

Co-Designing With Youth

HearMeWA Case Study

Submitted to
WA State Office of the
Attorney General

Submitted by
Do Big Good LLC

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I like that we
can help.
- DJ Disko, 14



 **Youth quotes** appear throughout this report. They are shared pseudonymously and with consent.

I never thought I could help with something so important.

- Buffalo Lover*, 11

What if we put youth at the center of decision-making on services designed for them?

By centering youth, we learned they want cultures of kindness and respect that use rules and norms to welcome and accommodate difference.


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**Want to learn more?
Keep reading.**



 We use **stock images** to protect the privacy of youth who participate in our workshops.


What We Did

Youth Co-Design for HearMeWA



Welcome to HearMeWA



 **Co-design** is a method for solving problems *with* directly-impacted stakeholders by sharing knowledge and power.

HearMeWA* is a Washington youth safety and well-being program.

Established by the Washington State Legislature in 2021 and managed by the Office of the Attorney General, HearMeWA was created to respond to tips 24/7/365 through an app, text, chat, and phone. Scheduled to launch in 2024, it will serve youth up to age 25. The program will respond to a wide range of tips related to youth concerns such as bullying, suicide, violent threats, and sexual abuse. In the spring of 2023, the Youth Outreach Team at the Office of Attorney General contacted Do Big Good, a Seattle-based human-centered design firm, to help them co-design the HearMeWA youth advisory group *with* youth. The subsequent co-design process took place in the summer of 2023. This report presents that process and its results.



We co-designed HearMeWA's youth advisory group with youth.

Between June and September of 2023 Do Big Good talked to 50 Washington youth at five (5) workshops to co-design the bylaws and implementation plan for a youth advisory group for the HearMeWA safety and well-being program.

- The workshops were held in Stanwood, Bremerton, Moses Lake, Tacoma, and Rainier Beach.
- Participants ranged in age from 11 to 25, with a median age of 16.
- Do Big Good was asked to consult with nineteen (19) youth demographics: Black, Indigenous, and youth of color, rural and urban Indigenous communities, federally recognized tribes, disabled and neurodivergent youth, formerly incarcerated youth who had interacted with the justice system, youth who had been in foster care, houseless, unsheltered, or transient youth, immigrants, refugees and asylees, English language learners, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit youth, low-income, rural, and urban youth, teen parents, and youth with military experience and were able to reach all but the last group.

Our Co-Design Process

Workshop 1 Priorities

Workshop 2 Policies

Workshop 3 Bylaws

Workshop 4 Implementation

Workshop 5 Follow-up



What Topics Should the Bylaws Cover?

After reviewing bylaws from a range of youth advisory groups, we asked workshop participants which elements were most important to *them*. Diversity and inclusion was voted the most important, followed by attendance and group purpose.



What Should the Rules Be?

After priority topics were selected for the bylaws, participants at the next workshop filled in the details. They suggested a range of accommodations to make the group more inclusive and asked for a kind and respectful group culture.



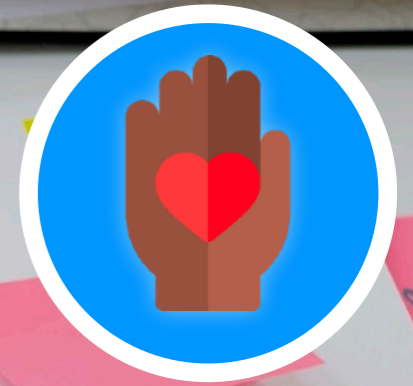
Feedback on First Draft

With policy requests in hand, we wrote a first draft of the bylaws and shared it with the next workshop group for feedback. This group was also our youngest of the five workshops (aged 11 to 14), which gave us another helpful perspective.



How to Start the Group?

With a final draft of the bylaws complete, we used this session to ask youth about launching the group. They gave us helpful advice on outreach (no to email, yes to in-person recruitment) and how to structure the application.



Final Thoughts

With solid advice on outreach also in hand, we used the last session to ask some follow-up questions. For example, on how to stay accountable to youth, participants requested in-person conversations, rather than forms or surveys.

