provides specialized services to certified blind and physically handicapped persons throughout the state. The Library of Congress provides the recorded and braille materials (estimated at an annual value of $376,700), but the state is obligated to provide processing, maintenance, and circulation.

The CCBC is a children's and young adult literature book examination center located on the UW-Madison campus providing unique resources and reference services to adults whose studies and work intersect with books for youth. Funding through the contract with the department supports the CCBC in providing information, outreach, and continuing education opportunities for Wisconsin public and school librarians, teachers, and others throughout the state.

Auto-Graphics is a library software company specializing in library management and resource sharing platforms. WISCAT, Wisconsin's Interlibrary Loan platform, utilizes its SHAREit product as the foundational software platform for interlibrary loans in Wisconsin. This software also includes authentication services that are needed to verify that only Wisconsin residents can access the licensed electronic information content in BadgerLink, a requirement in all BadgerLink contracts.

Funding History

The budget for library services contracts has undergone several major changes in the past two decades. The 2003-05 biennial budget reduced the appropriation for the contracts by $154,800 GPR for both FY04 and FY05. Funding remained flat for several years, until the 2007-09 biennial budget provided increases of $257,300 GPR in FY08 and $220,300 GPR in FY09. These increases allowed the department to maintain existing services and to purchase a Digital Talking Books server.

Under 2009 Wisconsin Act 28 (Act 28, the 2009-11 biennial budget), the GPR funding for the contracts was replaced with SEG funds from the USF. Act 28 also provided an increase for library service contracts of $37,100 SEG in FY10 and $72,600 SEG in FY11. The increases allowed the department to maintain existing services. Funding for the contracts has been modified several times in the past during the state's biennial budget process.

These changes reflected the estimated costs to continue for ongoing services under the library service contracts. Table 1 below presents the library service contracts appropriation history since FY16.

Table 1. Library Service Contracts Appropriation History, FY16 through FY27

Year	Appropriation
FY16-FY17	$1,167,200
FY18	$1,170,400
FY19	$1,174,300
FY20	$1,307,500
FY21	$1,342,400
FY22	$1,355,300
FY23-FY24	$1,367,700
FY25	$1,397,500
FY26	$2,016,700
FY27	$2,064,100

Estimated Costs

The projected increases to the library service contracts for FY28 and FY29 are driven by general operating cost increases among the four contract entities, as shown in Table 2 below. If the funding increase requested by the department is not provided, the total number of items that can be requested from the MPL and the UW libraries will be capped. Requests are sent to all the other libraries that do not charge for lending before they are sent to the MPL and UW. If borrowing from the MPL and UW libraries has to be capped, the impact will be felt by library patrons – Wisconsin residents may be denied access to the various materials available only from the MPL and UW libraries.

Table 2. Library Service Contracts in FY28 and FY29 Budget Projection

Contract	FY 27 Base	FY28 Projection	FY29 Projection
UW-Madison	$80,000	$80,000	$80,000
MPL-ILL	$234,600	$316,800	$325,700
MPL-WTBBL	$1,135,600	$1,211,300	$1,244,500
CCBC	$170,700	$229,595	$249,075
Auto-Graphics	$400,000	$516,366	$537,021
Total Costs (Rounded)	**$2,020,900**	**$2,354,100**	**$2,433,300**
FY27 Base Appropriation	$2,064,100		
DPI Request		**$290,000**	**$369,200**

Statutory Language

The department is not proposing statutory language changes related to this request.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 5003 – BADGERLINK AND NEWSLINE FOR THE BLIND

s. 20.255 (3) (q) - Periodical and reference information databases; newsline for the blind
APN 360

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$3,672,900	$3,763,000
Less Base	$3,582,900	$3,582,900
Requested Change	**$90,000**	**$180,100**

Request

The department requests an increase of $90,000 SEG in FY28 and $180,100 SEG in FY29 to increase funding for the contracts with all current BadgerLink vendors and to maintain the current level of services through Newsline for the Blind. Both services are supported with revenue transferred to the department from the Universal Service Fund (USF), one of the state's segregated (SEG) funds.

Background

BadgerLink is Wisconsin's online library which provides access to licensed content such as magazines, newspapers, scholarly articles, videos, images, and music. BadgerLink began operation in July 1998, with 3,500 full text magazines and other resources from EBSCO, as well as about 40 newspapers from ProQuest. BadgerLink provides increased access to information resources for Wisconsin residents in cooperation with the state's public, school, academic, and special libraries. Funding for BadgerLink has come from SEG funds since the early 2000's; state support for BadgerLink is provided in the same appropriation as for Newsline for the Blind.

The department currently contracts with six vendors (Britannica Education, EBSCO, Gale/Cengage Learning, ProQuest, TeachingBooks, and Wisconsin Newspaper Association) to provide access to a large volume of full-text information. Users can search approximately 20,000 full-text magazines, journals, newspapers, reference materials, and other specialized information sources. Included are over 8,000 full text magazines and journals, over 1,500 newspapers and newswires, and approximately 6,800 full textbooks. Full text articles are taken from 2,900 historical newspaper titles.

BadgerLink vendors provide access several other resources: automobile repair manuals, company profiles, country economic reports, industrial reports and yearbooks, biographies, primary historical documents, charts, images, schematics, maps, poems, essays, speeches, plays, short stories, author audio programs and book readings, author video programs, book reviews or discussion guides, and many other full text resources not available through regular internet search engines.

When these resources are available through search engines such as Google, it is because Wisconsin has licensed the content to appear when searched through search engines. BadgerLink also connects users to WISCAT (the online catalog of Wisconsin library holdings), OCLC WorldCat (an international database of library holdings), directories of libraries, digitized library collections, and other information.

Statewide contracts provide cost savings. Local library staff do not have to review vendor services and bids, negotiate with the vendor, pay invoices, monitor vendor performance, and arrange for training. If libraries, schools, universities, and other organizations had to purchase the databases in BadgerLink directly, costs could reach $73-75 million.

