



Washington State Agency Publication Guide

September 2019

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INTRODUCTION

It is the state's goal to ensure that all publications are produced and distributed in a way that meets both the needs of the state and controls publication costs. This guide is designed as a resource for agencies to help them comply with legal requirements and to provide information on the most cost-effective alternatives in producing state publications.

The Office of Financial Management was directed to report on implementation of chapter 40.07 RCW, on management and control of state publications, and to "make recommendations concerning the use of alternative methods of distribution, including electronic publication, of agency reports and other publications and notices."

Although some agencies are exempt from publication guidelines issued by OFM under chapter 40.07 RCW, they may be subject to other statutes, directives and administrative policies referenced in this guide.

What is a state publication?

RCW 40.06.010 defines state publications as the following:

"State publication" means information published by state agencies, regardless of format, intended for distribution to state government or the public. Examples may include annual, biennial, and special reports required by law, state agency newsletters, periodicals, and magazines, and other informational materials intended for general dissemination to state agencies, the public or the legislature.

Keep in mind that, according to this same RCW, the term "print" includes all forms of reproducing multiple copies (typewritten correspondence and interoffice memoranda are exceptions).

Therefore, these guidelines do cover electronic publications. With advances in technology, however, these guidelines may not always be applicable. Agency staff are encouraged to use common sense, keeping in mind the intent of the legislation and the principles of publication guidelines.

While this is a subjective standard, legislative intent is clear: The Legislature has historically taken a dim view of unnecessary publications. The statute requires agency heads to determine whether the benefits from a publication exceed the costs of production and distribution before any publication is authorized.

DECIDING TO PRODUCE A PUBLICATION

State law sets out the guiding principles for managing state publications in chapter 40.07 RCW, which states:

No agency head shall recommend a state publication for printing and distribution, other than those required by law, unless the benefits from the publication and distribution thereof to the citizens and taxpayers of this state clearly exceed the costs of preparation, printing, and distribution.

– RCW 40.07.030

OFM recognizes that agencies need to produce high-quality, well-designed publications to reach their audience, but recommends that they do so “in the most economic manner consistent with effectiveness and achievement of program objectives” [RCW 40.07.030(5)].

While decisions about individual publications are generally left to the discretion of individual agencies, RCW 40.07.030(2) gives OFM the authority to “selectively review state publications in order to determine if specific state publications are economically and effectively contributing to the accomplishment of state agency program objectives.” The governor or the governor’s designee in OFM also has the authority to “eliminate, consolidate, or simplify state agency publications” under RCW 40.07.040(1).

Annual evaluation of every publication is required

State agencies must conduct an annual evaluation of all publications in accordance with OFM guidelines to determine whether they will be produced, revised or distributed through other means (RCW 40.70.030). Internet publication, for example, may be a better choice for some formerly printed publications as it is often more cost-effective and accessible. Agencies should keep in mind, however, that not all citizens have access to electronic publications and should determine the audience when deciding how best to distribute the document.

If the requirements of a federally mandated state publication conflict with any of the state guidelines for publication or distribution, agencies are required to send a copy of the publication to the OFM director with a letter of transmittal citing the federal statute, rule or regulation requiring the publication (RCW 40.07.050). This requirement does not apply to publications that already meet the state publications guidelines defined by statute, governor’s administrative policy, OFM directive or this guide.

Despite the ubiquity of the internet, agencies should recognize that not all citizens have access to electronic communications, which are not a substitute for printed materials in all cases.

ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

Electronic publications are preferred

In many cases, electronic communications — whether through the internet or some other medium — provide a cost-effective alternative to printed publications.

STYLE, FORMATTING AND PRODUCTION

The Governor’s Office has directed all executive branch agencies, boards and commissions to balance the effectiveness of printed materials with cost considerations when selecting formats, colors and logos.

Select vendors who use recycled paper and ink

The state is continually working toward a cleaner environment and encourages the use of recycled products and nonpetroleum-based (vegetable) ink. The state clearly intends that recycling standards be followed for state publications. It is recommended that agencies follow this intent by consulting with state-approved vendors about available printing stock and affixing a recycle symbol to their publications.

