

Washington State Main Street Program
2023 Legislative Priorities
TALKING POINTS

OVERVIEW:

The Washington State Main Street Program (WSMSP) is a major driver of small business development, historic preservation, and community placemaking in Washington State.

To sustain continued recovery and resiliency on Main Street and support the increasing number of communities and small businesses served, **we strongly support Governor Inslee's budget which includes continuing present funding levels for the Washington State Main Street Program for the 2023-25 biennium through an increase in \$700,000 over current maintenance level funding to maintain services for the program.**

What is the Washington State Main Street Program?

- The WSMSP supports a network of **over 70 communities** across the state in implementing a comprehensive economic development strategy built around a community's unique heritage and attributes.
- The WSMSP is a program of the Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, managed under contract by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation.
- The WSMSP was able to double its staffing (from 2 to 4) in 2021 thanks to its current funding level. There are currently four full-time staff dedicated to a very large network, with Washington **still falling behind Main Street America's national standard** of one state staff to every ten local communities (standard is 1:10; WSMSP is at 1:18).

Why is it important?

- The power of Main Street in Washington State is irrefutable. Not only is Main Street **the most effective economic recovery tool our communities have**, but it also has a **proven positive return on investment**. A recent Impact Study demonstrates that for every \$1 the state invests in the program, a return of \$1.58 is generated in state revenues and showcasing how Main Street makes economic, fiscal, and social sense as a powerful tool and investment strategy.
- The 2022 Business Resiliency Study proves that Main Street districts were more resilient through the pandemic *because* the infrastructure, most importantly the presence of a local Main Street organization supported by WSMSP, was already in place to support small businesses and rally community members.
- With growing interest in Main Street across the state, **WSMSP has experienced consistently increasing demand for services**. Our communities need continual care and access to resources and support to withstand and even thrive within uncertainty.
- In [*insert Main Street Community here*], expanded WSMSP services enabled us to [*share a concrete example highlighting the benefits of expanded services to your community*].

What did the Legislature do last biennium?

In the 2021-23 budget, the Legislature provided DAHP \$700,000 in one-time additional Main Street program funding to increase program staff and enhance the services and support each of the participating communities receives. This enabled the WSMSP to meet the growing needs and management demands of the program.

What is being asked for this biennium?

We join the WTHP in requesting that the Legislature maintain present funding levels for the Main Street Program for the 2023-25 biennium through a similar increase of \$700,000 over maintenance level funding to maintain services for these local Main Street Communities that work tirelessly to support small businesses, create resources and partnerships, and build community. **This is not an increase over 2021-23 funding levels – it would maintain current 2021-23 funding levels for the 2023-25 biennium.**

General Best Practices

- **Prepare for the meeting:** Information and messages to convey what you want them to do.
 - **Introduce yourself:** Name, affiliation, constituent
 - **State the problem:** And how they can help. Allow legislator to provide feedback
 - Be short and concise, meetings can be anywhere from 2 to 15 mins
 - **Describe the impact for your Main Street community:** Relate at least one concrete example highlighting how the increased WSMSP services benefitted your community, and why they are still needed.
 - **Talk about what you know:** You might get asked questions. Answer what you know. It is OK if you don't know the answer.
 - **Leave Information:** Legislative Agenda
 - **Meet with the LA:** If your legislator isn't available, the LA can be a good alternative.
 - **Follow up:** After the meeting send a note thanking them for the meeting and restating concerns and asks. Provide further information if needed.
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Follow-Up Materials

- Use the "WTHP legislative agenda_Main Street_2023" document during your presentation and/or send as a follow-up!
- You might also share these full studies during or following your conversation:
 - o [Washington Main Street Impact Report \(2011-2019\)](#)
 - o [Resiliency of Main Street Businesses Study \(2020-2021\)](#)
- Any personal accounts of how the WSMSP (especially services or resources delivered directly by WSMSP staff) has benefited your organization and/or community