Newsline for the Blind

Newsline for the Blind (Newsline) provides access to newspapers on a daily basis for people who cannot read print newspapers, using an automated electronic voice that can be accessed using a regular touch-tone telephone. The Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (RLBPH) assists in providing the service by registering new users, providing technical support, and placing Wisconsin announcements and local information on the Newsline local channel. Newsline provides access to 14 Wisconsin newspapers and over 365 national newspapers, news wire services, and some national magazines:

- Appleton Post-Crescent
- Fond du Lac Reporter
- Green Bay Press-Gazette
- Janesville Gazette
- Herald Time Reporter (Manitowoc)
- La Crosse Tribune
- Marshfield News-Herald,
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
- Oshkosh Northwestern
- Sheboygan Press
- Stevens Point Journal
- Wausau Daily Herald
- Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune
- Wisconsin State Journal/The Capital Times

Non-statutory language included in 1997 Wisconsin Act 27 (Act 27, the 1997-99 biennial budget) required the department to enter into a two-year contract with the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) to provide Newsline services from the Madison and Milwaukee locations. The department was directed to use USF funds transferred into the

department's appropriation under Wis. Stat. sec. 20.255 (1) (ke), from the Public Service Commission (PSC), to fund the Newsline contract.

Initially, the statutes directed specific amounts be transferred to fund Newsline. However, beginning in FY02, the legislature instead enumerated the Newsline program as an allowable purpose for which USF revenues received from the PSC, in the department's appropriation for BadgerLink, could be used.

Funding History

Table 1 below presents this history of the appropriation for BadgerLink and Newsline since FY14. The appropriation amount over the years reflects the estimated costs to continue the various BadgerLink and Newsline databases and vendor contracts.

Table 1. Funding for BadgerLink and Newsline for the Blind

Fiscal Year	Appropriation
FY14	$2,589,900
FY15	$2,596,500
FY16	$2,841,800
FY17	$2,902,200
FY18	$2,919,100
FY19-FY20	$2,937,500
FY21-FY23	$3,283,300
FY24	$3,387,300
FY25-FY26	$3,486,300
FY27	$3,582,900

Estimated Costs

Table 2 below shows the contracted vendors and the cost of each contract under BadgerLink, the current and projected costs under Newsline, and total costs under the appropriation. The increases for the individual line items for the BadgerLink databases reflect general inflationary increases to maintain the current level of services (i.e., no changes to service levels).

Table 2. BadgerLink Contracts and Newsline for the Blind – Projected Costs

Purpose	FY27	FY28	FY29
Newsline for the Blind (NFB)			
NFB Newsline contract	$43,500	$43,500	$43,500
NFB Telecom	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000
WTBBL Staff Costs (Regional Library Contract)	$78,400	$78,400	$83,400
Newspaper Contracts	$10,000	$-	$-
Printing	$800	$800	$800
TOTAL NFB COSTS	**$135,700**	**$125,700**	**$130,700**
BadgerLink Databases			
Britannica Education	$514,500	$560,000	$588,000
EBSCO (multiple databases)	$1,922,000	$1,960,440	$1,999,649
Gale/Cengage Learning	$73,800	$73,800	$73,800
ProQuest (multiple databases)	$495,000	$511,084	$528,972
TeachingBooks	$98,500	$98,500	$98,500
Wisconsin Newspaper Association	$343,400	$343,400	$343,400
TOTAL BADGERLINK DATABASES COSTS	**$3,447,200**	**$3,547,200**	**$3,632,300**
Combined NFB& BadgerLink (rounded)	**$3,582,900**	**$3,672,900**	**$3,763,000**
Chapter 20 Appropriation (FY25 Base)	$3,582,900		
Difference (DPI request)		**$90,000**	**$180,100**

Statutory Language

The department is not proposing any statutory language changes related to this request.

DECISION ITEM 7030 – WISEDATA STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

s. 20.255 (1) (e) - Appropriation title
APN 106

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$4,300,000	$4,300,000
Less Base	$3,400,000	$3,400,000
Requested Change	**$900,000**	**$900,000**

Request

The department requests an increase of $900,000 GPR in FY28 and $900,000 GPR in FY29 in the appropriation under Wis. Stat. sec. 20.255 (1) (e), *Student information system* (WISEdata). The increase would offset inflationary increases in the costs of maintaining WISEdata, the data collection system for K-12 school students statewide.

Background

WISEdata is the multi-vendor, open data collection system that allows school districts, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a parental Choice program to submit data to the department from the student information system (SIS) vendor of their choice. The ability to receive data from multiple student information systems is possible because WISEdata uses an Application Programming Interface (API). This software allows communication between any SIS vendor (as the data sender) and the DPI (as the data receiver). This secure data flow saves thousands of hours that would otherwise be spent on manual data entry. The WISEdata portal application is used to verify that data is pushed from your school information system to the department.

The department's appropriation under Wis. Stat. sec. 20.255 (1) (e), Student information system (commonly referred to as WISEdata) was established under 2013 Act 20 (the 2013-15 biennial budget). As part of that budget Act, the Joint Committee on Finance set aside a total of $7.1 million GPR in the Committee's supplemental appropriation, with the intention that the funding be used to develop and maintain a statewide student information system. Under 2013 Act 20, the State Superintendent was required to develop a proposal for a multiple-vendor student information system for the standardized collection of pupil data and then submit a proposal to the Committee for release of funding from the Committee's supplemental appropriation for this purpose.

The Committee ultimately approved the release of funding to the department for the WISEdata student information system, providing $3,400,000 GPR annually, beginning in FY15, in a continuing appropriation. Expenditures from the WISEdata appropriation have not, however, been incurred at a steady level over the years. Once the project began in earnest, annual expenditures from the WISEdata appropriation exceeded $4 million. Eventually, as the project moved from initial development and deployment to maintenance and enhancements, costs decreased for a few years to a level lower than the $3.4 million appropriation.

Over time, costs have increased. The largest share of expenditures from the WISEdata appropriation takes the form of IT applications chargebacks. As is the case with many state agencies, the department's IT staff charge time initially to a program revenue-service (PR-S) appropriation; then those charges are allocated to the appropriate fund source, based on the work. For the department's IT staff who conduct work on the WISEdata student information system and WISEdata portal, the chargebacks are applied to the WISEdata appropriation.

To the extent that chargebacks are for permanent staff, the General Wage Adjustments (GWAs) provided by the state increase the cost of those chargebacks, and hence the ongoing WISEdata costs. However, the WISEdata appropriation has been at the same level since FY17. The cumulative (compounded) increase in GWAs between FY18 and FY26 was 25.5 percent (there were no GWAs provided to state employees in FY16 or FY17). When applied to the IT application chargebacks (for staff costs) from FY18, the resulting inflation to wages equates to nearly $900,000 annually. This phenomenon clearly contributes to the higher level of expenditure from the WISEdata appropriation in recent years.

