

NYLPI Pro Bono Clearinghouse Application for New Nonprofits

Before You Apply!

About us

For more than three decades, NYLPI's Pro Bono Clearinghouse has helped nonprofit organizations with their legal needs by matching them with the formidable skills of attorneys at New York's largest law firms and corporate legal departments. These pro bono matches ensure that organizations in need receive critical legal assistance and allow volunteer attorneys receive assignments that enhance their skills and connect them with work that matters.

The work we do is both litigation and transactional, and the groups we serve focus on housing, health care, education, youth and much more. In our most successful matches, the relationship between a law firm and a nonprofit client continues long after NYLPI makes a connection.

Who We Help

To qualify for legal assistance, the Pro Bono Clearinghouse requires new organizations to demonstrate strength and viability in three key areas: 1) *finances*; 2) *mission and programming*; 3) *governance, management and staffing*. By working with groups that demonstrate organizational sustainability, NYLPI can ensure that the clients we match are ready to receive legal help and can make the most out of the client-attorney relationship we create. It also ensures that attorneys have the chance to contribute to an organization that is positioned for success.

In accordance with our mission, we generally work with organizations that help under-served people or communities.

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Self-Assessment

If you are unsure about the viability of your organization, consider the following questions. These are some of the same questions we will be asking as we review your application.

Finances

- Can your organization provide a budget that details revenues and expenditures over the course of at least 3 years?
- Is your organization's financial plan realistic?
- Has your group given thorough consideration to potential funding sources?
- How does your group plan on raising money or obtaining resources for its activities?
- Does your group currently have any funding or access to resources?
- Do all people involved in your organization understand and agree that it has a not-for-profit purpose, and that all of the funds will go back into the organization?

Mission and Programming

- Does your group have a clear, defined mission and purpose?
- Is there a genuine need for the establishment of a new nonprofit? Will your organization duplicate an existing program or service?
- Will your proposed nonprofit programs or services have a community benefit? Will your group be providing activities, programs or services to the public generally, to a targeted group of the public or only to members of the organization?
- Is there a group of people who are interested in starting and committed to developing your organization? (not just an individual)
- Does your organization have a network of support that it can turn to for expertise, guidance or advice?

Governance/Management/ Staffing

- Does everyone involved with your group agree on the overall aim or purpose of the organization?
- Does anyone on your board or staff have experience in nonprofit governance or management?
- What decision-making structures does your organization have in place?
- How will your group be managed or run on a day-to-day basis? Are the responsibilities and roles of board members clearly defined? Staff?

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Application

The Pro Bono Clearinghouse requires applicants to submit a formal, written request for legal services. The proposal should provide details in each of the key areas listed below. While you are not required to answer each individual (previously listed) self-assessment question, applicants should demonstrate that they have been given thorough consideration to each one.

Mission and Programming

- The organization's mission statement.
- A description of the organization's proposed or actual programs, activities, and services. At minimum, this section should answer the following questions: What programs or services will your organization provide? Who will your programs serve? Where will they be offered? What are the organizations long- and short-term goals?

It is important to provide as much detail as possible.

Finances: Budget and Fundraising

If you are already operating, please provide:

- A budget detailing revenues and expenses for the past 3 years, or all years of existence if the organization is younger than 3 years.
- Details on your fiscal agent/sponsor, if applicable. Provide the agent's name and contact information. We will not contact them without your permission.
- A detailed fundraising plan for the next fiscal year. Where will donations come from? Will you solicit grants? How much do you expect to receive from each source?

If you have not yet begun operations, please provide:

- A three-year projected budget for the organization. Your budget should include a detailed breakdown of anticipated or actual revenues, as well as expenses.
- A detailed fundraising plan. Where will or have revenues come from? Will you solicit grants? How much do you expect to receive from each source?

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Governance

- A list of at least 3 initial officers for the organization's Board of Directors. Include their names and addresses.
- A mailing address, phone number, email address and website (if applicable) for the organization.
- A phone number and email address for the organization's primary contact person.

Management and Staffing

- A list of staff members and their titles, if different from the board.

Description of Legal Need

- A statement of your legal request, describing the kind of legal assistance you are seeking from a pro bono attorney. Include any legal assistance you anticipate needing in the future. Also include other avenues you have considered as an alternative to formation (i.e., fiscal sponsorship, partnerships, joining a similar cause, etc.) and an explanation of why you have chosen to form a new entity.

Please note that your request cannot be processed until all the information requested above is provided in sufficient detail. You may submit your request to mberk@nylpi.org to the attention of **Marnie Berk**.

After receiving your written request, you will receive an email confirmation. We may have additional questions that you will be required to answer before we can proceed with your request.

If you have any questions, please email **Marnie Berk** at mberk@nylpi.org.

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