



Washington State
**OFFICE OF
EQUITY**

THE OFFICE OF EQUITY
PRESENTS

COMMUNITY COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

VOLUME 2



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Introduction

Purpose

This document is intended to provide guidance to Washington State Agencies that establish Class One groups, such as boards, commissions, task forces, committees, and workgroups, in the executive, legislative, or judicial branches of Washington State government on compliance with [Second Substitute Senate Bill \(2SSB\) 5793](#) which states:

“The legislature finds that equitable public policy discussions should include individuals directly impacted by that policy. In order to do so, the legislature supports removing barriers to that participation. The legislature finds that asking community members with lower financial means to volunteer their time and expertise while state employees and representatives of advocacy organizations receive compensation from their respective agency or organization for their time and experience ultimately hinders full and open public participation. As a result, the legislature finds that removing financial barriers for those individuals fosters increased access to government and enriches public policy discussions and decisions, ultimately leading to more equitable and sustainable policy outcomes.”

“Subject to available funding, agencies may provide a stipend to individuals who are low income OR have lived experience to support their participation in class one groups when the agency determines such participation is desirable in order to implement the principles of equity described in RCW 43.06D.020, provided that the individuals are not otherwise compensated for their attendance at meetings.”

Underlying Philosophy

Public policy discussions should involve the individuals who are being or have been impacted by that policy or subject matter. By embracing co-creation, we advance a reality where community members are the experts of their own lives and are co-creators in the government decisions that impact them.

The intent of these guidelines is to remove barriers to participation in government actions, discussions, and decision-making, and to recognize the value and expertise that community members contribute to state policy by way of participation in government workgroups. For the sustained success of promoting equitable policy development, state agencies must establish, sustain, and grow relational partnerships. Moving from a transactional culture to a relational one is critical to developing the trust needed to meet the unique challenges of the 21st century.

Embedding Shared Power Principles into Community Engagement Structures

The shift from a transactional to a relational culture occurs when community members that have been impacted by specific policies can share their lived experiences and provide feedback that is utilized to influence government decisions. This movement emphasizes making decisions “with” community members instead of “for” community members and introduces the principle of “Shared Power” as a prerequisite for community engagement. According to the Centre for Public Impact, “The Shared Power Principle locates power within the lowest appropriate entities both across and within organizations and creates the environment for this shared power to be used to develop effective and legitimate solutions.” Within this approach, “power” is referred to as the ability to participate in making decisions that are crucial for specific outcomes as true co-creators.

There are four patterns that characterize the Shared Power Principle:

1. Communities as our guiding light

2. Relationships first
3. Accountability
4. Continuous learning

We highly encourage folks from agencies that are setting up workgroups that involve community members to embed these four principles. For more tangible practices to incorporate shared power principles and other equitable guidance on workgroup management, see [EQUITY's Community Engagement Toolkit](#).

Nothing About Us Without Us Act

During the 2024 legislative session, the legislature passed [E2SHB 1541](#), commonly known as the “Nothing About Us Without Us” act. This Act implements membership requirements for statutory entities, including multimember task forces, work groups, and temporary advisory committees that are established for the specific purpose of examining a particular issue impacting underrepresented populations. The Nothing About Us Without Us Act requires task forces, workgroups, and temporary advisory committees to include representation from the communities and groups directly impacted by the specific issues that those entities are tasked with examining. This bill plays a crucial role in supporting 2SSB 5793 (community compensation) by emphasizing the importance of including community members in the decision-making process. These individuals, who have firsthand experience are strongly positioned to provide valuable insights and solutions. Their proximity to the challenges ensures that the decisions made are both relevant and effective. Given that these community members are sharing their lived experiences and dedicating their time to improve the situation, it is only fair and just to offer appropriate compensation for their contributions. This approach not only respects their expertise but also fosters a more equitable and inclusive decision-making process.

About the Guidelines

EQUITY Reporting Requirements

Per [2SSB 5793](#), EQUITY must do the following:

1. Compile and analyze the information received from agencies under this section.
2. Prepare a report, in compliance with [RCW 43.01.036](#), to the governor and legislature by December 1, 2024. The report must include:
 - An overall evaluation of the stipend process authorized in [RCW 43.03.220](#) (2)
 - Recommendations for improving the process
 - Recommendations to further decrease barriers to participation and increase the diversity of group applicants

Updates/Periodic Review

Recommended compensation rates for eligible community members are based on various considerations that are impacted by inflation, cost of living, and self-sufficiency standards that are ever-changing and will necessitate ongoing review of these guidelines over time.

EQUITY will update the definition of “low income” annually to ensure compliance with the most current federal poverty guidelines.

EQUITY will review the reimbursement rates for child and adult care annually via feedback surveys completed by workgroup participants.

EQUITY will also conduct a more substantive review every three years as new Self-Sufficiency Standard reports are published by the University of Washington and will solicit stakeholder and agency input during this process. EQUITY will create and oversee a system for receiving and incorporating feedback into this document.

Definitions

Eligible Members/Workgroup Members

Individuals who serve on Class One Workgroups *and* are eligible to receive compensation will be referred to as “eligible members.” When referring to *all* individuals serving on a workgroup or distinguishing between those who may receive compensation and those who may not, the phrase “workgroup members” will be used in contrast to the phrase “eligible members.”

Workgroup Managers

The agency, staff, third-party contractors, and any individuals responsible for supervising workgroup members, issuing payments to eligible members, and establishing rules, procedures, and providing general oversight of the workgroup in question. “Workgroup manager” may not be an official title in every circumstance but generally refers to the people or groups responsible for the management of the workgroup.

Workgroup Classification

Class 1 Workgroup

Any Class One Workgroup, which is defined in 2SSB 5793 as:

“Any part-time board, commission, council, committee, or other similar group which is established by the executive, legislative, or judicial branch to participate in state government and which functions primarily in an advisory, coordinating, or planning capacity shall be identified as a class one group. Unless otherwise identified in law, all newly formed and existing groups are a class one group.”

When communicating with the public, and soliciting membership and participation on workgroups, state agencies should clearly state which class the workgroup belongs to and what type of compensation and reimbursement the membership is eligible for. If an agency is unsure which class their workgroup(s) belong to, they are encouraged to consult with their Agency-assigned attorney general (AAG) to make a determination.

This document pertains only to Class One Workgroups. Other workgroups defined in statute are still required to compensate members but have different payment requirements. Agency staff are encouraged to consult with their AAG to determine which class a workgroup belongs to and ensure that agencies are fulfilling their duty to compensate and reimburse all workgroup members appropriately.

Class Two Workgroups

RCW 43.03.230 states: “any agricultural commodity board or commission established pursuant to Title 15 or 16 RCW shall be identified as a class two group for purposes of compensation” and “Each member of a class two group is eligible to receive compensation in an amount not to exceed one hundred dollars for each day during which the member attends an official meeting of the group or performs statutorily prescribed duties approved by the chairperson of the group.”

Class Three Workgroups

RCW 43.03.240 states: “Any part-time, statutory board, commission, council, committee, or other similar group which has rule-making authority, performs quasi-judicial functions, has responsibility for the administration or policy direction of a state agency or program, or performs regulatory or licensing functions with respect to a specific profession, occupation, business, or industry shall be identified as a class three group for purposes of compensation” and “Each member of a class three group is eligible to receive compensation in an amount not to exceed fifty dollars for each day during which the member attends an official meeting of the group or performs statutorily prescribed duties approved by the chairperson of the group.”

Class Four Workgroups

RCW 43.03.250 states: “A part-time, statutory board, commission, council, committee, or other similar group shall be identified as a class four group for purposes of compensation if the group: (a) Has rule-making authority, performs quasi-judicial functions, or has responsibility for the administration or policy direction of a state agency or program; (b) Has duties that are deemed by the legislature to be of overriding sensitivity and importance to the public welfare and the operation of state government; and (c) Requires service from its members representing a significant demand on their time that is normally in excess of one hundred hours of meeting time per year” and “Each member of a class four group is eligible to receive compensation in an amount not to exceed one hundred dollars for each day during which the member attends an official meeting of the group or performs statutorily prescribed duties approved by the chairperson of the group.”

Class Five Workgroups

RCW 43.03.265 “Any part-time commission that has rule-making authority, performs quasi-judicial functions, has responsibility for the policy direction of a health profession credentialing program, and performs regulatory and licensing functions with respect to a health care profession licensed under Title 18 RCW shall be identified as a class five group for purposes of compensation” and “each member of a class five group is eligible to receive compensation in an amount not to exceed two hundred fifty dollars for each day during which the member attends an official meeting of the group or performs statutorily prescribed duties approved by the chairperson of the group.”

