

Mentoring: Big Brothers Big Sisters Community-Based (taxpayer costs only) Public Health & Prevention: Community-based

Benefit-cost estimates updated December 2023. Literature review updated May 2018.

Current estimates replace old estimates. Numbers will change over time as a result of model inputs and monetization methods.

The WSIPP benefit-cost analysis examines, on an apples-to-apples basis, the monetary value of programs or policies to determine whether the benefits from the program exceed its costs. WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies has three main steps. First, we determine "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using a statistical technique called meta-analysis. Second, we calculate whether the benefits of a program exceed its costs. Third, we estimate the risk of investing in a program by testing the sensitivity of our results. For more detail on our methods, see our [Technical Documentation](#).

Program Description: Big Brothers, Big Sisters (BBBS) aims to promote greater confidence, educational success, and avoidance of risky behaviors through one-on-one mentoring. BBBS can be provided in schools or in other community settings. This analysis represents BBBS programs provided in community settings.

Through the BBBS community-based mentoring program, volunteer adults are paired with at-risk youth to meet weekly at locations of their choosing for relationship building and guidance. Community-based organizations recruit, screen, and train volunteers and provide ongoing supervision and match support. The focus of the community-based program is to promote educational success, while reducing crime and substance abuse. Participating youth, aged 6-18, come predominantly from low-income, single-parent households. In the studies included in this meta-analysis, volunteer mentors met one-on-one with their mentees for an average of three 3-hour sessions per month over a period of nine months.

Benefit-Cost Summary Statistics Per Participant

Benefits to:

Taxpayers	\$145	Benefit to cost ratio	(\$0.36)
Participants	\$46	Benefits minus costs	(\$2,688)
Others	\$11	Chance the program will produce	
Indirect	(\$915)	benefits greater than the costs	43%
Total benefits	(\$712)		
Net program cost	(\$1,976)		
Benefits minus cost	(\$2,688)		

The estimates shown are present value, life cycle benefits and costs. All dollars are expressed in the base year chosen for this analysis (2022). The chance the benefits exceed the costs are derived from a Monte Carlo risk analysis. The details on this, as well as the economic discount rates and other relevant parameters are described in our [Technical Documentation](#).

Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	Treatment age	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Adjusted effect sizes and standard errors used in the benefit-cost analysis						Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)	
				First time ES is estimated			Second time ES is estimated			ES	p-value
				ES	SE	Age	ES	SE	Age		
Crime	12	1	548	0.009	0.129	32	0.009	0.129	42	0.009	0.945
Alcohol use before end of middle school	12	1	487	-0.142	0.162	12	-0.142	0.162	13	-0.142	0.379
Substance use [^]	12	2	676	-0.125	0.293	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	-0.125	0.670
Smoking before end of middle school	12	1	487	-0.158	0.220	12	-0.158	0.220	13	-0.158	0.474
Alcohol use before end of high school	12	1	69	-0.207	0.226	12	-0.207	0.226	18	-0.207	0.360
Cannabis use before end of high school	12	1	69	-0.156	0.226	12	-0.156	0.226	18	-0.156	0.489
Illicit drug use before end of middle school	12	1	487	-0.230	0.131	12	-0.230	0.131	13	-0.230	0.079
Anxiety disorder ^{^^}	12	1	32	-0.287	0.367	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	-0.287	0.435
Major depressive disorder	12	3	708	-0.254	0.152	12	0.000	0.310	14	-0.254	0.095
Externalizing behavior symptoms	12	3	406	-0.072	0.168	12	-0.040	0.102	15	-0.072	0.668
Internalizing symptoms	12	3	406	-0.109	0.168	12	-0.109	0.168	14	-0.109	0.518
Hope [^]	12	2	676	-0.021	0.167	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	-0.021	0.900
Graduate with any degree [^]	12	1	570	0.185	0.128	23	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.185	0.148

[^]WSIPP's benefit-cost model does not monetize this outcome.

^{^^}WSIPP does not include this outcome when conducting benefit-cost analysis for this program.

