Webinar: Get Your Nonprofit the Support You Need, For Free

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Today, again, for those just attending, or just logging in, my name is Josh. I'm the nonprofit success coach here at Taproot Foundation. I want to thank everyone for being here today on the kickoff event for our pro bono week celebration here at the Taproot Foundation. So at taproot every year in the fall, we usually have pro bono week. Pro bono week is a week in which we celebrate all things pro bono. So we have a lot of events. That kickoff during pro bono week. We do a lot of these webinars for both nonprofits and skilled volunteers. So that is what we are doing here today. So thank you all for being with us this pro bono week and helping to celebrate all things pro bono. So I will go ahead and just jump right in. Since it is a little past the top of the hour, we want to respect everyone's time. Again, my name is Josh, nonprofit success coach here at taproot. My job is really making sure that each of you has what you need in order to successfully engage on our programs, in particular, our online program taproot plus, which we're going to be talking about a little today, I'm joined by my taproot colleague, Kim Schwartz, who's actually our director of engagement. She's going to be helping us cover the chatbox during today's presentation, all attendees are going to be muted throughout today's event, but please feel free to ask questions or make comments in the chat box. Kim will be handling questions throughout or will direct them to me for our q&a. At the end of the webinar, we usually have 10 to 15 minutes for q&a. And so if you're, if your question is not answered through the duration of the presentation, go ahead and drop it into the chat box.

And just a little more high level information about Taproot Foundation, and what it is we do. We are nonprofit ourselves to drive social change by leading mobilizing and engaging professionals in pro bono service. So since the early 2000s, taproot has partnered with over 8400, social change organizations 20 to 24,000 volunteers, totaling over 2 million to $260 million in donated professional services. In addition to taproots pro bono programs and our own consultancy work. We aim to be leaders of the global pro bono network, and are committed to advancing pro bono movement, the pro bono movement through further research, education and events, such as pro bono week, what we're doing here right now. So to today's event, we're going to be covering what is pro bono? What do we mean by that? What the value of working with skilled volunteers is for nonprofits like yours, we'll go over some basic vetting criteria to test whether or not a certain project or need you have is a good fit for pro bono support. And then we're gonna have a panel with a special guest who's joining us today who is very seasoned skilled volunteer, who's going to talk with us about how to engage with skilled volunteers, and how to make the ask and attract a skilled volunteer to your project need. We're also going to walk through some of the logistics for how to get support through taproots online program, taproot plus, and then we'll do the q&a at the very end.

So that's what we have coming down the pipeline, you should be receiving a follow up email tomorrow as well with the recording of the presentation. So keep a lookout for that. So that you'll have a recording of this presentation to refer back to or even send to other team members. So again, tapper was founded as a nonprofit in the early 2000s. With the knowledge that there is a massive resource gap present in the social sector, organizations who have the solutions to our world's most pressing social challenges simply don't have the financial means to carry out their missions to their fullest extent. So the average US nonprofit reports spending around only 8.7% of its total budget on overhead expenses, compared to the 20% average traditionally spent by companies to build a strong infrastructure, infrastructure and capacity of their organization. So there's a gulf between what for profit organizations can spend on internal infrastructure and staff development versus what nonprofits are able to invest in this ultimately affects our bottom lines as nonprofits which is our mission that we're delivering to our community members. This means that social good organizations are missing out on staff development or hiring opportunities, or making do without entire departments like marketing, or cutting costs by continuing to delay key capacity building assessments.

So you can let us know in the chat if any of that is resonating with you. I always like to remind people that taproot we ourselves are a 501 C three nonprofit. So we go through many of the same challenges that all nonprofits go through. But to put it simply, most organizations tackling social problems don't have access to the resources, funding or staff expertise needed to fully accomplish their vital missions. And the lack of ability to invest in ourselves really saps our ability to build strong, resilient and sustainable organizations. And due to current global crises surrounding the COVID 19 pandemic, inflation, social good organizations are really feeling the strain now more than ever, while being pushed to get creative with how we bring in financial support for our missions. So that's where pro bono service can really help. So Taproot Foundation aims to bridge the nonprofit resource gap through connections with skilled volunteers, who provide their tech marketing, HR strategy and finance experience on a pro bono basis. So during today's webinar will specifically be addressing how pro bono support from the private sector can apply to nonprofit needs.

And I just want to pause for a moment to people who might be first hearing the phrase pro bono in this context, often when people hear the term pro bono, they think of legal support, because it's essentially standard of in the legal field now, but it's actually much more than that. So pro bono support is any donated professional services benefiting organizations working to improve society or for the public good. So taproots programs specifically focus on the areas of marketing communications, it and tech, human resources and leadership development strategy, finance, data and program operations. So through study we completed with CECP, originally in 2015. And using refresh data in in 2019, taproot has determined that the average value of an hour of pro bono service is around $195. So our average pro bono project takes around 30 hours of volunteer time to complete, which means your nonprofit is looking at donated services, amounting to around $6,000 per pro bono project. So through the webinar today, when we say pro bono is a really valuable tool, we really mean it. And by infusing the use of pro bono support throughout your departments, you can save money on your bottom line, while helping build capacity and resiliency and long term stability at your organization.

