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### Tip Jar Contents

- **Foster Honest Collaboration**
  - Nonprofits know their communities, goals, and area of need better than external consultants. Bring your specific expertise and work with the nonprofit to find a middle ground when creating systems change and innovative solutions.

- **Keep Timelines Flexible**
  - A nonprofit’s ability to move forward with a project depends heavily on funding timelines. A nonprofit could need a large amount of information or a certain level of documentation immediately and then need to hold for 3 months before they can proceed with the project.

- **Get Everyone on the Same Page**
  - Set clear expectations for compensation, project goals, and timelines, and ensure all partners know how the work will be documented and what the guidelines are for giving credit to all parties who are involved in the project. Work with the organization and make sure they understand exactly what you are providing.

- **Each Nonprofit is Unique**
  - Your background and experience may mean you have a skill set that can assist the organization, but it does not mean you have answers to the nuanced obstacles they face. Only apply your expertise when appropriate.

- **Words Matter**
  - Revisit established project language and make sure it is universally approved.

- **Get Your Permissions**
  - Ensure all waivers for photo and video releases are in place so project partners can use documentation freely.

- **Treat Pro Bono Clients Like Regular Clients**
  - These organizations depend on the services you offered to provide. If you don’t have time to fit them into your schedule, do not take them on as a client. Do not push their work to the bottom of the barrel.

- **Don’t Break Pinky Promises**
  - If you commit to doing a task or project, ensure that it is a priority and make time to complete it. If you can’t be sure of your availability, do not commit. Avoid leaving loose ends for the organization to tie up on their own.

- **Unnecessary Help is No Help at All**
  - Nonprofits know their clients and communities well. Let them know your skill set and they will let you know how you could best help. Sometimes too many hands and voices can be a hindrance. Be understanding if your help is not needed at that time and check back with them at a later date.

- **Ask and Listen**
  - Nonprofits are staffed with bright, ambitious, hardworking people who are motivated by social issues. Ask about their needs and only offer help if you are qualified to fill that gap. Their biggest barriers are often funding, capacity, and time.
TIPS FOR DESIGNERS

FOLLOW THROUGH
Community input is a treasured resource, so don’t waste it! When feedback and ideas gathered do not inform the final project, it can lead to planning fatigue and distrust in the community.

TAKE NOTES
Write down feedback, questions, and items to follow up on so everyone can see them. Avoid summarizing or paraphrasing people’s thoughts. This shows that you’re listening and validates the community’s concerns and ideas.

ENGAGE EARLY & OFTEN
The community should be engaged throughout the entire design process. Defining their needs and working with them to integrate their input provides visual proof that you are listening, creating trust, and getting community buy-in. A project grown from a community’s culture, aspirations, and needs will be respected and well-used.

FOSTER RESPECT
If you respect the people you are working with and create a welcoming environment, they are more likely to be open and respectful in return. If you are a community outsider, find trusted partners in the community to lead discussions and promote meetings.

DEFINE CONSENSUS
Consensus doesn’t mean that everyone has to agree and be happy with the final solution – but determining what consensus looks like allows people to leave a meeting feeling like they contributed in a worthwhile way.

MAKE SPACE & SCALE TANGIBLE
When possible, map or model areas or spaces and use scale figures or familiar objects like a bed or parking space. Bring visual aids, like renderings, and don’t expect that everyone can read a plan or a section.

PUT IN THE TIME
Projects don’t get built overnight, and neither do relationships. Set realistic expectations for collecting feedback, and allow time to build trust.

LISTEN FIRST
Start with questions, not answers. Recognize that you bring discipline expertise, but the community brings local expertise.

GIVE UP THE SPOTLIGHT
Standing at the front of a room puts the presenter in a “show-and-tell” position rather than a “listen-and-learn” position. Avoid large, singular open-mic situations, and instead promote partner or small group discussions, activities, user apps, or call-in lines. These allow all personalities to participate, not just the boldest voices.

WHEN IN ROME...
Celebrate the local culture throughout the design and development process. If food is essential, involve food. If prayer is essential, involve prayer. Listen to the community and do things their way. Engagement should grow from local culture.