Meta-analysis is a statistical method to combine the results from separate studies on a program, policy, or topic in order to estimate its effect on an outcome. WSIPP systematically evaluates all credible evaluations we can locate on each topic. The outcomes measured are the types of program impacts that were measured in the research literature (for example, crime or educational attainment). Treatment N represents the total number of individuals or units in the treatment group across the included studies.

An effect size (ES) is a standard metric that summarizes the degree to which a program or policy affects a measured outcome. If the effect size is positive, the outcome increases. If the effect size is negative, the outcome decreases.

Adjusted effect sizes are used to calculate the benefits from our benefit cost model. WSIPP may adjust effect sizes based on methodological characteristics of the study. For example, we may adjust effect sizes when a study has a weak research design or when the program developer is involved in the research. The magnitude of these adjustments varies depending on the topic area.

WSIPP may also adjust the second ES measurement. Research shows the magnitude of some effect sizes decrease over time. For those effect sizes, we estimate outcome-based adjustments which we apply between the first time ES is estimated and the second time ES is estimated. We also report the unadjusted effect size to show the effect sizes before any adjustments have been made. More details about these adjustments can be found in our [Technical Documentation](#).

Detailed Monetary Benefit Estimates Per Participant

Affected outcome:	Resulting benefits: ¹	Benefits accrue to:				
		Taxpayers	Participants	Others ²	Indirect ³	Total
Crime	Criminal justice system	(\$61)	\$0	(\$148)	(\$31)	(\$240)
Internalizing symptoms	K-12 grade repetition	\$3	\$0	\$0	\$2	\$5
Externalizing behavior symptoms	K-12 special education	\$59	\$0	\$0	\$30	\$89
Alcohol use before end of high school	Property loss associated with alcohol abuse or dependence	\$0	\$5	\$10	\$0	\$15
Major depressive disorder	Labor market earnings associated with major depression	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Externalizing behavior symptoms	Health care associated with externalizing behavior symptoms	\$144	\$41	\$149	\$72	\$406
Major depressive disorder	Mortality associated with depression	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Program cost	Adjustment for deadweight cost of program	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$988)	(\$988)
Totals		\$145	\$46	\$11	(\$915)	(\$712)

¹In addition to the outcomes measured in the meta-analysis table, WSIPP measures benefits and costs estimated from other outcomes associated with those reported in the evaluation literature. For example, empirical research demonstrates that high school graduation leads to reduced crime. These associated measures provide a more complete picture of the detailed costs and benefits of the program.

²"Others" includes benefits to people other than taxpayers and participants. Depending on the program, it could include reductions in crime victimization, the economic benefits from a more educated workforce, and the benefits from employer-paid health insurance.

³"Indirect benefits" includes estimates of the net changes in the value of a statistical life and net changes in the deadweight costs of taxation.

