Final Project Report & Lessons Learned - Group H
April 11, 2025

1. Team Overview

Team Name & Members

- Team Name: Group H

- Members: Rida Hashmi, Suhayb Hoolash, Youssef Abdelaziz, Praise Ogunrinde

Project Sponsor

- Dr. Tim Maciag (ENSE 271 Professor)

2. Business Need / Opportunity

Many small or starting charities lack the technical and financial resources as well as general knowledge to streamline their administrative tasks. By providing a discoverable, visually simple, and efficiently navigatable web interface with essential Charity Hub resources, this project attempts to enable charities to operate more efficiently as an effort in knowledge management so they can allocate more time to their core missions. The platform is a centralized Charity Hub to help charities manage their operations, improve outreach, and maximize their impact.

3. Project Planning, Execution & Closing

3.1 North Star & Carryover Customer Selection

- North Star: small/starting charities

- Carryover Customer: bigger charities experimenting with gaining more website traffic, non-profit organizations, student organizations/clubs

3.2 Assumptions & Constraints

Assumptions

- The development will be done using the following tools: WordPress, Mural, Figma, GitHub, and StoriesOnBoard.

- Users will access the website primarily through modern browsers on both desktop and mobile devices.

- The client will provide final branding assets (such as logo, colors, etc.).

- No backend development will be required from our side; the backend is assumed to be managed externally.

- The website will primarily serve as a resource hub with mostly static content.

- Content will be maintained by the client after delivery — so it needs to be easy to update via WordPress.

- The primary audience will be small/startup charities, student organizations, and non-profits looking for support tools.

Constraints

- Technology stack is fixed: Limited to Figma, WordPress, Mural, GitHub, and StoriesOnBoard — which restricts advanced features and custom interactions.

- No backend implementation is allowed from our team, so integrations must work with existing or placeholder backend solutions.

- Must be fully accessible (meeting WCAG standards), as the target users may include individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities.

- Consistency with SSCF branding is required across all visual and design elements.

- The design should be scalable and modular, in case the SSCF or client wants to expand in the future.

- No direct feedback from end-users (charities) — design decisions are based on assumptions and the client's interpretation of user needs.

- Limited client meetings: Feedback windows are restricted, so decisions had to be made efficiently and sometimes independently.

- Time constraint: Project had to be completed within the academic semester, limiting the scope of iteration and testing.

- Content-first approach was necessary — all features and pages had to align with the client's content priorities rather than starting with functionality.

3.3 Key Findings from Empathy Mapping & Affinity Diagramming

The affinity diagram helped us start with a developing concept of what we should work on in accordance with the MVP, while the empathy map helped us realize where we were falling short with Brooklyn's expectations. Although affinity diagramming was very useful to begin with as it helped us brainstorm and generate quantities of ideas, potential cons of this method can include generating too many ideas or categories which are potentially broader than we expected when it came to practical implementation. Additionally, another pain point with affinity diagramming was that we initially misunderstood the overall goal of the website and thought it was supposed to be numerically feedback driven, so we initially proposed graphs, charts, and dashboards. We realized after Activity 2 that these things were irrelevant and that we had misunderstood the scope of the project. In this case, empathy mapping was more useful than affinity diagramming because using empathy and asking more questions relating to concerns would have helped us more in getting on the right track with project goals and expectations.

3.4 MVP / User Story Map Evolution

- What Was the MVP (Minimum Viable Product)?

Our MVP focused on the core functionality that users needed to discover and access resources efficiently:

- Search functionality to help users quickly find resources.
- Resource detail pages with downloadable and accessible documents.
- Webinar listings and access to archives.
- About Us page to provide platform context and credibility.
- Simple, intuitive layout matching SSCF branding.

These elements were prioritized because they directly addressed user goals and met the minimum requirements to make the site useful as a resource hub.

