

/ Pro Bono and Sponsor Engagement Opportunities

Equal Justice Works Fellowships are sponsored (funded) by law firms, corporations, foundations, and individuals. Most Fellowship sponsors are interested in engaging in some capacity with the Fellows they fund, whether it be on legal pro bono projects, other volunteer opportunities, and/or Fellow meetings and presentations. Many law firm and corporate sponsors may choose candidates to interview, and ultimately select the Fellow they fund, based on opportunities for pro bono involvement.

The EJW Fellowship application includes a question on potential pro bono and other engagement opportunities that may be available to sponsors through your project. While some commonalities may exist within a particular category of sponsors - for example, corporate sponsors often prefer discrete, time-limited pro bono opportunities like legal clinics and are unlikely to participate in pro bono impact litigation - sponsors vary widely in terms of their interests and capacity, as well as their team composition and location. Given this variation, we encourage candidates to work closely with their host organization to think broadly and creatively about providing a range or “menu” of potential opportunities for both attorney and non-attorney volunteers, from discrete, “bite-size” opportunities (e.g. legal clinics, research projects, etc.) to longer-term opportunities (e.g. full client representation, impact litigation, etc.).

We suggest candidates consider the following:

- What opportunities would be available for in-person volunteers and what opportunities could be available virtually, including for volunteers who may be based outside of the geographic service area of your project?
- Will the opportunity require locally licensed attorneys who can enter their appearance in local courts? This is an important consideration for staffing projects.
- What volume/size of teams will the project require? Sponsors may be looking for projects where they can engage a higher volume of volunteers on a short-term project, projects which will require a smaller team over a longer period of time, and everything in between.
- If the pro bono opportunity involves litigation, who might the potential parties be? This is important as sponsors consider positional and specific conflicts.
- What training and support will pro bono volunteers receive from the Fellow and host organization?



COMMON TYPES OF PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

While the specific nature of your project will inform the types of opportunities that may be available, below are some common types of pro bono and engagement opportunities. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but rather provide examples to support you as you work with your host organization to complete this section of the application in connection with your specific project.

Pro Bono Clinics

Many Fellows select an element of their work suitable for intake, advice or limited representation, then organize a pro bono legal clinic to serve clients. Attorneys and staff from the sponsoring law firm and/or corporation team up, working together to provide advice, referrals or pro se support during a half-day or whole-day event. Clinics may be conducted in-person or virtually. Clinics are often an appealing option for sponsors who appreciate opportunities to directly engage with clients but may not be able to commit beyond a discrete, time-limited opportunity. Sponsors may be interested in including other members of their team, such as paralegals and legal assistants, who may be able to serve as volunteers on legal teams alongside attorneys, support clinic intake or serve as translators.

Legal Research and Developing Training Materials

Sponsors may be interested in assisting Fellows with legal research projects to address particular legal questions, provide country-conditions research for an immigration case, or gather information about a particular legal issue across jurisdictions (e.g. a 50-state survey). The bite-size nature of research projects may appeal to a range of volunteers, including junior associates and summer associates at law firms. Fellows also sometimes work with attorneys and staff at the sponsoring firm or corporate legal department to research and draft the content of handbooks and Know Your Rights materials. Sponsors may bring additional expertise and resources to bear, such as in design assistance, in supporting Fellows in the creation of these materials. Volunteers help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Fellow's project by creating resources to be used by those working on these issues in the future.

Direct Representation or Litigation Matters

Sponsors may be interested in taking on direct client representation or litigation, either fully or as co-counsel with the Fellow/host organization. Fellows whose projects involve appellate or impact litigation may have opportunities particularly appealing for large law firms, whose skills and resources are invaluable when taking on extensive and complex matters. Please consider whether discrete, more limited opportunities may be available within a larger litigation matter (e.g. briefing motions, amicus briefs, expert attorney preparation, mootings).



Transactional Projects

Transactional pro bono projects are especially rewarding for non-litigators in firms and attorneys working in corporate law departments and who may be unlikely to participate in litigation-related opportunities. Sponsors may be interested in learning about opportunities to work with their Fellows on pro bono projects surrounding issues such as nonprofit governance, community economic development, and microfinance. These opportunities may also lend themselves well to a clinic model.

Opportunities for Non-Lawyers

Many sponsors are interested in ways their law firm or corporate legal department's non-attorney staff, such as paralegals and legal assistants, can get involved and support the work of the project. Additionally, some sponsors may have areas of expertise outside of legal within their entities that can offer support such as in data analysis and marketing. Sponsors may also wish to learn about ways volunteers could support events that benefit the Fellow's clients and their communities, such as volunteering at a Know Your Rights event, Back-to-School event or client holiday gathering.