So, you might be wondering, this all sounds great in theory, but how could using pro bono play out at my organization, so we want to dive into some specifics and start arming you with some knowledge where you can start getting ready to make good on pro bono service. So we've come up with these four tests for great pro bono. So if you have a list of project needs that you have listed out of at your organization, and I know we all probably have those. How do you know which projects are really good for pro bono support. And we recommend kind of using these three, or sorry, these four tests for great pro bono projects. Based off of our years of experience in facilitating pro bono, certain projects are really good candidates for pro bono support in certain projects are not so great candidates for pro bono support. So I just want to briefly touch on each one of these criteria and what you should be looking for when thinking about which projects can be tackled using pro bono support.

So really quickly, the criteria are the scoping test, the urgency test, the knowledge transfer test, and the board and staff readiness test. So I just want to take a minute on each of these to break down what we're talking about here and empower you with this knowledge. So the first thing to think about is scope. And two things to really highlight here is think about how big this project is, and the other is how well defined this project is.

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So this isn't to say you can't have big projects that are done based on pro bono. But you just want to make sure that if your project is larger or more ambitious, that it's very clear and well defined. You'll want to make sure that the project has a clear completion criteria that you and a skilled volunteer can work towards together. and you want to ask questions like How will you know when the project is done? What does success look like for this project? These are really great questions to ask to make sure you can define the goal of the project. So remember, you're looking to source some one on one pro bono support from a skilled volunteer. If you have a very big ambitious goal, like building a whole new website from the ground up, or maybe doing your first strategic plan, you'll want to consider breaking those larger projects down into more bite sized constituent projects that build off of one another. That's a really great way to leverage pro bono support in a nimble way.

So if your need makes a good size project that's well defined, you can go ahead and check off the scope test. When you're vetting for your your projects, and whether or not they pass the scope test. So the next test is the urgency test. And really, this is saying that if the need is urgent, meaning very bad things might happen directly as a result of this project not happening, then we recommend not going if pro bono resources for that need. So an example of maybe the worst possible project with regard to the scoping or sorry, with regard to the urgency test is bringing in an event planner for your gala the night before the gala happens. Pro bono support is really awesome for many reasons. But one of the things that's not so great for us when there is an absolute deadline coming up sooner rather than later. Pro bono projects generally get done 50 To 150% to 100%, slower than expected. Many skilled volunteers are doing pro bono after hours or on the weekends. And this can necessarily extend timelines. paid consultants generally complete projects 25% to 50% slower or later than expected. So it's not that paid work gets done on time 100% of the time, but pro bono tends to be slower. So if you want to look at your list, if your project has an absolute deadline, and it's coming up very soon, you'll probably want to cultivate other avenues of support for that. So urgency is kind of one of the trade offs of pro bono support. Obviously, the big benefit of pro bono support is its work being done pro bono.

But again, there is a trade off here with the urgency aspects. So you'll want to think about that a little bit when you're mapping out which projects to get resources for on a pro bono basis. So the next test is the knowledge transfer test. So a good example of a form of pro bono with the least knowledge transfer needed would be bringing a plumber in to fix the sink in your office. This is a very expensive, highly skilled person who doesn't actually need a lot of information about your organization to do the job, it's pretty much there's the sink, please help us fix the sink. This doesn't work with for example, a project that's like a staff recruitment or retention strategy, right? You can't just point to the computer and say, there's a computer please create an effective strategy for us. There has to be a lot of information exchanged. photography or video editing for a fundraising campaign is a pro bono project that would fall somewhere in between both of those kind of more extreme examples. You definitely don't need as much detailed knowledge as the recruitment and retention strategy about your organization. But you still need to understand the essence of what you want to capture and how you want to tell that story.

