probono.net



BRIDGING
THE JUSTICE GAP

Pro Bono Net
2011 Annual Report

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS



Since its founding in 1998, Pro Bono Net has been at the forefront of our community's efforts to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to narrow the justice gap. Our core programs—probono.net, LawHelp.org, LawHelp Interactive, Immigration Advocates Network, LiveHelp and Pro Bono Manager—connect poor people to information and tools that empower them to help themselves; connect volunteer lawyers to pro bono opportunities, training and support; and build the capacity of nonprofit organizations, courts and other justice allies to scale their efforts.

The need for our services has only increased as more Americans find themselves living near or below the poverty line, even as funding for legal aid declines. Against this backdrop, technology can have a powerful multiplier effect, allowing pro bono and legal services organizations to do more with less, facilitating collaboration and giving individuals more power to protect their rights. We see this every day when our programs provide access to critically needed legal information in rural Texas, assist a lawful permanent resident to naturalize via a Spanish-language online interview, or make it easier for a pro bono attorney to help a client avoid losing her home to foreclosure.

In the following pages, you will learn how, in collaboration with our partners nationwide, we are leveraging technology to overcome barriers to justice. We are very proud of what we have accomplished together over the past year, and pleased to share with you these examples of how Pro Bono Net is bridging the justice gap.

Mark O'Brien

Executive Director, Pro Bono Net

Allison McDermott

Deputy Director, Pro Bono Net



Since its founding in 1998, Pro Bono Net has been a pioneering force in using innovative technologies to help bridge the justice gap.



BRIDGING THE JUSTICE GAP

Today, almost 1 in 6 Americans are living in poverty. Even more shockingly, 1 in 3 Americans live below 150% of the poverty guidelines. Virtually all of these people will have great difficulty paying an attorney when faced with a civil legal issue that may lead to the loss of their housing, income or even their children. Increasing poverty, coupled with decreased funding for legal services, means that millions of people are forced to navigate an often incomprehensible system with no help at all. The societal costs of failing to address these problems include increased homelessness, more families being broken apart, and even the risk of injury or death.

Since our founding in 1998, Pro Bono Net has been a pioneering force in using innovative technologies to help bridge the justice gap. Over the past 14 years, Pro Bono Net has empowered the public interest legal community nationwide to improve its knowledge sharing, increase private attorney involvement, provide better tools for self-help and enhance collaboration. Our core programs—probono.net, LawHelp.org, LawHelp Interactive, Immigration Advocates Network, LiveHelp and Pro Bono Manager—help thousands of people every day, and millions each year, address potentially devastating legal issues.

As a leader in incorporating technology and collaboration into legal service delivery, Pro Bono Net is addressing significant barriers faced by legal aid organizations struggling to provide services with shrinking resources, and by individuals unable to secure the assistance of an attorney. By helping to overcome a range of different obstacles, Pro Bono Net's innovative programs are helping to bridge the justice gap.

probono.net membership increased by

150%

FROM 2006 – 2011

Our Core Programs

probono.net

LawHelp.org

LawHelp Interactive

Immigration Advocates Network

Pro Bono Manager

LiveHelp



BRIDGING GAPS

IN GEOGRAPHY

Even in populous states, there is a disparity in the availability of and need for legal services in remote areas. In more rural states, this issue is particularly glaring. In Montana, the statewide legal aid program has a service area that spans more than 800 miles—roughly the distance from New York to Chicago. Pro Bono Net worked with the Montana Legal Services Association and other local partners on a project that placed legal assistance kiosks in public libraries and courthouses in eastern Montana, where the drive to access services can be more than 100 miles.

The kiosks allow people to easily access MontanaLawHelp.org, part of the national LawHelp.org network of nonprofit legal information portals developed by Pro Bono Net, which connects people with free online legal referrals, information about common civil legal issues and self-help tools. Those who have trouble navigating the site can turn to LiveHelp, a real-time, chat-based support service developed by Pro Bono Net for use on LawHelp sites. A trained navigator helps guide the user to needed resources. This service is particularly valuable for those with low literacy, limited English proficiency, or who are uncomfortable navigating online.

