IN-HOUSE PRO BONO IN PRACTICE PROFILE: ST. LOUIS ACC CHAPTER

November 2018

The St. Louis Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC St. Louis) began its pro bono program ten years after its founding in 1987. For more than twenty years, ACC St. Louis has provided opportunities for chapter members to deliver pro bono legal services in the metropolitan St. Louis area and southern Illinois.

Since 2013, ACC St. Louis has worked closely with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM) and its Community Economic Development Program as the chapter's primary legal services organization partner. Over the years, the chapter has participated in many LSEM clinics, and has built on past successes by replicating or "spinning off" clinics that use a similar format to engage volunteers, ranging from its nonprofit and small entrepreneur clinics to its newer healthcare clinic.

ACC St. Louis provides a model for chapters seeking to overcome obstacles to engagement in in-house pro bono. To address in-house lawyers' initial reluctance due to mismatch of skills, concerns about time commitment, and the lack of malpractice insurance coverage, ACC St. Louis designed clinic programs in partnership with LSEM that offered opportunities with a structured and discrete time commitment; subject matter expertise and training that builds volunteers' skills and confidence; and umbrella malpractice coverage for pro bono volunteers. Whenever possible, ACC St. Louis teams new volunteer attorneys with more experienced attorneys during clinics. Working with an established legal aid organization that understands the needs of the communities provides value in recruiting and screening clients as well as structural supports in helping new pro bono programs get off the ground more quickly.

General Program Information	
Pro Bono Contact	Paula Finlay and Patricia Duft
Region Served	ACC St. Louis serves the St. Louis metropolitan area and Southern Illinois.
Number of Members	Approximately 600 members
Pro Bono Program History	The ACC St. Louis Pro Bono program was formed in 1997, after the chapter received a grant from ACC (then known as American Corporate Counsel Association, or ACCA) to promote diversity and pro bono.
Pro Bono Leadership Structure	The ACC St. Louis Pro Bono Committee is led by two-chairs who share responsibility for identifying, promoting, and facilitating pro bono and community service activities.
Pro Bono Policy	ACC St. Louis does not have a pro bono policy.
Communications	Events are featured in the ACC St. Louis newsletter and on the website. Invitations to pro bono events are distributed to chapter

	members via email. Additionally, the Pro Bono Committee co-chairs use email to distribute information about pro bono opportunities.
Recognitions/Awards	ACC St. Louis does not formally recognize or provide awards to volunteers at this time.
Tracking Pro Bono	ACC St. Louis tracks the number of sponsored events and the number of participants at each event.
Partnerships	ACC St. Louis partners with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM) on pro bono projects. For many years, ACC St. Louis has also supported LSEM as a Gold Sponsor of its annual Justice for All Ball (the St. Louis "lawyers' prom"), at which the chapter gains recognition in the legal community. LSEM has honored ACC St. Louis for the chapter's support of pro bono in the community, both financial and its hands-on commitment to delivering pro bono legal services. The chapter also partners with sponsor law firms on particular pro bono projects.
Professional Liability	ACC St. Louis relies on partner organizations to provide professional liability insurance.
Pro Bono Projects	
Small businesses and nonprofits	Since 2013, ACC St. Louis has partnered with LSEM Community Economic Development Program (CED) to provide free legal assistance to both entrepreneurs who are starting or expanding small businesses that benefit lower-income communities, and nonprofit entities that promote community development to benefit lower-income communities. Through ACC St. Louis's work with CED, which helps generate jobs, create healthy communities, and provide a long-term solution to alleviate poverty, members have opportunities to support these efforts in a number of ways: • For several years, ACC St. Louis has sent one to two volunteers each month to staff regular Nonprofit Legal Clinics at LSEM where members meet with prospective LSEM clients for brief one-on-one sessions. • LSEM offers opportunities for ACC St. Louis members to engage in one-on-one legal representation of CED clients for start-up and existing enterprises on discrete business law matters. The client representations are limited to discrete projects and are not intended to be open-ended. • ACC St. Louis members participate in Business Legal Clinics. These legal information clinics require a time commitment of just 2-3 hours each, are limited to giving preliminary general advice, and do not require taking on a client representation. LSEM provides meeting space, screens

	the prospective clients and schedules them for 30-minute appointments during the clinic. Members can sign up for the clinics on a one-time basis or as often as their schedules permit. The chapter provides checklists of key topics to cover in the meetings, and volunteer lawyers work in pairs when providing assistance at the clinic.
Healthcare	For National Healthcare Decisions Day on April 16, 2018, ACC St. Louis collaborated with LSEM and Gold Sponsor Husch Blackwell* to offer a pro bono clinic to patients of the Family Care Health Center in the City of St. Louis. Prior to the clinic, LSEM worked with its community partner to advertise the clinic and make appointments. The healthcare center provided a conference room on-site and parking for the volunteers, making participation convenient for patients and attorneys. That morning, volunteer attorneys participated in a free CLE on Pro Bono Lawyering in Providing Durable Powers of Attorney for Healthcare and Healthcare Directive Forms, which trained volunteers on the specific skills needed for the clinic, followed by a three-hour pro bono clinic in the afternoon to assist low-income individuals in completing healthcare directives. During the clinic, ACC St. Louis attorneys worked in pairs with estate planning attorneys from Husch Blackwell to assist clients with filling out forms. A subject-matter expert was available for backup on any more in-depth questions that might arise during the client meetings. The chapter provided a notary so that clients could leave the clinic with fully executed powers of attorney and healthcare directives. LSEM extended malpractice coverage to the volunteer lawyers, and further protection was provided by having the individuals served sign acknowledgments that the clinic did not create an ongoing attorney-client relationship.
Ethics of In-House Pro Bono	In partnership with Corporate Pro Bono (CPBO) and LSEM, ACC St. Louis presented a CLE for its membership on the Ethics of In-House Pro Bono. More than 43 St. Louis counsel attended this free session, focused on implementing in-house pro bono programs. In-house counsel appreciated receiving in-demand ethics CLE credits as well as guidance on establishing pro bono programs in legal departments. Feedback from the event indicated that support for pro bono increased among attendees, and resulted in new volunteers signing up for the Pro Bono Committee.
Lessons Learned	
Be patient and persistent	Building a pro bono program takes time and dedication. Planning typically falls to a few committed volunteers, and developing a new project can take many months. Patience and persistence are essential.

Seek support from leadership	Support of Chapter leadership is key. Board support is needed for commitment of financial resources and time for community service.
Take a leap of faith when launching a new project	Sometimes it takes a leap of faith. Launching a new project can present a chicken-and-egg problem: How does the chapter gain the trust of a new community partner without a proven track record of providing reliable volunteers? How does the chapter attract volunteers to a new, unknown project? Having a reliable partner makes launching a new project doable. Hosting a successful clinic makes it easier to replicate the experience for later events.
Provide training	Give volunteers the tools they need. Training provides a safety net when asking volunteers to step outside their comfort zone. Checklists and job aids can guide them through key issues.
Make it easy for volunteers to commit	Look for projects with defined timeframes. Clinics typically require a commitment of just a few hours, and volunteers can sign up on a one-time basis or as often as their scheduled permit. When possible, pair new clinic volunteers with experienced volunteers so they can work together as a team.

*denotes a **Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge®** Signatory

Developed by Corporate Pro Bono
A project of Pro Bono Institute
www.cpbo.org
Copyright 2018 Pro Bono Institute
CPBO® is a registered trademark of the Pro Bono Institute