## 3.5 Prototyping & Usability Evaluation

Overview of prototype stages

Low Fidelity (LoFi) Prototype: The first prototype was for showing the client what we thought the problem was and how we planned to solve it with our website. With the feedback that we got from the first meeting, we got some insight about whether we were on the right path as well as the customer's likes and dislikes about our design ideas.

From the low fidelity prototype, the customer's feedback suggested that we misunderstood the problem, and we realized that the client did not want logging in and registration options, and the donation page and donations section were not wanted because that was out of the project's scope. This fast feedback helped us make quick changes so our mental mapping aligned with the user's expectations.

- Link to Constraints: This stage highlighted important constraints, such as avoiding features like user accounts and donations, which were out of scope. Recognizing these constraints early prevented unnecessary development.
- Link to Affordances: The presence of a login and registration form gave users the false affordance that they could create accounts, which conflicted with the actual purpose of the site.

High Fidelity (Hi-Fi) prototype: This is the last step and last chance to get feedback form the client before starting the development of the website.
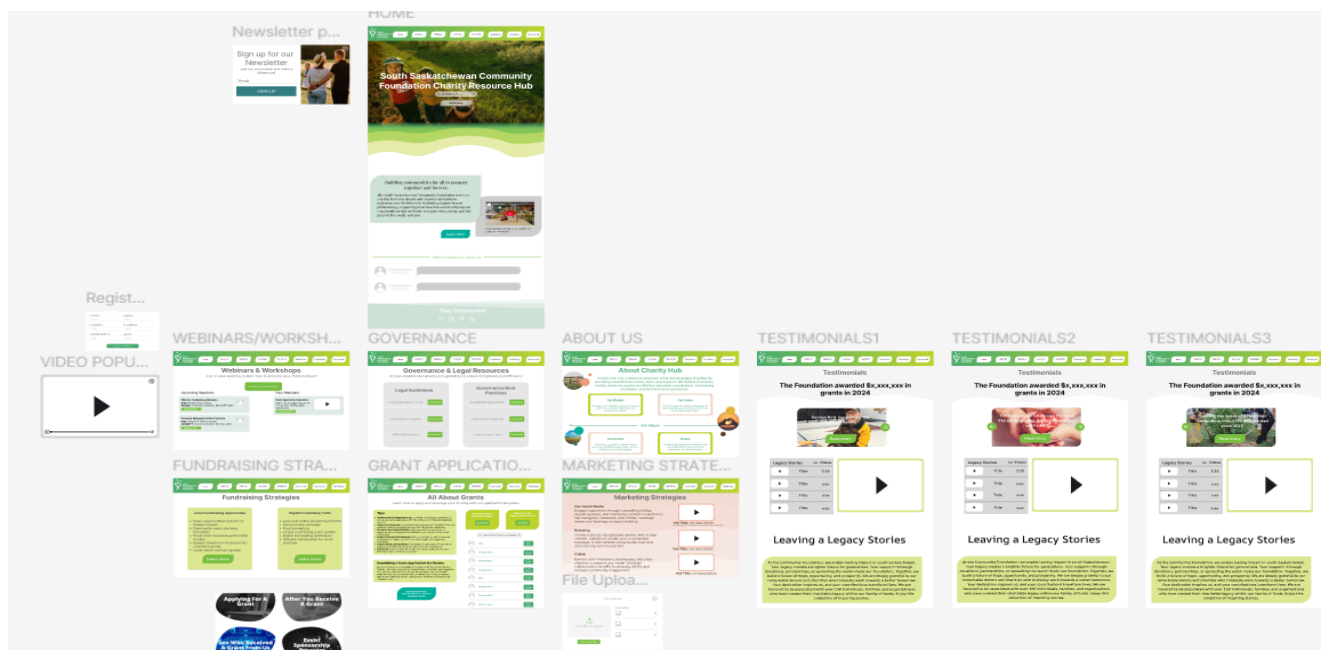
Feedback:

-Home Page: Needs consistent menu, No sign up, Contrast for accessibility(dark text on light background), Make a button linking with the main SSCF website.

