

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2550

Title: AN ACT Relating to creating the Washington answers! program.

Brief Description: Improving our state government's customer service.

Sponsors: Dunshee, Haigh.

BRIEF SUMMARY

- Creates the Washington Answers! program to improve the ability of agencies to provide quick, courteous, and accurate information to citizens.

HOUSE STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191)

BACKGROUND:

State agencies provide information to citizens in a variety of ways. Citizens may access agency information and services in many ways including over the telephone, by regular mail, by electronic mail, and on the internet.

SUMMARY:

The Washington Answers! program is created. The Director may award grants from the Washington Answers! account for the purpose of improving agency customer service.

Agencies applying for grants must submit proposals to the Director. The Director must consider the extent to which each agency proposal meets certain criteria including:

- Whether the proposal contains initiatives that will result in long-term customer service improvement;
- Whether the proposal reduces telephone wait times for citizens calling for agency assistance; and
- Whether the proposal creates any new efficiencies.

An agency receiving a grant under the Washington Answers! program must:

- Monitor wait times for citizens contacting the agency and the time within which the agency responds to citizen requests;
- Provide an opportunity for citizens to leave messages in the event that wait

- times are too long; and
- Provide the Legislature with an annual report detailing the results of the grant.

The Director must conduct an annual random survey of agency access numbers. The survey must contain information regarding:

- The number of times the agency could not be contacted;
- The responsiveness of the published agency access number;
- The average amount of wait time; and
- The availability of knowledgeable staff to answer citizen questions.

The Director must also make available to other state agencies any innovations he or she discovers in the course of administering the Washington Answers! program.

Appropriation: \$1,000,000.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 24, 2000.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.