

# Collaboration for organising your jurisdiction's pro bono week

## TOOLKIT 2: IDEAS FOR EVENTS & COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

This is a pilot document. Download the latest version at [ProBonoWeekCollaboration.org](https://ProBonoWeekCollaboration.org)

This document contains ideas for events and communications to encourage and support pro bono. We hope these will be useful for planning activities for your jurisdiction, though acknowledging that what works in one country will not necessarily be appropriate elsewhere.

Many of these events and communications can be used at different times of the year. Others such as an opening event are particularly intended for a pro bono day/week/month (which for convenience are referred to below simply as a "*pro bono week*").

Those arranging their first pro bono day week might want to start with just one or two activities.

We have split the ideas into the following categories which are addressed in turn:

- Volunteering related activities e.g. recruitment and training.
- Discussions, seminars and opening events.
- Activities to celebrate, recognise and encourage pro bono.
- Publications and research.
- Engagement with particular groups e.g. students, junior lawyers or Parliamentarians.
- Other communications activities such as articles, podcasts.
- Other event ideas.

Note that fundraising walks are addressed in a separate toolkit.

The document concludes with some links for more general resources about pro bono.

### **VOLUNTEERING RELATED ACTIVITIES**

#### **Pro bono clinics**

A pro bono week can be an opportunity to ask lawyers to volunteer to provide pro bono help either at existing clinics, or at a "pop up" temporary clinic.

Pro bono clinics may be different in each jurisdiction, but generally involve volunteer lawyers (and sometimes supervised law students) attending a location to deliver free legal advice to individuals, such as at the offices of a non-profit.

For example, pro bono clinics have taken place in Pro Bono Week in Lagos as organised by the [Public Interest Law Partnership](#), and in various places in the USA's [National Celebration of Pro Bono](#).

## **Pro bono fair or other recruitment drive**

You can communicate with potential new volunteers and offer them new opportunities at different clinics and projects. Recruitment events might include:

- Email and communications volunteering drive, with a central website with volunteering opportunities.
- In person pro bono fair, with stands showing different volunteering opportunities.
- Virtual pro bono fair, with a series of online presentations or pre-recorded videos from different pro bono programmes.
- Open houses at clinics.
- Road shows which move around a city or region featuring pro bono opportunities.
- Pro bono awareness lunches.

Examples include:

- Edinburgh University student [pro bono fair](#).
- Washington DC [Virtual Pro Bono Fair](#).
- Connecticut Bar Association Young Lawyers Section [Pro Bono Fair](#).

## **Training sessions / continuing education**

Organise training sessions for volunteer lawyers in areas of practice where there is a need for pro bono in your jurisdiction. The event can help recruit or retain volunteer lawyers, by educating them in areas of practice where pro bono help is needed.

In jurisdictions with continuing legal education (CLE) or professional development (CPD) requirements, lawyers may be attracted to attending if CLE/CPD credit is given.

Consider whether to hold in-person, online or hybrid.

Examples include:

- The USA's [Practising Law Institute session](#) "Representing the Pro Bono Client: Advocacy Skills for Administrative Hearings 2023".
- England & Wales' [LawWorks training sessions](#).

## **DISCUSSIONS, SEMINARS & LAUNCH EVENTS**

### **Opening or launch event**

Officially start your pro bono week with a centrally organised launch or opening event. This may offer a high-profile way to start your week, and a chance to bring together lawyers, and potentially others such as policy makers and the press.

Ideas you might include:

- Invite a leading, unifying figure in your jurisdiction (e.g. chief justice, attorney general or president of the bar association) to launch your pro bono week. They can give an address (or by pre-recording a welcome video) expressing thanks to lawyers for their pro bono.
- A panel discussion or set of speeches on the key theme for your pro bono week, or a pressing issue in your jurisdiction.
- Drinks reception to provide for networking, both to engage new people and to celebrate existing pro bono lawyers.

