

Data & Inquiry Committee Guide

This guide helps you identify strategies to ensure that time in committee is engaging, relevant, and useful to inform data-driven and responsible policy – for individual members and the committee as a whole.

Whole Committee Thinking

As a Committee, there are simple questions you can ask to prepare for a hearing and orient members:

1. Why are we hearing testimony from this witness?
 - To understand background information about a relevant issue through:
 - Subject matter expertise,
 - Individual story/experience, or
 - Data analysis
 - national, state, local population data, or
 - performance data about a strategy, program, organization, or system
 - To understand the language and policy implications of a bill moving through committee
 - To hear testimony advocating for or against particular language and policy implications of a bill moving through the committee
2. What are the most important pieces of information we want to understand?
3. What do we want to be able to do with the information we learn today?

Individual Committee Member Thinking

There are many questions that can come up as you listen to testimony. For any legislator, but especially if you are newly elected or new to the policy area being discussed, there are lots of details to become lost in. What follows here is a set of example questions for you to keep in mind that can help you – and your fellow committee members – stay focused. Which of these seem like they could be most useful to you?

I am new to this issue. Can you explain the problems or issues that have led to this discussion?	In my district, I've been hearing _____. How does that align with your understanding of the issue?	What do you hope changes as a result of this bill/these hearings?
The key question for me has been _____. What is the key question for you?	What do you think are general assumptions about this issue vs. what the data is telling us?	What are the 3 most critical points you want the Committee to understand?
What haven't we asked you yet that you think is important to address?	What are critical pieces of data or research the Committee should better understand?	What would you like to see the Committee consider/do as a result of this/these hearings?
How do you think the lives of all Vermonters will change as a result of this legislation?	Is there a specific group of people who will be affected if we pass this bill? Who? and How?	How long do you think it will take for us to know if this bill made a difference? What will that difference look like?