

2024

Community Compensation Legislative Report¹

Advancing a Government of the people,
by the people, and for the people



Washington State
**OFFICE OF
EQUITY**

¹ Note: This legislative highlight is a shortened version of the full technical report. The full technical report can be found on EQUITY's website [early in 2025].

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Washington State Office of Equity (EQUITY) recommends that the Legislature take action to:

1

Increase funding for community compensation (currently at \$250k annually).

2

Revise RCW 43.03.2705 to make permanent the agency reporting requirement.

3

Revise RCW 43.03.220 to eliminate \$200 daily cap. The initial concern of ensuring volunteers weren't considered employees has been resolved. Removing the cap will allow flexibility in response to living wage standards.

4

Revise RCW 43.02.220 to define "[l]ow [i]ncome" with the more accurate **University of Washington self-sufficiency standard** instead of the federal poverty level. An example of how the University of Washington self-sufficiency standard has been incorporated into law can be found in **SHB 2230 (2024)**, which codified the Economic Security for All ("EcSA") grant program.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Washington state's continued commitment to removing barriers from community participation in government decision-making has been demonstrated through the community compensation mandate. Washington **paid over \$1.3 combined million to community members** who participated in class one workgroups for fiscal years 2023 and 2024! State agencies also **eliminated benefit impact** for people who participated on class one workgroups for almost all benefit programs.

IMPACT

Community compensation accomplished the following:

- Reduced barriers and increased diversity of participation in state workgroups;
- Built trust between community and government;
- Improved recruitment and retention of participants;
- Signaled to participants that their time and expertise was valued and critical to public discourse and policy; and
- Broadened participants' personal and professional skillsets, networks, and credentials.

DIRECT QUOTES

Krystina Morton: *Having the opportunity to be included and speak my truth has been a blessing To be able to compensate someone, just for their time is rewarding. Their experience matters just as much as anyone else's. Working on the guidelines and 5793 has opened doors for so many.*

I am appreciative and I am hoping that someday there will be someone with lived experience at EVERY table. Having a degree doesn't mean you are better than or know more. I am hopeful that this difference is being made and we set an example across the world. Who knows better than someone who has been there?

Amy Lynn Roark: *Being part of the Class 1 workgroups in Washington has provided me with invaluable opportunities for personal and professional growth, network building, and travel experiences that were previously inaccessible to me as a low-income individual.*

Also, you don't have to be low income to be a community member in a class 1 workgroup all you need is lived experience and that has given me the opportunity to be an Advocate Game Changer.

SUMMARIZED FEEDBACK

Community members and agencies felt that community compensation was extremely positive. Providing compensation improved the findings, outcomes, participation, and effectiveness of class one workgroups. Most participants expressed appreciation for the ability to receive compensation and offered feedback to improve the process for future community participants.

Community compensation allowed people with lived experience to participate in because they did not have to make up the pay missed from work. It helped government workgroups operate more efficiently by avoiding the errors and missteps that often result from not collaborating with impacted populations early in the process. Recipients reported feeling valued, respected, and heard on an emotional level.

DATA

2023 Demographic Findings

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (%)	Disability (%)	Rural (%)	Low Income (%)	Age (under 28) %	Counties (%)
14	22	25	85	25	78 ²

Additional Data: Counties with most representation : King County (32.8%) Pierce County (12.37%), and Spokane County (8.6%)

Agency Reporting FY 2023					
# of Agencies	# of Workgroups	# of Compensation Recipients	Total Stipends Disbursed	Average Hourly Rate	Average Payout Time
16	81	1,532	\$491,639.23	38.95	17 days

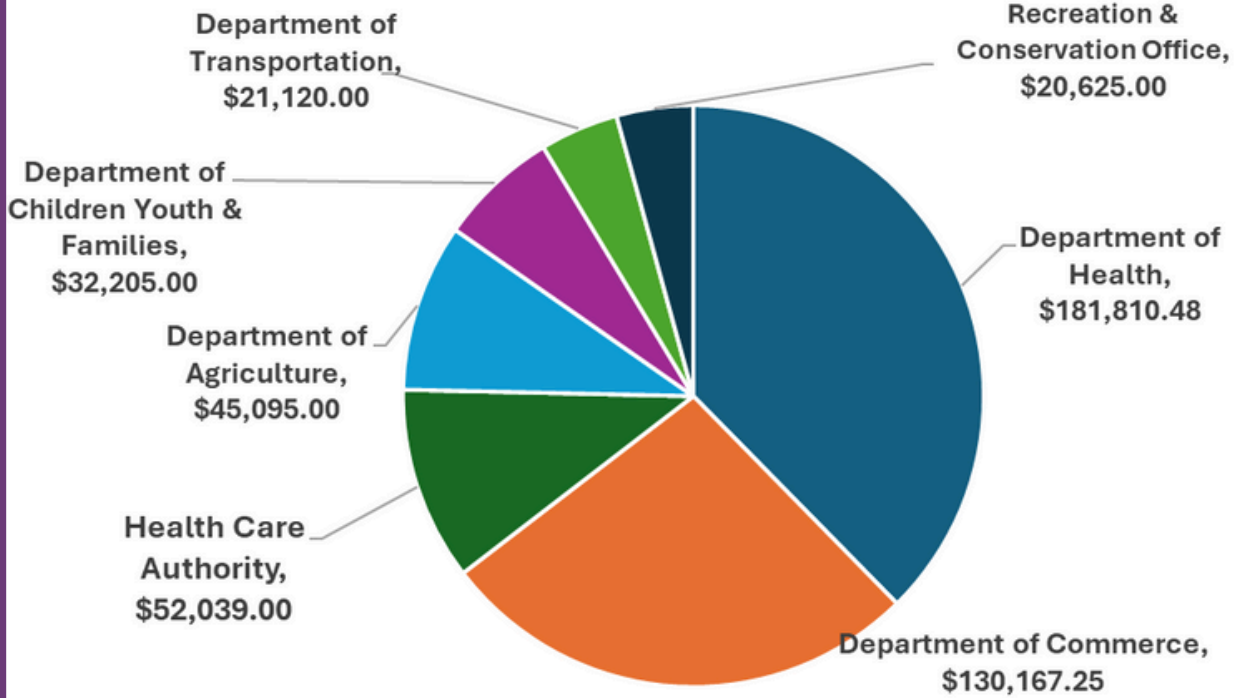
Agency Reporting FY 2024					
# of Agencies	# of Workgroups	# of Compensation Recipients	Total Stipends Disbursed	Average Hourly Rate	Average Payout Time
14	230	2,643	\$849,224.00	\$44.00	19 days

