ENSE 271

Project Report

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1.0 - Business Need/Opportunity

The South Saskatchewan Community Foundation (SSCF) identified the need for a centralized digital platform to help community members easily access information, resources, and services offered by nonprofits and charitable organizations in the region. Currently, information is scattered across multiple sources, making it difficult for users to find relevant support. This Resource Hub aims to address that gap by providing an intuitive, accessible, and user-focused interface that streamlines the search for community programs and initiatives, ultimately strengthening connections and support systems within South Saskatchewan.

2.0 - Reflections on project planning, execution, & closing

2.1 - Primary and Secondary Users

Charities and grant seekers are the core users of this platform. They rely on funding, operational support, and visibility to sustain their initiatives. This platform is designed to address their challenges by providing resources that aid in granting applications, marketing and many more.

Donors and grant providers play a crucial supporting role in the nonprofit ecosystem. While they may not use the platform as frequently as primary users, their experience must be seamless and efficient. This is mainly because their role is focused more on donations.

2.2 - Assumptions Made and Constraints Uncovered

At the beginning of our project, we made several assumptions. We knew that we would be using WordPress to build the site, Figma to design the layout, and StoriesOnBoard to map out the user experience. None of us had prior experience with these tools, but we were eager to learn and committed to completing the project successfully.

Using unfamiliar tools meant there was a significant learning curve, particularly in the early weeks. Coordinating our efforts was also challenging, as we had to navigate busy schedules and varying availability, which sometimes made collaboration difficult. As students, we didn't have all the technical answers or expertise, so certain parts of the project took longer than anticipated.

Despite these challenges, we supported one another, discovered each other's strengths, and stayed focused on building something simple, useful, and user-friendly. The constraints we faced made the process more demanding—but ultimately more rewarding.

2.3 – Key Findings from Affinity Diagramming and Empathy Mapping

At the beginning of the project, one of our main priorities was to gain a strong

understanding of our potential users and their needs. Our aim was not merely to create an aesthetically pleasing interface, but to design a platform that is functional, user-centered, and truly supportive. To achieve this, we applied empathy mapping and affinity diagramming, which allowed us to explore and organize user insights effectively.

Through the affinity diagramming process, we identified five key categories that consistently emerged from our user research: *Identifying Services*, *Identifying Location*, *Seeking Assistance*, *Application*, and *Video Recordings*. These categories helped us define the core features and structure of the resource hub.
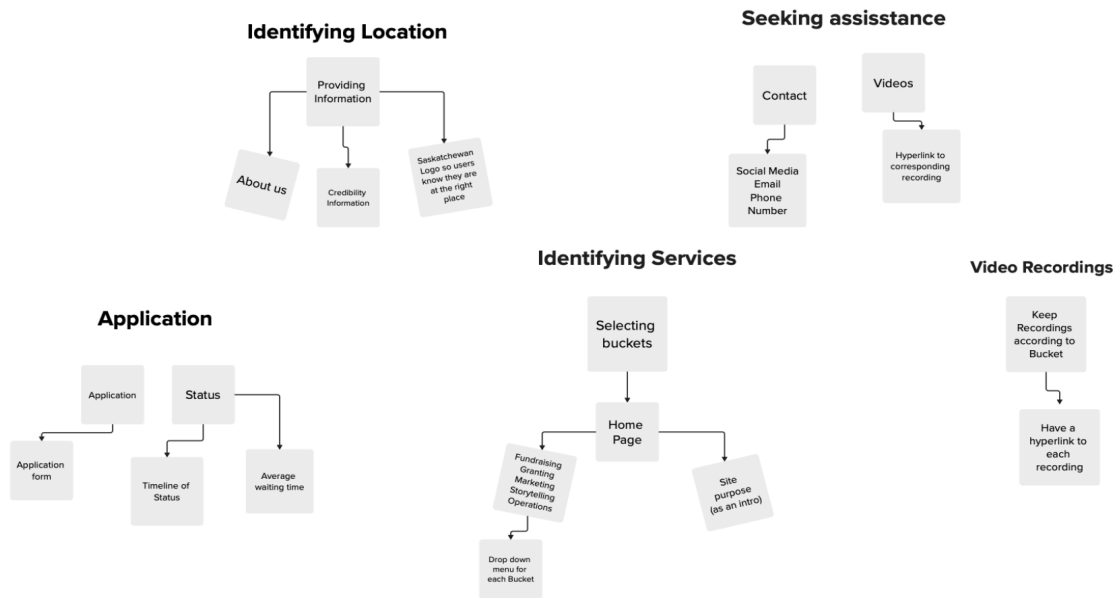
The categories *Identifying Services* and *Identifying Location* emphasized the need for users to quickly understand the purpose of the platform and the geographical relevance of available services. This insight led us to incorporate an "About" section prominently on the homepage to clearly communicate SSCF's identity and mission.

