

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

WSBA Sections: A Guide for Section Leader Volunteers

WELCOME to Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) section leadership. This guide is intended to introduce you to the WSBA's 29 sections and governance. In addition to this guide, we recommended that new section executive committee members connect with current and/or out-going executive committee members, read the section's bylaws, annual report, and budget (found online), and review the materials found in the [WSBA Volunteer Toolbox](#).

SECTIONS HISTORY/BACKGROUND

First mentioned in the WSBA Bylaws in 1955, but not officially formed until the 1970s, sections were created as a mechanism to connect more broadly with the membership and provide opportunities for practice-based communities to connect with each other. Some of the sections that were created in the 1970s still exist today.

As sections are entities of the WSBA, the WSBA has fiduciary, legal, and fiscal responsibility for section activities. Sections do not have independent legal status and are subject to the policies and procedures applicable to all WSBA entities.

WHAT ARE WSBA SECTIONS?

WSBA Sections Provide:

- A community of legal professionals with shared practice areas, practice settings, or characteristics
- Legal and practice updates on relevant topics, usually through newsletters
- Low-cost (sometimes free) CLEs with educational content focused on relevant topics
- Opportunities to communicate with other professionals and tap into their knowledge (via webpages, list serves, online communities, etc.)
- Opportunities to connect and network across the state
- Opportunities to comment on relevant Washington state legislation
- Leadership opportunities in the WSBA
- Outreach to and scholarship opportunities for law students

What Section Members Value:¹

- High quality CLEs with intermediate to advanced content (discounts to members are always appreciated)
- Sharing resources and knowledge with other section members
- Updates on law and legislation
- Practice tips

WSBA's 29 SECTIONS

Administrative Law
Animal Law
Antitrust, Consumer Protection & Unfair
Business Practices
Business Law
Civil Rights Law
Construction Law
Corporate Counsel
Creditor Debtor Rights
Criminal Law
Dispute Resolution
Elder Law
Environmental & Land Use Law
Family Law
Health Law
Indian Law
International Practice
Intellectual Property
Juvenile Law
Labor & Employment Law
Legal Assistance to Military Personnel
LGBTQ+ Law
Liquor, Cannabis & Psychedelics Law
Litigation
Low Bono
Real Property, Probate & Trust
Senior Lawyers
Solo & Small Practice
Taxation
World Peace Through Law

¹ Based on direct feedback to staff and past surveys conducted by individual sections.
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- List-serve engagement
- Newsletters
- Colleagues' involvement in legislative process (benefits all practitioners in practice area)
- Opportunities to get involved

Benefits for Volunteers Serving in Leadership Roles:

- The chance to provide service to other members with shared interests
- Camaraderie with other section leaders
- Satisfaction in accomplishing the group's goals
- The opportunity to meet/network with established practitioners in their fields
- Visibility at WSBA and among peers
- The opportunity to establish a statewide professional network
- Professional growth/development
- Leadership experience

SECTION GOVERNANCE

Each section has its own set of bylaws and is governed by an executive committee. WSBA Bylaws and policies provide overall direction and parameters for sections; individual section bylaws outline executive committee structure, the election cycle, terms of office, voting eligibility, and membership criteria. While each executive committee has some discretion in how it operates, each section must have a Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer (or Secretary/Treasurer). Many sections also find the Chair-Elect and Immediate Past Chair positions to be helpful in terms of succession planning and continuity. For more information on individual officer roles (Chair, Chair-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, and Immediate Past Chair), see [Executive Committee Officer Roles and Responsibilities](#).

ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL SECTION

- ✓ Strong Value Proposition for Members
- ✓ Regular Communication with Members
- ✓ Effective Executive Committee (meets regularly, shares responsibilities, and makes decisions)
- ✓ Good Management and Allocation of Resources (volunteer time & funds)

