



# THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENTREPRENEUR LAW PROJECT

"BUILDING COMMUNITIES, ONE SMALL BUSINESS AT A TIME."

## 2018 REPORT

### WHO WE ARE

The City Bar Justice Center (CBJC) operates the largest general free civil legal hotline in New York City and assists 26,000 clients with legal issues each year with the help of pro bono attorneys and Justice Center staff. Our close relationship with the New York City Bar Association, and proven experience responding to emerging legal needs, gives us a unique ability to leverage pro bono legal services. We look to our partners in the law to raise the funds necessary to operate the Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project in addition to other CBJC projects.

### ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENTREPRENEUR LAW PROJECT

Small businesses are the foundation of our economy, accounting for up to 66% of net new jobs over the last decade and employing half of all private sector workers, according to the Small Business Administration. However, starting a business is not easy, especially for lower-income individuals. Without an understanding of the relevant laws or the resources to access legal assistance, many potentially successful projects fail.

Recognizing the vital role small businesses play in our economy, the CBJC launched the Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project (NELP) to provide low-to moderate-income microentrepreneurs with the legal services they need to start their businesses. NELP's staff and volunteer attorneys guide clients through matters such as corporate formation, drafting contracts, negotiating and reviewing commercial leases, and protecting intellectual property through copyrights, trademarks, and patents. Volunteer attorneys also participate in presentations and legal clinics at community-based organizations on issues of relevance to micro-entrepreneurs.

Since its founding in 2003, NELP has partnered with more than 100 law firms, 25 corporate legal departments, and 30 community-based organizations to assist more than 15,500 clients through the provision of brief services, direct representation, legal clinics, and community presentations.

### A UNIQUE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

The Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project offers a unique opportunity for transactional attorneys to work on pro bono cases which are more in line with their practice area than traditional pro bono litigation work. NELP also provides training for attorneys who are new to transactional work, as well as access to mentors and other attorneys experienced in the field.



### Become a Pro Bono Partner!

#### Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project

**Akira Arroyo**

Director of the Neighborhood  
Entrepreneur Law Project  
212.382.6722  
aarroyo@nycbar.org

**City Bar Justice Center****Lynn Kelly**

Executive Director  
212.382.6678  
lkelly@nycbar.org

**Alice Morey**

Managing Attorney  
212.382.6682  
amorey@nycbar.org

**Kurt Denk**

Pro Bono Counsel  
212.382.4714  
kdenk@nycbar.org

**Michael Fil**

Communications &  
Development Coordinator  
212.382.6727  
mfil@nycbar.org

**The City Bar Justice Center**

42 West 44th Street  
New York, NY 10036  
www.citybarjusticecenter.org

## LESSONS LEARNED IN WORKING WITH SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

Based on 15 years of experience, the Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project offers the following tips for pro bono volunteers interested in working with small businesses.

### Unbundle the Services

At the start of a partnership with NELP, volunteer attorneys may want to get their feet wet by participating in one of the Project's more discrete, bite-sized pro bono activities, such as a community-based presentation or legal clinic. This provides the opportunity to meet and interact in person with a varied group of micro-entrepreneurs, and can even spark an interest to provide direct, ongoing legal representation to a client.

### Team Up with the Referral Organization

If volunteers are interested in engaging in direct pro bono representation through NELP, we act as a facilitator between the attorney and the client, assisting if any questions or concerns arise, and providing additional resources or mentoring if needed. Before assigning a pro bono case, NELP screens clients to make sure they qualify for pro bono assistance and will conduct an assessment of their legal issues and needs.

### Legal Clinics Make it Easier for Volunteers

Legal clinics offer a team of interested attorneys the opportunity to provide brief counseling and limited assistance and guidance. Attorneys can assist a significant number of microentrepreneurs within a relatively short period of time, usually 30 minutes per client. A legal team may even be able to "sponsor" a site and provide clinics on a regular basis (e.g., quarterly or monthly).

### Mind the Details

While many NELP clients may be enthusiastic to launch their small businesses right away, they often need pro bono counsel to help them focus on their immediate legal needs. They usually require assistance in realizing their short-term goals, such as selecting the best corporate structure for their current situation, protecting their intellectual property rights, and acquiring the required licenses to operate their small business.

### Presentations are Great Pro Bono Opportunities

Presentations are a great way to get involved with both clients and other attorneys. Materials are available for standard topics, and volunteers are generally required to make a time commitment of two to three hours.