Top tips:

- Consider if you can secure a venue free of charge, particularly at a “neutral” venue e.g. a university, the court, the bar association offices. Ideally they can provide refreshments but if not, consider asking an organisation to sponsor them.
- Consider the best timing to attract busy lawyers, for example at breakfast, or the late afternoon or evening.
- Invite your existing volunteers, representatives of law firms, bar association/law society, legal academics, the press etc.
- Consider an online or hybrid format that live streams the presentations or panel discussion.

Examples of launch or opening events can be seen at:

- European Pro Bono Week’s opening event [agenda](#) and [video](#).
- UK Pro Bono Week launch [advert](#) and [video](#).
- Nigeria’s Public Interest Law Partnership [opening plenary](#).

## **Panel discussions / seminars / conferences or conventions**

Arrange presentations and discussion on the barriers, best practices or benefits of pro bono. These can be online, in person or hybrid.

There are many examples, including [European Pro Bono Week 2022](#), which saw panel discussions across Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Ukraine.

The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice and the Pro Bono Network of the Americas organized a [conference in Bogotá](#) to explore the future of pro bono in March 2023.

See also [Canada’s National Pro Bono Conference](#) hosted biennially by Access Pro Bono, Justice Quebec, Pro Bono Law Alberta, Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan and Pro Bono Ontario.

## **Planning sessions / roundtables / task forces**

Convene local or national representatives to share information and to strategize about developing pro bono or creating new partnerships.

Examples include those from the USA’s [Celebration of Pro Bono](#), and in the UK where [roundtable](#) events took place to discuss establishing regional pro bono committees.

## **CELEBRATING / RECOGNISING / ENCOURAGING PRO BONO**

Recognition the contribution of pro bono lawyers can be essential to encouraging new lawyers to volunteer and retaining existing pro bono lawyers. It can also result in publicity for a particular pro bono scheme or clearing house.

### **Pro bono awards**

Recognise individual lawyers, law firms and other organisations that have excelled in pro bono in the last year. In addition, specific awards for innovation or partnership working can help drive effective pro bono in the jurisdiction. Some pro bono awards are standalone awards, others are part of a pro bono week.

For example:

- [Law Society of New South Wales](#) awards.
- [New York's Pro Bono Awards](#).
- [TrustLaw's](#) international pro bono awards.
- [England & Wales Bar](#) Pro Bono Awards and [LawWork's](#) awards.
- Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice's [Michael Cooper Celebration of International Pro Bono Excellence](#)
- Pro Bono [Johannesburg Awards](#).
- Hungarian Pro Bono Award
- [Canada's](#) National Pro Bono Awards.

See also student awards below under *Law School Events*.

### **Volunteer recognition events**

the events can be an opportunity to invite all of your regular volunteers, or those who have volunteered over a certain level during the last year. They can be public events for lawyers across a jurisdiction, or internal events to recognise colleagues within an organisation. Events might include a speech of thanks from a judge or association president, whether at a lunch or reception etc. Some provide certificates of appreciation. For example:

- [Connecticut Bar Association's](#) Inaugural Pro Bono Volunteer Recognition Reception

### **Networking receptions / meals**

Many of the event listed in this toolkit can include a drinks reception, for example after panel discussion, or recognition ceremony. Lunches and dinners can also be used, and can be also be used as fundraisers.

Benefits of pro bono receptions and dinners may include:

- Providing networking opportunities.
- Attracting new volunteers.
- Sharing information informally.
- Facilitating stronger relationships.

Some examples from the USA are the [Pro Bono Institute's](#) annual dinner, the Pro Bono Project's [Justice for All Ball](#) and from Canada the National Pro Bono [Awards Banquet](#).

## Proclamations

Proclamations are congratulatory messages issued by government or judicial figures, such as a mayor, governor, chief justice, or even president!

For examples see the USA's Celebration of Pro Bono [proclamations page](#).

## Honour rolls / recognition rosters

Honour rolls and recognition rosters are online lists used in a number of jurisdictions to publicly recognise lawyers and/or law firms and other organisations for carrying out a certain amount of pro bono in a year. Chief justices are the patrons of a number of honour rolls.