Lived Experience

“Lived Experience” refers to direct personal experience relating to the primary subject matter addressed by the workgroup. Workgroups should partner with representatives of historically excluded communities and those who have been disproportionately impacted by policies, processes, and systems that the workgroup seeks to address. These community members have the expertise and perspective necessary to determine what needs to change in our systems to achieve better outcomes.

Exactly *whose* perspectives meet the definition of “lived experience” will depend on the topic and goal of the workgroup. For example, if a workgroup that examines housing instability or the impact of emergency shelters, then those with “lived experience” are those who have utilized emergency shelters or experienced being unhoused. If the focus is to understand challenges of employers who directly work with the unhoused community or at emergency shelters, then it is the employers who have “lived experience.” But if the primary focus is a bit broader, and the goal of the workgroup is examining how services are being both utilized and delivered to those experiencing housing instability, then the definition of “lived experience” may include *both* recipients of services and the employees delivering the services. See the [Community Engagement Toolkit](#) for a deeper dive into the nuance of defining “lived experience.”

Low Income

As stated in 2SSB 5793:

"Low income" means 'an individual whose income is not more than 400 percent of the federal poverty level, adjusted for family size.'"

The federal poverty amounts are amended annually by the Health and Human Services Department. Refer to the most current year when determining income eligibility for workgroup members. The [2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines](#) are shown below.

2025 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$15,650
2	\$21,150
3	\$26,650
4	\$32,150
5	\$37,650
6	\$43,150
7	\$48,650
8	\$54,150

CALCULATION EXAMPLES:

- 400% calculation: for a family of four, household income could not exceed \$128,600 (4 X \$32,150)
- "To calculate the percentage of poverty level, divide income by the poverty guideline and multiply by 100. So, a family of five with an annual income of \$80,000 would be calculated to earn $(\$80,000/\$32,150) \times 100 = 246\%$ of the federal poverty guidelines for 2022..." - [Investopedia](#)

Otherwise Compensated

2SSB 5793 states that workgroup members of low-income status or those who have lived experience may receive compensation *"provided that the individuals are not otherwise compensated."*

Being "otherwise compensated" means that the workgroup member is already being paid for their participation in the workgroup by another party and should therefore not be eligible for additional community compensation.

Examples of being “otherwise compensated” may include:

- An organization (e.g. foundation, nonprofit, community-based organization) is already offering the workgroup member compensation for their participation.
- Employer of the workgroup member is allowing them to participate during regular work hours and they are not being required to use leave, whether unpaid or paid leave (e.g. vacation time, paid time off) in order to participate.
- Participation in the workgroup is already part of the routine course of the workgroup member’s regular employment.
 - Ex: The workgroup member is employed by an environmental nonprofit and is encouraged to serve on environmental policy boards, committees, and workgroups.
- The workgroup member is an independent contractor whose participation in the workgroup is inherent to the contract work they do. Therefore, the workgroup member is currently engaging in paid work that requires them to engage in advocacy or policy expertise concerning the subject of the workgroup, and their participation in the workgroup implicitly overlaps with their existing body of work.
 - Ex: The workgroup member is an independent contractor (such as a contract lobbyist or consultant) who has several clients that are paying them to work on solar energy policies, and the contractor joins a solar energy policy workgroup. Regardless of whether they bill hourly for their time spent in the solar energy workgroup meetings (some contract relationships do not bill hourly, but rather have a retainer or lump sum payment), their service on the workgroup would help advance the project that they are already being paid to work on, and therefore presents a risk of the contractor being doubly paid for their time on the workgroup and passing along the benefits of their knowledge and involvement to their client.

Reasonable Allowance

Reasonable allowances include any financial reimbursements for travel, lodging, mileage, and child and adult care. These rates are defined by the Office of Financial Management (OFM). See section on [mechanics](#) for stipends and reimbursements for more information on how to implement payments for reimbursable costs. These allowances which cover reimbursements for necessary practical costs incurred in the course of work should not be confused with stipend payments, which are compensation offered for an eligible member’s time, effort, and expertise.

Agency Requirements

Reporting

In the original statute, agencies were instructed to adhere to the following reporting requirements identified in 2SSB 5793 (Section 7), which states that:

*“(1) An agency exercising its authority to provide stipends under RCW 43.03.220(2) must report to the Washington state EQUITY by **August 30, 2023, and August 30, 2024, for state fiscal years 2023 and 2024** respectively, the following information:*

- (a) *A brief description of the groups for which stipends have been made available including:*
 - (i) *Number of members receiving a stipend or allowance; and*
 - (ii) *Aggregate demographic information of members of class one groups including race, ethnicity, income, and geographic representation by county;*
- (b) *The amount of stipends distributed;*
- (c) *The amount of allowances distributed;*

- (d) *An analysis of whether and how the availability of stipends and allowances has reduced barriers to participation and increased the diversity of group participants; and*
- (e) *An analysis of whether the provision of stipends and allowances resulted in more applications and willingness to participate.”*

Agencies must collect and retain the above information until it is reported to EQUITY at the end of each fiscal year. EQUITY distributes a reporting form and instructions to all state agencies, which they are required to complete by June 30th of each fiscal year, to meet the above mandate.

Moving forward, starting in fiscal year 2025, the [Community Compensation Request & Reporting](#) form will serve a dual purpose: it will function both as a request for allocation and as a tool for quarterly reporting (which will take the place of the previously required annual reporting).

It is important that each agency designates **a single representative** from their finance team to complete and submit the online form on behalf of all workgroups within the agency. If more than one submission is received from the same organization, all requests will be automatically denied. All requestors will be encouraged to connect within their agency and resubmit using one application.

Beginning in fiscal year 2026 (July 1st, 2025), all new allocation requests will need to be submitted by the end of August. Funds are limited, so agencies are encouraged to get their yearly compensation plans in as soon as possible. Statutory work groups will be prioritized. We will do our best to fulfill all requests when funds are available. Funds are replenished at the start of the fiscal year (July). Requests submitted earlier in the fiscal year will have a higher probability of receiving funds. We ask that agencies submit their requests all at once for all workgroups if possible. Please be aware that if an agency establishes a workgroup later in the fiscal year that was not included in the initial request, an additional request can be submitted to adjust the allotment (assuming there are funds available). The agency’s finance representative must make sure to attach a [5793 Tracking Form](#) for each workgroup they are requesting allocation for.

Starting in FY25, agencies are required to fill out a quarterly report that will provide updates on fund utilization, workgroup attendance, compensation details, and reimbursements (child/adult care, lodging, travel, and per diem). These quarterly reports will replace the previous end-of-year reporting questionnaire, allowing EQUITY and OFM to effectively monitor fund usage.

The quarterly reporting schedule is as follows:

- **Quarter 1:** July – September
 - Deadline: September 15th
- **Quarter 2:** October – December
 - Deadline: December 15th
- **Quarter 3:** January – March
 - Deadline: March 15th
- **Quarter 4:** April – June
 - Deadline: June 15th

When submitting a quarterly report, agencies should only report the amount spent during that specific quarter—not the cumulative total. For example, if an agency was allocated \$3,000 and spent \$1,200 between April and June, they should only report the \$1,200 spent during that April–June quarter. There's no need to include spending from previous quarters, as EQUITY is able to pull reports and calculate the overall amount spent per agency.

Important Note: Agencies that are not pulling from the Lived Experience/Community Compensation fund **do not** need to submit quarterly reports. The Office of Equity will be inviting agencies to share information about Community Compensation from alternative funding sources in fiscal year 2026 (this may be a requirement in 2026 via the Organizational Impact Assessment). Look forward to more guidance being provided by the Office of Equity.

In addition to these requirements, agencies are encouraged to keep a record of compensation challenges they encounter or process improvement recommendations. The quarterly reporting form includes space for agencies to share this type of feedback with EQUITY, which will help them request legislative changes or make necessary improvements to future policies and guidelines. Agency staff may also submit feedback at any time by emailing LivedExperience@equity.wa.gov.

Legal Considerations

Public Records

Per [RCW 42.56.250](#):

"The following employment and licensing information is exempt from public inspection and copying under this chapter:

(4) The following information held by any public agency in personnel records, public employment related records, volunteer rosters, or included in any mailing list of employees or volunteers of any public agency: Residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal email addresses, social security numbers, driver's license numbers, identicard numbers, payroll deductions including the amount and identification of the deduction, and emergency contact information of employees or volunteers of a public agency, and the names, dates of birth, residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal email addresses, social security numbers, and emergency contact information of dependents of employees or volunteers of a public agency."