16:13:54

And then, finally, the last test is the staff and board readiness test. So you'll want to this is really kind of an extension of the knowledge transfer test. But you'll want to think about other staff members and even if your board is involved in making this project a success. So you want to ask Does your organization really want this? Or is this just something that you want? This is important because several people from your organization may need to be involved to make a project a success. So for example, if you as an executive director really want to try crowdfunding for the first time, but your marketing director doesn't think it's a priority. That's probably a big red flag that you'll want to think about with regard to the board and staff readiness test. So those are our four criteria for vetting very good pro bono projects and setting yourself up for success with regard to setting yourself up for success. Now that you have a good idea about how to scope a good pro bono project You might have questions about sourcing. So how do you attract skilled volunteers to do work for your organization on a pro bono basis. So we'll get into the actual logistics and technical details about using our online marketplace taproot plus to make the ask, but we want to hear I want to bring in a special guest, to our webinar, to talk about this season's kind of volunteer experience, about what attracts them to pro bono work and how you can put your best foot forward when engaging with skilled volunteers and requesting pro bono support. So I'm really, really excited to welcome to the call today, Katherine Hunter Blyden, Katherine's area of expertise is in marketing, digital marketing and customer acquisition. over her career so far, she's founded her own startup worked with Fortune 500 companies, small and mid tier businesses and other startups. She's engaged in multiple taproot plus programs since 2009, and has completed eight projects with nonprofits through taproot plus. So I'm very excited to welcome Catherine to our call today to talk about the nonprofit experience. And Katherine, I think we'll just dive right in, I've given you I've given a kind of a short bio. But tell us just a little bit about your background and what your professional superpower is.

16:16:35

I will I just noticed in the captions that the caption put, my name is Katherine Hunter Blyden that happens, Lydon but anyway, I work as a partner at Tech CXO, which is a management consulting firm. And we have sea level consultants that work on a fractional or interim basis with everything from early stage companies to Fortune five companies. We have a number of practice areas, about 100 partners across the country, about half of them are CFOs, a quarter sit in what we call the revenue growth practice area, which is for revenue growth, sales and marketing professionals. I sit there as a fraction of Chief Marketing Officer, we have a human capital area, we have a technology group. And we have something we call executive operations. So in my role as the CMO partner, I work with clients in three areas, it's brand, helping them to build their brand, improve their corporate, customer and product communications. And then on the performance marketing side. So that's how they're using their human and capital resources. And I would say my superpower is the latter, figuring out how to put together a strategic plan to make sure that we're using resources to maximize growth.

16:18:03

Yeah. Yeah, that's, that's wonderful to hear. And it gives people at the line kind of a taste of the type of skills and expertise of the people willing to give back pro bono. So I'm interested in hearing from you also, what motivates you to do pro bono work for nonprofits. And as pursuant to that, what's something that nonprofit beneficiaries Should Know About What Motivates skilled volunteers to do pro bono?

16:18:31

So I can talk about myself for sure. I'm not sure that I can speak for all pro bono consultants, but I have been a student of business and how businesses and organizations are run for some time. It is my career work. And I in fact, started maybe eight years ago, as a mentor for small business owners through a nonprofit that's a resource partner for the US for business integration. And I have literally mentored hundreds of businesses during that time. So my give back is where the skill that I you know that I'm, I guess that's my superpower, and which is really about helping organizations grow. In terms of why people get back for me, I feel like we have an obligation to serve the communities that we live in. And I do that with the skills and the talent that I've been given. Again, I can't speak for everyone but I would hope that most pro bono consultants are doing it for the same reasons or similar.

16:19:47

Yeah, so we we get to take a look at like the surveys from our volunteers and our systems and things like that. And we kind of get to we ask them, you know, what, what motivates you to to give back like this? And a lot of times we hear very similar things is people they want Gonna get outside of their their day job or maybe use their skill sets to work with organizations that have missions that they're very passionate about. That they might might be a mission that involves something that's affected them personally or just a cause that's near and dear to their heart. So you're definitely not alone in terms of the motivations for doing pro bono work there is people are really excited about giving back the skill set that they use, you know, on their day job to mission driven organizations. So, obviously, pro bono services are in high demand for a lot of nonprofits. How do you decide when nonprofit when a nonprofit projects, or which nonprofit projects rather to apply to? So if you're using taproot plus our online marketplace, what makes you reach out? What makes you kind of hit that apply button? What makes you want to get in touch with them?

16:21:10

Yeah, so I can speak specifically to taproot plus, and I'm not sure if your audience has seen the platform yet. But with regard to those things that I'm passionate about those things that align with my values, you said other pro bono folks do that, that is one of the filters that I use for sure, as I think about and look at the organizations that have opportunities on the platform. I look at their overview, filter for, obviously, my areas of expertise, which is marketing strategy. And specifically, I've worked with a lot of nonprofits on Google Ads projects, just because I have a niche there. And it tends to be a skill that's not in house for many nonprofits. I look at their websites. So in addition to looking at what's on the platform, I look at the organization's website, I might look them up on some of the third party sites like GuideStar, or Charity Navigator, and then figure out there's usually, so there's a time commitment that's included there as well, when it makes sure that I'm available for the time that's there. And then if all of those things align, then I will reach out.

16:22:28

Yeah. And when you're talking about that, that overview, kind of the project a little bit, something that we like to instill in our volunteer or sorry, our nonprofits is demonstrating readiness. So someone who's done so many pro bono projects, what's your advice to nonprofits in terms of instilling confidence for the skill of volunteer and showing their skill, volunteer readiness for taking on a pro bono project?

