



# DESIGN JUSTICE: LOCAL NODES



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## Design Justice Network

### Written and edited by:

Victoria Barnett, Laura Carter, Sasha Costanza-Chock,  
Ryan Hayes, Garance Malivel, Rebecca Michelson,  
Wesley Taylor, Maya Wagoner

### Reviewers:

Una Lee, Andrea Ngan, Denise Shanté Brown

### Design & Illustration:

Marcia Díaz (illustrations), Camilo Calderón (layout,  
design) <https://bom.works>



# FOREWORD

This zine was collectively written and edited by members of the Design Justice Network (DJN). It provides organizing tips and resources to help current or aspiring DJN members create and grow local Design Justice Network nodes. It is the fifth in a series of zines ([www.designjustice.org/zines](http://www.designjustice.org/zines)) intended to share the principles of design justice, and to support efforts to put these principles into practice across a broad range of contexts, locations, and communities.

We acknowledge that the majority of examples and references used throughout this zine are grounded in the North American context, where the contributors are based. We welcome any feedback and insights to inform the next editions of this zine, and to keep growing the Design Justice Network into a diverse and transnational community.



*Throughout this zine, you will see this symbol, which indicates that you can find additional links in the resources section!*

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# Welcome to the Design Justice Community

## A short story about the birth of the Design Justice Network

The Design Justice Network (DJN) grew out of a session hosted in June 2015 at the Allied Media Conference in Detroit. 30 people who identified as designers, non-designers, artists, technologists, and community organizers gathered for a session called “Generating Shared Principles for Design Justice.”

The hope was to start shaping a shared definition of “design justice” – as opposed to “design for social impact” or “design for good.” While well-intentioned, these imprecise terms are not rooted in principles of social justice, and run the risk of perpetuating the systems that give rise to the need for design interventions in the first place. We began by breaking into groups to examine “design for social impact” stories that had recently come out of Detroit. These stories had received a great deal of positive attention in design and business press as socially-engaged projects.

Participants considered who was involved in decision-making, who benefited, and who was harmed in each design process. To different degrees, the “social good” initiatives tended to operate from a charity model that was driven by those who wanted to “do good” rather than those most affected by (and often, already organizing around) the issue. As a result, the need to address root causes was not made a priority.

You can read more about that session here: <https://designjustice.org/blog/2016/05/02/2016-generating-shared-principles>



## What is design justice?

Design mediates much of our realities and has a tremendous impact on our lives. Design justice rethinks design processes, centers people who are normally marginalized by design, and uses collaborative, creative practices to address the deepest challenges our communities face.

The Design Justice Network was established in 2016 after the initial gathering at the Allied Media Conference in Detroit. A set of 10 collaboratively generated and edited design justice principles were released in 2018. DJN is now an international network, and a community of practitioners that aim to ensure a more equitable distribution of design’s benefits and burdens to build safer and more sustainable worlds.

Working towards design justice is an ongoing process that requires us to analyze and challenge harmful social structures. This zine is not a recipe book nor a manual about how to put the design justice principles into practice. Rather, it offers a few insights on how to get started, and find your own way to draw on and aim for design justice within your community as a local node.

You can read more about the network and its principles here: [www.designjustice.org/principles](http://www.designjustice.org/principles)

# What are Design Justice Network Local Nodes?

## What do local nodes do?

Nodes are a key part of a thriving network. Just as in botany, where a node is the part of a plant stem where new leaves emerge, a local node within the Design Justice Network is a space for local members to gather and grow design justice related projects, ideas, processes, and community.