The *Seeking Assistance* category highlighted that users were looking for accessible support options, such as contact information, social media links, and video tutorials. Importantly, users expressed a preference for receiving assistance without being required to sign up or create accounts, guiding us to ensure support features remained open and easy to access.

The *Application* category underscored the need for simplicity and clarity in design. In response, we avoided clustering information and instead created distinct buttons for different topics, allowing users to navigate content with ease and confidence.

Finally, the *Video Recordings* category suggested that video content would be beneficial in enhancing engagement and understanding. As a result, we included relevant videos throughout the site to provide visual guidance and additional context for users.

Overall, the insights gained from empathy mapping and affinity diagramming were instrumental in shaping a resource hub that is intuitive, inclusive, and aligned with the expectations and needs of its intended users.

Identifying Location

Providing Information
- About us
- Credibility Information
- Saskatchewan Logo so users know they are at the right place

Seeking assisstance

Contact
- Social Media
- Email
- Phone Number

Videos
- Hyperlink to corresponding recording

Application

Application
- Application form

Status
- Timeline of Status
- Average waiting time

Identifying Services

Selecting buckets

Home Page
- Fundraising Granting Marketing Storytelling Operations
  - Drop down menu for each Bucket
- Site purpose (as an intro)

Video Recordings

Keep Recordings according to Bucket

Have a hyperlink to each recording

Empathy mapping revealed that users prioritize simplicity and clarity when using the site. They want an easy, non-overwhelming experience and clear guidance throughout. Users also prefer to access key information—like success stories, updates, and upcoming events—in one place, without needing to search through multiple pages.

Additionally, users may feel overwhelmed by text-heavy content, so we incorporated video resources to provide an engaging, alternative way to access information. These insights helped shape a straightforward, user-friendly design for the resource hub.

Think and Feel?
- Value their donations
- Learn new things and seek guidance
- Technically easy to navigate

Hear?
- Collaborations among different charity
- Volunteering work to do

Empathy Map

See?
- Future webinars and events
- All important information at one place
- Updated Information
- Past success donations and charity events

Say & Do?
- Easier login access
- Click the hyperlinks if more information is needed
- Attend webinars and participate in discussion forum

Pain
- Could be difficult for non-English speakers
- Technically challenging

Gain
- Access to past webinars
- New collaboration and networks
- A hub for all Saskatchewan charities

2.3 - Initial & Evolution of the USM/MVP

 At the start of the project, we focused on addressing the core needs of the site. Our initial version included essential features such as:

- A basic "About Us" section
- Navigation buttons to move between pages
- A grant application form and a timeline to track application status
- Social media links and video resources for support
- Organized content into broad categories (or "buckets") for easy navigation