LiveHelp is used on sites in ten states, and in 2011 nearly 12,000 visitors used it to find vitally needed information and referrals. The LawHelp network assists more than 4.3 million visitors per year in 25 states nationwide. A redesign deployed in 2011 made it more accessible and user-friendly, and enables better use of multimedia and multilingual resources. We also secured funding to develop a mobile version of LawHelp.



LawHelp Network

USED IN **25** STATES NATIONWIDE

ASSISTING

4.3M VISITORS PER YEAR

"Without the collaboration with Pro Bono Net, Montana Legal Services wouldn't be able to do half of what we can do to help people. We've had success getting information to domestic violence victims that live in rural locations where their abuser is watching every move they make. They can go down to the library and get on the computer and say they're getting books for their kids but actually get information about how to be safe."

–Alison Paul, Executive Director,
Montana Legal Services Association

BRIDGING GAPS

IN LANGUAGE

Language and culture are two significant factors that can prevent meaningful access to legal information and services. Pro Bono Net, in partnership with the Immigration Advocates Network and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, is helping immigrants overcome obstacles to navigating the citizenship process with CitizenshipWorks.org.

CitizenshipWorks provides easy-to-use, online tools to help low-income individuals answer important questions about their eligibility for naturalization, better understand the naturalization process and prepare for the naturalization tests. Resources are available in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese. In addition to its use by individuals, the service is used by nonprofits that provide free or low-cost naturalization application services, often in the context of group processing workshops that allow large numbers of people to receive services.

CitizenshipWorks improves the quantity, quality and efficiency of naturalization legal services, reducing the overall cost to both organizations and individuals. It also empowers clients to take a more active and informed role in the naturalization process. CitizenshipWorks was recognized with the 2012 Webby Award for Best Law Site.



"CitizenshipWorks is a great illustration of how to use the power of technology to increase your impact."

-Manuel J. Santamaria, Grantmaking Director at Silicon Valley Community Foundation

IN SUPPORT

In recent years, courts have seen rising numbers of unrepresented litigants who must navigate a bewildering system with little guidance. In New York alone, 2.3 million people a year navigate the State's complex civil justice system without an attorney. Studies have shown that 99% of defendants in consumer debt and landlord-tenant cases have no lawyer, leaving them on their own in an incredibly intimidating and stressful situation. The rising number of unrepresented litigants also puts extra pressure on court staff and contributes to delays and increased costs throughout the court system, which is struggling to manage a significant budget reduction.

A major source of relief for both unrepresented litigants and court staff in New York is a series of "do-it-yourself" legal forms developed by the court using LawHelp Interactive, the national online document assembly service operated by Pro Bono Net. The DIY forms, available online and in court self-help centers, help litigants prepare personalized, ready-to-file forms by leading them through a series of simple questions.

A 2011 case study on the New York Courts concluded: "By building and hosting DIY court forms with LawHelp Interactive, the NY State Unified Court System is improving access to justice for unrepresented litigants, easing the administrative burden on court staff, and working within its tightening resources."

New York is one of 26 states using LawHelp Interactive, with at least a dozen more in the process of implementing the service. By providing a national infrastructure that also includes training and technical assistance, and promoting cross-jurisdictional sharing of templates and best practices, Pro Bono Net enables the creation and distribution of online forms and the sharing of expertise with minimal cost and effort. Nationwide, more than 300,000 forms were completed using LawHelp Interactive during 2011, a 47% increase over the prior year.

