



Washington State Institute for Public Policy

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Background and Authorization

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy was established through specific funding from the Washington Legislature in the 1983–85 biennial budget in the appropriation for The Evergreen State College. This funding was in direct response to House Floor Resolution 82- 176, requesting the Council on Postsecondary Education (predecessor to the Higher Education Coordinating Board) to study ". . .the potential of focusing higher education's resources in assisting state government, through some readily available means."

WSIPP has been in operation since September 1983. It is one of the public service centers of The Evergreen State College. WSIPP is altogether non-partisan.

Mission

The mission of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy is to assist policymakers, particularly those in the legislature, in making informed judgments about important, long- term issues facing Washington State.

Through its activities, WSIPP will:

- benefit the state's policymakers by making available to them timely, useful, and practical research products of the very highest quality.

Toward these ends, WSIPP will:

- initiate, sponsor, conduct, and publish research that is directly useful to policymakers; and
- manage reviews and evaluations of technical and scientific topics as they relate to major long-term issues facing the state.

The legislature directs WSIPP's work through assignments in policy and budget legislation.

Governance

A Board of Directors governs WSIPP, appoints WSIPP's director, and reviews and provides oversight for all WSIPP projects. The WSIPP Board is made up of the following sixteen members:

- Two senators from each caucus of the Washington State Senate (four senators);
- Two representatives from each caucus of the Washington State House of Representatives (four representatives);
- Two individuals appointed by the Governor (preferably, state agency directors);
- President of The Evergreen State College and one provost, or designated representative, from each of the following: University of Washington, Washington State University, and, on a rotating basis, a regional public university;
- Director of Senate Committee Services; and
- Director of the House of Representatives' Office of Program Research.

A House and Senate member serve as co-chairs of the Board, with representation from each party. The co-chairs are elected by the Board and serve in this role for two years. By vote of the majority, these terms can be extended.

Legislators serve three-year terms, which may be renewed at the discretion of the Majority Leader of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. University members of the Board serve three-year terms, which may be renewed at the discretion of the university in question. Members of the Board appointed by the Governor serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

The WSIPP Board meets at least twice a year or more frequently when relevant issues arise. The Board co-chairs convene and facilitate Board meetings. As much as practicable, Board decisions are by consensus. The co-chairs serve as points of contact between the Board and The Evergreen State College president on matters of governance.

Any member of the WSIPP Board of Directors who misses three consecutive meetings shall have that fact called to that member's attention by one of the Board co-chairs with the request that the member reconsider his or her ability to continue as a member. After discussion, if the co-chairs believe the member is not able to continue as a Board member, the co-chairs shall request that the appointing body replace the member for the remainder of the unexpired term.

The WSIPP Director, appointed by and reporting to the Board, is responsible for all operations of WSIPP, including hiring and supervising staff, contracting with university and other researchers, project management, and liaison with legislative leadership and legislative staff. Should a vacancy arise in the position of director, the co-chairs shall convene a Board meeting.

For business and personnel matters, WSIPP's director works through the office of the president of The Evergreen State College. The WSIPP Board, however, is the decision authority for all matters affecting WSIPP.

Voting Guidelines

For external study requests subject to approval by the Board

Quorum. A quorum of a majority of members currently appointed to the Board must be present at Board meetings to conduct business of the Board. If all 16 appointments to the Board are filled, nine members would constitute a quorum.

Being "present" is defined as physically at the meeting or participating via conference call.

Proxy votes. Proxy votes will not be allowed. "Proxy" votes include instances when a Board member informs one or both of the co-chairs how he/she will be voting.

Stand-ins. A voting member cannot send a stand-in member to a Board meeting to vote in a member's place. The stand-in member does not count towards the quorum necessary for a vote to take place.

Voting rule. In the event there is not a consensus, in order for an item to pass, a majority of the Board members present, if at least a quorum is also present, must vote affirmatively.

In the event of a tie vote, no action is taken.

For Board-directed studies

Voting rule. In the event there is not a consensus, in order for an item to pass, ten members of the Board must vote affirmatively either in-person during a Board meeting or electronically following a meeting.

Electronic voting. Board members not present for a Board-directed study vote may email their votes to the co-chairs following a meeting when such a vote has taken place.

Resources

Core funding for WSIPP operations and projects is contained in the biennial operating budget of The Evergreen State College. This funding provides resources for the director, the associate director, one support staff, and a sufficient operating budget for two to three research projects.

Funding for additional projects directed by the legislature can be written into authorizing legislation and/or appropriations bills. Resources to implement these mandated projects can be directed as provisos to WSIPP through the appropriations for The Evergreen State College or in the appropriations for other state agencies. In the latter instance, line items are to specify that the state agency should contract with WSIPP to implement the studies or projects named.

