



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ESTABLISHING OR
JOINING AN EXISTING PRO BONO PROGRAMME

Singapore In-house Legal Counsel **Pro Bono Guide**



Contents

Introduction	3	Am I covered for pro bono work?	9
Foreword: Access to Justice – A Shared Commitment to a Just Society	4	How do I establish a pro bono programme or project?	10
Foreword: In-house counsel – Important role in creating better corporations and better communities	5	Example of in-house pro bono programmes.....	12
What is pro bono legal assistance?	6	Partnering opportunities	14
In-house counsel, pro bono legal assistance and Singapore law	7	For more information	16
		Appendix working with PBSG	17

Introduction



A robust pro bono culture is a critical piece of puzzle in the legal system that gives effective access to justice and safeguards equality.

Pro bono services provide timely and most-needed assistance to the most vulnerable people in the community. Charitable and community organisations also benefit from pro bono legal services to prepare law and policy reforms for the betterment of all. After years of development and promotion, the society expects the legal community to organise and manage pro bono services in a more scientific and systematic manner. Rather than seeing it as some simple volunteer opportunities, the legal community is expected to invest more in high-impact pro bono assistance, including driving systemic change. In addition to the positive externality, working on pro bono projects will also benefit the professional growth of lawyers and enhance the reputation and public image of their employers. The rise of awareness of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) also helps members of the corporate sector spur and motivate each other to contribute to the sustainable development of the community.

There is great potential for utilising in-house legal counsel to increase the volume, width and depth of the pro bono services that can be provided to the marginalised community. In addition to crucial legal drafting, research, commercial and presentation skills, many in-house counsel have expertise in areas such as contract law, employment arrangements, legal and business structures, property and leasing, risk management, insurance and intellectual property. These issues are typically in-demand legal services for charitable and community organisations. Further, the core legal skills of in-house counsel could be

utilised to assist disadvantaged individuals in resolving their disputes or to run community training to increase legal knowledge.

It is a global trend that more in-house legal counsel are involved in pro bono work. For example, Australia has an annual 20-hour aspirational pro bono target that in-house lawyers can sign up to. The Pro Bono Institute in America also runs a Corporate Pro Bono Challenge where Chief Legal Officers commit to supporting at least half of their legal staff to participate in Pro Bono each year.

DLA Piper, Pro Bono SG and SCCA Pro Bono Chapter collaborate in this next edition of the Singapore In-house Legal Counsel Pro Bono Guide (“the Guide”). Our collective mission is to clearly articulate the business case for companies to establish a pro bono programme, and provide considerations and useful tips for in-house legal teams to help them develop their own programmes.

In 12 months’ time when we, Pro Bono SG and SCCA Pro Bono Chapter look back at what has been achieved for vulnerable clients in Singapore, we hope that more Singapore-based in-house legal counsel have taken up that challenge, becoming key players in the community’s pro bono efforts and advancing social impact. Together, we can all reduce the justice gap.

Catriona Martin

Pro Bono Partner
DLA Piper

Foreword: Access to Justice – A Shared Commitment to a Just Society

Chairman, Pro Bono SG



As members of the legal profession, we hold a profound privilege and duty: to safeguard justice and promote equal access to the law. Yet, for countless individuals and communities, quality legal assistance remains a distant hope, constrained by financial barriers. This is where pro bono service becomes not just a choice but an ethical calling—one that underscores the core values of our profession.

This Guide is designed to inspire and empower in-house counsels to integrate pro bono into their practice. It provides practical strategies and insights to help you leverage your expertise and resources to bridge the justice gap. By doing so, you not only uphold the principles of justice but also enrich your professional journey and contribute to a fairer, more inclusive society.

In-house legal teams occupy a unique space at the intersection of corporate influence and community impact. Their capacity to drive change through pro bono initiatives is immense—whether by supporting vulnerable individuals, advising charities on regulatory challenges, or championing broader systemic reform. Each contribution, no matter the scale, strengthens the social fabric and reinforces the rule of law.

Pro bono engagement is transformative, not only for those served but also for those who serve. It deepens legal acumen, builds empathy, and fosters a culture of purpose and service within organizations. For junior lawyers, it is an unparalleled opportunity to develop skills; for seasoned practitioners, it is a chance to apply expertise in meaningful ways. For organizations, it cultivates a sense of shared mission and societal responsibility.

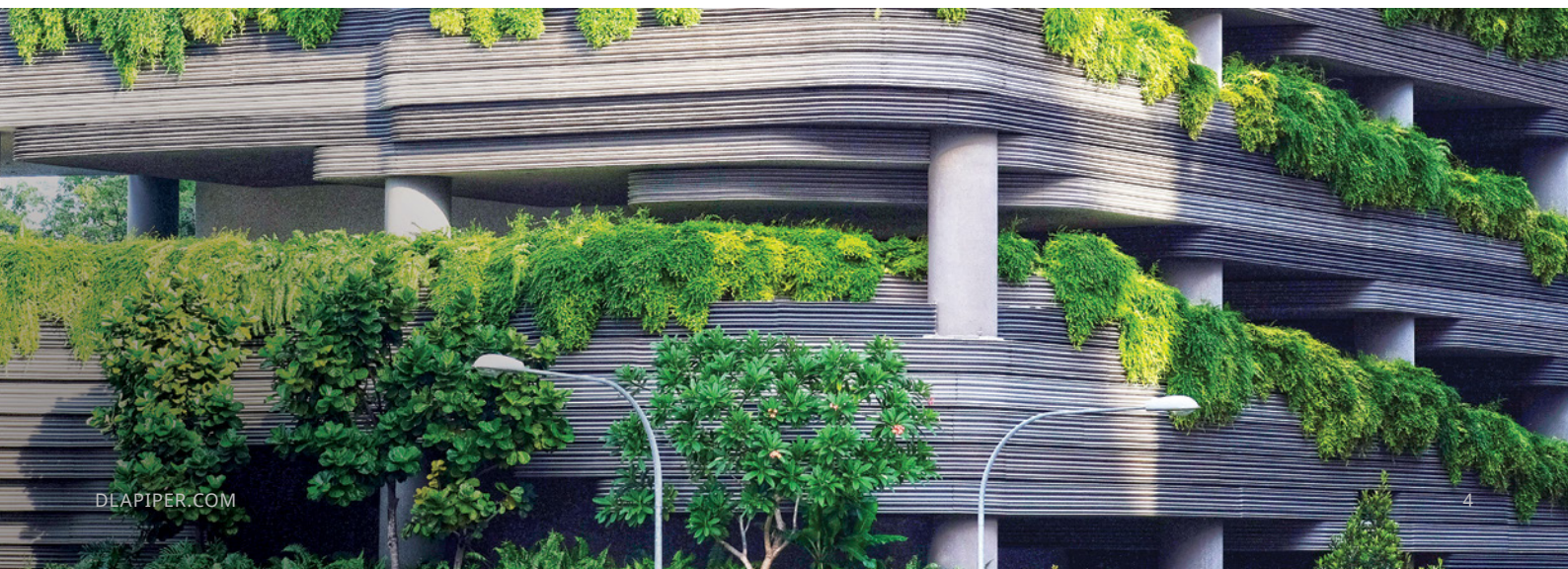
As our former President of the Law Society of Singapore, Adrian Tan said, “When you leave this world, if you have connected with other human beings, told their stories, and enriched society, you will have lived a life of meaning. The goal is not to seek happiness for ourselves, but to provide it to others. That is a life of service, and I commend it to you.” Pro bono work is not only a testament to professional excellence but also a pathway to a legacy of impact, meaning and purpose through service.