Another factor that has impacted expenditures from the WISEdata appropriation is the availability of other fund sources to pay for work that overlapped with WISEdata. In the past, the department has received awards under the federal State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant program, as well as a private grant from the Dell Foundation, which allowed DPI to conduct work that complemented WISEdata, thereby reducing expenditures from the WISEdata state appropriation. The department no longer receives the federal SLDS grant (Wisconsin was prohibited from competing for the most recent round of SLDS grants because Wisconsin had successfully competed for several rounds of that grant in prior years). The private Dell Foundation grant is also no longer available. The department cannot count on other funds beyond the $3.4 million appropriation for WISEdata work.

While the WISEdata appropriation has had carryover balances for several years, expenditures have exceeded the $3,400,000 appropriation since FY24- i.e., carryover balances have been used for ongoing costs for the past three fiscal years. Coming into FY26, the balance in the appropriation was $1,677,400; the department anticipates that the carryover balance in the appropriation will be exhausted at the end of FY27. The table below demonstrates the carryover budget authority, appropriations, expenditures, and

resulting year end balances in the WISEdata appropriation over the past 12 fiscal years. Note that while the appropriation was established prior to FY16, the data available from the state's current accounting system (STAR) provides data only as far back as FY16.

Table 1. WISEdata Appropriation

Fiscal Year	Carryover from Prior FY	Appropriation	Total Available	Expenditures	Uncommitted Budget Authority
FY16*	$5,162,650	$1,050,000	$6,212,650	$2,677,565	$3,535,085
FY17	3,535,085	3,400,000	6,935,085	4,520,857	2,414,227
FY18	2,414,227	3,400,000	5,814,227	4,085,150	1,729,077
FY19	1,729,077	3,400,000	5,129,077	4,169,509	959,568
FY20	959,568	3,400,000	4,359,568	3,697,983	661,585
FY21	661,585	3,400,000	4,061,585	2,466,732	1,594,853
FY22	1,594,853	3,400,000	4,994,853	2,616,925	2,377,928
FY23	2,377,928	3,400,000	5,777,928	3,273,681	2,504,247
FY24	2,504,247	3,400,000	5,904,247	3,736,115	2,168,132
FY25	2,168,132	3,400,000	5,568,132	3,890,735	1,677,398
FY26	1,677,398	3,400,000	5,077,398	4,646,424	430,973
FY27	430,973	3,400,000	3,830,973	N/A	N/A

*FY16: the Joint Committee on Finance imposed a one-year decrease in the appropriation, from $3.4 million in FY15 to $1.05 million in FY16, as part of the 2015-17 biennial budget. The appropriation then reverted to the $3.4 million (annually) level beginning in FY17. The one-year decrease was a direct response to the budget authority balance that was projected to carry forward into FY16.

The department projects that an increase of $900,000 GPR each year to raise the appropriation to $4,300,000 would provide sufficient funding for the ongoing costs of maintaining the WISEdata student information system and WISEdata portal.

Statutory Language

The department is not proposing statutory language changes related to this request.

DECISION ITEM 7031 – IT SYSTEMS MODERNIZATIONS

s. 20.255 (1) (en) – Information technology; systems modernization
APN 111)
NEW appropriation

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$11,513,700	$1,000,000
Less Base	$0	$0
Requested Change	**$11,513,700**	**$1,000,000**

Request

The department requests the creation of a new GPR continuing appropriation to be used to support the work of modernizing several major information technology (IT) systems maintained by the department for administering core agency functions. The department requests $11,513,700 GPR in FY28 and $1,000,000 in FY29 in this new appropriation. This paper includes examples of projects for which the funding is requested and for which the department would be prepared to begin work in FY28.

Projects

Competitive Grant Application System
WISEgrants is the department's inhouse Federal Grants Management System. Since FY17, WISEgrants has operated to house all federal formula grant information, as well as the allocation and subaward information for non-formula federal grants, for purposes of meeting the requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA). Formula grants are non-competitive, with subrecipients selected under criteria laid out in federal regulations and award amounts based on calculations dictated by federal law.

As designed, WISEgrants does not have the capacity to manage any type of federal or state grant that requires a grant application process involving open competition, collection of applications, an application review process, or awarding of grants. This process is currently completed via ad-hoc systems across various teams in the department. Currently, the process for managing these grants is complex, fragmented, and error-prone, involving various manual steps and multiple systems.

The Competitive Grant Application System project aims to streamline the administration of non-formula state and federal grants within the department. This project seeks to standardize and automate the grant application process as a module in which the department would create grant competitions, allow eligible entities to apply, and create an application review process with a rubric, to facilitate transparency in grant selection and awards for grant programs adminsitered by the department. The fiscal management of grants would then be integrated into the WISEgrants system with all existing capabilities, including secure connections to the state payment system.

Open Enrollment Application Log (OPAL) Modernization

The Open Enrollment Application Log (OPAL) system is designed to manage and facilitate the open enrollment applications for public school districts in Wisconsin. Currently, OPAL is built on an older Oracle database, which has become increasingly challenging for staff to support due to its outdated infrastructure and the complexities associated with maintaining it. This system comprises approximately 100 tables with business logic and data access encapsulated in Oracle packages, making it a sizable and complex environment to manage.

Private School Choice Programs OAS Modernization

The Private School Choice Programs Online Application System (OAS) is a critical software application used by the department to manage and administer private school choice programs. However, the system is currently built on an outdated version of Oracle along with other older application development technologies, which has become increasingly difficult and costly for the agency's technical staff to support. Modernizaing the OAS will enhance its maintainability, scalability, and integration capabilities with other department program area software solutions.

Private School Choice Programs – Combining Applications

The department is responsible for administering three separate private school parental choice programs: the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), the Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP), and the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP). Legislation proposed in a prior session would have combined these programs into a single Private School Choice Program (PSCP), underpinning the department's argument to combine the applications for the three parental choice programs into a single online application. Should legislation that combines the application process for these three choice programs is adopted, the department would engage in an IT project to streamline administration, improve efficiency, and maintain consistent standards across the choice programs.

Educator Licensing Online System

The BEL manages licensure for over 148,000 educators, processing around 50,000 license applications annually. The current Educator Licensing Online (ELO) system faces several challenges, including lack of a comprehensive user identity profile and non-integrated systems that hinder efficient application processing and communication management.

The current system operates as an application-based system. This means it does not allow for applicant-based profiles, communications, or dashboard displays.

The current system also lacks an integrated ability for preparation programs to upload their completers into the system and support the application process and an ability for employers to see license application status. The proposed project aims to replace the existing system with a cloud-based educator licensing system that addresses these issues by providing a more integrated and user-friendly solution. An RFI has been deployed and an RFP will be developed to solicit bids. The department has built in $2,500,000 GPR annually as a placeholder amount for the significant work of overhauling the ELO system, as information needed to produce an accurate estimate is forthcoming.