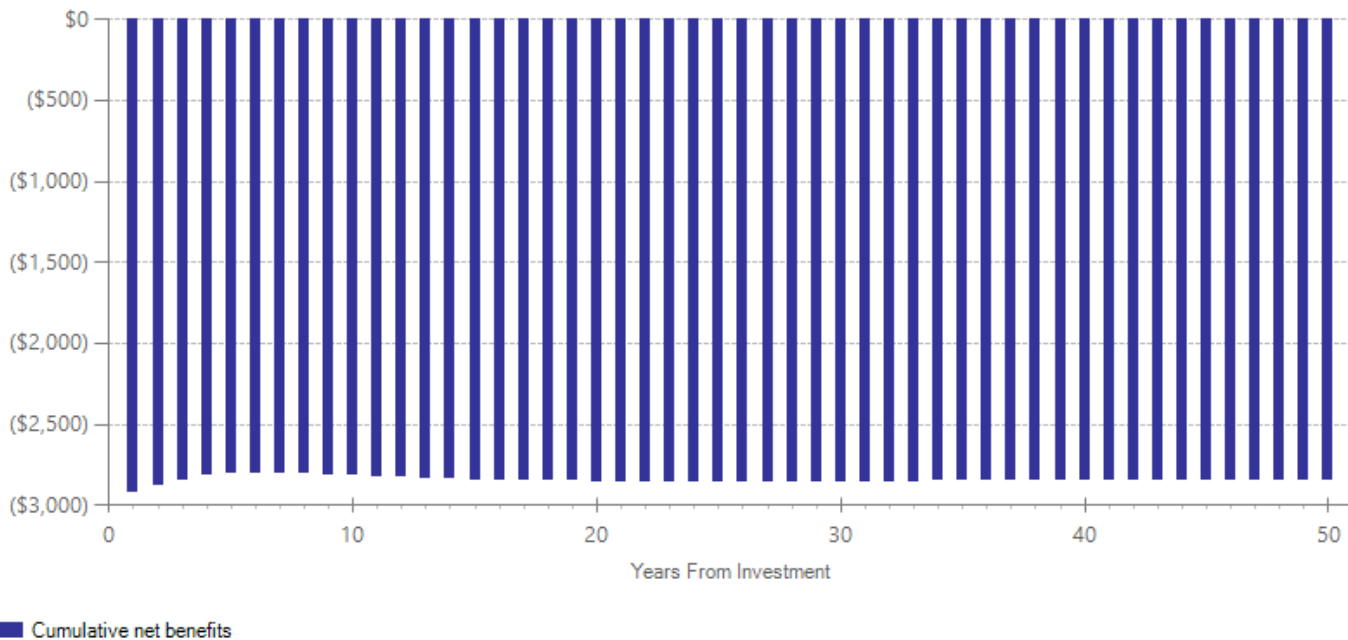
Detailed Annual Cost Estimates Per Participant

	Annual cost	Year dollars	Summary
Program costs	\$1,675	2016	Present value of net program costs (in 2022 dollars)
Comparison costs	\$0	2016	Cost range (+ or -)
			(\$1,976)
			20%

The estimated cost per participant is based on the average per-youth per-day cost to implement the program in Washington (\$4.59) and the average number of program days in the studies included in this analysis. The average per-youth per-day cost was calculated based on 2016 program cost and the number of youth program participants in three Washington BBBS agencies (provided