



Guideline 10: Structuring a legal team, which allows for the delegation of work, may enable strategic litigators to work on a case pro-bono or at a reduced fee.

Experts tip: Working with pro-bono lawyers

Many law firms provide free (*pro-bono*) assistance to public interest organisations. This can be a useful way to mobilise additional legal resources and expertise to support your case. However, while it may not cost money, it does require planning and investment of time – to define the tasks and timelines, provide the necessary background information, respond to requests for clarification, provide feedback on drafts, meet with the lawyers, and keep to schedule.

Pro-bono lawyers can assist in a range of ways, from early legal research when scoping potential cases, to targeted support for a case you are developing, to litigating a case on your behalf. It is crucial that you are clear at the outset – with yourself, and with the *pro-bono* lawyers – what assistance you are seeking and what role you see the *pro-bono* lawyers playing in your case. Support options can include:

1. obtaining and analysing evidence, whether access to information requests, searches of government records, obtaining corporate records, or interviewing witnesses;
2. conducting legal research on comparative law, on the interpretation of current or proposed legislation or regulations;
3. identifying potential legal claims, or advising on the strengths and weaknesses of legal claims that you have identified; or
4. assisting in the litigation itself by preparing court documents, advising on litigation strategy, or even acting as counsel.

Once you know what types of support you need, there are various ways to seek out *pro-bono* assistance. Many large firms have a *pro-bono* coordinator, who you can contact directly. Sometimes it can be easier to seek the assistance of an organisation that coordinates *pro-bono* assistance from multiple firms, especially for early-stage research. The [International Lawyers Project \(ILP\)](#), [International Senior Lawyers Project \(ISLP\)](#), and [PILNet](#) are examples with international reach. Specific countries, states, cities, and even bar associations may have their own *pro-bono* or public interest committees and organisations.

Regardless of whether you are contacting directly or through a coordinator, any firm will typically want to know about your organisation, its mission, what sort of assistance you are seeking, how it will be used, and the other parties that are involved in potential litigation. All firms and lawyers will need to run a check for conflicts of interest, and this can be a major challenge in getting large firms to assist in cases against major corporations who may be a client of the firms in other matters.