LawHelp Interactive was used to complete more than

300,000

FORMS NATIONWIDE IN 2011

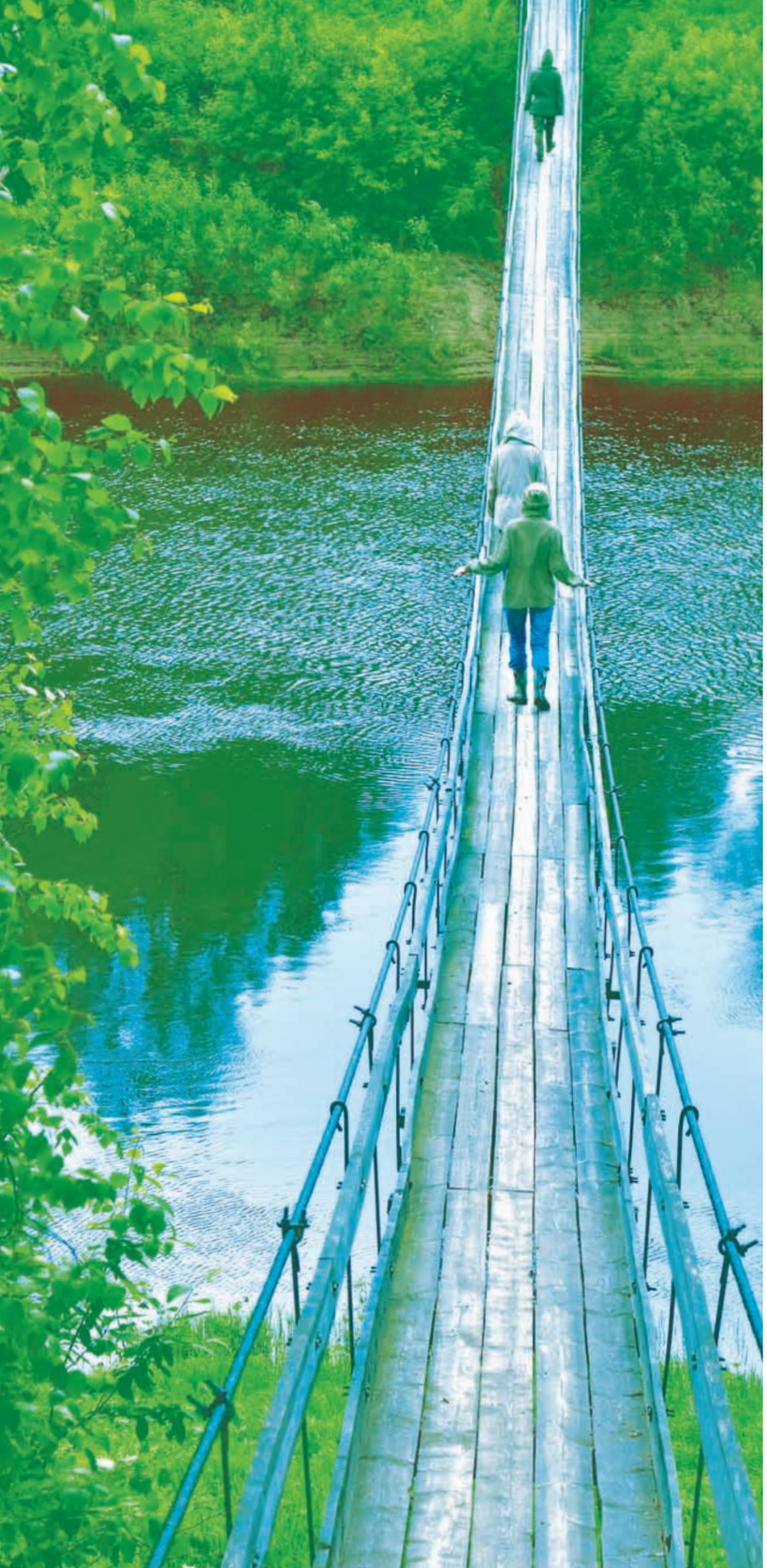
47%

INCREASE FROM 2010

"Extremely helpful and easy to use—more convenient than reading lengthy instructions in court and nervously filling them out. Thank you"

–LawHelp Interactive User, Chicago, Illinois





BRIDGING GAPS

IN CAPACITY

At a time when legal services organizations and pro bono programs are trying to do more with less, Pro Bono Net plays a unique role, providing technology, bolstering collaboration and sharing information to ensure best practices. The probono.net network of sites for pro bono and legal services attorneys provides training, practice resources and information to thousands of attorneys nationwide, and allows legal services organizations to recruit and engage volunteers. The probono.net platform also ensures that other technology tools, such as online legal forms, are fully leveraged.

"Pro Bono Manager is one of our key management tools...connecting lawyers to pro bono opportunities of interest and putting controls and procedures in place to assure that our pro bono clients are receiving the same high level of service provided to our paying clients."