Agencies are reminded to consult with their respective public records officers or assigned Assistant Attorneys General (AAGs) to consider any public records issues that may arise related to the workgroup. Agencies shall comply with all existing public records retention requirements while compensating eligible members. Eligible members should be aware that during their participation, written documents including digital files, emails, payments, reimbursement requests, etc. may be subject to the Public Records Act (PRA) and should consult with the agency's public records officer for more information.

Immigration Status

Individuals who are non-US Citizens or US Nationals may be able to receive compensation depending on their circumstances. The workgroup member may be informed that they should contact a personal immigration attorney regarding whether receipt of payment would impact their individual immigration status. Community Compensation should not be considered a public charge. Agencies may contact their assigned AAG with particular questions about individuals with general employment authorization or agency-specific immigration status (H-1B), or other specific questions regarding an agency's ability to provide compensation to a particular participant.

Youth Workgroup Members

Youth workgroup members are eligible to receive compensation, and there is no law that prohibits workgroup participation at any specific age. Agencies should carefully consider limitations on youth participation in

workgroups to avoid interference with educational activities such as hours of participation, breaks, the types of activities they may participate in, and whether the responsibilities and time commitment of workgroup membership is appropriate for youth.

While youth participating in workgroups are **not** employees, EQUITY recommends using existing statute regarding limitations on hours for children who work as guidance on maximum hours of participation for youth workgroup members. For youth workgroup members, participation *must not exceed the hours of work limitations established in state law for children who work*. Regular breaks and meal periods should be provided, including a break at least every three hours (at least 10 minutes) and longer breaks for meals should be provided if an event lasts over 5 hours. Hours of participation are recommended to follow these limitations:

Refer to the Labor & Industries website for up-to-date hour limitations for children in Washington State:
<https://lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/youth-employment/hours-of-work>

Tax Reporting Requirements

The Federal Government requires that any miscellaneous income in the amount of \$600 or more earned in one calendar year must be reported as income on the earner's federal taxes.

Therefore, if any workgroup member earns \$600 or more in compensation (not including allowances) from one agency, that agency must issue a 1099-MISC form to the workgroup member. If any workgroup member receives compensation from *more than one* agency for participating in multiple workgroups, this \$600 amount is applied per agency and is not calculated cumulatively. The IRS requires 1099 forms to be sent to compensation recipients by January 31st of each year for the previous year's earnings.

If compensation is distributed from the State of Washington, the respective state agency is responsible for issuing the 1099-MISC form. If the compensation is distributed via a third-party administrator, it is the responsibility of the third-party administrator to issue the 1099-MISC form. Agencies should include this requirement in contracts with third-party administrators (including nonprofit agencies, private businesses, and agents whose primary purpose is the distribution of payments) to ensure they are aware of their obligation.

Retired state employees who receive stipends may need to consult with Retirement Services to ensure there are no potential impacts on retirement payments.

Planning Ahead

Workgroup managers should calculate an estimate of the amount of money that an eligible member is likely to earn in the calendar year **before** the eligible member is officially brought on to the workgroup or at the beginning of each new calendar year for returning eligible members.

If that estimate hits (or even closely approaches) the \$600 threshold, workgroup managers need to inform the eligible member in advance that they will most likely have to report this income on their personal income taxes. Managers should also take this opportunity to collect all necessary information for tax reporting (such as a social security number, a W-9 form, or any other documentation required by the payer) so that they do not have to collect that information at the last minute when 1099s are issued in January.

Workgroup managers should work closely with their agency's accounting department or, if a third-party consultant is handling payment, with their accounting team, to ensure that all necessary documentation is collected in advance and that sensitive information such as SSN is stored securely.

Best Practices

Creating Internal Policies

Agencies must create comprehensive internal policies and procedures to provide staff with clear, reasonable, and easily implementable step-by-step instructions for implementing payment systems. This is a critical component of establishing consistent standards and ensuring that all eligible members receive the same compensation and experience the same quality of interaction across all departments and workgroups.

Refer to the “[Templates & Resources](#)” section of this document for helpful ideas on how to establish internal documentation. Please note that all documents and policies should be tailored to each agency, department, and/or workgroup’s unique needs.

When establishing an internal policy, consider what a workgroup manager would need to know at each step in recruiting, communicating, budgeting, and setting up payment processes for an eligible member.

Workgroup managers may also want to consult with the following personnel within the agency or department:

- **Accounting:** Agencies should contact their internal accounting department to establish a payment request process that workgroup managers can easily follow. Each agency’s OFM accounting assistant should be available for assistance.
- **Budget:** Agencies should contact their internal budget department or department and/or the department’s director or assistant director overseeing the workgroup in question to ensure that an accurate and appropriate budget is established before eligible members begin service on a workgroup. Each agency’s OFM accounting assistant should be available for assistance.
- **Equity:** Agencies should contact their internal equity department and should follow the agency internal process, if different. The Washington State EQUITY LivedExperience@equity.wa.gov is also available for technical assistance and support.
- **Legal:** Agencies should contact their internal counsel and should follow the agency internal process, if different. The assigned AAG should be available for assistance.
- **Policy:** Agencies should contact their internal Human Resources or policy-setting staff and should follow the agency’s internal process, if different. Each agency’s Governor’s Policy Advisor should also be available for assistance.

Community Members as Experts

Historically, government has often functioned in a paternalistic manner, making decisions without co-creating and engaging with the community members who are impacted most. Throughout history, such populations excluded from participation on related topical matters have often gone on to experience an increase in burden and harm observably derived from the lack of nuanced lived experience perspectives involved in the development of planning, policies, and actions. This has not always fostered positive community outcomes. To change this, we must collaborate with community members in decision-making. Community members are the experts in their own lived experience and know best what they need to achieve autonomy over their lives and thrive.

Therefore, community members who give their time and energy to share their expertise and perspectives provide an invaluable lens into the inner workings of our systems and have critical insights into what must change to achieve better program outcomes.

As identified by community members with lived experience, compensation is only one of several practices necessary to ensure individuals are meaningfully supported and retained to participate in complex government processes effectively.

This section attempts to direct agencies to additional practices that should be considered alongside the provision of community compensation.

Community Engagement

Advisory boards, commissions, workgroups, agencies and other statutory and non-statutory entities play a crucial role in collaboration and engagement with Washingtonians to shape public policy and amplify everyday voices—especially those with lived experience in that area—within the mechanics of state government. Per a budget proviso ([ESSB 5187](#)) passed in the 2023 legislative session, EQUITY was tasked with “consulting with state boards, commissions, and other entities that support the participation of people from underrepresented populations in policy making processes” to determine how Washington state agencies can improve community engagement and collaboration.

In January 2025 EQUITY completed production on this [Community Engagement Toolkit](#) which offers tangible support in the form of templates, checklists, examples, and guidance on how to effectively create and manage workgroups that include community members with lived experience.

Recruiting Community Members with Lived Experience

State agencies should avoid repeatedly partnering with the same individuals on workgroups and participation in other community engagement activities. Each one of Washington’s over 7 million residents should be given the opportunity to participate on workgroups to achieve a more representative government that works for everyone. Relying on the same group of individuals for input is to the detriment of equitable policy development and outcomes. The following are key recommendations to achieve broader participation from community members. Agencies should create an open, public application process for service on a workgroup, rather than simply soliciting recommendations from agency leadership. Keep applications simple: the goal is to increase access, not add barriers. See the examples and templates section for an application example.

Working Effectively with Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

One of the most effective ways a state agency can solicit participation in a workgroup or other engagement activity is to ask for the assistance of organizations who have developed trusting relationships with historically underrepresented communities. When seeking to recruit workgroup candidates with lived experience from specific demographic groups, seek assistance in identifying and recruiting candidates from “for and by organizations.

Compensating Incarcerated Individuals for Workgroup Participation

The Department of Corrections (DOC) has developed specific guidelines to support their own staff and other state agencies when engaging incarcerated individuals in Class One policy workgroups. These instructions are designed to ensure fair compensation, safe participation, and equitable access for individuals in DOC custody.

This work is part of a broader effort to create inclusive and meaningful engagement practices, especially for those who are directly impacted by the policies being discussed. In the future, these practices will be added to the *Community Engagement Toolkit* as a resource for agencies across Washington.

