Tool – Sponsors & Advocates Meeting Guide

Meeting with the legislative sponsor(s) of the authorizing bill for your workgroup, or the project's executive sponsor, and/or any of the interested parties who have been involved in the work, is a critical step for achieving mutual understanding of what the workgroup's output will be.

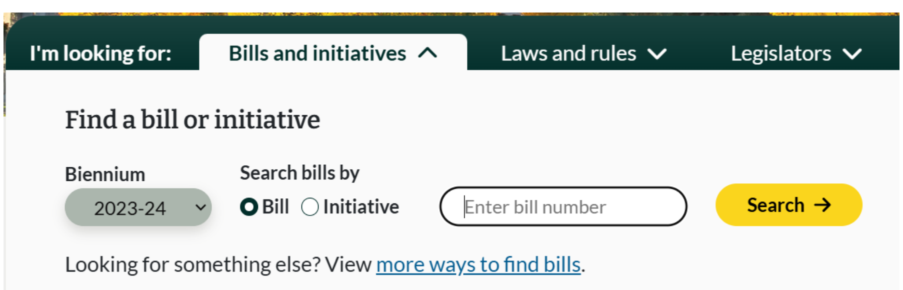
In this meeting, you will define:

- The workgroup topic
- The population impacted that has "lived experience"
- The outcome or product of the workgroup

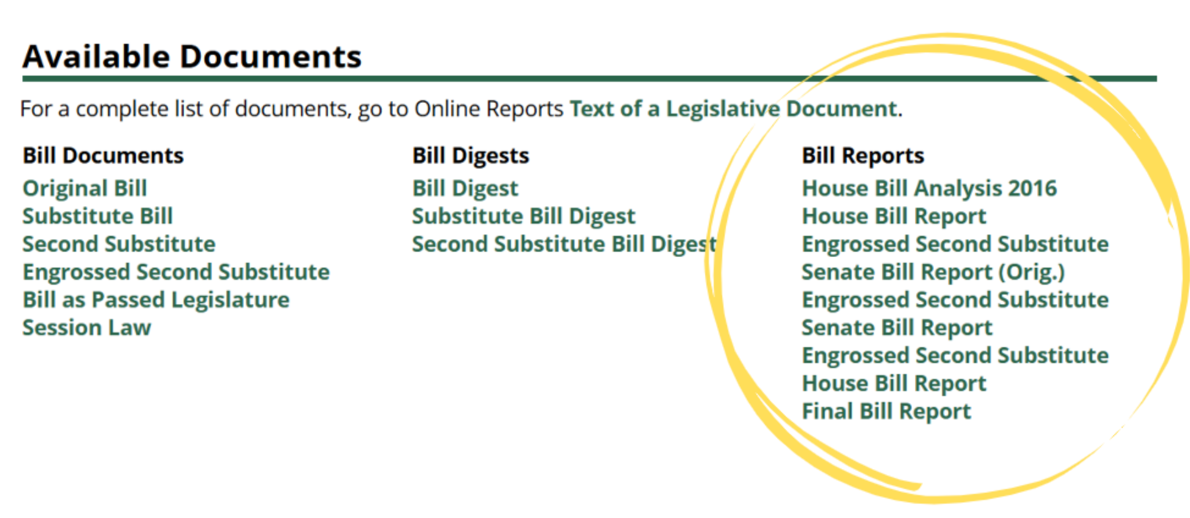
Legislation rarely goes into detail on the day-to-day management, expectations, or outcomes of workgroups. For example, a bill may require a workgroup to "provide recommendations" on a topic, but does not specify any details about those recommendations, leaving the task open to vastly different expectations. Use this conversation guide to ensure that you group is set up for success from the very beginning by establishing a shared understanding of the project.

1. Setting Up Your Meeting

Review the underlying legislation. You can do this by going to Washington State Legislature and searching for the bill number.



Once you are on the bill's webpage, an excellent resource that shouldn't be overlooked are the "Bill Reports" that are under the section titled "Available Documents." These tend to be written in more plain English than the legislation, and often include background and context that will be useful for this conversation.



Available Documents

For a complete list of documents, go to Online Reports **Text of a Legislative Document**.

