Small Town and Rural Council

Small Town and Rural Council Meeting I Virtual Only
Wednesday, November 18, 2026| 12:10 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.
Via Zoom

Quorum Bylaw	"Quorum" means the presence of a majority of the voting membership (i.e., more than half the voting members). A quorum must be present when votes are taken. STAR Council Quorum: 7 voting members
Governing Document	STAR Council Charter
Voting Members	Ashley Cummins (Chair), Dan Clark (BOG), Mary Rathbone (BOG), Michele Moore (Rural), Philip Hunsucker (Rural), Hyun-Ji Lee (QLSP), Sean King (Gonzaga), Travis Pietila (UW), Rusty McGuire (Rural), Dusty Weber Lamay (Rural), Raymond Swenson (At-large), Abraham Wise Hernández (New Member), Courtney Whitmore Wyckoff (Seattle U.)
Seattle University HUB Program Liaison	Gloria Guizar Negrete
BOG Liaison	Mary Rathbone
Staff Liaisons	Julianne Unite, Vanessa Sweeney

AGENDA – Discussion/Action

1. Welcome (Chair Ashley Cummins)
2. Approval of October 2026 Meeting Minutes (all)
3. WSBA Updates (Chair Ashley Cummins, Dan Clark, Gov. Mary Rathbone, and Julianne Unite)
    a. Board of Governors Updates
4. Charter Amendments (Chair Ashley Cummins)
5. HUB Liaison Discussion (Chair Ashley Cummins)
6. Rural Day of Service Discussion (Coco Holbrook)
7. Project Updates
    a. Job Fair at Gonzaga (Sean King)
    b. Legal Lunchbox (Chair Ashley Cummins)
    c. Small Town and Rural Practice Day Proclamation (Chair Ashley Cummins)
    d. ATJ Conference (Chair Ashley Cummins)
8. Announcements
9. Next Steps/Conclusion
10. Next Meeting: January 27, 2027
    a. Potential reschedule
11. Adjourn

WASHINGTON STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION

CHARTER
Small Town and Rural Council

Adopted: April 17, 2021. Amended July 17, 2021; September 7, 2024; November 14, 2025.

Purpose

As an advisory entity to the WSBA Board of Governors, the Small Town and Rural (STAR) Council is committed to strengthen and support the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. Members of the STAR Council 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 Council 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 Council 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 Council 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 Council 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 Council and reflective of Washington's unique geographic and sociogeographic 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 nonmetro 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 are rural, but likely adjacent to a labor market and perhaps have a varying set of circumstances that may differ from counties that are less than 30,000.

This definition will serve as the "per se" definition of rural. The STAR Council has the authority to change this definition based on specific programming objectives.

Composition

The member appointment process will follow the process for WSBA Committees. Members of the STAR Council should have demonstrated experience and/or interest in a thriving legal practice in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Council 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 New 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

In FY21, the first appointments to the STAR Council were effectuated in a staggered rotation of STAR Council members. Therefore, the following terms were in place for the first appointment cycle only. All subsequent terms should adhere to the term limits stated above. STAR Council members 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 per 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 New Member
- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP).

Scope of Work

The scope of the STAR Council'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 and increase access to justice in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Council 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 Council.

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 Council 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 Council should conduct an assessment within five years from the date of Board of Governors' initial approval of the STAR Committee by 1) conducting a survey of rural practitioners to provide stakeholder feedback regarding the impact of this Council 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 Council is necessary to continue the scope of work.

WASHINGTON STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Council

Small Town and Rural Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 28, 2026
Virtual meeting via Zoom

Council Members Present: Chair Ashley Cummins, Philip Hunsucker, Gloria Guizar (non-voting), Sean King, Hyun-Ji Lee, Rusty McGuire, Travis Pietila, Courtney Whitmore Wyckoff, Abraham Wise Hernández, Raymond Swenson
Council Members Absent: Past-President Dan Clark (unexcused), Michele Moore (excused), Governor Mary Rathbone (unexcused), Dusty Weber Lamay (unexcused)
WSBA Board of Governors Present: President Kari Petrasek
WSBA Staff Present: Julianne Unite, Vanessa Sweeney
Public Attendees Present: Sophia Byrd McSherry, Rachel Cortez, Raymond Denecke, Chris Fox, Annalise Martucci

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Introductions and Approval of September Meeting Minutes (Chair Ashley Cummins)

STAR Council Chair Ashley Cummins called the meeting to order at 12:11 p.m. On motion by STAR Council Member Rusty McGuire, seconded by STAR Council Member Raymond Swenson, the Council approved by unanimous vote the September STAR Council Meeting minutes (9-0-0).