Key Guideline Points for Including Incarcerated Participants

- Pre-approval is required for all workgroup meetings involving incarcerated individuals. Meetings can happen virtually or in prison facilities with advance notice (at least 14 business days).
- Only one prison facility can be involved per virtual meeting, and off-site participation are not currently allowed due to transport and safety limitations.
- Eligibility criteria:
 - Participants must be housed in minimum security (MI2/MI3), be infraction-free for 6+ months, and pass a DOC screening for safety and security.
- Participation is limited to one workgroup per person every five years to broaden engagement unless no one else is available.
- DOC uses a random selection process to choose participants and can prioritize underrepresented communities (e.g., LGBTQ+, older adults, community members with disabilities, limited English proficiency).
- All materials shared with incarcerated participants are subject to DOC screening.

Compensation Process and Amounts

Incarcerated individuals are compensated at Washington's minimum wage (e.g., \$16.66/hour in 2025) for time spent in meetings or doing workgroup-related tasks. This is not employment, and compensation should not interfere with prison job assignments unless there's a scheduling conflict. Agencies must send compensation to DOC's Trust Accounting Unit, which deposits funds into each participant's inmate account. Payment must be in check or electronic transfer form—gift cards are not allowed. Required deductions (e.g., restitution, legal financial obligations) will be applied per state and federal law. If a participant earns \$600 or more in a calendar year, the agency must issue a 1099-MISC form. DOC will assist participants with any necessary tax reporting.

Contact for Incarcerated Participant Coordination

For questions or to begin the process of including an incarcerated individual on a workgroup, contact:

- Mike Steenhout (michael.steenhout@doc1.wa.gov) at (360) 789-0480

Additional payment questions? HQLFO-COSUNIT@doc1.wa.gov

Onboarding and Ongoing Support

One of the most supportive practices to community members with lived experience is the development of an onboarding packet for work group members.

Agencies should thoughtfully develop an onboarding packet for all workgroup members (not only those who are eligible to receive compensation). This packet should contain, in plain language, information about the agency, the project, impacted benefits, applicable laws and policies to the agency such as confidentiality, public disclosure, non-discrimination, how to request accessibility supports such as language interpretation or hardware, and compensation and reimbursement instructions.

Workgroup managers and agency staff should be available to support community members to welcome them and create an environment of belonging, answer questions about requesting payment and reimbursement, and troubleshoot problems as they arise. Community members should be given agency staff contact information in advance, so they know who to contact when support is needed.

Communication

Communication is critical in establishing, growing, and maintaining relationships with workgroup members. Agencies should clearly communicate early and often about what workgroup members can expect in terms of the compensation process (amount, frequency, timing, method, etc.) Not doing so undermines trust with community members and may cause more harm, particularly for low-income workgroup members who could put the funds to use in their household.

Agencies should ask eligible members what their preferred method of communication is and then use that method. For example, many community members prefer receiving text messages to alert them if something time sensitive or important needs their attention. If an eligible member states that they do not check email frequently, or that frequent or lengthy emails are not likely to get their immediate attention, a simple text message alerting them that there is an important email for them to review can make a big difference.

Accessibility

Agencies should proactively inquire about workgroup members' individual needs and offer appropriate accommodations. Accessibility should be included in an agency's budget so that accommodations can be made to eliminate barriers to workgroup participation. Planning around members' needs may mitigate their need for reimbursements later on and will ensure the best conditions for effective participation and mutual respect. The following is a list of prompts to consider when forming a workgroup to establish norms around accessibility as it relates to meetings, necessary tools, and general supports. The following prompts are not requirements for agencies, but rather are suggestions that may be helpful to cover any costs that could inadvertently be passed on to workgroup members

Technology

What hardware would a workgroup member be expected to have to fully participate in the workgroup (e.g. phone, laptop, printer, webcam, internet access)?

- Can the agency loan hardware, or reimburse a workgroup member for the purchase of hardware? The mechanics of this process need to be worked out before offering equipment to workgroup members. See examples and templates for a template loan form.
 - Devices should have at least 10" screen, be Wi-Fi capable, and include Microsoft Suite, Teams, Zoom, an Internet browser, and Adobe reader. Workgroup managers should also ask the user if other software is needed for accessibility or other purposes.
 - If requested, agencies should take steps to provide community members access to the Internet, through a cell phone hotspot, air card, or other solution.
 - Besides computers leased for agency employees, good device options include Microsoft Surface, iPad, Android tablet, or Chromebook. Agencies will have to work through the pros and cons of Linux to windows-based computers, which present different security challenges.
 - Devices should be wiped and reimaged after each use.
- Can workgroup managers collaborate with another agency to utilize space and tools/hardware for workgroup members to use?
- What training might workgroup members need to use the technology or tools that are necessary for full workgroup participation?
- In written communication, include full link as text for low to no internet participants using paper copies.
- In written communication, avoid using graphics to convey written text such as images or jpegs with letters and words in them, as screen reading software cannot interpret the words embedded in a graphic image.

Agencies may want to consult with their assigned AAG before loaning equipment, technology, or paying for services.

Meeting Facilitation

When including community members with lived experience in workgroup settings, it is important to examine the workgroup's facilitation approach to ensure that it is as accessible and inclusive as possible. Use the list of prompts below to ensure the workgroup's facilitation is being designed in a way that will bring out the best participation from all workgroup members.

- Offer meeting materials at least 24 hours in advance.
- Offer meeting materials in both print and digital form with large print options, and in all primary languages used by workgroup members.
- Make use of assistive technology available for workgroup members with hearing and visual impairments or for those with learning differences (ex: screen readers, live captions, or transcription captures).
- If assistive technology is not sufficient, offer use of a professional interpreter.
 - If possible, ask the participants who need an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter or Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) services if they would like to utilize Washington Relay to call in to the meeting or event.
 - Ask if the ASL user prefers to use an on-demand Video Relay Service (VRS) app, such as Wavello.
 - Workgroup managers may need to request two interpreters in case one person is unable to attend on short notice or request two interpreters for meetings over 30 minutes or schedule breaks for one interpreter every 30 minutes to prevent interpreter fatigue.
 - If the CART captioner is unable to attend on short notice and workgroup managers are unable to secure another captioner, zoom captioning technology may suffice, or workgroup managers may use the chat feature of the virtual meeting platform of choice.
- If time allows, directly contact vendors on Department of Enterprise Services (DES) State Contracts to find a replacement:
 - Sign Language Interpreter Services - Referral Agencies
 - Sign Language Interpreter Services - Independent Contractors
 - Transcription and Captioning Services - CART
- Designate a person to read written content or describe videos and images.
- Avoid use of jargon and acronyms – this language can be othering and exclusive.
- Avoid assumptions around attendees using their time and funds to attend miscellaneous events such as post-meeting gatherings, dinners, happy hours, or other optional events where, by not attending, they may be missing out on meaningful conversations. Make clear distinction between non-official meetings and other types of interaction towards progress of workgroup
- Provide a glossary of commonly used acronyms and terms that are relevant to the workgroup.

In-Person Meetings

When hosting in-person meetings, consider the following prompts to ensure that the meetings are as accessible as possible:

- Are in-person meetings scheduled in a location that is easily reached by public transportation?
- Can the agency offer public transportation passes to workgroup members (such as ORCA card) so they can attend regular in-person meetings?

- Inform members of parking availability and cost in advance.
- Advise workgroup members to keep receipts for transportation or parking for reimbursement. Host meetings in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant accessible buildings.
- Are there inclusive restrooms for community members of all genders, community members with infants, and ADA compliant restrooms?
- Have workgroup managers built in breaks into the agendas (e.g. every 45-60 minutes) to accommodate community members with disabilities, nursing parents, caregivers, etc.?
- Are there allergies or sensitivities to be considered for any workgroup members? Consider whether the meeting location has a low-fragrance policy or mixed lighting for people with light sensitivity or conditions like migraines.

Communicating Accessibility Options

Workgroup leadership should solicit information about accessibility needs and preferences from all workgroup members.

For meeting accommodations such as translators, consider using or adapting the following sample language:

“We recognize that each individual workgroup member has unique needs, preferences, learning styles, and accessibility needs. We are open and receptive to any requests that workgroup members have that will help them to participate in this workgroup to their fullest capacity. To request communication services (interpreters, written information in other languages, or other services) or any other accommodations, please call 360-902-3355 or 711 16 (Telephone Relay Service), or email Access@equity.wa.gov. We encourage participants to make requests at least 14 days in advance of the meeting to allow time to make the proper arrangements.”

