

Overview—the stakeholder engagement process

Ecology and Health (“we”) implement the Safer Products for Washington program in a series of four phases, which take about five years to complete. At the end of the first cycle, we return to the first phase and complete the process again with new chemicals and products.



Figure 1. The Safer Products for Washington implementation process. Stakeholder involvement is crucial to inform each phase of the work, and is ongoing throughout the process.

Chapter [70A.350.050](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.350.050) RCW¹ requires us to “create a stakeholder advisory process to provide expertise, input, and a review of the department's rationale for identifying priority chemicals and priority consumer products and proposed regulatory determinations.”

Our stakeholder advisory process aims to help interested parties:

- Understand the law and our implementation process.
- Learn about our research efforts through emails, webinars, outreach materials, individual discussions and presentations, and regular updates to our implementation website.
- Contribute to our decision-making processes.
- Give expertise through email, meetings, and calls.
- Provide input at key decision points through a public comment period.

¹ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.350.050>

Our stakeholder advisory process involves frequent outreach to all required stakeholder groups to solicit their review, expertise, and input. Outreach is accomplished through a range of communication mediums: regular email list notifications, website updates, individual outreach emails, workshops or events, meetings with stakeholders, Washington State Register announcements, webinars, presentations, infographics, social media, blog posts, news releases, and formal public comment periods.

RCW 70A.350.050 specifies that our stakeholder advisory process must include representatives from:

- Large and small business sectors.
- Community, environmental, and public health advocacy groups.
- Local governments.
- Affected and interested businesses.
- An expert in scientific data analysis.
- Public health agencies.

The law requires us to engage these groups at some point in the process, but it does not specify this requirement for each phase in the process. Though it is not required, we aim to engage these groups, in addition to the public and community-based organizations (CBOs), and incorporate their input during all four phases of our process.

What's included in this document?

This document is an updated version of our [March 2020 stakeholder advisory process](#)² and contains a high-level summary of our efforts to engage stakeholders in our process to date. Building on Phase 2 efforts and early involvement planning, our stakeholder engagement process grew notably since we last updated this information. Here is what this document includes:

- The introductory section (focused on engagement outcomes) includes a high-level recap of our stakeholder engagement efforts.
- The section covering Phase 2 stakeholder engagement is a recap of our original stakeholder advisory process document. Each portion of this section also includes updates reflecting the additional stakeholder engagement efforts accomplished in Phase 2 between March and June 2020.
- The Phase 3 stakeholder engagement section adds new information to reflect stakeholder outreach and engagement since publishing our [report on priority consumer products](#)³ (and transitioning from Phase 2 to Phase 3 of our effort), from July 2020 to November 2021.

Introduction and engagement outcomes

Since starting our stakeholder engagement efforts in 2019, we've contacted over 600 organizations and individuals, and we have 288 organizations and individuals who are highly engaged in the Safer

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https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/Stakeholder_Engagement%20_Process.pdf

³ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/summarypages/2004019.html>

Products for WA program. That means they attend webinars or workshops, meet individually with our team, provide input on our work or methods, or reach out to us directly.

We involve the required stakeholder groups (in addition to the public and CBOs) during every phase of our process. However, given who uses consumer products (all of us!), we recognize the need to grow representation and involvement in our process from community groups, tribes and tribal organizations, and the public—especially diverse communities across Washington.

Phase 2 stakeholder engagement

Establishing our process

Ecology and Health began developing a stakeholder advisory process soon after the law took effect. In September 2019, we shared the product categories we were researching and invited manufacturers, industry groups, environmental advocates, and other interested stakeholders to share data on:

- Specific chemicals and concentrations found in relevant chemical-product combinations.
- Volumes of the product sold or present in Washington.
- The potential for human or environmental exposures.
- The availability of safer alternatives.
- Additional chemical-product combination recommendations that may be relevant for sensitive populations.

Phase 2 outreach

In order to ensure our process had representatives from the required sectors, we developed an outreach strategy. We first started reaching out to our existing email lists for related projects, such as Chemical Action Plans. To inform our stakeholders about our first draft report, we sent over 200 individual emails to large and small retailers, chemical and product manufacturers, environmental advocacy organizations, scientific experts, public health agencies, and more. Through these efforts, we grew our email list to over 225 subscribers. It included representation from every major stakeholder group outlined in the law, as well as CBOs and the public (which refers to individuals who are not affiliated with or representing any organization or institution).

