

Tips for Writing Bill Analyses

1. **Read the bill.** Bill language contains a notation at the beginning which cites the existing RCWs that would be amended by the bill; for new law the notation cites the RCW chapter where it would be codified. This information also indicates what agencies are affected, if it is not clear in the bill language.
2. **Read each question very carefully.** *When you're doing multiple bill analyses (BAs) in one day, it's easy for the questions to start to blend together in your head.*

Points to consider:

- What is the potential effect on the agency
 - What is the potential effect on stakeholders
 - What other agencies are required to take actions under the bill; how does that differ from what is required under current law; are the new actions consistent with existing authorities or the affected agencies
 - What other division or divisions would be effected and need to provide input to complete the bill analysis review.
3. **Reach out to other staff and programs if you're unsure about an answer.** If you think a bill will have a fiscal impact, or will affect another division or our stakeholders, but you're uncertain, ask someone.
 4. **If another agency is the main focus of the bill or if you are unsure about the effects on another agency, contact someone in the affected program to get their take on the bill.** How would the law change their current practice?
 5. **Keep your answers to the point.** Condense your answers to the most important points.
 6. **Keep your answers objective and informative.** A straightforward, factual answer is more persuasive than one laden with emotion but light on facts.
 7. **Try to proof-read your BAs or have someone else do so.** Poor grammar or spelling is distracting to the reader and reflects poorly on the agency. We want to persuade legislators, not dissuade them.

Things to Think About

- Does the bill make sense – sometimes the intentions stated in the legislative findings section of the bill would not be met by the substantive provisions. Sometimes the bill language appears to assume that we, or sister agencies, carry out our business in ways contrary to our current practice. Does the bill seem internally consistent to you.
- If you are unaware of the existing authorities of your agency or sister agencies, you can do a quick review of the RCWs or WACs involved in the bill. These are online.
- Bill ideas have multi-year histories. If they are not passed in a given year, they can come back with varying levels of change, often with a new bill number. It helps to develop your own history of bill analysis; but if you are fairly new at a particular bill subject, try to find someone who has reviewed similar bills in the past.
- Bills change from version to version; it is usually better to continue to track substitute versions as they move through the system, even if they appear benign. The new provision that could bite the agency can easily be added by a different committee or by the opposite house.
- A tip for reviewing substitutes – your main job is to see how the new version is different from the original. For bills that are amendments of existing law, changed language appears in underline/strikeout format, and so is easy to track. For bills (or sections of bills) that are new law, language changes in the substitute versions are not singled out at all. A reasonable way to see what has changed is to compare the last few words of each line between the original and substitute bills. Where the ending words are different, it is because some lines have gotten longer or shorter, an indication of changed language. The line-end synch up should start again at the beginning of the next section. This is not foolproof, but works well the large majority of the time, providing that your print format is the same for both versions.