



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding FPA's National *Pro Bono* Program¹

1. What is the FPA *Pro Bono* Program?

The FPA *Pro Bono* Program is a way for FPA members to give back to their communities by providing free financial planning advice to individuals and families in need.

2. Who is eligible for *pro bono* services?

The FPA program targets individuals and families who lack the resources to retain a financial planner on their own, as well as nonprofit community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve this population. In practical terms, this means low-income people who are potentially eligible for public benefits such as public housing, food stamps and Medicaid.

3. Who manages the *pro bono* program?

FPA national oversees national partnerships and will provide certain program resources and guidance if available. Local programs are powered by chapter initiatives and may vary widely in scope and application.

4. How is *pro bono* financial planning defined?

Although *pro bono* can be defined in many ways, for purposes of focusing FPA's efforts it is defined as providing financial planning services to those in greatest need of assistance, without compensation or expectation of any return except personal and professional satisfaction. FPA uses certain filters to determine priorities. Its goal is to advise low-income individuals using a structured 'mini-plan' process with advice to help clients attain certain personal financial goals.

5. What is the difference between *pro bono* advice and other community service programs?

FPA's community service activities can be divided into three basic areas: 1) *pro bono*; 2) disaster relief; and 3) financial education. In addition FPA actively promotes public awareness of the value of financial planning to encourage the use of paid financial planning services provided by its members.

An example of a disaster relief program would be helping victims in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster by providing them with basic financial advice about personal finance issues that arise as a result of the disaster, no matter their net worth or ability to pay for professional advice. A financial education program might be teaching middle and high school students about basic financial planning issues as part of a Junior Achievement

¹ These questions are guidelines only, and not requirements for participation in FPA's national *pro bono* program. As separate 501(c)(6) organizations, FPA chapter affiliates may adapt programs to the unique needs of their own community. FPA has developed guidelines solely for the purpose of setting priorities at the national level, and to provide quality assurance to our national partners in the administration of *pro bono* programs around the country. FPA reserves the right to review and approve in advance the use of any programs and materials containing FPA's logo or trademarks.

program. All are encouraged by FPA and equally valued as a way to give back to your community.

6. What's the difference between *pro bono* and public awareness?

Pro bono and the other forms of community service (disaster relief and financial education) involve providing free services to targeted populations for the good of the community, with no expectation of return. It has a charity aspect. Public awareness involves improving the general public's knowledge of financial issues and the planning process, with the expectation that some of them will engage FPA members in business relationships. It has a marketing aspect. Though different, they do share some rules (no promotion or sales of specific products, etc.) and they are both valuable activities for FPA.

7. Who is eligible to participate in the FPA *Pro Bono* Program?

All FPA members in good standing are welcome to participate. However, all *pro bono* engagements should be supervised by a person who is eligible to participate in FPA's client referral program, called PlannerSearch. At this time, only those CFP® certificants in good standing with the CFP Board of Standards and with no current disciplinary reviews pending are eligible for PlannerSearch. This means all client service activities (seminars, workshops and one-on-one consultations) should be led by a CFP practitioner, but the CFP practitioner is free to ask for assistance from other financial planners, paraplanners, and CFP candidates.

8. If I don't provide *advice*, is there something else I can do?

Chapter program management, content creation and outreach to potential partners are open to all FPA members.

9. Can I provide *pro bono* advice to a group instead of an individual?

A *pro bono* client may also be a nonprofit community-based organization (CBO) with 501(c)(3) status whose mission and/or application of whose mission focuses on our target population. In such engagements, advice tailored to the general needs of the organization's participants may be presented on a group basis as well as one-on-one. All other guidelines and restrictions on marketing and promoting professional services would apply.

10. How should a chapter determine who is "eligible for public benefits?"

There are several ways to determine who is best suited to receive *pro bono* help. Ideally, screening for eligibility should be done by the FPA chapter's partner CBO, which understands its client population best.

If a CBO partner does not check for public benefits eligibility as part of its own screening process, FPA encourages your chapter and partner to focus on clients with little or no assets and incomes at or below 80% of the local median income, the income limit designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for determining eligibility for public housing. The limits for every county and metropolitan area can be found at <http://www.huduser.org/datasets/il.html>. (See the entry at the end of this FAQ for details.)