This served as our Minimum Viable Product (MVP), providing just enough functionality to test the layout and user flow. Over time, we refined these features based on user feedback and insights, progressively enhancing the platform's usability and effectiveness.
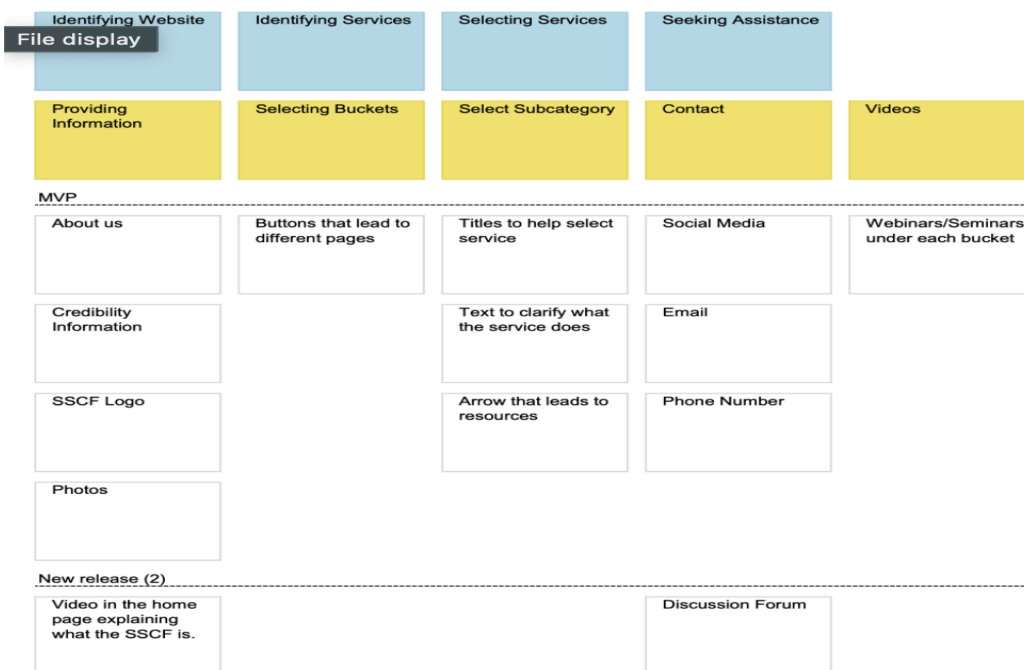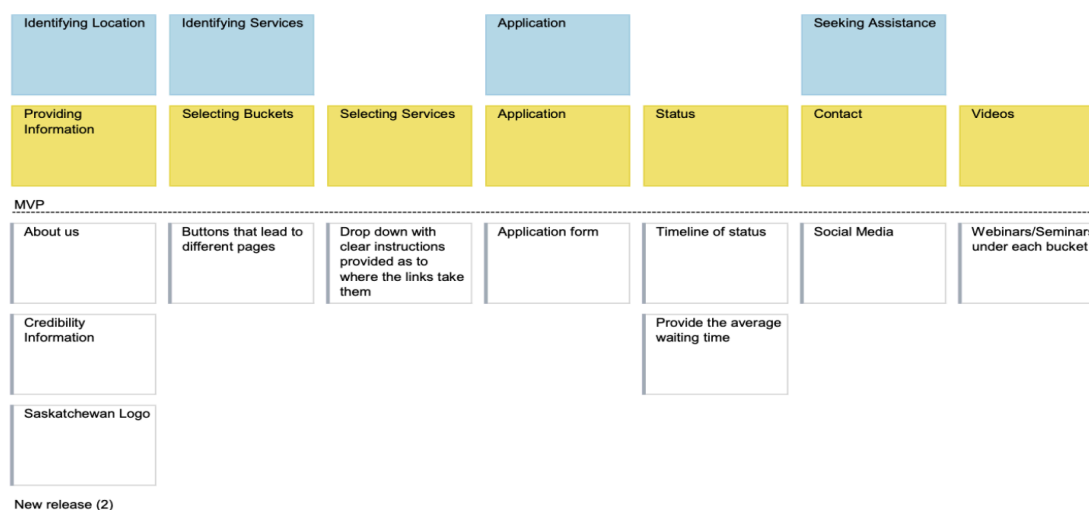

2.3.1 - What Changed and Why
 As we continued working on the project and gathering feedback, the USM evolved. We identified several opportunities to improve the site's functionality and user experience.

