

DECISION PACKAGES

What is a decision package?

Decision packages (DPs) are the key set of building blocks to construct the budget request. The DP is the place for the agency to make a compelling and persuasive argument for any proposed changes. Policymakers will rely upon this information when evaluating the request.

DPs organize and describe proposed cost changes in a way that highlights the budget policy decisions. The DP consolidates financial information, supporting justification and statements of impact for a specific action or policy proposed in the budget. One DP describes a proposed item of change listed on the recommendation summary (RecSum).

The Agency Budget System (ABS) guides agencies in developing budget DPs. It also automatically displays the expenditure, revenue, and FTE detail rolled up to the selected level (agency or program) for the RecSum report.

An equity-focused approach

The Governor continues the focus on equity in his 2025-27 budget development. Therefore, new questions have been added to ensure that agencies are considering the impacts of budget requests on marginalized communities. Agencies are expected to address these questions thoroughly and fully in their DPs.

When is a DP needed?

A DP is required for all incremental changes to the current biennial budget except for carry-forward level (CFL) roll-up items and the maintenance level (ML) adjustment to activities and revenue.

DPs requiring law changes

For any DP where a change in statute is required, please attach draft language from the Code Reviser's Office and describe in detail the proposed law change. Cabinet agencies must provide a complete agency request legislation package as an attachment to this DP **and** submit the request through the Bill Enrollment and Agency Requests System (BEARS).

DPs should represent discrete decisions

Each DP will appear as one line with a *positive* or *negative* amount on the RecSum and should represent discrete budget decisions. Craft your DPs so related items are grouped together, but do not obscure or combine separate decisions.

DPs must stress outcomes

Budget decisions hinge on the stated performance objective or outcomes being addressed and their merit relative to all other competition for limited resources.

Example: Seven new driver's license examining stations are proposed to expand geographic coverage and reduce client wait time.

The performance objective in this case is twofold (e.g., expanding coverage and reducing wait times). While the location of the examining stations is a necessary component of meeting the objective, the location of each station is not a separate budget decision. In this case, the agency would submit one DP.

Contact your assigned budget advisor if you have questions about how best to organize budget requests into DPs.

Anchor budget requests to the agency's strategic plan
OFM expects agency budget requests, including budget reductions, to be anchored to the agency's strategic plan and clearly support the implementation of these strategies and achievement of performance targets.

Use plain talk principles in your writing
Your DPs will be persuasive only if OFM analysts and decision makers can understand them. Use plain talk principles. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Keep your writing brief and clear. Anticipate questions.

The time available for budget review is scarce and the capacity for rounds of questions on agency DPs is very limited. OFM is likely to discard or require agencies to rework DPs if they are unclear, if requested information is missing, if assumptions are incomplete or if expected performance impacts are not explained.

Required elements of a DP

OFM uses DP information to evaluate the merit of your requests. DPs are composed of purposeful questions to collect key information needed to analyze the request. We expect justification materials to vary in length and complexity, depending on the proposal. All DP questions in ABS are detailed below. Make your DPs concise and compelling. The DP should be understandable by an audience that is not expert on your agency or the issues.

Use approved codes to designate change items
With few exceptions (see following note), agencies are free to use any combination of two-digit DP codes (e.g., alpha/alpha, alpha/numeric, numeric/numeric and numeric/alpha). “DP code” and “RecSum code” are terms of art in the budget community and used interchangeably in this document. ABS enforces allowable codes and titles.

Note: OFM designates a series of required codes for certain common ML and policy level (PL) changes (see [Chapter 5](#)). RecSum codes containing the letters O or I are restricted to prevent confusion with zero and one.

DP codes require two attributes

- **DP type**
 - » Central services
 - » Compensation
 - » Transfer, or
 - » Other

Most agency budget requests will fall under “other”. Global items have predetermined DP types

- **DP cost type**
 - » One-time
 - » Ongoing
 - » Custom. Custom indicates that the request is a mix of one-time and ongoing costs. For example:
 - A new program implementation has one-time equipment costs associated with ongoing staff costs.
 - A new program implementation is staged or has ramp-costs.

