

Pro Bono Evolution

A maturity model for in-house legal departments

The Microsoft Pro Bono Program and the Corporate Pro Bono (CPBO®) project of Pro Bono Institute co-created this Pro Bono Maturity Model as a tool for other corporate, in-house pro bono programs to assess the evolution of their pro bono efforts and to provide a framework for identifying specific opportunities for growth and development.

We are pleased to share this resource with other legal departments and hope it will inspire the planning and evolution of more in-house pro bono programs.

Please keep in mind that based on department size, staffing, and budgets, priorities and aspirational targets will vary and success can be found at every level.





Introduction

How to use this maturity model for self-assessment

Use this maturity model to:

- 1. Identify current state**
- 2. Determine desired maturity**
- 3. Identify key gaps**
- 4. Create a roadmap**

This maturity model identifies seven key areas of assessment and five levels by which to evaluate them. To assess your own program, review the criteria for each dimension and determine the level that best represents the current state of that dimension of your pro bono program.

In-house pro bono programs can thrive at many levels in the maturity model, and your department's pro bono program does not need to operate at the Optimized level to be impactful. This tool is designed to help you assess the current state of your program, goal-set, and map out the next step in your successful pro bono journey.

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Seven areas of assessment



Vision and strategy

How the department regards pro bono, incorporates it into its day-to-day operations, and sets goals for the short- and long-term development of the program.



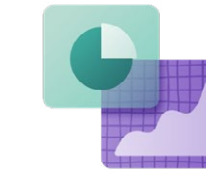
Internal engagement

How the department engages employees from varying seniority levels, roles, disciplines, and geographies to participate in pro bono, as well as how the breadth and depth of their participation is measured.



External relationships and partnerships

How the department interacts with legal services organizations and other entities that provide matters and support related to pro bono.



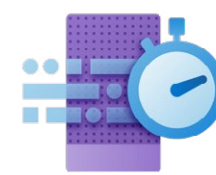
Impact

How the department measures and evaluates pro bono, including outcomes, and the experience of clients, partners, and volunteers through the pro bono engagement.



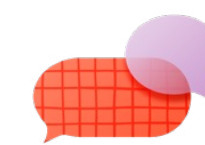
Risk management

How the department manages risks like malpractice and conflicts of interest as they relate to pro bono activities.



Program administration and tools

How the department approaches the adoption of process and technology for managing the various components of the department's pro bono involvement, including budget and funding needs.



Communications and recognition

How the department shares information about its pro bono program's impact and volunteer experiences both internally and externally.

Five levels of maturity

Level 1

Emerging

Areas of the program are being discovered and are typically ad hoc and/or heavily reliant on individual contribution.

Level 2

Foundational

Areas of the program are documented well enough to enable scalability with somewhat consistent and predictable results. Key systems are built to support organizational support and resourcing.

Level 3

Managed

Areas of the program become standard best practices, and contributors are in place to support and maintain the health of key systems. The organization fully supports and funds the program.

Level 4

Streamlined

Areas of the program have been measured and are advancing with enough dependability to foster a developmental, agile approach. The program begins to fuel organization and company culture.

Level 5

Optimized

Areas of the program are continually and deliberately improved and enabled by tools, resources, and support. The company sees the program as an imperative cultural and business pillar.



Vision and strategy



How the department regards pro bono, incorporates it into its day-to-day operations, and sets goals for the short- and long-term development of the program.

Level 1: Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive engagement is minimal and pro bono is separate and distinct from business priorities. Department awareness of the business value of pro bono is limited with few managers involved in support and promotion of pro bono work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational frameworks are in brainstorming phase.
Level 2: Foundational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive engagement is established and senior leaders take initial action to formalize department's commitment to pro bono work, such as signing the Corporate Pro Bono Challenge[®] initiative. Department awareness of the business value of pro bono grows and some managers are involved in the support and promotion of pro bono. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational frameworks are created to support participation, including pro bono committee and policy, along with initial development of strategic coordination with other organizations within the company (e.g., Corporate and Social Responsibility, HR).
Level 3: Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive awareness grows into sponsorship with identified business value of pro bono and development of strategies to meet goals or targets of Corporate Pro Bono Challenge[®] initiative, applicable Rules of Professional Conduct, and/or professional associations. Department awareness of the business value of pro bono evolves and a growing number of managers are involved in the support and promotion of pro bono work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational frameworks increase to support participation and impact; strategic coordination with other organizations within the company, such as one joint initiative or collaborative effort.
Level 4: Streamlined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive sponsors communicate that pro bono is a business priority for the department and develop strategy for achieving results. Department implements the developed strategy through the adoption of an annual target, core priority, or similar framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational frameworks are optimized to support participation and impact; strategic coordination with other organizations within the company expands, such as multiple joint initiatives or collaborative efforts and increasing engagement from employees outside the legal department.
Level 5: Optimized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executives at all levels fully recognize the value and impact of pro bono, including skill development and teambuilding. Department's strategy meets or exceeds all standards set forth in the annual target, core priority, or similar framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational frameworks that support participation are state-of-the-art; strategic coordination with other organizations within the company optimized and robust engagement from employees outside the legal department.