ENSURE EVERYONE HAS A VOICE
Whether it’s a marker, post-its, or stickers, ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak. Pay attention to the quiet members of the group and invite them to share.

HAVE FUN!
Avoid boring community meetings with a single presenter reading from a PowerPoint. Host a “non-meeting” instead, and make it a social occasion for people to get to know you and each other, and build social resilience.

MAKE TIME FOR MEETINGS
Hold events during non-work hours and at easily accessible locations. Consider providing childcare – or engaging the children – or setting up shop at a local shopping center or community center. Introduce yourself, learn people’s names, and use them when addressing individuals.

PROCESS AND REPORT
Be sure to document any community feedback and report back to attendees with a summary and information about next steps or future meetings.

CUT THE JARGON
Use accessible, inclusive language and avoid acronyms or technical terms. Industry buzz words might impress your peers, but they can be exclusive in this environment. Pay attention to the languages spoken, technology used, and social contexts.

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**CLICK HERE TO ADD TO THE TIP JAR**

### Tips for Designers

**Agree on the Artist’s Relationship to Their Work.** Decide together how you will credit the artists when speaking about the project and the artists’ relationship with the project post build. Will their work continue to evolve? Will they incorporate other works?

**Plan for the Future**
If the artist contributed built work, determine how that work will be taken care of in the future.

**Embrace the In-Between**
Beautiful ideas and collaborations can result from allowing discussions to get off track. Have a few key points that can be returned to, but embrace the process.

**Let the Artists Lead**
Set the parameters for the meeting, but step back and give the artists space to lead discussions. Listen and take notes of their ideas.

**Be Accessible**
Be readily available so when inspiration comes, they can contact you.

**Pay Your Artists**
What seems like a small amount of time spent painting a mural, discussing a project or performing a work of art, is the accumulation of hours spent thinking and developing an idea. An artist’s work schedule is rarely from 9am to 5pm.

**Schedule Meetings in Advance**
Artists are often on the move and need time to work in-person meetings into their busy schedules.

**Do Not Limit Creativity**
Build in a buffer when creating timelines and do not over-structure meetings. Present project parameters, state end goals, and give the artists time to work through their ideas.

**Plan for Your Artist’s Working Style**
Some artists need time to process alone, but others prefer to bounce thoughts off each other, drawing inspiration from one another. Adjust your meeting style to meet their needs.

**Be Clear About the Artist’s Role**
What are the expectations for participation? Will they be compensated for their time? What are the community’s/designer’s/funder’s goals for the project? What do you hope to gain from involving an artist in the project?

**Hire Local Talent**
Find artists who are rooted in the community and are passionate about community activism. This can be done by an RFP or open call meeting, but you can also attend local art shows, track down street artists and ask artists you know to help you in a more specific search for other artists.

**Involve Artists from the Start**
Artists can synthesize big ideas and filter them into feedback that can be useful at all scales and stages of design. Their unique and valuable thought process will add depth and meaning to a project.
LEAD WITH AN ELEVATOR PITCH
Communicate an overview of your project clearly and concisely. In your narrative state how the agency would benefit from the project, what issues the project is solving and what new opportunities it would create. Also relevant when Designing the Process.

ALIGN YOUR WORK WITH THE CITY’S AGENDA
Learn about recently-released and ongoing City initiatives and strategic plans, and understand how your work fits into their short and long term goals.

INTERAGENCY MEETINGS ARE THE FAST LANE TO SUCCESS
Convening meetings with all relevant departments and agencies in the room will streamline the process and save you some headaches. Public agencies operate as silos, without much communication between them. Also relevant when Working Together.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OR BUST
A robust public engagement process is essential (and compulsory) to develop projects with public officials and staff. Also relevant when Saying Goodbye.

GET EVERYONE ON THE SAME PAGE
Outline expected roles, time commitment, meetings, and the exit strategy. Map out a work plan for them including an engagement schedule with expected meeting dates and agendas.

