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What Designers Need to Know When Working in the Nonprofit Sector: 5 Design Principles for Developing Identities and Visual Materials for Nonprofit Organizations

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What Designers Need to Know When Working in the Nonprofit Sector: 
5 Design Principles for Developing Identities and Visual Materials 
for Nonprofit Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Nonprofit organizations with limited resources are in great need of effective visual design systems to help communicate their messages and focus their mission. Working together, a designer and a nonprofit organization can develop strategic plans and integrated design programs needed to create a cohesive visual system for clear communication. In addition to facilitating the creation of consistent visual materials, this thesis serves as a resource guide for improving the process-oriented collaboration between the designer and the nonprofit organization. As graphic designers continue to become involved with social and community design efforts, the design principles discussed in this thesis will further enrich the development of design solutions for nonprofit organizations.
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What Designers Needs to Know When Working in the Nonprofit Sector:

5 Design Principles for Developing Identities and Visual Materials for Nonprofit Organizations

0.0 Introduction

A nonprofit organization’s success hinges on clear communication of messages to its members and audiences. Unfortunately, many nonprofit organizations do not have the necessary resources to develop consistent and relevant forms of visual communication. According to DK Holland, the principal of DK Holland, a nonprofit brand identity consultancy, most collateral materials are disjointed and lack a consistent visual voice to deliver a unifying message before a nonprofit organization goes through the design process; printed materials are ineffective and websites tend to be a hodgepodge of content. (2006, p.86). However, nonprofit organizations are realizing the benefits of design and have become interested in building working relationships with graphic designers. Jocelyne Daw, Vice President of Marketing and Community Engagement at Imagine Canada, and Carol Cone, Founder of the nonprofit branding firm Cone, Inc., add, “In a 2007 Association of Fundraising Professionals study, branding and increased competition for the charitable dollar were the two biggest concerns of respondents. Those findings were echoed by the authors’ extensive 2008 survey, in which 94 percent of nonprofit professionals said building and managing their brand had grown in importance during the past three years” (2011, p.4). An organization that cultivates personality and emotional connections puts its constituents at the heart of its identity, thus creating a sense of community around unifying values, commitments, and concerns. (Daw & Cone, 2011,
In addition, participating in the design process promotes better understanding of internal organizational attributes and builds stronger relationships between the nonprofit organization and the designer.

There is also a growing interest among graphic designers¹ to become involved in community and social causes on local and global levels. Peg Faimon, the Director of the Miami Design Collaborative and a Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Miami, states, “Many designers believe that they have a social obligation to actually make a difference by contributing to a cause in which they strongly believe” (2009). Few resources are available to support these designers in their specific efforts. Through research and engagement of the design process with a nonprofit organization, Village Life Outreach Project (VLOP), five main design principles have been identified to aid designers interested in working in the nonprofit sector. These design principles include:

1. Understand the Nonprofit Organization’s Mission, Structure, and Needs
2. Define the Designer’s Role Within the Nonprofit Organization
3. Educate the Nonprofit Organization About the Design Process
4. Integrate the Nonprofit Organization into the Design Process
5. Develop a Flexible, Affordable, and Feasible Design System

Each principle is discussed thoroughly and is supported with examples. This thesis follows a specific case study of the development of the VLOP visual identity design system. After each principle, step by step accounts of the VLOP project are used to show how each principle is applied.

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, the term “designer” implies “graphic designer” and the term “design” implies “visual graphic communication.”
1.0 Principle #1: Understand the Nonprofit Organization’s Mission, Structure, and Needs

The first step in working with a nonprofit organization is to become familiar with its mission, structure, and needs. Often nonprofit organizations seek design help without communicating these specific organizational elements. According to MAP for Nonprofits, a resource for nonprofit organizations, understanding the organization’s mission, history, current leadership structure, and needs provide context that ensures the development of relevant relationships. (2006). Furthermore, the designer should consider the impact these components have on one another and how they fit together. In some cases, an organization may not have a clear understanding of one or more of these components. Consequently, this diminishes the effectiveness of the organization’s verbal and visual communications. Robert M. Sheehan, Jr., the Principal of Sheehan Nonprofit Consulting, adds, without agreement on organizational goals or clear direction where the organization is heading, operating effectively is difficult. (2010, p.20). In the case of uncertainty, it behooves the designer to work with the organization to develop, clarify, and articulate these components. This can be done in a number of ways and will be covered in the following sections. Once the organization and the designer are aligned, appropriate design solutions can be created.

1.1 The Nonprofit Organization’s Mission

At the root of every nonprofit organization lies a driving force to evoke change. According to Lester Salamon, a Professor at Johns Hopkins School of Arts and Sciences, “The nonprofit sector is a collection of entities that are organizations; private as opposed to governmental; non-profit distributing; self-governing; voluntary; and of public benefit” (1999, p.10). Carter McNamara, partner in Authenticity Consulting, adds, “Typical types of nonprofit services are advocacy, arts, civic, cultural, education, health and human development.”
service” (2006). Differing from for-profit entities, a nonprofit’s mission is not profit-based or, more appropriately said, not focused on the distribution of profits among shareholders. “Profit” in this context is a relatively technical accounting term, related to, but not identical with the notion of a surplus of revenues over expenditures (McNamara, 2006). Sheehan, Jr. explains, “While for-profit organizations are primarily concerned with producing profits and beating their competition, nonprofits are primarily concerned with accomplishing their mission—making a difference for society” (2010, p.1). However, Mark Moore, a Professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, points out, “Just as financial performance becomes the touchstone for gauging past and planning future performance in the for-profit sector, so mission performance becomes the touchstone for gauging past and planning future performance in the nonprofit sector” (2000, p.194). At the core, the mission distinguishes nonprofit organizations from for-profit entities. This requires slightly different design approaches and methodologies to create effective design solutions. These design approaches and methodologies are explored throughout this thesis.

The goals and objectives of a design solution shift from consumer-driven profit margins to those of support and relevance. It is imperative for a designer to engage with a nonprofit’s mission in order to develop solutions that speak to audiences, deliver clear and transparent messages, and build communities. Through this engagement process, a designer will gain a better appreciation for the nonprofit organization’s “culture.” Sheehan, Jr. defines a nonprofit’s culture as, “The connective tissue that binds together the organization, including shared values and practices, behavior norms, and most importantly, the organization’s orientation towards performance” (2010, p.142). Understanding the mission and culture of an organization will better prepare a designer when embarking on the challenges found in the nonprofit sector.
1.2 The Nonprofit Organization’s Structure and Key Decision Makers

Nonprofit organizations range in size and scale. Peter Frumkin, of the University of Texas at Austin, describes how funders define scale as it relates to nonprofits’ efforts to create a lasting and significant impact using the following five dimensions of measure: financial strength, program expansion, comprehensiveness, multisite replication, and accepted doctrine. (2010). Some organizations are extremely large and may have paid positions (e.g., Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, etc.). Other organizations are extremely small, having no full-time personnel and relying solely on volunteers. Regardless of size and scale, many nonprofits share the same key structural roles or positions. Understanding these roles and how they relate to one another will better prepare the designer in determining key design factors. These key design factors include identifying decision makers (chain of command) and determining audiences’ motivations to create meaningful and relevant design solutions.

Many nonprofit organizations have a founder or group of founders. These are the people that have the initial passion or drive to create positive change. Identifying a problem or need within a community, they seek to organize resources to accomplish an overall goal (McNamara, 2006). These individuals are often the most ingrained in the overall organization and may become the face or spokesperson for the cause.

In addition to founders, it is common for nonprofit organizations to have a board of directors. This board is usually comprised of a board chair, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. McNamara states, “Law and theory dictate that the board is in charge, and directly accountable for the overall direction and policies of the organization. Powers are given to the board by the Articles of Incorporation (or other governing document, for
example, Articles of Association, Constitution, etc.). The board can configure the nonprofit in whatever structure it prefers to meet the organization’s mission and usually does so via specifications in bylaws” (2006). The board chair is responsible for coordinating the work of the board, executive director, and committees. The board chair is a position of general leadership.

The board may identify one person to hold the position of executive director. This individual is ultimately responsible for coordinating and executing the organization’s goals. The executive director is accountable for the work of the staff/volunteers and facilitates the work of the committees. They act as program managers and devote time to fundraising efforts.

An organization may have different branches to support its overall mission. These branches have multiple, simultaneous projects. In order to organize and manage these branches, an organization creates committees to oversee their efforts. Committees are often made of community members who have a sincere commitment to the organization’s mission and a desire to promote change. Committees are usually led by a chairperson or co-chairpersons. Committee chairs report directly to the board and are considered part of the leadership team.

In addition to leadership positions, management roles, and committee members, nonprofits will often employ staff positions. It is common to have these positions filled by volunteers (unpaid individuals who donate time and services). Volunteers will be discussed more thoroughly in the following section. Staff positions include those who fulfill administrative and office support activities.
Having a clear understanding of the nonprofit’s structure and key roles allows the designer to build trusted relationships within the organization. This understanding provides the appropriate knowledge needed to determine the working relationships best suited to complete design tasks. It is very useful to know the following:

1. which members in the group generate content
2. which members in the group manage budget and expenses
3. which members in the group grant final approval

Understanding these factors will help the designer navigate the design process to lead the development of successful solutions. Successful solutions are visuals that communicate intended messages to appropriate audiences. These solutions are effective in informing/educating an audience or inspiring an audience to take action.

1.3 The Nonprofit Organization’s Audiences

The next three constituents often found within a nonprofit’s framework are essential to the success of an organization. For this reason, they are defined as the organization’s audiences; community served, volunteers, and financial supporters. Identifying these audiences, understanding their reasons for contributing to the organization, and realizing how they differ from the for-profit sector is important information for the designer.

One of the most important roles within a nonprofit organization is the population it wishes to serve. For the purposes of this thesis, this population is referred to as the “community served” or “communities served” (an organization may serve more than one community). This particular audience group, in a sense, takes on a consumer role. However, unlike the consumer role in the for-profit sector, this particular group of people have a unique relationship with the nonprofit. According to McNamara, everything a nonprofit does is ultimately directed to serving its audiences. It is important to note that these services can
be tangible or intangible (2006). The value for communities served is defined in terms of improving conditions that directly relates to their quality of life. Clearly understanding this point of differentiation from the for-profit sector is crucial to the success of nonprofit design systems. An additional factor to consider for developing successful design solutions is awareness of the relationship between the community served and the nonprofit organization. This is especially important when creating design solutions that reflect the needs of the community served and respect cultural attributes.

An organization’s volunteers provide the man-power to complete project initiatives. Volunteers are defined as unpaid personnel who assist staff (if an organization has paid staff members), serve on committees, and generally work under the direction of the executive director (McNamara, 2006). According to Daw and Cone, people are joining nonprofits as members and volunteering in record numbers. (Daw & Cone, 2011, p.10). Daw and Cone further explain, “Amnesty International has 2 million members, and the World Wildlife Fund has more than 5 million. In 2008 about 61.8 million Americans—or 26.4 percent of the population—volunteered through a formal organization” (2011, p.10). Similar to the communities served, motives for volunteering their time and resources are driven not by monetary compensation, but by emotional incentives. These emotional incentives include: supporting the community, connecting with other members of the community, gaining recognition, continuing family traditions, etc. (Katya Andresen, 2006, p.140). In addition to incentives, it is important to understand how value is created for volunteers. Value for volunteers is based on their experiences as they continue to serve and interact with the organization. Value is also something that comes from seeing how effective the organization is in accomplishing their mission. Once the designer identifies incentives and value for volunteers, they can more effectively assist in developing methods to sustain volunteers and reach potential volunteers as an organization’s volunteer-base grows.
Similar to identifying incentives and value for volunteers, a designer determines incentives and value for financial supporters. An audiences’ relationship with a nonprofit goes deeper than traditional consumer relationships. In the for-profit sector, depending on the consumer’s satisfaction, a consumer transaction may only occur once. In contrast, a nonprofit organization relies on emotionally driven value propositions that a for-profit entity usually cannot offer. This value is based on the trust that the organization is spending funds effectively and efficiently. According to the Giving USA 2008 study, charitable giving in the United States was estimated at $306.39 billion in 2007, exceeding $300 billion for the first time in history. Since then, charitable giving has declined slightly, but despite the downturn, charitable dollars still represent 2.2 percent of the nation’s GDP (Daw & Cone, 2011, p.9). Continued support is more likely if an organization can communicate how it is spending funds and the effects it is having on the communities served. It is the designer’s responsibility to visually communicate these points clearly.

