

Project report-out & lessons learned document guidelines

Team name & members

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Project sponsor

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Business need/opportunity

Charities and Non-Profit Organizations are struggling to find a variety of information about several different categories of Charity/Non-Profit operations that meet and follow Saskatchewan regulations. Because of this, we have been tasked to create a resource hub by the *South Saskatchewan Community Foundation* that compiles all necessary information into one space where these organizations can easily access the content they need without having to waste valuable time hunting for it.

This resource hub will feature various kinds of resources that all focus on the successful running of Charities and Non-Profit organizations that are solely based in Saskatchewan. Each resource will have specifics for Saskatchewan, especially pertaining to laws and regulations! This resource hub can be expected to help enrich Charities and Non-Profit organizations by providing them with the necessary tools to ensure their success with not only their inner organizational function, but with the causes and endeavors they are aiming for!

Reflections on project planning, execution, & closing

In our project, we regarded Charities and Non-Profit Organizations as our North Star customers. They were our main focus when creating the website because the initial problem was presented as Charities and Non-Profit Organizations having no concrete place to gather information about different aspects of running these types of organizations, as well as the fact that few websites dedicated to these groups seldom exist — which is especially true considering the scope of our project is Saskatchewan based. Furthermore, when envisioning our carry-over customers, we had to think about those who were not a part of these kinds of organizations, but would still have a use for a site that caters towards building and growing Charities and Non-Profit organizations. This resulted in our group envisioning both member and non-member parties of the SSCF organization — especially since the resource hub is SSCF powered — the SSCF team, people interested in starting charity/non-profit organizations, groups that supply resources, campaign-affected communities, and groups hosting Charity and Non-Profit Organizational events as our carry-over customers. All of these contain some connection towards Charities and Non-Profit Organizations, whether they are communities trying to view the legality and regulations of running certain campaigns, resource suppliers that want to know what kind of resources are worth their time producing, and people who are yet to start their Charity or Non-Profit, but are collecting data and looking for avenues to successfully begin.

The initial process of our project started with the assumptions and constraints that our group was going to face when creating our website. In terms of assumptions, there was a lot

that could be made for our project when we were just starting. The first main assumption was the fact that this resource hub was specifically going to be built on WordPress, and through this assumption, we could derive one of the main constraints that our project would face — that being the fact that more than half of our group has never used WordPress before this project. This would inevitably be a constraint on our end as it meant that our team would need to take extra steps to practice and learn WordPress's capabilities to ensure the production of a quality product. That is also to say WordPress itself becomes a constraint through this experimentation as we discover the limits of WordPress's potential and functions, making us have to learn to work with and innovate from these limitations.

Another assumption our group made was the fact that we would be incorporating the design aesthetics of the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation into our own website through the stylesheet that they provided. Although not inherently bad, this placed a restrictive constraint on our design as we needed to thoroughly delve deep into the SSCF website to understand the aesthetic choices and blocks that were normally used by the SSCF to simulate their style; however, we also needed to make our website stand independently from the SSCF, so there was a balance between matching with the SSCF and separation from the SSCF that had to be captured within our design.

We also made assumptions based on ideas the customer provided through her description of the project, along with the wants and needs she alluded to. In terms of functionality, we assumed having a website that prioritized simplicity and easy accessibility, which narrowed into more specific assumptions like; our website avoiding the use of login requirements — which the customer had verbally stated. Based on the customer's requests for website content, we also made assumptions that our website would contain a Webinars page, a plethora of different opportunities for Charity and Non-Profit Organizations, website transparency, and resource relevancy to Saskatchewan. These were all assumptions we could make safely about the website based on the customer's wants and needs that were expressed by her as she described the project.

One of our final assumptions that we had made pertained to the fact that we are students, meaning that the quality of the WordPress website would likely not meet the same standard as though a professional were doing this kind of project. This fact ultimately transitions into most of the inevitable constraints that we, as a team, would run into simply based on the inexperience factor. Aside from the lack of WordPress knowledge that was talked about earlier, we also lack knowledge in coding, and overall experience when it comes to creating a commissioned project. Due to all these different facets that we lacked, our team had to strive towards overcoming these constraints that held us back by actively learning and teaching ourselves how to utilize a lot of the new tools, alongside how to conduct ourselves in a semi-professional environment.

The last constraint that we ran into had to do with technology, in that one team member did not have a working laptop, but instead a PC. PC's are not easily transferable, therefore meaning our team could not regularly meet in person because that one person would be without technology when working on the website. We overcame this instead by relying on regular Discord calls that we would schedule to work on our website as a team rather than individually on our own designated sections.