Bill Documents	Bill Digests	Bill Reports
Original Bill	Bill Digest	House Bill Analysis 2016
Substitute Bill	Substitute Bill Digest	House Bill Report
Second Substitute	Second Substitute Bill Digest	Engrossed Second Substitute
Engrossed Second Substitute		Senate Bill Report (Orig.)
Bill as Passed Legislature		Engrossed Second Substitute
Session Law		Senate Bill Report
		Engrossed Second Substitute
		House Bill Report
		Final Bill Report

Reach out to the prime sponsor(s) of the legislation and ask them to provide the names and contact information for any relevant advocates, stakeholders, co-sponsors, or legislative staff who worked closely on the bill and would be an asset to this conversation. If they are willing to send out an introductory email on your behalf to this group, that is ideal.

Note: There may be two prime sponsors if a companion bill existed in both the House and Senate. In some cases, secondary signers may also be instrumental to include in this invitation.

Schedule a meeting with the bill sponsors and any additional advocates they suggested.

Save and attach the bill, the Final Bill Report, and your agenda to the meeting invitation so that all attendees can easily review these materials beforehand.

If your authorizing legislation is a budget proviso…

Find the budget bill (typically the State Operating Budget) and look up the proviso about your workgroup by doing a keyword search in the document using Ctrl+F. Search for keywords related to your project and you should be able to easily find the exact proviso that funds your workgroup or project.

State budgets, budget proposals, fiscal data, and easy-to-read educational guides for budget beginners and citizens can all be found on the WA State Fiscal Information website.

2. Defining the Workgroup Topic

Write down a list of the important nouns and key terms from the legislation on a whiteboard if you are meeting in person, or if you are meeting virtually by opening a note-taking document and sharing your screen. These definitions may seem obvious, but they are not. Underlying legislation can often be written in heavily legal and un-intuitive language that can be interpreted differently by each person who reads it.

Discuss what each key word means to this group and within the context of the intent of the legislation.

Make sure that you are collecting any definitions included in the RCW itself. You may also want to reference this [Statewide Diversity Equity and Inclusion Glossary produced by OFM](#).

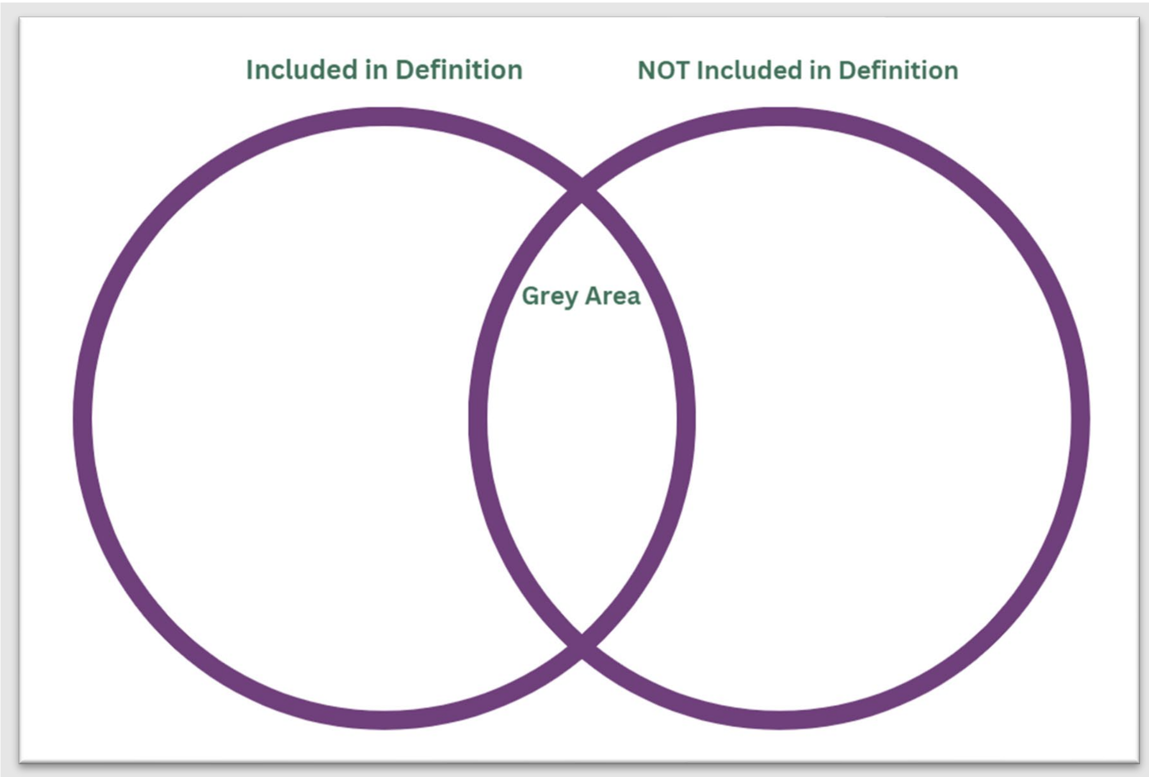
- Example: a workgroup regarding mental health for children could refer to many different experiences. Talk through what "mental health" means for the purpose of this group. Does the intent of the legislation imply a specific mental health issue such as depression, or is it trying to a vast spectrum of diagnoses?

