

Designers Available

Learn more about applying to receive pro bono design support.

What is Designers Available

Designers Available (D/A) connects designers with projects in service of non-profits and community organizations actively facilitating social change through direct service, arts and culture, and grassroots politics and activism.

Designers Available was founded by [Joelle Riffle](#), an independent designer, artist, and administrator in November 2016. Joelle works full-time at as a communications and brand manager at a youth writing non-profit and runs an online visual journal called [aslittlefear.co](#). The Designers Available network is made up of over 300 creatives around the world. Contact info (at) [designersavailable.com](#) for more information.

What can Designers Available for you.

Here's a quick list of just a few of ways that a designer could be of service to your organization.

- Designing a communications strategy that outlines goals around how you talk about your work and defines tools to meet your mission.
- Designing a brand identity including logos and visual systems you can use to represent your organization in print and digital applications.
- Designing print materials like brochures and flyers to tell people about the work that you do.
- Designing websites to amplify the work that you do.
- Designing invitations to fundraisers and community events.
- Designing social media graphics to share on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.
- Designing systems and processes that you could use to maintain your organization.

Why design.

Designers Available is projecting a new model around pro bono communication design in support of non profits and grassroots organizations. With one foot in design and another in non profits, we recognize the barriers that exist for organizers and leaders to collaborate with designers, from people resources to budget obstacles. We also see very tangible the way that a strategic communications plan supported by powerful visual design can help organizations level up in their ability to reach their audiences of supporters and those they help to serve.

Center those most affected by social justice issues.

Designers Available is experimenting with a radical idea of the relationship between design and social justice, one which centers those most affected by social justice issues and believes in redistribution of resources and access. Starting in 2019, designers from underrepresented backgrounds will be paid to do design work to support issues that are close to them with non-profits and grassroots organizations. In addition to supporting non-profits and grassroots organization, a mission of this work is to uplift designers of color, those from low-income and working-class backgrounds, immigrants and those with precarious immigration statuses in the US, queer, trans and gender non-conforming designers, and disabled designers. I believe that those who are most affected by the social justice issues that organizations support are uniquely positioned to address these issues.

A project manager to see it through.

Each Designers Available project is supported by a project manager. The role of the project manager is to facilitate work between community partners (non profits) and the designers. This makes make the collaboration as smooth and healthy as possible. Involving a project manager who establishes a timeline, checks in on deadlines, sets up phone calls/meetings and facilitates feedback and conversations will allow the community partners to continue getting the work of their organization done while moving forward with these collaborations and frees up time and effort for the designer to focus on doing design work, making revisions, and being able to sustain pro bono work along with their regular jobs and practices. The project manager role involves setting expectations for all three parties, for example, deciding on a work agreement and making clear when and how communications will happen so as not to overwhelm anyone.

Some past projects.

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What is it like to work with a designer.

The process of working with a designer will vary based on the project and collaborators but, the following outline might give you a general sense of how things work.

- Designers Available offers pro-bono work. Please keep in mind that for paid design work, hourly rates for a designer could range anywhere from \$30 to \$150. This depends on the kind of work and the individual and the project.
- In 2019, D/A will focus on months long projects. Even very small projects can take a few weeks to complete. We ask that you not apply designers with a project that needs to be completed in one week. Ideally, no fewer than 6 weeks should be allotted to complete a project. Rushing a project can result in design work that you are unhappy with and ends up not getting used, which isn't a good use of your time or the designers time.
- Many of our designers have full-time jobs or freelance practices balancing many clients and projects. Please keep this in mind when communicating around expectations, especially time and responsiveness via email and phone.
- We expect that partners and designers will collaborate to bring the best of all expertise to the work. Most designers are not experts in the work of your organization and we look to you to lead the conversation. We hope that partners will trust the creative process and keep in open-mind in the execution of design projects.
- To partner with D/A and our network, it will be required to decide on and document the terms of a project with a work agreement. We will walk you through this process.
- Having a timeline from the start of a project helps everyone to stay on the same page around deadlines.

What does a design process look like.

Below is a sample outline of a project like branding or web design.

- Designer presents a few rough draft options. This option will mostly focus on concept rather than specifics of form and color.
- You will choose one option to move forward with and present feedback on what you'd like to see, what there should be more of, what there should be less of.
- Designer will revise the chosen draft option and incorporate your feedback. The draft will become more specific, often incorporating color. This will be much closer to what the final version will look like.
- You will offer feedback on specifics about this option. Consider this feedback to be the last moment to make big changes to the final design to stay on track. What you see next will be close to the final so bring up any concerns you have. Be sure to share this with any stakeholders if you haven't already.
- Designer will revise the design and prepare a final design for your approval. This will be the final design before it is finalized.
- You will approve the final design or request an extension of the project, which will involve adding time to the project and if this was a paid project, would involve paying additional fees. Any feedback at this point should be highly specific.
- Once the design is approved, the designer will produce the final design and present you with the assets.

What happens after a design project.

- The designer will prepare the final files as well as help you understand anything you need to know to use the design work, such as a brand guideline, website log-in, or tutorial on making edits to your site.
- After this period has finished, you will be responsible for managing your design going forward. You will pay for hosting and domain names, hire designers and other production help, send to printers, etc.
- We'd love to know how the process went for you - What can D/A know about how to improve the experience for partners going forward. Let's talk on the phone or meet in person for an exit interview.

Design as a resource.

We hope that collaborating with a designer on a pro bono basis will help you understand what it's like to work with a designer. We believe that design is a valuable language that everyone should have access to. We offer pro bono services as an introduction to what design has to offer rather than a long-term sustainable approach to making use of a designer. We hope that in the future, you can raise funds or allocate part of your operating budget to hire design help, or even learn a little more about making your own design work for your organization. If you are interested in hiring a freelance designer, we are happy to connect you with someone in our network who can support you with paid work. We also think it's important that creative work around social justice should be collaborations between those most affected by the issues in question. Borrowing from a slogan which comes from the accessibility movement, we support the idea of "nothing about us without us." D/A recognizes that those most affected by racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, classism, ableism, and oppression at large are best positioned to create effective, meaningful, and rich design work around those issues.

Does my organization qualify for Designers Available support?

To receive support from Designers Available, you must meet the following qualifications.

- Small non-profit and grassroots organizations.
- Located anywhere in the United States.
- Don't have to be a 501(C)3 or otherwise incorporated.
- Can't be a for-profit business like a shop or similar business where you sell goods or services.
- Can't have a communications or design staff.
- Can't be a "design" business in any discipline.
- Ideally, you have never worked with a designer before or only on one or two projects.

Apply for support.

- Designers Available is offering three project cycles in 2019. Projects will start in February, May, and August.
- Applications will be available in December, April, and July.
- The application will ask you to speak about the work that your organization does, your experience working with design or communications professionals, and how you hope to make use of pro bono design support.
- Fill out an application here.

What if I have a smaller project I need support with?

- [Submit an application here](#) to be considered to have your project request included in a regular email newsletter to the Designers Available community.

Stay in touch.

Visit DesignersAvailable.com.

Contact Joelle at info@designersavailable.com.

Sign up for [email updates](#).

Follow on social media at #DesignersAvailable or follow @okayjoelle.