Cost type is automatically determined by the DP 4-year fiscal detail. Ensure all DPs have fiscal years 3 and 4 populated, as appropriate.

DPs require point of contact information

Required ABS point of contact information includes:

- First name
- Last name
- Email address
- Phone

Point of contact is not necessarily the individual who prepared the DP, but rather the point of contact with subject matter expertise and the authority to speak relative to the DP information.

Note: ABS and enterprise reporting reports will sort DP codes as follows:

1. AA to ZZ
2. A0 to Z9
3. 00 to 99
4. 0A to 9Z

Other general preparation requirements

Rounding protocols for dollars and FTEs

- All fiscal detail in ABS is dollars in thousands.
- Round all expenditure, revenue, object, and activity amounts to whole dollars in thousands. Round fractions of whole dollars from \$1.0 through \$499.0 to the next lower whole dollar in thousands, and \$500 through \$999 to the next higher whole dollar in thousands.
- Round FTE amounts to the nearest tenth.

Note: ABS and Enterprise Reporting (ER) reports will be accepted as produced.

Display of negative numbers

Use parentheses to indicate numbers reflecting expenditure decreases.

Required fund code conventions for budget documents

With few exceptions, use the legacy state accounting system coding scheme detailed in the OFM [Fund Reference Manual](#) for account numbers and other designations used in budget documents.

Fund codes require both the account number and the appropriation type code that indicates the source character of the funds involved. Separate the one-digit appropriation type from the three-digit account number with a hyphen as shown below.

General Fund

The following fund sources, where applicable, must be identified separately:

- 001-1** General Fund-State. Appropriation Type 1.
- 001-2** General Fund-Federal. Appropriation Type 2.
- 001-5** General Fund-Other Federal Fixed Grants (DSHS and DOH only). Appropriation Type 5.
- 001-7** General Fund-Private/Local. Appropriation Type 7.
- 001-8** General Fund-Federal Stimulus. Appropriation Type 8.
- 001-0** General Fund-Federal: Social Services Block Grant – Title XX (DSHS only). Appropriation Type 0.
- 001-A** General Fund-Federal: Family Support/Child Welfare – Title IV (DSHS only). Appropriation Type A.
- 001-C** General Fund-Federal: Medicaid – Title XIX. Appropriation Type C.
- 001-D** General Fund-Federal TANF. (DSHS only). Appropriation Type D.
- 001-E** General Fund-Federal: Child Care Development Funds (DSHS only). Appropriation Type E.

Other appropriated treasury funds

Identify other appropriated treasury funds by the following appropriation types:

State: Appropriation Type 1

Federal: Appropriation Type 2

Private/Local: Appropriation Type 7

Nonappropriated funds

All nonappropriated funds, regardless of original source of funding, must use Appropriation Type 6.

Agency request legislation proposals with a budget impact

Proposals must be submitted to the Governor’s Executive Policy Office through BEARS, consistent with the agency budget submittal due dates. Agency request legislation instructions will be available on OFM’s budget [webpage](#) when issued. Proposed agency request legislation will be reviewed with the Governor this fall. Agencies must include DPs in the budget submittal for any proposals with revenue or expenditure impacts. HEAL Act agencies submitting agency request legislation are also required to complete an Environmental Justice Assessment and post information on this assessment on [OFM’s website](#).

Ensure that other agencies affected by your agency’s proposed legislation are aware of the request; OFM requires fiscal notes from each affected agency. Each agency will also need to include the fiscal impact in its budget submittal.

The Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program approves or denies budget program structure change requests in mid-June

Budget program or subprogram structure changes recommended by OFM must obtain approval from the LEAP Committee as required by Chapter [43.88 RCW](#). Refer to OFM’s budget program structure change request [memo](#) for guidance on this process.

Include the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee audit responses in budget submittal

RCW [43.88.090](#)(1) requires agencies to reflect consideration of applicable JLARC performance audit recommendations in their budget requests. Specifically, “the estimates must reflect that the agency considered any alternatives to reduce costs or improve service delivery identified in the findings of a performance audit of the agency by JLARC. Nothing in this subsection requires performance audit findings to be published as part of the budget.”

See JLARC [audits and studies](#). Agencies should also be prepared to provide information to JLARC.