### Work in Teams

Attorneys may prefer to work with colleagues, as it allows for different opinions, varied expertise, and a shared workload. Clients will also benefit from working with a team of attorneys, as there will always be someone available to address their concerns.

## How NELP Provides Pro Bono Assistance to Microentrepreneurs

NELP staff interview each client to ascertain the scope of his/her legal needs and eligibility for services. If the entrepreneur is approved for services, NELP staff will connect the client with a pro bono attorney, who will meet with the client and handle representation. Periodic follow-up calls and meetings are scheduled to make sure each client's needs are met.

### In 2017, NELP conducted the following:



32 legal clinics where entrepreneurs received legal counsel regarding their specific small business concerns.

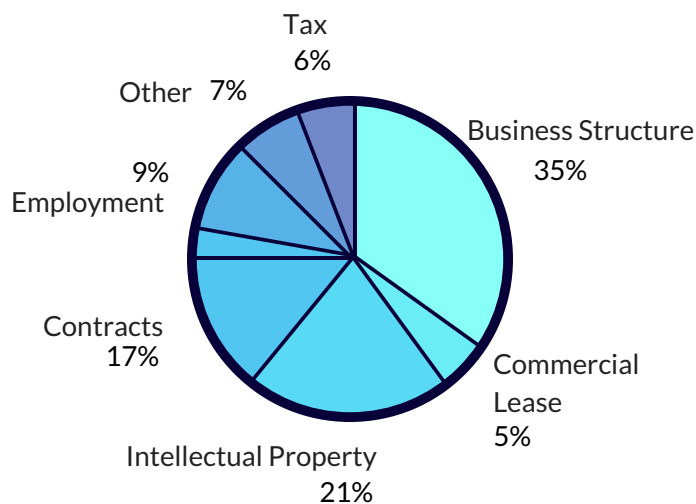


17 legal presentations on topics including entity formation, intellectual property, and contracts.



Managed 104 pro bono cases that were assigned to volunteer attorneys.

### Types of legal issues



## NELP'S 2017 HIGHLIGHTS



NELP provided legal assistance to **923** entrepreneurs.



**504** attorneys provided pro bono legal assistance to NELP clients.



NELP partnered with volunteers from **56** law firms and corporate legal departments throughout NYC.



Collaborated with **16** community-based organizations to host NELP events.

## SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESSES

### Raising Community Health Consciousness

Realizing the widespread health problems amongst the Latino community due to a lack of affordable, healthy food alternatives, Tania Lopez, a Puerto Rican native and Bronx resident, was inspired to start Coqui the Chef. Coqui the Chef, a mascot, provides a fun approach to building healthy eating habits through homemade recipes using fresh ingredients. NELP's pro bono volunteers assisted the entrepreneur with obtaining a trademark for her business name and logo, and provided counsel on other intellectual property matters. Ms. Lopez launched a website and YouTube channel where she shares a range of recipes and promotes her cookbooks in an effort to continue raising nutritional awareness for Latino families.

### Capturing Brooklyn's Essence

When Sophia Sylvester's children started experiencing severe skin conditions that no medical prescription could cure, she decided to take matters into her own hands by creating homemade, all-natural products. After noticing the significant improvement of her children's skin and receiving praise from people who had sampled her products, Ms. Sylvester reached out to NELP, determined to start a small business. NELP's volunteer attorneys assisted Ms. Sylvester with getting a trademark for the business' name, Brooklyn Flavors, and some of the product names, which were based on historical locations in Brooklyn. Ms. Sylvester returned to NELP for help with reviewing and negotiating a commercial lease so that she could open up a storefront business. Brooklyn Flavors' products are also available for purchase through its online-based store.

### Public Speaking Training for Everyone

An experienced actress and mentor hoped to revive a program she had created 20 years earlier that assisted performers with overcoming their stage fright. In keeping with the actor's convention of playing a role, she chose a pseudonym as she rebuilt this program: Peitho, the ancient Greek goddess of persuasion and speech. NELP's pro bono volunteers assisted Peitho with a wide-range of legal matters including setting up a legal entity, applying for an EIN, and obtaining a copyright and trademarks for the corporation's name, PS4e1, and its slogan. PS4e1 has broadened its client base by expanding their staff, developing an interactive eLearning curriculum, and publishing an eBook on Amazon.