At the core of these three audience groups is the value gained from their experience and interaction with a particular nonprofit organization. Value is what drives individuals to take action. In simple terms, value (engagement, rational, and emotional) equals benefits minus cost. Although, value is assessed a bit differently in each group there is still a common methodology that is shared. As shown in Figure 1.1 (Daw & Cone, 2011 p.20–21), this methodology consists of three states that have a direct relationship with one another.
Once the designer understands the motives for each audience group, it is important to assess how they fit together within the context of the organization. The success of this relationship is mutually dependent on the performance of each audience group. As shown in figures 1.2–1.4, Sheehan, Jr. describes how this cycle is constructed in the nonprofit sector, in addition to how the model compares to for-profit and government sectors. (2010, p.5–6). Sheehan, Jr. further explains, “Without all three of these areas of activities working well and positively feeding off of one another, the cyclical interdependence breaks down
and performance is not optimized” (2010, p.5–6). Defined as “the cycle of sustainable performance,” these three areas work together to construct an ongoing chain that simultaneously supports itself (shown in figure 1.5). Understanding the cycle of sustainable performance, a designer can develop a family of visual materials that support the needs of finance, volunteerism, project/service management. This family of visual materials may include: annual reports, social-networking platforms, and project evaluation forms.
1.4 The Nonprofit Organization’s Needs

Understanding how the nonprofit's positions and roles fit together is one aspect that helps the designer determine what solutions are needed to support the organization. However, there are a few additional aspects that a designer takes into account before starting the design process. These aspects include identifying the goals and objectives of an organization and determining the strengths and weaknesses of an organization.
In order to identify the goals and objectives of an organization, a designer should initiate a conversation with the organization’s board of directors (this could include the organization’s core management team as well). Similar to working in the for-profit sector, this conversation may take the form of an informal meeting, a work-session, or a structured presentation. Regardless of form, developing a clear understanding of what the organization wishes to accomplish is a fundamental step in the design process. Once goals and objectives are defined, a designer determines what the organization is doing well and identifies areas for improvement. For example, an organization could be allocating budget funds for printed materials, yet not developing the appropriate content to clearly communicate their message.

1.5 The Nonprofit Organization’s Partnerships and Competition

In the nonprofit sector, the roles of partnership and competition differ significantly from the those in the for-profit sector. Understanding these roles and how they affect a nonprofit organization may not be obvious at first. However, once a designer starts working for a nonprofit organization, they will quickly see the differences and realize the impact they have on the design process.

Partnerships within the nonprofit sector are more prevalent than some designers might consider. These partnerships may be with for-profit entities, government entities, or other nonprofit organizations. Educational institutions, such as universities, secondary, and primary schools, religious organizations, and local small businesses commonly partner with nonprofit organizations. Benefits of these collaborative relationships include: financial-growth opportunities, educational collaboration (providing learning experiences for students and the organization), and access to greater resources.
Businesses are seeking more nonprofit partnerships to reach audiences. A growing body of evidence demonstrates the positive impact of nonprofit partnership to a company’s bottom line and reputation. “Businesses and nonprofits are collaborating like never before. More and more businesses are recognizing the benefits of nonprofit alliances and co-marketing efforts.” (Daw & Cone, 2011, p.10). For example, the 2008 Cone Cause Evolution Study revealed that more than 85 percent of Americans say that when price and quality are equal, they will give their business to companies that support a cause they care about. The Datamonitor Group found that a business-community co-branded relationship results in customer acquisition costs 15 percent less than they would be through other means. In other words, connection with a charity provides a halo effect that strengthens companies and can drive additional business. (Daw & Cone, 2011, p.10).

Nonprofits are also realizing the benefits of company collaborations. These benefits include: increased awareness, additional marketing at no cost to themselves, new revenue streams, and the ability to reach new audiences. (Daw & Cone, 2011, p.10). Nonprofit organizations on shoestring budgets can create large-scale awareness using resources they may not otherwise access. In the corporate sector, business have an extensive infrastructure for developing and selling their products. Corporations can have research-and-development units, distribution networks, accountants, marketing managers, sales forces, public-relations departments, and ad agencies. (Andresen, 2006, p.108). A nonprofit organization with a good cause may not have that infrastructure or resources. However, by effectively partnering with other causes, like the for-profit sector, government, or larger nonprofit organizations (universities, religious entities, etc), they can have access to communication channels, distribution systems, political connections, money, and other resources.
A few examples of partnerships between nonprofit organizations and businesses include: Starbucks/CARE (a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty), Procter & Gamble’s Pampers/U.S. National Institutes of Health’s fight against sudden-infant-death syndrome (SIDS), and Macy’s/American Heart Association (AHA). Starbucks is a long-time partner with the international relief and development agency CARE. Both share an audience that wants quality coffee and is concerned about responsible corporate practices. The organizations also share the goal of promoting the well-being of people in coffee-growing countries (Andresen, 2006, p.109). Their partnership is a good strategic fit. Another example of partnership is the relationship between Pampers and U.S. National Institutes of Health’s fight against SIDS. Andresen explains that Pampers apply messages to diapers to encourage parents to put babies to sleep on their backs, thus reducing SIDS-related deaths (2006, p.109). “The Back to Sleep” campaign and Pampers had a shared audience of parents and the common goal of reducing infant death. A third example includes the shared relationship between Macy’s and the AHA. Looking to increase public awareness of heart disease (the number one cause of death among women), the AHA created a campaign that utilized an iconic little red dress (Daw & Cone, 2011, p.72). Partnering with Macy’s was an obvious channel of support to promote its public-facing effort to reach women shoppers.

Nonprofit organizations stand to greatly benefit from partnering with other entities. However, from a designer’s standpoint these partnerships can prove to be a difficult visual task if the partner’s design system uses a limited color palette or specific form orientations. In developing identity elements and visual materials, design solutions need to stand on their own and work in conjunction with partners’ design systems. For example, designing a promotional piece that utilizes more than one identity system requires increased sensitivity to insure legibility and clarity. This can be seen in the Macy’s/American Heart Association
Go Red campaign materials (Figure 1.6). It is important for the designer to develop a system that is flexible and consistent in its visual language. Without accounting for this flexibility, a design solution will prove to be ineffective and disjointed. An example of poor integration can be seen in the Pepsi/Team Heal promotional piece (Figure 1.7). In this example, the two visual identities clash and the information communicated lacks relevance. A nonprofit organization’s design system should not sacrifice its intent or visual equity.

Figure 1.6
Macy’s/Go Red Campaign
As previously mentioned, there are many benefits that come from partnering with other causes, the for-profit sector, or the government. However there are minuses to every partnership as well. Andresen states, “No partnership is perfect. (…) Shared, realistic expectations and common vision for the degree of collaboration can go a long way to establishing and preserving a successful partnership.” (2006, p.116). Both parties should assess what they stand to gain from the partnership while also considering what they have to contribute. It is imperative for a nonprofit organization to consider how their partners might affect their credibility and image. This realization is important for a designer to keep in mind when helping to develop content for a nonprofit organization’s visual communications. Appearing to endorse a company’s product that does not fit with the
organization’s cause could be detrimental to the trust relationship between an organization and their audiences. Sonya Behnke, a contributing author for the Georgetown Public Policy Review, adds, “If, for example, a nonprofit attaches its name to a corporation’s faulty product, they may do damage to the very population they are seeking to help. Such failures have consequences of both moral and financial scope” (2006). For instance, the International Breast Milk Project’s mission would suffer significantly if it created a partnership with Nestlé. The two opposing organizations have different views regarding the use of baby-formula.

Competition exists in the nonprofit sector as well. However, the term “competition” has a slightly different definition in the for-profit sector. In the for-profit sector, businesses face a highly competitive environment. Once a business starts making a particular product or providing a service that is profitable other organizations will enter their market to make a profit by selling a similar service or product to the same customers. (Sheehan, Jr., 2010, p.9). Since nonprofit organizations are not preoccupied with making a profit, they do not necessarily have the same concern as their business counterparts. However, according to Daw and Cone, “As nonprofits have grown in number and importance, the charitable marketplace has become more competitive. Donors are becoming more selective and discriminating. Individuals, corporations, foundations, and government all are basing funding decisions on more complex criteria. Examples include value alignments, shared passion and commitment, and level of trust they have in the NGO’s ability to deliver results.” (2011, p.10–11). With the growing numbers of cause-related organizations, audiences are expecting more from nonprofit organizations. These audiences are looking for outcomes that are worth the time they commit and dollars they invest. In order to stand out, nonprofit organizations must focus more on clearly communicating the relevance and effectiveness of a cause. Working with a designer
to develop relevant design materials that provide consistent visual messaging helps an organization establish effective relationships with audiences.

1.6 Village Life Outreach Project Case Study: Mission, Structure, and Needs

Village Life Outreach Project (VLOP) is a Cincinnati-based nonprofit organization that partners with communities in rural Tanzania. VLOP’s mission is to improve the quality of life for villagers while creating research and training opportunities related to global health issues and rural development for universities and practitioners. In conjunction with the examples discussed in this thesis, I use my experiences with VLOP as a case study to explore the five design principles for the nonprofit sector. Utilizing this case study, designers can see how the principles are applied and relevant to their own design experiences.

VLOP’s Mission

When first establishing a relationship with VLOP, I realized the organization makes a huge impact on the communities it wishes to serve. These communities include three impoverished villages in the Rorya district of Tanzania, East Africa and students/professional practitioners from the United States, mostly from the Cincinnati, Ohio area. Students and professional practitioners from the United States travel with VLOP to Tanzania twice a year. VLOP refers to these service trips as brigades. In addition to providing much needed healthcare to villagers, brigades offer hands-on experience and provide learning opportunities for villagers, students, and professional practitioners. VLOP also conducts in-school seminars for primary and secondary schools in the United States to share information and experiences gained from the brigades.
VLOP’s Structure and Key Decision Makers

I found it necessary to learn VLOP’s structure and identify the key decision makers before initiating the identity design process. I realized this while working on smaller VLOP projects; knowing which members had final approval proved helpful to finalize artwork efficiently. Additionally, gaining background and history about VLOP’s development was helpful in understanding its current culture. Dr. Chris Lewis founded the organization in 2004 to “unite communities to promote life, health, and education.” Currently, the VLOP board of directors include: Dr. Chris Lewis (chairman), Adam Parrillo (vice chairman), Dr. Jen Ernst (president), Jeff Perry (treasurer), and Sheeleah Prince (secretary). VLOP’s executive director is Richard Elliott. VLOP has five committees (Life, Health, Education, Roche Health Center, and Marketing and Development) working to support the organization’s mission, all of which have committee chairs and members. The committee chairs, along with Ernst and Perry, make up the VLOP management team. VLOP also has a strong group of volunteers and brigade participants.

The key decision makers in the identity process included: Lewis, Ernst, and Elliott. Their approval and buy-in was of utmost importance to ensure success. I also observed that the key decision makers sought comments and opinions from other members of the organization. These members had great impact and influence on the decision making process. These individuals included Jeff Perry (VLOP’s treasurer), Michael Zaretsky (Architect, Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of Cincinnati, and Chair of the Roche Health Center Committee), and Emily Roush (Research Assistant of the Roche Health Center).
VLOP’s Audiences

After working on a few small projects for VLOP, I wanted to get more involved and was eager to learn more about the organization. As our relationship grew, I realized that I did not have a clear perspective of VLOP’s audiences. I took an opportunity to travel on a brigade to better define the audience groups and gain a better understanding of the organization’s mission. VLOP’s audiences became more apparent after witnessing volunteers interact with the communities served during this brigade. The Tanzanian villages of Roche, Nyambogo, and Burere are VLOP’s communities served. In addition to the Tanzanian villages, VLOP also provides educational experience to local schools in Cincinnati, Ohio. The VLOP Volunteer-base is comprised of American college students and professional practitioners. VLOP’s financial supporters are mostly family and friends of members and volunteers. In contrast to some nonprofits, VLOP has no long-term funding in place.

