

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Council

Small Town and Rural Council Meeting I Virtual Only

Wednesday, March 26, 2025 | 12:10 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: 873 3538 6159 | Passcode: 595209 | Call-in: 888-788-0099

AGENDA

1. Introductions and Approval of February Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)
3. Council Position for Central WA Hybrid Hub Student Updates (Gov. Petrasek, Ashley Cummins)
4. Project Team Updates
 - a. Job Fair at Gonzaga (Sean King)
 - b. Summit Project Team (Merf Ehman, Ashley Cummins, Kevin Plachy)
 - i. Sponsorships
 - c. Rural grant internships (Ashley Cummins, Sean King, Travis Pietila, Kevin Plachy)
 - d. Rural Day of Service (Judge Kathryn Burke, Gov. Petrasek, Kevin Plachy)
5. Legal Lunchbox – April 2025 (Ashley Cummins)
6. FY26 Budget (Julianne Unite)
7. Access to Justice Contest Update (Ashley Cummins)
8. Announcements
9. Next Steps/Conclusion
10. Next Meeting: April 23, 2025
11. Adjourn

CHARTER

Small Town and Rural Council

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

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 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

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 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 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, February 19, 2025 *Virtual meeting via Zoom*

Committee Members Present: Governor Kari Petrasek, Merf Ehman, Rusty McGuire, Ashley Cummins, Philip Hunsucker, Sean King (departed 12:36 p.m.), Travis Pietila, Past President Dan Clark, Allison Foreman, Judge Kathryn Burke

Committee Members Absent: Jesse Lamp, Thomas Garvey (unexcused), Governor Mary Rathbone

WSBA Board of Governors Present:

WSBA Staff Present: Kevin Plachy, Julianne Unite, Vanessa Sweeney

Public Attendees Present: Jason Walker, Sophia Bird McSherry

Introductions and Approval of January Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)

STAR Council Chair, Governor Kari Petrasek called the meeting to order at 12:11 p.m. On motion by Council Member Rusty McGuire, seconded by STAR Council Member and WSBA Past President Dan Clark, the Council approved the January STAR Council Meeting minutes.

WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)

Governor Petrasek noted the next Board of Governors meeting scheduled for March 21-22 and will take place in the Greater Olympia area. Application for District Governor positions closed yesterday, if you are in a district that has elections, please [vote](#). Anyone interested in applying for at-large positions, or President-elect position, applications are due in April. WSBA Member Services and Engagement Manager Julianne Unite reminded the Council that the deadline for the [APEX Awards](#) is February 28th.

Council Position for Central WA Hybrid Hub Student Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Ashley Cummins)

STAR Council Member Ashley Cummins connected with Bree Blackhorse, who indicated there likely will be student interest but not able to make a commitment at this time. Additionally, Ashley shared summer internship grant program details and materials with Bree. Gov. Petrasek asked for the Council's thoughts on proceeding with creating a position for a hybrid hub student. Doing so would mean an amendment to the charter which could take some time or, wait for commitment from Heritage University first. Ashley proposed inviting law students to attend meetings to allow them to observe the Council. Gov. Petrasek agreed, and Ashley knows Seattle University students connected to Heritage and may have interest in attending. These students could be invited to attend, observe, and determine next steps from there.

WSBA Director of Advancement Kevin Plachy advised that Gov. Petrasek, as Chair, could appoint a student to serve as a liaison for now, which would give them a title such as “Liaison to Heritage University,” and allows the Council to assess, and determine whether the Council wants to change the process. Gov. Petrasek asked if this would require an application process, Kevin clarified it can be a statement of interest. The Council agreed that soliciting a volunteer from Heritage University to serve as a liaison is a good next step. Gov. Petrasek, Kevin, and Ashley will determine next steps via email.