Additionally, the department will assess whether revenue from its appropriation for education licensing, under Wis. Stat. sec. 20.255 (1) (hg), will be available to offset the costs of the ELO system project. The highest priority for use of licensing fee revenue is to fully cover the staffing costs for the Bureau of Educator Licensing, to ensure the department is processing license applications and meeting the needs of license applicants as efficiently as possible. That said, the overhaul of the exiting ELO system is absolutely integral to the department's larger goal of providing the most efficient, customer service-oriented, and user-friendly licensing system. While the license application fees are an appropriate revenue for the ELO overhaul project, those revenues are limited – hence, the department's request to include funding for the ELO overhaul project as part of the requested GPR continuing appropriation for IT systems modernization.

Project Cost Estimates

The estimated costs for the projects described in this paper are shown in the table below. While the costs are broken down evenly over the two years of the upcoming biennium, actual costs may not be incurred that way. It is possible that some projects will be completely more quickly than others, resulting in a greater portion of an individual project's expenditures being incurred in the first year; conversely, some projects may experience unanticipated delays that result in a greater share of the project's expenditures being incurred in the second year.

Because the precise breakdown of expenditures by fiscal year cannot be estimated perfectly, the department requests the appropriation be continuing and that the majority of the budget authority be provided in the first year of the biennium. This approach would allow the department to work at the appropriate pace for each project and ensure sufficient funding is available for all project, regardless of the actual time frame for project completion (and thus when expenditures are incurred).

The allocation of funding in the department's chapter 20 schedule in state statute is also indicated in the table. This request is structured so as to produce an ongoing appropriation

level of $1,000,000 GPR annually in the requested continuing appropriation, so that the department would continue to have resources to address additional IT systems modernization projects, as well as to address new IT applications needs that arise over time as new programs/data collections are created (i.e., with new legislation).

Table 1. Projected Costs for IT Modernization Projects

Project	FY28	FY29	Biennium
Competitive Grant Application System	$518,500	$518,500	$1,036,000
Open Enrollment Application Log	403,000	403,000	806,000
Private School Choice Programs OAS	403,000	403,000	806,000
Combining Choice Program Applications	1,104,200	1,261,500	2,365,700
SUBTOTAL	**$2,428,200**	**$2,585,500**	**$5,013,700**
Educator Online Licensing System*	**$3,750,000**	**$3,750,000**	**$7,500,000**
Total over biennium	**$12,513,700**		
Allocation in Chapter 20 Schedule	**$11,513,700**	**$1,000,000**	
Ongoing appropriation level (FY30)			

*Building $7,500,000 GPR as a placeholder amount related to overhauling the ELO system. More precise estimates will be based on data that is forthcoming from the Request for Proposal process.

Statutory Language

The department is proposing statutory language changes related to this request (new appropriation).

DECISION ITEM 7032 – SUPPORT FOR STATE PROGRAMS

s. 20.255 (1) (a) – General program operations
APN 101

POSITION SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Positions	3.0 FTE	3.0 FTE
Position Funding	$269,300	$351,400

s. 20.255 (1) (jb) – Special needs scholarship program; financial audits
APN 144

POSITION SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Positions	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE
Position Funding	$87,500	$114,100

Request

The department requests $269,300 GPR in FY28 and $351,400 GPR in FY29, and the creation of 3.0 FTE GPR permanent positions beginning in FY28, to support the existing core functions of the department. The three positions would reside in the department's GPR appropriation for general program operations and would be located across three bureaus in the department. The department also requests $87,500 PR-O in FY28 and $114,100 PR-O in FY29, and the creation of 1.0 FTE PR-O permanent position beginning in FY28, to support a dedicated auditor position for the SNSP, located in the Bureau of Education Options.

Bureau of Information Technology, Division of Management Services

IS Systems Development Specialist*:* The department requests 1.0 FTE GPR permanent position located with BITS to provide dedicated support for programs administered by the BEO, including private school parental choice programs, the SNSP, the independent charter schools program, and the public school open enrollment program. This position would work within the BEO staff to plan, develop, implement, upgrade, and support

software applications used by BEO. The position would also assist management by implementing information system related technical policies, standards, and procedures.

Bureau of School and Library Operations, Bureau of School Financial Services

School Administration Consultant: The department requests 1.0 FTE GPR permanent position for the Bureau of School Financial Services (BSFS) for a School Administration Consultant position that would be dedicated to working with local education agencies (LEAs) on management of various competitive grants administered by the department. In a separate DIN, the department is requesting state funding to modernize information technology (IT) systems used for several program areas. A portion of the funding under that request would be used to develop a uniform system for managing competitive grants to LEAs (see DIN 7031).

The position requested here would serve as a resource for LEAs by providing training and technical assistance in grant management. This employee in this position would not be the subject matter expert for every grant; rather, they would be familiar with relevant statutes and rules related to the grant programs and would serve as a conduit between LEAs and the department for a wide range of competitive grants. Because the grants would be overseen by program staff across the agency, the department proposes that this position be located with the BSFS, where other staff who work with school financial information are located. Having a position dedicated to assisting LEAs in this way would reduce the time that existing BSFS staff spend addressing questions about competitive grants, thereby allowing them to focus time on their primary job duties and responsibilities. In turn, it would provide LEAs with a consistent resource within the BSFS to assist LEAs with grants management (training and technical assistance).

Bureau of School and Library Operations, Bureau of Education Options

School Administration Consultant: The department requests 1.0 FTE GPR permanent position for the BEO to provide additional support to that team dedicated to the SNSP, a program that continues to grow since its creation under 2015 Wisconsin Act 55.

Auditor (School Finance): The department requests 1.0 FTE PR-O permanent position for the BEO to provide dedicated support for audit functions required under state law for the SNSP. Currently, the auditor function for the SNSP is fulfilled by an employee whose position splits time between the SNSP and the other private school parental choice programs. As the SNSP and choice programs continue to grow, the department needs to build capacity to fulfill its responsibilities under the law. The proposed funding source for this position would be program revenue (PR) generated by a fee assessed on private schools participating in the SNSP. The fee amount would be set to cover the costs of the one position funded by the fee revenue (shared among all SNSP private schools). This model is used for the private school parental choice programs [see Wis. State. Sec. 20.255 (1)(j)]. The department requests the creation of a new appropriation to receive the revenue

and house the position, as well as modification of applicable SNSP statutes to authorize the department to assess and collect the fee from private schools in the SNSP, and to require the participating private schools to pay the fee.