–Thomas A. Gottschalk, Of Counsel, Kirkland & Ellis

In Minnesota, for example, Legal Services State Support and local partners used LawHelp Interactive to build an online tool to help pro bono attorneys take on expungement cases—a serious need in a state where all encounters with the criminal justice system, including brief encounters with police, minor charges, and decades-old convictions, generate publicly accessible records that can prevent someone from getting a job or renting a home.

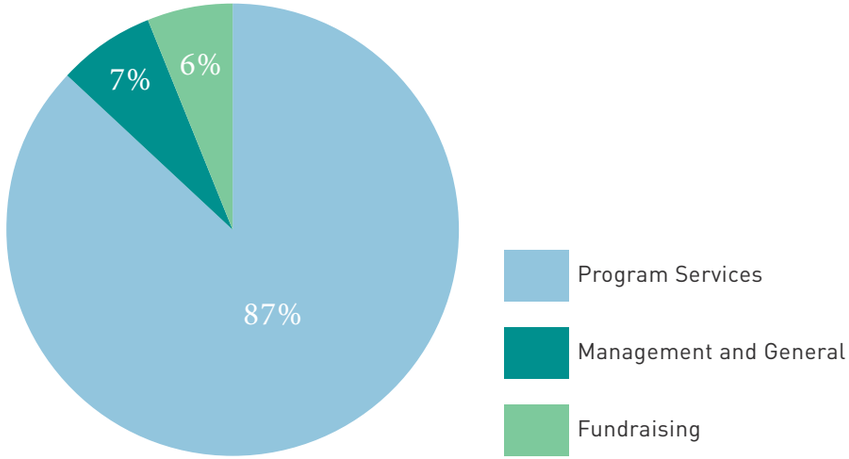
The expungement tool is accessible on ProJusticeMN, Minnesota's statewide website for pro bono and legal aid attorneys, part of the probono.net network. It's thus available to attorneys in rural parts of the state, as well as those participating in a monthly clinic run by Dorsey & Whitney, a Minneapolis law firm. Legal Services State Support was awarded the 2012 Law Technology News Innovation Award for Pro Bono in recognition of the expungement tool.

Pro Bono Net is also helping large law firms increase their pro bono capacity by helping them better manage their pro bono programs. Overseeing, monitoring and reporting on hundreds of pro bono matters, while also tracking the pro bono preferences and goals of hundreds of attorneys, is extremely time-consuming and labor-intensive. To address this, Pro Bono Net developed Pro Bono Manager, a pro bono practice management solution that is now used by a dozen large firms.

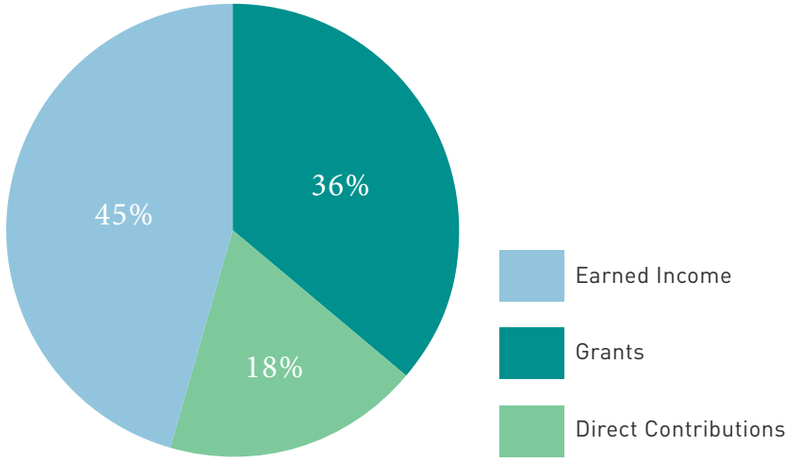
By streamlining the management and reporting involved in running a pro bono program, which can encompass hundreds of attorneys in multiple offices, Pro Bono Manager frees up more time for higher-value work such as forging new partnerships with nonprofit agencies and offering support to pro bono attorneys tackling a complex case or unfamiliar area of law. As an earned-income initiative, Pro Bono Manager also contributes to Pro Bono Net's overall sustainability.