Project Team Updates

a. Job Fair at Gonzaga (Sean King)

STAR Council Member Sean King shared an update on the status of job fair planning: registrations are rolling in from employers and job seekers. Sean has received inquiries from students at Lewis and Clark College and other schools seeking temporary accounts to browse jobs. STAR Council Member Travis Pietila asked Sean if an email template is available to be utilized to send email to students. Sean has one and will send to Travis, and Ashley. Kevin added that messaging about the summer internship grants was included in the job fair communications. Julianne noted that WSBA sent an eblast specifically targeting rural community members, including those who have reached out in the past.

Kevin provided an update on the summer rural internship grants. In a recent meeting with Kevin, Julianne, Ashley, Gov. Petrasek, Travis, and Sean, application materials were revised and posted on the website, and shared with the three law schools, with the hopes to see higher level of response given the greater lead time compared to last year. Ashley is working to get previous recipients involved in the article, and Julianne is working on a *Bar News* article and developing a NWSideBar blog post with the perspective of employers to cover both sides. This will be published in the April issue. The budget covers nine grants, with Family Law Section contributing \$5000, for a total of 10 grants. Applications are now open, and while no applications have been received yet, Travis has heard from some students who plan to apply.

b. Summit Project Team (Merf Ehman, Ashley Cummins, Kevin Plachy)

On January 29, Kevin, Merf, and Ashley for a Summit planning meeting. Kevin shared that budget expenses are currently at \$16,000. Regarding sponsorships, Umpqua will sponsor \$1000 and the Solo & Small Practice Section will sponsor \$1000, for a total of \$2000 in sponsorships. If Council members know of other potential sponsors, please let Kevin know. The Summit budget is currently at \$15,500, including sponsorships, and anticipated registration fees. There are extra funds, so an out of state speaker could be considered. Worth noting is there are two in-person STAR meetings budgeted at \$7500 each that we may or may not use and could use some of those funds to supplement the Summit. Gov. Petrasek expressed strong interest in the idea of considering a speaker from the conference last year in Las Vegas. Ashley shared the theme for this year’s STAR Summit: WSBA Small Town and Rural Practice Justice in Every Zip Code - Challenges, Opportunities and Solutions in Rural and Small-town Practice. Potential topics include ethics of small-town practice and the three Cs: conflicts of interest, competence, and confidentiality. Additional topics include increasing language access, AI and practice management, law

schools in rural practice/ hub program, tribal law, farm workers and immigration, and views from the bench. STAR Council Member Merf Ehman added that the idea of inviting Chief Justice Stevens as keynote speaker was discussed, with WSBA Executive Director Terra Nevitt possibly reaching out. Other out-of-state folks to consider include Lisa Pruitt, Sonia Rodriguez True, Judge Rebecca Pennell.

c. Rural Day of Service (Judge Kathryn Burke, Gov. Petrasek, Kevin Plachy)

Kevin, Judge Kathryn Burke, and Julianne met to discuss the Rural Day of Service clinic. The qualified legal service provider (QLSP) Northwest Justice Project (NJP) is interested in partnering. While the primary NJP contact is on leave, Coco Holbrook, Assistant Managing Attorney at the Wenatchee office, will assist. Kevin will contact Gov. Petrasek, Judge Burke and Coco within in the next week to set up a meeting. Coco asked if multiple practice areas can be offered, and whether it's possible to utilize funds to reimburse client travel. Kevin clarified that it would be up to the QLSP/NJP to determine how to use funds. Kevin also expressed interest in hearing what topics they feel would be most valuable. Next steps include scheduling a meeting with Gov. Petrasek, Judge Burke, Kevin, Julianne, and Coco. Gov. Petrasek noted wills is little time needed, with approximately three clients per hour, and if the NJP is interested in doing it, Gov. Petrasek is happy to help. Kevin added, it is important to seek input from the QLSP/NJP regarding the highest need in the community. Judge Burke noted transportation to the clinic is a significant concern. The senior center is a neutral central place where people feel comfortable and can accommodate partitions. However, people who are further may have difficulty getting there. Ensuring a bus runs on day of the clinic, and schedule accordingly to allow people to return home.