VLOP’s Needs

In the case of VLOP identity redesign, the board expressed the need to increase awareness and financial support to sustain current projects. I noted they were very successful in establishing connections with audiences by word of mouth. Unfortunately, their visual materials were not as effective in supporting their efforts. Visual materials lacked clarity, consistent use of colors and typefaces, and vehicles for action (Figure 1.8). For example, VLOP’s annual report had a different tone and message from its website and other materials. It was determined that efforts needed to be made to develop materials that were more effective in expressing VLOP’s character, mission, and values.
VLOP’s Partnerships

VLOP has many on-going partnerships. Its primary partner in Tanzania is the Shirati Health, Education and Development (SHED) Foundation. VLOP and SHED share many resources and functions. VLOP also partners with Cincinnati local schools such as the Wyoming Middle School, in addition to local businesses such as Coffee Emporium and Bowtie Cafe. These partnerships help foster strong community relationships but prove to present a challenge when designing materials. Each organization’s unique design system must be considered as visual applications are developed. For example, VLOP recently hosted an event at Bowtie Cafe. As materials were being created, I experienced frustration working
with Bowtie’s limited identity guidelines. Bowtie’s identity uses only one logo orientation that must be shown in purple, a color that does not fit with VLOP’s color palette. Some visual compromises and graphic elements helped to resolve the design of the promotional materials (Appendix D). Two additional approaches have proven helpful in these cases. The first approach is to design system components that are flexible, yet build equity. For example, VLOP’s new design system includes three different logo lock-ups that can be seen in two-colors or one-color. Additionally, the logo lock-ups can reserve out of a color if needed. The second approach has included opening lines of communication with all parties before final art is developed. Reviewing artwork before completion has helped to address comments and elevate concerns.
2.0 Principle #2: Define the Designer’s Role Within the Nonprofit Organization

Defining the designer’s role is an important aspect of working in the nonprofit sector. This may take some time to determine and may not be as evident when working in the for-profit sector. In the for-profit sector, a designer’s role may more clearly be understood. This is due to the fact that design is becoming a more widely recognized partner within the business world. Design is seen as a strategic partner, helping to address and solve business problems by providing cohesive messaging and alignment. However, in the nonprofit sector, many organizations are still unaware of the impact design can have for them. Holland explains, “Unfortunately, the nonprofit world is chock-full of fuzzy brands—mostly because nonprofit organizations are too busy focusing on service delivery or fundraising to consider the core work of branding.” (2006, p. 7). The lack of attention to define a nonprofit organization’s own identity can lead to muddled understanding of core values and objectives. Unclear values and objectives leads to the creation of disjointed communications that leave audiences questioning the nonprofit organization’s credibility. It is the responsibility of the designer to create awareness of the benefits of design while defining how the designer’s role can be most effective in context of the nonprofit organization.

2.1 Designer’s Skill-sets and Capabilities

To begin, a designer’s skill-sets and capabilities are not often clearly understood by nonprofit organizations. These skill-sets and capabilities include, but are not limited to: strategic planning, creative insight, content development, and project management. Many nonprofits may recognize the need for design but are uncertain how a designer fits into their organization. It is important for the designer to establish a clear understanding of their expertise and how they can contribute to the nonprofit organization’s cause. As discussed in the previous section, once the designer understands the organization’s
mission, structure, and needs, the designer can work with the organization to determine how individual skills and capabilities can best be utilized. Additionally, it is important for the designer to be honest with the organization about what the designer can provide; both in terms of skill and time. The desire to ‘do good’ can sometimes cause designers and nonprofit members to over-commit. In over-extending oneself, a designer may miss deadlines, or create work not meeting their own standard of quality. Creating an initial framework helps to manage expectations, deliver effective solutions, and ensure the completion of projects.

As in the for-profit sector, there is a range of design skill-sets and capabilities found in the nonprofit sector. Some helpful skills include: strategic planning, identity development, print production, website development, social networking, and information visualization. Strategic planning and identity development often happen simultaneously. Both are common starting points for a nonprofit organization in need of defining their core values and vision. Development of clear strategies help inform an organization’s visual identity. An organization’s identity establishes the foundation for their perceived look, tone, and feel. It provides the design context that influences an organization’s visual communication and touch-points. These touch-points are vehicles for delivering a nonprofit organization’s message to their audiences and they include: printed materials, a website, social networks, and visualized information. All of these elements work together to create a holistic and successful design system.

In addition to the design skill-sets and capabilities needed in the nonprofit sector, some technical skills are particularly useful in the development of nonprofit design solutions. Clear understanding of production methods—print and digital—are extremely beneficial in the nonprofit sector. A designer with production expertise can develop solutions that
maximize budget and resource limitations. These methods include: establishing a relationship with vendors, soliciting cost estimates, understanding printing techniques/materials, and formatting artwork appropriately. In addition to production methods, time-management is an important factor when working in the nonprofit sector.

Appreciating and respecting the personal time people are contributing to the design process (including the designer) ensures efficient management needed to complete tasks. That is not to say a designer should squander a for-profit client’s time, but a designer working in the nonprofit sector may not have the resources they would typically have to complete tasks. Helpful resources, such as, additional design support and access to technical support, are beneficial to finishing projects in a timely manner. Effective communication skills are also useful in the nonprofit sector. Commonly found in design firms working in the for-profit sector are teams of design professionals working together to complete a project. Design teams can include: designers, directors, and project managers. Intercommunication skills are required among team members. In contrast, a nonprofit organization may not be able to employ multiple individuals to fill these rolls, thus requiring a sole designer to cover both creative development and functional responsibilities needed to complete a project. These responsibilities include: educating an organization about the design process, scheduling meetings, developing agendas, establishing goals and objectives, facilitating discussions, and providing follow-up notes. Continuity and clear delivery of information are key to promote effective working relationships with an organization. Honing or working to develop the above mentioned skill-sets, both design and technical, aids the designer working in the nonprofit sector.

2.2 Designer's Motivations

A designer may decide to start working in the nonprofit sector for a plethora of reasons, especially with the resurgence of social design and the growing interest among designers
to become involved with their community. Although designing for social causes is not a new idea, many designers today are looking for ways to focus their efforts to benefit others. Motives for working in the nonprofit sector may include: building design experiences and developing a portfolio, exploring personal interests, and/or helping a community. Peg Faimon goes on to mention other possible incentives such as: increasing visibility of work, connecting with those in the community who share the same interests, and having more creative freedom (2009). Monetary compensation is not a common motivational factor when deciding to work in the nonprofit sector. Considering the above mentioned motives, it is up to the designer to determine why they choose to work in the nonprofit sector.

A designer may want to enter the nonprofit sector to help build an area of design in which they feel deficient. They could be looking to build experiences or gain more awareness for their work while helping an organization better reach its audience. For example, a designer may feel they need more experience or exposure in identity, print, or web design. Furthermore, the potential for more creative freedom is greater in the nonprofit sector. The assessment of risk is lower for a nonprofit, thus allowing the designer to explore a wider range of design concepts.

In addition to building design experiences, a designer may wish to work in the nonprofit sector to explore personal interests and find others in the community who share those same interests. This could include giving back to the community or helping to promote a cause that benefits the community. For example, perhaps a designer has a personal interest in supporting local farmers and growers. They may donate their time and/or get involved with a nonprofit organization that focuses on connecting local farmers and growers with members in the community. Not only does the designer’s efforts help grow
a community effort, it also helps them sustain their own personal lifestyle. In addition, the designer connects with others who make the same lifestyle decision, thus creating a support system to promote their choices.

Nonprofit organizations simply cannot compete with for-profit businesses when it comes to monetary compensation. According to David Schachter, assistant dean for career services at the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, “Nonprofit salaries vary, depending on geographic location and budget, but they are generally lower than those at for-profit companies” (Zimmerman, 2006). As discussed in the last section, any surplus funds gained by a nonprofit are directly cycled back into an organization to further its mission and sustain its projects. However, some nonprofits do have paid positions—compensation is dependent on what the organization is capable of sustaining.

To offset an organization’s potential inability to provide monetary compensation, a designer must determine what they gain from the experience of working in the nonprofit sector. Similar to the audiences’ perceived value, consideration of the designer’s perceived value of working with a nonprofit organization is needed. By no means though, does that mean a nonprofit should not provide compensation for design services. Faimon states, “Regardless of amount of monetary compensation (full, discounted, or free), it is important for the designer to give the organization an estimate for how much the work is worth. Providing a sense of value will ensure the neither the work nor the designer are taken for granted” (2009). It is important for compensation to be agreed on by the designer and nonprofit organization at the start of their relationship. Personal guidelines are needed if a designer chooses to donate their time, selectively deciding what matters and how to be involved (Faimon, 2009).
2.3 Designer’s Level of Commitment

Once the designer determines personal motivational factors for working in the nonprofit sector, they can assess their level of commitment. A designer’s level of engagement might not be the same for every nonprofit organization they choose to work with, nor will it remain constant throughout their relationship with an organization. As relationships evolve, so will the designer’s commitment to a cause or an organization. However, it is important to consider some commitment factors before building a relationship with a particular organization. These factors include: level of involvement, accountability, and time availability (short-term and long-term).

As discussed in Chapter One, the first step in determining the level of involvement happens in conjunction with identifying and assessing the design needs of a nonprofit organization. In some cases, minimal design involvement may be needed. This short-term scenario includes examples such as: designing or updating a website function, developing a single print application, or simply creating a support graphic to visualize an organization’s financial data. If minimal design involvement is needed, preliminary knowledge or understanding of a nonprofit organization may be all that is required for doing the design work. In other cases, a designer may be brought in as a consultant, thus requiring deeper levels of understanding of an organization and their cause. As a consultant, a designer may be asked to address overarching organizational issues or provide advice for strategic planning. In addition to minimal and consultant-based design, a designer may choose to be fully immersed in a nonprofit organization as an active member. This higher level of involvement requires great attention and dedication. In return, the designer is an integral part of the organization; thus strengthening the designer/organization relationship. Stronger relationships lead to trust and credibility, allowing the designer to have greater ownership and the ability to cast a vote during the decision-making process.
making process. Unlike the for-profit sector where designers may share their point of view and make suggestions to their clients, designers working in the nonprofit sector are considered to be a stakeholder. This increased involvement helps generate holistic, cohesive design solutions that have a greater impact on the organization, their audiences, and the designer.

Increased accountability comes with integration of a designer into the nonprofit organization. Accountability is another factor to consider when determining the designer’s level of commitment. Often, nonprofit organizations are comprised of members with passion and expertise not related to design. In order to make progress, the designer may need to make some assumptions and take ownership of particular parts of the design process. This is not to say that designers should act without approval. Rather, the designer establishes a leadership role to ensure projects get started, facilitated, and completed. Without accountability, important opportunities and deadlines may be missed.

In addition to determining their level of involvement and assessing accountability, a designer is faced with a question of time allocation. Depending on the needs of the organization and the designer’s determined level of involvement, the designer should consider the amount of time they wish to allocate to a particular organization and what the duration of their relationship is with that organization. In some instances, a designer may develop an identity for a nonprofit organization that is then handed-off to the organization to implement and maintain. This initially requires a great deal of time and effort. The commitment, though, is only for a predetermined amount of time. In these scenarios, diligence is needed to develop cohesive standards and guidelines that clearly communicate design intent. These guidelines are especially important if another designer or organizational staff/volunteer is responsible for implementing the final product.
In contrast to short-term involvement, a designer may choose to work continuously with an organization to develop, implement, and maintain an identity. This on-going relationship may have weekly commitments and deadlines, thus requiring the designer to allocate a set amount of time each week to complete necessary tasks.

Regardless of the level of commitment determined by the designer, it is imperative for both parties to have a clear understanding of the relationship. Once agreed on, the nonprofit organization and the designer can start working together to develop effective design solutions. Methods for developing and maintaining good working relationships are further discussed in Chapter Three.

2.4 Designer’s Responsibilities Within the Nonprofit Organization

With a basic understanding of skills, motivations, and commitment level, the final step in defining a designer’s role within a nonprofit organization is to determine the specific design functions needed. Working within the context of the organization’s structure, this can be broken into two parts: the designer’s place in the organization and the designer’s responsibilities. These two parts may vary depending on the goals and objectives defined by the organization.

As discussed in Chapter One, most nonprofit organizations follow a similar organizational structure. They have a board of directors, staff/members, and volunteers. So where does the designer fit in the organizational structure? The designer may work at any of the previous mentioned levels; they may serve on the board, be part of the staff, be paid for their services (either at full or discounted rate), or volunteer their services. Most importantly, it is what makes the most sense in regard to the organization’s culture and to what the designer is willing to commit. Regardless of position, it is important to identify
the person or persons responsible for approving the design. Unlike the for-profit sector, the designer working in the nonprofit sector can report directly to individuals who make final decisions, thus decreasing the likelihood of muddled communication or misdirection. In addition to identifying key decision makers, it is conducive for the designer to establish working relationships with other members within the organization to complete design tasks. A designer may work directly with the executive director or a project committee to fulfill an organizational need. These working relationships are highly encouraged and help promote collaboration, build consensus, and ease the burden of limited resources. Furthermore, working relationships might also include working with additional designers. A designer could be in the position of managing other designers during a project, or they may report to a lead designer if fulfilling a supportive role. Understanding how the designer fits into an organization is needed to develop clear points of communication and strengthen the relationship between the nonprofit organization and the designer.

In addition to determining the designer’s place within the nonprofit organizational structure, clear understanding of the designer’s responsibilities is needed. Similarly, apparent expectations of the designer are also needed to ensure a positive work environment. As mentioned previously, a designer may fill many rolls in a nonprofit organization. These roles include: project manager, facilitator, and/or creative. For example, when starting a redesign of a nonprofit organization’s identity, the designer may schedule a preliminary meeting with key members of the organization to determine design needs and objectives. The designer may also facilitate a work session to promote discussions and understanding among members of the organization. Finally, the designer may work to develop design concepts based on information gathered.
The designer may also be responsible for being an identity-steward depending on their level of involvement. The role of identity-steward includes: preserving the visual equities established by the identity, developing and ensuring proper use of identity guidelines/standards, maintaining design resources (printer relationships, vendor relationships, etc.), and identifying those within the organization that are also identity-stewards.

