

Design for Social Good — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a working method you apply to one real cause. Choose a charity, advocacy issue, or community group now, something you genuinely care about and can learn about, and carry it through every exercise so you finish with a portfolio-ready, impact-led case study rather than abstract notes. Each section maps to one course module, moving from scoping and the single action, through strategy and behavioural framing, to ethical community-centred design, and finally to sustainable delivery and honest measurement.

What Social-Good Design Actually Is

Set the foundations: choose your cause, scope the work so it stays finishable, and replace vague awareness with one specific, measurable action.

Exercise: Choose Your One Cause

Pick a single real cause you will use for the entire course: a local charity, an advocacy issue, a community group, or a mutual-aid project. It should be something you care about and can learn about, ideally with a real person you could talk to. Answer the prompts before doing anything visual.

- What is the cause or organisation, and what change does it exist to create in the world?

- What is the specific problem you might help with design (one project, not their whole brand)?

- Who is the priority audience this project needs to reach, named specifically rather than everyone?

- Why does this cause matter to you, and what do you not yet understand about the people it serves?

Worksheet: Pro Bono Scope and Boundaries

Treat your free project with the same discipline as a paid one. Fill in a one-page scope so generous help stays finishable and the organisation knows exactly what it will get and by when. Keep it short enough that a busy non-design staffer would actually read it.

The single problem this project solves, in one sentence

Deliverables with quantities (e.g. one A3 poster, three Instagram templates, one donation form)

Explicitly out of scope (e.g. no full rebrand, no website) so it is not silently assumed

Timeline with two review points and a firm handover date

What you need from them (logo files, copy, one named approver)

Revision policy (e.g. two rounds included, then a fresh agreement)

Exercise: Write Your SOCO

Force a single, measurable action into the brief using the single overriding communications objective. If you cannot complete the sentence, you do not yet have a campaign. This sentence becomes the filter for every later decision.

- Complete the sentence: As a result of this, I want [specific audience] to [specific, countable action].

- What is the real barrier stopping people who already broadly agree from taking that action (confusion, effort, timing, social discomfort)?

- How will the action be measured (form submissions, donations, RSVPs, items collected, calls made)?

- What is a realistic target and deadline, so success or failure is actually knowable?

Checklist: Foundations Checklist

- The deliverable is a means to a result, and the result is named, not just the artefact
- Scope is written on one page with deliverables, out-of-scope items, and a handover date
- The project is finishable within your real capacity, not an open-ended rebrand
- Raise awareness has been replaced with one specific, countable action
- One priority audience is named, not everyone
- The measurement method is decided before any design begins

Strategy and Theory of Change

Build the logic that connects your design to a real result: a theory of change, behavioural framing grounded in evidence, and a one-page brief everyone agrees on.

Worksheet: Theory of Change Map

Draw the unbroken line from your design to the outcome. Fill in each link, then write the assumption that must be true for each arrow to hold. The gap you find is where the project would fail.

Inputs (design hours, small print budget, the organisation's list or noticeboard)

Activities (what you make and do)

Outputs (the immediate countable result, e.g. seen by 8,000, clicked by 600)

Outcomes (the behaviour change, e.g. 220 registered as volunteers)

Impact (the longer-term mission result)

The single riskiest assumption, and a cheap way to test it before committing the budget

Exercise: Apply the EAST Framework

Run your one action through the Behavioural Insights Team's EAST levers, then choose your message frame deliberately. The goal is to make the desired action the easy, obvious, well-timed thing to do.

- Easy: what friction can you remove (fewer fields, sensible defaults, one obvious next step)?

- Attractive and Social: what will draw attention, and is there an honest social-proof line (most people here already do this)?

- Timely: when is the audience most receptive (payday, a deadline, just after a relevant event)?

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- Framing: is this a detection or risk behaviour (use loss framing) or a prevention or safe behaviour (use gain framing), and why?
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Exercise: Find Your One Face

Apply the identifiable-victim effect. People give to one named, pictured person, not to statistics. Plan how to lead with a single human story and let the scale support rather than replace it.

- Whose single, real, consented story could anchor this campaign, and what is their name?
 - What one image or quote conveys their agency and dignity (not their helplessness)?
 - What statistic will you place behind the person to show scale, without leading with it?
 - Where in the design does the human come first and the number come second?
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Worksheet: One-Page Creative Brief

Turn your strategy into a shared contract a non-designer approver can sign off. The most important and most skipped field is the single thought. Get this agreed before anyone falls in love with a colour.

Background: the cause and the specific problem, in two or three sentences

Objective: the single action and how it will be measured, taken from your SOCO

Audience: the one priority group and the barrier stopping them

Single thought: the one idea the audience must remember if they remember nothing else

Tone and mandatories: logo, colours, legal lines, accessibility requirements, deadlines

Deliverables and channels: exactly what is being made and where it runs

Designing With and For Communities

Make the work ethical and effective: involve the affected community, represent people with dignity, and meet real accessibility standards.

