

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee

Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting I Virtual Only

Thursday, June 16, 2022 | 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: **884 6080 9037** | Passcode: **047632** | Call-in: **888-788-0099**

AGENDA

1. Introductions, May Meeting Recaps, and Approval of May Meeting Minutes (Gov. Abell)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Abell and Julianne Unite)
3. Subcommittee Report Updates
 - a. Community, Education, and Outreach (Kari Petrusek, Chair)
 - b. Pipeline Placement Program (Laurie Powers, Chair)
 - c. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse (Betsy Penoyar, Chair)
4. STAR Committee Strategic Plan Phase I Update and Action Items
5. Bar News Article Update (Allison Foreman)
6. Other Business
7. Next Steps/ Conclusion
8. Adjournment

2021 - 2022 STAR Committee Meeting Schedule

October 26, 2021	Meeting: 3 – 5:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
November 18, 2021	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
January 20, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
February 17, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
March 17, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
April 21, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
May 26, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
June 16, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
July 28, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
August 18, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
September 15, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee Charter

Effective: July 16, 2021
as approved by the
WSBA Board of
Governors

Purpose

The WSBA Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee is committed to strengthen and support the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. Members of the STAR Committee will work to ensure that the practice of law in rural communities is present, growing, and thriving.

Practitioners in rural communities are few and far between. Additionally, many of these practitioners are nearing retirement without a clear plan of succession for their clients, leaving a void of access to legal representation and counsel. The STAR Committee will guide policy & program development, serves as ambassadors between the WSBA and these communities, explore and advocate for creative and innovative solutions, and regularly assess the legal landscape in rural communities to determine if WSBA policy, advocacy and program development require further resource for sustainability and improvements.

The STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in General Rule 12. More specifically, GR 12.1 (a) articulates the Washington Supreme Court's regulatory objective to provide, in part, "meaningful access to justice. . ." while GR 12.1(d) strives for "affordable and accessible legal services." In addition, the STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in GR 12.2, in particular by providing "services to members and the public," and "fostering collegiality among its members and goodwill between the legal profession and the public."

Further, the STAR Committee furthers the WSBA mission to serve the public and the members of the Bar by providing focused attention on the unique needs of residents and members in rural areas both by improving access to legal practitioners in rural communities and outreach and development of a pipeline of younger rural residents to pursue a legal career and serve their communities.

Definition of "Rural"

For the purpose of the STAR Committee and reflective of Washington's unique geographic and socio-geographic landscape, the definition of "rural" is as follows:

Based on the definitions produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (ERS) and an overview of Washington county population, we focused on counties with populations of less than 50,000 and more than 2,500. These areas are considered 'urban non-metro areas not part of larger labor markets' by ERS. As part of the working definition, and for ease, we have termed these counties as 'rural.' Based upon WA county population data, we've pursued a hypothesis that counties with 30,000 or more as rural, but likely more

adjacent to a labor market and perhaps have a varying set of circumstances that may differ from counties that are less than 30,000.

Composition

Members of the STAR Committee should have demonstrated experience and/or interest in a thriving legal practice in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Committee will consist of 13 members and are outlined as:

- Chair (voting member)
- 2 Current or Former WSBA Board of Governors Members (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Member At Large (voting member)
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities - see above for definition of "rural" (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member, as defined in WSBA Bylaws (voting member)
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting members, must be currently employed with a WA Law School which is not currently represented on the Committee.)
- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP)(voting member).

WSBA Staff Liaison: Member Services and Engagement Manager or staff member in the Advancement Department, non-voting

Board of Governor Liaison: as assigned annually, non-voting.

Terms

- Chair: two-year term
- Members: three-year term

Initial Committee Terms

The first appointments to the STAR Committee should effectuate a staggered rotation of STAR Committee members. Therefore, the following terms are in place for the first appointment cycle only. All subsequent terms should adhere to the term limits stated above. STAR Committee member serving an initial term less than three years, should be considered an incomplete term. Therefore, the member is eligible to serve two subsequent complete three-year terms in WSBA Bylaws.

- 2 Active WSBA Members
1 member with two-year term, 1 member with three-year term.
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities (see above for definition)
1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two years term, 2 members with three-years term.
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting, must be currently employed with a WA Law School)
- *1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two-years term, 1 member with three-years term.*

The following positions will begin as a standard term as set forth in this charter.

- Chair
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member

- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP).