Resources on Creating Accessible Meetings and Events

- [Guide to Accessible Web Design & Development | Section508.gov](#)
- [Create Accessible Meetings | Section508.gov](#)
- [Create Accessible Digital Products | Section508.gov](#)
- [Accessibility Training | Section508.gov](#)
- [Disability Inclusion Network – Inclusive Virtual Meeting Guide](#)
- [Requesting a sign language interpreter \(DSHS\)](#)
- [The Learning Center Video Tutorial: How to Submit a Sign Language Request](#)
- [Web Accessibility Font Contrast Checker](#)
- [Blindness and low vision skills training | Department of Services for the Blind](#)

Relational Partnership Framework

Additional resources focused on a relational partnership philosophy are also available by the Office of Equity and other agencies/groups in Washington. The relational partnership model focuses on empathy-centered collaboration between government entities and communities who have been excluded and marginalized by government decisions and actions to undo harm and advance Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) outcomes.

Examples of existing and forthcoming work by departments to serve as a complement to these guidelines include:

- [Digital Equity Plan](#)

- [Community Engagement Guidelines](#)
- Universal Access and Belonging Plan (Coming Soon)
- [Relational Partnership Workbook](#)
- [Executive Order 22-02: Achieving Equity in Washington State Government](#)
- [Executive Order 22-04: Implementing the Washington State Pro-Equity Anti-Racism \(PEAR\) Plan & Playbook](#)

Compensation Mechanics

Funding for Community Compensation

The Office of Financial Management (OFM) will dedicate funding, based on availability, per fiscal year for Community Compensation. All requests will be funded, starting with statutory workgroups first until the entire fund is distributed.

Beginning in 2025, EQUITY rolled out a new and more streamlined Community Compensation fund application process. Agencies will fill out the allocation request form and potentially be awarded on a rolling basis (funding is limited and earlier applications have a higher probability of receiving funds). In addition, there are updated reporting requirements – moving from a lengthy annual questionnaire to much shorter quarterly reports.

Forms are available to agencies for requesting and reporting Community Compensation funds and can be found here: [Community Compensation Reporting & Request Form](#). Below are the following options to choose from:

- [Allocation Request Form](#)
 - One representative per agency will request allocation for community compensation for all of their agency's workgroups using this form.
 - Must include a completed [5793 Tracking Form](#) with details on each workgroup request
- [Quarterly Reporting Form](#)
 - The same representative per agency will report on how much of the allocated funds have been spent on a quarterly basis; request additional funds if they have run low or report excess funds for redistribution if there is a surplus.

For more information, see the “*Annual Reporting*” section.

Activities Eligible for Compensation

Per 2SSB 5793, eligible workgroup members may be paid for the following activities:

- Attending official meetings
 - Examples may include full workgroup meetings, subgroup, task force, or subcommittee meetings, community feedback sessions.
 - Please note that workgroup members should be paid for meetings that either occur in person or virtually (i.e. Zoom)
- Performing statutorily prescribed duties approved by the Chair or leadership of the workgroup
 - Examples may include activities such as reviewing and commenting on a plan or document, producing or reviewing written content such as research or reports, meeting preparation, attending a conference or training, completing surveys, discussions via email, etc.

Income Verification

Workgroup members eligible for compensation based solely on low-income status (i.e. not also qualifying as having “lived experience”) must affirm their low-income status. The recommended lowest barrier method for affirming low-income status is simple self-attestation. It is recommended that agencies obtain self-attestation in writing via a simple form or application that a) informs the workgroup member of the definition of “low income: and b) prompts them to check a box or sign the document indicating that they are low income.

Additional verification methods are not required. If the agency prefers to collect additional verification, they may choose to request the following:

- Categorical eligibility for community members currently receiving public assistance in Washington state
- Pay Stubs from the last one to three months
- W-2
- Previous year’s tax return
- Employer statement

Recommended Compensation Rates

Hourly Compensation

The University of Washington (UW) publishes a Self-[Sufficiency Standard report](#) every three years as a measure of income adequacy for different households across Washington State. Some state agencies currently use UW’s Self-[Sufficiency Calculator](#) to better understand how they can support clients. In the Self-Sufficiency Standard Dataset produced in 2023, UW determined the cost of living for one adult, one preschooler, and one school-age child (family of 3) in the most expensive county, King County-East, to be \$120,192.67 annually or \$56.91 per hour.

Therefore, the recommended hourly rate for eligible class one workgroup members is \$57 per hour.

Per [2SSB 5793](#), daily compensation is capped at \$200 *per day*, however, there is no limit on the *total number or value* of compensation that can be issued to a workgroup member over multiple days, weeks, months or years.

RCW [43.03.220](#) clearly states that “agencies exercising their authority to provide stipends and allowances under this section must follow the guidelines established by EQUITY pursuant to RCW [43.03.270](#).” This means that agencies **must** follow the recommended hourly rate for compensation, using it as a baseline. Specifically, they should pay at least \$57 per hour and not compensate any amount below this. Agencies can pay eligible workgroup members more than the recommended hourly rate. However, the Lived Experience Fund will not be able to cover the additional cost (the funding only covers the recommended hourly rate).

Non-Hourly Compensation

Whenever possible, payments should be calculated based on the amount of time an eligible member spent performing their duties. However, in certain cases, a lump-sum payment may be more appropriate than hourly payments. Here are some examples of when it may be appropriate to issue a single, lump-sum payment, rather than tracking members’ hours to calculate payment amounts.

- An ad hoc workgroup is created by an agency to serve a short-term goal.
 - Example: An ad hoc committee is formed to provide feedback on a new website feature that an agency is testing out. The group isn’t planning on having any meetings but will discuss their

feedback over email. The workgroup manager estimates that it would take approximately 1 hour for an average person to review the website and an additional 1.5 hours to engage in discussion over email. The agency would then offer a payment of \$142.50 (2.5 hours X \$57 per hour) to each eligible ad hoc workgroup member. The eligible members do not have to track their time or submit an invoice showing each minute or hour of work, and they are all paid the same amount based on the workgroup manager's reasonable estimate.

- An existing workgroup asks members to do a one-time task on top of their normal workgroup participation.
 - Example: The Chair of an existing workgroup decides to form a subcommittee to review a document and provide feedback via a survey. They estimate that it will take one hour to read the document and respond to the survey, so every member who completes the survey receives an additional \$57 for that work.

Note: Payment incentives for one-time public engagement that are *not* part of membership and ongoing participation in a Class One Workgroup are not beholden to these guidelines. For example, if an agency issues a large, public survey, and the target populations to fill out that survey are not members of a workgroup but just part of the general public, they are not required to meet the recommended rates established above.

Note: If a workgroup member receives \$600 or more in a calendar year (per workgroup), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires a 1099-MISC form to be sent. See legal considerations section for more information.

Compensation for One-Time Engagement Activities

At times, workgroup managers may need to create temporary, ad hoc workgroups for one-time engagement opportunities. These could include activities like surveys, interviews, feedback requests, or even short-term subcommittees of a larger workgroup. These engagements are typically low-intensity and don't require a long-term commitment from participants.

Why Use One-Time Engagements?

One-time engagements are less demanding on participants compared to on-going, full-time workgroups. They require less time, fewer preparations, and lower levels of responsibility. These types of engagements are great when agencies already have a workgroup but want to do broader community engagement strategies to learn from more perspectives. For example, if an agency is conducting a survey, they might need feedback from 50, 100, or even hundreds of participants.

Because these activities require less effort and commitment from the participants, it's appropriate to offer slightly lower compensation rates compared to full workgroup involvement.

Compensation for One-Time Engagements

Providing compensation helps encourage participation and shows that agencies (overall government) value the time and input of the community members. Typically, **general-purpose gift cards** (those that can be used anywhere, not just at specific stores) are used for payment, but they aren't the only option. This is because asking a participant to apply for a statewide vendor number just for a small payment can be an unnecessary barrier.

Recommended Compensation Rates:

The suggested rates for one-time engagement activities are based on the duration of the engagement. If the activity is unsupervised, such as completing a survey or reviewing a document for feedback, workgroup

managers should estimate how long it would take the average participant to complete the task. Then, pay all participants the same amount based on that estimate. Here are the suggested rates:

- **For activities up to and including 30 minutes** = \$25.00
- **For activities up to and including 1 hour** = \$50.00
- **For activities up to and including 2 hours** = \$100.00
- **For activities up to and over 4 hours** = \$200.00

These rates strike a balance between offering a fair compensation for participants' time while also being realistic within budget constraints. If workgroup managers are planning to survey a large number of community members (e.g., 300 participants), keeping these rates manageable ensures fair compensation without going over budget.