Let this Guide be your companion in shaping a robust pro bono practice. Together, we can make justice not a privilege of the few but a fundamental right for all.

It is apt that we launch this Guide during Pro Bono Weeks Singapore, where we raise awareness about pro bono, inspiring others to become interested too and highlighting the outstanding work of volunteers for the disadvantaged and marginalised in our community.

Dinesh Dhillon

Chairman
Pro Bono SG



Foreword: In-house counsel – Important role in creating better corporations and better communities

Chair, Singapore Corporate Counsel Association, Pro Bono Chapter



In line with SCCA's vision of better counsel, better corporations, better communities, SCCA had been encouraging its members to give back to society over the years. Singapore in-house counsel community has come a long way in its pro bono journey.

In the past, lawyers without practicing certificates (including in-house counsel) were limited in their ability to provide pro bono legal services though they were eager to use their legal expertise and experience to give back to the community. That changed with the Legal Profession (Pro Bono Legal Services) Rules 2013. In conjunction with this, DLA Piper, Pro Bono SG and SCCA launched the Singapore In-House Legal Counsel Pro Bono Guide in 2016 to explain the 2013 rules and to be a useful reference for in-house counsels who wish to do pro bono work.

In 2020, SCCA Pro Bono Chapter was established with the objective of encouraging volunteerism among in-house counsel and to create opportunities for them to do so. SCCA Pro Bono Chapter has since organized a wide array of volunteering activities for Singapore qualified and non-Singapore qualified lawyers.

In 2024, SCCA Pro Bono Chapter launched the HOPE award to recognize outstanding legal departments for their volunteerism and how they encouraged their companies to be better corporate citizens and in turn make Singapore a city of good.

This year in 2025, as we commemorate Singapore's 60th birthday, it is an opportunity to reflect on our journey and how we can create a positive impact on the community and leave a lasting legacy of giving. We hope that this updated guide will continue to not only be a useful reference but to also inspire in-house counsel that they can make a positive difference with a showcase of the HOPE Award 2024 winner and finalist stories.

Serene Gan

Chair
Singapore Corporate Counsel Association
Pro Bono Chapter



What is pro bono legal assistance?

Why set up a pro bono programme?

As lawyers we have a privileged position in society. That privilege is the ability to provide legal advice and representation. With that privilege comes important responsibilities to ensure that everyone is able to access legal advice and to contribute to the administration of justice.

Pro bono helps protect equality and access to justice in the legal system. It ensures those who cannot afford legal assistance or are not covered by the legal aid system can obtain legal services. They are usually from marginalised and underprivileged communities as well as those who do public goods, such as charitable and community organisations. It also supports law and policy reforms for the betterment of all.

Lawyers nowadays see pro bono work as more than their moral duty to uphold access to justice and contribute back to one's local community. They consider pro bono work as an integral part of their practice. Taking up pro bono requests gives lawyers professional development opportunities, such as strengthening skills in client and matter management, interviewing, legal research and drafting. It also expands lawyers' professional networks and opens the door for lawyers to build expertise in new and emerging legal areas outside their usual practice areas.

To the law firms and the corporates, pro bono has become a key component of their social impact strategy and measured as part of Environmental, Social and Governance ("ESG") frameworks. As in-house legal departments grow in size and sophistication, a properly designed and structured pro bono programme with a clear vision and mission significantly enhances the ability of in-house lawyers to do good for the community.

Pro bono defined

"Pro bono" is a short form of the Latin phrase, "pro bono publico" which translates to "for the public good". Pro bono legal work is the provision of legal assistance and advice without fee, or expectation of a fee in situations where:

- (i) the client has no other access to the courts or legal system, and/or the client's case raises a wider issue of public interest;
- (ii) the work involves free community legal education or law reform;
- (iii) legal training workshops are organised to strengthen legal knowledge or skills of charitable and community organisations or marginalised communities; or
- (iv) the advice and assistance are to an institution of public character, such as charitable and community organisations.

Ultimately, the objective of pro bono work is to bring free legal assistance to those in need in the community.

For clarity, there is a distinction between pro bono legal work and other forms volunteering that lawyers may undertake e.g. sitting as a director on a not-for-profit board, mentoring junior lawyers or giving career talks. These volunteering activities are not examples of pro bono legal work as they do not involve the provision of legal advice or legal assistance. It is only pro bono legal work that is caught by the Legal Profession Act 1966 and requires lawyers to satisfy the eligibility criteria as described in the next section.

The business case for in-house pro bono programmes

While pro bono work should always be undertaken for the benefit of the clients and/or the community, investment in pro bono may deliver business benefits to your organisation. The business case for pro bono includes:

- Pro bono can be a means for a company to make social impacts by using the legal skills of in-house teams to improve outcomes in local communities, and often then, a stronger business environment. Integrating pro bono legal services into the ESG strategies can create a practice in which a company takes actions to benefit the community and itself.
- Pro bono helps recruit and retain talents. Making commitments on pro bono demonstrates a socially minded corporate culture and employee value proposition. Such positivity helps attract engaged and like-minded talents who are also willing to contribute and be passionate to others.
- Pro bono supports the professional development of the in-house counsel. Pro bono projects provide opportunities for in-house counsel to develop and enhance their professional skills. For example, in-house counsel can build their legal knowledge through advising a charitable and community organisation in a new area of law.
- Pro bono helps broaden in-house legal counsel's professional relationships and networks with external peers. It is an effective way of generating positive public relations and showcasing a legal department's unique expertise.

For the avoidance of doubt, pro bono legal work can only be done under the name of the individual who fulfills the eligibility requirements as described in the next section. As your company is not a registered law firm, it cannot hold itself out as providing pro bono legal services under its name.

In-house counsel, pro bono legal assistance and Singapore law

This Guide seeks to highlight to in-house counsel the options for pro bono legal assistance available to them in Singapore's legal community and under Singapore laws and regulations.

The Guide will take you through the regulations around pro bono legal work, in-house counsel liabilities, and policy and procedural considerations in establishing, running and ensuring the longevity of pro bono legal programmes for in-house legal departments. It also discusses the opportunities open to individual in-house lawyers who wish to undertake pro bono legal work independent of their employers. Case studies are provided for explanatory purposes only and should be used as a guide, not a template, because each assignment undertaken either by departments or individuals will require unique input contingent on its merit, purpose, and goal.

