

Initial Report

Last Modified: 05/20/2014

1. Name of Nominee:

Text Response

Philadelphia Bar Foundation, Board Observer Program

2. Nominee's position:

Text Response

N/A

3. Email address and phone number:

Text Response

jhilburnholmes@philabar.org; 215-238-6347

4. Mailing address of foundation:

Text Response

1101 Market Street, 11th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107

5. Executive Director or Senior staff person:

Text Response

Jessica Hilburn-Holmes, Esq., Executive Director

6. Name of program:

Text Response

Board Observer Program

7. Please describe the program in 1-2 paragraphs:

Text Response

The Board Observer Program (“BOP”) is a joint effort of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation and two arms of the Philadelphia Bar Association, namely the Young Lawyers’ Division (“YLD”) and the Delivery of Legal Services Committee (“DLSC”). The BOP was developed in 2011, under the leadership of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation, to match young attorneys as “observers” with non-profit boards so that they could gain non-profit governance skills and exposure to the important work of Philadelphia legal services organizations without the financial obligation of a board contribution – an obligation that might otherwise serve as an obstacle to board service for young attorneys who are just starting their careers. The BOP is administered by a committee consisting of representatives from the Foundation, the YLD, and BOP alumni. When applying for the BOP, young attorneys indicate their areas of interest such as housing issues, elder law, or the arts. The BOP committee then matches the attorney as an observer with a non-profit board in the attorney’s area of interest. The BOP requires a one-year commitment from observers and their agencies. During the course of that year, the observers attend each board meeting held by their organizations and are also encouraged to actively participate in board committees and to support their organizations’ events. Each observer is assigned a mentor, usually a trustee or the executive director of the organization, to help the observer assimilate into the organization and understand the way the board functions. In addition, the BOP sponsors a series of mandatory events designed to help observers get to know one another, gain exposure to all participating non-profits, and learn more about non-profit governance. These include: kick-off and year-end events; an annual CLE on the basics of non-profit board service; and quarterly “lunch and learn” programs covering topics such as fundraising, how to read financial statements, using social media, and ethics. The faculty and presenters for these programs all donate their time and include attorneys in non-profit practices at local law firms, board members and staffs from local non-profits, including agencies that participate in the BOP, and professors from universities. BOP committee members check in with observers and their mentors at regular points throughout the year to ensure that they are having a good experience with the program.

8. What is the program budget?

Text Response

There is no set program budget as the costs to administer the program are minimal. As noted above, the BOP is run by a committee including representatives from the Philadelphia Bar Foundation and the YLD who donate their time to this effort. The Bar Foundation’s staff spends some administrative time working on the BOP, and the Bar Foundation incurs de minimis expenses to provide name tags and program materials at events and refreshments at meetings.

9. How is this program funded?

Text Response

BOP events, such as the annual kick-off and year-end events, are hosted by law firms who have attorneys working with the program or serving on the BOP committee. As noted above, the BOP is run by volunteers.

10. How has the program made an impact on the justice system and/or the community?

Text Response

The BOP has very quickly made a positive impact on the Philadelphia community as a whole and has raised the profile of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation and Philadelphia-area legal services agencies. In its first year, the BOP matched 19 young attorneys as observers with 11 legal services organizations. Now in its third year, the BOP has nearly tripled in size. The 2013-2014 class includes 31 young attorneys from private practice, government, and corporate practice who have been observing the boards of 23 different Philadelphia-area non-profit organizations. Because of the high level of interest in the BOP, it has been expanded to include not only legal services non-profits but also non-profits operating in other areas such as the arts, housing, and service dog training. This has allowed the Program to positively impact not only Philadelphia citizens in need of legal services but also the Philadelphia community as a whole. The BOP benefits its participants – both the young attorneys and the participating agencies –

in countless ways. As noted above, Board Observers are able to gain firsthand insight into the world of non-profit governance and are expected to actively serve on committees and otherwise participate in their board's work. The participating non-profits benefit by forming long-term relationships with enthusiastic young lawyers who bring fresh ideas to the table. For example, one board observer took the lead in planning a bowling fundraiser for her non-profit, the SeniorLAW Center; another spearheaded Community Legal Services' annual 5K run fundraiser. Both of these young lawyers were asked to become full board members after their year of observation ended. Other young lawyers have stayed involved with their organizations by providing pro bono legal services, including one lawyer who served as co-counsel with his organization, the Pennsylvania Innocence Project, in a case requesting post-conviction DNA testing. In addition, the observers may bring additional fundraising possibilities to the non-profits with which they serve, particularly if that organization did not previously have a relationship with the observer's firm or company. The words of the observers and participating agencies speak for themselves. Here are just a few examples:

- Emily Hanlon, an associate at a Philadelphia firm, spent the 2011-2012 year observing the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia ("PILCOP"). She said: "This was an extraordinary opportunity to learn about the role of board members and make connections with other professionals in the Philadelphia community. I learned a great deal from observing a well-organized, effective, and efficient board that oversees a top-notch public interest legal services organization. I also gained experience serving on a board subcommittee and helping with board fundraising that I know will also be valuable in future service." Ms. Hanlon has continued her involvement in the BOP by serving on the BOP committee.
- Andrew Olen spent a year observing Friends of Farmworkers, and stated: "The BOP has been a great experience and so far has confirmed what I thought going in: a lawyer's value to a non-profit board is enhanced not just by professional experience, but also by prior board experience. Needless to say, that might be a circular problem for a lawyer who has never been a board member, but the BOP is a unique opportunity to gain that experience and make quality contributions from day one of becoming a board member for the first time."
- Linda Peyton, the Executive Director of the Legal Clinic for the Disabled, an organization that has participated in the BOP since its inception stated: "It has been a tremendous value add to our organization. The board observers who have participated have been interested, and interesting, have participated on committees, helped to fundraise, and generally added to the development of our agency. Three of our board observers have joined our board, and I know will eventually take a leadership position in meeting our mission."
- Barbara Macholz, the Director of Development and Communications at PILCOP, stated: "The Board Observer Program has helped us engage and build fruitful relationships with bright, young lawyers who share their expertise in the fields of communication, marketing, and event planning, among others. Board observers have generously helped us expand the capacity of various board committees to increase our organization's visibility and helped draw in a new generation of supporters, donors, and prospective directors."
- Sara Woods, the Executive Director of Philadelphia VIP, stated: "In our opinion, the program has been a smashing success. We have hosted three board observers, and all three have remained involved with our work after the program. Their insights were helpful and pushed our board to consider new avenues to recruit volunteers. More importantly, they brought an energy and excitement to the board that was palpable."
- Karen Buck, the Executive Director of the SeniorLAW Center, stated: "An eager, enthusiastic, visionary, diverse, and excited young new leader – that is what the Board Observer Program provided to us. Syreeta not only brought her plentiful skills but also her passion for justice, and turned it into action. In her first year, she started a bowling fundraiser for attorneys in the YLD, introduced our organization to new corporate partners, and served as an outstanding ambassador to the community, sharing powerful stories of how SeniorLAW Center changes the lives of seniors facing poverty and other crises. She is now a full-time board member and demonstrates excellence at every turn. We are grateful to the BOP and its interest in strengthening the non-profit public interest law organizations of Philadelphia and investing in our futures." Finally, the BOP provides benefits to all members of the Philadelphia Bar Association in the form of educational programming. As noted above, each year the BOP sponsors a CLE during National Pro Bono Week that covers the fundamentals of non-profit board service. Through the YLD, the BOP also sponsors quarterly "lunch and learn sessions" covering important topics related to board governance such as fundraising, how to read financial statements, how to leverage social media, ethics and fiduciary duties, and the like. These sessions are mandatory for Board Observers, but they are also open to all Philadelphia-area attorneys and non-profit staff members. They are very well attended, typically drawing 25-40 participants.

11. If applicable, please share details regarding:

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Number of people who helped/influenced the program		1	100%
2	Number of volunteers involved in the program		1	100%
3	List of "partners" involved with the program		1	100%

Number of people who helped/influenced the program	Number of volunteers involved in the program	List of "partners" involved with the program
<p>A core group of five individuals representing local law firms, the Bar Foundation, and the YLD got the BOP off the ground in 2011. Since that time, 68 young lawyers, 29 non-profit organizations, and a number of local legal employers have influenced and assisted the BOP.</p>	<p>31 young lawyers and 21 board mentors are involved in the program in 2013-2014. In addition, five volunteers serve on the BOP committee. Since the BOP's inception in 2011, more than 100 volunteers have been involved with the program.</p>	<p>Philadelphia Bar Foundation Philadelphia Bar Association, Young Lawyers' Division Philadelphia Bar Association, Delivery of Legal Services Committee Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis LLP Weber Gallagher Simpson Stapleton Fires & Newby LLP White & Williams LLP Fox Rothschild LLP Canine Partners for Life Court Appointed Special Advocates Centro Neuva Creacion Chester Children's Chorus Community Legal Services/Philadelphia Legal Assistance Dignity Housing Face to Face Friends of Farmworkers HIAS Pennsylvania Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind Legal Clinic for the Disabled Mazzoni Center Nichole Canuso Dance Company Pennsylvania Health Law Project Pennsylvania Innocence Project Philadelphia VIP Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia Scenic Philadelphia SeniorLAW Center Support Center for Child Advocates Theatre Horizon</p>

12. Can this program be replicated by other bar associations and foundations?

Text Response

This program could easily be replicated by other bar associations and foundations because it builds on existing relationships. The key to the success of the BOP has been bringing together young attorneys and non-profits, particularly legal services agencies. These are two constituencies that already worked with the Philadelphia Bar Association and the Philadelphia Bar Foundation. For example, the legal services agencies are grantees of the Foundation and members of the Association's Delivery of Legal Services Committee. The young attorneys are members of the YLD and often also have connections to the Foundation through their employers. Most other bar associations and foundations will have similar connections by virtue of the nature of their work. The program also requires almost no monetary expenditures by the Bar Foundation and Bar Association as committee members and presenters for the educational programming donate their time. Although there are a few annual events associated with the BOP, the BOP committee has had no trouble obtaining sponsorship for those events from local law firms. The Philadelphia Bar Foundation would be happy to provide guidance to other organizations that might want to replicate the program.

13. Thank you for taking the time to submit your program for the NCBF/ LexisNexis Partnerships for Success Award! If you have any supplemental materials you'd like to attach to your submission, please do so here. For any questions regarding the award, please contact: Kira Baltutis, Program Assistant ABA Division for Bar Services (312) 988-5998 Kira.Baltutis@americanbar.org

File Upload	File Type	File Size
<p>Phila Bar Foundation Single Sheet 20 14 v4.pdf</p>	<p>application/pdf</p>	<p>316.6KB</p>