Flexibility for Adjustments

If needed, agencies can adjust the compensation to a higher rate, such as \$57 per hour, especially if it is determined that the effort involved justifies it. However, it's important to keep in mind that for large-scale surveys or one-time activities, the rates need to be realistic given budget constraints and the nature of the task.

Ultimately, the goal is to provide fair compensation while balancing the budget and ensuring that workgroup managers can co-create with community members.

Payment Methods

There are several options to disburse payments to individuals, all of which have different considerations:

- State warrant (check)
- Direct deposit (ACH)
- Prepaid card
- Payment through a local bank account (Imprest account)
- Gift Card

Each method requires the disbursing agency have some infrastructure in place to issue and account for the payment. Depending on the payment option chosen and the method of issuance the agency may incur hard and/or soft dollar costs. When possible, offer multiple payment options and give members the choice to choose the method that works best for them. Agencies should use care when their funding source prohibits showing any preference for one vendor over another.

State Warrant (Check)

State warrants, or checks, can be issued through the Agency Financial Reporting System's (AFRS) Statewide Vendor system (SWV) or through a direct relationship with the Office of the State Treasurer (OST). Warrants must be cashed by the recipient within 180 days of issuance. Warrants older than 180 days are no longer valid. Aged warrants may be reissued, or payment can be made using another vehicle.

Recipients of warrants issued through SWV must establish a statewide vendor number. Note: when the payee signs up for a SWV they choose either warrant or Automated Clearing House (ACH) as their method of payment. Agencies that use the A19 Agency may incur minimal fees from AFRS for payment processing.

Statewide Vendor Numbers

A statewide vendor number is required whenever payments are made through the Agency Financial Reporting System (AFRS). AFRS is Washington State's central hub for accounting information. Requesting a statewide vendor number only needs to be done once, when seeking payment for the first time, however statewide vendor numbers can expire so workgroup members with previously existing statewide vendors numbers should check to make sure their number is still active.

Confirm that a vendor number does not already exist by searching the Vendor Number Lookup. If no vendor number exists, obtain a vendor number, by visiting [Statewide Vendor/Payee Services | Office of Financial Management \(wa.gov\)](https://www.wa.gov/Statewide-Vendor-Payee-Services). Complete the "Vendor/Payee Registration Form." For number 3 on the Vendor Registration Form, select the option Lived Experience - Class 1.

Workgroup members have the option of setting up direct deposit to a bank account or receiving a check via mail. Once the form is submitted, the members' Statewide Vendor number will be sent to the email provided within 3-5 business days.

To issue warrants directly through OST the agency must generate a warrant issue file to communicate the payee information to OST. Implementation of a new warrant issue file takes 3-6 months. Consideration should be given to delivery of the warrant to the payee, by mail or in person.

OST's warrant cashing services have not been reinstated after closing due to Covid. OST has an agreement with US Bank to cash state warrants for individuals at US Bank branches in Washington State. Other companies such as Fred Meyer, Walmart, and others offer check- cashing services for a fee. Recipients must present valid identification at the branch when cashing the warrant.

Challenges include:

- US Bank does not have a branch in all regions of the state, so workgroup members who do not have their own bank account to cash checks and also do not live near a US Bank may find it difficult to cash their checks
- Intervention by OST and the state's relationship team is often needed to facilitate the warrant cashing process at US Bank
- US Bank may charge the payee a \$10.00 fee per warrant cashed
- 3-6 month lag time to set up new warrant issue file is burdensome
- Loss of paper checks is a risk
- Statewide Vendor Number application process is lengthy and confusing for members, places a high burden on them.

Direct Deposit (ACH)

ACH can be issued through a Statewide Vendor Number or through a direct relationship with the Office of the State Treasurer. Recipients of ACH must have a domestic bank account and be willing to share their account details with the state to receive funds. In most cases, the requirement under RCW 43.41.180 to complete an Economic Feasibility Study (EFS) is waived by OFM when disbursing payment by ACH.

Recipients of ACH issued through SWV must establish a statewide vendor number. Note: when the payee signs up for a SWV they choose either warrant or ACH as their method of payment. Agency may incur fees from AFRS for payment processing.

To issue ACH directly through OST the agency must generate an ACH issue file to communicate the payee information to OST. In turn, the agency will receive a file of ACH Returns and Corrections detailing payments

that didn't work (Returns) or require updates to the bank information (Corrections). The disbursing agency is responsible for ensuring their program complies with all ACH Rules. Implementation of a new ACH issue file takes 3-6 months. OST does not charge a fee to the agency to disburse payment by ACH.

Challenges include:

- Collecting and storing recipient bank accounts
- ACH Rules Compliance can be complicated and resource intensive

Prepaid Card

Disbursing payment by prepaid card is a good option for unbanked and under-banked populations. US Bank's prepaid cards are Visa branded and are accepted anywhere that accepts Visa. Recipients have several options to use the card and/or get cash free of charge, including to the penny withdrawals at most banks. Recipients receive the same fraud protections against unauthorized withdrawals to prepaid cards as traditional bank accounts (Federal Regulation E).

Federal regulations may require certain disclosures be provided prior to the recipient choosing payment by prepaid card. The bank will review the program specifics to determine if disclosures are required. The disbursing agency enrolls the payee through the bank's online Admin Portal. The bank creates and mails a personalized, embossed card to the recipient. The recipient must activate the card, either online or by calling customer service before funds can be accessed. Funding the cards is done by direct deposit. The Admin Portal allows the agency to confirm deposits were credited to the card but does not allow them to see any other transactions or activity.

Implementation of a new prepaid card program takes 3-6 months for OST to process. An Economic Feasibility Study (EFS) must be completed and submitted to OFM. Agencies are responsible for card issuance fees.

Challenges include:

- Recipients need a physical mailing address to receive the card, bank does not mail cards to P.O. Boxes
- 7-10 business days for recipient to receive card in the mail
- Gift card amounts are often fixed at rates/tiers which A) doesn't neatly align with the changing compensation rates and B) is often difficult to utilize in full and thus not entirely released to the individual

Purchase and Distribute Preloaded Gift-Cards

Preloaded gift cards that effectively operate like a debit card can be obtained from traditional vendors, such as in-store kiosks. Many preloaded digital gift cards can also be purchased online. These are not to be confused with gift cards that can only be redeemed at a specific store (such as a Starbucks gift card) - cards that are only redeemable at one specific business should not be used as a method of compensation for workgroup members.

The State Administrative & Accounting Manual (SAAM) currently requires agencies to use gift cards with no fees associated. If there are fees attached, an EFS would be required. Ability to get cash, including to the penny withdrawals, are governed by the rules of the card purchased. Agencies have several options to purchase preloaded gift cards, such as petty cash or purchase cards, and distribute them to recipients.

Agencies should have internal controls in-place for undistributed cards.

Challenges include:

- Cards are like cash and there is risk involved in mailing cards to private residences; it is therefore recommended to email electronic gift cards OR use certified mail if sending physical gift card through USPS OR utilize Amazon gift cards that can be sent to secure lockers for retrieval
- Potential lack of customer support from issuer if recipient experiences problems

Agency Bank Account Outside the Treasury (Imprest Account)

Agencies may open an account outside the treasury with approval from OFM. Agencies would fund and replenish the account without using a statewide vendor number. Agencies would be responsible for all fees associated with account and products purchased.

Account would facilitate:

- Issuing checks directly from the account
- Utilizing US Bank's Automated Clearing House (ACH) Origination product to issue direct deposit without creating and transmitting a file
- Funding prepaid cards directly through the Admin Portal (requires EFS and OFM approval)
- Access to new same-day payment products such as Real-time payments, Zelle or Venmo

To establish an Imprest Account, agencies will need to submit a request to the accounting division within OFM (ofmaccounting@ofm.wa.gov). Agencies must have an internal policy drafted before final approval is given. OFM will not approve the request for funding without a policy stating how the account will be managed (as well as records of tracking). Keep in mind that policy development and review to approval will require some time.

For more information, please see the [Statewide Administrative & Accounting Manual \(SAAM\)](#). Also, for examples and templates used for Imprest Accounts, see Templates, Resources, and Examples section.

Third-Party Administrators

Agencies may opt to contract with third-party companies to connect with and compensate eligible members. As there is currently no statewide contract for this work, agencies must follow the [Request for Proposal \(RFP\)](#) process to select an organization to administer compensation. As not specifically authorized by 2SSB 5793, an agency may want to consult with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES), OFM, and their assigned AAG when contracting with a third-party administrator for the first time. See the ["Templates & Resources"](#) section for more supportive documentation.