Implementation webinars

We hosted two webinars during Phase 2 implementation. The first aimed to explain the law and its requirements. The second focused on our draft report on priority consumer products. Both involved time to answer questions from affected industries and interested stakeholder groups. A summary of the questions and answers from each of these webinars are on our [implementation website](https://bit.ly/SaferProductsWA).⁴

⁴ <https://bit.ly/SaferProductsWA>

In August 2019, [66 attendees](#)⁵ joined our first webinar. In February 2020, [97 attendees](#)⁶ joined our second webinar (which we hosted at two separate times in an effort to make the content accessible to stakeholders across time zones).

About a quarter of the participants in each webinar represented manufacturers or large businesses. The remainder of attendees represented small businesses, tribal organizations, local governments, environmental and public health advocacy groups, scientific experts, public health agencies, and the public.

Public comments on our draft priority products report

The release of our draft report on priority consumer products opened a 45-day public comment period, and during that time, we received over 1,300 comments on the report. The vast majority of the comments (about 97 percent) came from the public. There were 22 comments from manufacturers or large businesses and five from environmental or public health advocacy organizations.

Finally, we received comments from each of the following stakeholder groups:

- Manufacturing industry associations
- Large businesses
- Community-based organizations
- Local governments
- Public health agencies
- Scientific experts

In response to public comments and the overwhelming concern from many communities in Washington, we expanded three priority product categories and added two additional product categories. We sent an [update to our email list in May 2020](#),⁷ outlining those changes prior to publishing the final report on priority consumer products. We also reached out to 294 organizations between May and June 2020 to inform them that we added a product they produce, sell, or use to our list for consideration.

Community outreach

In addition to opening our doors for meetings and sharing regular research updates, the Safer Products for WA team also co-hosted a community outreach event in collaboration with Public Health Seattle King County in February 2020. We invited CBOs to learn about the draft report on priority consumer products and share input around their use of the listed products.

This event furthered our efforts to focus on equity and environmental justice in the Safer Products for WA implementation process. We brought community leaders from 25 organizations serving overburdened populations in the Seattle area to the table. We heard community concerns that the safer and healthier option is sometimes more expensive and inaccessible. Participants asked for actions to take to protect themselves while we continue to evaluate products. We recognize certain communities

⁵ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/August_2019_Webinar_Attendees.pdf

⁶ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/February_2020_Webinar_Attendees.pdf

⁷ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/May_2020_Stakeholder_Email.pdf

have fewer resources to make certain purchasing decisions, and that this could be affecting their ability to access safer products.

The concerns we heard and the community feedback shared at this event shaped our outreach efforts. It helped open doors for information sharing between our program and CBOs. Based on this input, we launched a public education campaign as part of our work to implement the program. Find outcomes from this education campaign in the [public involvement section](#).

Phase 3 stakeholder engagement

As we work through Phase 3, we are following and building on the precedent set in Phase 2 of sharing regular research updates through a range of engagement mediums and communication channels.

Growing our email list

We provide regular updates to our email list during key project phases, and use this distribution channel to share ways for stakeholders to engage—such as webinars and input opportunities. As a result of outreach and engagement efforts from March 2020 through October 2021, we grew our email list from 225 to 372 subscribers.

Our email list includes representation from every stakeholder category outlined in the law, in addition to CBOs and the public. It also includes at least one stakeholder who represents each of the eleven priority product categories we're considering under the first cycle of Safer Products for WA. New subscribers since March 2020 include mostly businesses and industry representatives, state and local government agencies, and environmental advocacy organizations. A small number of CBOs and members of the public also recently started to engage with our program.

Publishing our technical analysis methods for input

We engaged stakeholders in our Phase 3 technical analysis process by hosting a series of three webinars (each with a morning and evening time to accommodate varying time zones and work schedules), publishing detailed technical methods, and offering stakeholders an informal comment opportunity. This approach to sharing our technical methods aimed to ensure:

- Clarity in our process and goals.
- We provided input opportunities to stakeholders early and often in the process.
- Stakeholders could both fully understand and properly evaluate our methods for Phase 3.

Our [webinar in August 2020](#)⁸ outlined our required work in Phase 3. In [October 2020](#),⁹ our webinar introduced stakeholders to the external certification and labeling programs we planned to leverage to develop our own methods.

