

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Singapore

Introduction

Singapore has a robust legal aid infrastructure, anchored by government-funded bodies such as the Legal Aid Bureau (which provides civil legal aid to persons of limited means)¹ and the Public Defender's Office (which provides criminal defence aid to those who cannot afford legal advice)². Despite this strong institutional framework, gaps remain; particularly for individuals who fall outside the merits and means-testing thresholds, and for marginalised communities such as migrant workers.³ Pro bono legal services play an important role in bridging these gaps.

Pro bono engagement in Singapore has been on the rise in recent years, driven by organisations such as Pro Bono SG⁴, the charity arm of the Law Society of Singapore. Pro Bono SG expands access to justice by running community legal clinics, engaging law firms in pro bono work, and raising awareness of the value and impact of pro bono legal support through events like Pro Bono Week.⁵ At the regional level, pro bono in Singapore is discussed at the Asian Pro Bono Roundtable, a quarterly online forum bringing together legal professionals, NGOs, academics, and other stakeholders to collaborate on promoting pro bono legal services and enhancing access to justice across Asia.⁶ Singapore's growing pro bono culture is also recognised internationally, with the jurisdiction regularly featuring in the Thomson Reuters Foundation's TrustLaw Index of Pro Bono as a noteworthy pro bono market in the Asia-Pacific region.⁷

At a glance

Minimum pro bono hours requirement for lawyers?	Specific pro bono licence required?	May foreign lawyers practice pro bono?	Insurance required for law firm pro bono?	Insurance required for in-house pro bono?	Rules to limit advertising pro bono work?	Does pro bono work count to CLE credit?	Limitations for in-house lawyers to do pro bono?
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

The landscape

Professional regulation	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of legal services, including any licensing required to provide legal services. Please highlight any differences 	<p>The provision of legal services in Singapore is governed primarily by the Legal Profession Act 1966 of Singapore (the LPA) and the subsidiary legislation promulgated thereunder, including the</p>

¹ <https://lab.mlaw.gov.sg/legal-services/type-of-services/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

² <https://pdo.mlaw.gov.sg/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

³ <https://singaporelegaladvice.com/law-articles/legal-aid-court-cases/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁴ <https://www.probono.sg/our-story/#> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁵ <https://www.probono.sg/press-room/pro-bono-sg-launches-inaugural-pro-bono-weeks/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁶ <https://www.pilnet.org/asia-regional-pro-bono-roundtable-2025/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁷ <https://www.trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2024-TrustLaw-Index-of-Pro-Bono.pdf> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

<p>for lawyers working as in-house counsel.</p>	<p>Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules 2015 (the PCR).⁸</p> <p>Generally, a person must be registered to provide legal services in Singapore, as either an advocate and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore or a registered foreign lawyer.⁹ Every solicitor must, in every year before he or she does any act in the capacity of an advocate and solicitor, apply for a practising certificate.</p> <p>Certain select Qualifying Foreign Law Practices (QFLPs) may practice both foreign and Singapore law as they hold a special licence that permits them to practise certain areas of Singapore law (primarily commercial and corporate law), but not ring-fenced domestic areas such as criminal law, family law, conveyancing, and litigation. The QFLPs can practise the permitted areas of Singapore law through Singapore-qualified lawyers with practising certificates or foreign lawyers holding the foreign practitioner certificate.¹⁰</p> <p>For in-house counsel, the position differs. In-house lawyers who are Singapore-qualified but do not hold a practising certificate are not entitled to practise Singapore law in the traditional sense (i.e., they may not provide legal advice to third parties or appear in court). However, they may provide legal advice to their employer. The Legal Profession (Pro Bono Legal Services) Rules 2013¹¹ helpfully permits Singapore-qualified lawyers without practising certificates to provide specified pro bono legal services through approved schemes, thereby enabling in-house lawyers to contribute to pro bono without obtaining a practising certificate.¹²</p>
<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>A person must hold a practicing certificate to act as a Singapore advocate and solicitor or practise</p>

⁸ The LPA is available at <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/LPA1966> (last visited on 9 January 2025), and the PCR is available at <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/LPA1966-S706-2015> (last visited on 9 January 2025).

