

Joint Administration Policy Between the WSBA and Supreme Court Boards

Adopted: By WSBA Board of Governors July 19, 2024; approved by Washington Supreme Court April 4, 2025.

1.0 Introduction

Under Washington State Court [General Rule 12.3](#), the Supreme Court (Court) delegates to the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA),

“[t]he authority and responsibility to administer certain boards and committees established by court rule or order. This delegation of authority includes providing and managing staff, overseeing the boards and committees to monitor their compliance with the rules and orders that authorize and regulate them, paying expenses reasonably and necessarily incurred pursuant to a budget approved by the Board of Governors, performing other functions and taking other actions as provided in court rule or order or delegated by the Supreme Court, or taking other actions as are necessary and proper to enable the board or committee to carry out its duties or functions.”

Supreme Court Boards (Boards) report directly to the Court. The duties and functions these Boards perform on behalf of the Court are important to the public, the Court, and WSBA and its members.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all current and future Supreme Court Boards administered by WSBA.

3.0 Board Independence

Supreme Court Boards are created by and derive their authority from the Washington Supreme Court. Boards set their own priorities and goals and determine how to carry out their duties and functions as authorized by the Supreme Court. Boards’ independence does not limit WSBA’s authority or responsibilities under GR 12.3 or to direct its own activities, including taking action to protect the WSBA from liability.

3.1 Effect of Court Rules and Statutes on Board or Committee Independence

Boards are subject to Washington Statutes, and Washington court rules and orders, including such court orders or rules that authorized the Board, and which regulate each Board’s duties and functions. This specifically includes GR 12.4 governing records and public access to records.

3.2 WSBA’s Administration of Boards

WSBA recognizes that GR 12.3 provides each Board independence in terms of carrying out its activities consistent with any Court order or rule authorizing its existence. WSBA and the Boards will work cooperatively and maintain respect for the Boards’ independence as needed to ensure that the Boards can carry out their duties and functions as authorized by the Supreme Court and that the WSBA can fulfill its duties under GR 12.3.

3.3 Communication with the Public

WSBA acknowledges that Boards have the authority to communicate with the public. Boards will not state that any communication is being made on behalf of WSBA. Boards will not use WSBA letterhead for any public communication. Boards will not knowingly engage in any communications that would subject the WSBA to liability. If there is a reasonable question as to the risk a communication might pose, Boards will seek input from the Executive Director prior to publishing or distributing the communication. The prohibition on using WSBA letterhead does not apply to communications related to regulatory matters.

3.4 Lobbying Activities

WSBA acknowledges that Boards, in order to carry out their mission, may take positions on matters of public interest. These positions may include communicating with federal, state, and local governmental and community leaders. Constitutional limitation on the use of compelled license fees apply to the Boards' activities to the extent that they are funded by license fees.

3.5 WSBA Policy Changes

When there is proposed change to a WSBA policy, a proposed adoption of a new WSBA policy, or a WSBA proposal to change a Court rule, that the Executive Director believes will directly affect a Board's activities or functions, The Executive Director or their designee will notify the potentially affected Board(s) of the proposal as soon as is practicable and prior to final action, so each Board shall have the opportunity for comment with the Board of Governors, the Executive Director, and the Court.

3.6 Board Action

When a Board is considering taking action that it believes may expose the WSBA to liability, the Board chair will take steps to ensure that the WSBA Executive Director receives notice of the proposed action. The notice will be given so that the WSBA will have adequate time to provide input into the Board's decision-making process.

4.0 Staffing

The Executive Director provides and manages staff for each Board.

4.1 Staff Liaison

The Executive Director shall assign a staff member to serve as a Staff Liaison to each Board. The Staff Liaison shall serve as the primary contact between the Board and WSBA. The Executive Director shall allocate additional staff time to support each Board in carrying out its duties and functions based on the projected workload for the Board and overall WSBA capacity.

4.2 Staff Liaison Responsibilities and Duties

The WSBA Staff Liaison will work with the Board and make available other WSBA resources as needed and available given WSBA's overall capacity.

The Staff Liaison is not a member of the Board. The Staff Liaison will not vote on matters before a Board that requires Board approval. The presence or absence of the Staff Liaison at any meeting does not affect the quorum for a meeting.

Although a Staff Liaison represents WSBA to the Board it is not the responsibility of the Staff Liaison to direct how the Board proceeds.

4.3 Staff Liaison and Support Personnel are WSBA Employees

Staff Liaisons supporting a Board are WSBA employees and will be hired and have their job performance evaluated per the WSBA Employee Handbook and other WSBA personnel policies.

When evaluating the performance of WSBA staff, the Executive Director, through their representative, should solicit feedback from each Board regarding the performance of the Staff Liaison and any supporting staff working with that Board.