BUY-IN IS A MARATHON NOT A SPRINT
Make sure you are connected to all relevant contacts early on and maintain them engaged throughout the process. Also relevant when Working Together and Saying Goodbye.

THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT
Public agencies are often understaffed, juggling a large volume of projects at the same time. You should expect to do most of the tedious work.

GET THE MEMO?
Structure your written communication in a memorandum format. Lead with the most important piece of information and breakdown complex information using bullet points and supporting visuals. The reader should be able to read the entire document in less than 5 minutes.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT
Convene work sessions and presentation dry runs before public meetings to discuss language, content, presentation style, and the event agenda. Practicing presentation before the public meeting ensures that everyone is comfortable with how and what is being presented.

SET A REALISTIC SCHEDULE
In partnerships with the public sector, timelines tend to double because they have less time to meet frequently and need to consult various stakeholders.

IDENTIFY A CHAMPION(S)
Projects stall if no one within the agency feels ownership over them. This person will help you navigate internal challenges and advocate for the project when you are not in the room. Also relevant when Designing the Process.

PEOPLE WORK WITH PEOPLE THEY TRUST
Get a good introduction from a friend or colleague.

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It is important to acknowledge that some office cultures are complex and difficult to navigate. It is crucial to do your homework prior to starting your partnership. Do a bit of research on the community, town or group of people you will be working with. Recognize that experience and firsthand conversation is the best classroom, but it never hurts to be prepared and respectfully learn the history of a people or place.

Recognize your background, your culture, your hardships or your privilege. There will likely be differences between your life, and the lives of those in the community you are working with. Acknowledge the learning process those differences can catalyze. To represent the work through community lenses, representation of the project should be shaped by community perspective and supported by you.

Be sure your role is one of support, not one of outspoken leadership unless otherwise requested by the community. Be careful not to make assumptions on communication style, timelines or office hierarchies and standards. Be sure to design a process that outlines priorities and allows you to be on the same page for project benchmarks and goals. Acknowledge that some office cultures are complex and difficult to navigate.

Respect that the answer you think is correct might not be correct contextually. Develop common language when speaking about the project and the roles each partner has in its creation. Respect the community's in-depth knowledge of the issues they face, and your past training and experience. You will arrive at the best answer by working together to find it.

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UNDERSTAND THE MISSION
Good design is design that meets the needs of the user and the goals of the project – design that meets the mission. In order to align the design with the mission, ask your developer to clearly articulate priorities and project goals.

UNDERSTAND THE FUNDING SOURCES
Particularly with affordable housing projects, the funding sources are often layered and complex, and sometimes come with a range of requirements that may influence design decisions.

EMBRACE THE PROFORMA
For many developers, the pro forma drives decisions, so understanding the pro forma and the financial model can streamline decisions like unit mixes.

GET REAL ABOUT TIME
Establishing realistic expectations up front about how long something will take, when feedback is needed, and how that feedback can best be collected can help avoid decision lag. Understand how involved the owner wants and needs to be, and develop a clear system to facilitate that involvement.

FACILITATE AND MODERATE
If your project requires public engagement or community meetings, you may be in a better position to facilitate than the developer. With the appropriate attitude and tone, you can serve as a moderator for potentially difficult conversations and advocate for win-win design solutions (see Tips for Working with Community Members).

GET TO KNOW THE END USER
Conducting focus groups, research, or case studies can be invaluable when designing for specific populations. There is no one-size-fits-all design solution for all low-income residents. Small, smart decisions can make a big impact.

DESIGN FOR VALUE
Whether it’s a community engagement process, sustainable design features, public space improvements, or anything else that may impact the project budget, think in terms of added value and be prepared to communicate that. If “value” is difficult to quantify, utilize precedents or case studies to demonstrate it.

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RESPECT THE BOTTOM LINES
At the end of the day, if the numbers don’t work the project won’t happen.

POST-OCCUPANCY INFORMATION IS GOLD
Collecting data about how a project is actually used and operates can be invaluable for future projects. Post-occupancy evaluations are not often part of a standard design contract, but should be incorporated whenever possible.

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