PBI | PRO BONO INSTITUTE
CORPORATE PRO BONO PROJECT

IN-HOUSE PRO BONO IN PRACTICE PROFILE: WELLS FARGO
March 2026

Wells Fargo launched its formal Pro Bono Program (the "Program") in 2014. Today, the Program is a core component of the Legal Department's commitment to community engagement, professional development, and department culture, and reflects the company's broader commitment to strengthening the communities it serves.

The Program aligns closely with Wells Fargo's enterprise Community Impact priorities, including housing affordability, small business support, and broader economic mobility initiatives. By engaging legal professionals in pro bono matters connected to these themes, the Program complements—but is distinct from—the company's broader philanthropy efforts, leveraging the unique skills of legal professionals to deliver direct, high-impact services to underserved communities.

The Program has strong support from the Wells Fargo Legal Department's senior leadership, including its General Counsel, Ellen Patterson, who came to Wells Fargo in March 2020. Pro Bono Institute recognized Wells Fargo and Patterson with the 2026 Laurie D. Zelon Pro Bono Award, highlighting the strength and impact of the Program.

"I joined Wells Fargo, in part, because of the tremendous commitment the company has to the communities where it operates," said Patterson. "I am delighted that the commitment includes a strong and thriving pro bono program, with a talented group of attorneys and legal professionals who continually seek to strengthen its reach and its impact."

The Pro Bono Program is embedded in the culture of the Legal Department. Participation is voluntary but strongly encouraged, and many legal professionals incorporate pro bono service into their annual goals and professional development plans.

The Program is designed to:

- Provide meaningful opportunities for attorneys, paralegals, and administrative professionals to contribute to their communities
- Foster leadership development and cross-functional collaboration
- Enable legal professionals to expand beyond their primary practice areas and develop new skills
- Promote a culture in which professionals at all levels can participate meaningfully in client-facing work

The Program also emphasizes the importance of recognizing and celebrating volunteer contributions, regularly highlighting participants and projects through internal communications, events, and external recognition.

General Program Information	
Offices with Legal Staff	Wells Fargo's general counsel sits in New York, NY. Other legal offices are located in cities throughout the United States (including San Francisco, CA; Minneapolis, MN; St. Louis, MO, Des Moines, IA, and Charlotte, NC), in the U.K. (London), and in Asia (Hong Kong and Singapore). Local coordinators for the Program's Pro Bono Steering Team operate at 16 offices.
Size of Legal Department	Wells Fargo's Legal Department employs 800 lawyers and approximately 500 paralegals and administrative professionals.
Pro Bono Leadership Structure	The Program operates under a globally coordinated, locally executed model. A Pro Bono Steering Committee provides overall leadership, while Local Coordinators lead efforts within each office. The Steering Committee includes leaders responsible for key areas such as: • Community and philanthropic alignment • Conflicts and risk management • Communications and reporting • Diversity and inclusion • Law firm and legal services partnerships • Volunteer engagement and recruitment Local Coordinators are responsible for identifying and developing pro bono opportunities aligned with the needs of their local communities and the capabilities of their offices. The Program benefits from strong senior leadership engagement, including two Deputy General Counsel leaders serving as co-executive sponsors.
Pro Bono Policy	The Program operates under a formal policy adopted in 2014 that establishes a clear governance framework for pro bono work across the Legal Department. The policy defines guiding principles, scope, approval processes, conflicts management, tracking, professional liability, and roles and responsibilities, ensuring that all pro bono activities are conducted with the same rigor and professionalism as client work. This framework enables legal professionals across offices and practice areas to participate confidently, while aligning pro bono efforts with the Department's risk

	management, compliance, and operational standards. It also provides the consistency and structure necessary to scale the Program globally, support strong partnerships with law firms and legal services organizations, and sustain long-term, high-impact initiatives.
Mandatory Pro Bono	Pro bono participation is voluntary but actively encouraged. The Program does not rely on mandates; instead, it is driven by a strong culture of service across the Legal Department. Legal professionals are trusted to determine how they can best contribute to the communities they serve. While many engage directly in pro bono work—through clinics, ongoing representations, and project-based matters—others contribute through community volunteerism, inclusion efforts, and employee engagement initiatives across the enterprise. This flexibility reflects the Legal Department's broader commitment to service and reinforces a culture where meaningful contribution is expected, but not prescribed. Many professionals incorporate these contributions into their annual goals and performance discussions as a core element of professional development and community impact. This approach has fostered broad-based participation because it emphasizes purpose and ownership rather than obligation. By allowing individuals to engage in ways that align with their interests, skills, and availability, the Program has created sustained enthusiasm and meaningful involvement across offices and roles. The Program is further reinforced by enterprise support that enables and amplifies participation, including: • Community Care Grants available to volunteers • Alignment with employee engagement groups and employee resource networks • Cross-functional partnerships across the enterprise Together, this combination of cultural expectation and structural support ensures that pro bono is not treated as an extra activity, but as a natural and integrated part of how the Legal Department contributes to its communities.
Communications	The Program maintains a structured communications approach, including internal articles, email updates, and recognition programs that highlight volunteer contributions and promote engagement opportunities. Communications are used deliberately to shine a light on the meaningful work being done across the Legal Department—elevating individual volunteers, highlighting team efforts, and sharing tangible outcomes for clients and communities. This consistent visibility is a core driver of the Program's success. By regularly showcasing pro bono work across offices and roles, the Program builds awareness, reinforces expectations for participation, and generates enthusiasm for upcoming opportunities. Over time, this sustained focus on sharing and celebrating impact