When our group went through the process of developing an affinity diagram and an empathy map together, we ended up discovering a lot of different key components that needed to be considered when constructing our design. One of the first key findings we made note of was the idea of keeping our website simple and accessible. It had been stated by the customer that this design is supposed to help Charities and Non-Profit Organizations locate certain resources to help grow and improve their organization, and it should be easy to navigate. Taking this within our empathy map, we put ease of use at the top of our priority list. Our goal is to make finding resources easier for Charities and Non-Profit Organizations eliminating the time spent on researching — not increasing the time by filling the website with flashy visuals and artistic blocks that may distract, confuse, or fully disorient our users. We also set our sights on making the website a place that catered towards Charities and Non-Profit organizations. As informed by the project proposal, we had gathered information for our empathy map that showed deep frustration on behalf of Charities and Non-Profit Organizations who have stated their disappointment surrounding the fact that Saskatchewan-based charitable organizations do not have an easy way to find the resources they need to be successful. This ultimately formed the resource hub that we created which is a central hub that compiles various resources into one website that addresses Charities and Non-Profit Organizations as the main audience. Having a focus on simplicity ultimately influenced how we framed the rest of our affinity map, which was composed of more concise navigational headers, alongside a massive emphasis on keeping everything easily accessible.

During our first rendition of the user story map, we had very limited knowledge on how USMs looked and functioned, which ended up being a huge challenge. However, we ended up improving our design to reflect how a USM should be thought of: a user's journey from their point of view. In the beginning, the minimum viable products were described as an overarching action that ultimately led to a multitude of other actions. Although it seems relatively similar to our current story map today, our first rendition lacked the focus on a user's POV. Our current design of a USM, on the other hand, focuses on a customer's simulated needs for information and their journey through our site. The MVPs we built in the past were about the requirements that our customer provided us (e.g. no logins required, essential information provided at first glance, etc.). However, our current USM builds on this and lists features that the customer may see, such as; a navigation bar, buttons leading to resources, and resource details. Our website's fundamental purpose is to provide and compile resources for charities and people interested in charities, with our MVP reflecting these attributes that are the basic components needed to create a charity resource hub, resulting in the completion of our goal.

Creating a mobile and desktop Figma high fidelity prototype took large, designated chunks of time to plan out and populate the prototypes with resources. During this point in time, different areas of our website, like the home page, were not populated with resources and visuals the way that our final website is now. We also slowly made the Webinars page and its subpages lose its cohesion from the site's overall theme as we went through the prototypes — which was something we definitely had to close in on and fix. Throughout our prototypes, we also found that the website was very text heavy and, in hindsight, it might be because the information and research gathered to populate most of the site was done during this time without much regard on how we would properly store it inside containers. Overall, the site was fine — although there were small flaws in the design. The icons in the navigation menu were

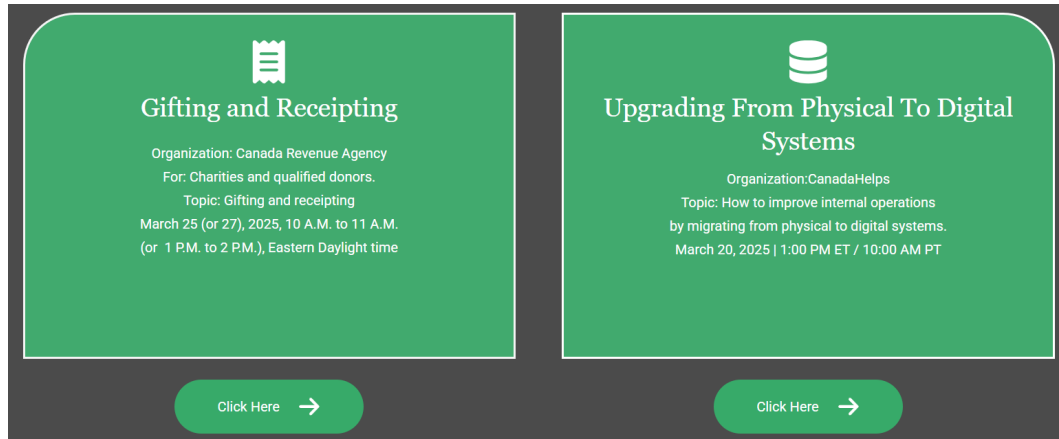
used as metaphors for what each page could mean, but some icons ended up being regarded as not meaningful enough for the website during customer feedback. Below is our navigation menu after improvements to our icons as signifiers to aid their understanding of what that page would contain.



The site's navigation also needed a more extensive menu for accessing sub-pages as navigating between subpages resulted in taking too many actions. To improve that, submenus were made for subpages, all of which followed specific components found in the lectures. Gestalt theory of proximity was used for readability during the creation of the pages. In the grant opportunities page, it is demonstrated that similar components are grouped together for users to understand the relation between related content. Affordances also appear throughout the website through the buttons of arrows pointing diagonally upward — which afford being pressed — and the bottom button affording to be pressed in order to bring the user to another website. These are some of the many design decisions created during the development of our hi-fi prototype.