Internal engagement



How the department engages employees from varying seniority levels, roles, disciplines, and geographies to participate in pro bono, as well as how the breadth and depth of their participation is measured.

Level 1: Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Employee engagement is low and individualized, consisting primarily of attorneys in one geography.	
Level 2: Foundational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Employee engagement is coordinated and growing, including by other professionals and staff within the department; in global departments, engagement includes employees outside the United States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some individual employees participate in more than one short-term opportunity per year.Employees participate in teams and individually.
Level 3: Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Employee engagement is organized, dependable, and growing yearly across roles, disciplines, seniority levels, and offices, within the department, and, in global departments, outside the United States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some individual employees repeat their engagement two or three times per year, e.g., by taking multiple trainings, matters, or clients, or by taking on longer-term matters.
Level 4: Streamlined	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Employee engagement expands to include all professional and seniority levels and across all disciplines globally; employees evangelize for the program organically.Employees regard the department's pro bono program as a benefit to themselves and their department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Many individual employees repeat their engagement several times per year, e.g., by taking multiple trainings, matters, or clients, or by taking on longer-term matters.
Level 5: Optimized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Employee engagement grows as volunteers become external influencers and trusted advisors in the pro bono and access to justice community; employees regard the department's pro bono program as a benefit to the company and the community.	

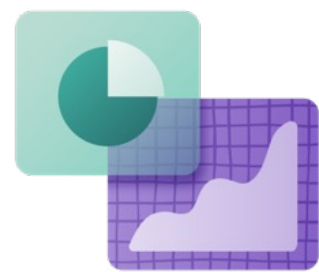
External relationships and partnerships



How the department interacts with legal services organizations and other entities that provide matters and support related to pro bono.

Level 1: Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">External relationships with pro bono partners and organizations are driven by individual employees and/or ad hoc volunteers within the department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Collaborating with other organizations, law firms, and/or in-house legal teams occurs as needed; roles and responsibilities are not defined.
Level 2: Foundational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">External relationships with pro bono organizations are based on grassroots efforts to assist one or more with multiple matters or cases in a one-year period. Department may provide some financial support to external partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The interest in building a partnership with other pro bono organizations, law firms, and/or in-house legal teams is present and growing.
Level 3: Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">External relationship management with pro bono organizations results in a model that includes provision of consistent employee volunteer hours and organizational support for one or more key partners year over year; may include low to medium volunteer participation with additional organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A collaboration model that will streamline working with law firms and/or other in-house teams is developed.
Level 4: Streamlined	<ul style="list-style-type: none">External relationship management with pro bono organizations evolves into a model that includes deepening volunteer engagement, financial support, and strategic influence with key pro bono partner(s). May include medium to significant volunteer participation with additional organizations through a diverse array of curated and grassroots opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The collaboration model with law firms and/or other in-house teams is expanded and drives greater, measurable impact, such as now influencing outside counsel to meet certain pro bono standards and metrics.Collaboration with partner organizations includes alignment on key strategic goals and community needs.
Level 5: Optimized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">External relationship management with pro bono partners sustainably provides volunteers with a diverse and frequent array of pro bono work; pro bono partners receive consistent or increased volunteer, financial, and other support year over year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The collaboration model with law firms and/or other in-house teams is optimized and drives impact for external partners and clients, such as becoming an increasingly powerful influence on outside counsel pro bono engagement; e.g., strategic partner status now dependent on meeting pro bono requirements.Collaboration with partner organizations advances key strategic goals and addresses defined community needs.

Impact



How the department measures and evaluates pro bono, including outcomes, and the experience of clients, partners, and volunteers through the pro bono engagement.

