

# PUBLICATION

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## Partner with Nonprofit Organizations to Offer Pro Bono Services Spanning Multiple Practice Areas

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**A nonprofit organization is defined as "a group organized for purposes other than generating profit and in which no part of the organization's income is distributed to its members, directors, or officers." (Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute**

**[https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/nonprofit\\_organizations](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/nonprofit_organizations)). Nonprofits are organized under their respective state laws and vary greatly in their missions. Most commonly, however, a nonprofit organization is driven by a dedication to a social cause. Examples of nonprofits include, but are not limited to, public charities, public clinics and hospitals, political organizations, legal aid societies, volunteer services organizations, labor unions, professional associations, and research institutes.**

### Types of Pro Bono Legal Services Nonprofits May Need

Just as individuals seek legal aid for a variety of reasons, the various types of pro bono services a nonprofit organization might need are limitless. Some of the pro bono services most commonly requested by nonprofit organizations are:

- forming a nonprofit organization,
- applying for tax-exempt status,
- drafting bylaws,
- analyzing governance of the organization,
- protecting and registering trademarks and other intellectual property,
- preparing employment contracts, and
- complying with fundraising regulations.

### Benefits of Partnering with Nonprofits

Partnering with a nonprofit organization can provide a law firm or in-house legal department, and thus a larger group of attorneys, with the ability to offer either short-term or ongoing legal services to one organization while developing a real connection with that organization. Nonprofit organizations, especially those just forming, often have a lot of questions about what the structure of the organization can look like, how to protect the organization's intellectual property, and how to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. These types of questions require the expertise and skills of attorneys with a range of experience, which affords the opportunity for more attorneys to be part of the pro bono team. Forming such a pro bono partnership also places the opportunity to participate in pro bono service within reach for many attorneys who may not have known how to get involved with pro bono service.

There are some pro bono centers and legal aid societies that can facilitate these partnerships, including the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center (<https://www.dcbbar.org/pro-bono/free-legal-help/help-for-nonprofits>) and the Pro Bono Partnership (<https://www.probonopartner.org/>). However, law firms and in-house legal departments can independently identify a nonprofit organization within their community, perhaps one that has a shared mission, and formulate a relationship by simply reaching out to the organization. Not only is this a great way to connect with an organization that has dedicated itself to a social cause, but it also allows law firms and in-house legal departments to create partnerships, offer legal services that span a variety of practice areas, and learn a great deal from the nonprofit organization along the way.