	has helped make pro bono a visible, valued, and routine part of how the Legal Department operates.
Recognitions/Awards	The Wells Fargo Legal Department maintains an internal site that regularly highlights the Pro Bono Program, including volunteer spotlights, program updates, and recognition of individual and team contributions. The Program and its volunteers have also received consistent external recognition from law firm partners, legal services organizations, bar associations, and community groups. These recognitions reflect both the breadth of the Program and the strength of its partnerships. In recent years, the Legal Department has been honored with numerous awards, including multiple recognitions from Hogan Lovells Cadwalader*†, Wickersham & Taft LLP in 2025 and 2026 for outstanding pro bono collaboration and commitment to expanding access to justice. The Department also received the Mecklenburg Bar Association's 2026 Collaborative Pro Bono Impact Award for the Charlotte-based Wills for Warriors program, as well as the Volunteers of Legal Services (VOLS) Pro Bono Excellence Award in New York. Recognition from legal services organizations further underscores the Program's impact across regions and practice areas. These honors include the Joseph R. Bartylak Award for Outstanding Pro Bono Service (Land of Lincoln Legal Aid) awarded to the St. Louis Legal Department in 2025, and the Pro Bono Hero Award from Legal Aid of North Carolina recognizing Wells Fargo's leadership and contributions to the Charlotte Triage Pro Bono Partnership. Individual Legal Department volunteers and leaders have also been recognized for their contributions to pro bono service. These honors include Mandy Schuller's Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award from the Charlotte Business Journal Corporate Counsel Awards, John Clark's President's Award from Counsel for Justice in Los Angeles, and recognition of Todd Stillerman for outstanding pro bono leadership and service, including honors from Lawyers Weekly and Mecklenburg County bar organizations. At the national level, the Wells Fargo Legal Department and General Counsel Ellen Patterson were awarded Pro Bono Institute's 2026 Laurie D. Zelon Pro Bono Award, recognizing exceptional leadership and sustained commitment to pro bono service across the Department.
Tracking Pro Bono	The Program currently uses a combination of tools and processes to track participation and outcomes, and is actively enhancing its capabilities to support more comprehensive reporting and data-driven program management.
Partnerships	Partnerships are central to the Program's success. Wells Fargo collaborates with: • Law firms

	• Legal services organizations • Corporate legal department peers These partnerships provide training, supervision, and additional capacity, enabling volunteers to take on impactful representations while continuing to develop professionally.
Professional Liability	The Program is supported by a dedicated professional liability policy, supplemented by coverage from partner organizations as appropriate.
Involvement of Paralegals and Staff	Paralegals and administrative professionals are actively encouraged to participate in all aspects of the Program and are integral to its success. The Program is intentionally designed to be inclusive of legal professionals across roles, with opportunities to contribute meaningfully through clinics, client intake, and ongoing representations. Paralegals and staff not only participate but also serve in leadership roles, including as Local Coordinators and members of the Pro Bono Steering Committee. This broad-based engagement reflects the Legal Department's view that pro bono is a shared responsibility and a "team sport," and it has been a key driver of the Program's scale, impact, and collaborative culture.
Pro Bono Projects	
Housing and Economic Stability	In Charlotte, volunteers supported housing-related matters through Lawyer on the Line clinics and the Charlotte Triage Pro Bono Partnership, working with the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy, Legal Aid of North Carolina, and law firm partners including McGuireWoods[*†], Moore & Van Allen[†], Cadwalader, Bradley[*†], Dechert[*] and Womble Bond Dickinson[*†], to provide advice and intake support on landlord-tenant issues.
Veterans Services	In Los Angeles, volunteers partnered with Counsel for Justice to support veterans through clinics and program initiatives, including work tied to the Veterans Legal Service Project and related pro bono activities.
Estate Planning (Wills for Warriors)	In Charlotte, the Wills for Warriors program—conducted with McGuireWoods and the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy, with support from the Wells Fargo Foundation—provided wills, powers of attorney, and advance directives to low-income veterans and their families, with more than 50 volunteers assisting approximately 25 clients in the most recent clinic.
Family Law	In Charlotte, volunteers partnered with Council for Children's Rights and Safe Alliance to support child custody and domestic violence matters, assisting individuals seeking safety and stability.
Health Care	In St. Louis, volunteers partnered with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Bryan Cave[*†], and Citi[**] to assist with healthcare directives and powers of attorney, and across offices in 2025 supported healthcare access initiatives during open enrollment through client outreach efforts.
Civil Legal Aid Clinics	In Chicago and Des Moines, volunteers worked with Legal Aid Chicago and DLA Piper[*†] to staff virtual legal clinics, conducting client intake, consultation with supervising attorneys, and delivery of real-time legal advice on civil matters.