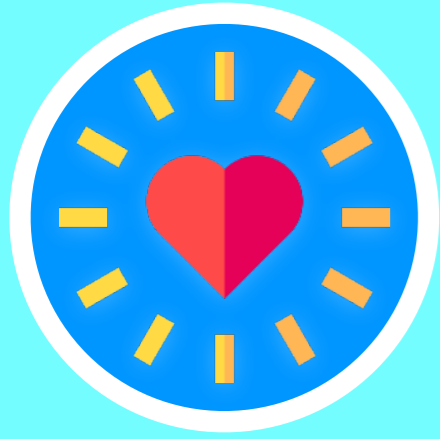


What Youth Want

Learnings from the Workshops



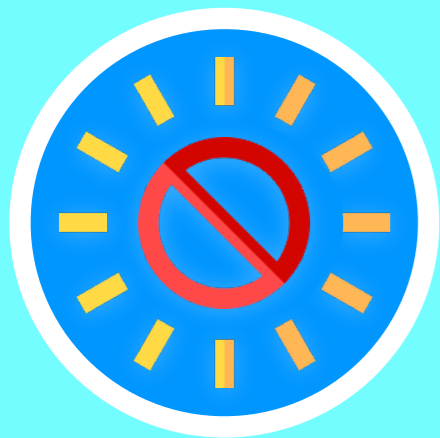
What Youth Want



1) A Culture of Kindness and Respect Regardless of topic or purpose, youth want to be in groups that are compassionate social environments. Respect is their most important value.



2)...That Welcomes and Accommodates Difference Youth valued diversity and inclusion more than any other topic in the bylaws and wanted accommodations to make the group accessible to all.



3)...Through Rules That Protect It While valuing access, youth want norms and expectations that protect the safe and nurturing social space of the group. Privacy is particularly important.

1. Culture of Kindness + Respect

If you're allowing everybody in, it's inherently going to — do you know the **paradox of tolerance**? You run into that, if you're including everybody, some people are going to exclude others, and then you end up with one group of people there. So I think that you have to exclude the ones that are going to push other people out.

- Vincent Adult Man, 14

I think everybody should be allowed in. But I think if it gets to the point where they're actively disrespecting another member... there should always be a **baseline respect** for anyone.

- Kitty Crusader, 16

Be **kind**.

- Ronaldo, 14

Be **respectful** to each other.

- Jacks, 15

Don't rush it.
Be **patient**.

- Sarah, 18

Have **respect** for each other, 'cause that's the **only way it's gonna work**. Even if they disagree.

- Betty, mid-teens

Everybody should listen to each other and **give each other chances**.

- Alice, 15

Be **positive**.

- Panther, 19

You can disagree with someone wholeheartedly. It's **perfectly okay to have a discussion with difference of opinion**. It depends if you're going personally at them, for anything of their identity.

- Kitty Crusader, 16

Be wise about the types of personalities you're gonna go out and invite to be part of this advisory group. I feel like [in this group] we mesh really good. We're all **respectful of each other's time**, what they have to say. But I've been in other situations where people have been really aggressive and want to control everything...

- Jayda, 25

[Group members should be] responsible, **respectful** with their teammates.... We should be respectful for each other.

- Polo Gonzalez, early 20's

Quotes

are from the co-design workshops described on page 7.

2. Welcome + Accommodate Difference

It feels unnecessarily cumbersome and bureaucratic to create carve-outs for every situation. There's always going to be something you can't predict. But there should be some accommodations set aside. Maybe video calling-in could work for people who can't physically make it. It should be clearly set out that accommodations are to be made and also can be handled on a case-by-case basis because **each individual person has their own needs.**

- Vincent Adult Man, 14

I think that that group of people should not be the same people, should not be the same color, should have, like, more **different cultures....**

- Sarah, 18

Service animals!

- Anonymous, early teens

I think the purpose [of the youth advisory group] is to be representative of the wider population. **If there isn't diversity and inclusion and accountability, it's not representative....**

- Vincent Adult Man, 14

The space needs to be big enough not to be **over-stimulating.**

- Anonymous, early teens

The space should be always calm and **accessible to all bodies.**

- Anonymous, early teens

Instead of having it bureaucratic, with specific situations all planned out, the group and, more importantly, the person with those needs tells the group... what the accommodations should be for that case and for that person. And, more importantly, that **person decides what would be best for them.**

- Jacki Sparrow, 16

People should have **different culture, different ability**, and that way they can help each other. They should have women and men as well and, like we said in the beginning, people who are more younger.