Legal Lunchbox – April 2025 (Ashley Cummins)

Ashley provided an update on the upcoming Legal Lunchbox, scheduled for April 29th. The topic involves attracting lawyers in rural practice, mentoring new attorneys, and how law firms can support new attorneys and APR6. Invitations have been sent and Ashley is currently seeking faculty members. Please reach out to Ashley know with ideas for faculty members. Jason Walker, who teaches new attorneys for Legal Lunchbox, is potentially available to participate, depending on availability.

2025 Department of Justice (DOJ) Access to Justice Challenge Discussion cont. (Julianne Unite)

Gov. Petrasek questioned whether the STAR Council should take on this initiative. It was suggested that it may be better suited for a QLSP to take this on. Another consideration is the federal order on levelling diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). As this is a national governmental grant, bringing attention to the WSBA carries uncertainty given WSBA is not dropping DEI efforts. Kevin noted a submission would need to be completed by March and questioned whether there would be enough time to prepare, and whether dedicating effort into a federal initiative without knowing the outcome makes sense. Merf suggested a better use of the Council's efforts may be to focus on state office of the courts, innovation grants presented in Las Vegas, and partnerships of local bar associations and state courts. The Council concluded forgoing the DOJ Challenge Grant and leave it to local entities to do so if they wish, while the Council will focus on other opportunities.

Announcements

Gov. Petrasek and Julianne were contacted by Tony Griego, Chief Equity & Access Office with the Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings requesting a presentation about STAR Council work and challenges Washington residents face seeking legal help in rural areas. On May 14, Gov. Petrasek and Julianne will give a presentation and answer questions virtually.

Next Steps/Conclusion

None.

Next Meeting: March 26, 2025

Adjournment

Gov. Petrasek adjourned the meeting at 12:55 p.m.

DRAFT

WSBA AI Use Policy for External Parties

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and AI-based tools continue to develop every day and their potential risks and benefits mount, it's crucial that we anchor ourselves to our purpose: to serve the public and members of the Bar, to ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice. We acknowledge that external parties may use AI to benefit their work with WSBA and this policy sets out requirements regarding that AI usage. Our responsible AI approach is our commitment to the ethical use of AI and aims to ensure that our AI usage aligns with our mission and values.

External AI Tools During Meetings/Events

- External parties (i.e., vendors, volunteers, meeting attendees) using an AI recording or notetaking tool **must** ask the staff liaison in advance (at the time the meeting is scheduled), so participants have a meaningful opportunity to decide whether to participate.
- **Failure to notify in advance:** If external parties fail to notify the staff liaison in advance, they **must** notify all event participants at the start of the meeting. Notice provided by the AI tool fulfills the notification requirements, i.e., "this meeting is being recorded."
- **Failure to notify:** Failure to provide this notification will result in the meeting's termination (if hosted by WSBA) or termination of WSBA's participation (if hosted by an external party).
- **AI tool as meeting participant:** If the AI tool is a meeting participant requesting entrance to a meeting, the meeting liaison must verify the identity of the individual who enabled the tool and notify all participants to get consent before letting the AI in.
- **No assigned staff liaison:** If no staff liaison is assigned, the external party **must** still notify WSBA invitees of the AI recording in advance, must provide WSBA access to the recording, and WSBA has the right to ask the external party to delete the recording at the external party's end.
 - o Failure to provide this notification or following these steps will result in the termination of WSBA's participation.

Consent on WSBA's behalf: Staff liaisons, on behalf of WSBA, may consent to a meeting being recorded, provided **no** sensitive or confidential WSBA information will be shared and/or discussed. Recording meetings with sensitive or confidential content is **prohibited**.

External AI Generated Content

We acknowledge that external parties may use AI to produce WSBA-business content. External parties should review these considerations to help ensure responsible and ethical AI use.