Level 1: Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pro bono is not measured; impact of pro bono hours is highly variable; generally limited to helping a few clients with limited-scope legal issues.
Level 2: Foundational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Still largely unmeasured, the impact of the pro bono program is increasing through pro bono work that aligns with employees' interest, existing skills, and subject matter expertise.
Level 3: Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Impact of the pro bono program is measured and growing as key partner organizations receive assistance with multiple matters or cases year over year. May include at least one coordinated or group effort that results in significant number of collective pro bono hours.
Level 4: Streamlined	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Impact of the pro bono program increases as volunteers become a sustainable source of legal services that help key partner organization(s) to scale. Some volunteers also take on complex and/or high-stakes pro bono matters.
Level 5: Optimized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Impact of the pro bono program is measurably high and sustained as the collaboration model allows partner organizations to maintain or expand capacity year over year. Volunteers regularly take on complex and/or high-stakes pro bono matters.

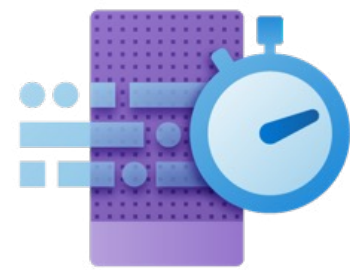
Risk management



How the department manages risks like malpractice and conflicts of interest as they relate to pro bono activities.

Level 1: Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All aspects of risk management are addressed by individual volunteers.• Awareness and communication of potential risk to volunteers is a grassroots effort. Strategies for addressing potential risk are ad hoc.	
Level 2: Foundational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organization develops initial process to manage professional liability risk, such as requiring volunteers to partner only with legal services organizations that provide professional liability insurance.• Outside of the United States, pro bono efforts are focused on legal education or similar activities that do not involve provision of legal services, such as mentoring law students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other ethical requirements, such as conflicts of interest and licensing limitations, are identified and a process to address is outlined.
Level 3: Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An established process for managing professional liability risk is in place and widely adopted by the organization.• Growing awareness and communication of other areas of risk related to pro bono.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A process for managing risk related to conflicts of interest is in place and being iterated upon.
Level 4: Streamlined	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactive strategies are in place for managing professional liability risk, such as securing a malpractice insurance policy for pro bono work.• Proactive strategies are in place for managing conflicts-of-interest risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For programs that are global in nature, risk management and malpractice insurance policies are in place that are global in scope.
Level 5: Optimized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The organization has a clear understanding how pro bono intersects with all applicable Rules of Professional Conduct and the internal resources that are available for managing risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal risk mitigation policies, standards, processes, and tools are optimized, and a fully adopted escalation path for new or unique risk management issues is in place.

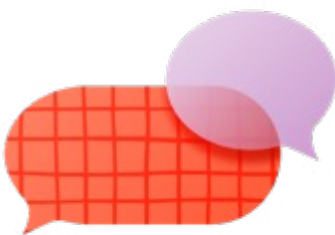
Program administration and tools



How the department approaches the adoption of process and technology for managing the various components of the department's pro bono involvement, including budget and funding needs.

Level 1: Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of the need for a formal pro bono program exists. Funding is ad hoc and allocated in reaction to specific events or one-time requests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The establishment and use of tools and resources to obtain and share pro bono matters and information is grassroots and informal. Tracking pro bono hours and impact is informal, individual, and not collected.
Level 2: Foundational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pro bono point person and/or committee is designated to manage the program in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities. Funding for program is minimal but strategic and allocated based on defined priorities and goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools include a centralized site(s) for pro bono program that includes policies, FAQs, and upcoming opportunities. Some level of tracking pro bono hours and impact is implemented.
Level 3: Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional staffing is identified and engaged to support the size and needs of the pro bono program. Funding is increased and a formal budget guides allocation and distribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools (such as newsletters) are routinely publishing content and relied upon, along with a centralized site, for volunteers and interested parties to learn more. Guidance and volunteer compliance for tracking pro bono hours and impact increases.
Level 4: Streamlined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A formal program expands to include additional expertise from others in the department or in the company who can provide needed assistance, such as an administrator, program manager, and/or a communications manager, to scale pro bono program and access to justice initiatives. For larger departments with a formal program, staffing may evolve to include dedicated headcount such as a part-time or full-time pro bono director or manager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding is significant, prioritized, and includes allocations for programmatic growth and innovation. Tools are created to recruit and retain partnerships with pro bono organizations, gather partner feedback, recruit volunteers, track pro bono hours and impact, and promote pro bono collaboration, community, and recognition.
Level 5: Optimized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The formal pro bono program evolves into a fully funded, self-reliant department within the company. For larger departments, staffing may evolve to include additional headcount to include managers to lead personnel in defined programs and relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wide adoption of and iteration upon best-in-class tools that enable, drive, and increase pro bono participation, collaboration, reporting, and community. New tools are developed for external use, such as client-facing and community forums that successfully address and mitigate broader access to justice issues.

