

**Washington State Paid Family Leave Analysis Grant  
Final Project Summary  
November 2016**

Washington State was awarded a grant by the Women's Bureau of the US Department of Labor to provide analysis of issues related to Paid Family Leave. This document summarizes the components of the grant and provides links to the final products.

The Washington effort included three categories of work:

- An Advisory Committee representing business, labor, and community groups.
- A set of opinion research efforts that captured attitudes about paid family leave policies.
- A set of impact estimates using different methods to assess the financial and programmatic impact of paid family leave policies under various assumptions.

### **Advisory Committee**

One of the first steps in the Washington effort was the creation of an advisory committee to inform the design and execution of deliverables under the grant. This work was coordinated by Ted Sturdevant of The Athena Group. From the outset, the members determined that they would not be coming together around specific recommendations for state program or state legislation. The deliverables described below were all completed by subcontractors. The Advisory Committee met periodically over the grant period to offer suggestions about deliverables and hear presentations as the research was presented. Advisory committee input was incorporated into deliverables to the extent feasible, but they do not represent a consensus.

### **Opinion Research**

Washington's grant supported two opinion gathering efforts. Both were completed by Lake Research Partners. The first, which was included in the original grant proposal, was an extensive survey of over 500 registered voters conducted in March of 2016. The research tested attitudes related to a general program and responses to programmatic variations (duration of benefits, allowable uses of leave, benefit levels, and other parameters). The results of this work are included in a report from Lake Research Partners, entitled "Washington

Paid Leave: Findings from a Survey of 529 Registered Voters Statewide.”

([http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22\\_WAPaidLeave\\_polling\\_report.pdf](http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22_WAPaidLeave_polling_report.pdf))

The second opinion research effort emerged as a result of discussions with the Advisory Committee. The purpose of the federal grant included gaining more understanding of employer attitudes around family leave policies. In an effort to expand knowledge of Washington employer perspectives, the project added some qualitative information gathering by engaging employers. This took the form of series of 30 employer interviews, with employers selected from a sampling frame including employers of different sizes, geographies, and industries. Topics in the interviews included existing leave policies, reactions to potential programs, funding options, and implications of a program. The interviews were conducted between August and October 2016. The results of this work are summarized in “Washington Paid Leave: Findings from 30 one-on-one interviews among business leaders throughout the State of Washington” ([http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22\\_WAPaidLeave\\_Employer\\_report.pdf](http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22_WAPaidLeave_Employer_report.pdf)) and the interview questions can be view here: “IDI Guides Final.” ([http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22\\_WAPaidLeave\\_Employer\\_guide.pdf](http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22_WAPaidLeave_Employer_guide.pdf))

## **Impact Estimation**

The Washington grant included quantitative research on the potential financial and programmatic impacts of a paid family leave program. This took two forms. First, a set of microsimulation model runs tested the cost of several variations on the theme of paid family leave. Second, a research study identified potential overlapping eligibility across a potential family leave program and some existing safety net programs.

The microsimulation work under the grant was completed by Randy Albelda (University of Massachusetts, Boston) and Alan Clayton-Matthews (Northeastern University). This work was done twice during the grant. An initial run was completed using parameters selected by the contractor. The purpose of this run was to inform decisions about potential program parameters based on likely impact on the cost of program. This run was also intended to introduce members of the Advisory Committee to the structure of the model and the variables that could be changed within the model to assess program outcomes. The second run of microsimulations was completed later in the grant process and included eight Washington-specific program variants. The results of these microsimulations are reported here: “Preliminary Estimates: Paid Family and Medical Leave Washington State” ([http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22\\_WAPaidLeave\\_prelim\\_estimates\\_modeling.pdf](http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22_WAPaidLeave_prelim_estimates_modeling.pdf)) and “Cost, Leave and Length Estimates Using Eight Different Leave Program Schemes for Washington”

[http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22\\_WAPaidLeave\\_modeling\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22_WAPaidLeave_modeling_final_report.pdf))

The second area of impact research was pursued by Ji-Young Kang, Marcia Meyers and Jennifer Romich in the School of Social Work, University of Washington. This work looked at the potential interactions among paid maternity leave programs, the existing Supplemental Food Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The findings from this analysis are included in a report entitled “Washington State Paid Family Leave Analysis Report: The Effect of State Paid Maternity Leave on TANF and SNAP Use.”

[http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22\\_WAPaidLeave\\_UW\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-11-22_WAPaidLeave_UW_Final_Report.pdf))

## **Lessons and Best Practices**

The grant staff team offered some thoughts on lessons from this process and elements that worked well in Washington.

***It was helpful to do microsimulations at different points in the process.*** Washington’s grant included microsimulations at the beginning of the process and at the end. This proved helpful because the data fulfilled different roles at different times (educating stakeholders in program parameters early, providing costing information as issues became clearer).

***It would be useful to explore more combinations of polling, focus groups, and interviews.*** Washington made specific choices about data gathering methods for different purposes and populations. There is no one right way to gather the information related to these programs. Future grant funding could usefully encourage additional opinion gathering by various means. The Women’s Bureau might also want to pursue a meta-analysis of polling results across the grantees.

***It would be informative to explore the unique issues facing states without Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) programs.*** Like most states, Washington does not have a TDI program, but most states with paid leave programs have built upon their TDI infrastructure. Additional research on the implications this gap could be useful.

***Advisory Committee work doesn’t have to be about policy agreement.*** By maintaining a focus on the group’s charge – to produce information that would more fully inform future policy discussions, regardless of one’s policy position – the Washington group did an admirable job of contributing to the quality of the research even as they held underlying policy disagreements.