Scope of Work

The scope of the STAR Committee's work will focus on what the WSBA is uniquely positioned to do in supporting a sustaining and thriving environment for the practice of law in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Committee will work with all relevant and interested stakeholders to collaborate where needed. The provision of direct legal services and civil legal aid to the public is outside the scope of the STAR Committee.

Measures of Success

- Increased awareness of the issues and possible solutions to address any gap in practicing members in rural communities.
- A sustainable pipeline of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- Increased numbers of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- The establishment of funding for programs and initiatives for the practice of law in rural communities.

STAR Committee Roles

1. Community Education and Outreach

Coordinated efforts to educate members and potential members about the unique needs, opportunities and benefits of a rural practice. This can include, but should not be limited to, comprehensive information on WSBA's website, features in WSBA publications, presentations at high schools, law schools and community colleges. Meetings and events, such as a summit or symposium, to highlight the issue, convene interested stakeholders to share their concerns and strategize on possible solutions.

2. Pipeline and Placement Program(s)

Develop WSBA programming, or WSBA supported/partnered programming designed to build a pipeline of practitioners in rural areas as well as an incentive program to encourage members to explore a rural practice on a time-limited or multi-year timeframe. This role should explore a possible collaboration or strategic overlap with WSBA existing and future mentorship program(s). In particular, this role will require extensive strategic planning and identification of external stakeholder support and additional funding sources. Coordinate with law schools and other stakeholders regarding economic incentives to practice in rural areas.

3. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse

Utilize existing and future WSBA resources to support and highlight job opportunities in rural communities. This role should include making it easier, and perhaps more cost-effective, to add job postings to WSBA's service. Develop a clearing house to assist retiring members with succession planning and the buying/selling of a practice.

Committee Evaluation

The STAR Committee should conduct an assessment within five years from the date of Board of Governors' approval by 1) conducting a survey of rural practitioners to provide stakeholder feedback regarding the impact of this Committee to effectuate change in these areas, 2) assessing the scope of work to reflect impact and progress in this area and align with trends in the greater legal community, and 3) earnestly examining if the Committee is necessary to continue the scope of work.

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee

Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 26, 2022, | 12:05 p.m. – 1:55 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Committee Members Present: Cindy Yeung, Elizabeth Penoyar, Governor Hunter Abell, Kathryn Burke, Laurie Powers, Rusty McGuire, Sarah Cuellar, Zachary Bryant

Committee Members Absent: Allison Foreman (Excused), Merf Ehman (Excused)

WSBA Staff: Julianne Unite – Member Services and Engagement Manager, Chelle Gegax – Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant, Mike Kroner – Outreach Specialist, Sara Niegowski – Chief Communications and Outreach Officer

Public Attendees: Madeleine Shojai, Beatrice Lucas, Arielle Handforth, Governor Francis Adawale

Introductions, March and April Meeting Recaps, and Approval of March Meeting Minutes (Gov. Abell)

STAR Committee Chair, Governor Hunter Abell, called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. First time attendees were invited to introduce themselves. First time attendees included WSBA Chief Communications and Outreach Officer Sara Niegowski, Madeleine Shojai from the Washington Attorney General's Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance, and Beatrice Lucas from the Washington Attorney General's Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance. Following public attendees' introductions, WSBA Staff provided introductions. On motion by STAR Committee Member Laurie Powers, seconded by STAR Committee Member Katie Burke, the STAR Committee by unanimous vote (8-0-0) approved the March Meeting Minutes.

WSBA Updates (Gov. Abell and Julianne Unite)

Governor Abell advised that voting is now open for the Governor At-large position for all statewide Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) members.

WSBA Staff Liaison, Julianne Unite, advised the STAR Committee and those in attendance that the incoming WSBA President Elect will be Governor Hunter Abell. Julianne also provided an update on the ETHOS Bar Structure meeting and encouraged members to participate in upcoming meetings if they have the time or capacity. The next meeting will be held on July 23 and is designated for feedback from stakeholders.