In the updated version, we made the following changes:

- Added titles and subcategories to each section to help users find information more quickly.
- Expanded contact options to include email and phone, in addition to social media.
- Incorporated signifiers like arrows to indicate the purpose of each button or link.
- Featured a video on the homepage explaining SSCF's mission and purpose.

These enhancements transformed the site from being merely functional to a more user-friendly and intuitive platform, making it easier for users to navigate and engage with the content. Also, It is considered as a minimum viable product because it focuses on the core needs of the user. An MVP typically prioritizes addressing the most critical needs and pain points of the target users. Your emphasis on a strong user-focused structure suggests you concentrated on delivering essential value first.

Identifying Location	Identifying Services		Application		Seeking Assistance	
Providing Information	Selecting Buckets	Selecting Services	Application	Status	Contact	Videos

MVP

About us	Buttons that lead to different pages	Drop down with clear instructions provided as to where the links take them	Application form	Timeline of status	Social Media	Webinars/Seminars under each bucket
Credibility Information				Provide the average waiting time		
Saskatchewan Logo						

New release (2)

2.4 - Summarize prototyping activities and usability evaluation findings

Throughout the design and prototyping process of our WordPress solution, we met up with Brooklyn a few times to discuss the progress we have made each week and gather insights from her. Over these check-ins and user testing, we refined our website solution to meet her expectations and ensure that it fully aligned with her feedback. To showcase these check-ins, here are some of the ideas that we shared with her and her responses to those ideas:

2.4.1 - Account Creation

One of our initial ideas was to implement an account creation feature, allowing only registered users to access the website. However, Brooklyn strongly emphasized the importance of making the website accessible to everyone. Requiring users to create an account would have created an unnecessary barrier and negatively impacted the overall user experience. After discussing this perspective, our group decided to drop the account creation idea entirely and focus instead on ensuring the website was fully accessible to all visitors without any registration requirements.

2.4.2 - Marketing Page

Initially, we weren't quite sure what to include on the Marketing page, so we settled on simply linking to SSCF's social media platforms. However, after reviewing the page, she pointed out that it missed the mark. Instead of featuring social media links, she suggested that the page should offer resources to help small organizations with their marketing efforts. Taking her

feedback into account, we scrapped our original idea and redesigned the page to provide various marketing tips tailored for organizations. These included guidance on improving SEO, establishing branding rules, and forming collaborations with other organizations.

2.4.3 - Visual Design Adjustments

During the showcase of our Figma prototypes, we initially used an overwhelming amount of green across every page, thinking it aligned well with the SSCF website. We also placed a large image and an oversized logo on the homepage.

During our check-in, Brooklyn provided helpful feedback on both design choices. She mentioned that the heavy use of green was visually overwhelming and suggested using a softer color, like peach, to create better visual balance. Regarding the homepage, she felt the large image and logo took up too much space and didn't add much value. Instead, she recommended incorporating a section like "Upcoming Events" or "Tip of the Day" to enhance user engagement and provide more utility.

Throughout our design process, we also applied People-Centered Design concepts introduced in our lectures. We incorporated principles such as affordance and signifiers, constraints, and Gestalt's principles to create a more intuitive and user-friendly experience.

2.4.4 - Affordance/Signifiers

In our design we have set up numerous affordances and signifiers to make our platform user-friendly. For example, we have used the symbol arrows to indicate to the users that if they click on them, it will lead to a page that contains more information.

2.4.5 - Constraints

A significant constraint we encountered in this project was that our group's primary responsibility was limited to delivering resources. This meant we were only tasked with providing materials and tools, while all other decisions—such as organizing or structuring the fundraising efforts—were left to the SSCF. Given this limitation, our main focus was to design a dashboard that was as user-friendly as possible, ensuring the interface was meaningful, intuitive, and accessible.