## CLIENT TESTIMONIALS



"With the help of NELP and the extraordinary lawyers ..., PS4e1, Inc. was launched. The original concept is no longer a mirage. It exists. And we at PS4e1 will forever be grateful to NELP for all it has given us and made possible,"  
- Peitho, PS4e1

"This is a phenomenal program. Early stage start-ups often can't afford the sound legal advice they need to get off the ground. NELP increases the chances of good start-ups surviving."

- Marc Lara, MicroHealth, Inc.

"NELP has been nothing short of a blessing. As an amazing resource and through its extensive network, they connected me with top firms that catered to my needs. They have helped me build the foundation to my business and I will be forever grateful."

Charles Medenilla, Mansi

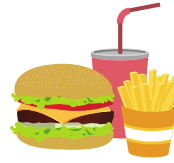


## NELP'S 2017 COMMUNITY OUTREACH INITIATIVES



### FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP SERIES

Recognizing the lack of readily available and free resources for people looking to achieve economic stability and success, over the summer, NELP partnered with **Barclays** and **Rise New York** to host a three-part financial empowerment series. It was designed to help attendees build knowledge and learn how to manage their personal and business finances.



### FOOD-BASED SMALL BUSINESSES

NELP designed a specialized program for entrepreneurs with small food-based businesses. They held a presentation and recruited specialized attorneys for a legal clinic. The volunteers provided one-on-one counsel to entrepreneurs with legal questions about the legalities of operating food-based businesses.



### THE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UNIT'S HUB

The CED Unit, including the Bankruptcy, Foreclosure, and NELP projects developed the Financial Empowerment Hub with the goal to help community members feel more in control of their financial well-being. The Hub provides people with a range of accessible resources including resource sheets, guides, articles, and more!



### IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS

In partnership with the **Mexican Coalition**, **HSBC**, and **Mayer Brown LLP**, NELP coordinated a two-part program in the Bronx. The goal was to empower Mexican entrepreneurs who due to language barriers, often lack the essential resources to get an in-depth understanding of the basic legal requirements associated with starting a small business.

## NELP'S 2017 PARTNERS

### Law Firm & Corporate Legal Departments

- AIG
- American Express
- Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer, LLP
- Bank of America
- Barclays Capital
- Blank Rome Tenzer & Greenblatt, LLP
- Bloomberg, LP
- Bressler, Amery & Ross, P.C.
- Citigroup
- Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, LLP
- Covington & Burling, LLP
- Credit Suisse Securities, LLC
- Davis Polk & Wardwell, LLP
- Debevoise & Plimpton, LLP
- Dechert, LLP
- Deloitte, LLP
- Dentons US, LLP
- Deutsche Bank
- DLA Piper, LLP
- Duane Morris, LLP
- Elke A. Hoffmen Law, PLLC
- Goldman Sachs & Co.
- Goodwin Procter, LLP
- Helbraun & Levey, LLP
- HSBC
- Hunton & Williams, LLP
- Jefferies Group, LLC
- JP Morgan Chase
- Kirkland & Ellis, LLP
- Latham & Watkins, LLP
- Mayer Brown, LLP
- Norton Rose Fulbright
- O'Melveny & Meyers, LLP
- Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP
- Paul Hastings LLP
- Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton, & Garrison, LLP
- Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, LLP
- Proskauer & Rose, LLP
- Shearman & Sterling, LLP
- Sidley Austin LLP
- Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, LLP
- Sullivan & Cromwell, LLP
- Weil Gotshal & Manges, LLP
- Winston & Strawn LLP
- XL Catlin

### Community-Based Organizations

- Brooklyn Library Business and Career Center
- CMP Business Outreach Center
- FoodWorks
- Harlem Commonwealth Council
- Hostos Community College
- Mexican Coalition
- New York City Business Solutions Center (Brooklyn; Bronx; Upper Manhattan; Queens; Staten Island)
- New York City Technical College, Small Business Development Center
- Pace Small Business Development Center
- Queens Central Library
- Queens Economic Development Corporation (QEDC)
- Rise New York
- SCORE NYC
- South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO)
- St. Francis College
- The Entrepreneur Space
- Women's Venture Fund

The Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project relies on the generosity of its NELP Partners to sustain the work of the project. NELP Partners are given priority for cases, clinics, presentations and training. To support NELP and/or to become a NELP Partner, please visit: [www.citybarjusticecenter.org](http://www.citybarjusticecenter.org) and enter "NELP" under Donation Tribute to specify your law firm or corporate legal department's support for this project.