16:23:00

You know, a lot of it is I think they don't know what to ask for. It's in an area that they don't have in house. And like I said, I work with marketing strategy and Google ads. And so I oftentimes see in the overview, like maybe a time commitment, that's a short time, we just want to have a couple of weeks. And what I recognize is that they don't necessarily know that this project takes a longer time than that. So I'm a little bit. I'm sensitive to that, because I've seen it a few times. But I think the more thorough you can be in your overview of the project and who you are, and the the time commitment that that you're willing to make to the project. That's, that's a, that's helpful for, for me. I think the other thing is having a really robust profile, like I said, I'm going to review where you are and what you're doing. The reason of reasonable timeframe, oh, one big thing. So for me, it's having the right decision makers at that are part of the project. So when I do my outreach now, to anyone that posts a project, I always say, Please schedule this meeting with me if you have the right decision makers available. Because if you don't, we're not going to get anything done. We can't move forward. Oftentimes, it's not just let's just go to Google ads, or let's just look at your marketing strategy. But there's kind of an overall strategy that you want to accomplish. And you want to make sure that what you're doing feeds into that. And if the folks that are part of those decisions aren't in the room, it makes it harder.

16:24:43

Yeah, I couldn't have summed up the board and staff readiness test for a good pro bono projects better. But you're speaking to it right there. as that being something you're looking for making sure the right players are at the table. And that's something that definitely helps instill confidence that all nonprofits should know about when they're when they're making these pitches. And again, with the timeline, you'll you'll notice, you know, when nonprofits use taproot Plus, they have the option of kind of selecting a timeframe. But also calling out things about the timeline in the project description itself, can go a really long way, in instilling confidence from a skilled volunteer. So, to make this even more concrete, I'd like to ask you about if you can describe a pro bono project you worked on, that went really well, and why specifically, you think it went really well? What were the what were kind of the the most successful strategies that were used? Like, why was it such a success?

16:25:57

So Josh, I know you're gonna ask this, I made some notes on this one. It's been a little while since I've looked at this particular project. But I'm the one thing I'll just mention this, in case I talked about Google ads before. So I'm going to use that as an example. I think most of the audience knows that Google has a grant that they make available to nonprofits. That is $10,000 a month, it's up to $10,000 a month, if you can spend that amount if you qualify it for and most nonprofits will. So this was a project that was with an organization in the DMV area, DC, Maryland, Virginia area. And their problem was that they were using only 22% of the grants. So they were using about 2000 of the $10,000 that was available to them each month. And they wanted to increase the utilization of the grant to be more effective. Now, they were competing with law firms, big law firms with deep pockets and lots of money that spent a lot on Google ads to try to get after the same clients that they were serving. And so essentially, they're offering their service for free for these individuals last long legal services for free for these individuals, and competing against law firms that are paying hundreds of dollars, and are charging hundreds of dollars an hour to the sane and can actually spend a lot more because of that. So. So fortunately, for this organization, the grant allowed them to spend at a level that would let them reach many, many more of the target audience that they would after. And I'm intentionally being vague, because I'm not sure how much I can say about the not the organization themselves. But we looked at so this, this nonprofit had poor visibility into the website visitors that were coming to their website, because of how their campaigns were structured. So we restructured the campaign's they weren't set up appropriately to be able to reach the population as effectively as they need. They also had a website that wasn't really set up in a way that can maximize Google ads, and I'll just tell you, it, it's not just looking at the platform of the ads itself. It's what happens when they come to your website. And Google actually considers what happens when they come to your website. So your website actually has to be ready for these projects. And that's something that a lot of nonprofits don't know.

So we revamped some of their web pages a little bit to the extent that we could. And we had some constraints because they didn't have resources internally to get them exactly where we needed them to be. And we revise the campaign talked about that. And they they needed to get an immediate win. But their revamped to their website was months off. They also had a mobile app that they were using. And so what we did is we sent people to the desktop version of the mobile app through their website. And ultimately, they went from using $2,000 a month of the Google ad to using $8,000 a month of the Google Ad grad, Google grant. So what that meant for them is they saw an increase in impressions. Impressions are how many times your ad gets shown, we saw a slight increase there. That was 37%. But the increase the 275% increase from the 2000 to 8000. Was really because they could pay more for each click. Anyway, the campaigns were set up to do that. And you can see I'm very focused on the outcome, the business outcome because that's what I do. But one of the things that really worked for us with this project is they had the resources that needed to be there were always there and available. And anytime there was a question that was asked that they couldn't immediately get to they were really responsive and following up on that, to make sure that we could keep moving the project along and really changed their campaigns and do what we could with their site to get to a better utilization of the grant, which obviously drove more of the they're serving veterans. I don't mind telling you that but more the veterans helped being able to help more than veterans that needed support for the legal services they had. So that's good. Very good. Yeah. Very.

