
Public Safety Committee

ESSB 5353

Brief Description: Creating a partnership model that facilitates community engagement with law enforcement.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Conway, Darneille, Nguyen and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Creates a pilot project within the Department of Commerce to award grants to public agencies and nongovernmental organizations fostering community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement-community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement.
- Requires the Department of Commerce to submit a preliminary report to the Legislature regarding the pilot project by January 1, 2022, and submit a final report to the Legislature by December 1, 2023.

Hearing Date: 3/19/21

Staff: Corey Patton (786-7388).

Background:

Some counties in Washington have developed programs designed to promote collaboration and engagement between law enforcement agencies and local communities. Programs vary in mission, scope, and the services provided, but are generally staffed by teams of program managers and mobilization specialists and supported by community members with ties to local services such as education, social services, health care, and law enforcement. Examples of ongoing programs include the Okanogan County Community Coalition, the Pierce County Safe

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Streets program, and Safe Yakima Valley.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The Department of Commerce (Commerce) must create a pilot project to foster community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement-community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement. The project must include 12 to 15 grant awards in counties that have demonstrated commitment to programs that promote community engagement in public safety, including Spokane, Pierce, King, Okanogan, Yakima, Cowlitz, Clark, Chelan-Douglas, Walla-Walla, Benton-Franklin, Grant, and Snohomish counties. Commerce must adopt policies and procedures to administer the project, including policies and procedures for:

- an application process;
- disbursement of grant awards to selected applicants;
- tracking compliance and proper use of funds; and
- measuring outcomes.

To qualify for the project, an applicant must:

- be a public agency or nongovernmental organization, other than a law enforcement agency serving a city or county with a population above 10,000 people;
- have experience with community engagement initiatives impacting public safety;
- have community engagement;
- have established or be willing to establish a coordinated effort with committed partners, which must include law enforcement and organizations committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion of community members, including organizations whose leadership reflects communities most impacted by racism; and
- have established priorities, policies, and measurable goals in compliance with the project's requirements.

An agency or organization that receives a grant from the project must:

- lead and facilitate neighborhood organizing initiatives;
- build substantive law enforcement-community partnerships;
- mobilize youth to partner with neighborhood groups and law enforcement to prevent violence;
- engage businesses to help prevent crimes through safety training and other prevention initiatives;
- provide training and technical assistance on implementing community engagement, law enforcement-community partnerships, youth engagement, and business engagement;
- maintain leadership for managing the grant, including an administrator who acts as an available point of contact; and
- collect and report data and information required by Commerce.

Commerce must, in consultation with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, develop reporting guidelines for grant recipients to measure whether the project has an impact on crime rates and community engagement with, and perceptions of, law enforcement. Commerce must

submit a preliminary report to the Legislature containing details about the grant recipients and Commerce's reporting guidelines by January 1, 2022, and submit a final report containing an analysis of the information collected from the project by December 1, 2023. The project expires on January 1, 2024.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.