⁹ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/LPA1966?ProvlDs=P13-#pr25-> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

¹⁰ <https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/update-on-qualifying-foreign-law-practice-licences/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

¹¹ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL-Supp/S658-2013/Published/20131021170000?DocDate=20131021170000> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

¹² <https://www.probono.sg/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/In-House-Legal-Counsel-Pro-Bono-Guide-2025.pdf> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

	<p>Singapore law. However, to promote the provision of pro bono legal services, a specific exemption was created under the Legal Profession (Pro Bono Legal Services) Rules 2013 (the Pro Bono Exemption Rules)¹³ to allow Singapore-qualified lawyers without practicing certificates to provide specified pro bono legal services.</p> <p>Such specified pro bono legal services are services provided (i) under schemes administered by Pro Bono SG (a Singapore registered charity and a wholly owned subsidiary of the Law Society of Singapore) or certain Singapore courts, (ii) to charities, (iii) to institutions of public character, and/or (iv) to certain voluntary welfare organisations.</p> <p>This exemption does not extend to appearing or pleading in any Singapore court or appearing before any Singapore quasi-judicial or regulatory body, authority, or tribunal.¹⁴</p> <p>This exemption is primarily designed for non-practising Singapore-qualified lawyers which typically includes in-house counsel, lawyers working in government, academia, or other non-practising roles, and Singapore-qualified lawyers who have allowed their practising certificates to lapse. Many of these individuals are not foreign-qualified.</p> <p>In addition, when applying for a practising certificate, every solicitor is required under the Legal Profession (Mandatory Reporting of Specified Pro Bono Services) Rules 2015 to make a declaration stating (i) whether such solicitor provided any specified pro bono service at any time in the immediately preceding practice year and (ii) certain details of each such specified pro bono service.¹⁵</p> <p>Save for the above, there is no Singapore regulation specific to the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>Lawyers do not need to hold a particular license to provide pro bono legal services. Most pro bono matters and programmes in Singapore</p>

¹³ Available at <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/LPA1966-S658-2013> (last visited on 9 January 2025).

¹⁴ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL-Supp/S658-2013/Published/20131021170000?DocDate=20131021170000> last visited on 9 May 2026).

¹⁵ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/LPA1966-S96-2015> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

	<p>require participating lawyers to be qualified to practise Singapore law, and as noted above, no person may practise Singapore law without a practising certificate, subject to the exemption for specified pro bono legal services under the Legal Profession (Pro Bono Legal Services) Rules 2013. However, the Pro Bono SG website lists Singapore-qualified lawyers, both with and without a practising certificate, and foreign-qualified lawyers as persons who can volunteer for certain pro bono opportunities.¹⁶</p> <p>In-house lawyers who are Singapore-qualified but do not hold a practising certificate may rely on the Rules to provide advice and drafting services through approved schemes but may not appear in court.¹⁷</p>
<p>4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>Singapore recognises various categories of law practice structures involving foreign lawyers, including:¹⁸</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foreign Law Practices (FLPs): These are law firms licensed to practise foreign law in Singapore. Lawyers at FLPs (whether foreign-qualified or Singapore-qualified but not holding a practising certificate) may provide pro bono legal services relating to foreign law. They may not, however, practise Singapore law, which means they cannot advise on or handle pro bono matters involving Singapore domestic law (including family law, criminal law, conveyancing, and litigation in Singapore courts). 2. Qualifying Foreign Law Practices (QFLPs): QFLPs hold a special licence that permits them to practise certain areas of Singapore law (primarily commercial and corporate law), but not ring-fenced domestic areas such as criminal law, family law, conveyancing, and litigation. 3. Joint Law Ventures (JLVs): JLVs are collaborations between a foreign law practice and a Singapore law practice. The Singapore law practice component

¹⁶ <https://www.probono.sg/get-involved/volunteer/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

¹⁷ <https://www.probono.sg/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/In-House-Legal-Counsel-Pro-Bono-Guide-2025.pdf> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