11. Why is FPA using an income limit to determine the eligibility of *pro bono* clients?

FPA's *pro bono* program cannot serve every need and must be focused to be effective and sustainable. To this end, the program seeks to serve those with the greatest need who have the least access to financial planning, i.e. those with low incomes and little to no assets. Using an income limit is a means to focus on this population.

12. Can I provide *pro bono* advice to some with higher income limits than FPA's guidelines?

FPA chapters and members are free to determine their own criteria for delivery of *pro bono* services. There is a need for flexibility and freedom at the local level to handle special situations and borderline cases. However, to establish priorities at the national level, provide quality assurance to outside partners, and distinguish *pro bono* from other forms of community service, FPA has set parameters designed to help those most in need.

13. I can *appreciate* that low income people have difficulty paying for financial planning, but how do we help disaster victims and military veterans if they exceed certain income requirements? Don't they deserve *pro bono* help, too?

It is up to a chapter to prioritize its work in the community service area. The national emphasis on low income people is not meant to exclude other populations. **It is meant to focus FPA resources on the most vulnerable segment of all populations, whether they are disaster victims, military personnel, cancer survivors, etc.** Certain chapters may wish to focus on disaster relief or helping our nation's veterans without regard to income thresholds. But if the target population is very large, income thresholds can help to focus services on the segment most in need.

14. What is a "*mini plan*?"

A mini plan is the basic financial planning process minus implementation and monitoring. It consists of three steps – 1) gathering data and setting goals, 2) data review and clarification, 3) plan presentation and discussion. It was conceived to help both volunteers and partners/clients determine the scope and limitations of a *pro bono* engagement.

15. Why does FPA recommend use of a mini plan in a *pro bono* engagement?

Many partner organizations and their clients may not be familiar with financial planning. The mini plan is a framework to help them understand that financial planning is not only financial literacy education but a powerful problem-solving process.

16. Can I use *pro bono* in order to develop my business?

No. *Pro bono* means working with vulnerable populations, and any suggestion that FPA volunteers are using it to sell something would seriously damage our credibility. Therefore, do not promote your business or any products or services while working on a *pro bono* engagement. Avoid using materials with corporate logos on them. Do not hand out your name card at group sessions unless someone specifically asks you for it. When working as a *pro bono* volunteer, you are not representing your business, you are representing FPA and the financial planning profession.

17. How can I find out more about FPA’s *pro bono* program?

Contact a participating local FPA chapter, or consider starting a program within your own chapter. Chapter information can be found at http://www.fpanet.org/member/chapters/local_chapters/find.cfm. We suggest you start with your chapter president, *pro bono* director, or chapter executive. For additional assistance, you can visit the FPA *pro bono* website, <http://www.FPAprobono.org>, or contact the FPA *Pro Bono* Services department at 800.282.7526.

Determining Eligibility

FPA relies on HUD income limits for housing assistance in determining reasonable criteria for providing *pro bono* service. HUD determines the median income for every county and/or metropolitan area. These are updated each year, and correspond to unique economic conditions in all parts of the country. HUD defines 80% of the local median as “low income.”

To review HUD income limits:

- Click on <http://www.huduser.org/datasets/il.html>;
- Click on the link to the latest year’s figures (“FY20XX Income Limits”);
- Click on the link underneath *Access Individual Income Limits Areas* (“FY 2008 Income Limits Documentation”);
- Click on the button (“Click Here for FY 20XX IL Documentation”);
- Select a state and county OR select a metropolitan area.

You should then see a chart like this:

FY 2008 Income Limits Documentation System
FY 2008 Income Limits Summary

Denver-Aurora, CO MSA										
FY 2008 Income Limit Area	Median Income	FY 2008 Income Limit Category	1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person	7 Person	8 Person
Denver-Aurora, CO MSA	\$71,800	Very Low (50%) Income Limits	\$25,150	\$28,700	\$32,300	\$35,900	\$38,750	\$41,650	\$44,500	\$47,400
		Extremely Low (30%) Income Limits	\$15,100	\$17,250	\$19,400	\$21,550	\$23,250	\$25,000	\$26,700	\$28,450
		Low (80%) Income Limits	\$40,200	\$45,950	\$51,700	\$57,450	\$62,050	\$66,650	\$71,250	\$75,850

Many community-based organizations screen their clients based on other public benefits, most of which have stricter criteria than the HUD income limits. Discuss with your partner the best and most practical way to ensure you reach the clients you want to reach.