Communications and recognition



How the department shares information about its pro bono program’s impact and volunteer experiences both internally and externally.

Level 1: Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The team identifies the need for messaging and communication and begins brainstorming process followed by initial execution focused mostly around highlighting available pro bono matters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of volunteers is ad hoc. Stories of volunteer experiences relies on individual word of mouth.
Level 2: Foundational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strategy for internal and external pro bono messaging and communications is being iterated upon and includes the publication of formal collateral, such as a mission statement about the department’s commitment to pro bono.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of volunteers, such as in the distribution of an annual award, and the collection and telling of volunteer experiences is growing into a formal and repeatable process.
Level 3: Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pro bono messaging and communications for internal use is finalized and branded, and a content creation plan is put in place. The content plan includes a routine cadence of certain publications, such as a pro bono annual report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of volunteers occurs at a regular and expected cadence. Volunteers are provided with opportunities to formally promote their experiences and stories both inside and outside the company through established channels.
Level 4: Streamlined	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pro bono content creation and deliverables are produced and published at an approved and predictable cadence. A dedicated external-facing site is published to promote content about the program, its impact, and how to get help if in need of pro bono services. Other companies and peers request communications strategy template to start their own programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of volunteers is an anticipated cultural moment among peers, fosters participation and enthusiasm, and reaches companywide employee base. New ways to recognize volunteers and share their stories are constantly being innovated upon.
Level 5: Optimized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pro bono content is anticipated, shared, and widely known internally and externally as a central pillar of the company’s social impact story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of volunteers reaches external audiences, is promoted by earned media, and becomes a company recruiting tool.

Worksheet: Assessing your current state

Use this template to rate your program’s maturity in the seven key areas of assessment.

To assess your own program, review the criteria for each dimension and determine the level that best represents the current state of that dimension of your pro bono program.

Your program can be successful at all levels; this assessment can help you craft new goals and increase the impact of your pro bono program.

Areas of assessment	Level 1: Emerging	Level 2: Foundational	Level 3: Managed	Level 4: Streamlined	Level 5: Optimized
Vision and strategy How the department regards pro bono, incorporates it into its day-to-day operations, and sets goals for the short- and long-term development of the program.					
Internal engagement How the department engages employees from varying seniority levels, roles, disciplines, and geographies to participate in pro bono, as well as how the breadth and depth of their participation is measured.					
External relationships and partnerships How the department interacts with legal services organizations and other entities that provide matters and support related to pro bono.					
Impact How the department measures and evaluates pro bono, including outcomes, and the experience of clients, partners, and volunteers through the pro bono engagement.					
Risk management How the department manages risks like malpractice and conflicts of interest as they relate to pro bono activities.					
Program administration and tools How the department approaches the adoption of process and technology for managing the various components of the department’s pro bono involvement, including budget and funding needs.					
Communications and recognition How the department shares information about its pro bono program’s impact and volunteer experiences both internally and externally.					



About Microsoft Pro Bono Program

The mission of the Microsoft Pro Bono Program is to inspire and empower Microsoft employees and community partners to create solutions that promote justice for all by providing those in need with access to legal knowledge, resources, and services. The pro bono program continues to grow since its launch in 2003, with US attorneys striving to volunteer 30 hours of annual pro bono work, the creation of additional pro bono opportunities, and the provision of malpractice insurance to enable employees to provide services for other causes.

To learn more, visit [Pro Bono Legal Services & Programs](#).

About Pro Bono Institute (PBI)

Pro Bono Institute, a national nonprofit organization established in 1996, provides research, consultative services, analysis and assessment, publications, and training to a broad range of legal audiences. PBI is mandated to explore and identify new approaches to and resources for the provision of legal services to the poor, disadvantaged, and other individuals or groups unable to secure legal assistance to address critical problems. We do so by supporting, enhancing, and transforming the pro bono efforts of major law firms, in-house corporate legal departments, and public interest organizations in the U.S. and around the world.

The **Corporate Pro Bono (CPBO)** project, launched in 2000, is the initiative of PBI that supports, enhances, and transforms the pro bono efforts of in-house corporate legal departments. Since its inception, the CPBO project has worked with hundreds of legal departments around the globe to strengthen in-house pro bono.

For additional information, resources, and assistance on in-house pro bono, please contact the CPBO project at cpbo@probonoinst.org.