Some rolls and rosters are announced at annual pro bono receptions, others are accompanied by communications such as a message from the relevant chief justice.

For example see:

- [Washington DC's](#) Pro Bono Honor Roll.
- [Illinois' Public Interest Law Initiative](#) Pro Bono Recognition Roster.
- [US Bankruptcy Court](#) Southern District of Indiana pro bono recognition.
- [The Law Society of Hong Kong's](#) pro bono and community recognition programme.

## Pro bono hours pledges / challenges / aspirational targets

Pro bono week is a good opportunity to highlight, or publish the results of, an aspirational target or challenge. In either case, the objective is to encourage lawyers and organisations to meet or exceed a certain level of pro bono hours per lawyer in a given year.

For instance, Advocate in England & Wales used Pro Bono Week 2022 to release a report on their 25 hours [pro bono pledge for barristers](#). Also, the UK Collaborative Plan for Pro Bono, a group of 60+ firms, releases [their stats on their aspirational 25 hours target](#).

Other targets /challenges / aspirational targets are not necessarily linked to a pro bono week, examples include:

- Australia's [National Pro Bono Target](#).
- The USA's Pro Bono Institute [Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge](#).
- Illinois [Pro Bono Pledge](#).
- Pro Bono Law [Saskatchewan's Pro Bono Pledge](#).
- Pro Bono Ontario's [Vision 100% A2J Leadership Circle](#).

## **Case-studies / inspiring stories**

Pro bono week is a chance to showcase inspiring examples of pro bono, whether by spotlighting individual lawyers, or pro bono initiatives and partnerships. These can be in the form of social media graphics, or short videos, in email newsletters, or articles in legal journals or other publications. Pro bono week can be a good time of these activities, but they can be used throughout the year.

For example:

- Australia's Pro Bono Day saw "[20 stories of change](#)" published in 2022 and in 2023 a collection of writings from [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers](#) from the pro bono community.
- The [North Carolina Bar Association](#) Pro Bono Committee featuring volunteer spotlights in their blog and other communications channels
- Many law firms in the USA and UK use their pro bono week to showcase examples of pro bono.

## **PUBLICATIONS / RESEARCH**

### **Launch initiatives or guides**

A pro bono week can be a good opportunity to publicly introduce a new pro bono clinic, initiative, partnership, website or guide. Having an annual pro bono week in the calendar can help provide a landmark across the year to help drive progress for the development and launch of initiatives.

For example, [Ireland's Pro Bono Week](#) in 2022 launched a Data Protection Guide for NGOs.

### **Survey the profession/non-profits**

Conduct a survey the legal profession about how much, or what pro bono they do, or that the barriers are to doing pro bono. Research can of course be carried out any time of the year but consider using a pro bono week as an opportunity to grab the attention of lawyers to complete a survey.

### **Publish reports or stats**

An annual pro bono week provides a staging post in the year to launch a publication containing research or recommendations for pro bono. For instance, to highlight the results of a survey of the legal profession.

See for example in Australia, [Justice Connect highlighting their research](#) on Australia's Pro Bono Day.

## **ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS**

Some of the above ideas may take the form of communications, media or other online activities, for example case studies; proclamations; rolls of honour. In addition, you might consider the following ideas to discuss and promote pro bono online whether during a pro bono week or at other times of the year.

### **Social media**

Pro bono week is an excellent opportunity for organisations to post on LinkedIn and social media outlets, including to:

- Thank all your volunteers
- Showcase a pro bono project or partnership
- Spotlight particular pro bono lawyers
- Share pro bono case studies / stories
- Recruit for new volunteers
- Highlight stats or research
- Promote blogs and articles about pro bono.

For example see the communications/social media toolkits from the [USA](#) and the [UK](#).

### **Podcasts / radio**

Podcasts can be a great way to discuss pro bono issues and to celebrate pro bono, as can getting interviewed on traditional radio programmes.