by BBBS of Puget Sound in October 2017). Except for fundraising costs, all expenses are included (e.g., buildings, phones, staff); however, this cost estimate excludes the value of donated volunteer time and space.

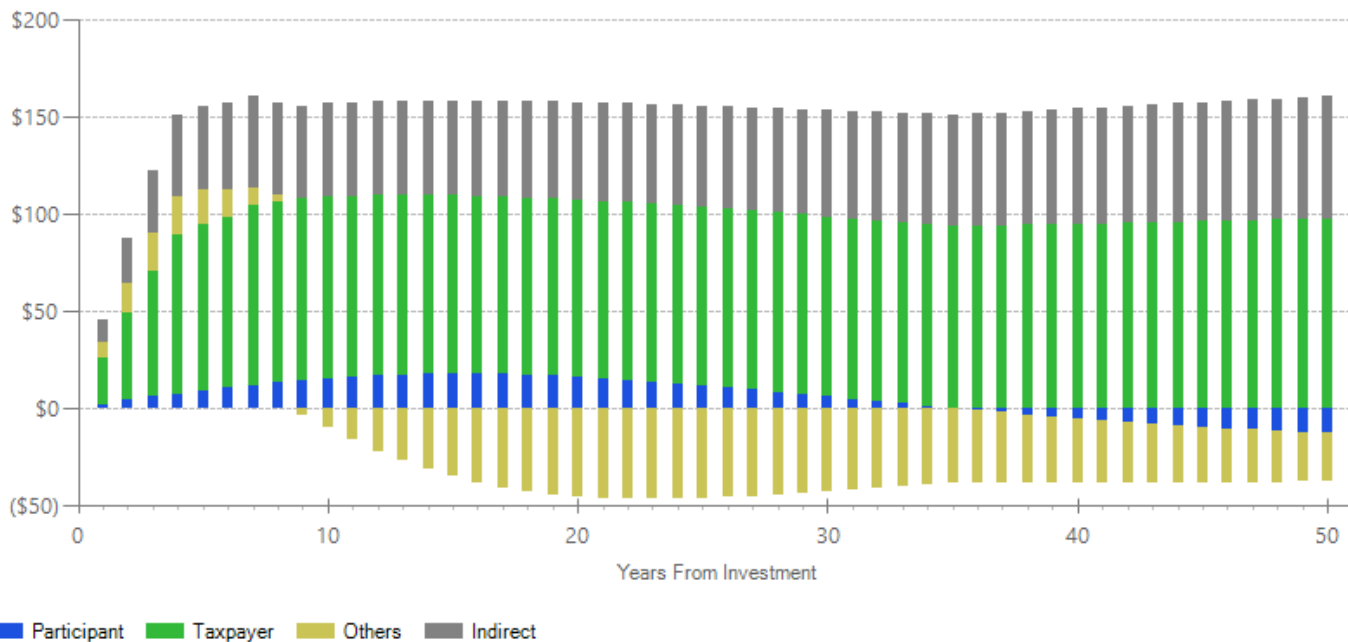
The figures shown are estimates of the costs to implement programs in Washington. The comparison group costs reflect either no treatment or treatment as usual, depending on how effect sizes were calculated in the meta-analysis. The cost range reported above reflects potential variation or uncertainty in the cost estimate; more detail can be found in our [Technical Documentation](#).

