

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: USBE Program Evaluation Specialists Critical FTE

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Director Reviewer: Leah Voorhies

Nature of Request (Select all that apply):

☒ **Policy Change:** Creating, amending, or repealing Utah State Code.
(Complete Section 4)

☒ **New/Increased Funding:** Seeking new financial resources. (Complete Section 3)

☐ **Efficiency / Reduction:** Proposing the elimination or reduction of a program, mandate, or funding stream. (Complete Section 3 and/or 4)

Purpose Statement (BLUF - Bottom Line Up Front):

We are requesting \$300,000 in ongoing funding to hire two (2) Specialist-Level Program Evaluators to establish USBE's dedicated agency infrastructure for rigorous, data-driven program evaluation. These positions will directly operationalize the statewide evaluation standards enacted under

S.B. 324 (2026) and UCA 63G-6b-402. Funding this request guarantees that taxpayer dollars are directed strictly to programs that demonstrate verified, empirical impact on student outcomes aligned with USBE strategic priorities and legislative intent.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

The Problem:

Every year, major education initiatives and pilot programs are enacted with mandatory implementation deadlines but zero funding or specialized personnel for empirical evaluation. Furthermore, S.B. 324 (2026) and UCA 63G-6b-402 established a rigorous statewide Evaluation Framework requiring formal Pre-Analysis Plans, randomized control trials (RCTs) or quasi-experimental counterfactual designs, strict data privacy protections (UCA 63A-19, FERPA), and independent evaluator oversight. USBE currently lacks the specialized human infrastructure required to build pre-analysis plans, execute advanced statistical modeling, or coordinate joint reviews with GOPB, LFA, and the Office of the Legislative Auditor General (OLAG). Without dedicated evaluators, new legislative mandates risk relying on unacceptable evaluation methods—such as simple pre-post or correlation-only analyses—that fail state framework standards and leave taxpayer investments unvetted.

The Source:

This request originated internally within USBE designed to fulfill statutory directives under S.B. 324 (2026) and address legislative calls for transparent, outcome-based fiscal oversight across all public education appropriations.

Projected Results:

Compliance with S.B. 324 Standards: Establish agency-wide technical capacity to author Initial Pre-Analysis Plans (logic models, counterfactual

methodologies, construct validity, target metrics) and oversee Final Pre-Analysis Plans in collaboration with GOPB, LFA, and OLAG.

Methodological Rigor & Causal Attribution: Conduct evaluations utilizing approved RCT or quasi-experimental designs (e.g., propensity score matching, difference-in-differences) to isolate true program effects from external confounding variables.

Identified Fiscal Offsets & Sunsets: Provide objective, data-backed "keep, modify, or sunset" recommendations to legislative appropriations subcommittees, identifying underperforming or redundant programs to safely reallocate millions in public funds.

Consequence of Inaction:

Without dedicated oversight, new mandates operate without the performance data required to verify their impact. This prevents the state from identifying and sunseting underperforming programs, leading to the inefficient use of limited public funds. Without dedicated program evaluators, the state lacks the necessary mechanisms to monitor and track the ROI of educational mandates. This oversight gap creates a fiscal risk, as ineffective programs may continue to be funded indefinitely without empirical support. Establishing this infrastructure is essential to ensuring that taxpayer resources are prioritized for interventions that deliver measurable, high-quality outcomes for students.

Evidence & Data:

Recent legislative history highlights a growing structural gap: major statutory bills create complex mandates but routinely provide \$0 for analytical personnel. For example, no funding was provided for the required

evaluation and management staff in H.B. 312 S6 (2026), S.B. 241 (2026, 5 FTEs needed), H.B. 448 (2026), or S.B. 312 (2026). Even when staffing funds are included—such as S.B. 267 (2026)—funding is often strictly one-time (\$159,000), leaving ongoing evaluation requirements completely unfunded (\$0). Dedicated, ongoing funding for two Specialist-Level Program Evaluators creates a permanent mechanism to meet S.B. 324 quality benchmarks, protect student data under UCA 63A-19, track differential attrition rates, and deliver transparent reporting to GOPB, LFA, and OLAG.

SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

Financial Ask:

- **FY 2027 Ongoing Requested:** \$300,000 (Estimated at \$150,000 per specialist position, inclusive of salary and benefits)
- **FY 2027 One-Time Requested:** \$0
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** Note: The long-term objective of these positions is to **generate millions in future offsets** by identifying failed programs for legislative sunseting

Future Obligations:

☐ Yes

☒ No

Itemized Budget Request:

	FY 2027 (Current)	FY 2028 (proposed)
2 Specialist -Level Program Evaluator FTEs	\$0	\$300,000
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$0	\$300,000

New USBE FTEs Requested: 2 FTEs

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

No. Current staff are fully leveraged to capacity maintaining baseline statutory duties, regulatory enforcement, and specific program management. Independent evaluation requires dedicated, un-siloed data and policy analysts who have the specific technical skill sets to run longitudinal, value-added control evaluations across multiple school districts.

If no FTEs are required, explain.

Performance Measures:

Measure 1 (Pre-Analysis & Methodological Rigor): Author or approve Initial Pre-Analysis Plans—complying 100% with S.B. 324 / GOPB-LFA Framework standards (logic models, counterfactual designs, target outcome values)—for a minimum of six (6) major legislatively funded pilots or Board initiatives within the first 12 months of hire.

Measure 2 (ROI & Legislative Sunset Recommendations): Complete longitudinal evaluations featuring approved quasi-experimental or RCT designs, delivering formal "Keep, Modify, or Sunset" policy and fiscal recommendations (including full transparency code and data packages for OLAG review) to legislative appropriations subcommittees to track Return on Investment (ROI).

SECTION 4: POLICY & STATUTE

Suggested Legislative Solution:

While this is a funding request for technical personnel, USBE strongly recommends that future legislative policy align with the governance structure established in S.B. 324 (2026) and UCA 63G-6b-402. Specifically, USBE supports statutory language requiring that any new major educational pilot program automatically incorporate:

1. A mandatory Pre-Analysis Plan validated by GOPB, LFA, and USBE prior to fund disbursement; and
2. An automatic 5-year statutory sunset clause tied directly to the final empirical evaluation findings generated by these funded FTEs.