Criminal Expungement	In Chicago, volunteers partnered with Legal Aid Chicago to staff expungement clinics in 2025, screening clients and preparing petitions to clear eligible records.
Driver's License Restoration	Across multiple offices, volunteers worked with the North Carolina Pro Bono Resource Center to help clients restore driver's licenses, improving access to employment and services.
Immigration	Volunteers across multiple offices supported immigration matters: in California, partnering with Latham & Watkins[*†]; in Minneapolis, partnering with Faegre Drinker[*†] and the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota; and in Charlotte, working with the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases.
Multi-Office & Virtual Clinics	Volunteers in Chicago, New York (NYLAG-related initiatives), and other offices supported structured intake and virtual clinics, including collaboration with Chicago Volunteer Legal Services and multi-office pro bono efforts tied to expanded virtual programming in 2025–2026.
Triage	The Charlotte Triage Pro Bono Partnership—led by Wells Fargo, Bank of America[**], Duke Energy[**], McGuireWoods, and Moore & Van Allen—continued in 2026 to provide coordinated client intake, legal triage, and referrals across housing, benefits, and immigration matters. PBI recognized the Charlotte Triage with the 2020 CPBO Pro Bono Partner Award, which celebrates innovative pro bono partnerships between law firms, in-house legal departments, and public interest organizations. Trained on a pre-recorded webinar and supervised by legal staff, volunteers performed intake for clients dealing with a wide range of issues from immigration to housing law through New York Legal Assistance Group's Mobile Legal Help Center in 2025. With Chicago Volunteer Legal Services in 2025, Wells Fargo employees also used a structured intake form to assess clients' needs, prepare them initial legal information, and match them with a volunteer attorney for their case.
Lessons Learned	
Make pro bono a team sport.	The Program is deliberately structured so that attorneys, paralegals, and administrative professionals are all expected to participate meaningfully. This inclusive approach is not aspirational—it is operational. By embedding pro bono across roles and creating leadership opportunities at every level, the Program has built a culture where participation is the norm and shared ownership drives both scale and impact.
Build signature programs that create momentum.	Recurring initiatives such as Wills for Warriors and the Charlotte Triage Pro Bono Partnership demonstrate the power of sustained, repeatable programming. These are not one-off events—they are embedded platforms that deepen institutional knowledge, strengthen partnerships, and generate increasing volunteer enthusiasm and client impact year over year.

Leverage partnerships as force multipliers.	The Program relies on deeply integrated partnerships with law firms, nonprofits (including PBI) and legal services organizations. These partners provide training, supervision, and infrastructure, enabling volunteers to engage confidently and allowing the Program to scale across offices and practice areas without sacrificing quality or consistency.
Make pro bono part of the routine through tradition.	The **Financial Institution Pro Bono Day®** (**FIPBD®**) event has become a signature moment for the Program each year. Rather than treating pro bono as episodic, the Program uses FIPBD as a recurring anchor—building anticipation, reinforcing expectations for participation, and integrating pro bono into the ordinary rhythm of the Legal Department. Over time, this consistency has driven engagement, increased visibility, and helped establish pro bono as a regular part of how the Department operates.
Design for flexibility to unlock participation at scale.	The Program intentionally offers a range of entry points—including one-hour clinics, virtual opportunities, and longer-term representations—to meet volunteers where they are. This flexibility removes barriers to participation, expands access across offices and roles, and sustains engagement by allowing individuals to participate in ways that fit their schedules and interests.
Empower local leadership within a coordinated model.	A globally coordinated, locally led structure allows each office to build programs that respond directly to community needs—while still benefiting from shared infrastructure and best practices. This model has enabled offices such as Charlotte, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Minneapolis to develop distinct areas of strength while contributing to a cohesive, department-wide program.
Focus relentlessly on community-driven impact.	The Program prioritizes initiatives that address urgent and tangible community needs—such as housing stability, healthcare access, immigration, and economic mobility. This focus ensures that pro bono efforts are not only well-supported internally, but also clearly relevant and impactful in the communities where the Legal Department operates.

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