

Best practice paper:

# Soliciting work from professional communication designers

**Icograda: leading creatively**

The International Council of Graphic Design Associations (Icograda) is the world body for professional communication design. Founded in 1963, it is a voluntary assembly of associations concerned with graphic design, visual communication, design management, design promotion and design education. Icograda promotes communication designers' vital role in society and commerce and unifies the voice of communication designers worldwide. The vision, mission and core values of the Council are collectively embodied in the statement 'leading creatively', and manifested through our Members' diverse activities to use design as a medium for progressive change.

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### **Defining speculative practices**

'Speculative practices' for our purposes are defined as: communication design work (including documented consultation), created by professional communication designers and organisations, provided for free or at nominal fee, often in competition with peers and often as a means to solicit new business. In harmony with Icograda's *Model Code of Professional Conduct for Designers*, Icograda recommends that all professional designers avoid engaging in such practices.

We know that this position is in the best interest of both designers and their clients because neither designers nor their clients benefit from this practice. Speculative *Calls for Proposals* are exploitative because they demand work without guarantee of compensation. When work is done on a speculative basis, designers are unlikely to conduct the research and analysis needed to produce the best result because they have no guarantee of remuneration. This undermines the tenant that professional communication designers act as consultants, partners or members of a client's strategic communications team.

### ***Why we discourage it***

In recent years, many of Icograda's member associations and others have articulated their disagreement with speculative practices and have launched programmes to raise awareness of:

- the detrimental impact on the quality of business outcomes from such practices,
- resulting restraints on developing the status and standing of communication design as a respected profession, and
- the detrimental impact on the economy.

These organisations include, but are not limited to:

- Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA – Australia)
- AIGA, the professional association for design (AIGA – USA)
- Association of Professional Design Firms (APDF – USA);
- BNO – Netherlands;
- British Design Innovation (BDI – UK);
- Chartered Society of Graphic Designers (CSD –UK);
- Corporate Design Foundation (CDF – USA);
- Danish Designers (DD – Denmark);
- Design Business Association (DBA – UK);
- Design Council (DC – UK);
- Design Institute of Australia (DIA – Australia);
- Designers’ Institute of New Zealand (DINZ – New Zealand);
- Design Management Institute (DMI – USA);
- Graphic Artists Guild (GAG – USA);
- Hong Kong Designers Association (HKDA – Hong Kong);
- Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI – Ireland);
- Interaction Design Group (IXDA – international);
- No!Spec (international);
- Registered Designers of Ontario (RGD – Canada);
- Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC – Canada);
- Society of News Design (SND – USA),
- South African Graphic Design Council (think– South Africa).

**Running Calls for Proposals that avoid speculative practices**

The most effective and economical method of resolving a design problem is to engage the services of an appropriately qualified and experienced designer, design team or design company and to collaborate closely throughout the design process. A recommended approach to evaluate competing designers is to request samples of work from previous assignments that are similar in nature to the project for which you require design services. After this review, if initial concept work is necessary to make a final selection, full fees should be paid to each designer asked for submissions.

***Special considerations:***

*Limited Calls for Proposals* - If you want to limit the *Call for Proposals* to a finite list of designers, the complete list of invitees should be disclosed to all those invited to submit proposals.

*Open Calls for Proposals* - If you do not want to limit the *Call for Proposals* to a finite list of designers, the solicitation should nonetheless be limited to professional designers and design students.

*Calls for Proposals from Students* - If you want to limit the *Call for Proposals* to students of communication design, you must define the learning outcome of the assignment. It is not appropriate to publish a *Call for Proposals* for communication design work that is limited to students simply for budget considerations.

*Public Calls for Proposals* - A public call (one in which you are also inviting people who are neither professional communication designers nor communication design students to respond) must be limited in scope to thematic ideas that might guide a design assignment.

*Requests for creative content* - If you are certain you require a presentation of creative ideas from those responding to a *Call for Proposals*, limit the *Call* to a predetermined list of firms and pay a fee to each competitor. The amount should be equivalent to what a reasonable design fee and expenses would be for a similar project under normal circumstances.

**What governs Icograda's position on speculative practices?**

Icograda's *Model Code of Professional Conduct for Designers*, adopted by our membership in 1983, states that:

- A designer shall not undertake any work at the invitation of a client without payment of an appropriate fee. A designer may however, undertake work without fee or at a reduced rate for charitable or non-profit organisations.”\*
- Before accepting an assignment, the designer shall define exactly and comprehensively for the client the basis on which total remuneration is calculated.”

*\*Note: Public sector institutions, such as government, are not considered as non-profit organisations.*

**Support for this policy**

The Icograda Secretariat works actively with its professional Members to guide the implementation of this policy. It is a voluntary position that has been ratified by the Icograda Executive Board and is supported by Icograda's Membership. While Icograda encourages Members to adopt this position as a national policy, it respects that there are cases where national legislation may govern a Member's ability to adopt this position.

*Drafted: April 2006, Montreal (Canada)*  
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