



**WASHINGTON STATE CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
Statewide Legislative Advocacy Project
June 2021**

Introduction

The Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) seeks to work with the three Catholic Dioceses of Washington state to grow a year-round, statewide legislative and policy advocacy network. This advocacy effort intends to engage diocesan staff, parish groups and other stakeholders to support a statewide, Catholic network of legislative and policy advocates. This network will engage in training and advocacy activities around the state. All advocacy efforts will be in line with Catholic Social Teaching and the bishops' legislative priorities.

Relationship Building

To carry out a statewide advocacy effort of this type, WSCC will work to engage staff and volunteer leadership at the diocesan and parish levels from all three dioceses. This will include direct outreach and listening to what dioceses are already doing around legislative advocacy. By engaging dioceses in this manner, WSCC will seek to 1) Meet with parish leaders who are already engaged or want to be engaged with legislative advocacy, and 2) Seek to create a network of statewide advocacy contacts from all three dioceses that can work to create a system of information exchange that is part of a statewide network working on policy and legislative advocacy for the common good. This will also include working within multi-diocesan regions and deaneries. Local preferences will be a priority in terms of what dioceses and parishes choose to advocate around.

ACTION:

- ❖ By May 2021 hold a statewide listening session with the WA bishops. This will be to gather statewide feedback on areas of advocacy priority from all three dioceses. The sessions will be in Spanish and English and will help advise the bishops in setting their annual legislative priorities for 2022.

- ❖ By June – July 2021 meet with newly engaged diocesan advocacy leaders from the listening sessions, to get their feedback and buy-in on promoting a statewide, year-round advocacy effort.

Forming Consciences

A goal for this work is to establish a well-formed network of Catholic, statewide advocates. WSCC will work with diocesan staff to offer training in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* and the elements of Catholic Social Teaching to diocesan and parish-based groups desiring this type of formation. As mentioned, these can also be regional trainings. The goal is to provide training that is fully Catholic in content and is uniform across the state for dioceses and parishes. WSCC can facilitate this by using Zoom presentations, videos, social media and enlisting the help of other local and statewide experts to provide these types of trainings. WSCC will also seek to provide these trainings in Spanish.

ACTION:

- ❖ By July 2021 WSCC will market formation trainings on its website and in its advocacy bulletins, and will work with the statewide advocacy planning committee and the network of diocesan contacts to market formation trainings via their communication networks. WSCC will facilitate these trainings on Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and Faithful Citizenship via Zoom, as invited.

Advocacy Models

As part of advocacy formation and as requested, WSCC and our partners can provide presentations on tried and tested advocacy models such as Just Faith, Network Builder & Dialogue for Justice (Catholic Community Services), Faith Doing Justice (Jesuits West Province) and Voice of the Poor (St. Vincent de Paul). Models are not limited to these examples and if a local parish or diocese prefers to use their own model, that can work if the model adheres to Catholic teaching. As stated, assessing advocacy models will focus on local preferences and on providing tools for effective legislative and policy advocacy. While efforts for service work may well come from some of these efforts, legislative and policy advocacy will be the focus for these statewide advocacy efforts.

ACTION:

- ❖ By June - July 2021 WSCC will consult with advocacy model entities (e.g., Jesuits NW, CCS and St. Vincent de Paul) to obtain materials that can be shared with dioceses and parishes. This would include asking the advocacy model entity to help train/mentor groups interested in using their model.

Identifying Priority Issues

Utilizing regular communication to a well-formed advocacy information network, WSCC will use their current advocacy bulletin platform to provide timely updates on legislative matters and policy items that may be of concern to local advocacy groups. This could include state and national legislation and policy. Information on these matters will be provided on an ongoing and year-round basis. Special presentations on these topics may be done on a case-by-case basis virtually. Working with advocacy network leaders, WSCC will encourage local groups to meet and identify matters, issues and/or legislation that are a priority focus for local groups. WSCC will also inform advocacy stakeholders regarding the legislative priorities for the Catholic bishops of Washington.

ACTION:

- ❖ By July 2021 WSCC will email a legislative priorities survey to all Catholic Advocacy Planning Committee members as well as to all members of the WSCC Catholic Advocacy Network to learn the top three personal Catholic legislative priorities of all participants.
- ❖ By August 2021 WSCC will host a statewide virtual meeting with statewide advocacy network stakeholders (Catholic Advocacy Planning Committee members, Listening Session participants, etc.) to promote WSCC's goal of informing parishes, dioceses, and individuals about policy matters of interest in a year-round manner. This will include garnering feedback for how our current information sharing systems can be improved and, making an appeal for help in growing our advocacy network.
- ❖ By September 2021, will work with Bishops of WA State to determine the 2022 Legislative Priorities, with input from Listening Session and survey group data.

Faith in Action`

A primary goal of this statewide advocacy program is that our efforts lead to legislative advocacy action. As part of this statewide advocacy effort, WSCC and other Catholic advocacy stakeholders can help provide needed technical assistance to help local groups hold legislative forums, town halls, meetings with their legislators, launch letter writing campaigns and hold advocacy days. It is our intent that legislative advocacy occurs year-round, based on local priorities whenever possible. The goal here is that well-trained local groups be active and engaged in a variety of legislative advocacy activities and be willing to train others.

ACTION:

- ❖ By October 2021, the 2021 Cornerstone Catholic Conference will include a workshop on Faith in Action: Ministry and Advocacy, where attendees will learn, step-by-step, how to establish a variety of ministry/advocacy groups in their parishes.

- ❖ By November 2021, the Bishops of WA state will issue a statement on a timely advocacy topic, accompanied by a WSCC Call to Action Alert.
- ❖ By December 2021 WSCC will share the bishops' legislative priorities with advocacy network stakeholders.
- ❖ During January – March, 2022 and WA State Legislative Session, WSCC will encourage engagement on issues important to Catholics across the state through reading the WSCC Catholic Advocacy Bulletin; signing in pro/con, submitting written comments, or providing in-person testimony on important issues before the legislature; as well as responding to large and small action alerts on state and federal matters.

ACTION: April 2022 to November 2022:

- ❖ Parishes involved with the 2021 listening sessions will be encouraged to conduct convenings to establish relationships with lawmakers and make Catholic priorities known. WSCC and other stakeholders can help facilitate and provide training for these.
- ❖ Parishes holding these convenings can help mentor another parish with similar goals.
- ❖ By Fall 2022 will conduct two advocacy events (e.g., a town hall, legislative forum, meeting with legislators) at a local parish – one in eastern and one in western WA. This effort will seek to engage statewide advocacy network stakeholders and advocacy planning committee members to assist or help take the lead on these with support and needed training from the WSCC.

WSCC Role

Through the efforts of a statewide advocacy project, WSCC will work with dioceses, parishes, and other stakeholders to use the collective capacity of all stakeholders to promote this project. As stated, these efforts will seek to defer to local preferences and identify and utilize advocacy methods and systems already in place and that are working well. WSCC will seek to play the roles of convener, communicator, collaborator, resource provider, sharer of best practices and will otherwise bring an effective level of communication and accountability to this effort.

WSCC alone cannot provide all the services noted in this project description but will seek to leverage the skills, resources, and capacity of all those involved to make this effort work. WSCC will also lean heavily on virtual tools to engage stakeholders and help facilitate all the activities needed to make this effort successful.