

FY 2020 Operations Funding Change Requests (revised)

Agency Priority:	1
Program Description:	Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services
Requested FTE:	0.0
State Appropriations:	\$840,000
Funding Description:	Funding Request for State Appropriations
Purpose:	Maintain necessary state match and maintenance of effort funding associated with Title I federal funds

Increased funding maximizes services to Oklahomans with disabilities, enhancing their opportunity to become self-sufficient through employment and become independent in their homes and communities. This means more Oklahomans can terminate their dependence on state and federal programs and move towards becoming taxpayers. This funding increase will positively impact the stability of the Oklahoma economy. The ratio of funding available is \$4 federal dollars to every \$1 dollar of state matching funds. Funding this request will allow DRS to fully match all of the federal funds available to the State of Oklahoma and keeps DRS on target to put over 2,200 Oklahoman's with disabilities to work each year. The SFY-2020 appropriation increase requested is \$840,000. This increase will allow DRS to fund all obligations associated with the federal funds awarded to the State of Oklahoma, including match and maintenance of effort. Not providing this funding would cause the State of Oklahoma to forfeit additional federal funds from the 2019 grants and severely reduce the services available to disabled Oklahomans who want to return to work.

DRS continues to work with other state agencies to coordinate services to common participants and to improve efficiencies. The Agency is an active participant in the Oklahoma Workforce System as well as the Governor's Council on Workforce. The workforce and Opportunity Improvement Act, the guiding federal regulation for the VR program, requires DRS to participate with 19 different programs across the State to better prepare individuals for successful employment outcomes. Providing this necessary funding would allow full access to available funds to continue serving existing clients and expand services to better reach underserved populations.

Agency Priority:	2
Program Description:	Oklahoma School for the Blind
Requested FTE:	0.0
State Appropriations:	\$156,000
Funding Description:	Funding Request for State Appropriations
Purpose:	Annual maintenance request

The Oklahoma School for the Blind in Muskogee provides effective education options for children with all levels of blindness or visual impairments. The goals of the school are to provide an environment that maximizes the learning opportunities for children with disabilities, certify their learning in accordance with State standards and provide a solid foundation of knowledge that the students can lean on well into adulthood. OSB also serves as a resource center to complement the spectrum of services provided within common education for the State of Oklahoma. Communication and literacy are the two most crucial components for learning. OSB is able to tailor the education to the needs of the student. Students learn to be literate through braille and experience different levels of communication technology that establish a strong foundation for a lifetime of learning. OSB is 100% state appropriated. They do not receive funding from local ad valorem taxes or the State Department of Education funding formula. The School received the teacher pay raise this last year; otherwise, they have not received an appropriation increase since SFY-2010. Additionally, OSB was reduced disproportionately to the rest of Oklahoma's educational system during SFY-2016 and SFY-2017. Operating budgets have been shifted as necessary to provide a safe and healthy learning environment. An adjustment based on the Consumer Price Index would restore funding and allow for ongoing incremental economic adjustments to the school's funding.

As a residential facility, OSB has the same budgetary challenges as all the other local school districts in regards to the rising cost of food, fuel and utilities, but with the additional challenge of operating a residential facility. The Oklahoma Constitution mandates that the State provide for and support the School for the Blind. The adjustment to the Teacher Salary Schedule was funded during SFY-2018 and OSB received an 8.3% increase compared to initial SFY-18 appropriations. Since the last appropriation increase in 2009, the Bureau of Labor shows that the Consumer Price Index has risen 17.920%. The 2018 CPI adjustment indicates an increase of 2.1% over the previous year. DRS has chosen to use the CPI as a reasonable and unbiased metric for economic growth. OSB still lags 9.6% behind the CPI growth rate. A maintenance appropriation adjustment based on this most recent increase of 2.1% would result in a \$156,000 budget request for the School for the Blind. This would allow for economic adjustments to the school's funding that are not otherwise available.

Agency Priority:	3
Program Description:	Oklahoma School for the Deaf
Requested FTE:	0.0
State Appropriations:	\$192,000
Funding Description:	Funding Request for State Appropriations
Purpose:	Annual maintenance request

The Oklahoma School for the Deaf in Sulphur provides effective education options for children with all levels of deaf or hard of hearing impairments. The goals of the school are to provide an environment that maximizes the learning opportunities for children with disabilities, certify their learning in accordance with State standards and provide a solid foundation of knowledge that the students can lean on well into adulthood. OSD also serves as a resource center to complement the spectrum of services provided within common education for the State of Oklahoma. Communication and literacy are the two most crucial components for learning. OSD is able to tailor the education to the needs of the student. Students learn and communicate using sign language and experience different levels of communication technology that establish a strong foundation for a lifetime of learning. OSD is 100% state appropriated. They do not receive funding from local ad valorem taxes or the State Department of Education funding formula. The School received the teacher pay raise this last year; otherwise, the School for the Deaf had not received an appropriation increase since SFY-2010. Additionally, OSD was reduced disproportionately to the rest of Oklahoma's educational system during SFY-2016 and SFY-2017. Operating budgets have been shifted as necessary to provide a safe and healthy learning environment. An adjustment based on the Consumer Price Index would restore funding and allow for ongoing incremental economic adjustments to the school's funding.