COMMUNICATION

- External parties need to cite the use of generative AI: reading or viewing AI content without noting its use can be jarring, misleading, and feel inauthentic.
- External presenters who submit potentially copyright materials (*i.e. CLE materials, committee presentation materials, etc.*) **must** disclose AI usage as follows:

- All images and videos created by any AI system must be attributed to the appropriate Generative AI system.
- If text generated by an AI system is used substantively in a final product, attribution to the relevant AI system is required.
- All attributions should include the name of the AI system used and a HITL (human-in-the-loop) assertion (which should include the person who reviewed and edited the content).

Sample language: *Some material in this publication was generated using [insert AI tool] and was reviewed for accuracy by [insert name].*

CONSIDERATIONS

- BE WARY OF BIASED CONTENT

- Research indicates that algorithms can be biased against some groups, compounding systemic discrimination.
 - We want to ensure that these technologies do not harm vulnerable populations.
 - Think about how racial and ethnic minorities, women, non-binary, people with disabilities, or others could be portrayed or impacted by the content generated with AI assistance.

- ACCURACY

- While AI can rapidly produce clear prose, the information and content might be outdated, inaccurate, or even made up.
 - The user is responsible for verifying that the information is accurate by independently researching claims and content made by the AI tool (look for inaccurate details, including links and references to events or facts).
- There are also reputational and legal risks of relying on incorrect and biased information.
 - Monitor and verify outputs before using them, check sources, and be mindful about when generative AI use is inappropriate.

AI Use for Accommodations

If AI use is needed to accommodate a disability, the external party **must** notify the staff liaison in advance of the meeting. The staff liaison will then work with the Accommodations team to ensure proper measures are in place that also comply with this policy.

Q&A | INTERVIEWS WITH 2024 RURAL PRACTICE INTERNSHIP GRANT RECIPIENTS

In 2024, the WSBA's Small Town and Rural (STAR) Council launched a pilot program to provide grants to law students participating in summer internships in rural parts of Washington. The purpose of these grants is to assist in building a pipeline of rural attorneys who will help narrow the legal services gap in rural communities throughout the state. What follows are interviews with two of the 2024 grant recipients, Olivia Perez and Shaw Lowry.

Olivia Perez

Q. You were awarded a rural practice summer internship grant in 2024. What kind of work did you do during your summer internship?

The Rural Practice Summer Internship Grant allowed me to serve as a Rule 9 intern at the Franklin County Office of Public Defense. During this internship, I had the opportunity to assist attorneys with legal motions and research. I also engaged directly with clients, discussing their cases and offering support. One of the most rewarding aspects of the experience was making court appearances.

Q. Where was your internship located? My internship was with the Franklin County Office of Public Defense, located in Pasco.

Q. What motivated you to pursue this particular internship?

I decided to intern at the Franklin County Office of Public Defense because I wanted to work in a diverse county, one that serves a large number of Spanish-speaking defendants. This experience gave me the



chance to not only follow my passion for public defense but also, to connect with and support individuals in a community that means a lot to me.

Q. How did the grant money help you? The grant money was incredibly helpful in covering my living expenses during the internship. Since I had to maintain housing in both Spokane and Kennewick, it allowed me to manage the added financial strain of paying double rent while focusing on my work at the Franklin County Office of Public Defense.

Q. How did your internship help you grow as a law student and future legal practitioner?

This internship deepened my commitment to public defense and played a significant role in my growth as both a law student and an aspiring legal practitioner. Although I've always known that public defense was the right path for me, this experience made me realize how much my skills are needed in rural communities, particularly where there is a shortage of Spanish-speaking attorneys. It also gave me a clear sense of direction for my future and confirmed where I want to start my legal career after law school.

Q. Did the experience make you more or less likely to practice in a rural community after graduation?

My internship increased my desire to practice in a rural community after graduation. Through my time in Franklin County, I saw firsthand the pressing need for Spanish-speaking public defenders in the Tri-Cities. I am now even more determined to return to the Tri-Cities and continue providing support to all those in need.