By balancing these roles and responsibilities, a designer has the ability to positively support and impact a nonprofit organization by helping them reach their goals. Working together to build lasting relationships and promote the development of successful design solutions, the designer and nonprofit organization achieve effective results that leave a lasting impression on the community served.

2.5 VLOP Case Study: Designer’s Role

Working with the VLOP organization, I defined my role by assessing how my skill-sets and capabilities would best meet VLOP’s needs. Before my involvement with VLOP, my professional background included experience in identity development, branding, packaging, and environmental graphics. In addition to assessing my skill-sets, I also defined my personal motivations, determined the level of commitment needed, determined my ability to meet that commitment, and identified those responsibilities helpful to the organization.

Designer’s Skill-sets and Capabilities

VLOP recognized the need for a new identity that visually supported the organization’s mission and values. It become apparent that VLOP was in need of a designer who had experience in identity development, understood their cause, and was able to visualize their
message. After assessing VLOP’s needs, I shared my background and expertise during a preliminary design meeting. During the meeting I showed examples of identities I had developed, brands I had maintained, and print work I had created. Discussions followed addressing how my identity design skill-sets could benefit the organization and how I could alter processes learned from my for-profit experiences to better fit the organization’s nonprofit needs.

**Designer’s Motivations**

Throughout the preliminary stages of the design process, I identified varying motivational factors. My initial interest for becoming involved with VLOP was to increase personal community involvement. Having volunteered time for other organizations, I wanted to provide design services benefiting others. Once involved with VLOP, I saw an opportunity to explore and investigate ways to strengthen the nonprofit organization/designer relationship while helping the VLOP organization effectively reach goals that included: growing a community of members and volunteers to build organizational support, more clearly communicating the positive effect that VLOP was having on the villages in Tanzania and cities in the United States, and promoting local learning while helping improve quality of life for others.

**Designer’s Level of Commitment**

As mentioned, I had an initial interest for becoming involved with VLOP to increase personal community involvement. Although I wanted to help, my availability was limited, and the organization needed someone to commit more time. As the VLOP/designer relationship grew, I had to make a decision about the level of involvement required. After traveling on a VLOP brigade trip, I was determined to make a positive contribution to
the organization by becoming more involved. Once immersed, I made it a priority to become an active member of the organization.

**Designer’s Responsibilities Within the Nonprofit Organization**

Once I made a commitment to work with VLOP, many discussions followed as how to best utilize the my skills and time. It was determined I would be responsible for the creation and implementation of the new VLOP identity design system. This included leading work-sessions and reviewing meetings. I worked with the executive director and the marketing team to identify and deliver design applications. I was responsible for developing guidelines, identifying identity-stewards, managing design volunteers, and establish methods for completing VLOP tasks and design needs in a timely fashion.
3.0 Principle #3: Educate the Nonprofit Organization About Design and the Design Process

Usually comprised of individuals with professional backgrounds in non-design related fields, nonprofit organizations have cursory understanding of design and the benefits it provides. This limited understanding of design often leads to the development of ineffective design solutions. Without proper education of the design process, solutions may be disjointed, inconsistent, and unclear. In addition, deadlines may be missed or relationship with designers may be poor. It is important for the designer to educate the nonprofit organization of design methodologies to establish common understanding and help manage expectations. Without this education, nonprofit organizations may have unrealistic expectations of design or be uncertain how to correctly implement a design solution. Considering many nonprofit organizations have limited resources, understanding how to maximize the efforts of those involved and effectively utilizing design solutions to their fullest potential will greatly benefit the organization's cause. The education process will also help the nonprofit organization clearly define their own design needs, and will allow them to realize the appropriate resources needed to ensure success. Reinforcing appropriate visual design components establishes cohesive messages and helps an organization build equity. According to Alina Wheeler, a brand consultant and graphic designer, “Nonprofits need to build their brand equity. Their future success is dependent on building public awareness, preserving their reputation, and upholding their values.” (2006, p15). Developing design solutions to support these goals is especially crucial as the nonprofit sector continues to grow and differentiation is needed.

3.1 Establish the Benefits and Value of Design

The first step in the education process is establishing how design can help a nonprofit organization reach its goals. Once an organization understands the benefits and value of
design, it is more likely to adopt design methodologies into its way of thinking. This leads to the development of an identity system the nonprofit organization believes in and will likely maintain, thus establishing long-lasting and consistent forms of communication.

There are many reasons an organization may consider an identity design or redesign. These reasons include: repositioning, modernizing, managing change, promoting growth, and starting over (Fishel, 2002, p.9-11). Without the organization’s support, design solutions prove ineffective and unsuccessful. For the purposes of this thesis, general examples that apply to most nonprofit organizations are discussed. In addition to these general examples, more specific needs may be determined for each individual organization, thus requiring further investigation and assessment. Establishing the benefits and value of design in advance of starting the design process helps minimize stress and confusion for the nonprofit organization and designer.

The benefits and value of design are discussed in two parts: internal and external. Internal identifies benefits that have an internal effect on the organization. These benefits include: the clarification of core organizational attributes, the development of consistent messages, and the creation of internal excitement and pride within the organization. Clarification of core organizational attributes is a necessary component of the design process. It creates the foundation for design work and establishes clear, strategic directions. As mentioned in earlier chapters, many organizations evolve without clear business plans or working models. They evolve as needed to sustain momentum and growth, often without clearly defining core organizational attributes that include: mission, values, character, and tone of voice. That is not to say organizations are haphazard about their practices; they are just more apt to explore multiple avenues than their for-profit counterparts to achieve goals and advance their mission, thus straying from diligence and consistency. Woody Pirtle, a partner at the design firm Pentagram, states, “An identity needs to embrace an
organization’s history and incorporate enough flexibility to evolve as the organization anticipates the future.” (Wheeler, 2006, p.23). This supports the importance of developing clear internal awareness of core attributes; past, present, and future.

Design also helps the development of consistent messages and tone. A common issue in many nonprofit organizations is the large amount of disjointed and fragmented messages communicated. This is due largely in part to the fact that multiple members are responsible for the creation of materials and applications. For example, VLOP’s committee co-chairs generate most of the content for their specific project committees. This individual approach creates inconsistent and disparate messaging. Realizing that each individual has their own perspectives and unique motives for contributing to an organization, it is easy to see the expression of different voices and viewpoints. By engaging in the design process, members of an organization build a familiar language and understanding that unites their perspectives. As the design process continues, the whole organization begins using common vocabulary and forms of expression. Once established, this common language is then visually translated into materials and applications.

Once a strong foundation of organizational attributes and consistent messages are created, excitement and pride builds among the members of an organization. As excitement and pride grow, so does the identity of the organization. As seen in the VLOP example, members and volunteers were excited to receive t-shirts with the new identity visually represented. Many members and volunteers expressed enthusiasm and said they would gladly wear the shirt anytime, not just during VLOP events. In addition, t-shirts were also given to the community served (Figure 3.1). This created a visual bond among all of VLOP’s audiences (Figure 3.2). As an organization’s identity manifests into visual forms
of expression, each member has something tangible to rally behind and believe in, thus strengthening the organization.

![Figure 3.1](image1.png) ![Figure 3.2](image2.png)

It is important to remember that the design of a visual identity is more than a logo—it is developing a visual strategy that helps to clearly communicate multiple layers of information. Similar to a fingerprint, the identity should represent character and personality. According to Holland, identity, in the broadest sense, is a confirmation of the organization’s character and helps establish individuality from other nonprofit organizations (2006, p.130). By participating in the design process, an organization can successfully realize its spirit, promises, and expectations.

A holistic design system helps an organization better reach its audiences; thus externally benfitting the organization. As defined in the first chapter, the audiences include: the community served, the nonprofit’s volunteers, and the nonprofit’s financial supporters. Each audience group has its own interests; however, they share similar motivational factors when they choose to support a nonprofit organization. Holland describes four important motivational factors facilitated by an organization’s identity (2006, p.6):
(1) reputation (opinion of the organization)
(2) esteem (appreciation for the organization)
(3) relevance (the purpose of the organization)
(4) differentiation (comparison of the organization to other organizations)

These motivational factors establish a need for design and provide a framework to develop solutions. If successful, these solutions greatly benefit the organization.

The outward benefits of design include: creating awareness, promoting volunteerism, and helping support fund-raising efforts. The nonprofit organization, Nuru International uses design to accomplish these goals. Nuru creates graphic icons—that fit within its visual language—to clearly communicate what the organization does (Figure 3.3–3.4). Nuru’s website also provides a quick link to encourage donations and indicates multiple avenues for participation (Figure 3.5–3.6). A cohesive visual system allows for audiences to repeatedly see messages through related forms of communication.

As these related forms of communications are repeated they start to resonate and create meaning, thus creating awareness within the community. Furthermore, increased awareness builds visual equity and stimulates audience recognition and loyalty (Wheeler, 2006, p.15). Establishing and maintaining consistent visibility is one of the main strengths of a holistic design system. It reinforces unified and consistent visual messages that support an audience’s relationship with a nonprofit organization.
Figure 3.3

What Does Nuru Do?

Nuru International is a social venture dedicated to fighting the greatest humanitarian crisis of our generation: extreme poverty.

Our mission is to eradicate extreme poverty by relentlessly empowering local communities to achieve social and economic self-sufficiency and inspiring the developed world to confront the root of extreme poverty.

How do we do that? Nuru mentors local leaders in the principles of economic self-sufficiency to enable their community to grow together and identify the leaders contributing to the cycle of extreme poverty in their community.

Our Mission: To select and train local leaders to identify the most effective interventions in our four areas of development:

- Education
- Agriculture
- Health
- Renewable Energy

Nuru coordinates these interventions alongside local leaders and the community groups, acting as a "social contract" of proven poverty solutions. Ongoing measurement and third-party evaluation assist in evaluating our progress, and income-generating businesses integrated into our program areas provide revenues that train our project self-sustaining.

It’s big. That’s why we need you.

Figure 3.4

Developing Nonprofit Identities 50
A well-developed design system also helps promote volunteerism. Similar to the members’ relationship with an organization, volunteers feel a strong sense of community by rallying together to support a cause. For example, the nonprofit organization, Building Tomorrow, create a strong visual sense of community. Building Tomorrow utilizes “snap-shot” photos to visually connect potential volunteers to the Building Tomorrow community served.
Having a strong visual system provides recognizable unity. Holland mentions, “Well-designed materials are key in developing enthusiasm and commitment to the organization with many different audiences, and to developing clear, credible perceptions of the organization” (2006, p.120). As the nonprofit sector grows, the audiences’ enthusiasm and commitment to a particular organization is critical to its success. In addition to maintaining a current volunteer-base, an organization may also wish to grow the number of volunteers. The most effective and cheapest way to accomplish volunteer growth is to encourage current volunteers to spread the word (Holland, 2006, p.8). This is especially important as social-networking methods continue to develop and connect people. This further demonstrates the need for clear and consistent visual messages.

Figure 3.7

Developing Nonprofit Identities 52
In addition to creating awareness and promoting volunteerism, a cohesive design system also provides creditability to current and potential financial supporters. Perhaps the most discerning audience group, financial supporters need confirmation their financial contributions are being used appropriately and effectively. Nonprofit organizations provide this information in a number of ways; however, annual reports and websites are common visual forms used to communicate financial data. The ability to clearly communicate how money is being spent is imperative to nonprofit organizations receiving and maintaining donated funds. If the design of informative materials inhibits legibility or understanding, an organization may experience a loss of financial support. For example, a financial supporter indicated VLOP’s annual report visually misinterpreted use of funds, thus discouraging donors to contribute to the organization (Figure 3.9).
Overall, it is important for a designer to communicate how design affects the success of a nonprofit organization. By building relationships and using consistent messaging, nonprofit organizations provide lasting impact for their members and audiences. Developing a design system that delivers on many levels and stretches across multiple applications...
strengthens an organization's mission. An effective and unique identity, rooted in an organization’s sincere character, allows audiences to distinguish one entity from another.

**3.2 Describe Design Process and Design Components**

Once a nonprofit organization understands how design positively impacts their mission and goals, it is important for the designer to describe the necessary steps to develop a cohesive design system and the design components needed to ensure success. Establishing these factors in advance better prepares a nonprofit organization to become an active participant in the process, thus helping to increase involvement and understanding. Collaboration is particularly important in the nonprofit sector and is further discussed in the next section and following chapters. However, before true collaboration can take place, clear understanding of the design process and components are needed by both the organization and the designer.