The estimated costs for the requested positions are indicated in the tables below.

Table 1. Projected Position Cost – Detail

Div & Bureau	Classification	Fund Source	Salary	Fringe	S&S	Total
			FY28			
DMS/BITS	IS Systems Development Specialist	GPR	56,000	24,600	13,700	**94,300**
DSLO/BEO	School Administration Consultant	GPR	51,500	22,600	13,400	**87,500**
DSLO/BSFS	School Administration Consultant	GPR	51,500	22,600	13,400	**87,500**
	TOTAL	**GPR**	**159,000**	**69,800**	**40,500**	**269,300**
DSLO/BSFS	Auditor (School Finance)	PR-O	51,500	22,600	13,400	**87,500**
	TOTAL	**PR-O**	**51,500**	**22,600**	**13,400**	**87,500**
			FY29			
DMS/BITS	IS Systems Development Specialist	GPR	74,700	32,800	15,700	**123,200**
DSLO/BEO	School Administration Consultant	GPR	67,800	30,100	15,300	**114,100**
DSLO/BSFS	School Administration Consultant	GPR	67,800	30,100	15,300	**114,100**
	TOTAL	**GPR**	**212,100**	**93,000**	**46,300**	**351,400**
DSLO/BSFS	Auditor (School Finance)	PR-O	67,800	30,100	15,300	**114,100**
	TOTAL	**PR-O**	**67,800**	**30,100**	**15,300**	**114,100**

Table 2. Projected Position Cost - Summary

	FY28	FY29	Biennium
GPR	269,300	351,400	620,700
PR-O	87,500	114,100	201,600
	356,800	**465,500**	**822,300**

Statutory Language

The department is proposing statutory language changes related to this request (new appropriation for the PR-O position).

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 7033 – OFFICE OF LITERACY

s. 20.255 (1) (fc) - Office of literacy; literacy coaching program
APN 139

POSITION SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Positions		1.0 FTE
Position Funding		$227,400

Request

The department requests $227,400 GPR in FY29, and 1.0 FTE GPR unclassified position in FY29, to restore the position and budget authority for the existing Director position in the Office of Literacy. The department also request a statutory language change to eliminate the repeal of the appropriation under Wis. Stat. sec. 20.255 (1) (fc) and to eliminate the repeal of s. 115.39, Wis. Stats [Literacy coaching program].

Under 2023 Act 20, the appropriation under s. 20.255 (1) (fc), and s. 115.39, Wis. Stats, will be repealed effective July 1, 2028. If the repeals occur, there will be no funding to support the department's Office of Literacy Director position, and by extension, the work of the Office of Literacy, beyond June 30, 2028. Further, the department would not be able to continue the literacy coaching program created by 2023 Act 20 beyond the June 30, 2028, repeal date.

The department intends to submit a request to continue funding for the literacy coaching program beyond June 30, 2028, as part of the second portion of the department's 2027-29 biennial budget request (to be submitted in November 2027).

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 7034 – LICENSING OPERATIONS

s. 20.255 (1) (hg) - Personnel licensure; teacher supply, information and analysis; teacher improvement
APN 122

POSITION SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Positions	2.0 FTE	2.0 FTE
Position Funding	$152,200	$ 198,000

Request

The department requests an increase of $152,200 PR-O in FY28 and $198,000 PR-O in FY28, and 2.0 FTE permanent classified PR-O positions (beginning in FY28), in the appropriation under Wis. Stat. Sec. 20.255 (1) (hg), for educator licensing operations. The classifications for the two requested positions would be Paralegal-Advanced and would be dedicated to working through educator licensing investigations.

The department also requests that the appropriation type be changed from an annual ("amounts in the schedule") to a continuing ("all monies received") appropriation. This change would allow the department to more easily manage the licensing operations budget, as the revenue and expenditures in the appropriation vary from year to year, with a five-year cyclical pattern related to required background checks.

The department further requests the repeal of the current law requirement that ten percent of licensing application fee revenue be lapsed to the state general fund at the end of each fiscal year. This change would allow the department to fully utilize the revenue from application fees to support agency operations associated with teacher licensing and with educator license investigations. The amount of revenue that the department could retain with this change is estimated at roughly $450,000 PR to $530,000 PR (FY28 and FY29, respectively). The range of values reflects the five-year cycle required background checks for license holders; FY29 is anticipated to be the high point of the current five-year cycle.

Background

Under Wis. Stat. sec. 115.28 (7), the state superintendent is required to license all teachers for the public schools of the state, and to make rules establishing attainment and procedures for the examination and licensing of teachers. Additionally, under Wis. Stat.

sec. 115.28 (7) (d), the state superintendent is authorized to establish fees for "the certification or licensure of school and public library personnel sufficient to fund certification and licensing administrative costs." This statute can be understood to assume that the revenue generated by the licensing application fees is intended to remain within the department for operations of the Bureau of Educator Licensing (BEL).

In prior years, the department has had to draw on revenue from its GPR appropriation for general program operations to cover a portion of operational costs for the BEL (most recently, for FY20, the amount was approximately $87,500 GPR). In these cases, there were sufficient revenues collected within the fiscal year to cover all expenditures; however, the limit on expenditure authority prevented the department from accessing the full amount of licensing application fee revenues collected.

Changing the Appropriation Type to Continuing

The workload of the BEL is cyclical, with predictable peaks in workload that correspond to the time during the year when more individuals submit applications for licensure (e.g., upon completion of an educator preparation programs, prior to the start of a school year). Additionally, the number of licensing applications submitted and required background checks conducted by the BEL varies across years. The change from a five-year renewal model for educator licensing, to a lifetime license model, under 2017 Act 59 (the 2017-19 state biennial budget) created expectations of a more consistent workload over the years, with less variation across years. However, the requirement that educators have a background check conducted by the BEL every five years as one of the conditions for retaining a lifetime license leads to the continued five-year cycle of peaks and troughs in workload.

This is an important reason for the department's request that the appropriation be changed to continuing – while revenues can fluctuate from year to year, the budget authority is static for a two-year period – a function of the state's biennial budget process. A continuing appropriation would provide the department with the flexibility to cover operational costs that fluctuate from year to year with available revenue. Changing the appropriation type from annual to continuing would allow the department to increase budget authority, if needed, to access existing revenue for BEL operations. Further, the uncommitted revenue balance would carry forward (as it does currently) and be accessible to the BEL in subsequent years.