Benefits Minus Costs Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)

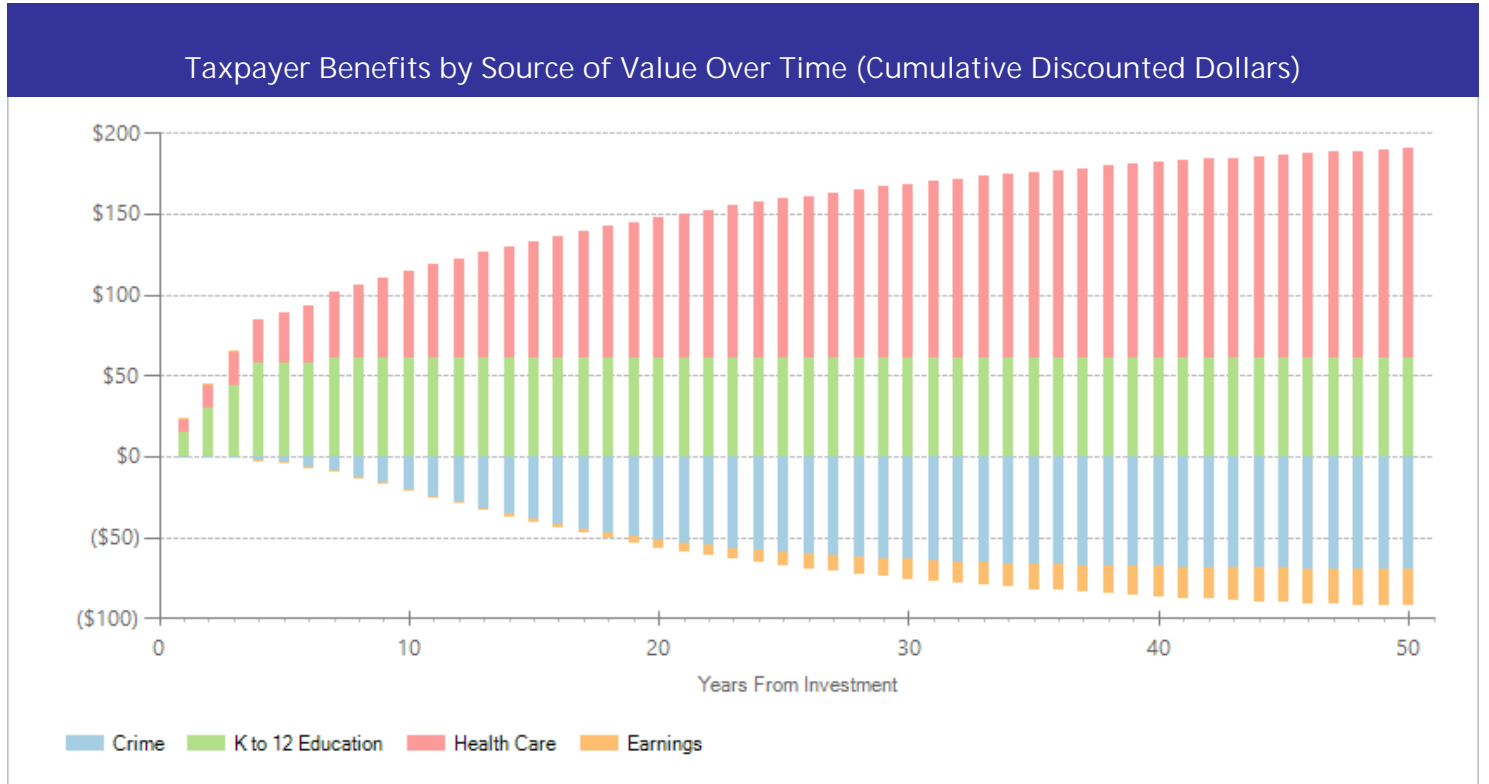


The graph above illustrates the estimated cumulative net benefits per-participant for the first fifty years beyond the initial investment in the program. We present these cash flows in discounted dollars. If the dollars are negative (bars below \$0 line), the cumulative benefits do not outweigh the cost of the program up to that point in time. The program breaks even when the dollars reach \$0. At this point, the total benefits to participants, taxpayers, and others, are equal to the cost of the program. If the dollars are above \$0, the benefits of the program exceed the initial investment.

Benefits by Perspective Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)



The graph above illustrates the breakdown of the estimated cumulative benefits (not including program costs) per-participant for the first fifty years beyond the initial investment in the program. These cash flows provide a breakdown of the classification of dollars over time into four perspectives: taxpayer, participant, others, and indirect. "Taxpayers" includes expected savings to government and expected increases in tax revenue. "Participants" includes expected increases in earnings and expenditures for items such as health care and college tuition. "Others" includes benefits to people other than taxpayers and participants. Depending on the program, it could include reductions in crime victimization, the economic benefits from a more educated workforce, and the benefits from employer-paid health insurance. "Indirect benefits" includes estimates of the changes in the value of a statistical life and changes in the deadweight costs of taxation. If a section of the bar is below the \$0 line, the program is creating a negative benefit, meaning a loss of value from that perspective.



The graph above focuses on the subset of estimated cumulative benefits that accrue to taxpayers. The cash flows are divided into the source of the value.

Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

- De Wit, D.J., Lipman, E., Manzano-Munguia, M., Bisanz, J., Graham, K., Offord, D.R., O'Neill, E., Pepler, D., & Shaver, K. (2007). Feasibility of a randomized controlled trial for evaluating the effectiveness of the Big Brothers Big Sisters community match program at the national level. *Children and Youth Services Review, 29*(3), 383-404.
- Dolan, P., Brady, B., O'Regan, C., Russell, D., Canavan, J., & Forkan, C. (2010). *Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ireland: Evaluation study: Report one: Randomised controlled trial and implementation report*. Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway, Foróige.
- Grossman, J.B., & Tierney, J.P. (1998). Does mentoring work? An impact study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. *Evaluation Review, 22*(3), 403-426.
- Herrera, C., DuBois, D.L., & Grossman, J.B. (2013). *The role of risk: Mentoring experiences and outcomes for youth with varying risk profiles*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures, MDRC.

For further information, contact:
(360) 664-9800, institute@wsipp.wa.gov

Printed on 03-28-2024



Washington State Institute for Public Policy

The Washington State Legislature created the Washington State Institute for Public Policy in 1983. A Board of Directors—representing the legislature, the governor, and public universities—governs WSIPP and guides the development of all activities. WSIPP's mission is to carry out practical research, at legislative direction, on issues of importance to Washington State.