Am I eligible to provide assistance?

The types of pro bono work you can engage in will depend, however, on whether you are a Singapore qualified lawyer ("**SQL**") or foreign qualified lawyer. Lawyers qualified in Singapore who do not hold a current practising certificate can provide pro bono legal services under limited circumstances.

Until 2013, SQLs without a practising certificate, including in-house counsel, were limited in their ability to provide legal advice or representation on a pro bono basis. Pro bono legal work was mainly limited to supporting lawyers with a practising certificate, or undertaking research or legal education activities. However, 2013 additions to the rules relating to legal practice in Singapore have meant that there is now a much greater opportunity for SQL in-house counsel to be involved in pro bono work. Opportunities include providing research support to practitioners, providing legal guidance to needy applicants and helping with drafting accessible bite size legal content.

The relevant legislation is the *Legal Profession Act 1966* which has been in effect since 1967. It was amended in 2013 to give the Minister for Law the power to make rules to allow persons without a practising certificate to provide legal advice in certain circumstances. The Minister subsequently introduced rules governing pro bono legal assistance for lawyers without a practising certificate, through the *Legal Profession (Pro Bono Legal Services) Rules 2013* which came into operation in 2013.

The legislative changes mean that SQLs who do not hold a practising certificate can provide "permitted" pro bono legal services, including providing pro bono assistance:

- (a) to any scheme administered by the Law Society of Singapore or the subordinate courts;
- (b) to, or for the benefit of, a charity, an institution of a public character or a welfare organisation.

Excluded from "permitted" pro bono legal services includes (i) appearing or pleading in any court of justice in Singapore, or (ii) appearing in any hearing before a quasi-judicial or regulatory body, authority or tribunal in Singapore, and which are not provided for or in expectation of any fee, gain or reward.

While the above-described changes do not extend to foreign qualified lawyers, this does not mean that foreign qualified lawyers cannot participate in pro bono activities in Singapore. Research projects, legal education opportunities or assisting locally qualified lawyers by acting as an interpreter, for example, are all possible options for foreign qualified lawyers that can be of invaluable assistance for many clients requiring pro bono legal assistance.

The Legal Profession Act 1966 and Legal Profession (Pro Bono Legal Services) Rules 2013

The relevant sections of the *Legal Profession Act 1966* ("Act") and the *Legal Profession (Pro Bono Legal Services) Rules 2013* ("Rules") are outlined below. However, note that the general sections of the Act and Rules still apply and the below extracts should not be considered in a vacuum.

Under the Act and Rules, in-house counsel in Singapore fall into two categories:

- (a) Singapore-qualified lawyers who do not hold a practising certificate ("**SQL without PCs**"), and;
- (b) Non-Singapore-qualified lawyers ("**all other in-house counsel**").

Under the Act, both SQL without PCs, and all other in-house counsel, are considered to be "unauthorised persons" for the purposes of the Act.

Under section 32(2) of the Act, a person is an “unauthorised person” if —

- (a) His name is not on the roll of advocates and solicitors;
- (b) He does not have in force a practising certificate;
- (c) His name is not on the roll of lawyers (non-practitioner **(NP)**);
- (d) He does not have in force a provisional practising certificate; or
- (e) When carrying out the act in question, he is not under the supervision of a solicitor.

In addition, section 32(3) of the Act also notes a person is an “unauthorised person” if, being an advocate and solicitor who practises in a Joint Law Venture or its constituent foreign law practice, a Qualifying Foreign Law Practice or a licensed foreign law practice, he practises Singapore law otherwise than in accordance with Part 4A and any rules made under section 36M.

Section 32 is read in conjunction with Section 33 of the Act, which established the penalties for practising law as an “unauthorised person”:

Section 33 — (I) Any unauthorised person who —

- (a) acts as an advocate or a solicitor or an agent for any party to proceedings, or, as such advocate, solicitor or agent —
 - (i) sues out any writ, summons or process;
 - (ii) commences, carries on, solicits or defends any action, suit or other proceeding in the name of any other person, or in his own name, in any of the courts in Singapore; or
 - (iii) draws or prepares any document or instrument relating to any proceeding in the courts in Singapore; or
- (b) willfully or falsely pretends to be, or takes or uses any name, title, addition or description implying that he is duly qualified or authorised to act as an advocate or a solicitor, or that he is recognised by law as so qualified or authorised, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding SGD25,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to both and, in the case of a second or subsequent conviction, to a fine not exceeding SGD50,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (I), any unauthorised person who, directly or indirectly —
 - (a) draws or prepares any document or instrument relating to any movable or immovable property or to any legal proceeding;
 - (b) takes instructions for or draws or prepares any papers on which to found or oppose a grant of probate or letters of administration;
 - (c) *(Deleted by Act 8/2011 wef 03/05/2011)*

- (d) on behalf of a claimant or person alleging himself to have a claim to a legal right writes, publishes or sends a letter or notice threatening legal proceedings other than a letter or notice that the matter will be handed to a solicitor for legal proceedings; or
- (e) solicits the right to negotiate, or negotiates in any way for the settlement of, or settles, any claim arising out of personal injury or death founded upon a legal right or otherwise;

shall, unless he or she proves that the act was not done for or in expectation of any fee, gain or reward, be guilty of an offence.

- (3) Any unauthorised person who, for or in expectation of any fee, gain or reward, offers or agrees to place at the disposal of any other person the services of an advocate and solicitor shall be guilty of an offence.

(See also Sections 33(4) to 33(10)).

Section 33 of the Act limits the actions of both SQL without PCs, foreign lawyers without PCs and all other in-house counsel. However, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 34(2) of the Act, the Minister for Law implemented the Rules in November of 2013. These Rules, most notably Rule 3, have created exceptions to allow SQL without PCs to engage in pro bono work under certain circumstances:

Rule 3 — Section 33 of the Act does not extend to any non-practising solicitor in respect only of his provision of any permitted pro bono legal services in any of the following circumstances:

- (a) the services are provided under any scheme administered by either or both of the following:
 - (i) the Society; (The Law Society of Singapore)
 - (ii) the State Courts referred to in section 3(1) of the State Courts Act 1970
 - (iii) the Family Justice Courts referred to in section 3 of the Family Justice Act 2014;
- (b) the services are provided directly to, or for the benefit of, any charity registered or exempt from registration under the Charities Act 1994;
- (c) the services are provided directly to, or for the benefit of, any institution of a public character;
- (d) the services are provided directly to, or for the benefit of, any voluntary welfare organisation which is granted membership of the National Council of Social Services under section 15 of the National Council of Social Service Act 1992