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

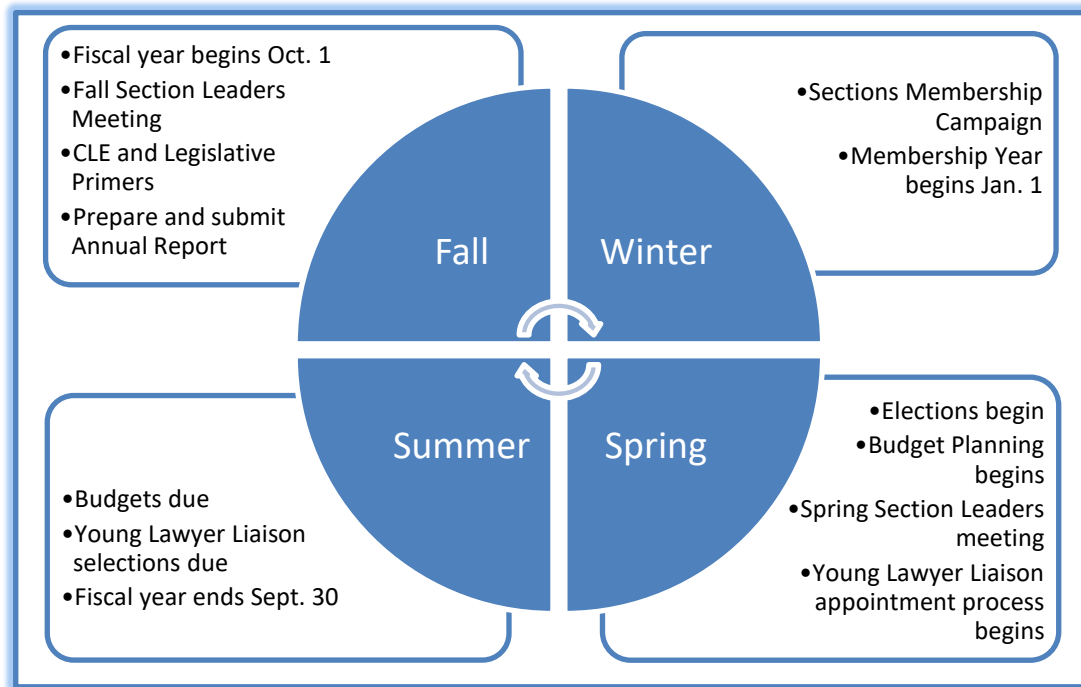
Sections Team: The WSBA Sections Team is comprised of two (2) dedicated Sections Program staffers (Sections Program Specialist and Sections Program Coordinator) and two (2) shared staffers (Member Services and Engagement (MSE) Manager and MSE Program Coordinator) responsible for supporting activities across all WSBA sections. The Sections Program Specialist will attend executive committee meetings when possible and act as a resource for conducting section business. In general, the Sections Team is responsible for:

- Connecting the executive committee to WSBA resources to help meet annual work plan goals
- Staying apprised of section activities and decisions and maintaining master files
- Acting as a "hub" between sections and other WSBA teams, including Finance, Communications, General Counsel, and Legislative
- Reviewing/routing all contracts and expense reports for proper approvals/signatures
- Reviewing/routing all formal communications from executive committee to section members (e.g., mailings, e-blasts, surveys)

Board of Governors Liaison(s):

Each year, members of the WSBA Board of Governors are appointed to serve as liaisons between the Board of Governors and one or more sections. The function of the Board of Governors liaison(s) is/are to assist the operation of the section's executive committee by acting as an information conduit between the executive committee and the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors liaison(s) is/are not a voting member of the executive committee, unless otherwise stated in a section's bylaws.

TYPICAL SECTION GOVERNANCE CYCLE



MORE INFORMATION

- [WSBA Bylaws](#), especially Article VII(B) and Article XI
- **Section Bylaws** (see individual section webpages)
- **Section Budget** (see individual section webpages)
- **Section Annual Report and Year-at-a-Glance Sheet** (see individual section webpages)
- [Volunteer Toolbox](#)

The Volunteer Toolbox is designed to provide many of the tools needed to effectively lead a section. Tools and resources are added and updated on a regular basis and suggestions for what to include are welcome. Topics include:

- GR 12 (authorizes and limits WSBA activities, including sections)
- WSBA policies and procedures (including expense form and fiscal policies)
- Marketing and outreach resources (list serves, social media, e-blasts, newsletters, etc.)
- Legislative process information
- CLE seminar timelines and guidelines
- Executive committee best practices

QUESTIONS?

Contact any member of the Sections Team below or email sections@wsba.org.

Julianne Unite
julianneu@wsba.org
Member Services and
Engagement Manager

Carolyn MacGregor
carolynm@wsba.org
Sections Program
Specialist

Noah Baetge
noahb@wsba.org
Sections Program
Coordinator

Vanessa Sweeney
vanessas@wsba.org
Member Services and
Engagement Program
Coordinator