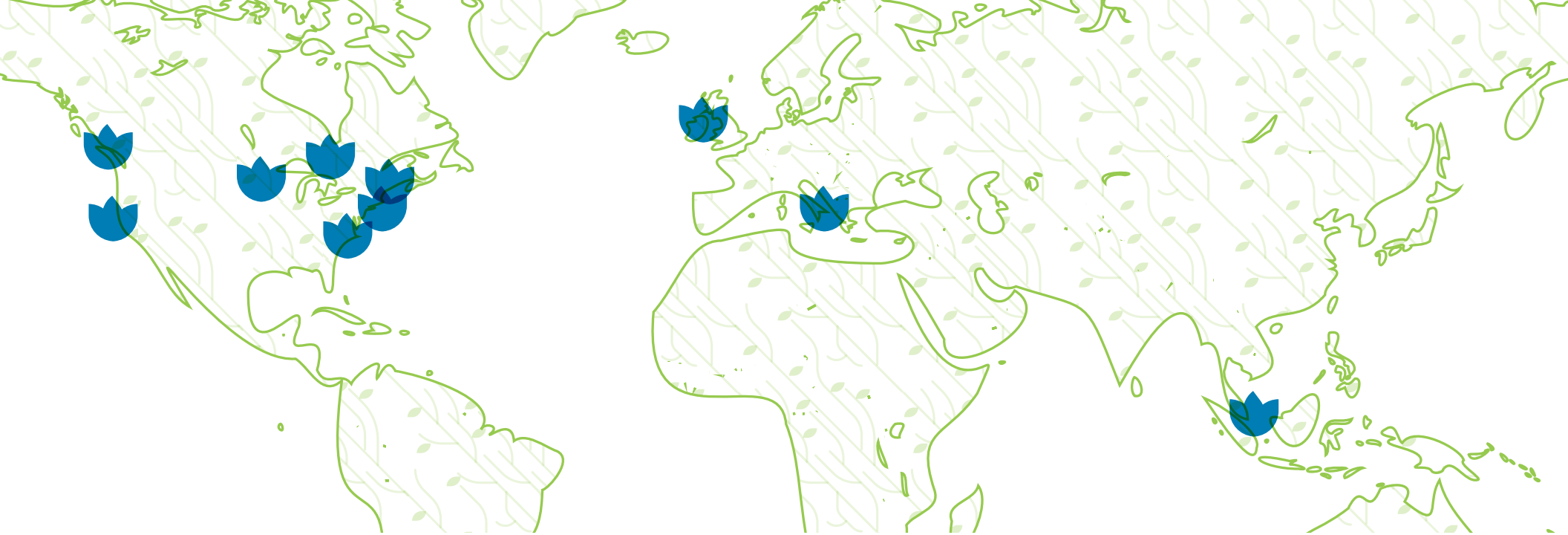
DJN is a sponsored project of Allied Media Projects, and the local nodes have thus far developed as volunteer-driven and community-based groups. DJN local nodes and members are accountable to the communities they serve, through organizing work that reflects the design justice network principles.



## Local nodes do things like:

- Engage with and share personal experiences around the design justice principles
- Assess and provide feedback on a given project using the design justice principles
- Identify and organize around local issues using the design justice principles
- Support, foreground, and amplify the voices and practices of marginalized designers
- Support local organizations and campaigns with design processes
- Convene design justice related events and socials (for example, by hosting invited speakers, artists dates, connecting design practitioners to community organizers to build relationships...)
- Host skillshare events, such as the “DiscoTechs” (Discovering Technology) events for communities (first coined by the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition: [www.detroitdjc.org](http://www.detroitdjc.org))
- Develop walking tours in your community using the design justice principles to observe your built environment
- Organize a reading group
- Engage in shared activities with other DJN local nodes

And much more! What is your local node working on? Share what you’re up to with other members on our Slack channel, or during our periodic Nodes Connect calls.



## Where are the existing local nodes?

As of July 2020, there are local nodes active in:

- **Toronto:** [djn.toronto@gmail.com](mailto:djn.toronto@gmail.com)
- **Philadelphia:** [djn.philadelphia@gmail.com](mailto:djn.philadelphia@gmail.com)
- **San Francisco Bay Area:** [djn.sfbay@gmail.com](mailto:djn.sfbay@gmail.com)
- **New York (NYC):** [djn.newyork@gmail.com](mailto:djn.newyork@gmail.com)
- **Chicago:** [djn.chicago@gmail.com](mailto:djn.chicago@gmail.com)
- **UK/Scotland Design Justice Node:** [djn.intheuk@gmail.com](mailto:djn.intheuk@gmail.com),  
[djn.scot@gmail.com](mailto:djn.scot@gmail.com)
- **Singapore:** [djn.singapore@gmail.com](mailto:djn.singapore@gmail.com)
- **Mediterranean Design Justice Network Node:** [djn-med@cryptolab.net](mailto:djn-med@cryptolab.net)
- **Boston:** [djn.bos@gmail.com](mailto:djn.bos@gmail.com)
- **Vancouver:** [designjusticeyvr@gmail.com](mailto:designjusticeyvr@gmail.com)
- **A location near you!**

The most up-to-date information about local nodes can be found at [designjustice.org](https://designjustice.org)

## How can you join an existing local node?

1. Read and sign on to the [Design Justice Network Principles](#) if they align with what you would like to work toward. (The principles are available in multiple languages!)
2. Become a member of the Design Justice Network to receive an invitation to our Slack, where you can connect with others near you.
3. Go to [designjustice.org/local-node](https://designjustice.org/local-node) to find a node near you
4. Contact the local node coordinator(s) to let them know that you would like to join upcoming events or efforts

Other ways to connect with local nodes:

- Sign up for the mailing list [designjustice.org/newsletter](https://designjustice.org/newsletter)
- Attend a design justice event: [designjustice.org/events](https://designjustice.org/events)

Couldn't find a local node near you? Learn about how to start one in the following section.

# How to Create a New Local Node?

## Where to start?

### 1. Get together and set your intentions

Start by scanning your own networks: find a friend (or two) and gather your folk. We recommend having at least three people to start a new local node. Before hosting a public meetup, your initial small organizing group should meet up informally. Discuss and sign on to the [DJN principles](#), and [become members of the DJN](#). (All the ppl you are connecting with do not need to be members- we welcome ppl at all stages of membership and it is not necessary). It is required that you have 2-3ppl to start/co-found a node.

### 2. Get in touch with the steering committee

Get in touch with the DJN steering committee and inform us of your intention to start a new local node. The steering committee can help you think through some ideas about how to organize your new node, and share useful resources and tips. Please email us at [designjusticenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:designjusticenetwork@gmail.com) to get started!



🔗 Find links in the resources section!

### 3. Host your first public meeting

Get together with your core group to organize your first public meeting. Generally, a first meeting could include a discussion of the Design Justice principles - what resonates with folks or how you came across them, and perhaps discussing areas of connection for future collaborations. See the next section of this zine for some useful tips.

### 4. Register your node and access DJN resources

Reconnect with the steering committee to let us know how your first public meeting went! Once you have confirmed your intention to start a new local node, you will be able to [register](#) it as a part of DJN and to access resources shared within the network (see the Next Steps section). We can strategize together about next steps.

### 5. Join the Local “Nodes Connect” Monthly Meeting

Local node organizers come together in a monthly “Nodes Connect” meeting where they share updates on their work and best practices. Check out our [website](#) to learn the date of the next meeting.

### 6. Note

There is a chance that at any one of the check-in stages the steering committee may ask you to reconsider your process of starting a local node. There is also the likelihood that the steering committee will refer you to some of the established local nodes for review and guidance. In some instances there may be scenarios where a local node submission is asked not to proceed if there is an issue of alignment.



## Who to invite?

Take a moment to create your first draft of an invite. Now, ask yourself or someone near you, “Based on this invitation, what kinds of people are most likely to come? Who is unlikely to come and why?” Every decision includes and excludes some people, and it is important to be aware of how this happens.

Everyone is impacted by design and the decisions of designers, and a lot of people who are not working in design have lived experiences and opinions about it. What types of skills and experiences do people in your core organizing group have, and which ones might be missing? Are the voices of people working in public policy represented? Are the voices of youth and students represented? Are the voices of elders represented? Does your group’s make up only include academics or people with “designer” in their job title?

Does your group include Black people, Indigenous people, and other People of Color? LGBTQIA+ folks? Disabled people?