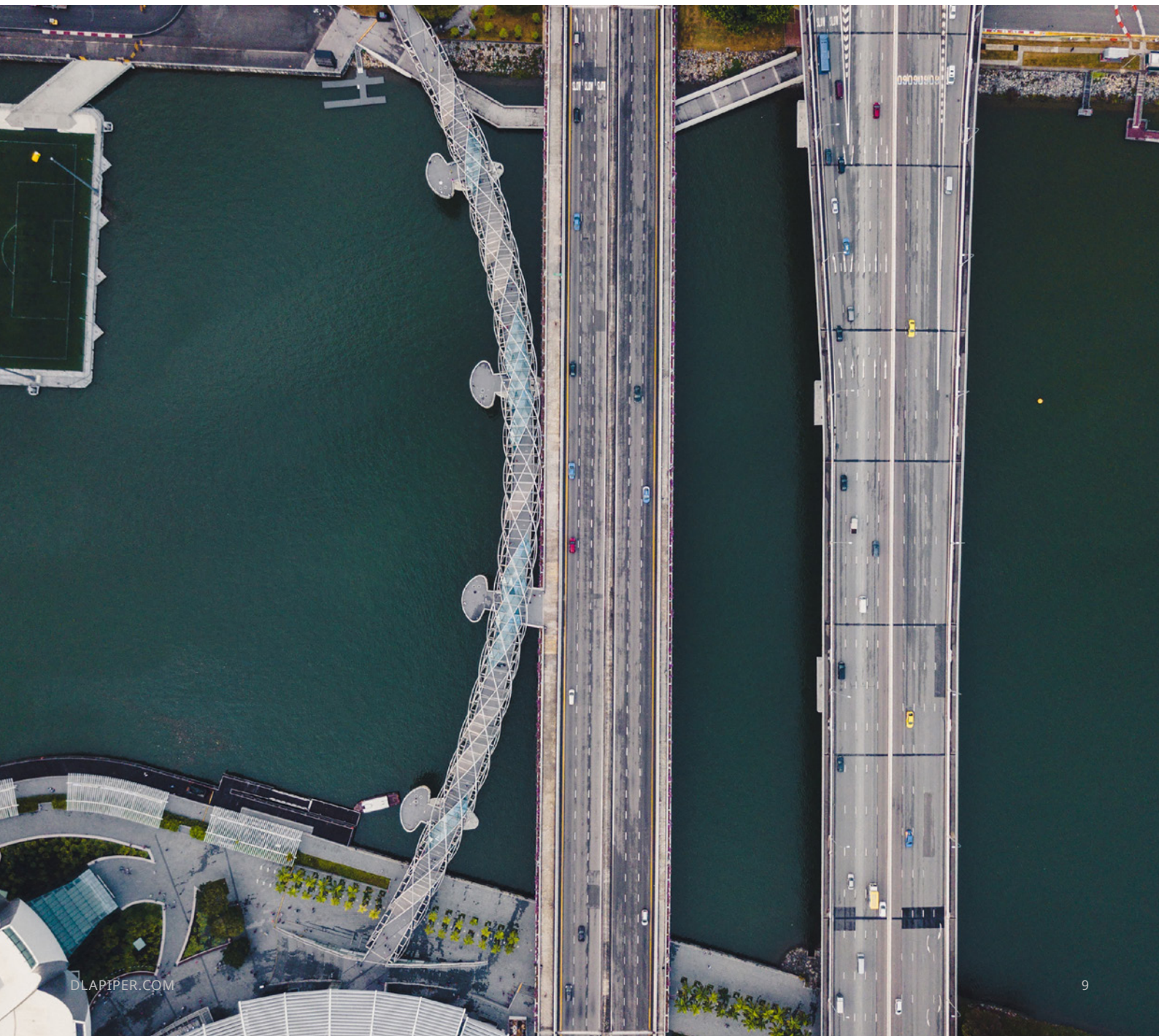
As a “non-practising solicitor” constitutes “any solicitor who does not have in force a practising certificate”, this exception allows SQLs without PCs to advise on pro bono matters on behalf of charities, institutions of public character or organised through the Law Society of Singapore’s programmes. However, this exception does not extend to all other in-house counsel (i.e. foreign qualified lawyers).

Am I covered for pro bono work?

Prior to under-taking any pro bono work, it is prudent for lawyers working in-house to put in place appropriate professional indemnity ("PI") cover in place. This is to provide peace of mind to not only the lawyers but also to the clients to know that the lawyer providing advice is insured.

While law firms will generally have PI cover in place, the same is not necessarily the case for in-house counsel. There are a number of options available to ensure you are adequately covered:

1. Pro Bono SG's ("PBSG") insurance will cover any natural person acting in a voluntary capacity on behalf of PBSG and at the specific direction of PBSG. This means pro bono services provided under PBSG's programmes are covered by PBSG's insurance.
2. Request your company to take out PI insurance to cover legal work provided by you on a pro bono basis. As pro bono service can be an important aspect of a business's social commitment, this may be something that your company is willing to do. For a list of insurance providers who may be able to cover pro bono legal work, please contact PBSG.
3. Collaborate with a law firm whose PI insurance covers work done by volunteers with whom they collaborate. Not all law firms will have extended their PI coverage so you will need to discuss this with the law firms you work with.



How do I establish a pro bono programme or project?

Key factors to consider before embarking on the pro bono journey

Before establishing a pro bono project it is important to consider the following:

- Is there institutional support for pro bono within the legal department and within the organisation generally? The ideal case is to have organisational support from senior management or a senior member to champion pro bono initiatives. Endorsement from the highest level is an effective tool to promote pro bono culture and encourage colleagues to volunteer. If not, it will be important to address the lack of internal support before establishing a pro bono project. At a minimum, you will require the support of the lawyers who will be involved in the pro bono project. From a client service delivery perspective, it is important that the lawyers participating in the delivery of pro bono services are doing so voluntarily. Survey can be a useful tool to find out your colleagues' availability, experience, intended commitment and interest.
- It is helpful to conduct research to identify the unmet legal needs in the community which may require pro bono assistance. The easiest way to do this is to have discussions with charitable and community organisations who are providing frontline services to vulnerable people. Questions should be asked about the frequency of problems in the legal area, the degree to which affected people recognise that there may be a legal response available to their problem generally or the relative seriousness of the problem for an affected person or group.
- It can be helpful to stocktake the skills that exist in the legal team and see if those skills can be matched to an identified legal need in the community. Depending on the interests of the legal team and the legal needs in the community, the lawyers may be interested in developing new or further skills in particular areas of the law. If your team do not have the skills to work on a preferred topic or type of projects, you should arrange appropriate training for the in-house legal team or to partner with an appropriate law firm. In addition, consideration should be given to the prevailing rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services as set out above.

- Finally, you should consider the financial and other resources your organisation is willing to invest. Different pro bono programmes require different levels of time, skill and financial investment. Setting targets and timeframe for periodic reviews will help your organisation to evaluate the impact of the pro bono work and keep track of the contribution.