WSBA Career Center Discounts (Sara Niegowski, Chief Communications Officer)

WSBA Chief Communications and Outreach Office Sara Niegowski advised that the WSBA partners with an outside company to run the WSBA job board. Sara advised that the job board through the WSBA is an available resource to the STAR Committee and that the WSBA Communications Department would love to create a partnership with the STAR Committee and utilize this resource. Sara asked additional clarifying questions including who are you trying to reach, what parameters does the job need to meet, and how long would the campaign need to run for? Governor Abell asked for feedback or questions from those in attendance, no response. WSBA Advancement Department Director, Kevin Plachy, advised that there is a working definition of “what is considered rural” and suggested the committee discuss this definition to ensure that they are all in agreement of that. Kari Petrasek commented that in some counties such as Snohomish County, some small towns would not meet the current definition and suggested that committee use town size rather than the county size. Sophia Byrd McSherry commented that she agreed with Kari’s perspective. Sophia also commented that Oregon has provided definition between urban and non-urban.

On motion by STAR Committee Member Kathryn Burke, seconded by STAR Committee Member Rusty McGuire, by unanimous vote (8-0-0) the STAR Committee approved to have the WSBA Staff post on the job board at no cost, positions relating to the STAR Committees charter. The Job Opportunities Subcommittee will work to refine the definition of “Rural”.

Washington Attorney General’s Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance (Beatrice Lucas and Madeleine Shojai)

Beatrice Lucas and Madeline Shojai, from the Washington Attorney General’s Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance, provided a presentation demonstrating requests for legal needs and attorney representation by county. Bulk of their attorneys are in large counties such as Snohomish and King County, with very little to no representation in rural counties.

Laurie commented that this program has several similarities as Moderate Means Program. Beatrice commented that she would like to partner with the Moderate Means Program in the future, if possible, and currently refers some clients to this program. Rusty commented that he has signed up for the Veteran Legal Assistance program and Madeleine confirmed. Madeleine offered to send sign up information to anyone interested. Governor Abell thanked Madeleine and Beatrice for their presentation and attendance in today’s meeting.

Subcommittee Report Updates

Pipeline Placement Program (Laurie Powers, Chair)

Laurie Powers provided an update on committee’s progress and included a report of their recommendations which is shown below.

WSBA Small Town and Rural Practice (STAR) Pipeline Subcommittee

Recommendations, May 2022

Subcommittee Members: Merf Ehman, Cindy Yeung, Kathryn Burke, Sophia Byrd McSherry, Kari Petrasek, Laurie Powers (chair)

1. Each member of the subcommittee reviewed 4-6 programs from other states or organizations that address rural practice issues. At our subcommittee meeting on May 17, 2022, we reported back on what we learned, what initiatives we particularly liked, and from there had a broader discussion of what proposals we wanted to recommend to the STAR committee.
2. As a matter of structure, **we recommend that the STAR committee develop a multi-phased plan that incorporates immediate, short-term, and longer-term initiatives.** While other initiatives may also be appropriate as part of any of the phases, the pipeline subcommittee focused on the following ideas.

Phase I:

- a. Work with the three law schools to host a rural career fair in February 2023, with a mix of private and public interest employers and summer/post-grad positions. Gonzaga could take the lead in coordinating this with the other schools.
- b. Invite students outside of the WA law schools to apply to positions via the career fair. This can be easily done via the NW Consortium of Law Schools and NALP, and perhaps the Alliance Summer Intern Orientation.
- c. Provide training to rural practitioners on how to effectively supervise law student interns and onboard/train new attorneys, including providing materials and checklists. The law schools and CLS have such resources readily available.
- d. Request BOG funding to assist with marketing these opportunities.
- e. In preparation for the career fair, offer rural practice presentations/info sessions at the law schools.

Phase II:

- a. Obtain WSBA funding to hire a .5 FTE coordinator, with a background in rural practice and who knows the players, to lead the phased efforts. Perhaps locate such a position in a rural location or Spokane.
- b. Create a Rural Practice Section of the WSBA.

Phase III:

- a. Develop a post-graduate rural practice fellowship program.
- b. Develop a summer rural practice internship program/cohort. Explore the use of state work study funding, grants, and externship credit to ensure all positions are either paid or students receive academic credit.
- c. Develop a rural loan forgiveness program and/or other financial incentives.
- d. Look at providing free law school tuition to a defined number of students who commit to being rural practitioners

Board of Governor Francis Adewale suggested having conversations with law firms about having “peace corp” type attorney representatives spend time in rural areas, but still allowing them to make partner. The discussion of “will I still be able to make partner if I take the route of rural attorney?” was discussed at the Equal Justice Conference in Minneapolis.