2025-27 BIENNIAL BUDGET DECISION PACKAGE

Agency: Agency number and name

DP code/title: 2-digit RecSum code and short, descriptive title limited to **35 characters**. This will appear on Decision Packages and Recommendation Summary reports.

Budget period: Session for which a budget change is proposed

Budget level: ML or PL

Agency RecSum text: A brief description of your proposal. A cogent “elevator pitch” including a concise problem statement, proposed solution and outcomes affected by the proposal. Agencies should strive not to exceed 100 words. Summary text need not include references to financial or FTEs data, which is displayed directly below in the fiscal detail.

Fiscal detail

Operating Expenditures	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund AAA-X	Xxx	yyy	zzz	Aaa
Fund BBB-Y	Xxx	yyy	zzz	Aaa
Total Expenditures	Xxx	yyy	zzz	Aaa
Biennial Totals	\$###,###,###		\$###,###,###	
Staffing	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
FTEs	x.y	x.y	x.y	x.y
Average Annual	x.y		x.y	
Object of Expenditure	FY 6	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Obj. X	Xxx	yyy	zzz	Aaa
Obj. X	Xxx	yyy	zzz	Aaa
Obj. X	Xxx	yyy	zzz	Aaa
Revenue	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund AAA-X	x.y	x.y	x.y	x.y
Fund BBB-X	x.y	x.y	x.y	x.y
Total Revenue	Xxx	yyy	zzz	aaa
Biennial Totals	\$###,###,###		\$###,###,###	

Package description

Your detailed package description should expand upon the RecSum description provided above. This detailed description should provide the Governor, the Legislature, OFM and the public an understanding of the problem you are addressing, your proposed solution and anticipated outcomes or consequences.

To thoroughly describe the package and its justification, agencies are strongly encouraged to use:

- Detailed narrative descriptions
- Informative tables
- Charts and graphs
- Logic models
- Timelines
- Flowcharts
- Maps or other graphics

High-quality narrative descriptions whether for an addition, or a reduction will address the following questions:

What is the problem, opportunity, or priority you are addressing with the request?

- Describe in detail the problem you propose to solve.
- What is the relevant history or context in which the DP request is made?
- Why is this the opportune time to address this problem?
- Have you previously proposed this request? If so, when, and how was it received in the budgeting process at that time?

What is your proposal?

- How do you propose to address this problem, opportunity, or priority?
- Why is this proposal the best option?
- Identify who will be affected by this DP and how.
- How many clients will or will not be served? Served by whom?
- If this impacts a central service, which specific central service and how?

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

1. Please describe in detail how this proposal is likely to benefit communities and populations who have historically been excluded by governmental decisions. Include both demographic and geographic information about communities.
2. Describe how your agency engaged with communities and populations, particularly those who have been historically excluded and marginalized by governmental decisions?
3. What input did your agency receive and how was it incorporated into your proposal?
4. Explain why and how these equity impacts will be addressed, i.e., consider communities or populations excluded or disproportionately impacted by the proposal.

What are you purchasing and how does it solve the problem?

- What will this funding package buy, reduce, or eliminate?
- What services and/or materials will be provided, reduced, or eliminated?
 - » When and to whom will these service level changes impact?
- How will these service level changes achieve the desired outputs, efficiencies, and outcomes?

What alternatives did you explore and why was this option chosen?

- What are the consequences of not funding this proposal?
- Describe the pros/cons of alternatives. Explain why this proposal, whether for an enhancement or a reduction, is the best option.

- What other options did you explore? For example, did you consider:
 - » Options with lower costs.
 - » Services provided by other agency or unit of government.
 - » Regulatory or statutory changes to streamline agency processes.
 - » Redeployment of existing resources to maximize efficient use of current funding.
 - » Option to maintain the status quo.

What resources does the agency already have that are dedicated to this purpose?

- Please list any related maintenance level DPs that are related to this request.
- Explain what the agency can accomplish within existing resources – reference meaningful metrics when possible (proportion of eligible population served or size and number of grants distributed, for example). What implementation decisions does the agency make to live within these existing resources?
- Provide a list of budget items from the past two biennia that are related to this purpose. Please include a brief description, information about fund sources, and note if the funding was one time or ongoing.