All attendees introduced themselves and shared why they wanted to participate in the STAR Council, along with one small-town or rural practice issue they hoped the Council will address this year.

WSBA Updates (Chair Ashley Cummins, Julianne Unite)

Board of Governors updates

President Kari Petrasek mentioned the next Board of Governors (BOG) meeting is scheduled to take place on November 6, in Richland, WA, If anyone has questions, please contact President Petrasek.

WSBA policies and processes overview and resources – Volunteer Toolbox

Member Services and Engagement Manager Julianne Unite noted the WSBA's Volunteer Toolbox and highlighted frequently used links, committees and board guidelines, which includes information about bar records, and roles and responsibilities, and the AI use policy.

STAR Council Overview (Chair Ashley Cummins, Julianne Unite)

Chair Vision and Goals (Chair Ashley Cummins)

Ashley highlighted three priorities for FY27: 1) Grounding the STAR Council's work in the charter, 2) making room for strategic conversations for not only this year, but looking ahead for the next five years, and 3) evaluating the Council's impact and explore opportunities.

WSBA Staff Support (Julianne Unite)

Julianne explained that the primary point of contact for STAR Council is Julianne, followed by WSBA Member Services and Engagement Program Coordinator, Vanessa Sweeney, and WSBA Advancement Department Director Kevin Plachy. In addition, the CLE team is available for support when developing a CLE as well as other WSBA staff as needed.

STAR Council Webpage (Julianne Unite)

Julianne gave a brief tour of the STAR Council and STAR Resources webpages.

Council Member Roles (Chair Ashley Cummins, Julianne Unite)

Ashley expressed the importance for Council members to inform Ashley or Julianne prior to a meeting when a known absence will occur as quorum is important. Ashley noted that all Council members should actively participate in projects. Julianne added that per WSBA Bylaws, two unexcused absences are grounds for removal from a WSBA entity. Julianne explained that the STAR Council list serve consists of STAR Council and staff, and the 'Friends of STAR Council' is a list open to anyone who wishes to be included. Friends of STAR will generally receive meeting notices and information that the Council wants to share. Julianne reminded the group that anything that is emailed to the list serve is a Bar record and all things are subject to public disclosure, and that the list serve is meant for informational purposes only and is not a discussion tool per WSBA's open meetings policy. Julianne covered expenses and reimbursements and noted current expense forms can be found on the Volunteer Toolbox webpage, or reach out to Julianne prior to expenses being incurred to ensure full reimbursement eligibility.

Year-at-a-Glance and Projects Overview (Chair Ashley Cummins)

In the meeting materials, Ashley pointed out an overview of the STAR Council's current programs and those planned to continue in FY27. Ashley noted that all programs remain open to discussion and revision.

FY27 Meeting Schedule Discussion (Chair Ashley Cummins)

Ashley confirmed that the STAR Council monthly meetings are currently scheduled for the fourth Wednesday of each month, 12:10 - 1:10 p.m. Council members present at the meeting confirmed that this meeting cadence works.

STAR Council Member Raymond Swenson asked how best to propose agenda items. Ashley confirmed to contact Julianne and/or Ashley via email. STAR Council Member Travis Pietila asked whether the same procedural guidelines apply when project teams are working on a project. Ashley confirmed that project teams should bring topic to the Council as a whole and project teams should operate within that direction.

Announcements

None.

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Next Steps/Conclusion

None.

Next Meeting: November 18, 2026

Adjournment

Ashley adjourned the meeting at 1:03 p.m.

Some material in this document was generated using Microsoft Copilot and was reviewed and modified by Vanessa Sweeney, WSBA Member Services and Engagement.