Q. Where are you from originally, and where do you plan to practice after graduating from law school?

I was raised in Bridgeport, a small agricultural town in the heart of North Central Washington. With a population just over 2,000, my ties to rural Washington have been a defining aspect of my life. After law school, I aspire to practice public defense in a rural county that serves a significant population of farmworkers and immigrant criminal defendants.

Q. What interests you about practicing law in a rural community?

My interest in practicing in a rural county comes from my upbringing in a rural area. Bridgeport and the surrounding region are severely lacking in resources, and having witnessed firsthand the challenges of living in a legal "desert," I feel a deep commitment to serving such communities. As the child of Mexican Spanish-speaking farmworker parents, I feel a personal responsibility to support fellow Latino/a farmworkers within the criminal justice system. The gratitude and support I receive from clients who are thankful to have a Spanish-speaking attorney is incredibly fulfilling and only strengthens my dedication to serving

rural farmworkers.

Q. What are some of the challenges you foresee of practicing law in a rural community?

One of the challenges I anticipate when practicing law in a rural community is assisting clients who miss court appearances due to a lack of access to transportation. Many clients live miles away from the courthouse, and the absence of reliable public transportation in rural areas can make it difficult for them to attend appointments or court hearings. Additionally, securing diversion treatment for clients is challenging, as treatment centers in Washington are limited and often located far from rural areas.

Q. What would you say to other law school students or graduates who are on the fence about moving to and working in a rural part of Washington?

One piece of advice I would offer to law students is to weigh the benefits of the cost of living in rural areas compared to the available salaries. Living in a rural community is typically more affordable than living in a large city, and rural areas offer a peaceful and beautiful environment.

Most importantly, I would emphasize how rewarding it is to work in a small rural county. While criminal law can often be divisive and adversarial, in a small county relationships with prosecutors are more collaborative and reasonable. During my time in Franklin County, I have felt welcomed, supported, and uplifted by defense attorneys, prosecutors, judges, jail staff, clerks, and many others. I truly feel appreciated and needed. What's most fulfilling, however, is the impact of filling a crucial role in a community with a significant need. Knowing that I am making a lasting, positive difference makes the challenges of working in a rural county incredibly worthwhile.

Olivia Perez is currently a third-year law student at Gonzaga University School of Law. A first-generation daughter of Mexican immigrant farmworkers from Bridgeport, Perez has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to public service from a young age. Her passion for public defense was ignited during her undergraduate

Courtesy photo

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Q&A | Interviews with 2024 Rural Practice Internship Grant Recipients

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studies at the University of Washington. Perez pursued law school to further her dedication to serving the community. Throughout her legal education, Perez has gained valuable experience working with the Spokane County Public Defenders, the Franklin County Office of Public Defense, and assisting with CJA appeal cases. Her favorite law school experiences have been arguing in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals supervised by her criminal law professor and working in her school's immigration clinic.

Shaw Lowry

Q. You were awarded a rural practice summer internship grant in 2024. What kind of work did you do during your summer internship?

I was a Rule 9 intern at the Benton County Office of Public Defense. My primary duties involved managing District Court cases at all phases, including drafting and arguing motions and briefs, visiting clients on a daily basis to prepare for proceedings or review discovery, and conducting first appearances in superior court.

Q. Where was your internship located?
The office is located in Kennewick.

Q. What motivated you to pursue this particular internship?

I came to law school with the intention of practicing criminal law in some capacity, as either a public defender or a prosecutor. As I finished my interviews for 2L summer work, I kept thinking about how well the interview I had with the Benton OPD manager, Charlie Dow, went. We had a lot in common, similar senses of humor, and cared about the same kind of work, so it just made sense. I was lucky enough to receive a summer job offer from him. I had never spent much time in the Tri-Cities so it was a win-win opportunity to discover a new place while gaining valuable experience.

