

# Pro Bono Today:

## What's New, What's Working



Driving Social Change...



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# Acknowledgments

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## From the Desk of Linda B. Gornitsky, Ph.D. President, LBG Associates and Founder, LBG Research Institute

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In 2015, LBG Associates and LBG Research Institute published a report on pro bono called, “Balancing Pro Bono Supply and Demand: Challenges and Solutions from the Nonprofit Point of View.” The report helped corporations with active pro bono programs and those just getting started understand what nonprofits think about pro bono and what they need to succeed.

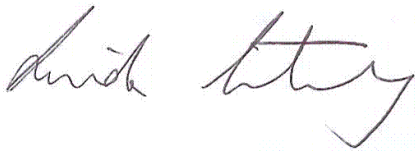
Since then, we’ve watched as pro bono programs have grown and changed. In framing this study, we sought to learn what was new in pro bono, or better yet, what was unique or innovative.

To that end, we solicited participation from companies with reputations for having solid pro bono programs—either companies we already knew or companies suggested by one of the pro bono intermediaries we contacted for their opinions.

As the research progressed, we discovered that while there wasn’t much we would define as “innovative,” pro bono has definitely grown and matured over the years. The companies we spoke to are always tweaking their programs—adding opportunities, involving more departments in the program, creating evaluation protocols and making other improvements. There is a lot to report on how these different programs operate and what contributes to their success.

The companies interviewed for this study represent a cross-section of ways to do pro bono. There is no one “right” way—rather it is what is right for that company, its employees and its communities.

We encourage you to share this research freely. And we’d love to hear your thoughts.



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# Executive Summary

## Types of Pro Bono Observed

We noted six basic types of pro bono volunteer opportunities among the companies interviewed. Some of them use more than one model to increase the number of employees who can volunteer:

1. Loaned Employees
2. On-Site Pro Bono Volunteers
3. Virtual Pro Bono
4. Open-Ended Consulting Relationship
5. Marathons
6. Skills-Based Volunteering

## Trends

In the course of the interviews for this study, a number of trends emerged that are moving the practice of pro bono forward:

### Increased Opportunities for Engagement

Among the companies interviewed, the majority run a pro bono program that offers multiple ways for employees to volunteer. They design a portfolio of programs so that more employees can participate and more nonprofits can be served.

### Companies Looking Inward

While some companies' pro bono programs started as ways to help nonprofit partners, more and more are focusing attention on the internal benefits of volunteering. If the internal and external benefits of pro bono were on two sides of a balance scale, today the scale seems to be tipping to a balance point—or even in favor of the internal benefits, particularly the benefits to employees.

### Stronger Connection with Human Resources

As the talent development aspects of pro bono volunteering have gained recognition, corporate citizenship and human resources teams have been joining forces, with citizenship running the nonprofit side and talent development the employee side.

### Deepening Strategic Partnerships

It's long been a best practice for companies to have a strategic partnership with at least one nonprofit. Pro bono is a way to deepen the relationship between the partners.

### Competing for Grants

Pro bono teams compete for grants that the nonprofit can use to implement the project that the team worked on or even for other projects. Participants report that the competitive aspect is an additional motivation for both volunteers and nonprofit staff to excel.

### Using Third Parties

Third parties, such as Taproot Foundation, Pro Bono Partnership, Bridgespan, Common Impact, Team4Tech, Catchafire and Pyxera Global, among others, are providing services that take some of the work of running a pro bono program off the citizenship staff.

## How We Define Pro Bono

*Pro bono volunteerism is the donation of professional services that utilize the professional and technical skills of the volunteer and for which the recipient nonprofit would otherwise have to pay. It gives nonprofits access to the business skills and experiences they need to develop and implement sound business strategies, increase their capabilities and improve their organizational infrastructure.*

## Increased Focus on Outcomes and Impact

Companies rely on surveys of both parties to understand the impact of the project. Employees are asked about their development goals and how they plan to use their enhanced skills in their jobs. Nonprofits are asked not only about their experience with the volunteer team, but also about the deliverable and implementation plans.

## Practices That Address Barriers to Pro Bono

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In our previous research on pro bono from the nonprofit point of view (see page 61) we asked the nonprofit participants about the challenges of taking on a pro bono volunteer. In this study, we asked both parties about the challenges—the corporation's challenges in running its pro bono program, and the nonprofit's challenge in working with that corporation's volunteers.

We were pleased to see that some of the solutions suggested in the earlier study are being implemented by many of the companies studied. These include:

Challenge #1: Getting Started With Pro Bono

Solution A: Offer Short-Term Opportunities

Solution B: Provide a Menu of Pre-Scoped Projects

Challenge #2: Finding the Time to Work With a Volunteer

Solution: Thorough Volunteer Preparation for an Intensive Engagement

Challenge #3: Funding the Implementation

Solution: Competitive Grants

## Elements of Success

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Following are the elements of success that the companies participating in the study shared :

1. Senior Management is Supportive and Involved
2. There is a Partnership with Human Resources/Talent Development
3. Volunteers Are Well-Prepared for the Engagement
4. The Amount of Time Volunteers Contribute is Well-Defined

## Conclusions

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The companies we interviewed are continually evaluating their pro bono programs to create connections between the company, its employees and nonprofits in the community for the benefit of all stakeholders.

How are companies improving their programs? In a number of ways:

- Expanding the opportunities for more employees to serve
- Setting development goals for employee volunteers
- Increasing their commitment to evaluation
- Using the expertise of intermediaries to vet nonprofits and scope projects
- Making it easier for nonprofits to take on pro bono volunteers

Pro bono is a powerful statement about a company's commitment to social purpose. The growth and evolution of pro bono programs is welcome news for employees and nonprofits alike, both of which benefit greatly from the pro bono experience. We expect that pro bono programs will continue to evolve, depending on the needs of the company and its employees, as well as the nonprofits being served. We also expect that the elements of success will continue to ring true and provide a valuable guide for any company beginning or expanding its pro bono programs.