

POLICY RESEARCH:

Organizations working on social problems, even at the most grassroots level, need to support such work with an understanding of the larger issues. Many Network volunteers assist with policy research on a range of issues. One Network volunteer works one day a week at a child welfare organization assisting with research on different models of administration for child welfare agencies.

PROGRAM EVALUATION:

Often organizations do not have sufficient staff time or resources to evaluate their own efforts. Such needs can be turned into volunteer projects. One Network volunteer was placed with an educational nonprofit that designs bias-free curriculums. The organization had received funding to implement their curriculum in four schools but funding had ended and the organization was unable to do follow-up to determine the impact of the curriculum at the schools. The volunteer designed and implemented an evaluation project, involving interviews with school administrators and teachers.

BOARD MEMBERSHIP:

Many of our clients, from junior to senior level attorneys, want to use their skills and experience to help an organization steer its development. Serving on a board of directors is a wonderful way for them to do so. This type of placement offers the opportunity to become intimately acquainted with the mission of the organization and the field within which it operates. Our clients are interested in active board memberships that challenge and stimulate them with projects.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS:

Many nonprofits serve at-risk or indigent populations whose stories are not collected or saved through mainstream avenues. Volunteers have expressed interest in working with nonprofits to develop an oral history of its clientele. This type of project could take many forms: for example, the volunteer could collect and reproduce the oral histories, or the volunteer could coordinate the involvement of local community members in the project. The finished project could be useful for the organization in its fundraising efforts.

INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY:

Similar to the oral history idea, organizations themselves often have interesting stories behind their founding and development that risk being lost. A volunteer could help an organization archive its materials, interview founders or former staff, and write an institutional history of the group. This could dovetail with policy or other research about the field in which the group works to produce a thorough look at the uniqueness of the organization.

WORKSHOPS COORDINATORS:

Does your organization offer workshops to your staff or to the clientele you serve? Network volunteers have a diverse set of skills that might make them the perfect candidates to run a workshop. Possible topics are endless, depending on what your organization needs: everything from education about legal rights to how to run a good meeting. One Network volunteer has worked with a labor rights' organization running workshops for workers planning union drives to help them strategize and to teach them their rights in the workplace.

STRATEGIC PLANNING / PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:

As organizations plan new projects or expand current ones, they often benefit from having outside input on direction, speed, and scope of such plans. Some nonprofits the Network works with have established "taskforces" of interested and skilled parties, including Network volunteer attorneys, to serve as advisors. The extensive business experience of many Network clients, particularly senior or retired attorneys, is immensely important during such times. One Network volunteer assisted a grassroots organization that offers work skills training to women on welfare as an alternative to workfare assignments. The organization received funding to develop an internship program with the corporate sector for graduates of its program. The volunteer joined a taskforce to help with all aspects of this new project, from finding internship sites to publicizing the program.

PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS:

Do you want to spread the message of your organization to the public? Do you want to make accessible to the broader community the developments in the field, changes in legislation, and/or your suggestions of how to respond? Do you want to teach community members what their rights are? Network volunteers have helped coordinate public education campaigns and write "Know Your Rights" brochures. One volunteer assembled a list of resources available to cancer patients for alternative funding for treatments, which has been produced as a brochure. The brochure targets those who have been denied by their insurance companies and those who are uninsured.

ABOUT THE NETWORK

The City Bar Public Service Network, a program at the City Bar Justice Center, links the legal and public service communities by placing attorneys as volunteers with nonprofit organizations. The Network works closely with the organizations and the potential volunteers to develop volunteer projects that meet the organizations' needs and the volunteers' interests. Network clients range from recent law school graduates to senior and retired attorneys. Network projects generally vary from a five to thirty five hour a week commitment.

Volunteer Attorneys and Non-Legal Projects

Nonprofits often assume that volunteer attorneys are only interested in legal volunteer work. However, lawyers are often interested in taking a break from their legal careers to volunteer in a non-legal capacity. Indeed, the skills lawyers have gained through training and work experience can be used in capacities that reach far beyond strictly legal matters. There are many innovative ways to put to work lawyers' analytic, writing, strategic thinking, and research skills. Included inside are examples of possible non-legal projects. The Network is happy to work with interested organizations to brainstorm ideas, identify unmet needs, and develop well-designed projects. If you or an organization you are involved with is interested in learning more, please contact us.

To get involved as a volunteer with the Network, or for more information on how your organization can take advantage of the Network's services, contact :

Laura Kolesar
(212) 382-6759
lkolesar@nycbar.org

City Bar Public Service Network
42 West 44th Street
New York, NY 10036-6689
(212) 382-6759
fax: (212) 221-5318
cpsn@nycbar.org
www.citybarjusticecenter.org

The Network is a program of the City Bar Justice Center. The Justice Center improves access to justice for poor New Yorkers through provision of legal services by pro bono attorneys, assistance to the self-represented, and direct representation.

City Bar Public
Service Network

**IDEAS
FOR
NON-LEGAL
VOLUNTEER
PROJECTS
FOR
ATTORNEYS**