Challenges Include:

- Some of the funds for community compensation will be used to pay for the organization's payment administration.
- Contracting with a community organization or private company exclusively for this purpose (i.e. not a part of a broader contract) may not be a comfortable or appropriate role for an organization that does not exist solely for this purpose.

Note: Contracting with a third-party administrator would eliminate the need for workgroup members to obtain a statewide vendor number. If possible, agencies are encouraged to use this method to reduce the burden and barriers on volunteers.

Non-Exclusive Third-Party Administrators

Agencies may include the responsibility – and appropriate budgeting – for payments administration as part of a larger scope of work under contract with non-profit community organizations or private businesses. Examples include organizations or businesses contracted for the facilitation of workgroups, conducting community engagement, providing technical assistance, and other scopes of work.

Challenges include:

- Community-based organizations and private businesses may experience financial burdens due to lack of up-front payments or delay in payments may cause strain.
- Online platforms that automate these payments for a large volume of smaller payments often require cost projection and calculation that put an extra logistical challenge on the organization.

Reimbursements

RCW [43.03.220](#) states:

“(c) Individuals eligible for stipends under this section are eligible for reasonable allowances for child and adult care reimbursement, lodging, and travel expenses as provided in RCW [43.03.050](#) and [43.03.060](#) in addition to stipend amounts.”

Child and Adult Care

Workgroup members can either submit the bill or invoice received from the provider for child or adult care services or confirmation of payment. Be as flexible as possible with what constitutes a bill or invoice or confirmation of payment (e.g. traditional receipt, handwritten document, screenshot of money transfer through apps like CashApp and Venmo) to make it as easy as possible to receive reimbursement. Agencies, boards and commissions interested in providing onsite childcare for meetings should seek guidance from their AAGs to ensure that state-purchased or state-coordinated childcare adheres to the appropriate health and safety standards for the children in care.

Reimbursement rates:

- Childcare: up to \$25 per hour for the first child and up to \$50 per 24-hour cycle for each additional child
- Adult care: up to \$34 per hour for the first adult and up to \$50 per 24-hour cycle for each additional adult

Lodging, Meals, and Travel

Reimbursements can be made for lodging, meals, and mileage costs in addition to the compensation offered in accordance with [RCW 43.03.050](#) and [RCW 43.03.060](#). When overnight stays are required, agencies should try to book and pay for the hotel rooms on behalf of workgroup members to lessen the financial burden on the eligible member, as they may not have enough cash on hand to pay for these costs up-front and wait for reimbursement later.

Timely Payments

Agency staff must establish their internal procedure for issuing compensation *before* eligible members are invited to participate so that they can be paid in a timely manner. Agency staff from accounting, budget, policy and other involved departments should understand their role in the community compensation process and be prepared to initiate payments as soon as an eligible member begins participation in a workgroup.

“Timely payments” means that:

- Eligible members are compensated for each individual meeting or activity, and not in a lump sum after the workgroup has completed its goals or after the eligible member’s term has ended (Ex: workgroups with monthly meetings should offer monthly payments, not payments at the end of the project or the end of the fiscal year).
- Agencies or third parties are required to issue payments as quickly as is reasonably possible.
- Workgroup leadership or management should communicate to eligible members in advance what the typical payment schedule will be so that eligible members can anticipate when they will receive payment and budget accordingly.

Understanding State Benefit Impact & Taxes

Workgroup members who have questions or concerns about their compensation eligibility, timeliness of payments, or about any of the information in this document are encouraged to contact the Washington State EQUITY for support. Email: LivedExperience@equity.wa.gov.

Recipient Tax Reporting Requirements

If a workgroup member receives \$600 or more in a calendar year (per workgroup), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires that they report this income using a [1099-MISC form](#).

If the workgroup member is under the age of 18, they must report income to the IRS *only* if they receive more than the standard deduction for the tax year (\$13,850 for 2023 and \$14,600 for 2024).

Community members who are low-income, experiencing homelessness, with limited English language proficiency, or those with disabilities may qualify for free tax-filing support through the IRS’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs. Workgroup managers can find more information about this free support [here](#).

Benefits Eligibility & Amounts Impacted

Per [2SSB 5793](#) (2)(e):

“As allowable by federal and state law, state agencies will minimize, to the greatest extent possible, the impact of stipends and reimbursements on public assistance eligibility and benefit amounts.”

Federal and state income-based programs such as those that provide assistance with housing, health care, and money for food and other living expenses typically require reporting of any earnings by the recipient of said assistance. Many community members are enrolled in more than one of these programs. State agencies, which plan to compensate eligible community members, must consider how this may affect each of the assistance programs from which workgroup members receive assistance.

Below is the chart that demonstrates which public assistance eligibility and benefit amounts are impacted by stipends and reimbursements, and which will require statutory changes in order to avoid negatively impacting a workgroup members’ benefits.

Program	Agency	Benefit Eligibility & Amount Impact Analysis
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Public Housing	Dept. of Commerce (COM)	Payments excluded from income determination if temporary and sporadic (received/earned no more than 3 times per year) or nonrecurring
Consolidated Homeless Grant	COM	Payments excluded from income determination
Housing Choice Voucher	COM	Payments excluded from income determination if temporary and sporadic (received/earned no more than 3 times per year) or nonrecurring
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program	COM	Payments excluded from eligibility determination
Project-Based Voucher/Public Housing	COM	Payments excluded from income determination if temporary and sporadic (received/earned no more than 3 times per year) or nonrecurring
Housing Trust Fund	COM	Payments excluded from income determination if temporary and sporadic (received/earned no more than 3 times per year) or nonrecurring
National Housing Trust Fund	COM	Payments excluded from income determination if temporary and sporadic (received/earned no more than 3 times per year) or nonrecurring
HOME- Home Investment Partnerships	COM	Payments excluded from income determination if temporary and sporadic (received/earned no more than 3 times per year) or nonrecurring
Affordable Connectivity Program	COM	<p>Gross income: ACP verifies income through looking at tax returns or pay stubs. If tax return used as verification- would only impact if more than \$600 received and 1099 generated. If pay stub used to verify, would be no issue.</p> <p>Categorical eligibility: automatically eligible if participate in any of the following programs: SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, SSI, Housing assistance, Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit, Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch, Federal Pell Grant, Tribal Assistance. Visit the Do I Qualify page for more information.</p>
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	COM	Payments excluded from eligibility determination
Head Start	Dept. of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF)	Payments excluded from eligibility determination

Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program (ECEAP)	DCYF	Payments excluded from eligibility determination
Working Connections	DCYF	Payments excluded from eligibility determination
Child Care (WCCC)		
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and	Department of Health (DOH)	Income from participation is reportable for WIC and could impact eligibility. DOH provided the following options to minimize or eliminate benefit impact.
Children (WIC)		<p>WIC treats community compensation as income when it is on-going (i.e. when program participants participate in community advisory groups that occur over the course of months). If it is a one-time event (including a few engagement occasions to complete a project), they do not count the compensation as income. Examples below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report as income: If a WIC participant sits on a community advisory board, attends the monthly meetings, and receives compensation at \$57/hr basis for their time, contribution and any other assignments that satisfy their duty as the member for the duration of their appointment (6 months). • Exempt Income: If a WIC participant opts in for a user experience pilot project for a new online shopping program and participate in a set of 3 tests where they provide their feedback and receive a fixed-rate compensation for each test they complete, WIC won't count it as their income during the income verification process. <p>WIC offers additional eligibility for participants participating in programs that might exempt this income, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Medicaid Title 19 · State or Federal non-Title 19 medical assistance programs with income guidelines the same or less than WIC's · TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) · SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) · FDPIR (Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations) <p>WIC can also annualize income (over 12 months) received for a short-term engagement (e.g. time-limited and less than six months), which would reduce the risk of the participant exceeding program income eligibility guidelines.</p>

		<p>WIC does not consider gift cards income and is allowable if not equivalent to a cash payment, like a visa card.</p> <p>WIC is also requesting a waiver from USDA that would exempt this income from WIC income eligibility.</p>
SNAP/FAP (Food Assistance Program)	Dept. of Social & Health Services (DSHS); Community Services Division (CSD)	Payments included - Federal waiver requested
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	DSHS; CSD	Payments excluded from income determination
Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) cash assistance	DSHS; CSD	Payments excluded from income determination
Tribal TANF	DSHS; CSD	Currently under analysis
Child Support	DSHS; Division of Child Support (DCS)	Payments excluded from income withholding
Refugee Cash	DSHS; CSD	Payments excluded from income determination
Medical Assistance	DSHS; CSD	Payments excluded from income determination
Veterans' nonservice-connect pension or survivors' pension	Dept. of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)	Income included - DVA to request change with federal VA.
Unemployment	Employment Security Department (ESD)	Payments need to be reported on weekly claim and the payment will likely be deducted from weekly benefit amount.
Paid Family Medical Leave	ESD	Payments excluded from income determination
MAGI-Medical	Health Care Authority (HCA)	Payments excluded from eligibility determination
Non-MAGI Medical	HCA	Payments excluded from eligibility determination
Free/Reduced Lunch	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)	Payments excluded from eligibility determination