- Polo Gonzalez, early 20's

Sadly, we're in a very white populace around here. We don't have a lot of diversity.... If you're gonna be advising a youth hotline... you definitely should include someone of every kind of background... making it **as diverse as possible.**

- Kitty Crusader, 16

3. Rules That Protect

The team should be **prepared and organized**.... If you're gonna be part of the group, everyone should participate.

- Polo Gonzalez, early 20's

Keep it [meeting times] **consistent**.

- DJ Disko, 14

They should have their own **privacy**. I am an advisor. I would like to have my own room, so I can have my privacy. And then, like, when we have a meeting we can have a room, something like this [workshop space]... so we can meet-up and talk about what situations we're having.

- Polo Gonzalez, early 20's

I don't think that anybody outside of the group should know what is going on inside the group because **it's supposed to be private** and not with the public. It should only be discussed with important people.

- Alice, 15

Attendance is really important. I don't think this is just my opinion. I think a lot of people think this way. Unless you have a valid reason for being late to something... then I think you shouldn't be allowed to do it... specifically when it's dealing with other people, when you're delaying their time and their energy to do something. Because it's just, it's showing disrespect.... If you're gonna be a part of something, you should put in the effort to go to it.

- Kitty Crusader, 16

There are people that don't like being **recorded**, that actually like their privacy.

- Ronaldo, 14

There should be **group agreements**.

- DJ Disko, 14

Be organized. **Clean up**. Be friendly towards each other.

- Keyshia, 15

If you **don't go** [to the meeting] you're **not** gonna **know**.

- Mayo, 14



What We Made

Youth Advisory Group Bylaws



Constitution and Bylaws*

HearMeWA Youth Advisory Group

ARTICLE 1

Name

The name of this group shall be the HearMeWA Youth Advisory Group. It is coordinated by the staff of the Washington State Office of the Attorney General (AGO), who manage the HearMeWA program.

ARTICLE 2

Purpose

The purpose of this group is to help young people in Washington with their life problems by making the HearMeWA program as effective as possible.

With our advice, HearMeWA should save lives.

ARTICLE 3

Members

Section 1: Size and Composition The group shall have up to 20 members aged 10 through 25 who live in Washington state and are committed to the group's Purpose and Community Agreements, and plan to attend every meeting for the upcoming year. Members may choose to create subcommittees to accomplish their work.

Section 2: Diversity and Inclusion The group should include and represent all young Washingtonians, including those of different ethnicities, cultures, ages, genders, and abilities. Members have the ability to take and request action from the Attorney General's Office to make the group more diverse and inclusive.

ARTICLE 3 Members (continued)

Section 3: Accommodations In order to make the group diverse and inclusive, it is necessary to accommodate a range of access needs. Accommodations include, but are not limited to:

1. **Virtual Attendance:** for in-person meetings, either by video or phone
2. **Live Chat:** during meetings for those who prefer to write than speak
3. **Translation:** consecutive or simultaneous, dependent on need and availability, including sign language, and close captioning for virtual meetings
4. **Babysitters:** or other childcare at in-person meetings for members' children
5. **Rides:** or transportation to in-person meetings
6. **Tech Support:** in advance of or during any meeting to ensure that members know how to attend virtually or use any other digital tools associated with group membership
7. **Calm Environment:** particularly in-person sessions, so the meeting is not over-stimulating and is comfortable for all bodies
8. **Service Animals:** and emotional support animals shall be permitted at in-person meetings whenever feasible

Whenever possible, these accommodations shall be provided by default, rather than request. Some, however, will require advance notice to be accomplished by AGO staff. Staff will inform members how long they need to fulfill any such requests.

Section 4: Community Agreements At the first meeting of each term, the members will agree upon Community Agreements that will guide their behavior toward one another while they are members of the group. These agreements may change from year to year, but will always affirm kindness, responsibility, and mutual respect, even in the case of differing opinions.

