A Meditation on Building Host-Fellow Relationships

Please take these provocations as a starting point, and not as a definitive guide. They're built from some of our experiences and observations. Therefore, we recognize they're limited. We hope that this list will help you build your own list of questions that you can periodically reflect upon throughout the course of your development career.

- **How would you assess your host organization?** How are they organized? What is their capacity? Are they impacted by seasonality (of funding or available work)?

  - How do you think these considerations will impact your project? How can you leverage your assessment of the host into building a productive relationship?

- **How do you assess _your_ capacity in completing the project?**

  - Some productive approaches to self-assessment might include outlining what tasks you can do on your own and what tasks you will need guidance on; then communicate with your host or mentor to see how you can move forward

- **Do you feel comfortable with the frequency and content of your communications with your host or mentor?**

  - Like with many of the points on this sheet—from the assessments outlined above to forms of communication—this is something that we find worthwhile to reflect upon periodically.

  - If you don't feel comfortable with your current level of communication, what strategy could you employ to improve it?

    - Schedule regular check-ins!

- **What are you going to do when you first get there?**

  - What does your first few weeks look like? Aside from settling in, do you have a clear picture of how your project will begin? Some projects will be more intense from the start than others. Communicate with your host and mentor to help ensure that a slow start is not a stressful one.

- **When you leave your project, will you feel comfortable about the condition you leave that space?**

  - This provocation may come off as a little patronizing, but I felt it is a worthwhile piece of advice that my advisor Liza Grandia gave to me. _When you leave, your partners and the communities with whom you've worked will not be doing so._ Make sure that you keep this in mind as you spend your time there and that you don't leave them in a worse situation (socially, emotionally, or economically) than when you arrived.

- **What are the objectives of your project? What are the overall objectives of your partners?** What are the shared objectives? What objectives lie beyond the scope of your project? In other words, where will your partners' priorities fall when 'push comes to shove'? How do you think this will affect the project?

- **What are your objectives? How do you communicate your objectives?**

  - Like an elevator speech, it's good to be able to concisely describe your objectives.

- ○ Moreover, have you and your host or mentor clearly outlined your objectives for the projecttogether? Do you have the same understanding? If your objectives change, do you feel comfortable sharing this to your host or mentor?

- **If and when the nature of your project changes, do you feel you have the tools and a strong enough relationship to communicate concerns or ask questions to help you adapt?**