16:30:48

Yeah, it's music to my ears, because I'm sure there's probably nonprofits on this call right now that have questions about Google ads, it is one of the most common types of pro bono requests that we get to the point where we actually have a pre scoped project template that you can use the language from, and this is for our nonprofits, that is specifically a Google ads based project template, because it is such a common request. And it's very, very high impact. We know there's a lot of nonprofits out there that are got the grant. And then they're like, Okay, now what? How do we do this? I just had a call with a nonprofit this morning, who encountered the exact problem you called out, which was they didn't necessarily realize that their website needed to be up and running and kind of firing on all cylinders to really make the most of that. Google Ads grant. Yeah, so I'm also wondering, you know, this question is about what really well, is there, you don't have to name any names. But is there maybe an example of something that happened on a project that maybe hindered the project or advice for nonprofits like about, you know, make sure not to do this or avoid this when helping manage pro bono volunteers? I know, that's a bit of a curveball. But I did want to, we have some people in the comments asking for examples of things that maybe didn't go as well, or things that could have been better.

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So there have been times when I've initiated a conversation with a nonprofit through the platform that was looking for support. And I get on the call with him. And they realize that they just don't have the one of two things, they don't have the resources to make changes that need to be made, so that they can be effective in building out either the marketing strategy or the Google ads, they just don't have the right resources at that time. That makes it tough. And so we've, I mean, I've stopped that, and we say, well, we'll have to come back to it when you're ready. So the project really just didn't go forward at all. And then there, I've said this before, but the other thing is, when you don't have the decision makers in the room, and you don't have their ear, and you can't make changes, or you can't make decisions that need to be made. And it just delays the project. And for me, if I'm committing to a project, that's six to nine weeks, which is pretty typical. And it starts to get 912 weeks, it can run into other areas and other projects that I'm working on for my day job. And that becomes that can become a problem. And so then it gets stretched longer and longer. Or it doesn't end in the way that it should in. So I'll say again, having the right folks in the room, and the folks that understand the strategy. Oftentimes, I'm asking for a strategic plan, if there's one that exists for the organization, so I understand what you're after. And i less than half the time, but more frequently than I like there's not one available. So that means we need to have another session, which is fine. It's a q&a where I try to understand more about the organization but having those kinds of things in place before you start any project, I think are very important because it's not just for marketing as for marketing, it's websites, it's it, it's finances, understanding where you want to go where you are today and where you want to go is critical and and being able to communicate that will help the pro bono volunteer, figure out how best to support you to get there.

16:35:04

Yeah, Thank you for talking about that. Because it's honestly, like I said, music to my ears. Oftentimes, the people that are actually doing pro bono support can describe kind of what our best practices and our advice is for pro bono support much better than we can, which is why we love having you all on calls like these are webinars like these. But I heard a lot of really great information in there about how important readiness is to take on a pro bono project and getting the right people in the room. And demonstrating that readiness. Something that I like to emphasize is, you know, pro bono support is nonprofits shouldn't just think of pro bono support as free work, but as a partnership. And it's really, really important to think about it in those terms. Because you'll start thinking about, okay, I need to have my ducks in a row, I need to do some homework before I start making Gask. Making sure I have things lined up to take on to support this person who's coming to, to do pro bono work. So thank you for so much, so much for making that kind of crystal clear with those examples. So Catherine is a busy woman, obviously. So we are we are going to let her go. But thank you so much, Catherine, for giving your perspective, I think it's incredibly important for people who are thinking about using pro bono service to hear directly from the people who provide that about what it is they're actually looking for. And I think the nonprofits today will be in a much better position to to make those asks, After hearing from you. So thank you so much, Catherine, for being with us. We will send out Katherine's LinkedIn profile in our follow up email. So if you want to check her out some more, you can do that as well. We'll be sending that to you tomorrow. So thank you again, Katherine. It was wonderful to have you here on this webinar on pro bono week with us.

16:37:07

Thanks for the invitation. Josh, have a good day.

16:37:10

No problem. Thank you. So now we want to talk a little bit about how do you actually connect with skilled volunteers. So you've heard a little bit about what types of projects can be done on a pro bono basis, and how to set yourself up for success and attracting skilled volunteers. So you're now probably wondering, how do I find someone like Katherine to help with my with my nonprofit and all the needs we have? So you can get connected with the support you need through taproot plus, which is our cost free online, nonprofit volunteer matchmaking platform. taproot plus is designed to be flexible and nimble. So your nonprofit can get skilled volunteers no matter how big they are, in any business professional can support said nonprofit no matter where they are located. And of course, again, it's completely free to use as pursuant to the mission of the Taproot Foundation. This is really taproots way of scaling up the pro bono movement and making sure all those who want to use pro bono have a way to do so. So, currently, taproot plus is open to nonprofits, and public institutions like public schools, or a library or Chamber of Commerce, and fiscally sponsored social good organizations in the United States. We are also available to nonprofit and charitable organizations and social good organizations in Canada, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and India. And we have over 120,000 total users since we debuted in 2019. So there is no limit to the number of staff members at your nonprofit who can have an account on taproot plus.