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	Social Security Administration (SSA)	SSA provided a decision that these payments must be reported but is excluded from income for SSI purposes
Social Security Insurance (SSI)	SSA	No impact - assistance not base
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	SSA	No impact - assistance not base

Resources

Templates

- Stipend Request Form Sample
- ACH Authorization Sample
- Individual Invoice Sample
- Workgroup Invoice Sample
- Internal Attendance and Compensation Tracker for Workgroup
- 5793 Tracking Form
- Volunteer Acknowledgement Form

Helpful Tools

- [Charity & Nonprofit Board Service in WA State Guidelines](#)
- [Sorenson Wavello](#)
- [ASL Referral Agencies Contract Summary \(wa.gov\)](#)
- [Independent contractors \(ASL\) - Contract Summary \(wa.gov\)](#)
- [Translation & CART services - Contract Summary \(wa.gov\)](#)
- [Community Engagement Toolkit](#)
- [Quarterly Reporting Schedule](#)
- [Allocation Best Practices](#)
- [RFP Bidder Contracting Guide Agencies](#)
- [RFP Bidder Contracting Guide DES](#)

Other State Agency Examples

- **Department of Health**
 - Gift Card Policy
 - DOH Community Compensation Guidelines
 - DOH Community Compensation Report SFY23
- **Department of Fish & Wildlife**
 - Request for Compensation
 - Workgroup Compensation & Reimbursement Form
- **Department of Corrections**
 - Community Compensation Program – Attendance Report (Internal Process)
 - Community Compensation Program – In-Person Attendance Roster
 - Community Compensation Program – Other Statutory Duties Templates
 - Community Compensation Program – Other Statutory Duties Process

- Community Compensation Program Application
- Community Compensation Program Disbursements (Internal Process)
- Community Compensation Program Member Acknowledgement
- Community Member Compensation Request
- Community Member Onboarding & Orientation Guide
- Group Chairperson Guidelines
- **Department of Commerce**
 - Recording Release Form
 - Stipend Request Form Template
 - Community Compensation Self-Attestation Template
 - SWV Compensation Template
 - Compensating Community Members Procedures
 - Compensating Community Members Policies
- **Office of Equity**
 - Community Compensation One-Pager Overview
 - Community Compensation Live Presentation March 29, 2023
 - Private & Local Funds
 - Imprest Account Monthly Reconciliation
 - Imprest Account Internal Policy
- **Department of Social & Health Services**
 - DSHS Community Compensation Guidelines

Does your agency have internal policies, procedures, and/or guidelines that you would like to share? Send materials to LivedExperience@equity.wa.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: WHICH GROUPS ARE COVERED BY 2SSB 5793?

A: The legislation and the guidelines offered in this document refer to any Class One workgroup in the state of Washington. Class two, three, four, and five Workgroups also have compensation and reimbursement requirements which agencies should be familiar and in compliance with.

Q: WHAT ARE CLASS ONE WORKGROUPS?

A: Any part-time board, commission, council, committee, or other similar group which is established by the executive, legislative, or judicial branch to participate in state government and which functions primarily in an advisory, coordinating, or planning capacity shall be identified as a Class 1 group. Throughout this document the word “workgroup” is generally used to refer to any qualifying group. See Definitions section.

Q: WHO IS COVERED UNDER 2SSB 5793?

A: Anyone volunteering their time and expertise to a "class one group" who is either a) low- income or b) has lived experience that participates in the workgroup can be eligible to receive compensation, provided they are not already being paid for their time on the workgroup and they are participating in an eligible activity. See sections Definitions and Eligible Activities.

Q: WHAT COUNTS AS “LOW INCOME”?

A: "Low income" means an individual whose income is not more than 400% of the federal poverty level. See Definitions section.

Q: WHAT ARE THE LIMITS TO COMPENSATION?

A: There is a \$200 cap on compensation per member, per day, for their work. If a workgroup member is paid \$200 for one day of work and in addition to that compensation, they also require reimbursement for gas, hotel, etc., they may also receive that necessary reimbursement in addition to the compensation. There is no limit for daily amounts of reimbursement.

Q: WHAT COUNTS AS “LIVED EXPERIENCE”?

A: Lived experience is direct personal experience in the subject matter being addressed by the workgroup. For example, a workgroup that is focused on the topic of housing instability might determine someone has lived experience if that person has experienced being unhoused. More specifically, an agency might seek perspectives from those communities who disproportionately experiencing housing instability. Academic, professional, or second-hand knowledge of the subject matter, while valuable, may not be considered “lived experience.” We also recognize that the relevance of “lived experience” can change significantly over time. When possible, workgroups should prioritize including members whose lived experience is as recent and as relevant to the subject matter as possible. See Definitions section.

Q: IS COMPENSATION MANDATORY?

A: Agencies are authorized, but not required, to offer stipends and reimbursements to eligible members of class one groups consistent with [RCW 43.03.220](#) and these guidelines. If agencies offer stipends and reimbursements, they should offer it to all eligible members of that workgroup. Members may elect to not receive the stipend.

Q: HOW MANY TIMES CAN AN AGENCY COMPENSATE THE SAME INDIVIDUAL?

A: There is no limit to the number of times one person may receive compensation. Agencies should develop extensive community networks so as not to partner with the same individuals repeatedly, thus ensuring they are getting broad representation across Washington.

Q: WHAT WORK QUALIFIES FOR COMPENSATION?

A: Attending meetings or performing any other duties assigned by the chairperson or leader of the workgroup can be eligible for compensation. See activities for eligible compensation section.

Q: WHAT IS A STATE WARRANT AND IS IT RELATED TO AN ARREST WARRANT?

A: A state warrant is simply another way of saying a check. In other words, it is a way of compensating community members with a paper check similar to what one would receive at a regular job. Checks can be taken to a bank in order to deposit the money into an account or receive cash in exchange. The term “state warrant” is not the same as a warrant for arrest and is not related in any way to the criminal justice system.

Q: DO WORKGROUP MEMBERS HAVE TO VERIFY THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL INCOME, THEIR FAMILY’S INCOME, OR BOTH?

A: Workgroup members receiving compensation based on their low-income status may be asked to affirm that their household’s total income qualifies as low income but should not be required to provide documentation of income for themselves or their family members. See definitions and income verification sections.

Q: WHEN SHOULD AGENCIES CONSIDER SEEKING ADVICE FROM OOE, OFM OR THEIR ASSIGNED AAG?

A:

If a class one workgroup member will earn \$600 or more in compensation in a year.

If there are questions about whether a particular group meets class one status, or a particular activity is eligible for the stipend or reimbursement.

If there are questions about how to define “lived experience” for a particular group.

If there are questions or concerns relating to public records compliance.

If reimbursements are needed for technology or services for community member participation.

When seeking to contract with an organization to facilitate the distribution of stipends for community participation in workgroups for the first time

Glossary

Index of Acronyms and Commonly Used Terms

2SSB 5793 - Second Substitute Senate Bill 5793 is the enacting legislation for community compensation

AAG - Agency-assigned Attorney General

ACH - Automated Clearing House

COM - Department of Commerce

CSD - Community Services Division

DCYF - Department of Children, Youth & Families

DOH - Department of Health

DSHS - Department of Social & Health Services

DVA - Department of Veterans' Affairs

EFS - Economic Feasibility Study

ESD - Employment Security Department

HCA - Health Care Authority

OFM - Office of Financial Management, an office that provides fiscal services to Washington state government, legislature, agencies, etc.

OSPI - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

OST - Office of the State Treasurer

PRA - Public Records Act

RCW - Revised Code of Washington, which is the compilation of all current and existing laws in the state of Washington. The full Revised Code of Washington can be found here: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/>

SSA - Social Security Administration

SWV - Statewide Vendor (number)

UW - University of Washington

WAC - Washington Administrative Code, refers to state law that is established by statute in order to regulate executive branch agencies. The full WA Administrative Code can be found here: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/>