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Pro Bono and Skilled Volunteers

It used to be that when a nonprofit was offered pro bono services, the nonprofit and volunteer navigated the process on their own. As a result, “pro bono” too often resulted in unintentional missed opportunities and dropped balls, and the reputation of pro bono services suffered. Now there is growing recognition that deployment of skilled volunteers through supportive programs and structures can be an effective strategy for nonprofit capacity building.

Pro bono support providers for nonprofits

There is a growing number of organizations dedicated to providing or coordinating pro bono assistance to nonprofits. Many of these organizations match skilled volunteers with a nonprofit’s project combined with ongoing support before, during, and after a project’s completion to ensure a successful outcome for both volunteer and nonprofit.

Supportive pro bono programs are designed to screen and match so that the pro bono volunteer has the requisite skills and experience needed for the specific project at hand, and similarly that the nonprofit “tees up” the project appropriately for the volunteer.

Ideally, the support organization also makes sure that any nuances peculiar to the nonprofit’s particular environment are explained to the skilled volunteer, who often

is well-qualified but sometimes more experienced working in a for-profit environment.

Pro bono support programs also work to ensure that the pro bono project is completed in a timely manner, and that the end result is satisfactory for the nonprofit. The entire process provides accountability, because both the nonprofit and volunteer have an advocate, and complaint mechanisms are available if there are challenges along the way.

Where to find pro bono assistance or volunteer opportunities

Charitable nonprofits now have many ways to find skilled volunteers. One place to start is your [state association of nonprofits](#). Other local organizations such as United Way, community foundations, or your [regional association of grantmakers](#) may also be able to refer you to an appropriate pro bono program that serves nonprofits.

[Taproot Foundation's Taproot Plus](#) platform matches nonprofits with pro bono marketing, IT, HR, operations, strategy, and finance resources. Taproot Plus is free to use and accessible to all US-based nonprofits and fiscally sponsored social good organizations. Organizations request support through multi-week, in-depth projects where your volunteer completes a specific deliverable or one-hour virtual consultation calls for advice and brainstorming from a subject matter expert. The Taproot platform will help you recruit, interview, and manage your skilled volunteer partners, and Taproot's staff are available for any questions or coaching.

Regional and national supported pro bono programs include:

- [Catchafire](#)
- [Common Impact](#)
- [Taproot Foundation](#)

Legal pro bono providers

For pro bono legal assistance, some nonprofits are fortunate to have relationships with local attorneys or law firms. One way to locate firms that may offer pro bono assistance to tax-exempt organizations is to check with your state bar association or

consult [this list of programs](#).

Additional Resources

- [Powered by Pro Bono: The Nonprofit's Step-by-Step Guide to Scoping, Securing, Scaling, and Managing Pro Bono Resources](#) (book from the Taproot Foundation)
- Prepare your nonprofit for success with pro bono and skilled volunteers with an [Organizational Readiness Assessment](#) (Capacity Commons)
- [Skilled Volunteering 101: Is your organization ready to engage?](#) (Common Impact)

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