¹⁸ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/LPA1966> and <https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/law-practice-entities-and-lawyers/licensing-or-registration-of-law-practice-entities/types-of-licence-or-registration/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

	<p>may handle Singapore law matters (including pro bono), whilst the foreign law practice component is restricted to foreign law.</p> <p>4. Formal Law Alliances (FLAs): FLAs are arrangements between foreign and Singapore law practices that allow them to collaborate whilst remaining separate entities.</p> <p>The key distinction is between the ability to practise Singapore law and the ability to practise foreign law. Pro bono matters in areas such as family law, criminal law, and domestic litigation require qualification to practise Singapore law (i.e., a practising certificate as an advocate and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore). Foreign lawyers and non-practising Singapore lawyers cannot undertake such matters, regardless of the firm structure in which they sit. Foreign qualified lawyers still have opportunities to participate in pro bono, however, and can conduct activities such as research, offering foreign law advice, legal education or assisting with administration and triaging at legal clinics. For further information on pro bono volunteering, see Pro Bono SG's volunteer page.¹⁹</p>
<p>5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?</p>	<p>Lawyers in Singapore are not required to work a minimum number of pro bono hours.</p>
<p>6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?</p>	<p>Yes. In 2013, the Singapore Institute of Legal Education initiated a mandatory pro bono programme for law students, requiring the performance of 20 hours of approved pro bono work as part of their graduating requirements.²⁰</p>
<p>7. Aside from mandatory targets (if any), are there aspirational pro bono hours targets for lawyers set by the local bar association, regulatory body or other body?</p>	<p>The Singapore Corporate Counsel Association (SCCA) actively encourages in-house counsel participation in pro bono through its Pro Bono Pledge²¹ initiative and Pro Bono Committee, which publicises relevant opportunities suited to in-house lawyers.</p>

¹⁹ <https://www.probono.sg/get-involved/volunteer/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

²⁰ Singapore Institute of Legal Education, Pro Bono Programme, <https://www.sile.edu.sg/pro-bono-programme> (last visited on 9 January 2025).

²¹ <https://www.scca.org.sg/form/pro-bono-pledge> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

	It is common for large law firms to set internal aspirational pro bono hours targets.
8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	Lawyers do not receive any CLE or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked. However, lawyers who act as supervisors of university students working on approved pro bono matters may receive a maximum of two continuing legal education-equivalent points per year. ²²
9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers? If insurance is required, can lawyers meet the requirement by working under the cover of another pro bono provider, e.g. in partnership with a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?	There are no prescribed requirements for insurance cover in respect of pro bono work specifically. However, all Singapore advocates and solicitors in private practice are required to maintain professional indemnity insurance coverage. ²³ Pro Bono SG suggests that in-house counsel should put in place appropriate insurance for pro bono work. It also confirms that volunteers under its programmes are covered by its own professional indemnity insurance policy, which provides a measure of protection for volunteer lawyers (including in-house counsel) providing pro bono services through its schemes. Lawyers providing pro bono services under the auspices of a private law firm may be covered by that firm’s existing professional indemnity insurance, with their agreement. ²⁴
10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	Any person licensed to practise Singapore law must, in the course of giving any free legal advice, take reasonable steps to ensure that no information pertaining to that person is publicised except that person’s name, the fact that that person is a legal practitioner, and the name of that person’s law practice. ²⁵ Apart from the above, the rules regulating the publicity of legal services in the PCR are also generally applicable to every law practise in

²² See the relevant website of the Singapore Institute of Legal Education, which has responsibility for the administration of the Singapore legal profession’s continuing professional development programme, <https://www.sile.edu.sg/pro-bono-programme> (last visited on 9 January 2025).

²³ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/LPA1966?Provids=P16-#pr75A->

²⁴ <https://www.probono.sg/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/In-House-Legal-Counsel-Pro-Bono-Guide-2025.pdf> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

²⁵ PCR, Rule 47(2), <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/LPA1966?Provids=P16-#pr75A-> (last visited on 28 January 2025).