So later when we send out this recording to all registrants, feel free to forward the information to a colleague who could also maybe benefit from virtual pro bono support from a skilled volunteer. And we are again, a nonprofit that exists to assist other nonprofits. And the only costs associated with our programs is time and energy it takes to again make the request and manage skilled volunteers. So again, as pursuant to our mission, taproot plus is free to use. There's no asterisk or kind of fine print anywhere. There's no fee for posting or anything like that. You should actually see, excuse me, a ribbon up at the top of your screen now where you can go and sign up to use taproot plus if you haven't already Um, to get started, you just need to go to taproot. plus.org. And once you're there, you can hit sign up and sign up as a nonprofit user. And we'll need you to tell us just a few details about your organization that you work for. If you have an EIN will need your EIN will need your website if you have one, your mission statement. So make sure that those things are handy. You'll also make sure to you know pick out which which email address you want to use. If you're like a lot of professionals and have multiple ones, we're going to be sending you emails directly about the projects you post and the candidates that come in. So keep that in mind when you're when you're giving us your email address. And once you've submitted all your account details, and if confirmed your email address, you're really ready to go ahead and start submitting requests on a pro bono for pro bono projects. We also have a another avenue you can go with that's called sessions. So before diving into the weeds of project posting, I want to touch on what sessions are for just a brief minute. So when you go to the submit a request part of your dashboard, you'll see on the left, you could submit a request to do a project. You'll also see on the right that you have the option to do what we call a session or a consultation session. consultation sessions are really really great for diagnosing, brainstorming or even scoping out potential projects. These are one off one hour conversations with a subject matter expert. So you can kind of pick the brain of a subject matter expert. And again, these are great for if you have a specific question that you need someone with a certain level of knowledge to answer. So that is where you can go to request a consultation session, we will mark it those out on taproot plus the same way we boost out projects. So if you get interested volunteers who want to have that consultation session with you, again, we'll email you when those people come in. Sorry. So that is something that you can do as a part of taproot plus as well. But on the left here, you can also submit a request to do a project. So if something like a Google Ads grant assistance project like Katherine was working on, that would be something you want to request a project for, since here's a kind of deliverable and a clear end product that might take several weeks to work on together. So that's something that's more suited to a project post. And when you click on that page, or request a project, we just want to give you a snapshot of what the Project Request Form actually looks like. We're going to ask you three free answer questions about what it is that you're looking for. And again, think about that readiness aspect and demonstrating readiness to take on the project. as Kathryn emphasized, that's really important when you're making the pitch.

And I would say, just pay close attention to what's being asked on this request form. Because your responses here are actually going to be collated into what we call your project post. This is what we boost out to skilled volunteers on our marketplace to get them interested in your project. So you do want to take a little bit of time here and make sure that you're thinking critically about your need. And make sure to try and put your your best foot forward, so to speak. So on the right here, there's just a list of the most common types of projects that we see get posted on tap root plus, this is by no means an exhaustive list. But just an example of kind of these four main practice areas and the types of requests that we see coming in all the time. But again, if your need isn't up there, that does not mean that it is not something you can post to to taproot plus.

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So moving right along once you post a project to taproot plus, we are going to boost it out to skilled volunteers on our marketplace. Our marketplace is curated, meaning that projects that match a certain skill set will be boosted out specifically to volunteers with that skill set. So when they log into their marketplace, they're going to see those opportunities right at the top. We boost projects out also via direct email by skill set. We also have a partnership with LinkedIn, which allows us to cross post our opportunities to their VA onto your marketplace. So taproot plus will help facilitate making the match with a skilled volunteer that will send you interested applicants, and help you set up a time to actually discuss the project with them. as Catherine mentioned, she was talking a little bit about that process. taproot plus will help you facilitate that, select a time confirm the meeting, and he was a nonprofit leader will actually have the opportunity to vet these candidates and make the best choice for who fits best for this project. And you'll see here, this is an example of what we call the Project Management page, where you can manage calls that you have confirmed with interested applicants, you can join those calls via the buttons there under the confirmed meeting. Or you can call in directly via phone, we just wanted to give you a snapshot of the project management page and what that looks like. You'll see on the left hand side of your dashboard, there's kind of the big blue toolbar, that's going to be your your navigation guideposts to figuring out taproot plus, so just pay attention to that. And this is just a basic snapshot of what the user experience looks like. So I know I've done a lot of talking, and we've heard directly from a skilled volunteer. So we've got about 12 or so minutes left. And I do want to dive into questions that you might have for us and try and get them answered as many as we can on the call today. And if for whatever reason, we miss your question, or aren't able to answer it online today, we actually do keep kind of a record of these, these recordings. So go ahead and put whatever comment you want down there in the drop box. And we will go ahead and try and get back to you. We don't get back to you right now on the call.