The development of a clear framework is needed to provide relevance and context. An overview of the design process is especially helpful for a designer to establish trust and credibility. Design is an iterative process that seeks to integrate meaning with form. When developing or refining an organization’s design system, a designer will schedule an initial meeting to review the benefits mentioned, assess the goals and objectives of an organization, and describe the design process and components. There are five main phases that describe the design process within the context of the nonprofit sector. The five phases include:

1. identify and narrow the organizational attributes
2. visualize the organizational attributes
3. conceptualize and explore possible solutions
(4) select a final design direction and refine the design system components

(5) implement and maintain the design system

The first phase of the design process begins with an initial sequence of steps that identifies organizational attributes and narrows the focus of an organization. Wheeler describes these steps as: clarifying the message, positioning the brand, and defining the brand essence (2006, p.99). This initial phase is working toward defining the character and tone of an organization. It establishes consistent viewpoints of vision, values, mission, culture, audiences, and trends. Tim Brown, CEO and president of the design firm IDEO, adds, “The first stage of the design process is often about discovering which constraints are important and establishing a framework for evaluating them” (2009, p.18). Also in this first phase, the designer and nonprofit organization finalize goals and objectives for the project. The second phase in the design process is visualization of the organizational attributes defined in phase one. This provides visual reference for all involved and establishes a base vocabulary to aid discussions, essentially developing meaning through images. The third phase in the design process is conceptualization. Conceptualization is the exploration and discovery phase where the design system takes form. Selection of a design direction and refinement of the design system components constitutes the fourth phase. The fifth phase is implementation and maintenance of the design system. This process can vary slightly depending on the needs of the organization and how the organization functions. For example, some design needs may happen congruently as the identity design process takes place. This requires the designer to balance and schedule checkpoints appropriately.

Many nonprofit organizations are not aware of the appropriate design components needed to construct a holistic design system. The development of these components facilitates the design process and provides tangible reference points for the organization. A holistic
design strategy employs a unique set of tools created for an organization; it is applied in every communication vehicle that helps convey the organization’s identity (Holland, 2006, p.5). Created specifically for each individual organization, these design tools include strategic devices, graphic elements, and applications (touchpoints).

Strategic devices are visual elements that define inspiration, reflect aspirational intentions, and influence design directions. Strategic devices represent the organization’s character and personality. They are especially helpful in aligning all involved in the process while establishing a common visual language. Stemming from the strategic devices, graphic elements are explored, conceptualized, and developed. These visual forms include: logo, color palette, typefaces, graphic styles, photographic styles, and language. Unique to an organization, these graphic elements provide distinctive, ownable visual elements. Applications are created using the strategic devices and graphic elements to convey information. Applications are the vehicles used to engage audiences. Some examples of applications include: print collateral, website, brochures, promotional items, informational posters, and annual reports. Strategic devices, graphic elements, and applications work together to create a comprehensive design system. Functionally, the system is memorable, appropriate, and immediately recognizable (Wheeler, 2006, p.16). Having enduring value, the design components visually express the nonprofit organization and work well across multiple media.

3.3 The Nonprofit Organization’s Level of Involvement
Once the nonprofit organization is aware of the benefits of design and understands the phases of the design process, it is important for the organization to participate in the creation of the design system. Similar to the designer defining their roles and responsibilities, a nonprofit organization should determine their level of commitment
and involvement in the design process. Contributing to the design process, allocating resources, and dedicating budget funds ensures an organization’s commitment to the success of the design solutions. Without the organization’s involvement, a design system fails and proves ineffective.

In order to contribute to the design process, a nonprofit organization develops a clear understanding of its mission, values, and character. Engagement in this self-discovery process ensures value for the organization and aids the designer in visually representing attributes. Design is supported by the organization as a whole, not just a few members. According to Beth Fredrick, VP of Communications and Development at the Alan Guttmacher Institute, “Everyone involved with the organization needs a branding mentality; otherwise it’s a real challenge to use design in strategic and effective ways.” (Holland, 2006, p.26–27). By increasing the organization’s accountability and involvement, the designer encourages active participation and appreciation for design, thus ensuring the development of relevant design solutions. Active roles for an organization include:

1. participating in work-sessions
2. providing organization’s background/history
3. contributing to research
4. finding and sharing aspirational images
5. reviewing concepts and providing feedback
6. approving final design directions
7. allocating necessary resources to complete project
   (personnel, budget, planning)
8. working with designer to determine design applications
9. providing calendar of events and deadline
Facilitating these efforts minimizes confusion and promotes understanding, thus helping generate excitement and acceptance among members of the organization.

3.4 Village Life Outreach Project Case Study: Education of the Design Process

VLOP had an interest in design, but a limited understanding of how it could benefit the organization. VLOP’s previous materials did not clearly or consistently communicate their message and failed to resonate with audiences. VLOP’s core management team wanted to develop a sustainable visual identity system it would be proud to implement. During a preliminary design meeting, Dr. Lewis expressed his dissatisfaction with the current identity. Lewis went as far to say that he was embarrassed to handout his VLOP business card because it lacked the credibility the organization had worked so hard to build. Lewis continued by saying, “Village Life needs an identity that communicates partnership, sustainability, and a sense of community.” VLOP was unsure how to accomplish this goal. After a design meeting that discussed possible methods and opportunities, VLOP was eager to engage in the design process.

Establish the Benefits and Value of Design

After learning the possible reasons an organization may want to consider a redesign, VLOP identified its reasons for a redesign as: clarifying its message, modernizing its look, and promoting its growth. Furthermore, VLOP acknowledged it wanted to better define its mission, vision, and character. Lewis and I had a few informal design discussions while traveling on a VLOP brigade. These design discussions initiated assessment of other nonprofit and for-profit organizations’ identities. These conversations established reason and rational behind successful identity design system. Sharing perceptions and discussing the intended visual representations promoted active learning for Lewis and myself.
Describe Design Process and Design Components

Based on the five design phases described previously, VLOP defined the organizational attributes and narrowed the focus of the organization (Appendix B). First, VLOP and I developed specific methodologies for the project to accomplish VLOP’s goals and objectives. Second, after organizational attributes were finalized (discussed in the next chapter), I worked to develop visual strategy tools to provide reference for those involved in the design process (Appendix C). Third, I presented a range of concepts that the design team evaluated against the attributes (Appendix D). Hearing the members of VLOP use the criteria established by the design strategy in phase two showed remarkable understanding and promoted objective discussions. For example, Lewis used the term “I don’t like” to communicate his lack of support for a concept. Ernst responded, asking Lewis if he personally “didn’t like it” or “if it didn't fit” with what the organization wanted to accomplish. Hearing the members of VLOP use the established criteria was very rewarding for me. Fourth, the design team worked together to identify the design direction that most resonated with the organization's mission and design strategy. Fifth, once selected and finalized, VLOP and the designer worked together to implement the design system in a way that benefited VLOP and their budgetary conditions.

The Nonprofit Organization’s Level of Involvement

VLOP committed time and resources to the development of a new identity design system. Members of the VLOP core management team dedicated their time and efforts to the design process by participating in work-sessions and review meetings. VLOP also initiated and organized a strategy planning meeting to gain outside perceptions of the organization and learn how to better communicate messages and reach audiences. Additionally, VLOP’s executive director, Elliot, took the role of promoting the new design system via social-networking media and events.
4.0 Principle #4: Integrate the Nonprofit Organization into the Design Process

A nonprofit organization discovers and clarifies who they are by participating in the development of their unique design system. By actively engaging in the design process, they gain a better understanding of themselves and their audiences. This understanding allows them to create effective strategies to reach broader audiences and advance their mission. Decisions made during the design process lead to the discovery of new ideas and realizations, thus improving the messages an organization wishes to communicate. It is important to remember, as the designer initiates the design process, that many nonprofit organizations are still defining their organizational attributes (character, personality, tone of voice, etc.) and may not be able to articulate who they are as succinctly as for-profit counterparts. In such cases, the designer may begin the design process by engaging the organization in an initial identity exercise to help develop these important design building blocks and establish open lines of communication. This could include a work-session, a survey, or an informal discussion. By engaging the nonprofit organization in this initial exercise, the designer takes the first step and integrates the organization into the design process, thus creating opportunities to strengthen the organization/designer relationship and the organization’s connection with the final design solution.

4.1 Create Positive Working Relationships

As mentioned, it is important for the designer to consider how to engage a nonprofit organization in the preliminary phases of the design process. Working to integrate the organization into the design process early ensures consensus in later phases. A good way to encourage early involvement is for the designer to work with the nonprofit organization’s core management team to identify members of the organization who will positively contribute to the design process. As representatives participating in the design process, these individuals should have unique perspectives, yet be dedicated to advancing the
efforts of the organization. Representatives also have: visual/verbal acuity, a facility for abstract thinking, an organized but flexible management style, ability to work effectively as part of a group, respect for his or her peers (Holland, 2006, p.31). Additionally, members from the core management team are part of the design team to ensure agreement at the top level. Working in collaboration with the designer helps create an environment where everyone arrives at the same conclusions together. No one person is responsible for the final decision (Holland, 2006, p.72). Utilizing group consensus to make decisions encourages participation and supports the development of a holistic design system that best fits an organization’s needs. Incorporating group consensus into the decision making process differs from the for-profit sector where, as a rule, one person is responsible for making final decisions. Consensus building is discussed further in the following section.

Once the design team members are identified, it is important for the designer to foster positive working relationships. Each member should introduce themselves and describe their role within the organization. This provides greater context for the project. Furthermore, this initial dialog opens the lines of communication, thus creating an environment that inspires collaboration. Discussions of the organization’s history and background adds value to the initial introductory meeting. This continues to unite those working on the design team and provides relevant information that greatly impacts the design system development. In addition to introductions, allowing the design team members to share motivations for contributing to the organization provides beneficial insight and encourages others to consider different viewpoints in conjunction with their own. Sharing personal accounts and establishing connections enhances the rapport among team members. Defining the nonprofit organization’s problems at the beginning of the design process aids the development of working relationships. With the varying viewpoints that each design team member brings, it is important for the team to share and
discuss common issues the organization faces. From this discussion, the team pinpoints and prioritizes what they hope to achieve throughout the design process. According to Marc English, graphic designer and author, working with the design team first to define a problem is helpful when work is judged against what the team agrees to achieve (2000, p.16). English adds, “If a program and process are 'designed,' in addition to specific communications, design can effect significant change” (2000, p.16). Identifying the organization’s specific problems and determining goals/objectives as a team is helpful in getting everyone aligned. Providing a solid foundation, it leads to the development of an effective design system strategy. For example, VLOP identified that it wanted to make its information more publicly accessible (i.e. financial records, members' donated hours of service, etc.), develop more partnership opportunities, promote VLOP events more effectively, and generate visual materials to reach a border member/volunteer base.

Estimates and design briefs are useful tools to develop an initial strategy and generate consensus. Both documents are often found in the for-profit sector, however, they are used less frequently in the nonprofit sector. According to Holland, “(...) many consultants who work with nonprofits skip the development of a design brief altogether” (2006, p.21). These documents define deliverables and assist in managing expectations. They indicate items such as: process (research, exploration, refinement, implementation), review/approval procedures, project timeframes, content and messages, and cost (fees, expenses, etc.). It is important for the organization’s design team to consider these items so they are better prepared for the design process. A design brief outline contains: profile, context, positioning, audiences, branding personality/character, current situation, budget, project timeframe and deadlines, design applications, and technical requirements/limitations (Holland, 2006, p.22). As shown in VLOP’s design brief (Appendix A), design
brief elements provide useful information that guides the development of a relevant and effective design system.

Moreover, estimates and design briefs provide a structure that ensures everyone is aligned at the beginning of the process and aware of roles/responsibilities. The development of the documents, and other strategy tools such as theme and character boards, also remove subjective rational from the design process. It is only natural for individuals to respond differently to an image or design solutions, as the meaning found within these vehicles is subject to personal interpretation. However, once tools are developed, team members start thinking in terms of the organization rather than personal interests. Furthermore, Holland explains, “Because design ultimately involves making a lot of subjective decisions (regarding color, typography, form, etc.), the design brief helps protect against irrationality creeping into and possibly ruining the process.” (2006, p.33). Estimates and design briefs establish strategy and safeguard against personal opinion from derailing the design process. Paul Rand, a graphic designer, explains, “Likes or dislikes should play no part in the problem of identification; nor should they have anything to do with approval or disapproval.” (Logo, Flags, and Escutcheons, 1991). Collaboration starts when the members of the design team start evaluating solution components based on strategy rather than personal feelings. Estimates and design briefs enhance the credibility of the design process and initiate good brand stewards. For example, VLOP plans to implement estimates and design briefs into its method of operation. This will help clarify who is responsible for content generation, establish value for design work, ensure visual consistency, provide effective timelines for due-dates, and inform committee members of VLOP specific attributes.
4.2 Create Engagement, Encourage Collaboration, and Build Consensus

Integrating the nonprofit organization into the design process is beneficial for the organization and designer. Once working relationships are established and nurtured, it is important for the designer to create engagement opportunities, encourage collaboration, and develop tools that help build consensus among all members of the design team. Skipping one of these essential components is detrimental to the design process and delays progress.

