

## Setting Up Your *Pro Bono* Program

### I. Getting Buy-In at Your Law Firm

The first challenge in initiating a pro bono program is to build the necessary support among the leaders of your firm. 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 firm and individual attorneys as well. PILI’s Pro Bono Initiative can help your firm get started.

### II. Promulgating a Pro Bono Policy

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

- What your firm considers to be pro bono work;
- Who will approve the engagements and what type of information will need to be provided before a pro bono matter is accepted;
- Whether and how much billable, bonus or advancement credit will be given to pro bono matters;
- What type of support will be available on pro bono cases (e.g., expert fees); and
- What amount of pro bono work is expected of each attorney.

### III. Rolling Out the Program

Once your pro bono policy has been adopted, you must take steps to ensure that the program gets off to a good start. You should consider:

- Encouraging department leaders to lend their vocal support and encourage program participation, 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 manager of the program to cultivate and identify good opportunities for the firm, encourage participation, track involvement and promote successes;
- Partnering with one or more pro bono or legal aid agencies to pre-screen cases for your organization;
- Actively involving your legal staff in the program and encouraging them to spot worthy matters or causes for your firm to handle or support;
- Publicizing your pro bono program’s successes and linking the program with your organization’s marketing, recruiting and professional development efforts; and
- Participating in the legal community’s efforts to identify and share best pro bono practices.