So I'm just gonna take a moment to kind of look at the questions that have come in. And right at the top, I see a really good question, which is, what types of pro bono website support is available? I love this question, because we do get a lot of web design and development support requests. And what I'll say with that is, if you come to taproot plus, and your request is, we need someone to design and build out an entire website from scratch, you probably won't be as successful as if you make your web development or design requests a little more targeted. So going back to that scoping criteria test, a really good strategy to use for website design and development projects is try and familiarize yourself a little bit with the web design and development process. And there's a lot of great online resources for doing that. And if you have questions about that, get in touch with us, I can actually send you some breakdowns of what that process looks like. And instead of making your project request for website development assistance, building something up entirely from scratch, take you know, maybe the first step in creating a new website and just make that the focus of your first project. And then use the deliverable from that project as the foundation for the next project. So a concrete example of what that looks like in the context of web development is maybe your first project is you just want to create a wireframe for your new website. And that is just the goal of that project. And then once you finish that project, you can take that wireframe and in the readiness section of making the request for a new project, say, we have a wireframe developed, and we're looking to build off of that. That's a really successful strategy for getting those big goals with website design and development support. But you might also just have website design and development needs that are you know, maybe not that ambitious. For example, you know, if your website that wants to figure out, you know, how to integrate an E commerce feature into your website, that's a project in and of itself as well. So you can think about that as well. Another website project is just doing a requirements brief with a skilled volunteer. So someone who can tell you, here's kind of the minimum of what you need on your website. And here's the best kind of website solution to go for. Whether it's WordPress, or Squarespace, someone who can tell you the actual specifications that would fit best for your organization and develop a requirements brief for you, where you can just take that information, and then again, go back and request a volunteer who can start building that out. So keep that in mind as well.

16:50:28

Another great question is simply, if you're really new and don't even know where to start with all of this, maybe you're overwhelmed that you have access to this marketplace. I would say I always start by asking the question, what hurts the most right now, if your organization, what big skill set that you really wish that you had, that you don't have actually is it could be tech support with something like a website, or it could be, you don't have a marketing background. And right now you're wearing the hat as like the Chief Marketing operator, right? We know, at a lot of nonprofits, we are wearing multiple hats. So think about the big skill set, maybe that you wish you had at your organization, and then build off of that. So okay, you're feeling the burn of not having that skill set, what would having that skill set do for you? What kind of projects do you really need to push forward at your organization that you need that skill set for, and then you can start creating a list of like needs based off of that skill set. And you can start to prioritize based off of that list of needs.

So a good way to start is figure out maybe which projects are dependent on other projects to start getting in line, okay, this project needs to be finished before this project, this project is dependent on this project. So just creating a list and then trying to prioritize of what maybe the top needs that you have are that would make good pro bono projects. Again, thinking back to those vetting criteria, for good pro bono, that's a really good place to start is just doing the homework and taking the time to think really critically about your needs and how you're going to demonstrate readiness, this phase in the pro bono process can oftentimes be rushed through, because you just kind of want to get something up there and make the ask and get help. But I would say invest some time in this thinking and ideation process. Because how you make that ask, as we've seen, is going to be very critical to whether or not you're finally able to get support. So it's kind of like when you know, your teachers back in school would say, you need to do an outline for your essay before you start writing the essay. And you're like, Well, I just want to start writing. And then you get halfway through and realize, oh, I should really have an outline. That's how you should probably think about this process where you're just kind of outlining what your needs are and how to make the ask.