-Governance and Legal Resources: Overall was fine, just needed more content.

-About Us: Good but Brooklyn wanted a mission statement on this page.

-Volunteer Management: No dashboard, No usable tools. Only an informative page.

Grant Application: Mini scroll is not mobile friendly.

Project Management: Irrelevant page.

Document and record-keeping: Irrelevant page.

With the Hi-Fi prototype feedback, we were able to make changes and start developing a website more towards what the client wanted and expected in terms of design and visual expectations.

● Feedback from customer/peers

The main outcome of the feedback that we received was:

  ○ To make the website more informative and less interactive. It is a resource hub.
  ○ To keep the same theme/brand as the official SSCF website and keep all the pages consistent.

● Changes made based on feedback
  ○ No more mini scroll on the "Granting" page to make it mobile friendly.
  ○ Removed "sign up" and "join newsletter" from the "Home" page and a button linking to the main SSCF website was added.
  ○ Made the site more informative rather than interactive, in line with client expectations (removed pages like "Project Management" and "Document and Record Keeping", removed dashboards, Removed "sign up" and "join newsletter" from the "Home" page)
  ○ Ensured visual consistency across pages, reflecting the branding of the main SSCF website.
  ○ Removed irrelevant and non-functional features, such as dashboards and mini scrolls.
  ○ Aligned pages with user expectations and actual affordances (e.g., informative content, not interactive tools).
  ○ Improved accessibility through better contrast and a cleaner layout using Gestalt principles like figure-ground and proximity.

4. Final WordPress Solution

4.1 Screenshots & Highlights

Not what you are looking for? Here is an overview of what the main SSCF website offers

Building communities for all to prosper together and forever

The South Saskatchewan Community Foundation serves as a bridge between donors and charities in Southern Saskatchewan. We believe in facilitating Saskatchewan philanthropy, supporting local charities and developing our community so that our home is a more vital, strong, and fair place to live, work, and play.

Go To SSCF Website

4.2 Link Back to Feedback & Design Principles

Throughout the design and prototyping phases, client and user feedback directly influenced our decisions. Key improvements and their alignment with core design principles are outlined below:

- Popup Plugin Issue
  We encountered a technical issue with the popup plugin and resolved it by writing custom code.

  - Constraint: The plugin's limitations became a technical constraint, requiring a custom solution to preserve functionality without disrupting the user experience.

- Brand Consistency and Familiarity
  Users consistently emphasized the importance of recognizing the SSCF branding and navigating a familiar layout.

  - Gestalt Principle - Similarity: Maintaining consistent visual elements across pages reinforces similarity, helping users intuitively understand navigation and hierarchy.

  - Design Principle - Consistency: By mirroring the SSCF website's design language, we built trust and familiarity.

- Simplified User Flow
  Pages like "Project Management" and "Document and Record Keeping" were removed based on client feedback that they were out of scope and unnecessary.

- ○ Constraint: Scope acted as a functional constraint, guiding us to focus only on relevant content.

  - ○ Design Principle - Simplicity & Cognitive Load: Removing irrelevant pages reduced cognitive load, allowing users to access meaningful content more efficiently.

- Granting Page Mobile Usability
  We removed the mini-scroll feature to improve mobile responsiveness.

  - ○ Constraint: Mobile screen sizes created a responsive design constraint that influenced layout decisions.

  - ○ Design Principle - Accessibility & Usability: Ensured content was accessible and easy to navigate on all devices.

- Home Page Call to Action
  The original "Sign Up" and "Newsletter" options were replaced with a clear button redirecting users to the SSCF site.

  - ○ Affordance: The button provided a clear, intuitive affordance — signaling to users that they could easily access more information.

  - ○ Constraint: The newsletter and user account features were out of scope, creating a functional constraint that directed the redesign.