	<p>Singapore. These include prohibitions on touting and requirements where a client is referred to a law practise, including in relation to maintaining the relevant practitioner’s and law practise’s independence and impartiality and not rewarding a referrer with any consideration.²⁶</p>
<p>11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs?</p>	<p>In 2026, the Ministry of Law conducted a survey of the legal needs and experiences of Singapore residents, and this Guide will be updated once the survey report is released.</p> <p>At their Community Law Centre, Pro Bono SG provides training and support to community partner staff and, where relevant, their volunteers, in identifying potential unmet legal needs among socially excluded beneficiaries. Major unmet legal needs include: assistance for persons who fall just above the means-testing thresholds for government legal aid; migrant workers facing exploitation or unpaid wages²⁷; and elderly persons²⁸ requiring assistance with estate planning.</p>
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>The main non-governmental sources of pro bono and/or other pro bono resources in Singapore include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Public Defender’s Office (PDO): a department under the Singapore Ministry of Law that provides criminal defence aid to accused persons of limited means who face charges carrying a sentence of imprisonment.²⁹ • The Legal Aid Bureau (LAB): A department under the Singapore Ministry of Law that provides legal aid and advice in relation to certain civil proceedings to persons who satisfy the applicable means and merits tests.³⁰ • Pro Bono SG: A Singapore registered charity with the status of an Institution of a Public Character. It is the national coordinating body for pro bono legal

²⁶ PCR, Rule 39(2), <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/LPA1966?Provlids=P16-#pr75A-> (last visited on 28 January 2025).

²⁷ <https://www.ntuc.org.sg/uits/news/Migrant-Workers-Centre-enhances-legal-support-for-migrant-workers/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

²⁸ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08959420.2025.2475265> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

²⁹ <https://pdo.mlaw.gov.sg/about-us/about-the-public-defenders-office/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

³⁰ <https://lab.mlaw.gov.sg/about-us/our-mission-core-values/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

	<p>services and administers numerous pro bono programmes including Community Legal Clinics, and the Community Law Centre.³¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private law firms and legal practitioners, who maintain active pro bono practices and provide pro bono legal services both independently and in conjunction with clinics and initiatives of NGOs, governmental organisations, schools, and universities. • Singapore universities' law faculties: The National University of Singapore (NUS) Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education³² and the Singapore Management University (SMU) Pro Bono Centre³³ both provide pro bono legal assistance and legal education programmes. • Singapore Corporate Counsel Association's (SCCA), which is an organisation with a mission to promote professional standards and provide developmental opportunities for in-house counsels, including pro bono opportunities.³⁴ The SCCA's Pro Bono Committee invites the participation of all in-house counsels and aims to encourage the pro bono spirit and publicise pro bono opportunities for in-house counsels.³⁵
<p>13. Are there any noteworthy examples of how innovative technology or artificial intelligence is being used to enable access to pro bono or otherwise as part of pro bono cases or matters?</p>	<p>Singapore has demonstrated notable adoption of legal technology and artificial intelligence to enhance access to justice, particularly for low-income and vulnerable persons. Key past examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligent Legal Assistance Bot (iLAB): Developed by the Legal Aid Bureau. iLAB helps individuals identify their legal issues, provides relevant legal information, checks eligibility for legal aid, and directs users to appropriate sources of legal advice.³⁶ • eBantu: A divorce form filing guidance tool developed for the Syariah Court, which assists self-represented litigants in completing originating documents for

³¹ <https://www.probono.sg/get-legal-help/legal-guidance/the-general-public/legal-clinics-in-singapore/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

³² <https://law.nus.edu.sg/media/pro-bono-group-appreciation-event-2021/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

³³ <https://pbc.smu.edu.sg/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

³⁴ See <https://www.scca.org.sg/our-mission> (last visited on 20 January 2025).

³⁵ See <https://www.scca.org.sg/pro-bono> (last visited on 20 January 2025).