In addition to operating flexibility, having access to accumulated revenues would allow the department to pursue much needed upgrades to the online educator licensing system (ELO), which is used by individuals to apply for all educator licensing types. The current ELO has reached the end of its expected useful life cycle, creating operational limitations that require system upgrades to maintain the BEL's efficiency and long-term functionality. Currently, there is a balance of revenues generated by licensing fee applications, which could be used to help support upgrading of the ELO system. However, the balance of

revenue in the appropriation is insufficient to pay for the overhaul of the ELO system. Note that the department is also requesting GPR funds to support the ELO system project (see DIN 7031), as the ongoing operational needs of conducting educator licensing work must be the first draw on the licensing application fee revenue.

Elimination of Ten Percent Lapse of Licensing Application Fee Revenue

Under current law, the department is required to lapse 10 percent of all revenue received from license application fees and background check fees to the state's general fund. The statute is clear on the purpose of the licensing application fee revenue collected by the department; it authorizes the state superintendent to establish fees for "the certification or licensure of school and public library personnel sufficient to fund certification and licensing administrative costs."

The required lapse of ten percent of fee revenues collected by the department is an impediment to the efficient operation of the BEL in its licensing duties. Because the licensing application fee revenue collected by the department varies from year to year (within the five-year cycle), so too does the lapse amount; between FY19 and FY26, the lapse amount has ranged from approximately $421,500 (FY19) to as much $507,500 (FY24). The median lapse amount over those eight years was $450,230; the lapse amount in FY26 was $466,300.

The lapsed fee revenue goes to the state's general fund, becoming a general purpose revenue (GPR) fund source that can then be used for the state's overall biennial budget. The lapse amount from this appropriation is an exceedingly small amount in the context of the state's general fund – approximately 2/1,000ths of a percent of the state's FY26 general purpose revenue appropriations ($22,722,745,300).[3] However, retaining that revenue would provide the department with much needed flexibility to address operational needs within the department, as described below.

Position Authority

The department's request to create two new positions, if approved, would allow the department to expand staffing capacity for educator license investigations. If approved, the department would create the 2.0 FTE positions in the Paralegal-Advanced classification. The positions would be located with the department's Office of Legal Services (OLS) and would be dedicated to conducting license investigations and related work. Currently the department can support just one Paralegal-Advanced permanent position and one Limited Term Employee (LTE) position to work on license investigations. Having additional dedicated staff for this purpose would allow the department to more efficiently conduct and complete investigations.

[3] Legislative Fiscal Bureau, "Summary of Provisions – 2025 Act 15" (2025-27 biennial budget), July 2025. See Table 1 - Summary of 2025-27 Appropriations, Compensation Reserves, and Authorizations. GPR Appropriations (excludes Compensation Reserves amount).

Additional capacity to conduct license investigations is needed to reduce the current backlog of cases and ensure that when the backlog is reduced, the department's OLS staff can continue to process complaints, conduct the investigations, and close out cases more efficiently than is possible now. At present, there are roughly 150 open investigations and 60 community complaints to evaluate (eight of which are from 2025, the remainder submitted in 2026). The existing volume of investigations and complaints precludes the department's existing Paralegal staff (one permanent, one LTE) from making meaningful progress in reducing the backlog, as the number of complaints received and investigations opened continue to increase.

A single case can take a significant amount of time to bring to completion. One of the most important factors is the volume of information that must be reviewed when a complaint is received and an investigation begins; staff may be faced with reviewing hundreds of pages of documentation, such as a lengthy police report. Another factor is the complexity of a given investigation; for example, allegations of conduct that spans multiple years, involves multiple victims, or multiple teaching positions or districts creates more documentation, which would require more time for review. Some cases must be held open while the department waits on criminal cases to conclude before staff can complete the investigation.

No single average accurately represents the time required to complete an investigation. Rather, the period between receipt of a complaint and completion of the investigation varies based on the nature and complexity of the case, as well as the specific circumstances involved. The volume of investigations has increased over the past year, as illustrated in the table below. All cases received during or prior to 2022 are fully resolved. The current caseload is comprised of investigations stemming from complaints received up to three years ago.

Table 1. Caseload and Referrals

			Referral Source for Open Cases				
Calendar Year	**Total cases (average per month)**	**Open cases (Active. Rev/Surr, Criminal^)**	**School District Referrals**	**Community/ Agency Referrals**	**Media Referrals**	**DPI (BEL)^^**	**Request for Reinstatement ^^^**
2023	107 (8.9)	3 (2/0/1)	39	12	13	39	4
2024	121 (10.1)	14 (6/4/4)	63	10	10	34	4
2025	170 (14.2)	40 (19/12/9)	74	13*	17	58	8
2026 (as of 8/31)	129 (16.1)	102 (89/8/5)	88	11*	9	20	1
Total Open Investigations		**159 (116/24/19)**					

^Open Cases: Active (investigation in progress), Revocation/Surrender (the case is assigned to an OLS attorney who is seeking a license surrender or pursuing license revocation), Criminal (pending conclusion of a law enforcement investigation or criminal prosecution).

^^DPI's Bureau of Educator Licensing.

^^^Request for Reinstatement: A licensee who has had action taken against their license may request to have their license reinstated. These requests are treated as a new investigation. As part of the reinstatement investigation process, an investigator requests and reviews documents supporting the request, reviews the underlying file, prepares a brief report for the department's license review team (LRT), and discusses the matter with the LRT before a decision about reinstatement is made.

*The numbers from prior years which I sent you Friday included only referrals from the public; data now includes referrals from other agencies.

License investigations are part of the department's larger responsibility of overseeing the licensing and certification of school staff. It is therefore appropriate to utilize a portion of the revenue from license application fees for the purpose of expanding staff capacity to conduct license investigations. However, the department will not have sufficient fee revenue to support the requested two Paralegal positions **unless the 10 percent forced lapse of licensing related revenue to the state's general fund is eliminated**. This request for additional position authority for conducting licensing investigations is linked directly to the department's request to eliminate the 10 percent lapse of revenue under current law. The costs associated with two Paralegal-Advanced positions are summarized below.

Table 1. Projected Position Costs

	Annual Cost for 1 FTE	FY28 - 2 FTE (9 months)	FY29 - 2 FTE (12 months)
Salary (minimum of pay range)	$58,700	$88,000	$117,400
Fringe Benefits	$25,700	$38,600	$51,400
Supplies and Services*	$14,600	$25,600	$29,200
Total Costs	**$99,000**	**$152,200**	**$198,000**

*The Supplies and Services line includes IT support chargeback ($7,500), fixed/overhead costs assessment ($4,200 - 7% of salary), and travel/attendance at trainings, conferences ($3,000).