See for example: <https://www.probonoinst.org/category/podcast/>

### **Online videos**

Post videos on YouTube or other online video platforms to highlight the role of pro bono.

### **Blogs**

Post articles on your websites of a bar association, non-profit, law firm or other organisation.

### **Newsletters**

Use newsletters sent to the legal profession by bar associations, law societies and other organisations to highlight the need to volunteer, and to celebrate pro bono lawyers.

## **Media/press articles**

Engage with the press to highlight the role of pro bono and celebrate pro bono lawyers. This might encompass:

- Issuing press releases or media advisories to the media.
- Placing articles or op-eds with media outlets including legal publications.
- Letters to the editor.

## **ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTICULAR GROUPS**

A pro bono week can be an opportunity to engage with particular groups ranging from law students to senior lawyers to Parliamentarians.

### **Law schools / students**

Some law firms will use pro bono week to aid recruitment of students to work for the law firm.

Events at law school can also be a fantastic way to engage the future legal profession, and enthuse them with the pro bono ethos, whilst offering valuable experience. Activities can include many of the above examples, including:

*Pro bono fairs.* For example: Berkeley Law School Pro Bono Fair for New Students

*Pro bono awards.* For example, [National University of Singapore Pro Bono Awards](#) and [Pro Bono Students Canada's Awards](#).

### **Junior lawyers**

Equally, a pro bono week is a good opportunity to reach junior lawyers, including to explain the benefits to their careers of doing pro bono work.

For example, UK Pro Bono Week includes an annual panel debate and reception for [young lawyers](#).

Note also pro bono schemes to support junior lawyers include mentoring schemes that match junior lawyers with senior lawyers to work on cases, such as [Advocate's Collaborate scheme](#).

### **Senior / retired lawyers**

Another category of lawyers for engagement are senior lawyers or those who have retired. For example in the USA through [Emeritus Pro Bono](#) schemes, such as New York's [Attorney](#)



[Emeritus Program](#) and in Canada such as through the Law Society of Saskatchewan's [Pro Bono Membership](#).

Such schemes seek to encourage retired lawyers to volunteer through pro bono programmes, for example by lessening the licensing burden and/or by providing recognition to volunteers such as from the chief justice.

### **Parliamentary / government engagement events**

Finally, a pro bono week can be an opportunity to engage with members of the legislature, particularly those that undertake constituency surgery or services who need to understand the role of pro bono in their jurisdiction.

For example, the UK, there is an [annual meeting at Parliament](#) during Pro Bono Week that engages Members of Parliament on pro bono related issues.

### **OTHER EVENT IDEAS**

#### ***Art and other multidisciplinary events***

Invite stakeholders from other sectors to collaborate such as working with local artists to showcase topical public interest law issues through art form. See for example the [video of PIPL's 2021 Pro Bono Week](#) event.

#### ***Film screenings***

<https://www.probono.net/celebrateprobono/search/item.333049>

#### ***Pancakes for volunteers cooked by judges!***

<https://www.communitylegalaid.org/node/618/pancakes-pro-bono-volunteer-recognition-breakfast-warren>

#### ***Hackathon***

<https://probonoweek.org.uk/event/launch-of-trainee-hackathon-birmingham-law-society-pro-bono-committee>

### **GENERAL RESOURCES ABOUT PRO BONO**

<https://www.pilnet.org/our-work/resources/>

<https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/resources/>

<https://www.globalprobonohub.com/resource/guides.html>

<https://www.probonocentre.org.au/pro-bono-resources/>

<https://www.vancecenter.org/our-programs/pro-bono-promotion/>

<https://www.ibanet.org/unit/Section+on+Public+and+Professional+Interest/committee/Pro+Bono+Committee/3122>

## **YOUR IDEAS AND FEEDBACK**

We would love to hear from you with additional ideas, or additional web links or other resources that could help improve this toolkit. Please email [info@ProBonoWeekCollaboration.org](mailto:info@ProBonoWeekCollaboration.org)