Utilising Pro Bono SG, SCCA Pro Bono Chapter and other organisations to build pro bono partnership

You, or people in your organisation, may already have a connection with charitable and community organisations that may require legal assistance. Many successful pro bono projects are partnerships between PBSG, SCCA Pro Bono Chapter and community-based organisations working on the ground. You can reach out to PBSG and SCCA Pro Bono Chapter to participate in their volunteering opportunities. Most pro bono matters and programs in Singapore require participating lawyers to be qualified to practice Singapore law, and as noted above, no person may practice Singapore law without a practicing certificate, subject to the exemption for specified pro bono legal services under the Pro Bono Exemption Rules.

Partnering with your law firms

In addition, law firms that your organisation works with may already have a well-organised pro bono practice and long-term partnership with various charitable and community organisations that may need additional legal assistance. You can see if your in-house legal team can join their existing projects. For example, DLA Piper has, in recent years, partnered with a number of in-house lawyers to conduct comparative legal research and organise legal education programmes for various charitable organisations and marginalised communities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Collaboration is a key ingredient to undertaking successful pro bono work. More information can be found in the section 'Partnering Opportunities'.

What will it cost?

It is often the case that work carried out on a Pro Bono basis requires a small financial investment in addition to an investment of time and expertise. The types of expenses can include travel costs to and from client appointments or community organisations and small disbursements on pro bono matters such as copying costs, filing fees, etc. The costs will depend upon the nature of the project or the matters that you undertake.

Even though costs are likely to be minimal, it is important to understand the extent to which your organisation is able to provide funding to facilitate pro bono work. This may impact the types of matters that you are able to take on.

If you are working with a law firm, they may be willing to bear some of the costs. It is a good idea to ask whether this is a possibility at the outset, as this promotes clarity and may increase the amount of pro bono support your organisation is willing to provide.

Formalising the engagement

Although you will be acting on a pro bono basis, it is still important to enter into a retainer with the client which sets out the terms on which you will act if you happen to act directly for the pro bono client. You should make clear the areas which are excluded from the scope of services. Establishing the scope clearly and imposing a limit on liability are important to manage risk.

The retainer should make clear that no costs will be charged, except (where applicable) any third-party disbursements. It is important to ensure the retainer complies with requirements in your local jurisdiction (if you are based outside of Singapore). It is also important to ensure the retainer is drafted in plain, easy to understand language, and is explained to the client, so that they understand the terms on which you are acting. This document should be tailored to suit individual circumstances.

Amongst other things, the retainer should include details of the process by which a pro bono client may make a complaint against a lawyer. It is also advisable to set out the circumstances in which the lawyer may make a decision to cease to act for the pro bono client.

Regulatory and compliance issues

When performing pro bono work, lawyers are required to comply with all regulations applicable in Singapore. The information in this section details some of the key compliance issues which must be considered prior to commencing work on a pro bono project. The information contained in this Guide is not exhaustive, and in-house counsel engaging in legal work on a pro bono basis should contact PBSG, SCCA Pro Bono Chapter, DLA Piper or your legal advisors for further information.

Corresponding with pro bono clients

Communications with pro bono clients should be tailored to suit the needs of the client. In Singapore, the four official languages are English, Malay, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil. Certain pro bono clients may have limited language skills; therefore, plain language drafting and face to face meetings to explain the content of written communications may be important.

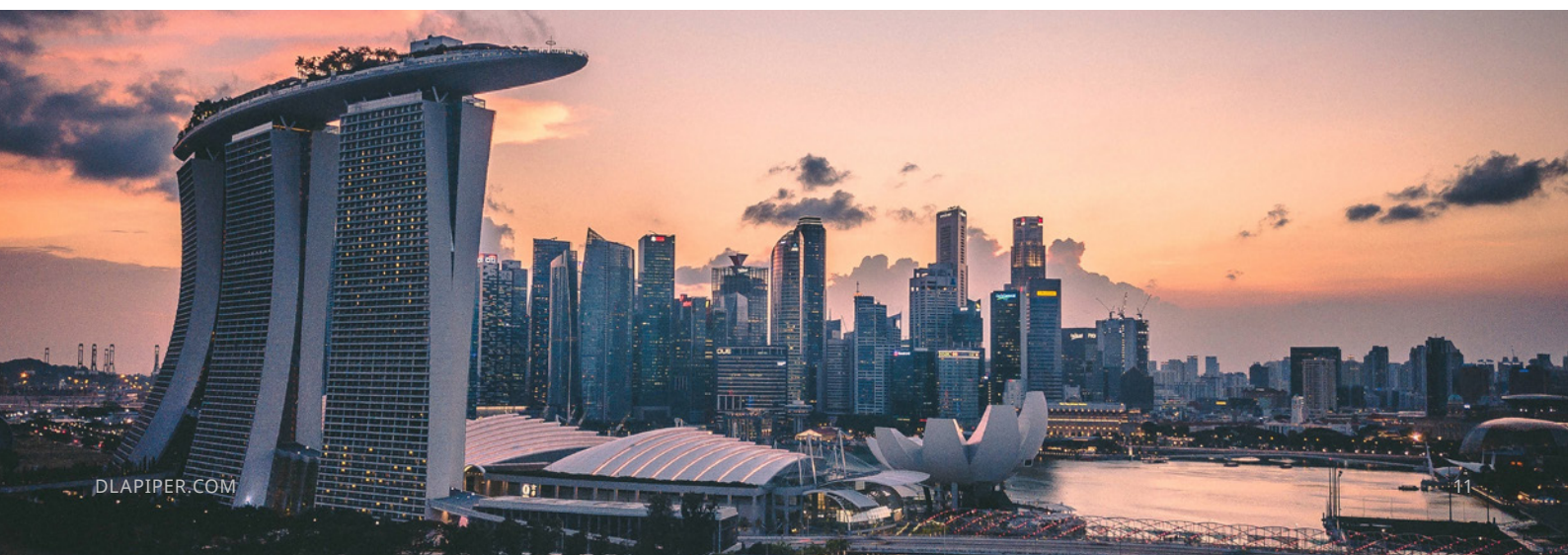
It is also important to consider the most appropriate letterhead to use when sending communications on a pro bono matter.

When considering this question, it is often useful to begin by determining which entity is providing the legal services, and where the professional indemnity risk lies. If you are partnering with a law firm, and the law firm is carrying the risk, then communications should be sent on the letterhead of the law firm, and approved by a partner of the firm.

Please do not use your company letterhead unless it is a registered law firm in Singapore. Whilst you as an individual may be able to provide permitted pro bono legal services as a SQL without PC, your company would not be able to do so unless it is a registered law firm in Singapore.

Client money

In most cases, it will be possible to deliver pro bono services without the need to deal with trust monies. In relation to projects where it may be necessary to accept monies on trust, a partnership with a law firm which would be able to receive client money will be necessary.



Example of in-house pro bono programmes

Below are case studies of organisations which have embraced pro bono programmes within their company.