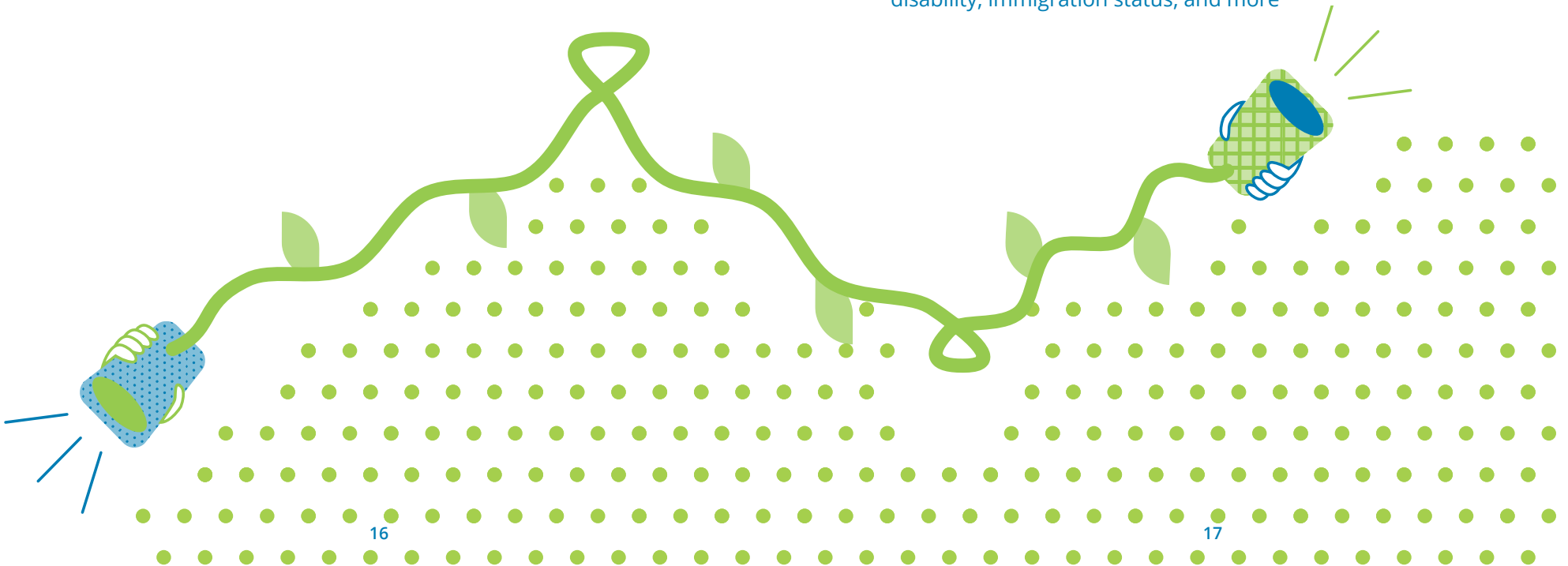
## How to invite?

Think about the different channels where you’ll find people who could contribute to the cause. Some examples might be Instagram, Facebook, Eventbrite, mailing lists, bulletin boards at public libraries, friends with large networks, [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com/), or senior centers. What groups have shared values with design justice, and who do you want to be in coalition with?

If there’s a group of people that you think will not come by default, find a way to explicitly include them. When the Brooklyn Public Library hosted a DiscoTech, they called it “Brownsville DiscoTech: An Intergenerational Technology Skillshare.” It’s a long name, but the elders who came said that even though they know most technology events are not meant for them, the word “intergenerational” let them know that they were more than welcome. They also held the event at a community Black history center that many elders already frequented.