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WASHINGTON STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION

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Small Town and Rural Council

Adopted: April 17, 2021. Amended July 17, 2021; September 7, 2024; November 14, 2025; TBD.

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Commented [JU1]: This may need to be updated pending Sep. BOG meeting report.

STAR Council HUB Liaison Position Application

Thank you for your interest in the HUB Liaison Position to the STAR Council. Council members have the unique opportunity to ensure that the practice of law in rural communities is present, growing and thriving. We do this by guiding policy and program development, serving as ambassadors between the WSBA and these communities, as well as explore and advocate for creative and innovative solutions to address these goals. Visit our webpage (https://www.wsba.org/connect-serve/committees-boards-other-groups/small-town-and-rural-council) to learn more, view recent work we've done, and to view the position description.

Personally identifiable information will be removed from the application before review by the STAR Council.

* Required

To apply, please complete this form no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025.

1. Applicant Name *

2. Email address *

3. Which HUB Program are you attending? *

4. Please describe your relevant experience that will help you serve in this volunteer position *

5. Why are you applying for this position? *

6. How will serving in this liaison role help you in your professional development goals? *

7. Have you participated in any WSBA programs? If so, please provide a brief description of your involvement.

8. Is there additional information you would like to share?

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.

Microsoft Forms

STAR Council Seattle University HUB Program Liaison

Position Description

The Small Town and Rural (STAR) Council (formerly STAR Committee until Sep. 2024) was established by the Board of Governors with approval of its charter in April 2021. The STAR Council is committed to strengthening and supporting the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. The STAR Council 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.

Position overview: The STAR Council guides policy and program development, serve as ambassadors between the WSBA and these communities, explore and advocate for creative and innovative solutions that further the goals of strengthening and supporting the practice of law in rural communities. The three main focus areas of the Council are:

1. Community Education and Outreach
2. Pipeline and Placement Program(s)
3. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse

See the Council Charter for more information.

Position expectations and time commitment: Given that the STAR Council is focused on and will largely be composed of rural practitioners, attendance at meetings is primarily and predominantly virtual. It is anticipated that Council meetings will be monthly for one hour, with the initial meeting of the year being two hours for an onboarding orientation. The liaison would be expected to attend meetings regularly and share information and perspectives from the Central Washington Hybrid Hub program and deliver relevant information about the work of the STAR Council back to colleagues in the HUB program. The liaison is not a member of the STAR Council and does not have voting authority.

Requirements: Must be a student enrolled in the Flex JD program at Seattle University School of Law, connected to Seattle University School of Law's Central Washington Hybrid Hub and / or HUB partner Heritage University, and have an interest in rural legal practice.

Preferred qualifications and skills: Interest in practicing law in Washington's rural communities.

Benefits:

- Develop and contribute to a deeper understanding of the unique needs, opportunities, and benefits of a rural practice
- Opportunity to explore creative solutions.
- Create connections, build relationships, and network with practitioners in Washington's rural communities as well as law students and members of the public.

Reimbursement policy: This is an unpaid volunteer position. Reasonable travel and other expenses will be reimbursed per the WSBA Expense Reimbursement Policy.

Selection and appointment process: Please submit this application form by 5 p.m. on July 11, 2025. For questions, contact STAR Council Chair Kari Petrasek at barleaders@wsba.org.

REPORT ON POSTPONEMENT

Reflections on the need to postpone the WSBA Rural Practice Day of Service clinic in Moses Lake

Authored by Coco Holbrook

Oct. 2026

Summary

WSBA and NJP partnered to host a 2026 Rural Practice Day of Service in Moses Lake, WA. Volunteer attorneys were going to provide advice and draft end-of-life planning documents for low-income folks in Grant County. The clinic is postponed until Spring 2027; in this report we reflect on why the postponement happened and the Day of Service Program as a concept.

Last year, the Wenatchee NJP office partnered with the STAR Council to hold the inaugural Rural Practice Day of Service in Omak. Comparisons to that successful clinic will be made throughout this report to support our reflection.