Creating opportunities for engagement encourages interaction among the design team. There are a number of ways to promote this valuable experience. For example, conducting a work-session encourages involvement. Work-sessions provide an opportunity for members to share their viewpoints while hearing the viewpoints of others. This ensures every member has a voice and feels connected to the design process. The first step in conducting a work-session is to find a positive work space that is inviting and inspiring. It is important for all members to feel comfortable and welcomed. In addition to finding a conducive work environment, scheduling work-sessions and other meeting times that work for everyone’s schedule is beneficial for the design process. Scheduling meeting times is difficult, especially given many members are volunteering time and have other obligations. Finding dates and times that coincide for all members is rare. Scheduling meeting times far in advance helps ensure attendance. Also, providing multiple dates and times gives members the opportunity to select the options that best work for their schedules. If the designer is unable to schedule a meeting time that works for everyone, it is important to identify the key decisions makers and select dates/times that best work for them. Ensuring their attendance keeps the design process moving. Another way to initiate engagement among design team members is to give assignments and responsibilities. This encouraged involvement and helps facilitate discussions and encourages interaction among members.
Assignments and responsibilities may include:

1. asking members to answer questions pertaining to the organization (mission, vision, character, etc.)
2. encouraging members to find visual forms of inspiration
3. asking members to conduct their own audits and research.

Through this interaction, members may develop different viewpoints or consider alternative perspectives.

Providing an opportunity for members to share their responses and information inspires conversation and creates a framework that informs an organization’s strategy. This framework creates a foundation for collaboration and helps the design team to define organizational attributes, as well as other important factors that impact the design system.

Working together to complete exercises and/or tasks creates a bond among team members that leads to the development of more meaningful solutions. This can be seen in the VLOP case study. As contributors to the process, each design team member developed a connection with the work. Meaning for each member was inherent in the solution. Without responding as group, the VLOP identity would not be as strong or as easily accepted. Linda Wingate, of Wingate Consulting, defines seven collaborate principles relevant to the design process. These principles include (Wheeler, 2006, p.77):

1. establish belief in collaboration among leadership members
2. listen to all perspectives
3. promote participation
4. understand everyone’s contribution is important
5. develop strong professional relationships, building high levels of trust/rapport
(6) engage in dialogue; find a common purpose and language for learning and communicating
(7) provide equal access to information

Each of these principles provide valuable insight into creating synergistic opportunities and allow the designer to better facilitate an environment that promotes collaboration. Without considering these principles, a designer would face a difficult challenge getting the team aligned or receiving valuable feedback needed to complete a project.

Building consensus among team members encourages participation in the development of an appropriate design strategy. Building consensus is essential in the success of the design process (Holland, 2006, p.31). Finding commonalities and developing mutual understanding gains support of the design system and ensures adoption by the nonprofit organization. Without true integration in the design process, an organization is less likely to maintain the necessary components needed to implement design solutions, thus inhibiting the success of the design system. According to Alycia Perry, a brand identity and naming advisor, the process of narrowing down attributes and eliminating words that overlap in meaning help the design team construct a common language and generate focus (2002, p. 48). Through comparison and selection, a design team builds strategy that distinguishes the organization's attributes from other organizations. For example, VLOP narrowed its attributes to: loving, collaborative, honest (has integrity), diverse, vibrant, and resourceful. These six attributes define the success criteria for any design project. This focused approach allows an organization to appropriately communicate their mission, represent themselves honestly, and promise only what they can deliver. The ability to create authentic expressions is a competitive advantage over other for-profit organizations that may use branding techniques for more nefarious ends (Andresen, 2006, p.9).
4.3 Develop Strategies for Defining and Communicating Messages

As the design process continues, the designer engages the nonprofit organization in the development of strategies needed to define and communicate messages. Synthesizing information from a work-session and/or design team assignments points to possible design scenarios that capture the essence of an organization. The distillation of these elements prove to be useful for the designer and nonprofit organization. From the designer’s perspective, pinpointing the exact message ensures focused design exploration. For an organization, clarifying messages helps them gain better understanding of themselves. Strategies are built on relativity, personification, assets, and differentiations (Perry, 2002, p.35). These building blocks give the design team members something to relate to and allows them to springboard from a mutual starting point.

The development of design strategies guides the design direction. According to Perry, “The purpose of an identity strategy is to provide a plan or blueprint of how to verbally and visually communicate a brand’s identity relevantly and uniquely to intended audiences” (2002, p.24). Identifying audiences, current and potential, is a great place to begin. Often, nonprofit organizations fail to define specific audience groups. For example, VLOP first indicated that “everyone” was its audience. Upon further discussion, VLOP defined their audiences to Tanzanian villages of Roche, Nyambogo, and Burere in need of support to improve their quality of life, students and professional practitioners seeking educational and collaborative experiences, and financial supporters interested in funding VLOP’s mission. Helping the organization articulate audience groups helps them better understand how to connect with those individuals interested in supporting their cause. Andresen explains, “Identifying focused ways to connect with audiences will save time, money, and effort, thus encouraging audiences to pay attention, listen, and act” (2006, p.29). “Everyone” or the “general public” are not considered well-defined audience groups.
“Members of a specific community” or “healthcare professionals” are two examples of well-defined audience groups. It is important for an organization to realize that individuals who share common characteristics likely take similar actions. Helpful information to gather about audiences includes: demographic and geographical location, cause-related interests, degree of likeliness to take action, responses to similar cause-based organizations, motivation and benefits, and decision influencers (Andresen, 2006, p.47). Identifying specific audiences enables a nonprofit organization and designer to formulate relevant messages that convey an organization’s intentions.

Nonprofit organizations are consistently looking for new methods to connect with audiences. One way to discover new opportunities is to conduct an audit or benchmark what other similar organizations are doing. Assessing similar organizations and relevant competition spurs the nonprofit organization to do better, work more effectively, and utilize limited resources wisely (Andresen, 2006, p.92). Auditing and benchmarking are often part of a designer’s process, but rarely do organizations formalize this information. Including the organization in this process allows them verbalize and develop new perspectives, thus helping the designer gain better understanding of organizational needs. Conducting audits and benchmarking provide relevant information that allows for the development of applications and methods that better resonate with an organization’s members and audiences.

Once a nonprofit organization and designer identifies organization-specific audiences and conducts audits, it is important to evaluate an organization’s current strategies or methodologies. These strategies or methodologies include: applications used to promote events, communication of fund-distribution, and use of social networking to strengthen audiences connections (with themselves and the organization). Assessing the effectiveness
of an organization’s strategies or methodologies uncovers areas for improvement and establishes possible design opportunities. One way to evaluate these current strategies or methodologies is to seek outside viewpoints. Asking members of the community, professionals, and/or supporters of an organization to provide feedback on current messaging helps the organization and designer define successes and failures. Andy Goodman states, “If we can identify the set of stories that tells our history, our contributions to the world, and how we’re making a difference, all communication problems tend to go away.” (Andresen, 2006, p.182). Communication problems often plague nonprofit organizations. As mentioned in earlier sections, this is partly due to the fact that organizations are focused on generating content not how to deliver it.

To further define strategic design elements and create messages that resonate with audiences, a nonprofit organization formulates their character and tone of voice. Assembling the information discussed in the previous sections helps a designer develop tools that visually represent an organization’s character and personality. In turn, these tools are utilized by the design team to assess design concepts and evaluate appropriateness. This ensures consistent messaging and form of delivery. Examples of tools include: theme-boards, inspiration boards, character boards, and audience boards. The development of tools differ slightly from a for-profit approach where representation of audience segments are created and aspirational images are compiled. In contrast, nonprofit organizations utilize their own images to capture who they are and what they do, thus providing an authentic image to their audiences. Strategic messages need four components: right mood, right messenger, right moment, and right channel (Andresen, 2006, p.185). Developing strategies for defining and communicating messages promotes genuine connections with audiences and inspires action and support.
4.4 Promote Involvement and Enthusiasm

Promoting organizational involvement and enthusiasm throughout the design process is critical to the success of the design system. Maintaining momentum keeps the nonprofit organization engaged and excited about the design strategy and solutions. Failure to keep the organization ingrained in the process leads to incomplete messaging and development of superficial applications. By initiating regular review sessions and staying in communication with the design team, the designer ensures the organization’s participation throughout the design process. Determining how to include the greater organization in the process builds excitement, provides relevance, and creates support.

Facilitating regular review sessions is part of most design processes. However, they are especially imperative in the nonprofit sector. Helping to keep a nonprofit organization on track, these review sessions allow for discussions and consensus. Without them, important information falls through the cracks, opportunities may be missed, or decisions may not be made. VLOP is constantly overseeing many committee projects. Without regular meetings, last minute requests are rushed or never completed. For example, visual materials were needed for a conference but the deadline was never communicated, nor did the team know who was generating content. Without clear consensus, the project was stalled and the potential for fund-raising and involvement was jeopardized.

Providing a framework to encourage constructive feedback also promotes involvement and ensures satisfaction among members of the organization. Important points to consider when facilitating review sessions include: beginning each meeting by reviewing decisions made to date (goals, target audiences, mission statement, organizational attributes), present each concept as it relates to the defined strategy, always have a point of view when presenting concepts, present next steps, and follow-up by documenting and
distributing decisions made during the review (Wheeler, 2006, p.123). In addition to following these steps, each member should be given an opportunity to share their viewpoint and refer back to the strategy tools when discussions veer off-track. This keeps members of the design team involved and engaged. It is important to determine the best way to include the nonprofit organization in the design process. Sharing a near-complete design direction limits irrelevant comments, but provides an opportunity to address any feedback that affects the finalization of the design system. An organization may be tempted to include the introduction of the design system during another event or meeting, given the difficulty in scheduling a time when most members can attend. However, it is important to note, purposely creating an environment that captures and fully engages the members’ attention encourages support and involvement with the new design system. Without properly describing the design components and process, members may give uninformed comments that could be potentially detrimental to the design solution. Furthermore, determining the appropriate channels to unveil the finalized design system with the organization’s audiences generates excitement and pride among all who support the organization. Possible channels include: creating an event to reveal the new design system, using social-networking opportunities like Facebook and Twitter, or design materials that generate fund-raising support.

By creating a positive working environment and encouraging a nonprofit organization to participate in the design process, a designer strengthens the organization/designer relationship and builds an organization’s connection with their design system. Defining the engagement process greatly affects the final solutions. Engagement components include: identification, understanding, clarification, development, and implementation. Developing a design system that honestly represents an organization generates pride and enthusiasm on an internal level, as well as creates visual opportunities to connect audiences.
4.5 Village Life Outreach Project Case Study: Integration into the Design Process

VLOP was eager to start the design process once design value and benefits were understood. During one of the preliminary discussions, VLOP stated it wanted to increase membership involvement, community awareness, and financial support. However, VLOP was uncertain how to reach audiences in order to accomplish these goals. Through additional discussions, I discovered that clarification of organizational attributes and messages were needed to establish stronger relationships with VLOP’s audiences. To accomplish this goal, it was determined the focus of the design process was to define and communicate VLOP’s unique attributes and messages.

Create Positive Working Relationships

Creating positive working relationships among nonprofit organization members is essential to integrating the organization into the design process. Chris Lewis and I worked together to identify key members of the organization to be part of the design team. Michael Zaretsky, Emily Roush, and Tina Weitkamp were selected for their varying viewpoints and roles within the organization. Zaretsky, an architect, a professor at University of Cincinnati (UC), and the VLOP Roche Health Center committee chair, provided design sensibility and critical thinking. Roush, an architectural student working on the Roche Health Center, spent over six months living in Tanzanian villages and provided relevant cultural perspectives for the VLOP community served. Weitkamp, a nurse and international nursing professor at UC, provided an international healthcare and education perspective. Additionally, members of the core management team were identified to be part of the design team: Ernst, Perry, and Elliott.