STAR Committee Member Cindy Yeung asked for clarification - are big firms send associates to small towns? Governor Adawale explained that large firms who do not have offices in small towns but are willing to send their junior counsel to work at other offices (ex. public defender’s office, district attorney’s office) for two years, are providing assurance that they can still make partnership. These larger firms receive tax benefits by providing this, and junior counsel receives experience in small town and rural areas.

Julianne encouraged subcommittee members to send any notes and/or presentation materials to WSBA staff. Julianne also reminded that anything that STAR committee would like to accomplish that may have a fiscal impact would need to be discussed now as FY23 budget is being built.

Governor Abell opened floor to other questions and comments. No response from those in attendance.

Kevin commented on budget process. If there are any plans for the STAR Committee to receive WSBA funds in FY23, the first read of budget at the Budget and Audit Committee meeting will be June 29. The first draft of the budget including cost centers and deep detail will be on July 27. Any necessary WSBA funds request must be included in this proposal and reviewed on June 29.

Julianne clarified that expenses can be sought after final approval of the budget if needed through WSBA processes for accommodations.

Community, Education, and Outreach (Kari Petrasek, Chair)

Kari Petrasek, Community, Education and Outreach Subcommittee Chair, advised the STAR committee that they did not meet prior to this meeting and had no additional updates at this time.

Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse (Betsy Penoyar, Chair)

STAR Committee Member, Elizabeth Penoyar (Betsy) commented that she feels committee should be able to move forward and suggested that the committee vote toward having a job fair in February and having the phased approach to follow.

Kevin commented that WSBA could provide some logistic support to a job fair.

Julianne commented that WSBA Member Services and Engagement team could help provide logistical support for the job fair as team supports similar projects. Julianne commented that February may be a difficult month to hold a job fair, as weather may pose a negative impact, and questioned if the job fair could be held virtually.

Cindy Yeung commented that she felt that in-person would be most beneficial to build relationships and make connections.

STAR Committee Member, Zachary Bryant (Zach) asked if the WSBA could assist with information on who is taking the bar exam and where they are located, to advertise to a large audience.

Kevin advised that there could be release of information requirements before being able to access information on who is taking the bar exam.

On motion by Zach, seconded by Betsy, by unanimous vote (8-0-0) the STAR Committee approved to adopt the phased approach presented by the Pipeline and Placement Subcommittee and revisit quarterly to adjust timeline as goals.

Bar News Article Update (Allison Foreman)

Julianne provided an update on behalf of STAR Committee Member Allison Foreman. There will be a future issue of WSBA Bar News with a lot of Rural Practice focus. Allison Foreman may be writing an article for this issue. WSBA Communications Specialist, Colin Rigley, has traveled to rural areas to interview attorneys for this part of the Bar News publication.

FY23 Committee Budget

Julianne commented that committee would need to vote to approve expense, and discuss the expenses related to any in-person or potential hybrid meetings for Fiscal Year 2023. Kevin reminded the committee to consider reimbursements for committee members traveling to meetings, including travel, meals, etc. as committee members are spread wide and could potentially incur large expenses for travel to in person meetings. Kevin suggested to follow the WSBA Board of Governors meeting schedule and pair meeting locations with BOG.

Committee Applications, Recruiting, and Recommendations Update

Julianne advised that the application deadline has been extended to June 3. Additionally, the WSBA is currently accepting chair applications for all committees within WSBA.

Governor Abell provided an update that he will not be reapplying to serve as chair for STAR Committee. Julianne commented that the recommendations team will be herself as staff liaison, and Governor Anjilvel as Governor Abell is applying for a different position within the STAR Committee. The current President Elect will select chair for WSBA committee, and committee is traditionally not involved.

Kevin commented on the term limits as outlined in the Committee's Charter, specifically those regarding Law School Representatives. This may need to be revisited, as there is no one to replace the current Law School Representatives on the committee.

July Meeting Date

Governor Abell commented that July meeting date now conflicts with the BOG meeting. As result the July meeting will be moved to July 28th, from 12:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M.

Other Business

Governor Abell asked if anyone in attendance had new business to address to the committee. No response from those in attendance.

Next Steps/ Conclusion

Governor Abell confirmed that the committee will adopt the phased approach as outlined in the Pipeline and Placement Subcommittees report. The subcommittees will meet prior to the June meeting and report back on any updates. The next Full committee will meet again June 16th.

Adjournment

Governor Abell adjourned the meeting at 1:55 P.M.

DRAFT