

## INSTITUTIONAL HONOREE

### AMERICAN EXPRESS GENERAL COUNSEL'S ORGANIZATION

#### *Assisting nonprofits year-round for 18 years and counting*

Celebrating an 18-year partnership milestone, Lawyers Alliance proudly acknowledges the remarkable dedication and commitment of the in-house legal team at American Express General Counsel's Organization. American Express has handled 71 pro bono cases during the course of this relationship, ranging from assisting in limited scope legal clinics to handling more complex full representation matters, all while positively impacting numerous nonprofits. American Express has built a truly pro bono-minded corporate culture, with regular and consistent pro bono engagement over time. American Express efforts have spanned our client base, including organizations focused on education, health, economic development, social services, and human rights advocacy.



American Express attorneys have helped several organizations focused on youth development, including **Latinas On the Verge of Excellence - L.O.V.E. Mentoring Program (L.O.V.E)**, created to address the specific challenges that face adolescent Latinas in New York City. In the last decade, L.O.V.E. has served more than 2,500 students with activity in 35 separate public schools across NYC. Attorneys from American Express became involved with L.O.V.E. during the Lawyers Alliance National Day of Service in 2023, sponsored by Exponentum™, a national network of business law pro bono providers led in part by Lawyers Alliance. During the clinic, American Express assessed the organization's corporate governance documents, answering questions while identifying areas for improvement. American Express attorneys then volunteered to take on the legal work identified in the assessment, revising the organization's conflict of interest policy and providing advice on best practices for the annual election of its directors, allowing the organization to improve its Board operations and feel more confident in its governance practices.

American Express volunteer attorneys also assisted **Student Leadership Network**, which supports young people in diverse and underserved communities by providing access to higher education. The attorneys reviewed a contract, offering guidance on protecting the organization's interests while it was expanding its programmatic and geographical reach to seven new schools in upstate New York and New Jersey. They also created a contract abstract, breaking down the contractual language so that the meaning was clear and significant provisions were highlighted.

American Express has been a frequent and reliable partner for our regular limited scope legal clinics, offering clients an opportunity to receive valuable assistance on a range of legal issues such as contract review and drafting, corporate governance assessments, and bylaws assessments. In recent years, American Express attorneys participated in nine clinics addressing core needs of New York City nonprofits, including corporate governance, contracts, and doing business online.

One of the clients served by American Express is **Inclusiv**, which helps low- and moderate-income people and communities achieve financial independence through credit unions. During the clinic, volunteers assisted Inclusiv by creating a privacy policy and terms of use that it uploaded to its website. The organization indicated that these documents were crucial to helping it remain in compliance with industry best practices regarding privacy and security.

# LAWYERS ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK

## ***Q. How does the company encourage and support business and transactional lawyers at all levels to participate in pro bono?***

The American Express General Counsel's Organization is very fortunate that the vast majority of our attorneys are business and transactional attorneys. Thus, the pro bono opportunities provided by Lawyers Alliance allow our attorneys to tap directly into their skills and experience and use that expertise to help clients in need. Our attorneys are eager participants, from the newest, most junior attorneys to GCO leadership – everyone likes to get involved!

## ***Q. How has the company's pro bono program evolved during the last few years?***

Since COVID, the American Express GCO U.S. pro bono program has focused on taking the expertise of our colleagues and developing opportunities for them to apply the work they do at American Express to benefit pro bono clients. We have leaned into assisting nonprofit organizations and small businesses in their operational legal needs – doing business online, non-disclosure agreements, governance, and more. In addition, one of the biggest positive evolutions is the virtual pro bono world, which has allowed our colleagues across the U.S. to collaborate to help pro bono clients. Focused work and diverse perspectives has created an enriching pro bono practice for Amex GCO colleagues.

American Express attorneys have represented the following Lawyers Alliance clients in the last three years: **Adhikaar for Human Rights and Social Justice, American Dream Charter School, Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC), Bottomless Closet-New York, Downtown Community Television Center (DCTV), Full STEAM Forward, Glasswing International USA, Hour Children, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Hyde Leadership Charter School-Brooklyn, iEARN-USA, Inclusiv (National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions), Kings Bay YM-YWHA, Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, L.O.V.E. (Latinas on the Verge of Excellence Mentoring Program), New Yorkers for Children, Shorefront Jewish Community Council, Student Leadership Network, The Alex House Project, The Midori Foundation d/b/a Midori & Friends, United Sikhs, and Urban Dove.**

In-house attorneys who have worked with these clients include: Rabab Alajmi, Chiu Chang, Jennifer Fell, Jim Franklin, Rachael Kaminski, David Kanarek, Tackjin (Ted) Kim, Temi Kolarova, Matthew Koreiwo, Kim LaBarbiera, Cynthia Lareau, Catherine Lo, Rogan McCally, David Mikulecky, Michelle Pelletier, Edward W. Scheuermann, Emily Sheahan, Regina Sorin, Rita Tendolkar, Erica Washington, Kimberly Washington, and Soyoung Denise Yang.

*“Without an internal legal department, our organization relies on Lawyers Alliance and their fantastic volunteers to protect us from a litigious society. The professionalism of the [American Express] lawyers was so refreshing. They felt like people instead of lawyer stereotypes.”*

— *Kyiakhalid Ruiz,*  
*Director of Communications, Inclusiv*