16:53:10

Another good question, are there resources available for recruitment for an executive director? So this question is interesting. tapper plus right now is it's not necessarily a jobs posting platform. So we host you know, project needs and these consultation session needs. But what you could use taproot plus to get support for if you are trying to source for a high level executive position, is posting an HR based project to help with a recruitment strategy for that high level executive position. So I love love, love, HR pro bono projects, because that is what we've seen to be the most underutilized sector of pro bono support is HR projects. And I say that because if you have HR needs, you'll have a very high chance of really securing a volunteer because we oftentimes have more HR consultant interests than we do nonprofit projects or needs coming in for HR support. So HR volunteers are kind of constantly waiting in the wings. And the other reason why I like to advocate HR projects like Executive Director, recruitment strategy, which would be like, how to make the ask who are you targeting who or what's the kind of job description that you want to pitch to people, these are all things a, an HR professional can help you with. And I love HR projects, because despite the fact that they're not exactly the immediate needs on a nonprofits list, they can be sometimes the most impactful. These are kind of cutting to the heart of your organization, which is which is your people that are working at your organization. So that's my pitch for HR projects. We don't do any kind of direct job listings or postings on our platform, but you can get help with a recruitment strategy for those positions for drawing up those advertisements for that position, or even figuring out if you need HR assistance with someone just managing the pipeline for that, or, you know, what questions do we even ask a potential executive director that we're trying to recruit? What do we ask them during the interview phase? How many interviews? Should we even do? Should we do one interview for, you know, skills and the other interview with another member of staff to make sure they're a good cultural fit for our organization? Those are all the types of questions that you're probably going to ask when you're recruiting for an executive position. And those are the types of questions that an HR consultant could really help you work through.

So another question, can more than one person from the same organization sign up? Is there a single point point of contact. So I think I mentioned a little bit about this at the top of the presentation, but you can have as many people from your organization, sign up for taproot plus as you want, you'll all be kind of added to your organization's basic profile, which is basically just the mission statement and the website. So everyone at your organization, as long as they have a unique email address, can sign up to use taproot plus, the caveat there is if someone from your organization posts a project, that person that posts, the project has to be the one that controls that project. So that manages the applicants and kind of does the vetting. So keep that in mind, you can't control or make decisions on each other's projects. So that's just a good point of clarification for you. If you're kind of thinking about who's going to actually make the project pitches. Just keep that in mind. Right now. We require a unique email address, and you can't necessarily take action on each other's projects. Another great question that we oftentimes get asked is okay, we posted a project, it's up on the marketplace. What what happens if you know, week or two goes by we don't get any hits. I'd say in that case, reach out to us at You can reach out, of course, via the address here, or the other address we have is help at taproot. plus.org. Again, that's help at taproot. plus.org, I think I can get Kim to drop that into the comments as well. So you have a written version of that. For help at taproot plus.org, there's several things we can do to get more set more sets of eyes on your project post. Those people that man, our helpdesk, too, can also bring you over to me as the nonprofit success coach. And I can take another look at your project description. Maybe punch help you punch up the language a little bit to make things more attractive and compelling for skilled volunteers on the marketplace.

So there's always different strategies we can use to really drive interest to your project. So I'd say after about two weeks, if you've gotten absolutely no hits on your project, please let us know we'd be happy to figure out some ways in which we can further help, then I know we're right at time. But I do want to just show off a feature that could be very helpful for you all on that project posting page. So we do have several projects that are actually pre scoped. So you'll see some of those fields are actually already filled in. When you use these pre scoped project templates. You'll see the user Template button right at the top left. And those those Google Ad Grants type projects is actually one of the pre scoped templates that we have. So that'll actually populate our form with a project description that's kind of ready to go, you'll just need to add in information into the second pre answer section here about how this deliverable connects back to your organization's mission. That's not something we can pre populate these, it's so specific to your organization. But make use of those templates, we also have it as a goal to expand those template of offerings. So again, if you're just starting and maybe not sure where to start out, maybe take a look at those templates and see if any of those types of projects resonate with you. That might be a good place to start, especially if you've never made a pitch for services like this before. You can lean on us a little bit to help make the pitch for you. So just keep that in mind. I think those are all the questions, I think we have one more question that's come in. And this is about who controls the project. So does that mean the person who pitches controls only a selection process and then can handle project off to someone else? Or does the person who proposes the project need to manage it all the way through to the entire project. Our recommendation here is, the person posting the project should ideally be the project manager for that project. However, you'll just you'll need to take notes, if you are having someone post these projects and do all the sourcing that and then it's passed off to someone else at your organization to manage the project itself, you'll want to make that really, really clear in the project pitch, that they'll be who they'll be working with when they finally do the work. So that's just a matter of making expectations really clear for any potential skill, volunteer about who they're actually going to be working with. If it maybe is different than the person that they're talking to initially, you'll just want to be really upfront about that.

So again, it's the matter of, it's not prohibited for you to do that. You'll just want to make sure expectations are really, really clear. But that is a very great question. And I think that is it in terms of the questions that I've seen come through again, we'll try and get back to any questions we missed. I want to thank everyone for attending today. And wish everyone a happy pro bono week, we hope to see all of you online using Capri plus, again, we're gonna send out a recording of this presentation tomorrow and a follow up. Also, I know Catherine's no longer on the line. But big thanks to Katherine. Again, we'll include her LinkedIn and check out her profile and see the types of volunteers that are giving back with pro bono service. So thank you all for attending our webinar today. And we hope to see you online and I hope to connect with all of you at some point in the future if you have any more questions. So thanks, everyone. Bye