

IN-HOUSE PRO BONO IN PRACTICE PROFILE: AT&T

August 2018

In 2009, AT&T formalized its pro bono program and became a **Corporate Pro Bono Challenge**[®] 100 signatory in 2010. Since then, the program has grown under the leadership and direction of David McAtee, Senior Executive Vice President and General Counsel of AT&T Inc. Since becoming General Counsel in 2015, McAtee has empowered AT&T attorneys and legal department staff to build on the department’s commitment to pro bono. AT&T’s pro bono program is well-organized, with a national pro bono committee and five regional subcommittees. This structure allows AT&T to set companywide goals and to tailor efforts to the needs of each region. The pro bono program also uses online resources to track pro bono hours and circulate information about pro bono projects among AT&T’s large legal team of over 500 attorneys and 200 non-attorney staff.

AT&T attorneys participate in more than 40 approved programs, ranging from representing low-income clients in immigration matters to clinics to prepare wills to staffing a legal services hotline. Over the years, AT&T has learned valuable lessons about increasing attorney engagement and staff participation in pro bono programs, which include offering a diversity of projects and partnering with law firms or other organizations to collaborate on longer term and more involved projects.

General Program Information	
Offices with Legal Staff	HQ: Dallas, TX; Other U.S. offices: Atlanta, GA; Bedminster, NJ; Chicago, IL; El Segundo, CA; Houston, TX; New York, NY; Redmond, WA; St. Louis, MO; and Washington, DC
Size of Legal Department	500+ attorneys and 200+ non-attorneys
Pro Bono Leadership Structure	AT&T’s national Pro Bono Committee, led by two co-chairs, administers the department-wide pro bono program. The national Pro Bono Committee is responsible for managing the overall budget, serving as liaison to the general counsel and senior leadership team, guiding the direction of AT&T’s pro bono efforts, and ensuring consistency across the program. Additionally, five regional subcommittees, each headed by co-chairs, plan events and oversee approved regional funds. Together, the national and regional co-chairs serve on the Pro Bono Committee’s Executive Committee.
Pro Bono Policy	AT&T’s formal pro bono policy supports and encourages, but does not require, its attorneys to volunteer to provide direct legal services to persons of limited means, to take on human rights and public rights law matters, and to provide legal services to charitable, religious, civic, governmental, artistic, educational, professional, or similar organization who cannot pay customary legal fees. The policy does not set an hourly goal. The policy provides that volunteers may do

	pro bono work during their regular work hours. The policy also explains the approval process for pro bono projects.
Mandatory Pro Bono	Pro bono participation is not required. Volunteers are encouraged to follow the ABA's recommendation of at least 50 pro bono hours annually or to follow the guidance of the state in which the attorney is licensed.
Communications	AT&T has a dedicated pro bono email account and an intranet site to publish opportunities and track RSVPs. The national Pro Bono Committee publishes a quarterly newsletter highlighting past activities and future opportunities, and some of the regional committees also provide newsletter updates.
Recognitions/Awards	At the annual AT&T legal conference, the national Pro Bono Committee recognizes one attorney from each region with the AT&T Regional Excellence in Pro Bono Award. Additionally, one of the regional winners is selected as the AT&T National Pro Bono Award Winner. Attorneys also have the opportunity to detail external representation, which includes pro bono and community engagement efforts, in the annual attorney evaluation process.
Tracking Pro Bono	Volunteers have the option to track pro bono hours on the AT&T Volunteerism portal.
Partnerships	In 2017, AT&T and Akin Gump co-sponsored a two-year Equal Justice Works Fellow to work on veterans' cases. AT&T also collaborates with other firms and legal aid organizations to offer clinics and provide representation in pro bono matters.
Professional Liability	Historically, legal services organizations and law firms working with AT&T have provided insurance coverage for pro bono matters. In 2018, AT&T purchased malpractice insurance through the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA) program.
Non-Lawyer Involvement	Administrative staff, legal assistants, paralegals, and other managers work alongside attorneys in delivering pro bono services. Non-lawyers are eligible to serve on the national Pro Bono Committee and the regional subcommittees.
Pro Bono Projects	
<i>Veterans</i>	Veterans Consortium. Since September 2017, AT&T has partnered with Akin Gump to fund a two-year Equal Justice Works Fellowship at the Veterans Consortium to help veterans obtain a discharge upgrade when they have received an other than honorable discharge due to post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. Pro bono attorneys from AT&T and Akin Gump work with the Equal Justice Works Fellow to deliver legal services to veterans. AT&T also hosts a legal clinic for veterans in Dallas and participates in other clinics in various cities.

<i>Immigration</i>	National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC). AT&T attorneys, paralegals and assistants provide pro bono representation in immigration-related cases through the NIJC's asylum, DACA, U-visa, and VAWA programs.
<i>Nonprofits</i>	Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta. Lawyers provide legal advice to nonprofits in the Atlanta area regarding issues including employment, real estate, corporate law, and contracts.
<i>Legal Clinics</i>	Lawyers participate in many other pro bono projects, including staffing a telephone hotline to answer callers' legal questions, and hosting a clinic to prepare wills for those who cannot afford legal counsel.
Lessons Learned	
<i>Leadership Support Drives Engagement</i>	When leadership sends the message that pro bono is supported, members of the legal department feel empowered and encouraged to take time away from their busy schedules to engage in pro bono efforts.
<i>Value In Pro Bono</i>	Pro bono opportunities provide attorneys with opportunities to donate their unique legal and professional services. Lawyers provide individual clients with equal access to justice and offer non-profits the same legal acumen that for-profit corporations receive.
<i>Offer Opportunities With Defined Time Commitments</i>	Offering discrete projects such as clinics, staffing hotlines, or transactional projects increases attorney pro bono engagement, because volunteers can plan to provide pro bono service during a defined time period.
<i>Recognize Pro Bono Efforts</i>	Recognizing employees for their pro bono efforts, both as part of overall attorney evaluation and engagement and through the Pro Bono Awards, goes a long way towards increasing participation.
<i>Seek Partnerships</i>	Partnering with law firms or other legal aid organizations to take on pro bono cases and share the workload helps to drive attorney engagement in pro bono.

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