As a residential facility, OSD has the same budgetary challenges as all the other local school districts in regards to the rising cost of food, fuel and utilities, but with the additional challenge of operating a residential facility. The Oklahoma Constitution mandates that the State provide for and support the School for the Deaf. The adjustment to the Teacher Salary Schedule was funded during SFY-2018 and OSD received an 8.3% increase compared to initial SFY-18 appropriations. Since the last appropriation increase in 2009, the Bureau of Labor shows that the Consumer Price Index has risen 17.9%. The 2018 CPI adjustment indicates an increase of 2.1% over the previous year. DRS has chosen to use the CPI as a reasonable and unbiased metric for economic growth. OSD still lags 9.6% behind the CPI growth rate. A maintenance appropriation adjustment based on this most recent increase of 2.1% would result in a \$192,000 budget request for the School for the Deaf. This would allow for economic adjustments to the school's funding that are not otherwise available.

Agency Priority:	4
Program Description:	Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Requested FTE:	0.0
State Appropriations:	\$300,000
Funding Description:	Funding Request for State Appropriations
Purpose:	Purchase equipment and textbooks for the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center

The Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center serves children in pre-k through 12th grade who attend public and private schools in Oklahoma. Braille and large print textbooks, instructional materials and specialized educational aids are provided to children who are blind or visually impaired, have a physical disability or a medically diagnosed learning disability that makes it difficult to use regular print.

The Aim Center currently serves 1,032 students across the State of Oklahoma. Of those, 753 qualify for the Federal Quota reimbursement funds, but those funds are limited to an average of \$272.69 per student. Of the students DRS is currently serving, 279 students do not qualify for any federal quota funds. There are a little over one thousand students each year that need services and on average 192 new students are identified each year. Federal quota funds alone do not adequately serve these students. Each student is as unique as are their needs for accessible materials. The goal is to provide sufficient equipment and textbooks for them to be at the same starting point as their sighted peers. On average, students need \$750 worth of equipment and textbooks to maximize their opportunity to be successful in the classroom and beyond. DRS is requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$300,000 for FY-2020 to better serve these students across all the school districts of Oklahoma.

This population is not receiving an equal and appropriate level of equipment and textbooks comparable to what sighted students receive. Schools must look to multiple resources and take additional steps to acquire needed equipment, further delaying the services and limiting learning time. An appropriation would provide for a single point of contact to assist the school districts in identifying and acquiring the equipment. It is expected that this funding would improve services to consumers and bolster their opportunity for success.

Agency Priority:	5
Program Description:	Oklahoma School for the Deaf
Requested FTE:	0.0
State Appropriations:	\$600,000
Funding Description:	Funding Request for State Appropriations
Purpose:	Additional Funding for Senior Citizens Hearing Aid Program

DRS is requesting \$600,000 to improve access to communication equipment for hearing impaired Oklahomans. In 1986, the Telecommunications for the Hearing Impaired Act was passed and the programs offered in conjunction with this act are; Senior Citizen Hearing Aid Program, Children's Hearing Aid Program, Equipment Distribution Program and the TTY/Telephone Relay Service. As technology has changed, the priority of funding the programs has also changed. In 1995 the Senior Citizen Hearing Aid Program began and quickly emerged as the highest priority for the fund. Currently there is a waiting list of 740 senior citizens and the fund had the fiscal capacity to serve 175 during SFY-2018. This would make the waiting list time about 4 years. It is likely that seniors on the list may pass before they are served by this program. The loss of hearing in this vulnerable senior population can be the catalyst that leads to additional health and wellness complications. The inability to hear can lead to isolation, depression, compromised safety and the inability to continue to live independently.

This funding would allow for services to be extended to nearly 800 senior citizens each year. This would augment the earmarked funding received through the Telecommunications for the Hearing Impaired Act that places a .05 cent surcharge on each phone line in Oklahoma. The surcharge is only on land lines and as technology has changed, consumers have elected to not have land lines, opting for the convenience of cellphones, which has led to a 66% drop in revenue over the last eleven years. Twenty eight states have added the surcharge to cellphone lines, but Oklahoma has not chosen to make this change to the Act. Fulfilling the funding request would allow Oklahoma to better serve this vulnerable population and improve the lives of senior Oklahoman's.