⁸ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/August_2020_Webinar_Presentation.pdf

⁹ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/October_2020_Webinar_Presentation.pdf

In February 2020, we published our technical analysis methods documents—including the [working draft criteria for safer](#)¹⁰ and the [working draft criteria for feasible and available](#).¹¹ We [updated our email list](#)¹² when we published the materials, and opened an informal, [open-ended comment period](#)¹³ for stakeholders. There was no deadline to provide input on the methods, but we encouraged stakeholders to weigh in early so we could incorporate the input while we used the approach in Phase 3. We integrated the input we received, and will publish updated versions of these methods in the draft report on regulatory determinations.

At our [webinar in March 2020](#),¹⁴ we outlined our approach for assessing whether alternatives to priority chemicals in priority products are safer, feasible, and available. Because our approach to identify safer alternatives leveraged existing certification and labeling programs, we invited speakers from these programs—Cradle to Cradle™ Material Health Certification, Safer Choice from the U.S. EPA, and GreenScreen® from Clean Production Action. Offering our stakeholders an opportunity to hear from these programs and ask questions directly promoted an open discussion and helped support transparency in our process.

Product-specific webinars

Between May and August 2021, the Safer Products for Washington team hosted six half-day webinars focused on the specific product categories we're assessing in the first cycle of the program. These webinars intended to:

- Share our potential regulatory determinations with stakeholders earlier in the process than required, significantly extending the input timeframe.
- Offer a meaningful opportunity for stakeholders to co-develop the structure of potential regulations through dialogue with the Safer Products for Washington team.
- Clearly communicate areas where additional information or input from stakeholders would benefit our analysis.
- Prevent surprises for interested parties during the comment period in late 2021.

Each webinar addressed two products, and we provided a minimum of one hour—often one and a half hours—for discussion about each product. The discussions focused on individual products to encourage stakeholders with specific expertise to contribute to our process. However, each webinar also included an overview of progress across product categories to frequently update stakeholders and invite participation.

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https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/SaferProductsWA_WorkingDraftCriteria_Safer.pdf

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https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/SaferProductsWA_WorkingDraftCriteria_FeasibleAvailable.pdf

¹² https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/February2021_StakeholderUpdate.pdf

¹³ <http://hwtr.ecology.commentinput.com/?id=mrUbp>

¹⁴ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/March_2021_Webinar_Presentation.pdf

We structured these webinars interactively. Participants saw their feedback from the discussion portion captured live in the presentation during the webinar. It contributed to a constructive, two-way dialogue with stakeholders about the outcomes of our technical evaluations and the specifics of potential regulations. These discussions were key opportunities for stakeholder input, and they grew our understanding of the product categories and of the impact of any potential regulations.

Through specific, tailored research and outreach, we ensured webinar attendees represented the regulated community for each priority product. All six webinars included attendance from all the required stakeholder groups outlined in the law we're implementing. Each webinar also included multiple representatives whose business or organization focuses on the specific products we discussed. For example, thermal paper manufacturers attended the thermal paper webinar, and cosmetics manufacturers attended the personal care and beauty products webinar.

See below for the products included and the number of attendees at each webinar:

1. May 18—leather and textile furnishings and laundry detergent
 - a. [84 attendees](#)¹⁵
2. June 1—paints and thermal paper
 - a. [83 attendees](#)¹⁶
3. July 13—recreational polyurethane foam and food and drink cans
 - a. [64 attendees](#)¹⁷
4. July 27—stain- and water-resistance treatments and personal care and beauty products
 - a. [68 attendees](#)¹⁸
5. August 17—vinyl flooring and carpets and rugs
 - a. [52 attendees](#)¹⁹
6. August 31—electric and electronic enclosures and printing inks
 - a. [54 attendees](#)²⁰

Find our presentation materials, all the feedback we received during the discussions, and the responses our team provided to stakeholder questions on our [implementation website](#).²¹ In future phases, we aim to host more public-oriented, accessible webinars and events in addition to technical discussions with stakeholders. We acknowledge the need for additional engagement opportunities throughout our process to involve stakeholders with diverse expertise.

¹⁵ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/May_2021_Webinar_Attendees.pdf

¹⁶ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/June_2021_Webinar_Attendees.pdf

¹⁷ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/July_13_2021_Webinar_Attendees.pdf

¹⁸ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/July_27_2021_Webinar_Attendees.pdf

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https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/August_17_2021_Webinar_Attendees.pdf

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https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/saferproducts/August_31_2021_Webinar_Attendees.pdf

²¹ <https://bit.ly/SaferProductsWA>

Engaging community organizations to address health disparities

The Safer Products for Washington team recognizes that, in addition to meeting regulatory requirements, our program and implementing agencies should (and are striving to) do more to reach and serve overburdened communities in Washington state who are disproportionately impacted by exposure to toxic chemicals.