Bloomberg

Philanthropy is at the heart of Bloomberg, and the Legal & Compliance Department's mission is aligned to paying it forward. In 2016, it launched the Bloomberg Legal & Compliance Pro Bono Programme as a way for its attorney, compliance, operations and negotiation teams to use their knowledge, time and expertise to give back to underserved communities around the globe. The Bloomberg Pro Bono programme aims to help marginalised communities navigate legal issues and processes for complex matters related to asylum, veteran benefits, immigration, domestic violence, transgender name change petitions, and small business management.

Bloomberg's Pro Bono Work in Singapore

The Singapore Legal & Compliance team is comprised of legal counsel, legal negotiation specialists, and compliance officers. Pro bono initiatives are selected to involve a jurisdictional qualifications or legal training. Examples of projects include:

Collaboration with Pro Bono SG

- First Posthumous Admission to the Bar in Singapore

Bloomberg provided critical legal research support for the posthumous admission of a 28-year-old lawyer to the Singapore Bar. Leveraging resources from its New York headquarters, the Bloomberg team conducted direct outreach to U.S. courts and legal professionals to obtain essential non-digitized information. This landmark case brought justice and closure to the family while inspiring the legal community.

- Negotiation Skills Webinar and Workshop

In partnership with PBSG, Bloomberg hosted a webinar and workshop on negotiation skills for freelancers in Singapore. Legal negotiation specialists from Bloomberg and private practitioners shared their expertise, empowering participants to navigate contract negotiations effectively. Plans are underway to extend these workshops to other communities in need.

Other Collaborations

The Singapore Legal & Compliance team has also partnered with other charitable and community organisations and law firms, including:

- Community Justice Centre: Supporting the Deputyship Assistance Programme;

- PILnet: Contributing to the Legal Health Check Project; and
- Baker McKenzie: Participating in "Justice in Action Sprints".

Bloomberg's commitment to growing pro bono in Singapore

In addition to undertaking pro bono work by partnering with local organisations, Bloomberg is committed to growing pro bono efforts and has taken a leadership role in this area. For example,

- (1) In partnership with PBSG, Bloomberg hosted the student event "Sparking the Pro Bono Spirit in Students" in both 2023 and 2024, introducing law students to pro bono work. Panels featuring private practitioners, in-house lawyers, compliance officers, and full-time pro bono attorneys shared insights into the impact of pro bono services. The Bloomberg team volunteered as mentors, inspiring students to integrate pro bono work into their future careers.
- (2) Bloomberg also supported the growth of pro bono initiatives (particularly with in-house legal counsels) by hosting and sponsoring roundtables and discussions to encourage information sharing and greater collaboration amongst the legal community. In collaboration with PBSG and PILnet, Bloomberg co-hosted a landmark roundtable in its Singapore and Hong Kong offices, bringing together legal professionals globally to explore impactful pro bono projects.



Encouraging Employee Participation

Bloomberg actively encourages pro bono work through initiatives such as our corporate philanthropy “Dollars for Your Hours” program. This program amplifies volunteerism with financial contributions (e.g., USD2,500 for 25 hours of service, USD5,000 for 50 hours of service). These donations benefit the Company’s nonprofit partners, turning financial support.

Additionally, top pro bono contributors are recognised with the Pro Bono Cup.

Bloomberg’s Chief Legal Officer also sets a strong example by aiming to spend 50 hours annually dedicated to pro bono work.

Achievements in 2023 and 2024

In 2023 and 2024, Bloomberg’s Legal & Compliance members around the globe contributed more than 10,000 pro bono hours across hundreds of unique projects. In 2023 and 2024, demonstrating the department’s commitment to philanthropy and providing equal access to justice.

One of Bloomberg Singapore’s key milestones in 2024 was receiving the inaugural Heroes of Pro Bono Excellence (HOPE) Award from the Singapore Corporate Counsel Association, recognising an organisation’s outstanding contributions towards pro bono initiatives and creating a positive impact on the community.

Accenture

Accenture places a strong global emphasis on giving back to the community via pro bono efforts. Within Accenture, each regional legal team is empowered to plan and drive its own programmes, allowing ownership and flexibility to take part in interest programmes. In Southeast Asia, Accenture’s pro bono programmes focus on the financially less privileged communities, legal awareness for youths, supporting youths at risk, and empowering women. Within each regional legal team, it has pro bono leads/coordinators that are known as “champions”, who assist to coordinate the pro bono initiatives. Within each regional legal team (e.g. Southeast Asia (“SEA”)), the various pro bono champions convene at least once every quarter to share their programmes to inspire each other and track progress.

Involving both SG-qualified and non SG-qualified lawyers in the Accenture’s pro bono projects

Given that its SEA legal team includes locally qualified lawyers and foreign qualified lawyers, Accenture’s in-house team participates in programmes that are suitable and compliant with local regulations. Internally, it also runs approval checks that may involve Marketing + Communications, internal Geo Compliance, Anti-Bribery and Corruption and other compliance teams to ensure that its programmes do not present compliance issues, professional liability or other concerns such as reputation risks.

Some examples of Accenture’s legal team pro bono work:

- (1) SG-qualified lawyers participate in Community Development Council (CDC) Legal Clinics that are coordinated by PBSG. Senior members of the Accenture legal team also participated in a webinar organised by PBSG, sharing information on the company’s pro bono initiatives and legal technology adoption.
- (2) Accenture also works with Baker McKenzie to organise interest area research sprints so that non SG-qualified lawyers can also participate and undertake legal research in new areas (e.g. sustainability) to raise awareness or suggest possible areas for legislative development.

Incentives and Training

Apart from “legal access champions”, Accenture leadership tracks its pro bono involvement and participation and leads by example. Time spent on pro bono is captured on an internal “Making a Difference” portal, and are considered billable work hours. The “Making a Difference” portal also contains various projects that other non-legal employees of Accenture can take part in. In addition, Accenture has an internal recognition programme where leadership can award “recognition points” for persons who have actively participated in pro bono projects.

For training support with the legal clinics, volunteer lawyers can reach out to the legal access champions if they need any assistance prior to the session. Seasoned volunteers provide guidance and training where required.

Learnings from establishing a pro bono programme

Since establishing its pro bono programme, Accenture has learnt that having a passionate legal access/pro bono coordinator is key towards establishing a sustainable pro bono practice. In Accenture’s experience, also having the coordinator work closely with PBSG or other partners to explore and identify suitable programmes has been instrumental. For teams with limited SG-qualified lawyers, Accenture has found that getting involved in established programmes such as the legal clinics is a good start, as well as participating in legal research projects which are often flexible in terms of time commitment.



Partnering opportunities

An in-house legal department interested in taking on pro bono work has a number of options available to source such work. These include:

- Partnering with a law firm with a long-standing pro bono practice;
- Working with community service organisations and other bodies that have regular contact with disadvantaged clients and communities;
- Volunteering with one of the PBSG's pro bono schemes;
- Discussing with PBSG on of the organisation's in-house lawyers' availability to assist with its initiatives that serve both indigent individuals as well as community organisations;
- Partnering or volunteering with SCCA Pro Bono Chapter.