³⁶ <https://insight.mlaw.gov.sg/articles/legal-developments/2021-03-01-tech-ing-on-a-better-tomorrow/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

	<p>divorce proceedings.³⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Justice Centre (CJC) explored how legal AI can transform access to justice by empowering self-represented individuals with technology, including the CoCounsel platform developed by Thomson Reuters. The integration of CoCounsel's AI-powered form extractor helped break down barriers and streamline legal processes for CJC.³⁸ • CorpPass-integrated Court Services: The Singapore Courts have progressively digitised their processes through systems such as the Community Justice and Tribunals System (CJTS), which allows self-represented litigants to file and manage claims online for tribunals including the Small Claims Tribunals and the Employment Claims Tribunals. This system can reduce barriers to justice for individuals who cannot afford legal representation.³⁹ • Pro Bono SG has introduced online legal clinic sessions (via video-conferencing) and an online registration system for legal clinic appointments, which expands access for persons who face mobility or logistical barriers to attending in-person clinics.⁴⁰
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Notable sources of pro bono matters and resources in Singapore include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Clinics: Various legal clinics operate across Singapore, providing free legal advice on a range of matters. A comprehensive list of legal clinics and initiatives is maintained by Pro Bono SG.⁴¹ • SMU Pro Bono Centre: The Singapore Management University's Pro Bono Centre provides resources, training, and pro bono opportunities for students and lawyers.⁴² • Thomson Reuters Foundation's TrustLaw pro bono clearinghouse connects NGOs and social enterprises with lawyers providing free legal assistance, and Singapore-based law firms and

³⁷ <https://lab.mlaw.gov.sg/resources/ebantu-syariah-court-originating-documents-guidance-tool/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV4bVqM9itw> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

³⁹ <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/services/CJTS> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁴⁰ <https://www.probono.sg/get-legal-help/legal-guidance/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁴¹ <https://www.probono.sg/get-involved/volunteer/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁴² <https://pbc.smu.edu.sg/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

	<p>in-house teams can participate in TrustLaw matters.⁴³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PILnet operates a global network of pro bono clearinghouses and has been active in building local pro bono communities in Asia.⁴⁴
15. Is there any public or private organization with which a local or foreign lawyer can register to be made aware of pro bono opportunities?	<p>Interested attorneys may register to volunteer with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro Bono SG;⁴⁵ • the Singapore Corporate Counsel Association in connection with its Pro Bono Pledge;⁴⁶ • the Asian Pro Bono Roundtable, a regional forum that brings together pro bono practitioners, legal aid organisations, and access to justice advocates from across the Asia-Pacific region to share best practices and develop collaborative initiatives.⁴⁷
16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro Bono SG Awards are annual awards recognising outstanding pro bono contributions by individuals and law practices across a range of award categories.⁴⁸ • Thomson Reuters Foundation's global TrustLaw Awards recognise outstanding achievements by TrustLaw legal members around the world.⁴⁹ Their Index of Pro Bono, an international benchmarking survey also includes Singapore-based firms and recognises pro bono contributions globally.⁵⁰ • At a university level, some universities recognise students for their pro bono contributions, for example: NUS Law Pro Bono Awards.⁵¹

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Learn more

[Navigate the full Global Pro Bono Guide](#) to explore the global landscape and pro bono practices and opportunities across 100+ jurisdictions.

⁴³ <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁴⁴ <https://www.pilnet.org/asia/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁴⁵ <https://www.jotform.com/23057050541444> (last visited on 9 January 2025).

⁴⁶ See <https://www.scca.org.sg/pro-bono> (last visited on 20 January 2025) and <https://www.scca.org.sg/form/pro-bono-pledge> (last visited on 20 January 2025).

⁴⁷ <https://www.babseacle.org/asia-pro-bono-roundtable/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁴⁸ <https://www.probono.sg/press-room/pro-bono-sg-awards-2025-honoured-champions-of-access-to-justice/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁴⁹ <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/awards/the-2025-awards/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁵⁰ <https://pbi.trust.org/introduction/?year=2024> (last visited on 9 May 2026).

⁵¹ <https://law.nus.edu.sg/cpbcl/our-activities/pro-bono/awards/> (last visited on 9 May 2026).