Starting and Strengthening a Corporate Pro Bono Program

Developing a pro bono program for your corporate legal department may seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be! There are many existing partners and resources you can draw upon as you get started and no need to reinvent the wheel:

The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF)

- **The CBF Corporate Leadership Circle**
  - A network of companies that provide mentoring and resources to new and growing pro bono programs, and work to support and identify best practices from successful programs.

- **The CBF Pro Bono Support Program**
  - The CBF Pro Bono Support Program can walk you through starting up your program at a high level and connect you to corporate peers in the Leadership Circle for more in-depth advice.

Corporate Pro Bono Resources

- **CBF Corporate Leadership Circle Pro Bono Opportunities Guide**
  - A curated list of opportunities that members of the Corporate Leadership Circle have identified as well-suited for corporate legal departments.
  - The legal aid organizations on this list all carry malpractice insurance for volunteers.

- **Corporate Pro Bono Policies**
  - Sample corporate pro bono policies from peer companies are available on request—email Sarah Blair at sblair@chicagobarfoundation.org.

- **Other Resources**
  - **CPBO (Corporate Pro Bono):**
    - CPBO Pro Bono Development Guide: Three-phase guide to starting a pro bono program.
  - **PILI (Public Interest Law Initiative):**
    - Pro Bono Reference Guide for Corporations: In-depth guide for starting and operating a pro bono program.

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Best Practices

- **Not sure where to start?** Take advantage of the CBF Corporate Leadership Circle to connect with peers who can talk you through starting a program. Email Sarah Blair at sblair@chicagobarfoundation.org to ask to join the Circle.

- **Just getting started?** Consider starting with bite-sized opportunities from the "One Day or Less" section of the Corporate Opportunities Guide. As interest grows and pro bono becomes more embedded in your company's culture, you can then expand to more in-depth opportunities.

- **Interested in integrating with your company's broader priorities and structures?** Consider reaching out to your company's Corporate Social Responsibility team. Your CSR team be able to suggest organizations or causes your company already supports and can share best practices for promoting volunteerism within your company's unique culture.

- **Worried about logistics?** Consider partnering with one or more of your outside firms. Firms are generally very willing to partner on pro bono projects and can handle most of the planning and logistical support.

- **Scheduling a clinic?** Consider which days your team members are most likely to come into the office. For many companies, this ends up being Tuesday through Thursday.

- **Juggling multiple pro bono opportunities?** Consider assigning one person to serve as project lead for each project.

- **Trying to engage a national (or international) team?** Consider partnering with a global law firm and/or a national (or international) non-profit. Some potential partners include:
    - Baker McKenzie's Justice in Action community day of action
    - DLA Piper's New Perimeter global pro bono program
    - National Veterans Legal Services Program (possible firm partnership: Skadden)

For questions or to request more information, contact Sarah Blair, CBF Director of Pro Bono & Training, at sblair@chicagobarfoundation.org.

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