Partnering with a law firm

As explained earlier in this Guide, law firms often have well established pro bono programmes that in-house legal teams can partner with, such as clinics or legal services for charities and not-for-profit organisations. By partnering with a law firm on already established projects, in-house counsel teams can immediately access clients with real, pressing legal problems.

Alternatively it may be possible to partner with a law firm to create a new programme that is jointly run by an in-house counsel team and the law firm.

DLA Piper has partnered with a number of in-house legal teams on various projects, for example:

A collaboration between DLA Piper and its technology clients

DLA Piper has a longstanding pro bono commitment to promote the rule of law and support access to justice around the world. A key aspect of the firm's strategy is supporting people who have been forcibly displaced which led to DLA Piper and UNHCR establishing a global partnership to develop innovative responses to the global refugee crisis, enhance refugee integration and advocate for impactful, systemic change. DLA Piper also acts as a connector, bringing in-house legal teams of its commercial clients to join its pro bono projects to amplify the power of pro bono and the positive impact to the marginalised communities.

DLA Piper has partnered with commercial clients on pro bono projects across the globe to advance the rights of refugees. Recently in Singapore, DLA Piper partnered with one of its technology clients to develop a digital rights mapping tool for UNHCR (described further below).

In 2024, DLA Piper and one of its Singapore-based technology clients, joined hands to support UNHCR in developing its flagship digital project the Rights Mapping

and Analysis Platform ("RiMAP"). RiMAP is a digital platform designed to provide information about laws and policies relating to the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced and stateless persons RiMAP provides a structured methodology and an online platform for collecting and analysing legal data and identifying challenges related to specific rights categories. In doing so, RiMAP aims to monitor access to rights for refugees globally and enhance the understanding of the extent to which refugees and asylum-seekers (and perhaps internally displaced and stateless persons in future) are able to access and enjoy their rights, in law and practice.

Singapore-based lawyers at DLA Piper and in-house client team worked together to conduct legal research on the domestic laws and policies regulating 11 specific rights categories affecting asylum seekers and refugees, including asylum, work and workplace protection, social protection, education, health, documentation, nationality, housing, land and property, freedom of movement, liberty and security of person, and family life.

To make it as easy as possible for the Singapore-based in-house lawyers to get involved, DLA Piper and UNHCR developed the questionnaire, research questions and concept notes, so that the in-house counsel would have enough background information and guidance to work on this project once they were onboarded. Recognising that participating in-house volunteers may not specialise in refugee or immigration law, DLA Piper and UNHCR also organised brief training sessions on refugee laws and an introduction to RiMAP so that they had some background information before commencing the research.

Partnering with a law firm with a global pro bono practice like DLA Piper can save the in-house team time from project planning. Most global law firms now have a full-time team to manage their pro bono practices scientifically and professionally. Those pro bono lawyers have more capacity and possess the relevant expertise to work out the needs assessment and feasibility study before the launch of the pro bono projects. They also have more capacity to liaise with the charitable and community organisations regarding the logistics. In-house counsel can conveniently take part in structured pro bono projects and focus their time and efforts on the legal work. The extensive geographical footprint of international law firms, as well as the diversity in the background of their lawyers, attract global charitable and community organisations to partner with them. It is easier for them to have regional or global pro bono opportunities. It is understandable that the global/ regional in-house legal teams of some multi-national companies may want all members to work on the same project, or at least the same topic, to show unity and achieve consistency. Working with international law firms can give the in-house legal teams convenient access to some global pro bono projects.

Ideas for collaborating with law firms

Other commercial law topics of interest to civil society organisation are diversity and inclusion, legal technology, the use of artificial intelligence, and digital financing. So why not start a conversation with your local charity/civil society partners to see how you can use your in-house legal skills to help.

Working with charitable and community organisations and legal aid bodies

One of the best ways to ascertain where legal assistance is most needed, and to develop an effective response to meeting those needs within available resources, is to develop and maintain strong ties with charitable and community organisations (e.g. Family Service Centres, Community Development Councils) and legal aid bodies (e.g. PBSG, the Community Justice Centre) that have regular contact with the people that lawyers representing an organisation's pro bono legal practice aim to help.

Depending on the nature of pro bono work that lawyers from your organisation wish to develop, they might want to:

- Provide assistance in a particular area or community and therefore develop ties to organisations that provide legal assistance and welfare services in that area;
- Provide a broad range of pro bono assistance within the ambit of the abovementioned *Legal Profession (Pro Bono Legal Services) Rules 2013* and develop ties with a range of charitable and community organisations able and willing to refer appropriate matters to lawyers from your organisation;
- Investigate opportunities to establish a programme that focuses on a particular social issue, for example, domestic violence;
- Pursue a community development approach to the legal needs of a particular social group – lawyers from the organisation would undertake a commitment to the particular issue and over time structure and adapt its pro bono legal programme in light of changing relationships and increasing understanding of the needs of the client community;
- Explore options for undertaking joint projects with PBSG, the Community Justice Centre, law firms, or with corporate clients in relation to charities and non-profit organisations.

Pro Bono SG can help create your own pro bono opportunity

Pro bono opportunities come in all shapes. Companies may wish to discover opportunities to assist individuals or organisations in the community from internal and external recommendations or referrals following implementation of their pro bono policy.

Alternatively, your in-house legal department or you as an individual in-house counsel may wish to tap into existing sources of pro bono work of which PBSG has many.

The Pro Bono Services Office (PBSO) was first established in 2007 as a department of the Law Society of Singapore. It corporatised and commenced operations as Law Society Pro Bono Services (LSPBS) in 2017. A Singapore-registered charity with an Institution of a Public Character Status, it was rebranded as Pro Bono SG in 2022. PBSG was initiated to carry out the Law Society's mission of ensuring access to justice for those in need within Singapore by serving individuals, organisations, and communities.

In aiming to achieve this mission, PBSG develops and manages pro bono programmes. These programmes rely heavily on volunteers to give their expertise in provision of advice, research, guidance, talks, content generation, and ad hoc activities. Given the diversity of their programmes and the experience of their volunteers it is imperative that the volunteers are appropriately matched with opportunities so their skills are optimally utilised.

PBSG aims to provide all in-house counsel with opportunities to contribute to the community through pro bono work. There are opportunities to render pro bono services with PBSG for both those in-house counsel who are SQL without PCs and all other in-house counsel, provided they do not purport to act as practising solicitors. Further opportunities with PBSG can be found in the Appendix. Those who are SQL without PCs can render pro bono services at legal clinics, as well as talks, workshops and webinars directed at raising legal awareness and literacy for individuals as well as community organisations.

Both SQL without PCs and all other in-house counsel who may be qualified in practical terms to render services in ad hoc clinics, talks, content generation, and workshops can be channeled into Pro Bono SG programmes as appropriate.

Your organisation may also be interested in its in-house legal team adopting a project, or providing in-house counsel for particular programmes and initiatives. If so, please contact PBSG at volunteer@probono.sg for more information.