## Outreach tips

- Use accessible language and avoid jargon
- Reach out to existing local groups that might want to be part of your organizing effort
- Be sure to reach out with an eye to inclusion by gender, B/I/PoC, disability, immigration status, and more





## Where to host?

The space matters! Different people feel comfortable (and comfortable speaking up) in different spaces. Here are a few points to consider:

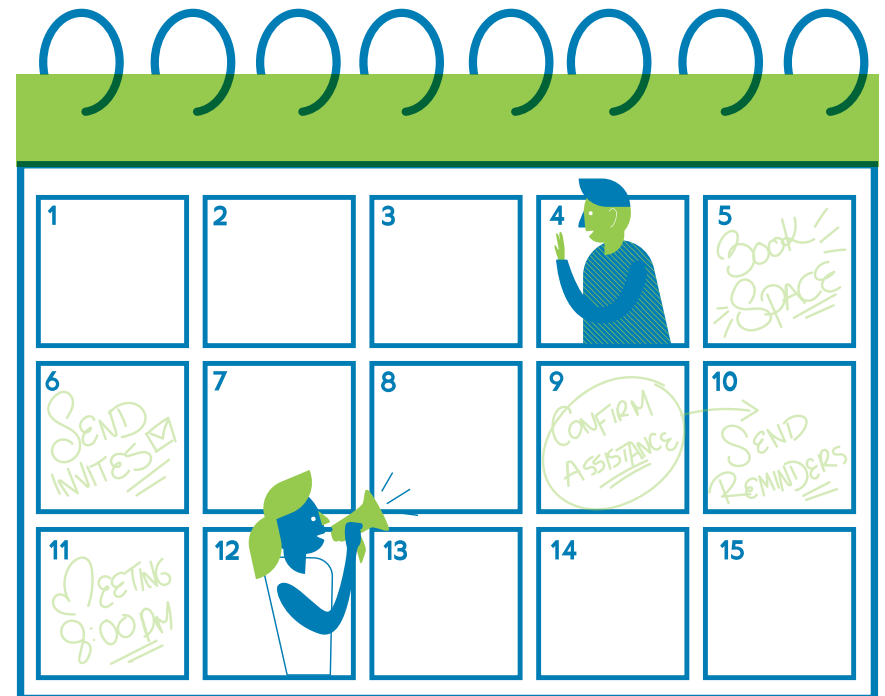
- **Venue:** Depending on the size of your group, you could choose to meet in a coffee shop, online, or in a community space like a library or community center. Consider hosting outside if the weather is good!
- **Accessibility:** What modes of transport are available to people to get to the chosen space? Is it convenient to get there at the time of day you want to have your meeting? Are all the parts of the space that you want to use wheelchair accessible? For example, some spaces have 'auditorium' spaces that are accessible, but 'stage' spaces that are not. Can you bring in ASL interpreters or translators for various languages? Will someone in your group be able to volunteer to provide childcare during the meeting, or can you offer a stipend to cover this?
- **History and current use:** Will a venue with religious history or affiliations put some people off attending? Will a venue that serves alcohol exclude some people?
- **Equipment:** Will you need a projector? Microphones? A whiteboard and markers? Tables and collage supplies? Accessible wifi? Signs to help people find the space? Check the space's policy on food and think about if you want to have home-cooked snacks!
- **Online meetings:** If your meeting is being hosted solely online, consider what steps you will need to take to ensure video conference security, and whether you can provide call-in numbers for folks who might not have a computer/laptop. It is a good practice to create instructions for people to understand how to join and utilize video conferencing tools more easily.

## When to host?

Timing matters. When planning a meeting keep in mind:

- **Other events:** When are your potential sister organizations meeting? Do you need to plan around the “Activism for Designers” meetup that happens one night a week?
- **People’s availability:** Is it easier for people in the community that you want to reach to meet during the week time or on the weekend? In the daytime or at night? Is the suggested meeting time compatible with parenting, caring responsibilities, volunteer commitments?
- **Polling:** You might consider polling people for their availability and preferences each time, or set a consistent date, such as the first Thursday evening of every month.

It will not be possible to accommodate everyone, but we can make our best efforts, strive to make improvements on an ongoing basis, and our nodes will be stronger for it.



# Planning Your First Meeting

## Setting goals for your first meeting

Think about both the content and the process of your first meeting. What do you want to cover and how do you want to do it?

