

Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc.

Chicago, IL
www.clccrul.org

When you function as an intermediary you have two sets of customers to serve and satisfy. Such is the dynamic for the Community Economic Development Law Project (a project of the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc.) which functions as a broker, pairing attorneys who provide *pro bono* legal services with nonprofit organizations or low-income

individuals in need of legal services.

The Project takes a number of steps to ensure that both sets of customers are well served. "To make sure that all parties know what they are getting into, all of our clients and all volunteer attorneys sign legal retainer agreements," explains Susan Kaplan, Executive Director. "We often receive requests from new organizations that want help to get their 501c-3, non-profit status. This is often a first step, and the attorney's role expands as the organization grows." The Project carefully screens entities that are requesting help to get established legally to make sure it's a good use of valuable volunteer time.

At the conclusion of each legal matter, says

Kaplan, "We send an evaluation form to all parties asking: What was the outcome of your work? Were the client's objectives achieved? How much time did you spend? Was it personally satisfying, or not? Would you do it again?" In some instances these evaluations prompt appreciative comments and praise that are gratifying for volunteers. In other instances, miscommunications or delays surface that can be addressed.

Feedback from customers also helps identify additional needs. For example, attorneys representing low-income individuals asked for more information on the various financing institutions involved in home-buying transactions. And, the Project has developed follow-on legal services for new homeowners such as help drafting wills and understanding property taxes.



A Heron grantee since 1998, the Community Economic Development Law Project provides key legal services that support our wealth-creation strategies to organizations and low-income individuals.