Board Decisions about Non-Legislatively Directed Projects

Unlike public policy institutes in other higher education settings, WSIPP only pursues non-state funding for policy studies that are approved by WSIPP's Board.

WSIPP has developed staff and information expertise that is valuable to public policymakers in state agencies as well as the legislature. WSIPP is sometimes asked to share its expertise, often as a one-time request for information, or a contract for research.

There are two categories of requests to WSIPP: access to research databases and requests for research analysis. These are as follows:

- 1) *Research databases.* WSIPP has created several integrated research databases to complete legislative assignments. For example, to evaluate the state's WorkFirst program, WSIPP created a database that merges records from a number of different state agencies. For studies that require analysis of criminal recidivism, WSIPP established matching procedures to trace individuals across state information systems maintained by the Courts and the Department of Corrections.

Other researchers have requested access to WSIPP's research databases. The amount of staff time needed to support these requests varies greatly by the type of request.

Data sharing agreements with the contributing state agencies require that the databases only be used for research purposes and that WSIPP protect the confidentiality of individual records. The agreements also require that other researchers who desire access to the records must first obtain permission from the contributing agencies.

- 2) *External requests for WSIPP research analysis.* Periodically, external organizations request that WSIPP perform research under contract. These organizations can include governmental agencies and private foundations. The decision-making process for these requests is as follows:

[Criteria for Decision-Making for Non-Legislatively Directed Projects](#). In considering additional opportunities for research and the outside use of WSIPP's research databases, WSIPP's primary consideration is the extent to which the work fulfills its mission and is consistent with existing directions from either the legislature or the Board. The two primary criteria that must be met for requests to be considered are:

- **Importance to the State:** What value does this project have for state-level policy research or state-level policymakers?
- **Consistency with Long-Term Goals and Mission:** Is the project associated with non-partisan policy research for a legislative audience?

In addition, WSIPP will consider the following factors before agreeing to participate in research or provide access to research databases:

- **Relationship to Current WSIPP Work:** Does WSIPP have direction to do this type of work?
- **Staff Expertise:** What is WSIPP's staff expertise on this topic?
- **Staff Availability/Scope of Project:** What are all aspects of WSIPP's expected role in this project; are staff available to fill all aspects without detracting from existing assignments?
- **Funding Availability:** Would the proposed contract cover all costs of WSIPP's involvement? If not, does WSIPP have sufficient funds available to finance the study, and is the issue of sufficient merit to justify use of WSIPP funds?
- **Independence:** Does the project allow WSIPP to assure its independence and impartiality?
- **Audience:** Is the primary audience the legislature? What is the level of interest in the topic?
- **Sensitivity:** How sensitive is the topic? Could WSIPP's participation in this project be misconstrued as advocacy or endorsement for the results?
- **Visibility:** To what extent will information or assistance be required from non- state entities, such as schools, courts, or local offices? If required, will the project potentially compromise the willingness of respondents to later participate in legislatively mandated projects? Does this involve human subjects review?

[Decision-Making Process for Non-Legislatively Directed Projects](#). WSIPP may participate in research projects outside legislative/Board origination or allow other researchers to use its integrated research databases, provided the above criteria are met, and with the following stipulations:

- Staff may agree to undertake "de minimus" projects requiring less than \$10,000 in resources, provided projects are consistent with WSIPP's adopted criteria for decision-making, as listed above.
- For projects or assistance requiring \$10,000 to \$50,000 in resources, staff will notify Board members through e-mail. Board members will communicate their approval or disapproval of the proposal through e-mail. In order for a decision to be reached, the staff must hear from at least seven members, with a majority (four) indicating approval.
- Projects or assistance over \$50,000 require approval of the Board as a whole at a Board meeting.

Adopted by WSIPP Board of Directors
December 5, 2016

Resolution

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 82-176, by Representatives McDonald, Heck, Dawson and Pruitt:

WHEREAS, The state's higher education institutions are a source of knowledge that can be applied to the solving of the state's economic and social problems; and

WHEREAS, The development and administration of public policy by state government is enhanced through the availability of the best possible knowledge base; and

WHEREAS, The important knowledge resource of our higher education institutions is not readily available to state policymakers and administrators; and

WHEREAS, Other states have developed means to focus higher education resources to assist in solving public problems;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, By the House of Representatives, That the potential of focusing higher education resources in assisting state government, through some readily available means, be studied by the Council for Postsecondary Education and a report provided to the 1983 regular session of the Legislature; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution be transmitted by the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives to the Council for Postsecondary Education.

On motion of Mr. McDonald, House Resolution No. 82-176 was adopted. 1982 Legislative Session