Have some ideas about what a 'successful' meeting would look like. Do you want participants to leave the meeting feeling like they are part of a growing community? Working towards a shared goal? Joining a shared educational space? Be mindful that the group might have other ideas: be prepared to be flexible! Create an agenda and post it inside the meeting space, or have it accessible somewhere folks can see it (ideally in advance) so people know what they are coming to.



## Preparing to facilitate

- **Group size:** Think about how many people you expect. This will be a big factor in how you run a meeting. Groups of 12 or fewer might be able to work as a single group; if there are more of you, you may want to split into small discussion groups for parts of the meeting. Breaking into pairs or smaller groups often gives folks who are shy in large group settings a chance to be heard.
- **Define roles:** One or two people will be needed to facilitate, possibly more if you anticipate breaking into small groups. You may also want to have designated people to hold other roles: taking notes, keeping time, recording action points, keeping track of who is waiting to speak, welcoming people as they arrive.
- **Set guidelines:** During the first few meetings, establish community guidelines and revisit them at the beginning of every meeting for newcomers. Keep the guidelines in a visible and accessible space. Here are some examples drawn from [Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing World, by adrienne maree brown](#).<sup>1</sup> 1) be open to learning, 2) value the process as much as, if not more than, you value the outcomes, 3) self care and community care - pay attention to your bladder, pay attention to your neighbors.
- **Share space:** Think about how you can empower people to participate, and how you can combat systemic power imbalances. Stay aware of who is speaking a lot and who is not. Make efforts to include everyone, without putting people on the spot. If some people are behaving in harmful ways that are rooted in misogyny, white supremacy, ableism, or other oppressive systems, name those behaviours (if you've never done this before, it can be useful to practice or think about what you would say!)
- **Stay on top of both content and process:** You don't want the meeting to get stuck on a point of process (for example, long discussions on whether to have a discussion) but you also don't want decision-making to move too fast. Aim for consensus.

These are all important considerations from the very beginning, but remember to come back to them after you've met once, twice, or dozens of times. Inclusion and sharing power is a difficult and ongoing process, but anyone can do it!

See Resources section of this zine for more tips on facilitation.

🔗 Find links in the resources section!

## Crafting your agenda

Here are some suggested agenda items for a first meeting. Depending on your group and objectives, you might want to modify this list and you might not get through all these items at once!

- **Land Acknowledgement:** Begin by acknowledging the original inhabitants and the history of the land where you are meeting, in a way that is appropriate and meaningful. Here is a resource for that: <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement>. Keep in mind that this should not be treated as a mere checklist item. For those not Indigenous to the land the meeting is taking place on, a land acknowledgment should be seen as part of a larger process of righting relationships with the peoples the land was taken from.
- **Welcome & Introductions:** You might know everyone who is attending, but that doesn't mean they know each other! Allow a little time for people to speak about what motivated them to attend. Icebreakers are fun activities to start off a meeting.
- **Community Guidelines:** Set and review as a group your community guidelines, and be mindful in future meetings about potential revisions or additions.
- **Presentation of DJN:** Briefly introduce the history and ongoing activities of the network.
- **DJN principles:** Review the DJN principles as a group and encourage people to share some thoughts and examples of how the principles resonate with their own experiences.
- **Issues:** What are some of the key issues and concerns that participants are already thinking about? You might want to brainstorm these together, or break up into smaller groups and report back. How are the DJ principles useful in addressing these? You might find that 1-2 key issues emerge that the whole group is engaged with. If not, try to synthesise and bring out any common themes, and discuss further.



- **People:** Are the people in the room representative of the people who are affected by the issues you have identified? If not, discuss why. How will you build relationships between these people and the node? What offers and outreach will support this relationship work?
- **Activities:** What would you like to do to make changes? What is feasible with the people you already have involved? How do the principles help? What else do you need to do in order to carry out the activities you want to do? How can the activities provide opportunities for pleasure, creative play, and discovery? Identify skills that your group is strong in, and skills that you are lacking. Think about whether these skills match the activities you want to do.
- **Action points or working groups:** If you have already decided some, confirm them again.
- **Bike rack:** Park the items that were not addressed yet in the 'bike rack' for a future meeting! Review your bike rack when planning for your next meeting.
- **Check-in:** How have people found the meeting? What did they like? What would they like to see more/less of next time? Are there any unaddressed needs that are coming up for participants and what are ways to address them? You might also want to run a follow-up survey.
- **Next meeting:** When? Where? Who can volunteer for planning, facilitating, and note-taking roles?
- **Follow-up:** How will you keep participants informed and follow-up on assigned tasks? Does everyone have access to your chosen communication medium, or do you need a backup/secondary channel? How will people stay in touch and what purpose does each channel serve (listserv/Slack/Facebook group, etc.)?