FINANCIALS

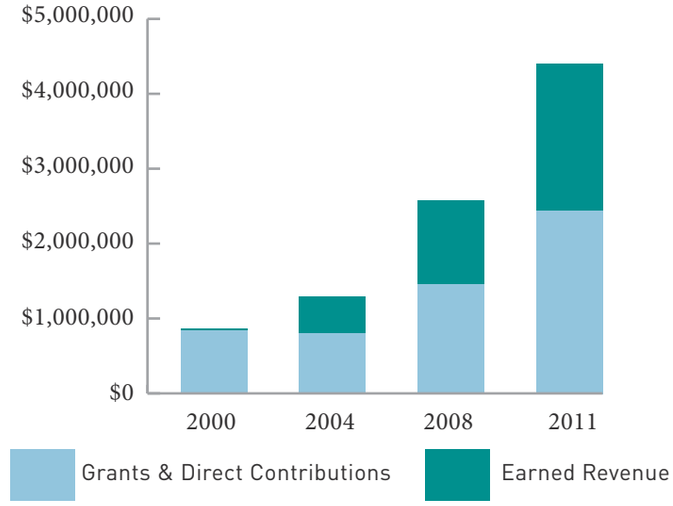
EXPENSES



INCOME DISTRIBUTION



REVENUE GROWTH



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the Year Ended December 31, 2011

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUE			
Contributions	$937,198	$926,003	$1,863,201
Corporate sponsorship	192,070		192,070
Donated software	42,262		42,262
Donated goods and services	469,465		469,465
Interest and other income	73,279		73,279
Program fees	1,286,513		1,286,513
Product subscription fees	465,338		465,338
Net assets released from restriction	298,716	(298,716)	–
Total support and revenue	3,764,841	627,287	4,392,128
EXPENSES			
Program services	3,297,554		3,297,554
Management and general	251,266		251,266
Fund raising	244,020		244,020
Total expenses	3,792,840	0	3,792,840
NET ASSETS			
Beginning	1,044,063	298,716	1,342,779
Change in Net Assets (Revenue minus Expenses)	(27,999)	627,287	599,288
Ending	$1,016,064	$926,003	$1,942,067

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LSI Foundation
Microsoft
Thomson Reuters

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Those listed below contributed $1,000 or more in 2011.

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Michael Hertz & Dorothy Thomas
John Knight
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Suzette Brooks Masters and Seth Masters
Michael Mills
Kenneth O'Brien
William Pollak
Stephen Warnke

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Among the more than 300 public interest legal organizations that have joined us in meeting the challenge of increasing access to justice by embracing collaboration and new technologies, the following partners merit special recognition:

NATIONAL LAWHELP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Jonathan Asher, Colorado Legal Services

Joan Fairbanks, Washington State Bar Association and Access to Justice Board

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Marc Lauritsen, Capstone Practice Systems

Betty Balli Torres, Texas Access to Justice Foundation

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American Bar Association Commission on Immigration

American Immigration Lawyers Association

American Immigration Council

ASISTA

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

National Immigration Law Center

National Immigration Project, NLG

The Advocates for Human Rights

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Weil Gotshal & Manges

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Legal Services Alabama

OneJustice

Colorado Legal Services

Florida Legal Services

Atlanta Legal Aid Society

Georgia Legal Services Program

Guam Legal Services Corporation

Legal Aid Society of Hawaii

Iowa Legal Aid

Southeast Louisiana Legal Services

Micronesia Legal Services Corporation

Legal Services State Support

Minnesota State Bar Association

North Mississippi Rural Legal Services

Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project

Mississippi Center for Legal Services

Montana Legal Services Association

Nevada Legal Services

LawHelp/NY Consortium

Legal Aid of North Carolina

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma

Pro Bono Law Ontario

Legal Aid Services of Oregon

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network

South Carolina Legal Services

Texas Legal Services Center

Virginia Poverty Law Center

Blue Ridge Legal Services

Northwest Justice Project

DC Bar Pro Bono Program

probono.net
lawyers serving the public good

LawHelp.org

LawHelp INTERACTIVE

Immigration Advocates NETWORK

probono MANAGER

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