About the Planned 2026 Rural Practice Day of Service Clinic

We decided to host an end-of-life planning clinic in Moses Lake. We identified Moses Lake as a good host location because:

1. It was a new city and county from past Day of Service events,
2. It would be easier for travelling volunteers to attend because of its proximity to I-90,
3. Grant County is a legal desert, and
4. NJP had a community partner who was excited about the idea and willing to support the clinic's fruition by assisting with outreach and providing a space.

The clinic was for end-of-life-planning documents because that was a complete same-day service we could provide. The potential documents to be drafted are a simple will, power of attorney for healthcare and/or finance, and a healthcare directive (including a separate one for dementia). Clients would tell the volunteer attorney about their needs and concerns; the corresponding documents would then be drafted for them.

We had 12 interested volunteer attorneys and about 30 callers interested in this clinic. There is certainly a need for the end-of-life planning clinic. In advertising for the clinic, we received three inquiries about hosting the clinic in other Grant County cities. This confirms that this legal support is needed but also that folks are unwilling or unable to travel for it. (I hear about a lack of gas money from plenty of my clients.)

What led to the postponement?

Ultimately, the clinic was postponed due to a lack of clients signed up to serve. The week before the clinic, only 3 clients were scheduled. This number is too few for the fiscal expenditure WSBA would've made to support their staff and volunteer attorneys attending the clinic. So, the clinic was postponed and NJP served the three registered clients.

If we had 30 folks interested, how did we end up with only 3 scheduled? It was a combination of timing, waning interest, and eligibility. Some folks wanted assistance on a different

legal issue, couldn't make the timing of the clinic, or were no longer interested; this happened with our Omak clinic too. I'd estimate 25% of interested folks fall into this category.

Our challenge for the Moses Lake clinic was that we underestimated how many folks would be interested in these services but are ineligible for NJP services. NJP has eligibility requirements that another QLSP may not have because we receive funding from the federal government. Happily, these restrictions were not a barrier to our Omak clinic and we underestimated how many ineligible clients would contact us for the Moses Lake clinic. We had a long list of interested potential clients that NJP could not serve and thus could not schedule for the clinic. I estimate that about 70% of folks interested in the Moses Lake clinic were ineligible for NJP services.

To address this issue for the postponed clinic, we're searching for a partner in the clinic so that volunteers could serve any client ineligible for NJP services under that partner. The struggle is that Grant County is a legal desert with no volunteer attorney program. We're the main organization I know of providing civil legal services to the county. We could not find a partner before the clinic planned for September. If we cannot find a partner for the rescheduled date, we'll have to plan to double the time spent on outreach to overcome the high volume of ineligible clients.

Reflections on STAR Council's Rural Day of Service Program

STAR Council's Rural Day of Service Program is still in its pilot stage, and I'm hoping these reflections on the overall model from a QLSP are useful as the STAR Council evaluates the pilot program.

This program model has been a double-edged sword for us. It's a boon that allows us to meet community needs and grow an infrastructure to continue to have similar clinics around our service area. It's also a huge commitment that takes a lot of work to pull off. It is not easier to host a clinic after doing it the year before, it seems to take just as much effort. Since the clinic requires a concentrated number of clients, we have to dedicate a high level of staff time to do outreach and intakes of potential clients in the month before the clinic. Conducting an intake in the field has so far been unsuccessful because the potential client does not want to spend time in that moment to do so and prefers a callback. This adds to the workload. A reoccurring pattern between both clinics is that interested folks do not return our calls until two weeks before the clinic, if they return our call at all. This gives us very little time to do a lot of work to add them to the schedule.

Instead of this model, I wonder if it would be a better use of STAR Council's resources to identify X number of rural legal providers to connect with and see if they could provide support in expanding the services the organization is already providing in some way. This could be supporting an organization with a grant to create an infrastructure to do a new project or clinic, perhaps WSBA

could help leverage it's communication with the Bar to find exports to help build expertise in an area of law that's needed, perhaps WSBA reaches out to practitioners in the region and help the organization poll the private bar to understand what types of pro bono or low pono cases private counsel are willing to have referred.

If it would be helpful for the STAR Council's reflection and planning, I would be happy to attend a STAR council meeting to assist how I can, whether it's answering questions this report raises, providing my opinion on brainstorm discussions, or something else.