5. Reflections on Project Results

5.1 Overall Feelings

- Learning experience: We gained hands-on experience using Figma and WordPress, which helped improve our design and development skills.
- Contributing to the community: It felt rewarding to work on a project that supports local charities and nonprofit organizations.
- Team collaboration: Working together made the process enjoyable, productive, and closely aligned with real-world experiences.

5.2 What Went Well

- <u>Effective teamwork and task distribution</u>: We divided responsibilities based on our strengths.
- <u>Adaptability</u>: Our group was able to adjust timelines and tasks as needed..
- <u>Consistent branding</u>: We ensured the website matched the SSCF's official style and branding.
- <u>Collaboration and communication</u>: We maintained regular communication, which helped us stay aligned and avoid overlaps or confusion.

5.3 What Didn't Go Well

- <u>Lack of documentation</u>: We didn't always keep track of changes or decisions, as well as detailed customer's feedback
- <u>Time management challenges</u>: We occasionally left tasks until the last minute, which added pressure and reduced time for revisions.
- <u>Practice presentations more</u>: If there was a final pitch or walkthrough, rehearsing more could've helped the delivery feel smoother and more confident.

5.4 Success Translating Prototypes to WordPress

- What Worked Well:
  - WordPress plugins let us add interactive features that we couldn't create in Figma such as the slider plug in.
  - We were able to maintain the overall layout, branding, and structure from the Figma design, which helped ensure consistency between the prototype and final website.
- What Was Challenging:
  - Not everything in Figma translated seamlessly into WordPress; Such as the "leafs"design in the headers because of technological constraints.
  - There was a learning curve with WordPress plugins and themes.
  - Everyone had different ideas and approaches which demanded teamwork and collaboration on every page.

5.5 People-Centered Design Reflection

- Affordances: Buttons and links were clearly interactive, making the site easy to use and navigate.
- Constraints like lock-ins (e.g., fixed templates) helped keep users within the intended flow but limited creative flexibility. We used lock-outs (e.g., disabling incomplete forms) to prevent user errors.

- Gestalt principles: We used alignment, spacing, consistency and grouping to create a clear, organized layout.

5.6 What Would You Repeat vs. Change

Repeat:
- The logo we created.
- Consistent theme and branding with the official SSCF website (e.g., leaf box design, color palette).
- The structure and content of the pages we created.
- The search function and to help users find specific resources quickly.
- "Not what you're looking for" button that takes customers back to the SSCF official website.
- Accessible PDF downloads/ "read more" links taking the users back to the official SSCF website.

Change:
- Improve design consistency across all pages (font sizes, spacing, layout alignment).
- Simplify the layout to make navigation more user-friendly.
- Add more relevant content and resources to enhance the hub's usefulness.
- Make buttons and links more visible and intuitive for users.
- Add an accessibility toolbar like the one on the official SSCF website(Switch between languages, Increase or decrease text size for better readability).

5.7 Future Opportunities / Design Ideas

- Make buttons and links more intuitive with clear visuals and hover states.
- Add an accessibility toolbar
- More feedback from the customer
- Keep the search bar to help users find content faster.
- Keep the "Not what you're looking for?" button and "Read More"/PDF links that guide users back to SSCF's official site.

6. Themes And Plugins

Theme/plugin name	Elementor	Astra	Smart Slider Maker 3	Pop up Maker
The user rating	4.5(7,034 ratings)	4.9(6132 ratings)	5(1,102 ratings)	5 (4,476 ratings)
Last Updated	2 weeks ago	3 days ago	1 month ago	2 months ago
Active Installations	10+ Millions	1+ million	900,000	700,000+
What is it used for	Edit website without the use of codes	Astra is a fast, customizable, and SEO-friendly theme for any website.	creating and managing sliders, carousels, and other dynamic content presentations on websites.	creates targeted popups to boost engagement, conversions, and email list growth.