In October 2020, we used the Washington Department of Health's Information by Location Tool to understand—at a basic and high level—which communities in Washington show worsened health outcomes that could result from exposure to toxic chemicals. It helped us prioritize key areas in the state to identify CBOs that are helping to address the needs of those communities.

In December 2020, we contacted 50 CBOs to invite their participation in the program and offer informational resources. (Some of these CBOs attended our February 2020 event, mentioned above in the [Phase 2 community outreach section](#).) More than 10% responded to learn more about the program, invite our team to give a presentation, or share their input about consumer products or toxic chemicals.

We listen intentionally to this input and the concerns we hear from these communities, and it informs our public education campaign. We aim to prioritize the outreach materials that will address the questions we receive most often. When we identify a need from a community partner, we translate materials to grow their potential impact where possible.

Here are some examples of our efforts to engage CBOs and share resources following this initial invitation:

- We met with the American Indian Health Institute to identify program overlap and opportunities for knowledge exchange with task forces or community organizations doing similar work.
- We met with a community leader who serves and supports populations in the Seattle area who speak Hmong, Laotian, and Lu Mien. We translated infographics to these languages/dialects to support their communities with reducing exposure to toxic chemicals.
- We gave a presentation during an evening meeting of the Community Health Worker Coalition for Migrants and Refugees, and shared Spanish materials with information for reducing exposure following the presentation.
- We provided a list of safer alternative products, aiming to support the Afghan Health Initiative's communities in purchasing safer options for preventing stains on textile products.

Our program hired an equity and environmental justice consultant in April 2021. We are currently developing new approaches to engage communities in Washington. We are looking for additional ways (and trying to identify resources) to incentivize engagement, including potential contracts, so we can build meaningful partnerships with community organizations.

Certain communities have historically lacked the resources or access to get involved with environmental policies and government implementation programs. It is our team's perspective that this history makes these voices and perspectives more important to incorporate. We welcome feedback around how to better engage and involve the public as well as CBOs serving populations who have disproportionate exposure to toxic chemicals.

Public education campaign

When the public and stakeholders in Washington communities learn about this program and the scope of the problem of toxic chemicals in consumer products, they often wonder how they can protect themselves and their families while we evaluate products. To address the need for information in this area that is relevant and digestible for the public, we are implementing an education campaign in conjunction with our program.

We are creating infographics and videos, and updating our website content about each of our priority chemical classes. We're including information about the products that contain the chemical, the health outcomes, and ways to protect yourself from exposure. We started with a [PFAS infographic](#),²² [PFAS video](#),²³ and updated [PFAS website](#).²⁴ We then added a [flame retardants infographic](#),²⁵ and updated the [flame retardants website](#).²⁶

We intend to continue with these education materials for additional chemical classes in the future. To reach additional communities in Washington with linguistically appropriate information, we've translated these infographics into Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Samoan, Laotian, Lu Mien, Hmong, Russian, and Tagalog (as of November 2021). While we recognize that translating materials is helpful, translation alone is not enough to create culturally relevant materials. We aim to enlist more approaches for understanding different communities' needs for public education.

Public involvement

We recognize the important consumer impacts that could result from implementing this program. We aim to involve the public in the process because they have a right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. We know more public involvement in the process will result in more effective, sustainable decisions and programs.

Half a dozen public stakeholders regularly attend our webinars and share their input about our work. These perspectives help us to consider what information is relevant to the public, and we rely on them to inform the outreach materials we develop. While we're grateful for this participation, we recognize the need to grow the level of public and community input on our process.

To gather more public feedback, we are looking for ways to reach Washingtonians beyond traditional methods. For our public comment on regulatory determinations, we plan to implement a short, public-oriented survey to allow people to quickly weigh in on our process—regardless of their level of expertise. We hope to continue with similar surveys and public-oriented feedback mediums—especially to gather input about products for the second cycle of the program. We welcome feedback around how to better reach communities and individuals, and especially those who are disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals.

²² <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2004043.html>

²³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6WfpWnlpLc>

²⁴ <https://ecology.wa.gov/PFAS>

²⁵ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/summarypages/2104026.html>

²⁶ <https://ecology.wa.gov/PBDE>



Stakeholder Engagement Process Safer Products for Washington

Questions?

If you have questions or input to share about the stakeholder engagement process, don't hesitate to contact us at SaferProductsWA@ecy.wa.gov.