Once assembled, an opportunity was provided for the team members to meet and discuss the objectives of the design project. In this particular case, the opportunity was part of a
work-session. Commonly, these events are separated; however, the decision was made to combine efforts due to the difficulty in scheduling a time when all team members were available. Varying viewpoints of VLOP were shared. Common issues discussed included the need for VLOP to better define its character, tone of voice, mission/vision, project objectives and evaluations, and volunteer inclusion/retention. Another issue discussed was the need for the organization to better communicate the benefits provided to the Cincinnati community. In addition to VLOP issues, Lewis shared important VLOP background and history. This included the meaning of VLOP's name and original model based on the “Shoulder to Shoulder” method of service. This information proved helpful to most members of the design team, many of whom admitted they were not aware of these facts prior to the meeting. Through this discussion, VLOP members contributed to identifying common issues, developed VLOP specific organizational attributes, and defined possible strategy solutions. Based on the information discussed in the work-session, a design brief (Appendix A) was created to formally capture the following items:

1. VLOP’s background information
2. Project questions
3. Design objectives
4. Design strategies/methodologies
5. Design considerations
6. Design needs
7. VLOP’s audiences
8. VLOP’s partners
9. Project timeline
10. Deliverables
Create Engagement, Encourage Collaboration, and Build Consensus

Fostering engagement, collaboration, and consensus helped integrate VLOP into the design process. These necessary components were achieved by conducting a work-session and regular review meetings. Scheduling meeting times and locations that worked for all team members was difficult. I implemented a “Doodle Poll,” an online scheduling application, to suggest multiple dates and times. Populating the scheduler, each member shared availability. After a few attempts, a common date and time was identified. In addition to scheduling a date/time, finding positive work spaces that were inviting and inspiring helped accomplish successful integration. For example, a work-session was held at my house. My house was easy to find, provided ample parking, and encouraged social interaction, thus reducing stress so members could focus on the tasks at hand. Review meetings were held at local restaurants that supported VLOP and Dr. Lewis’s office.

To spur conversations, I asked each member to answer questions (Appendix B) pertaining to the organization. These questions established personal perceptions and viewpoints while also defined VLOP’s attributes. In addition to the questions, I asked the members to bring visual images that best described the VLOP organization overall, based on answers to assignments. These examples included, but were not limited to: color, graphic styles, other nonprofit visuals, and photographic styles. This encouraged members to find visual forms of inspiration. During the work-session, design team members shared their answers (Appendix B) and visuals. After some discussion, the team members constructed a common language that facilitated meaning and context (Figure 4.1–4.2).
Develop Strategies for Defining and Communicating Messages

After some common elements were discovered during the work-session, the team conducted an audit of similar organization’s websites. This inclusive activity generated focus and utilized the common language. Some benchmarking examples include: American Red Cross, Keep a Child Alive, Doctors Without Borders, Partners In Health, Shoulder to Shoulder, Make It Right, Engineers Without Borders, Sprinkles, Hands of Hope, International Breast Milk Project, Madventurer, Nuru International, and Architecture For Humanity. Many ideas and thoughts were shared that initiated thoughtful consideration of design strategies and messages. Additionally, the design team worked together to define the VLOP’s audiences. These audience’s included: the Villages of the R Rorya district of Tanzania, East Africa, the Cincinnati Community, VLOP student volunteers (primary and secondary education), VLOP professional practitioner volunteers (healthcare, engineering, architecture, design, business, etc.), VLOP financial supports (member’s family and friends, business with similar interests, those interested in supporting VLOP’s cause), and the VLOP board of directors and committee members.
After conducting benchmarking audits and identifying audiences, the team worked together to define design strategies and methods for reaching its goals. These included defining and promoting VLOP’s attributes (loving, collaborative, integrity, diverse, vibrant, and resourceful), developing applications to promote events and communicate fund-distribution, and creating opportunities for social-networking to strengthen audiences connections. The design team also assessed and evaluated VLOP’s current identity (Figures 4.3–4.4) to determine its effectiveness. The team quickly concluded VLOP’s current identity was not visually communicating or representing the organization’s attributes. This was determined by asking a series of questions regarding the current materials. I asked if the materials visually represented the newly defined organizational attributes. Once reviewed, it was determined the current identity and materials did not represent VLOP as: loving, collaborative, honest (having integrity), diverse, vibrant, and resourceful. The materials were evaluated as childish, cartoonish, and light-hearted. The development of a new identity was needed. Working to visually represent the design strategies and methods components, the designer created character and theme-boards for VLOP (Appendix C). These tools proved useful during reviews to keep all team members aligned and focused when evaluating concepts.

![Village Life](image)

**Figure 4.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Color Palette (Logo Colors)</th>
<th>Secondary Color Palette (Logo Colors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>367 427</td>
<td>161 113 154 301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Promote Involvement and Enthusiasm

Maintaining involvement and enthusiasm is imperative for the success of the identity design process. To help keep VLOP members actively participating in the design process, I scheduled regular review meetings. During each meeting we reviewed decisions made to date, reinforced organizational attributes, established success criteria, and introduced new/updated designs concepts (depending on the phase of the project) as shown in Figure 4.5–4.6 (Extensive study shown in Appendix D). Allowing every member of the design team to share comments established consensus and ensured approval and acceptance. After each meeting, I followed-up with notes and comments regarding the VLOP design process, outlined decisions, and described the next phase of the project. Consistent communication ensured alignment and involvement, keeping VLOP engaged and excited.

Figure 4.4
Nearing project completion, the design team shared the final design direction with a larger VLOP membership group. Members were excited about the new design and expressed their opinions of color options. Including the greater membership group into the final decision making process helped build excitement, created inclusion, and affirmed the design team’s efforts. Taking the comments from the greater VLOP membership group, I worked to refine the final design direction that was approved by the VLOP design team (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7
5.0 Principle #5: Develop a Flexible, Affordable, and Feasible Design System

Many nonprofit organizations lack the necessary funds to execute extravagant design systems. The designer should remain mindful of budget and resource limitations throughout the design process to ensure solutions are flexible, affordable, and feasible. That is not to say the designer should ignore or sacrifice appropriate techniques that could benefit the organization. The designer and nonprofit organization work together to select the set of circumstances that prove most effective in communicating the organization’s message. For example, specifying recycled paper for print collateral may reinforce an organization’s commitment to eco-friendliness, while specifying digital-safe printer paper may be more cost effective to promote an organization’s fund-raising event. Print collateral has a longer shelf-life and is intended to create credibility. In contrast, promotional materials (such as posters and flyers) are intended to quickly inform and generate interest. It is important for the designer to think creatively, but at the same time, think practically. The priority for the visual design system is to function with the following purposes in mind: bring an organization’s identity to life by developing character and personality, enhance recognition and recall, assist to differentiate from other organizations, and tie all the disparate visual elements together with the same look and feel (Perry, 2002, p.95–96). As long as these factors are incorporated into the design solution, the designer can use any number of methods to maintain a consistent visual language and establish an organization’s look, tone, and feel.

5.1 Create an Easily Transferable, Durable, and Long-lasting Design System

A nonprofit organization’s design system needs to be adjustable to accommodate many different needs/circumstances. The organization and designer consider the broad range of applications the design system spans. When examining the flexibility of a design system, the designer chooses the most visible and challenging applications, as well as determine
scalability across all applications (Wheeler, 2006, p.121). Additionally, identifying and educating individuals responsible for design implementation is beneficial to the success of final design solutions. Orchestrating these variables promotes consistent delivery of information and ensures the longevity of a design system.

The design system incorporates an array of functions and methodologies to ensure flexibility. Methodologies ranging from very specific, tangible devices to more overarching guidelines are used. An example of a specific, tangible element is seen in the AIGA identity system. The AIGA identity utilizes a box-shape to contain their logo. The logo-box element allows for greater versatility in application. Without the box device, the logo would float in space, leading to design problems in many situations that weaken the logo’s readability significantly and jeopardize the logo’s usefulness (Holland, 2006, p35–36). A common practice for nonprofit organizations is to reinvent themselves with each application that is produced. Creating visual elements that bridge multiple applications generates repetition and recognition. Over time, consistent repetition builds visual equity for an organization. Visual elements used repeatedly provide a foundation for future design applications, which decreases the time needed to complete tasks and ensures visual continuity.

In addition to specific visual devices, a designer implements guidelines that ensure consistent style and representation of a nonprofit organization’s design system. A design manual (or style guide) transfers specific knowledge about the design system and how design components are implemented. This ensures continuity in all visual expressions. The design manual is especially useful when multiple individuals are responsible for creating applications and materials for the organization. According to Holland, “A design manual serves to both inform and empower both the organization and the individual designers who put the brand into use” (2006, p.35). A design manual is responsible for ensuring every
effort captures the organization’s attributes and clearly communicates the organization’s message. Incorporating a range of options and multiple scenarios encourages durability. Understanding how visual elements are implemented and showing how they function across varying applications illustrates the flexibility of a design system. These options and scenarios are created as the designer identifies what design applications are needed and begins to anticipate possible ways to address them. Components of a nonprofit organization’s design manual include:

1. background information
2. explanation of the design strategy
3. visual strategy components/tools
4. mission and vision statements
5. logo usage and safe zone
6. color specifications
7. typography
8. look/tone/feel expressed through applications (print collateral, website, promotional/fundraising materials, partnership examples, etc.)
9. printing specifications
10. contact information

Recounting the design process is not commonly found in design manuals. However, including this information in the design manual provides deeper levels of understanding for individuals who were not involved in the design process. This is especially important when organizations seek design help from outside sources that are not familiar with the organization’s attributes. For example, VLOP often needs support from other designers that were not involved with the new identity project. Without proving clear rational for the design decisions, a designer may unintentionally break the guidelines or deviate from the
visual equity elements. Communicating the rational behind decisions ensures long-lasting support and brand stewardship.

### 5.2 Assess Budget Limitations and Consider Affordability

Once the design system is developed and the design needs of the nonprofit organization assessed, the organization and designer work together to identify and prioritize the applications needed. Nonprofit organizations lack funds and resources needed to achieve a holistic roll-out at one time. In contrast to the for-profit sector where organizations have funds and resources to roll-out a range of design applications that use the new design system within a short timeframe. It is important for the nonprofit organization and designer to select the applications that most effectively impact the organization’s mission. Considering budget and timing limitations, these applications are selected based on purpose, significance, and affordability.

The nonprofit organization’s executive director, or members of the core management team, and the designer are responsible for assessing the organization’s budget. This includes the allocation of funds for production and services related to design. If an organization has not created a budget that includes design services, the designer may submit estimates for printing, production, and service. Seeing costs and how they fit in with other organizational funding needs helps an organization make selective decisions appropriately. Additionally, structuring phases of implementation is helpful in alleviating financial stress. For example, an organization may determine their website and event promotions are of greater priority due to audiences that are reached with those applications. In this scenario, the designer focused attention on the development of web and promotional materials in the first phase of implementation. They wait for a
later phase to develop print collateral. It is important to select the most appropriate applications to communicate the intended message of the organization.

Function is another point to consider when developing design applications for nonprofit organizations. There are a plethora of design techniques available to a designer when exploring concepts and developing solutions. However, choosing when to utilize these techniques is especially important in the nonprofit sector. A designer can determine the appropriate technical attributes to communicate a message by identifying the function of a design solution. As discussed previously, a designer may recommend using a recycled paper for print collateral material to promote eco-consciousness, yet recommend cost-effective paper for other applications. Additionally, a designer may suggest implementing e-marketing or social media techniques to more effectively manage cost and reach a greater audience. Identifying functional differences allows a designer to respect budget limitations while purposely reinforcing organizational attributes. Paper type is just one technical specification to consider. A designer also identifies and utilizes standard paper sizes to keep costs low. They build color flexibility into the design system so exact PMS colors are not needed and multiple printers can be utilized based on quantities needed. Single-color or 2-color applications can be externally successful and budget friendly, as long as the design system includes a range of logo variations. Exploring single-sided and non-bleed options also keep costs down. Determining the impact and longevity of a design solution influences decisions pertaining to technical specifications and develops a nonprofit organization’s character.

5.3 Consider Design System Maintenance

Once a nonprofit organization’s design system proves flexible and affordable, it is important for the organization and designer to ensure the design system is maintained.
Design system maintenance is an ongoing process that utilizes tools and continuous assessment to determine the success of implemented design solutions. Balancing standardization and flexibility allows for growth and versatility while establishing consistency. Furthermore, an organization faces an arduous challenge in developing cohesive visuals that build equity if design components are complicated to manage and guidelines difficult to follow. Being aware of these circumstances helps a designer in the development of an appropriate design system and effective applications.

Standardization and design templates are useful tools for a nonprofit organization. They ensure consistency and decrease time needed to complete design solutions. The utilization of standard formatting options facilitate content updates and cost-saving measures. They provide a framework for web applications, electronic communications, and promotional/informational pieces. Creating electronic templates also allows for other individuals, such as members of the organization and volunteers, to assist the designer in developing basic design solutions. These basic design solutions include: electronic newsletters, letterhead, thank you cards, and informational packets. Empowering an organization to complete tasks encourages participation, promotes appreciation, and ensures adoption. Incorporating the organization into the design implementation phase assists in the maintenance of the design system and encourages good brand stewardship.

In addition to standardization and template development, a nonprofit organization and a designer implement the practice of using project briefs, or write-ups, to facilitate the completion of consistent design applications and materials. Similar to a design brief, a project brief outlines specific project needs, ensures clear communication among members of an organization, and establishes project value. However, project briefs are
not as extensive as design briefs; they simply illustrate objectives, convey content and copy, describe format and materials, and communicate deadlines. Project briefs are useful tools that fulfill committee needs and make the design process more efficient, thus maximizing each individual’s time and efforts. Project briefs also provide relevant documentation. Helping catalog past projects, documentation provides an opportunities to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of completed designs. The ability to capture this information is especially important with annual events and needs with design related applications. As the nonprofit organization continues to grow and expand, it is important for a designer to ensure the success and maintenance of a design system.