# Next Steps

## Register your local node

Once you've held your first public meeting and come up with a description of what you're planning to do, fill out this form to help us get to know you better: <https://designjustice.org/noderegistration>

The DJN steering committee will get in touch to organize a meeting with you to talk things through and (hopefully) approve the formation of your new local node. The DJN steering committee will want to hear how your first meeting(s) went, and know a bit more about the work you'd like to do moving forward, including local organizing efforts or movement building you might be connected to. If you are not already connected, the steering committee will want to hear more about how you plan to engage respectfully and responsibly with these organizing efforts.

The steering committee will then work with you to ensure you have access to the information and network resources you will need to help your node grow and flourish.

## Access our network resources

Here are the tools we use for communication and coordination.

**Public facing tools:** As a local node, you will get access to the following resources to post your upcoming events and gatherings:

**Website:** [www.designjustice.org](http://www.designjustice.org)

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/designjusticenetwork>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Design-Justice-Network-271936540305243/>

**Twitter:** [https://twitter.com/design\\_justice](https://twitter.com/design_justice) (double underscore)

**Newsletter:** <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/designjustice-news>

## DJN members Slack:

After you join the Design Justice Network as a member, you will get an email with the access information to join our Slack. More information on how to become a member: [designjustice.org/membership](https://designjustice.org/membership)

## Great work!

Yay! Your local node is registered and up and running! We'll work with you to have your node listed on the DJN website, set up a Slack channel for your node, make an announcement on the Design Justice Network newsletter list, and support you to post content about your events and activities to our various channels.



# Checklist

- Have your core organizers discussed and signed on to the Design Justice Network principles?
- Have your core organizers become members of the Design Justice Network?
- Have you set intentions for the local issues you will organize around?
- Is your group representative of communities that are directly affected by these issues?
- Have you connected with other local groups who you could organize with or who are already organizing around the same issues?
- Do you have some initial ideas for what activities you will undertake?
- Do you know how this work will align with the DJN principles?
- Have you reached out to the DJN steering committee before and after organizing your first public meeting?
- After joining the DJN Slack, have you reached out to the #discussion channel to see if there are other members in your area who would like to join your node?

# Useful Resources

- Land Acknowledgement guide, by Native-Land.ca: <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement>
- How To DiscoTech zine, from the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition: <https://alliedmedia.org/ddjc/discotech>
- Facilitation guide, by the AORTA collective, for facilitating inclusive and antiracist events: [http://aorta.coop/portfolio\\_page/anti-oppressive-facilitation/](http://aorta.coop/portfolio_page/anti-oppressive-facilitation/)
- Facilitation guide for meetings by Seeds for Change: <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/facilitationmeeting>
- Sample Code of Conduct, by the ADA initiative to make more gender-inclusive conferences: <https://confcodeofconduct.com>
- Book Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need, by Sasha Costanza-Chock, 2020: <https://design-justice.pubpub.org>
- Previous zines edited by the Design Justice Network: <https://designjustice.org/zines>
- [Safer Space resource/guide](#)
- Sample Group Agreements Guideline (from Seeds for Change): <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree>
- First Meeting checklist : USDAC Imagining Event Checklist: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ks9uQkh6ykKEAFpNp56eq9l7m5UtKd2i/view>
- Community Guidelines Resources: <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree#how> <https://cloud9.support/communityguidelines>
- Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds, adrienne maree brown: <https://www.akpress.org/emergentstrategy.html>