Standards for state letterhead and business cards

While common sense should dictate printing decisions, some standards should be adhered to for stationery (letterhead and envelopes) and business cards produced by agency in-house printing facilities and state-approved private vendors.

- » Individual names should not be printed on any letterhead or memo paper.
- » Addresses should be printed with the PO Box and ZIP +4 ZIP code.
- » The union label and recycle symbol should appear on all business cards and letterhead printed by a state agency.
- » Letterhead and business cards should be printed with green ink on recycled stock.
- » Agencies may create letterhead electronically, provided that the design conforms to that established by OFM.
- » Business cards should be printed only for employees who require cards as an integral part of their responsibilities.

While these requirements apply specifically to letterhead and business cards, OFM recommends that agencies apply similar standards of simplicity to all publications.

Guidelines for agency publications

Agencies are encouraged to develop internal policies and procedures to govern their publications. These policies and procedures should:

- » Ensure the quality of agency publications and promote consistency in graphic design in individual agencies.
- » Standardize and simplify the process of creating and maintaining agency publications. A regular review process should include strategies to revise, combine or eliminate outdated or unnecessary publications, and planning for all communication materials.
- » Allow publications to be posted electronically with a minimum effort, thus increasing access to public information.

Disability access and ADA language

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that all state services, including publications, be accessible to people with disabilities:

In communicating with employees, applicants, clients of services or the public, all state agencies, boards and commissions will ensure that teletypewriters, sign language interpreters, assistive devices and information in alternate formats will be provided upon request.

The Central Access Office at Central Washington University's Disability Services department provides services that include document conversion, free software and alternative media consultation. Visit <http://www.cwu.edu/central-access/> for more information.

The Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web Consortium, <http://www.w3.org/WAI> has developed guidelines for improving access for people with disabilities to materials provided through the internet.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Review and approval by the Executive Policy Office and OFM prior to legislative submittal

Reports prepared by an executive agency for the Legislature may be reviewed and approved by OFM's Budget Division and the Governor's Executive Policy Office prior to transmittal to the Legislature for policy, fiscal and program content.

Agency review submittal process

Reports prepared by an executive agency must be placed in one of the following categories, as determined by the agency:

Category 1: Reports that suggest a change in law or a change in current or future legislative appropriations, or have a significant budget/fiscal impact.

Category 2: Reports that are unique in nature or topic, or reports that the executive agency is unsure about whether they fall into Category 1.

Category 3: Reports that are routine or that do not suggest or imply any significant change in law or funding. This includes recurring reports in the form of quarterly, semiannual or annual updates.

All reports prepared by an executive agency for the Legislature that fall into Category 1 or 2 must be reviewed and approved by the Budget Division and the Executive Policy Office prior to transmittal to the Legislature. These reports are reviewed for policy, fiscal and program implications to ensure they are consistent with executive branch policies.

Sample ADA language

ADA language must appear on all agency and institution documents available to the public. This language lets individuals requesting alternative formats for meetings know how to notify agencies of their specific needs.

Sample ADA language is provided here as a reference.

If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format, please contact (provide name of agency, address, phone number and TTY/TDD number).

To obtain this publication in alternative format, please contact the (indicate agency) ADA coordinator at (address, phone, email).

This document is available in alternative formats to accommodate persons with disabilities. Copies of this document can be obtained in alternative formats by calling (contact phone number, TTY/TDD telephone number).

Reports that fall into Category 3 may be distributed without review and approval from the Budget Division and the Executive Policy Office. However, the Budget Division or the Executive Policy Office may request that a report be submitted for its review and approval regardless of category.

Reports submitted for review will be assigned a three-week deadline. The Budget Division and the Executive Policy Office will complete their reviews by the deadline. Unless a request is made for an extension, with an explanation, by the Budget Division or the Executive Policy Office, the submitting agency may consider the report approved upon reaching the three-week deadline and then submit the report to the Legislature, regardless of notice of completion.

Agencies must provide copies of the final report submitted to the Legislature, regardless of review by the Budget Division or the Executive Policy Office, to both groups.