Statutory Language

The department is proposing statutory language changes related to this request.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 7900 – CYBERSECURITY

s. 20.255 (1) (eo) - Appropriation title
APN 143
NEW appropriation

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$3,393,700	$3,342,700
Less Base	$0	$0
Requested Change	**$3,393,700**	**$3,342,700**

Request

The department requests $3,393,700 GPR in FY28 and $3,342,700 GPR in FY29, in a new continuing appropriation for cybersecurity costs.

Background

Within the Major Budget Policies for the 2027-29 biennium, the Department of Administration-State Budget Office (SBO) indicated that state agencies would be permitted to request GPR funding to offset the costs associated with cybersecurity related requirements. Cybersecurity refers to actions taken by organizations to protect their information systems, networks, and data from digital attacks. Maintaining protection from malicious actors requires organizations to implement processes that will prevent attacks from occurring and safeguarding information when attacks do occur. Cybersecurity efforts require staff time and technology to establish and maintain policies and practices to reduce the risk of harm from digital attacks that arise from unauthorized access to information and data breaches, which can result in financial loss and operational disruption to the organization.

The department's Bureau of Information Technology (BITS) receives formal cyber incident reports and/or requests for assistance from schools and school districts across Wisconsin. BITS staff indicate that the volume of such inquiries has increased by nearly 200 percent, compared to the prior year. BITS staff further indicate that this trend among Wisconsin's schools is consistent with national trends reported by MS-ISAC, K12SIX, and federal sources over the last several years.

Account hijacking via phishing has been the primary vector in over half of reported cases, but reported cybersecurity incidents also include ransomware attacks, attempted fraud, cyberbullying and harassment, and insider attacks. Ransomware is a particular concern;

multiple analysts reported the emergence of a K-12 specialist threat actor (SafePay) in 2025, and Sophos reported in their 2026 State of Ransomware in Education report that K-12 schools remain more vulnerable on average to successful ransomware attacks and are more successfully targeted by ransomware actors than other sectors. These and other reports note that K-12 schools are also vulnerable to data breaches and other attacks involving their service providers; the 2025 Powerschool breach and the 2026 Canva LMS breach each resulted in multiple requests for assistance from the Wisconsin Cyber Response Team and precipitated national response efforts in which DPI participated.

As a state agency with deep connection to Wisconsin schools, and as an operator of residential schools, the department is not immune from these threat trends and has significant perimeter exposure to manage due to extensive data sharing and program area collaboration with K-12 schools and districts. While the department has initiated incident response protocols only once in the last year (an account hijacking, successfully mitigated), the agency currently receives and responds to identity attacks via phishing daily.

Recent attack trends of note include targeted spear-phishing and whaling attacks impersonating the identities of department officials and replicating department formats and language in phishing lures. The K-12 education and state agency sectors are increasingly targeted by impersonation attacks in 2026. BITS staff note that the department is clearly known to – and specifically targeted by – bad actors (threat entities) and is being used to target others in the K-12 sector and state government.

Funding to Support Cybersecurity Efforts

The department's request for funding is informed by the department's plan for addressing cybersecurity threats. The department will use State of Wisconsin tools and services where available and appropriate. Agency specific tools or services will be considered where enterprise capabilities do not satisfy technical or operational requirements for the department's application environment. The effort will involve the execution of three main pillars which involve building key capabilities within the agency. The three pillars are then broken down by agency capability that will be developed and standardized by the agency to address each area:

- **Prevention and Detection**: Identify security flaws earlier, prevent vulnerable software reaching production, and maintain visibility into vulnerabilities after deployment.

- **Remediation Execution**: Build the processes, automation and technical ability/capacity needed to mitigate and fully remediate vulnerabilities. Meeting service level agreements associated with tiers within the SI-2 standard timelines.

- **Legacy Application Risk Analysis and Reduction**: Build processes to evaluate applications to determine their cybersecurity exposure and vulnerabilities. Build support to remediate in a timely fashion by leveraging Remediation Execution capabilities.

See the Appendix to this paper for more information about each of the three pillars. The table below contains the department's projections for costs of the individual components of the larger approach to cybersecurity. Note that costs are projected to be larger in the first two years of work; while the department requests nearly $3.4 million GPR for each year of the 2027-29 biennium for this work, the ongoing cost for FY30 and after are currently projected at half that amount, at roughly $1.6 million annually (not adjusting for inflationary pressures).

Table 1. Cybersecurity Cost Projections

	FY28	FY29	Projected Ongoing (FY30)
Cybersecurity Initiative Discovery	$1,525,700	$1,262,700	$1,262,700
Security Infrastructure Modernization*	140,000	-	-
Application Security Testing and Dependency Scanning	403,000	40,000	40,000
Patch Management Process and Tools	109,000	53,000	53,000
Vulnerability Monitoring	284,000	60,000	60,000
Vulnerability Intake, Remediation Management and Reporting	286,000	34,000	34,000
Emergency Mitigation and Response	419,000	125,000	125,000
Legacy Application Risk Assessment and Disposition*	227,000	-	-
Application Remediation and Deployment*	-	663,000	-
Legacy Application Remediation and Risk Reduction*	-	1,105,000	-
Total Cost	**$3,393,700**	**$ 3,342,700**	**$1,574,700**
Requested funding for FY27-29 Biennium		**$6,736,400**	

*One-time costs for year one or year two (no ongoing costs projected).

Statutory Language

The department is proposing statutory language changes related to this request (new appropriation).

Appendix – Cybersecurity Scope of Work, Pillars, and Capabilities

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) supports a large portfolio of applications and technology services used to administer education programs, collect and report data, along with support educators and schools.

Scope of Work

The DPI will use Wisconsin State tools and services where available and appropriate. Agency specific tools or services will be considered where enterprise capabilities do not satisfy technical or operational requirements for DPI's application environment. The effort will involve the execution of three main pillars which involve building key capabilities within the agency. The three pillars are then broken down by agency capability that will be developed and standardized by the agency to address each area.

- **Prevention and Detection**: Identify security flaws earlier, prevent vulnerable software reaching production, and maintain visibility into vulnerabilities after deployment.

- **Remediation Execution**: Build the processes, automation and technical ability/capacity needed to mitigate and fully remediate vulnerabilities. Meeting service level agreements associated with tiers within the SI-2 standard timelines.