The Board is not involved in the hiring of WSBA staff. However, with any employee whose primary or exclusive role is to support the duties and functions of a Board, WSBA should seek and may receive input from the Board as to skills and experience required for the role.

4.4 Board or Committee Membership

Each Board or Committee will add members to the Board and Committee per the Court rule or order that authorized and regulates the Board or Committee.

4.5 Board of Governors Liaison

The WSBA President may appoint a liaison between the Board of Governors and a Board.

The Board of Governor Liaison is not a member of the Board. They will not vote on matters before a Board that require Board approval. The presence or absence of the Board of Governors Liaison does not affect the quorum for a meeting.

4.6 Internal Structure of a Board

Unless otherwise defined by the court order or rule which authorizes and regulates a Board, the internal structure, such as the creation of subcommittees and appointment of members to such subcommittees, designating a chair or sub-chairs, and other decisions about how the Board conducts its duties and functions, is the sole province of each Board.

5.0 Oversight and Compliance Monitoring

Consistent with GR 12.3, WSBA shall oversee and monitor the compliance of Court Boards with the court rules and orders which authorize and regulate it. This includes GR 12.4 and First Amendment limitations relating to use of compelled license fees.

5.1 Reporting to the Court and WSBA

Boards shall submit an annual report to the Court and submit a copy of the report to the Executive Director and the Board of Governors. Boards shall submit other reports as stated in the court rules and orders authorizing them.

If the court rule or order which authorizes or regulates each Board is silent on the structure of an annual report the Board shall decide the format of the report.

5.2 Resolving Compliance Issues

5.2.1 Good Faith Standard—First Attempt to Resolve

If the Staff Liaison has a good faith belief that a Board is not complying with the court rules or orders which authorize and regulate the Board, the Staff Liaison shall first attempt to resolve the matter with the Board.

5.2.2 Escalation to Executive Director

If resolution fails and/or if the Staff Liaison is unable to address the matter directly, the Staff Liaison shall report any perceived noncompliance issue to the WSBA Executive Director who should attempt to work directly with the Board to resolve the issue.

5.2.3 Escalation to the Court

If these parties cannot resolve the matter, it may be presented to the Court for resolution.

6.0 Budget and Expenditures

6.1 Annual WSBA Budget Process

The Staff Liaison works collaboratively with the Board, and the Executive Director or their designee, to develop a budget that will allow the Board to fulfill its duties and functions, consistent with the rules and orders that authorize and regulate the Board.

The Board's budget will be submitted for approval to the Board of Governors as part of WSBA's overall budget.

WSBA and the Board of Governors cannot pass a budget for a Board without an opportunity for the Board to provide input to the WSBA and Board of Governors.

6.2 Funding Outside the Annual Budget Process

A Board may request additional funding outside of the budget cycle.

Such requests should be submitted to the Executive Director and will be considered by the Executive Director, the Budget & Audit Committee, or Board of Governors as authorized by WSBA Fiscal Policies & Procedures.

6.3 Funding a Board Duties and Functions as Described by GR 12.3

All reasonable and necessary Board duties and functions as defined by each Board's court order or rule must remain funded at a level that ensures the duties and functions can be met. The Boards acknowledge that WSBA has the authority to establish the budget for the WSBA and the Boards. The WSBA acknowledges that this authority cannot be used to interfere with a Board's independence as defined in Section 3.0.

6.4 Board Fundraising

A Board may seek additional funding, above and beyond the funding which WSBA provides, including grants for a particular duty or function from a government, private, or public sector entity.

If a Board raises such funds, then WSBA shall not reduce the budget of the Board because of the funds raised, unless it is for the same work.

As a Board is not a legal entity entitled to have and manage a bank account, the Board will need to seek the approval of WSBA, the Washington State Bar Foundation (WSBF), or

with the approval of WSBA or the Court another appropriate entity to accept and manage such funds on behalf of the Board.

7.0 Other Actions

Consistent with GR 12.3, WSBA may engage in other activities that are necessary and proper to enable Boards to carry out their duties and functions consistent with the overall capacity of WSBA. This might include access to other WSBA resources and teams, including communication channels, design and publication services, website presence, financial analysis, WSBA technology, and continuing legal education.

8.0 Immunity & Indemnification

8.1 Immunity

If a court order or rule that authorizes and regulates a Board extends immunity to the Board and the members serving on a Board, WSBA shall cooperate with the Board and the Court to provide and defend such immunity.

8.2 Indemnification from Lawsuits

WSBA Bylaw Article XIV indemnification applies to members of court created boards described by this policy to the same extent as volunteers appointed by the WSBA.