3. Defining Lived Experience

Draw a Venn Diagram (see image below) to help visualize this conversation. Share your screen if the meeting is virtual or draw on a whiteboard if in person. Taking notes within the diagram in real-time can help people with visual learning patterns participate more fully in the conversation.

The Venn Diagram should include:

- one circle representing people or experiences that everyone agrees *definitely do* qualify as lived experience
- one circle representing people or experiences that everyone agrees *definitely do not* qualify as lived experience
- the intersecting middle section representing "grey areas" or people and experiences that might qualify but where there is some potential for disagreement. Acknowledging and describing what these grey areas are in advance will help avoid confusion later when recruiting and appointing workgroup members.



Remember that actual "lived experience" and the type of "lived experience" that is going to be practical for the workgroup may differ slightly. If we continue using the example of a workgroup regarding mental health needs in children, one might argue that the only people with relevant lived experience are people who are *currently children*. However, children under a certain age lack the mental capacity to serve on a government workgroup. On the other extreme, someone who experienced mental health issues as a child, but is now 80 years old, wouldn't have an experience that is recent enough for it to be relevant because their diagnoses, available treatment, and available school supports/interventions would be almost unrecognizable today.

For the purpose of this exercise, your team might decide that "lived experience" means anyone who experienced mental health difficulties as a child within the last 10 years who is now between the ages of 16 and 28 years old, or a parent of a young child who is currently experiencing mental health challenges.

4. Defining Outcome or Product of the Workgroup

Ask these questions of the meeting attendees:

- **What should the group output be?** Often this is defined very briefly in the underlying legislation, which might say something like "develop recommendations" on a given topic. Dig deeper: are these recommendations intended for legislators to pass new bills on, are they recommendations for agencies to implement or improve programming, are they recommendations regarding budget allocation? All of the above?

- If a written report or product is a goal of the group, **who is expected to produce the written deliverables?** Convening a group to have conversations is one thing, but producing a written product like a report is another. Do you expect the workgroup members (including any community members) to deliver actual work products like this? Or, will you as the overseeing agency staff be responsible for collecting input from meetings and compiling them into a final written product?
- **What will meeting participation look like for your community members?** Be specific: will meetings have guest presenters and speakers, or will they be more conversational and free flowing. Do you anticipate asking community members to prepare and present on topics? What would be the most useful structure for the meetings and for the work that happens in between meetings? How will consensus be achieved when (not if!) there is disagreement?
- **Is there a specific cadence or deadline for this work?** How many meetings, how often, and for how long will this workgroup convene?
- **What should the basic group agreements for conduct and participation be?** What happens if a member never shows up to a single meeting? What are the basic rules that will ensure the workgroup is healthy and doing its job?
  - *Don't* impose unnecessarily complicated, formal or rigid bylaws that are difficult to understand
  - *Do* make sure the expectations are decided on in advance so that potential community members can be aware of them in the application stage, and know that their attendance, participation, and respectful conduct is a condition of their membership to the group