

Strengthening Nonprofits Is Important for Recovery

Strengthening nonprofits and rebuilding a better New York are intertwined.

Since the pandemic began, nonprofits have found innovative ways to reach and support their communities, and they are playing a central role in our City's recovery and renewal, from providing food, shelter, and human services to connecting New Yorkers through the racial justice movement and community arts. Strengthening nonprofits and rebuilding a better New York are intertwined.

Lawyers Alliance has identified six elements critical to the success of nonprofits, especially during difficult times: mission, people, financial stability, facilities, technology, and relationships. Lawyers Alliance helps nonprofits address legal issues associated with each of these elements.

Mission

The charitable mission of a nonprofit organization creates an agenda for the services it will offer, who it will target for services, and how services are to be delivered. Legal assistance can help organizations review mission questions related to their corporate purposes, board oversight, and restricted funds, so they can make informed decisions and focus their resources on core services.

Case Example: Harlem Advocates for Seniors, a senior-led coalition focused on issues of concern to seniors, is bringing recreational, social, and cultural programs to where community members live. A team of volunteers from **Citibank** and **Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP** assessed the organization's legal needs during a pro bono clinic, and then the Skadden pro bono attorneys updated the organization's governance policies and procedures

to reflect best practices. This legal assistance is helping Harlem Advocates for Seniors to transition and grow during and beyond the pandemic. [Hear from the client](#) about the impact of pro bono in this video.

People

People drive mission. Stakeholders include staff, boards, donors, volunteers, and program participants. Understanding the legal framework can help nonprofits work through evolving personnel and operational questions, so that they can better engage people in hybrid and in-person activities.

Educational Example: In September 2021, Lawyers Alliance held an online Community Arts Roundtable, *Another Opening, Another Executive Order*. Pro bono counsel from **Sendroff & Baruch, LLP** and the Co-Artistic Director of **Heartbeat Opera** discussed the return to in-person community arts events, with the goal of filling seats while keeping audiences and performers safe. Forty roundtable participants gained useful information about vaccine and mask mandates; terms and conditions for audience members; and appropriate personnel protocols for cast, crew, and other staff members.

Financial Stability

Revenues and cash are essential to sustain programs. However, state and local government funding, philanthropic support, and fee-for-service revenues are limited. Legal assistance can help nonprofits navigate issues related to lending, borrowing, fundraising law, cost control, and sound fiscal management. Some organizations are pursuing strategic alliances to improve their financial stability and programmatic reach.

Case Example: This year, **Goddard Riverside**, a multi-service agency on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and **Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center**, serving individuals and families on the East Side, announced a strategic partnership to enhance the services that both organizations provide. Pro bono attorneys from **Lowenstein Sandler LLP** represented Goddard with the documentation of the partnership, resulting in a relationship that increases efficiencies and serves more than 26,000 City residents from Lincoln Square to East Harlem.

Goddard Riverside is a multi-service agency in Manhattan.

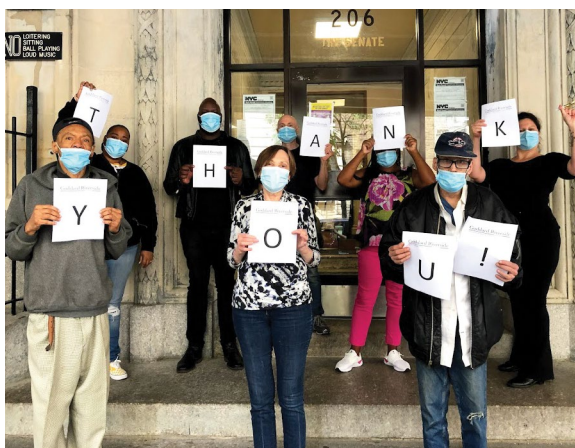


Photo Credit: Goddard Riverside

Facilities

For decades, the nonprofit sector has developed onsite community services to improve the lives of New Yorkers across the spectrum of need and neighborhood. The pandemic has tested that model. Lawyers can help organizations evaluate, negotiate, and renegotiate their real estate options to move forward.

Case Example: During the pandemic, **Grand Street Settlement**, a multi-service agency, has received legal assistance from a **Dechert LLP** real estate attorney on three leases, enabling it to expand its Early Head Start and Head Start programming for children up to age five in Brooklyn. The first lease is for a Head Start Childcare Center on 55th Street, and the newer ones are for spaces on 50th Street and Atlantic Avenue. The client reports that, because of pro bono counsel's "talented and professional support during the legal negotiations, Grand Street is able to provide high-quality child development programs for an additional 200+ families with children in areas of high need."

Technology

Increased use of digital communications brings new opportunities and new legal questions. Lawyers Alliance staff and volunteers are helping organizations with legal issues related to technology contracts, website activity, confidentiality of client and employee information, and ownership of intellectual property.

Case Example: With university students who serve as mentors, **Latinas On the Verge of Excellence** (L.O.V.E.) empowers young Latinas to strive for success. L.O.V.E. operated more of its programs virtually during the pandemic, helping young women pursue healthy lifestyles and college and career readiness. Pro bono counsel from **Linklaters LLP** is providing legal guidance related to L.O.V.E.'s website policy and data privacy procedures. Recently, pro bono counsel from **Arnold & Porter LLP** assisted with a whistleblower policy and document retention policy. [See a video clip](#) with words from the client and volunteers.

Relationships

Another vital resource is a nonprofit organization's network of relationships with external parties, such as subcontractors, partners, vendors, program participants, lenders, and creditors. As organizations work to build a better New York, many are exploring new or different arrangements. Legal assistance can help nonprofits establish and sustain better relationships for the longer term.

Case Example: During the pandemic, **Meals For Good** has been expanding its reach by partnering with community groups in East and Central Harlem so that more New Yorkers facing food insecurity can choose the food they want. Pro bono counsel from **Dentons US LLP** recently advised Meals For Good on its pilot project to distribute vouchers for groceries to those in need, including guidance on letters to the managers of two local supermarkets detailing the project and their participation. Through this effort, Meals For Good reached approximately 700 adults and more than 600 children, the majority of whom were immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and Africa.

Through these and other legal strategies, Lawyers Alliance staff and volunteers are ready and eager to help organizations navigate legal issues during the next stage of pandemic recovery and economic renewal.



Photo Credit: Grand Street Settlement

Grand Street has expanded its early childhood services in Brooklyn.