Q. How did the grant money help you?
Trying to find a temporary living arrangement for 12 weeks of work can be

SIDEBAR

RURAL PRACTICE SUMMER INTERNSHIP GRANTS

The WSBA is now accepting applications for its 2025 Rural Practice Summer Internship Grants. The internship is open to law students (1Ls, 2L, and non-graduating 3Ls) who:

1. Will be participating in a summer internship for an organization providing legal services to individual members of the public in a nonprofit, government, or private setting located within a rural community as defined by the WSBA Small Town and Rural Council.
2. Interns working in a private firm setting must primarily serve individuals from underserved and underrepresented groups. These groups may face economic, geographical, cultural, or language barriers to legal services.
3. Demonstrate commitment to practicing in a rural community.
4. Articulate a desire to practice within a rural community upon graduation from law school.
5. Preference will be given to law students from rural communities.

Please contact memberbenefits@wsba.org with questions, and visit www.wsba.org/connect-serve/committees-boards-other-groups/small-town-and-rural-council for requirements, application instructions, and employer acknowledgement forms.

Please note the application deadline is April 13, 2025.



a difficult task. My original plan was to try to move all my possessions from Spokane, but as the school year ended and my start date grew near, I realized ending my lease in Spokane to find a new spot in Kennewick for a few months wasn't a feasible option. The grant money was instrumental in helping me confirm a short-term rental for the summer.

Q. How did your internship help you grow as a law student and future legal practitioner?

As many legal professionals know, hands-on experience can be tricky to come by while in law school. Hands-on experience was plentiful throughout last summer. My internship provided me the opportunity to meet with my clients, to understand the legal issues they were facing, and to speak at length with colleagues for advice and mentorship. In many situations, these opportunities helped me place my clients in a better position. It was incredibly rewarding to help individuals with real life situations after being in a classroom for the last couple years.

Q. Did the experience make you more or less likely to practice in a rural community



after graduation?

Decidedly more likely. I've been fortunate enough to gain career experience in large cities and small counties across Washington, but I can't be too far from outdoor activity. Last summer was a nice reminder of this fact. During my weekends, I spent time floating out on the Snake River. I was reminded that as much as I love a day in the city, the ability to drive 20 minutes to a hike, river, or lake is something I can't forego.

Q. Where are you from originally, and where do you plan to practice after

graduating from law school?

I'm originally from the outskirts of Snohomish, which I suppose isn't as rural as it used to be, but still just as beautiful. I am currently looking in central Washington for work, around the Wenatchee area.

Q. What interests you about practicing law in a rural community?

I like making friends at my places of work, as many do. It just helps so much to have a collegial workspace where the topics of conversation can change from work to hobby, to weekend plans, to life's big questions on a day-to-day basis. I think practicing in a rural community really lends itself to growing close to those you share a career path with, which to me is invaluable.

Q. What are some of the challenges you foresee of practicing law in a rural community?

I suppose the flip side of the coin is also social. Reputation is everything in any legal or legal-adjacent work. Where there are fewer individuals working in a specific field, it is entirely possible that I will need to put in the extra legwork to stop bridges from being burned based on personality differences or disagreements.

Q. What would you say to other law school students or graduates who are on the fence about moving to and working in a rural part of Washington?

It goes without saying, but don't knock it till you try it. There will of course be different positives and drawbacks for everyone, but rural Washington has so much to offer anyone who wants to discover it. Especially if you're the outdoorsy type, in which case the decision will eventually make itself, in my opinion.

Shaw Lowry is currently a third-year law student at Gonzaga University School of Law, where he serves as Gonzaga Law Review's technical editor. Before law school, Lowry lived in Bellingham, where he enjoyed regular visits to Mt. Baker, and worked as a paralegal at the Skagit County Public Defender's Office, assisting primarily in dependency and juvenile cases. After completing the bar exam, Lowry intends to begin his career as a public defender. Outside of the law, he enjoys spending time with his girlfriend and their dog Koda, sarcasm, skiing, hiking, paddleboarding, and cooking (sometimes). [BN](#)

Courtesy photo

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 a statement of interest to STAR Council Chair Kari Petrasek at kari@petraseklaw.com.