Partnering and volunteering opportunities with SCCA Pro Bono Chapter

Singapore Corporate Counsel Association is Singapore's national association for in-house counsels. SCCA Pro Bono Chapter was established in 2020 to encourage volunteerism among in-house counsels and to create opportunities for them to do so.

As the in-house counsel community is diverse and from various backgrounds, we have a wide array of pro bono projects.

We believe that everyone can positively contribute to the community and welcome in-house counsels and their departments to volunteer.

Pro bono opportunities include:

- Volunteering at legal clinics for charities;
- Speaking on a legal topic for or moderating at law awareness talks for the public or charities;
- Supporting and guiding students to work on pro bono projects.

You don't need to be a big department in order to do volunteer work and we are happy to collaborate together to make things work or we may have an existing volunteering opportunity that may be of interest.

If you would like to volunteer, find out more or collaborate on any volunteering opportunity, please contact probono@scca.org.sg or visit our website for more information at www.scca.org.sg.

For more information

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Pro Bono SG

(UEN No. 201700430E)

Contact us by email at volunteer@probono.sg or ask for our Volunteer Management team members at

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#B1-18 State Courts,

Singapore 059724

T +65 6536 0650

help@probono.sg

<https://www.probono.sg/>

SCCA Pro Bono Chapter

Contact us by email at probono@scca.org.sg or visit our website www.scca.org.sg

Appendix working with PBSG

PBSG has developed, implemented, and administered many successful pro bono initiatives both internally and in partnership with external stakeholders.

By volunteering with PBSG, you on behalf of your in-house legal department can be integral in the provision of legal-related services to needy clients with legal concerns.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of campaigns/initiatives that have been coordinated by PBSG in Singapore in the provision of legal aid to the general public:

- **Legal Awareness:** an initiative to increase legal knowledge and literacy through events, webinars, publications, videos, and the <https://www.lawgowhere.sg/> website. Specialised programmes under Legal Awareness includes:
 - (1) **Legalese**, a toolkit for community organisations to raise legal knowledge for the setting up, running and even shutting down of operations.
 - (2) **Law Works**, a partnership with NTUC for provision of legal clinics, legal primers, and a pocket series to help employees better navigate the legal landscape of the workplace and be better educated on their rights and responsibilities;

(3) **Project Schools**, a programme to create awareness of the law and the consequences of juvenile delinquency to youths from age 14, delivered by teachers in classrooms across Singapore as well as talks on related legal issues; and

(4) **Law Cares**, advance legal planning end of life talks at elder care centres, educational institutions and hospices, and on-site legal clinics concerning mental capacity, maintenance of parents, wills, power of attorney, and civil/ criminal liabilities in the eldercare industry.

- **Legal Advice:** general legal guidance for individuals on personal matters, and for community organisations on community matters or corporate non-litigation issues.
- **Legal Advocacy:** the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS) provides criminal legal assistance to the poor and needy who are unable to afford a lawyer and are facing charges in a Singapore court for non-death penalty offences under statutes covered by CLAS. Those facing matrimonial issues may also receive legal assistance.

	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITIES	WHICH IN-HOUSE COUNSEL CAN PARTICIPATE
(a) Direct Aid for Individuals	Guidance at legal clinics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rendering face-to-face and virtual advice to needy members of the public on personal legal issues at legal clinics. • Issues typically involve family, probate, contract, employment and criminal law. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singapore-qualified lawyers only.
(b) Direct Aid for Organisations (i.e. non-profits, charities, social enterprises)	Advice at Community Organisation Clinics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rendering advice at legal clinics with the organisation's representatives. • Issues typically involve contractual disputes, advice on non-litigious corporate matters, such as privacy and confidentiality, contracts, intellectual property rights, under Singapore law. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singapore-qualified lawyers only.

	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITIES	WHICH IN-HOUSE COUNSEL CAN PARTICIPATE
	Ad hoc pro bono research projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing research support for community organisations which encounter complex, non-litigious matters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All in-house counsel
	The Joint International Pro Bono Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing legal advice or representation to non-profit or non-governmental organisations which have cross-border legal needs. • Matters are largely corporate in nature, non-litigious and often involve cross-border legal issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All in-house counsel (only Singapore lawyers may advise charities which are registered in Singapore, IPCs or members of the National Council of Social Services.) • Foreign lawyers should check with their own bar associations/regulators to determine whether they may provide direct external pro bono legal services while working as in-house counsel.
(c) General Legal Awareness	Talks, webinars and workshops for members of the public at large; either on an ad hoc basis or in connection with a specific legal awareness initiative (for example, "Law Awareness Weeks", "Project Schools", "Law Cares", "Law Works")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting PBSG's mission to promote better legal awareness and access to justice for members of the community. • Some examples include (i) giving talks on wills and other end-of-life issues to the elderly in connection with the "Law Cares" initiative; (ii) teacher training in "Project Schools" (whereby teachers are trained on how to communicate basic legal concepts to students); (iii) talks on intellectual property rights to disadvantaged young artists. • Volunteers are typically required to speak on relevant Singapore law matters and engage in question-and-answer sessions with participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All in-house counsel with specific relevant expertise may moderate or speak as subject matter experts for webinars. • Singapore qualified lawyers only for legal talks.

	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITIES	WHICH IN-HOUSE COUNSEL CAN PARTICIPATE
(d) Supporting Functions	The preparation of materials in support of all opportunities in (a) – (c) listed above, and preparation for matters in Representation schemes such as the Ad Hoc Pro Bono Scheme for civil and criminal matters; Criminal Legal Aid Scheme; and Family Justice Support Scheme which require ultimate representation by SQL with PCs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These activities can be very varied but do not involve the direct provision of any advice on Singapore law by volunteers. • Some examples include (i) interviewing CLAS applicants on the basic facts of their cases (and assessing their eligibility for legal aid); (ii) preparing and updating technical legal “FAQ” manuals to support volunteer lawyers in clinics; (iii) preparation of supplementary or promotional material (for example, acting in and scripting “re-enactment videos” in Project Schools, as a lesson companion to engage students) or new modules under the lawgowhere.sg website (iv) preparation of materials and toolkits to assist social workers (v) preparation of simplified pamphlets on Singapore employment law to assist workers under the “Law Works” programme. • All material is vetted or reviewed by Singapore qualified lawyers holding valid practising certificates before dissemination. • Interpretation assistance during consultations for service users not conversant in English. • Translation of publications to other languages e.g. collateral meant for migrant workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All in-house counsel
	The Pro Bono Research Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing research support to volunteer lawyers who face complex legal issues during pro bono criminal and civil representation • Final research findings are reviewed by the Singapore qualified lawyer with a PC handling the case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All in-house counsel

If you wish to volunteer for any of the above programmes, or wish to discuss any other please contact PBSG at: volunteer@probono.sg | +65 6536 0650

dlapiper.com