5.4 Village Life Outreach Project Case Study: Flexible, Affordable, and Feasible Design System

Flexibility, affordability, and feasibility are some of the most important points to consider when designing in the nonprofit sector. VLOP’s budget and resources are limited. Funds raised and resources are used to sustain VLOP’s projects, leaving limited budgets for design needs. However, realizing the benefits of design, VLOP developed a budget strategy that reallocated funds received from book-generated sales to create design materials. Working within budget and resource limitations, appropriate solutions were developed. VLOP’s executive director, Elliott, and I worked together to select the circumstances that best fit VLOP’s needs.

Create a Design System that is Easily Transferable, Durable, and Long-lasting

I worked with VLOP to diligently develop flexible components of the design system. Considering the broad range of VLOP’s design applications (Appendix A), these components included: well-considered logo variations (orientation, scale, color), a multi-layered color palette, and a holding device (tag) that can be used in conjunction
with photographs. A few examples can be seen in Figure 5.1–5.3 (additional examples are shown in Appendix E). In contrast to the flexible components, selectively limiting certain elements ensured durability and consistency. These elements included one type family (Trade Gothic), specific color combinations, and a certain photographic style. Selecting appropriate opportunities to integrate flexibility while limiting some choices ensures an easily transferable and long-lasting system.

![Figure 5.1](image)

Figure 5.1
Figure 5.2

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**Color Palette**

- PMS 7533
  - C0 M22 Y85 K85

- PMS 7496
  - PMS 383
  - C40 M40 Y100 K38
  - C20 M40 Y100 K19

- PMS 1595
  - PMS 143
  - C0 M59 Y100 K5
  - C0 M35 Y65 K0

- PMS 541
  - PMS 7468
  - C100 M57 Y0 K38
  - C100 M0 Y10 K25

- PMS 730
  - C0 M38 Y78 K29

**Typeface**

- Trade Gothic Condensed
- Trade Gothic Condensed Oblique
- Trade Gothic Condensed Bold
- Trade Gothic Condensed Bold Oblique
- Trade Gothic Light
- Trade Gothic Light Oblique
- Trade Gothic Medium
- Trade Gothic Oblique
- Trade Gothic Bold
- Trade Gothic Bold No. 2
- Trade Gothic Bold No. 2 Oblique
- Trade Gothic Bold Oblique

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Figure 5.3

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To help ensure a long-lasting design system, I developed two style guides for VLOP. The first style guide is an extensive document that outlined the design process and described why certain decisions were made (color, photographic style, etc.). This information provides relevant context for any designer (not involved in the design process) asked to implement a design application. In the case of VLOP, the style guide proved helpful in briefing new designers. The second type of style guide was a quick reference for printers and vendors. It ensured correct colors and typefaces were used while providing an overview of the design system. Elliott found the quick style guide helpful when requesting quotes, introducing the design system to first-time users, and relaying VLOP’s design system to partnering organizations.

Assess Budget Limitations and Consider Affordability

VLOP assessed budget limitations and developed a strategy it felt comfortable implementing. The VLOP design team identified and prioritized design applications based on upcoming events and opportunities. These needs included materials to promote a social event that celebrated a brigade trip and annual VLOP fund-raising dinner called Night on the Serengeti. Fortunately, some of the printing for these materials was donated by a local printer; however, certain paper and printing limitations applied. Working within these parameters, I created applications that utilized a standard, non-bleed tabloid paper size. For the print needs not covered by the donation, I developed a single-color design that proved to be cost effective. Assessing function of the single-color piece, I chose to specify a particular PMS color to ensure accuracy. Evaluating the function and limitations of each VLOP application ensures maximum effectiveness and affordability.
Consider Design System Maintenance

The development of design tools ensured VLOP’s acceptance and maintenance of the design system. Due to time limitations, the design needs of VLOP proved too great for one designer to implement. Establishing standardizations and design templates ensured continuity and consistency. These templates included announcements, newsletters, letters, and promotional packets. In addition, these templates helped empower VLOP’s members to complete tasks and promoted identity stewardship.

As excitement about the new design system grew, many VLOP committees were eager to create new materials to promote specific projects and efforts. Helping to manage these requests and ensure consistency, Elliott and I recognized the need for a project-brief system. Project briefs were standardized forms that indicated background, objectives, content, deliverables, and timing. Establishing work-flow and content helped elevate confusion and stress, thus ensuring maximum productivity and design solution effectiveness.
6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the five design principles identified in this thesis are intended to improve nonprofit visual communications, design process, and organization/designer relationships. These design principles are:

1. Understand the Nonprofit Organization’s Mission, Structure, and Needs
2. Define the Designer’s Role Within the Nonprofit Organization
3. Educate the Nonprofit Organization About the Design Process
4. Integrate the Nonprofit Organization into the Design Process
5. Develop a Flexible, Affordable, and Feasible Design System

Having clear understanding of the nonprofit sector better prepares a designer wishing to work with them. It is important for a designer to remember a visual identity is a collection of perceptions about an organization, formed by its every communication, action, and interaction. (Daw & Cone, 2011, p.20). Developing strategies and methodologies that best meet the needs of a nonprofit organization may lead to more effective design solutions that truly have a positive and lasting-impact on society.

As this particular area in the design field grows, further research, investigation, and relevant documentation is needed. This thesis serves, however, as an starting point for the development of design resources for designers interested in becoming actively involved with nonprofit organizations.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: VLOP Design Project Brief · Visual Identity System

Introduction
Village Life Outreach Project is a Cincinnati-Based nonprofit organization that strives to improve the quality of life for impoverished villages in rural Tanzania, East Africa while providing learning opportunities and experiences for the Cincinnati community. VLOP focuses on collaborative strategies that create solutions with a lasting impact on the communities it serves—villages in Tanzania and Cincinnati. VLOP is looking to increase membership involvement, increase community awareness, and increase funding to support current and future projects.

Background
Dr. Chris Lewis founded Village Life in 2004 to provide accessible healthcare for villages surrounding the rural village of Shirati in the Ronya district of Tanzania, East Africa. Building on his experiences with the global health nonprofit organization Shoulder to Shoulder in Honduras, Chris Lewis organized a group of volunteers to travel to the villages of Roche, Nyambogo, and Burere to treat patients in mobile field clinics. Since that first trip, VLOP held a number of brigades that continue to serve the three villages. With each brigade, relationships with the villages grow. Currently, VLOP projects include:

Life
- Slow Sand Water Filters
- Moringa Tree Planting
- Solar Disinfection
- Microfinance Program

Health
- Mosquito Net Project
- Mobile Field Clinics
- Standardization of Treatment Protocols
- Schistosomiasis Prophylaxis, Child Health Initiative

Education
- Pen-Pal Program
- Education Sponsorship Program
- Nutrition Project
- Teacher Professional Development
- Establishing School Resource Centers

Roche Health Center
Marketing and Development

Project Question
- Will future projects fall into one of the three focus areas of VLOP (life, health, education)—can system be based on three categories?

Design Objectives
- Create a lasting visual identity system that supports and communicates VLOP’s mission and goals.
- Establish credibility and create visual equity.
- Provide a system that is versatile, adaptable, and feasible.
- Communicate clear, concise, and informative message—provide multiple levels of information (initial interest, deeper dives, full disclosure)

Design Strategies and Methodologies
- Work Session to identify VLOP’s key character components and tone of voice
- Benchmark other relevant nonprofit solutions and tools (to help fuel discussion of positive VLOP components and possible opportunities for improvement/growth)
- Audit VLOP’s current identity
- Develop tools to help visually communicate and reinforce character components and tone of voice (establish common language and methods for assessment)
- Create visual concepts to explore identity solutions
- Refine based on core management team’s feedback
- Implement across range of applications to show versatile, adaptable, and feasible.
- Actionable plan to maintain visual system.

Design Considerations and Explorations
- Multiple Audiences
- Social Networking (way for volunteers to stay involved)
- Web Videos: Crowd Accelerated Innovation
- Recurring Communication Materials (tweet, Facebook, newsletter)
- Fund-raising Materials (annual reports, grant applications)
Design Needs

- Logo
- Print Collateral (letterhead, envelope, business cards, etc.)
- Website/Blog/Volunteer Sharing
- Newsletter (electronic/print)
- VLOP Flyer (general organization overview)
- VLOP Poster (general organization overview)
- VLOP Brochures (general organization overview)
- Project Flyers, Posters, Brochures (RHC, Nutrition, mosquito Net, Education, Water Filtration, Health Brigades)
- Health Education Materials/Medicine Instructions
- Health Center Signage
- Coffee Labels
- T-shirts
- NOS Materials: Holiday Fund Materials
- Fund Raising Materials
- Grant Proposals
- Brigade Packets
- Photo Library
- Thank You Cards/Follow-ups
- Monthly Event Materials
- Art/Photography Exhibits

VLOP Audience

- Villages of the Ronya district of Tanzania, East Africa
- Cincinnati Community
- Volunteers: Students (primary and secondary education), professional practitioners (healthcare, engineering, architecture, design, business, etc.), and members of the Cincinnati community
- Financial Supports: member’s family and friends, business with similar interests, those interested in supporting VLOP's cause
- VLOP Board of Directors and Committee Members

VLOP Partners

- SHED (Shirati Health, Education and Development)
- UC (Medicine, Engineering, Design/Art, Business, Education)
- Coffee Emporium
- Wyoming School District
- Bow Tie Café

Project Time/Framework

- Initial Meeting: 08.04.2010
- October 2010 Brigade
- Work Session: 01.19.2011
- Strategy Tools Development and Design Concepts (two weeks)
- Meeting to Review Tools and Concepts: 02.10.11
- Refinement (two weeks)
- Meeting to Review Refinements: first week of March
- Refinement (one week)
- Approved Design
- Implementation: Phase 1 (two weeks): End of March
- Further Implementation of additional applications

Phase 1 Deliverables

- Strategy Tools
- VLOP Identity System
- Identity Guidelines
- Applications (range to show versatility of system)
  - Print Collateral (letterhead, envelope, business cards)
  - Website Design
  - Newsletter Design
  - Annual Report Design
  - Flyers (VLOP general, Life, Health, Education)
  - TShirt Design

Phase 2 Deliverables

- Applications
  - Posters/Brochures
  - Fundraising Materials (grant applications)
  - NOS Materials
  - Brigade Packets
  - Thank You Cards/Follow-ups

Phase 3 Deliverables

- Central shared electronic space with access to design applications
- Photo Library
- Applications:
  - Health Education Materials
  - Medicine Instructions
Appendix B: VLOP Work-session Assignment Questions and Answers

1. In your own words, how would you describe Village Life's mission, goals, and objectives?
   - Foster Love
   - Health Promotion/Maintenance
   - Partnership
   - Sustainability (self-sustaining, inspiring, solutions to fight poverty)

2. What do you think Village Life's overall vision is, now and in the future?
   - Expanding/Growth
   - Feedback to Community
   - Forward Thinking
   - Ongoing Partnership
   - Simultaneous Higher Learning
   - Bi-directional Empowerment
   - Financially Sustainable
   - Inspire Global and Adaptable Model for Other Organizations
   - Innovative Thinking

3. What words best describe Village Life's character?
   - Loving
   - Collaborative
   - Integrity
   - Diverse
   - Vibrant
   - Resourceful
   - Grassroots

4. If Village Life was a person, what tone of voice would Village Life use?
   - Loving
   - Experienced
   - Inspirational
   - Sincere
   - Vibrant
   - Respectful

Appendix C: Visual Strategy Tools
Appendix D: Design Concepts
Appendix E: Identity Guidelines

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VILLAGE LIFE OUTREACH PROJECT

PARTY

BOW TIE CAFE, MT. ADAMS

JUNE 3, 2011
FRIDAY 6:00PM

$10 MINIMUM DONATION · $5 FOR STUDENTS

FOOD, DRINKS, AND COFFEE WILL BE SERVED

PROCEEDS BENEFIT VILLAGE LIFE OUTREACH PROJECT

Come party with Village Life as we celebrate our partnership with Dhani Jones’s Bow Tie Cafe. Enjoy food, drink specials, and music with the Village Life team as we showcase our work to improve conditions and fight poverty in Tanzanian villages and expand the horizons of Cincinnati students. Samples of Village Life’s Tanzanian Peaberry Coffee, roasted by Coffee Emporium and now served at Bow Tie Cafe, will be available, so come get a taste of the good stuff while supporting a great cause.

www.villagelifeoutreach.org
www.bowtiecafe.com