



The Department of Agriculture's legislative decision packages aim to advance equity by ensuring access to food for lower-income and vulnerable consumers, addressing financial stress for farmers through targeted support measures, fostering diverse leadership within the agricultural sector, and developing a comprehensive labeling program to promote and differentiate Washington-produced products. These initiatives are designed to enhance economic stability, support inclusive leadership development, and strengthen local agricultural markets.

<p><b>Advancing Equity and HEAL Act Funding</b></p> <p>\$1.243M, ongoing - GFS</p>	<p>WSDA is dedicated to advancing equity but has faced challenges with underfunding, receiving only partial support for its full legislative needs. The current proposal seeks to secure the previously requested funds and additional funding to cover other expenses identified to better apply environmental justice principles to the critical agency functions specified in the HEAL Act.</p>
<p><b>Sustained Enhanced Food Assistance</b></p> <p>\$93.25M, ongoing - GFS</p>	<p>Demand for food assistance at community-based organizations is rising due to ongoing economic impacts of COVID-19 and high food prices, particularly affecting low-income individuals. To meet this unprecedented need, increased funding and capacity investments in the emergency food system are essential. Hunger relief organizations have seen record client visits and require sustained support for staffing, food purchases, and essential facilities.</p>
<p><b>AG Mental Health - Reducing Farm &amp; Ranch Financial Stressors</b></p> <p>\$608,000, ongoing - GFS</p>	<p>Farm production expenses have increased in recent years while farm income has decreased resulting in financial stress. WSDA requests \$304,000 annually to continue supporting the Farm Financial Literacy Project (FFLP) and hire one additional FTE to expand the program, servicing a wider range of producers, including Spanish speakers.</p>
<p><b>Growing Diverse Leaders in Agriculture - Part II</b></p> <p>\$2.476M, ongoing - GFS</p>	<p>WSDA requests funding for eight projects and programs designed to build and sustain a robust network of partnerships with 4-H, The National FFA Organization (FFA), Washington State University (WSU), Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS), Washington State Tree Fruit Association (WSTFA), Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation, Semillero de Ideas, the Internship Program, and funding to support local youth agricultural community programs.</p>
<p><b>Labeling and Promotion Program for Washington Food and Agricultural Products</b></p> <p>\$1.317M, ongoing - GFS</p>	<p>After passage of SB 5341, WSDA created a location-based promotion program for Washington food and agricultural products. Additional funding is needed for program implementation including, but not limited to, website development, logo design, marketing material creation, on-going marketing campaign support, membership management and continued stakeholder engagement.</p>
<p><b>Local Food and Infrastructure Grants</b></p> <p>\$2M, FY2027 - GFS</p>	<p>This proposal requests an additional \$2 million in FY2027 to expand grant funding capacity and increase equity by providing longer time horizons for smaller producers who need more technical support, and to provide more time for the seasonality of agricultural production.</p>
<p><b>Improving Services to Assist Underrepresented Farmers &amp; Ranchers</b></p> <p>\$593,000, ongoing - GFS</p>	<p>WSDA's 2022 report highlighted significant barriers faced by underrepresented farmers and ranchers, underscoring the need for better technical assistance, regulatory guidance, and access to resources. The agency requests funding to implement equity-focused recommendations by expanding services through its Regional Markets Program with input from affected groups.</p>
<p><b>Small Meat and Poultry Assistance and Capacity Grants Program</b></p> <p>\$4.484M, ongoing - GFS</p>	<p>Small, direct-marketing farms, ranches, and local processors are vital to Washington's meat economy and food system resilience, especially highlighted during pandemic disruptions. Despite their importance, they have historically lacked support; WSDA requests ongoing funding to continue providing assistance and grants to these essential local businesses.</p>
<p><b>Organic Inspection Credit</b></p> <p>\$1.313M, ongoing - GFS</p>	<p>Organic certification is funded by annual user fees in Washington. The Washington State Organic Inspection Credit will offset the cost of the required annual inspection, decreasing the financial burden for businesses working to achieve or maintain organic certification and increasing participation and market opportunities for Washington businesses.</p>

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