Review process

Reports must be submitted through email in Microsoft Word format and as a PDF to ofm.policy@ofm.wa.gov. The former allows budget analysts and policy advisors to use the tracked changes feature for their comments, suggestions and revisions.

Upon receipt of a report, the Executive Policy Office will assign a three-week period for review and approval.

Reports will then be assigned to the appropriate budget analyst and/or policy advisor.

Agencies will be notified upon completion of the review. The report may be approved or may require revision. If approved, the agency can send the report to the Legislature.

If revisions are required, the agency will be informed if the report needs to be reviewed again by the Budget Division or the Executive Policy Office or if the report can be sent to the Legislature without a second review. If the agency is not informed that the report has been approved in the three-week period, the agency may nevertheless consider the report approved and send it to the Legislature.

An executive agency may request expedited review and approval of a report at ofm.policy@ofm.wa.gov.

Contact ofm.policy@ofm.wa.gov with questions.

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution to the Legislature

RCW 43.01.036 directs agencies to provide all reports to the Legislature and Governor's Office only in electronic format. Agencies should distribute reports as directed in the enacted legislation or budget proviso.

Agencies also must copy the Secretary of the Senate (senate.secretary@leg.wa.gov) and Chief Clerk (chief.clerk@leg.wa.gov) on their report transmittals. Links to these reports will be posted on the Legislature's website at <https://app.leg.wa.gov/reportstothelegislature>.

The State Library requires copies for statewide distribution

To help ensure that the public has access to information and that historic records of state activities are maintained, OFM requires that agencies use the State Distribution Center at the State Library to make information available through libraries statewide.

The State Library uses depository libraries to ensure that publications are available for the public. For large print runs — more than 100 copies — the State Library requests that agencies provide it with 50 paper copies of all publications written for a general audience, the Legislature or the public. These copies will be made available at depository libraries throughout the state.

If a publication is produced for limited distribution — fewer than 100 copies — the State Library requests 15 paper copies for the full depository libraries only. These guidelines apply to state publications defined by chapters 40.06 and 40.07 RCW.

The State Library is required by law to collect state publications in all formats. For publications produced electronically, send a URL or electronic file to the Digital State Publications staff at epubstate@sos.wa.gov. To determine the number of copies needed for other formats, call 360-704-5265 or 360-704-5221. For more information, visit <http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/StateDepositoryProgram.aspx>.

The State Library may also request that agencies furnish the Distribution Center with a list of current state publications and a copy of its mailing and/or exchange lists per RCW 40.06.060. Mailing and/or exchange lists provided to the State Library fall within the guidelines of RCW 42.56.070 and 42.52.050 relating to confidentiality. Call the State Library at 360-704-5265 or 360-704-5221 for more information.

State Library collection program

Before recycling old state publications that have outlived their usefulness to state agencies, please contact the State Library. It may be able to distribute such publications as RCWs, session laws and agency publications to libraries in Washington. Contact the State Library at 360-704-5265 or 360-704-5221.

Mailing publications at the lowest available rate

RCW 40.06.040 requires that state publications distributed to the public and the Legislature be mailed at the lowest available postal rate. Assistance with bulk mailing is available from the Department of Enterprise Services. (See DES website: <https://des.wa.gov/services/printing-mail/mail-services>.) Consultation on developing and formatting agency mailing lists is also available through DES.

FEES AND ADVERTISING

Charging fees for state publications

State law provides some agencies with specific statutory authority to collect fees for the publications they produce. For example, under RCW 77.12.170, the Department of Fish and Wildlife deposits fees for informational materials published by the department in the State Wildlife Account.

The state Public Records Act also allows agencies to impose “a reasonable charge” to recover the cost of providing copies of public records pursuant to public records requests (RCW 42.56.120). The law stipulates a maximum charge of 15 cents per page for copying. The public disclosure law should not be interpreted as providing blanket authority to agencies to charge for publications not relating to a public disclosure request. Absent specific statutory authority, state agencies are advised to consult with their assistant attorney general before charging for a publication produced for general distribution.