Worksheet: Co-Design Plan

Plan how to design with the community, not just for it. Decide how far up the ladder of participation you can climb on this project, and how you will involve real people rather than designing from a stereotype.

Who has lived experience of this issue and could collaborate?

Where on the ladder will you operate (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, co-create)?

The participatory activity you will run (short workshop, concept ranking, three real conversations)

How you will show rough, unfinished work so feedback is honest

How participants will be compensated or genuinely thanked

How you will close the loop and show them how their input changed the work

Exercise: The Dignity Test

Audit your planned imagery and language against the dignity-over-pity standard. Run each image and key phrase through the test before you finalise anything that depicts a real person or community.

- Would the person depicted be comfortable and proud to see this image of themselves?
 - Does the framing show people with agency (working, deciding, leading), not as passive objects of charity?
 - Have you avoided poverty porn and white-saviour framing, with the community as the hero of its own story?
 - Does your language respect how the community describes itself (e.g. people experiencing homelessness, survivors), and do you have genuine informed consent for any real person?
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Checklist: Accessibility and Inclusion Checklist

- Text-to-background contrast is at least 4.5 to 1 for body and 3 to 1 for large text, verified with a checker
- Colour is never the only cue; a label, icon, or pattern is paired with it
- Type is a legible size with generous spacing; no long all-caps or centred body text
- Plain language is used at a reading age suited to the audience, not to a grant panel
- Alt text on meaningful images and captions on video are included as standard
- Easy-read, translated, or printed versions exist where the audience needs them, not assuming internet access

Exercise: Test With One Real Person

Before finalising, show your draft to at least one member of the actual audience and capture what you learn. This single step catches the tone, language, and accessibility problems that are invisible from the inside.

- Who did you show it to, and what is their connection to the audience?
 - Could they immediately understand the single action you want them to take?
 - What word, image, or assumption landed wrong that you could not have seen yourself?
 - What specific change did you make as a result of their feedback?
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Delivering and Sustaining Impact

Produce work that survives real constraints: a system a volunteer can run, honest outcome measurement, and an impact-led case study that proves the result.

Worksheet: Handover System Plan

Design for handover so the organisation can keep producing on-brand work after you leave. Plan the mini brand kit, the locked templates, and the plain-language guide that prevent brand drift and dependency. Brand kit contents: logo files, two or three colours with hex codes, one or two free or system fonts, dos and don'ts

Templates to build for recurring needs (social post, event flyer, donation appeal, email header)

The free, common tool the team will use (usually Canva for Nonprofits)

Which elements are locked (logo, colours, layout) and which are editable (text, image)

Format of the handover guide (one-page document or five-minute screen recording)

Where the master files will live so the next volunteer can find them

Worksheet: Outputs vs Outcomes Tracker

Separate reach from real behaviour change and build measurement into the design before launch. Fill this in so you can prove impact, not just count likes, when the campaign is over.

The one outcome metric from your SOCO (the behaviour, not the views)

Output metrics you will still note (reach, impressions, prints distributed) but not mistake for success

Tracking built into the artefact (unique link, UTM tag, promo code, dedicated landing page)

Baseline figure captured before launch, so you can show the change

Comparison period or group without the campaign, where possible, to gauge real lift

How you will report honestly, including what did not work

Exercise: Write the Impact Case Study

Turn your work on the one cause into a portfolio case study structured as a story of impact. Lead with the result, not the artwork, and carry the same ethics into how you present it that you applied to making it.

- Problem: the cause, audience, and specific behaviour the project needed to change?
 - Approach and solution: the insight, the single thought, and the design shown in real context?
 - Result: the honest outcome metric (e.g. 40 percent more volunteers, 12,000 dollars against a 9,000 goal)?
 - Ethics: did you get permission, credit collaborators and the community, and avoid overstating your role?
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Checklist: Delivery and Handover Checklist

- Editable templates and a one-page brand kit are handed over, not flat uneditable files
- Only free, common tools the team already uses are required; no paid licence dependency
- Fixed elements are locked so volunteers change only text and images
- A short plain-language guide or walkthrough video accompanies the templates
- Outcome measurement was built in before launch and reported honestly, including misses
- The case study leads with the problem and result and credits the community

Your Action Plan

1. Choose one real cause and write down the change it exists to create and the specific project you could help with
2. Scope the work on one page with deliverables, out-of-scope items, a named approver, and a handover date
3. Write the SOCO sentence naming one audience and one measurable action, and decide how it will be counted
4. Build a theory of change, circle the riskiest assumption, and find a cheap way to test it
5. Run the action through EAST, choose loss or gain framing deliberately, and plan to lead with one real face
6. Agree a one-page creative brief, including the single thought, with the organisation before any visuals
7. Plan and run a co-design activity, climbing the participation ladder beyond tokenistic consultation
8. Audit imagery and language with the dignity test and meet WCAG contrast, plain-language, and format standards
9. Build a locked template set, a one-page brand kit, and a plain-language handover guide a volunteer can run
10. Measure the outcome with built-in tracking, report it honestly, and write it up as one impact-led case study

