

Community Outreach Agreements + Practices

This document is intended to give some basic guidelines on how Colloqate communicates to community members about projects we are working on. Our goal is to maintain the ability for project team members to speak clearly about their own strategies and goals for the project, while also building relationships with widely varying communities and avoiding misunderstandings as the project progresses.

Using I, Not We Statements

Project team members are naturally going to have their own goals and ideas for a project, but it is important that when communicating to the public, those ideas are presented as one's own, and not necessarily something that's shared by everyone working on the project. This also gives the impression that more input is desired on the given project, rather than indicating that "we," the project team, have already made a decision.

Creating a Space of Multiple Truths

Communities come to outreach efforts with widely varying experiences in the world, which have led to their different perspectives about what a certain project should look like. Sometimes they will be conflicting, but it is our goal to engage with these different truths and experiences and record them over the course of outreach. This is not to say that any perspectives that degrade the humanity of others, such as racism and misogyny, need be nourished or given credence.

Assuming Accurate Representation

This is closely related to the practice of multiple truths. We try to assume people are who they say they are, and believe what they say, unless they exhibit otherwise. Our outreach will sometimes bring us in contact with people that disagree with our equitable and reparative goals for a project. When we encounter this, we generally record the information and try to glean any strategic information from it - How are the opponents of equity and reparation planning their own version of the built environment? How can we most effectively counter that?

Staying Present

This is especially important given the amount of virtual outreach that is being completed during COVID. It is very easy to get distracted by a phone or webpage during a community meeting, but it leads to a halting and awkward conversation if the person facilitating the discussion isn't active within it.

Honest Response

This is one of our foundational trust-building practices. We respond to questions and concerns about the project honestly. Any project has both amazing opportunities and also potential pitfalls. We have found if we aren't honest about the challenges facing the project, or try to paint the project in a utopian manner, we aren't actually engaging community members in an honest way, and are actually obscuring the truth about an ongoing process.