Note: Fewer agencies reported issuing community compensation in FY 2024, but there was a dramatic increase in the number of class one workgroups and the amount of community compensation issued

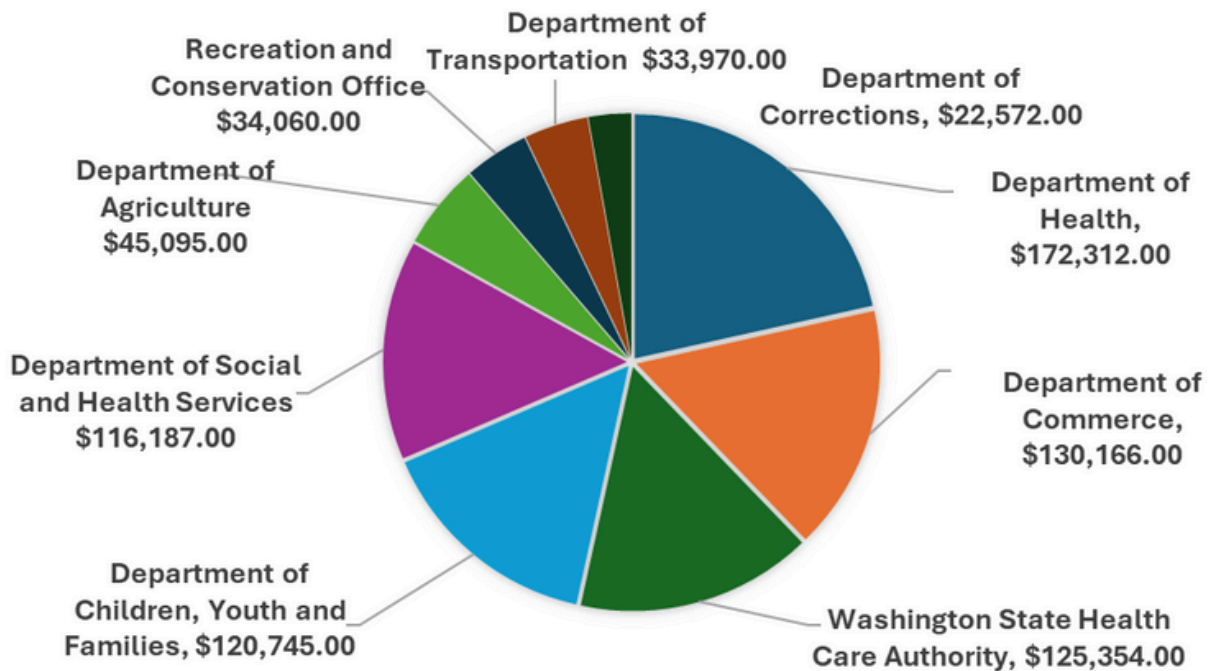
[2] Data based on EQUITY optional participant survey in FY 2023

DATA

Agencies with Highest Compensation Disbursed in FY 2023



Agencies with Highest Compensation Disbursed FY 2024



FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The following improvements are being made:

1

Standardizing agency compensation processes to reduce administrative errors, lower administrative burdens and compensate community members faster.

2

Increasing payment methods to compensating community members in ways that work better for their families and situation (i.e. unbanked populations).

3

Increasing awareness of community compensation within state agencies to further standardize processes and increase utilization.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Legislature passed [Second Substitute Senate Bill \(2SSB\) 5793](#), to remove barriers for community member participation in state workgroups. The legislature found “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... hinders full and open public participation”. The legislature created the requirement for community compensation for individuals who are not otherwise being compensated for their participation in class one workgroups.

This bill required the Office of Equity to establish guidelines for community compensation. EQUITY released [Community Compensation Guidelines Volume 1](#) in 2022 and the [Community Compensation Guidelines Update Volume 2](#) in 2024.