Section 5: Good Standing A member in good standing consistently abides by the Community Agreements, regularly attends meetings, and has no unexcused absences.

Section 6: Term Youth participants who join the group agree to be members for a term of one (1) year. If they are in good standing, they may renew their membership for a total of up to three (3) years or they may choose to leave the group.

ARTICLE 4 Leadership

Section 1: Facilitator At each meeting one member will act as facilitator and move the group through the agenda and tasks of the meeting. The facilitator should be a member in good standing who has also shown exceptional effort and commitment to the group, as determined by their fellow members. An effort shall be made to give any such member the opportunity to act as facilitator. No member shall be asked to facilitate who does not wish to take on that role. The facilitator will be selected before each meeting in a manner determined by the members. Other roles, such as note-taker or time-keeper, can be added by the membership as needed.

Section 2: Voting Each member shall have a right to cast one (1) vote on any matter submitted to a vote of the membership. Decisions shall be made by majority vote and votes will occur by secret ballot, with the goal of reaching decisions by consensus, whenever possible.

Section 3: Quorum The presence of more than 50% of the group shall be required to constitute a quorum necessary to vote on group decisions.

ARTICLE 5 Meetings

Section 1: Frequency The youth advisory group shall meet monthly. A notice of time, place, and agenda, co-designed by that meeting's facilitator and AGO staff, will be provided to all members at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

Section 2: Attendance Members are expected to attend every meeting, either virtually or in-person. If they are not able to attend a meeting, they must inform the other members in advance and provide a reason. This is a sign of responsibility and respect for other members. Reasons for absence include, but are not limited to:

1. **Family Emergency:** including the death of a family member
2. **Traffic Incident:** such as a car crash
3. **Personal Illness:** such as needing to go to the hospital
4. **Other Circumstances:** beyond the control of the member

ARTICLE 5

Meetings (continued)

A member who has repeated unexcused absences may be asked to leave the group, a decision that would be proposed by any member and would be decided by a majority vote of the members.

Section 3: Agenda AGO staff can provide guidance on how to structure the meeting's agenda. For example, starting a meeting with a review of Community Agreements, the results of the last meeting, a go-round activity, a summary of meeting tasks, and information about future group activities can be helpful.

Section 4: Compensation Members will be compensated for their attendance at meetings at the ongoing participation rate of \$45/hour, as prescribed by the Washington State Office of Equity. Whenever possible, the payment will go to the member directly, rather than to a parent or guardian. The facilitator will be paid for up to two (2) hours of preparation for any meetings they oversee. Participants who wish to use meetings to fulfill volunteer requirements must inform AGO staff in advance in writing for any hours they do not wish to be paid for. Other forms of compensation, such as fulfilling court-mandated community service, can also be addressed with AGO staff and will be accommodated whenever possible.

Section 5: Privacy and Transparency Members have an interest in privacy and the public has an interest in knowing the group's activities. In respect of both interests, topics discussed and voting totals will be public, as recorded in minutes or reports created by AGO staff. To protect members' privacy – particularly their ability to express unpopular opinions without fear of reprisal – statements made in meetings may only be recorded anonymously. Likewise, votes will occur by secret ballot to protect member privacy. To protect member privacy, video and audio recordings of meetings will not be made. Though constrained by public disclosure rules, staff will defer to member privacy preferences whenever possible.

ARTICLE 6

Amendment of Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the group by a two-thirds vote, providing that the amendment has been submitted in writing at the previous regular meeting, with the goal of full group consensus on any changes.

Thank You

Let's continue this work together.

Thank you to the Youth Program Team at the Office of the Attorney General for being such spectacular collaborators. To our organizational partners: Community Resource Center of Stanwood-Camano, Kitsap Immigrant Assistance Center, Boys and Girls Club of the Columbia Basin, Imagine Justice Project, and Atlantic Street Center for connecting us with young co-design participants. Most of all, thank you to the youth themselves, the true experts in this process.



Do Big Good LLC is a human-centered design firm based in Seattle. We use co-design and social justice principles to help clients create transformative change *with*, not for, directly-impacted stakeholders :: Contact // Mer Joyce // mer@dobiggood.com

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