- **Legacy Application Risk Analysis and Reduction**: Build processes to evaluate applications to determine their cybersecurity exposure and vulnerabilities. Build support to remediate in a timely fashion by leveraging Remediation Execution capabilities.

Pillar 1: Prevention and Detection

Identify security flaws earlier, prevent vulnerable software reaching the wild (production), maintain visibility into vulnerabilities after deployment. Find flaws before software is released to production environments.

Capability 1.1: Automated Application Security Testing

Implement automated security testing for DPI-developed applications. This may include source control scanning with static application security testing tools (SAST), dynamic application security testing tools (DAST) on running systems, secrets detection, container scanning and other security controls appropriate to the application's technology and deployment methodology/model.

Application Security Scanning, Reporting, Remediation, and Tracking during application development phases of the DPI Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC).

Incorporate application security testing into standard development and deployment processes. Security checks will be integrated into build and deployment pipelines (Azure DevOps) where technically feasible so vulnerabilities can be identified as early as possible in the development lifecycle before deployment.

Capability 1.2: Continuous Vulnerability Monitoring

Establish a process to route identified vulnerabilities to the appropriate technical teams, prioritize remediation based on requirements, track remediation progress, and provide visibility into outstanding application security risks. Penetration testing should be included, probably in Continuous Vulnerability Monitoring.

Pillar 2: Remediation Execution

This pillar is responsible for taking security findings and turning them into controlled, repeatable and reportable actions. Correct flaws within required timeframes outlined in the Flaw Remediation (SI-2) standard.

Capability 2.1: Vulnerability Intake, Triage, Prioritization and Assignment

Define and establish a common process to receive and validate findings from the newly established Continuous Vulnerability Monitoring Capability (1.2). This process will need to be able to map vulnerabilities to the SI-2 tiers and deadlines, assign, escalate, and monitor.

Capability 2.2: Emergency Mitigation Procedures and Standards

Define and establish procedures and technical standards for reducing immediate exposure when permanent remediation cannot be accomplished within the SI-2 defined timeframe. Mitigation measures may include disabling functionality, restricting access or traffic to the system, or temporarily taking the affected system or component offline. Procedures and standards will need to be documented and validated (tested).

Capability 2.3: Application Remediation

The department will need to provide technical capacity needed to permanently correct identified flaws. Resources needed for this work will include project managers, application developers, business analysts and quality assurance staff.

Capability 2.4: Automated Testing and Clean Deployment

Improve build, regression testing, deployment, verification and recovery processes so security changes can be developed and delivered rapidly without creating new production issues and risks.

Capability 2.5: Remediation Tracking and Compliance Reporting

Track vulnerabilities by system, severity, SI-2 Standard tier, mitigation status, remediation status, etc. This reporting will provide DPI leadership with visibility into urgent exposure, overdue work, constrained systems, expiring risk decisions, remediation capacity; this will provide a report on compliance with new state requirements.

Pillar 3: Legacy Application Risk Analysis and Reduction

Identify applications that cannot consistently meet flaw remediation requirements because of unsupported technology, fragile architectures, obsolete components, platforms, vendor limitations, or other technical constraints. Develop and implement remediation plans that may include enhancements, migration, replacement, isolation, retirement or decommissioning. Deal with systems that cannot be remediated quickly or easily.

Capability 3.1: Application Risk and Remediation Readiness Assessment

Evaluate and assess legacy applications to determine their cybersecurity exposure and ability to support timely remediation. Adopt a phased approach to this effort; for example, begin with externally available Java and Oracle systems (highest risk).

Capability 3.2: Formal Risk Disposition Management

Establish a documented, time-bound decision process for systems unable to meet normal mitigation or remediation requirements.

Capability 3.3: Security Driven Application Enhancements

Enhance systems when a documented technology, architecture, component or platform would prevent timely remediation and/or creates recurring cybersecurity exposure. Upgrading unsupported frameworks, runtime, components, and platforms. Where appropriate improve configuration management, test, development and deployment capabilities with an eye towards improved security for older systems. Modernize authentication and authorization for older systems. Scope may include replacement, migration, retirement and/or decommissioning decisions.

Capability 3.4: Temporary Isolation and Compensating Controls

Develop ability to apply approved protections to systems while permanent remediation or replacement efforts are undertaken. These protections may include, network isolation, restricted access, stronger administrative controls, increased monitoring, temporarily take offline, or disabled functionality and feature sets.

Benefits

Compliance with State Requirements – Provides the DPI with the processes, staff (remediation capacity), technical controls and tools to meet the SI-2 Flaw Remediation standard mitigation and remediation timeframes.

Reduced Exposure to Known Vulnerabilities – This initiative will reduce the account of time that known vulnerabilities remain present in all DPI production systems.

Earlier Identification of Application Flaws - security issues in vulnerable code, software libraries and dependencies will be identified during application development, before being deployed to DPI production environments where they can be exploited or trigger emergency work.

Faster and Safer Remediation – After this effort, the DPI will be able to use repeatable remediation, testing and deployment practices and standards to reduce time and operational risk associated with correcting these security flaws.

Reduced Cybersecurity Related Technical Debt – This initiative will remove unsupported frameworks, obsolete components, unsupported platforms and other technical conditions that adversely impact operational performance, cost, and timely remediation.

DPI 2027-29 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

DECISION ITEM 7910 – CENTRAL SERVICES ADJUSTMENT

s. 20.255 (1) (a) - General program operations
APN 101

FISCAL SUMMARY		
	2027-28 Request	**2028-29 Request**
Requested Funding	$101,100	$101,100
Less Base*		
Requested Change	**$101,100**	**$101,100**

**The existing appropriation under s. 20.255 (1) (a) does not include an allocation specifically for central services. The FY27 adjusted base appropriation is $14,002,700.*

Request

The department requests $101,100 GPR in FY28 and $101,100 GPR in FY28 to reflect changes in DOA Allocated Central Service assessments in fiscal years 2022-23 through 2024-25.

Background

As part of the major budget policies for the 2027-29 biennial budget released by the Department of Administration (DOA) – State Budget Office (SBO), state agencies are permitted to request additional budget authority for increases in assessments levied by DOA for central services provided to state agencies. The allowed request amount for each state agency is equal to the increase in the DOA assessments between FY23 and FY25. For the department, that amount is $101,100 annually.

The department allocates the DOA assessments for central services to its general program operations appropriation under s. 20.255 (1) (a). The department therefore requests that the allowable budget authority amount be allocated to this appropriation.

Statutory Language

The department is not proposing any statutory language changes related to this request.

End of Document