Assumptions and calculations

You must clearly display the caseload/workload/service-level changes and cost/savings assumptions and calculations supporting proposed expenditure and revenue changes. An attached electronic version (Excel) of detailed fiscal models and/or fiscal backup information may augment but not replace your description here.

The intent here is not to repeat the fiscal detail summarized in the package description above, but to expand and provide all underlying assumptions and calculations associated with this proposal. All calculations must include impacts to the 2025-27 *and* 2027-29 biennia and must support the fiscal summary detail.

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

Where a proposal is an expansion, reduction, elimination or alteration of a *current program or service*, provide detailed historical financial information for the prior two biennia (2021-23 and 2023-25).

Detailed assumptions and calculations

- Provide detailed caseload/workload and cost information associated with adopting this proposal.
- Identify discrete expenditure/revenue calculations. Many DPs contain multiple components to achieve a desired outcome. If this package contains discrete funding proposals, the fiscal models or details must break out the complete costs/savings of each component part.
- Clearly explain all one-time expenditure or revenue components.
- For budget requests funded or eligible to be funded with Climate Commitment Act accounts (Climate Investment Account, Carbon Emission Reduction Account, Climate Commitment Account, the Natural Climate Solutions Account, Air Quality and Health Disparities Account, Climate Active Transportation Account, and the Climate Transit Program Account) please describe the estimated percentage and amount of the requested funds that will go towards creating direct and meaningful benefits in overburdened communities and defined in OFM's [OBC map](#) or as determined by the agency. If applicable please include your methodology for making this estimate, including project/awards lists if available.

Workforce assumptions

Include FTE information by job classification, including salary and benefits, startup costs and any additional staff related ongoing costs.

Historical funding

Available funding for this current program or service in the 2025-27 biennium. For ML decision packages, include all funding through CFL. For PL decision packages, include all funding through ML.

FY2026

- FTE = xx FTE
- Total Funds = \$x million
- Near General Fund = \$x million
- Other Funds = \$x million

FY2027

- FTE = xx FTE
- Total Funds = \$x million
- Near General Fund = \$x million
- Other Funds = \$x million

Strategic and performance outcomes

Strategic framework

- Describe how this package relates to the Governor's Results Washington goal areas and statewide priorities?
- How does the package support the agency's strategic plan?
- Identify how this proposal affects agency activity funding by amount and fund source.

Performance outcomes

- Describe and quantify the specific performance outcomes you expect from this funding change.
- What outcomes and results, either positive or negative, will occur?
- Identify all Lean initiatives and their expected outcomes.
- Include incremental performance metrics.

Other collateral connections

Intergovernmental. Describe in detail any impacts to tribal, regional, county or city governments or any political subdivision of the state. Provide anticipated support or opposition. Impacts to other state agencies must be described in detail.

Stakeholder impacts. Agencies must identify non-governmental stakeholders impacted by this proposal. Provide anticipated support or opposition.

Legal or administrative mandates. Describe in detail if this proposal is in response to litigation, an audit finding, executive order or task force recommendations.

Changes from current law. Except for appropriations acts, describe in detail any necessary changes to existing statutes, rules, or contracts. Where changes in statute are required, cabinet agencies must provide agency request legislation as an attachment to this DP *and* submit the request through BEARS.

State workforce impacts. Describe in detail all impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

State facilities impacts. Describe in detail all impacts to facilities and workplace needs (see [Chapter 9](#) - Leases and Maintenance). Describe in detail all impacts to capital budget requests.

Puget Sound recovery. If this request is related to Puget Sound recovery efforts, see [Chapter 14](#) of the budget instructions for additional instructions.

Governor's salmon strategy. If this request is related to implementing the Governor's salmon strategy, see [Chapter 14](#) of the budget instructions for additional instructions.

Other supporting materials. Attach or reference any other supporting materials or information that will help analysts, policymakers and the public understand and prioritize your request.

Information technology (IT). Does this DP include funding for any IT-related costs including hardware, software (to include cloud-based services), contracts or staff? If the answer is yes, you will be prompted to attach a complete IT addendum. (See [Chapter 10](#) for additional requirements.)