Our final WordPress solution had some problems, such as the website elements taking up too much space, or other aspects of categorization not being thoroughly thought through, but overall the design had been designed well. The original intention and goal of the website had been met as a resource hub that provides charities and non-profit organizations with the necessary resources they need. We have designed a business directory, made submenus (although these could be improved upon), and redesigned the Webinars pages to have a similar theme that correlates with the rest of the pages. The Gestalt principle of closure and symmetry can be seen on the management Webinars subpage as well. As seen below, an overall shape can be perceived despite it not being fully connected at all ends, as well as similarity since the buttons are similarly designed. This design is also symmetrical, contributing to their similarity.



The buttons below also display affordances since, as mentioned previously, they afford being pressed in order to work, and the signifier (arrow) shows that it leads somewhere else (another page). This is a compact showcase of design techniques and other techniques are also displayed throughout our website. In conclusion, the website now provides various resources in different formats, serving as a proper resource hub. There are still small design problems to consider, but overall we believe the final product satisfies the needs of the customer.

Reflections on Project Results

In the first phase of design, there was trouble getting most of the materials together for the first phase of the project (affinity diagramming, empathy maps, lo-fi designs, site maps), which was frustrating since there were many things to do within less than a week as a deadline. Designing itself was the pinnacle of our challenges for most of the way throughout the website process; however, time passed as we got used to designing within each of the various available formats (pen & paper, Figma, Storyboard and finally WordPress). WordPress has many features, but it functions similar to that of a toolbox that is the size of a convenience store — sometimes the feature exists somewhere hidden, but you are never entirely too sure where to look. A small change could be nearly impossible to perform due to WordPress's design. Other times, WordPress would look very different between the editor and user views. The fact that WordPress has many features, plugins, and ways to design is appreciated though as it leaves the door open for different avenues that we could take design wise, if necessary. Designing our website based on our customer's feedback, following the format principles provided by our customer, and our preliminary research was something that usually ended up fairly well. After getting proficient with manipulating Figma and WordPress editors, designing a website went quite smoothly. Archiving files into Github also felt quick and easy as, after getting the hang of it, it mostly just consisted of dragging and dropping. Communicating also ended up being smooth as our group had the technology to meet online and response times were quick as well.

Our group did not end up having too many negative experiences with the creation of our website; at least, nothing catastrophic. Of course, the constraints that related to more than half of our group having never used WordPress was certainly a bigger challenge for us to overcome; however, we would not call that so much a negative experience as it was a major learning

experience. Although sometimes it was disheartening to hear the critiques given to our design choices — especially considering it was something that we created — we managed to learn and take the critiques thoughtfully, implementing the critiques into our design as intended. A more specific instance of a constraint hindering our design, causing frustrations among the group, was one that was only discovered very recently. Throughout our journey, there was one critique that continued to be stated in each of our project meetings. This critique in particular was about the fact that our website tended to steer toward an element of ‘bigness.’ A lot of our content and images took up more real estate than they needed to, making our website visually super overwhelming and unpleasant to look at. However, it was recently discovered that, upon investigation, the WordPress screen looks different from other desktop screens and did not resize properly between them. While two team members used regular laptops to build the website, one team member used a PC that had a relatively larger monitor that stretched the screen out horizontally. This ultimately resulted in the screen shrinking down to adjust to the monitor size, allowing the team members to see more vertically than on the regular laptop screens. Because of this, our website looked incredibly blown up on the projector and other screens, and we had not come to realize this until our final presentation. This in particular was probably the biggest frustration we had to face.



Example image: On the projector, all you could see was the banner image. On this particular PC, you could see the banner image and the caption as it was intended.

In terms of our successes, we believe we were very successful in translating our prototype into WordPress. Although We ended up having to scrap a lot of the pages, compartmentalizing some of the pages into one whole page, we still ended up producing something that we could be proud of. The ideas we discussed in the lectures aided heavily in our design process — especially the fast feedback cycle. This process provided us with a structured guide on how to go about implementing our previous designs, lo-fi to hi-fi, over towards our final rendition of the website. The constant feedback from the customer served as a

crucial element throughout our design iterations. One thing we will most certainly carry forward towards future projects is to always consider the feedback the customer has to offer. In future projects, we would also aim to be more inclusive in our designs. We would implement more user-friendly features, including different colour schemes — which allow those who are colour-blind to change the webpage colour — and implement language translation features for those in Saskatchewan who may not have strong English skills — especially given Canada is a multicultural country with several different people from all walks of life.

Appendix: WordPress themes and plugins

Astra is the plugin that our team used that allowed for Astra-themed blocks, like Spectra and SureForms. It also provided us with starter templates that helped us get started, and block creation, editing, and header and footer creation . The plugin itself has a 5-star rating with over 5k+ reviews. It was last updated on April 8, 2025. On our website currently, we have 2 active installations of Astra.