

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/perspectives-on-crime-and-money-interview-with-cost-benefit-expert-steve-aos>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Steve Aos, the associate director of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy ([WSIPP](#)), spoke with us recently about the agency's approach to reducing crime and saving money. Steve has built a reputation for conducting cost-benefit studies that have a considerable impact on justice policies. Vera's [Cost-Benefit Analysis Unit](#) is lucky to have Steve on our [advisory board](#), and we asked him to tell us about what makes WSIPP's approach successful.

We interviewed Steve and created six podcasts, each about three to four minutes long. In the [first](#), Steve describes WSIPP's role in Washington's policy arena and how its cost-benefit studies influence the state's justice policies. In the [second](#) and [third](#) podcasts, he discusses his approach to calculating the costs and benefits of justice programs and how he communicates the approach to policymakers in a way that is accessible and meaningful to them. In the [fourth](#), Steve offers guidance to organizations that want to develop capacity to do cost-benefit analysis. In [this](#) podcast, he discusses how WSIPP's cost-benefit analysis informs the state's budget process and helps policymakers allocate resources efficiently.

The [fifth podcast](#) is my favorite. In this segment Steve explains how WSIPP uses cost-benefit analysis to merge the approaches of science and policy making. He describes the world of science as slow and deliberate, with researchers sometimes taking years to understand what works and what doesn't. The world of policy making, in contrast, is fast-paced: during the heat of a legislative session, decisions must be made quickly. Steve says WSIPP combines the two by drawing on science to conduct cost-benefit analysis and providing policymakers valuable information when they need it most.

You can watch the entire podcast series [here](#).

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