BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKING WITH DESIGNERS

Planning and Budget

• Plan ahead. Make sure you have planned ahead of time your overall strategy, and have proofread and edited your text. The more advance planning you do, the less hours you will accumulate with the designer – keeping your costs down.

• Include the designer if possible early into the process, so that ideas can be fleshed out before starting the designs.

• Leave enough time in the schedule – allow at least one week for printing, and plenty of time for the design phase. Schedule the time in advance with the designer and printer in order to meet your deadlines. Understand that designers are often juggling many jobs at one time.

• Budget: you can always request pro bono work but do not assume you can have free graphic design work simply because of nonprofit status. See if your designer offers sliding scale fees for nonprofit organizations.

Design and Visual Communications

• Know your audience – who is this piece really intended for?

• Imagery and tone of designs should be inclusive and not alienating. Many times pieces need to “walk the line” and appeal to a wide audience or base of people.

• Try to understand the differences between your personal aesthetics and what design/color/image/tone will advance the mission of your organization. How do you want your base or your audience to experience this piece?

• Good high-quality photography! This is a worthwhile investment. Make sure the digital camera settings are on the highest resolution setting. Assign someone to take pictures at your events.

• Have captions to your pictures.

• Always include calls to action in your pieces.

• Think about what stories you want to tell about your work. How can you challenge assumptions and get your message across?

• 2color or 4color? Uncoated paper or glossy paper? Consider the effect and pricing of these options when first meeting with the designer. Technology has advanced and the bar has been raised on good design in our movements, so 4color printing is now much more financially accessible.

• Be concise. Brochures, newsletters and annual reports will be much more likely to be read if there is minimal text – bullet points help! A lot of margins and “White space” also makes your piece easier to read. Your donors and members might be daunted if there is too much text to read. You want them to read your materials!

• When working on identity and logo design, remember that logos are an introduction to your organization, they are not meant to tell the whole story.

• Your staff/volunteers should have a clear understanding of the organizational identity. Be consistent in the use of identifying elements.

• Don’t micromanage! Trust the process with your designer and provide, clear, consolidated feedback that helps move the project forward.