

## Setting Up Your *Pro Bono* Program

### I. Getting Buy-In at Your Corporation

The first challenge in initiating a pro bono program is to build the necessary support among the leaders of your organization. You need to be prepared to dispel the “myths” of *pro bono* and to articulate why having a program will not only benefit the clients you intend to serve, but your organization and individual attorneys and staff as well. PILI’s Pro Bono Initiative is a key starting point in your efforts.

### II. Promulgating a Pro Bono Policy

The less experience your organization has with pro bono work, the more important it will be to promulgate a policy explaining how the program will work. The policy should address:

- What your organization considers to be pro bono work;
- Who will approve the engagements and what type of information will need to be provided before a pro matter is accepted;
- Whether and how much credit will be given to pro bono matters;
- Whether and what insurance is available for pro bono services rendered;
- What type of support will be available on pro bono cases (i.e., use of administrative staff, copy equipment) and what type of expenses will be reimbursed (i.e., expert fees); and
- Whether pro bono work is expected or required of each attorney and if so, in what amount, or rather that *pro bono* work is encouraged and valued.

### III. Rolling out the Program

Once your pro bono policy has been adopted, you should consider the following to get your program off to a good start.

- Encouraging corporation and legal department leaders to lend their vocal support and encouragement to participation in the program, ideally by their own example;
- Having a few pro bono opportunities in hand to distribute to interested lawyers; and
- Announcing publicly the purposes and goals of the program.

### IV. Maximizing the Program’s Potential

As your pro bono program gains traction, maximize its potential by:

- Appointing a program manager to encourage participation, track involvement and promote successes;
- Partnering with a pro bono or legal aid agency to pre-screen cases for your organization;
- Involving your legal staff actively in the program and encourage them to spot worthy matters or causes for your organization to handle or support;
- Publicizing your pro bono program’s success and link up the program with your organization’s marketing, recruiting and professional development efforts;
- Participating in the legal community’s efforts to identify best pro bono practices;
- Considering the creation of a partnership with a law firm that you have engaged as outside counsel; and
- Developing a program that is self-sustaining in order to ensure the program’s viability during times of staffing changes, particularly in the role of General Counsel.