2.4.6 - Gestalt's Principles

After learning about Gestalt's principles in our lectures, we chose to incorporate them into our design. For instance, we ensured that our subcategories were uniformly sized and

consistently aligned, helping users intuitively recognize that these elements are related. This visual consistency enhances the user's ability to navigate and interact with the dashboard more easily.
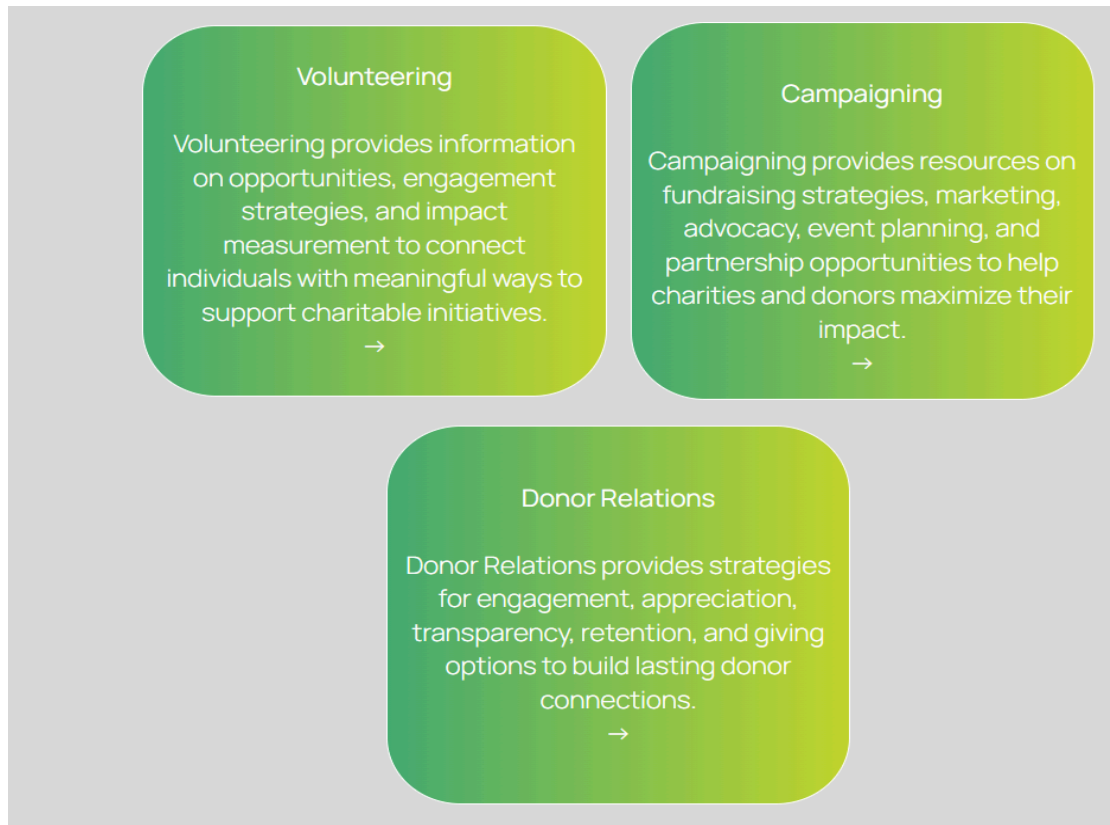
2.5 - Final Wordpress Solution

Our final WordPress solution is a streamlined and user-friendly Resource Hub designed for the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation (SSCF). Built with accessibility and simplicity in mind, the site empowers users—particularly charities and grant seekers—to easily find resources and support relevant to their needs.

The homepage features a clean and inviting layout with a clear introduction to SSCF's mission, followed by visual tiles representing the main resource categories. We replaced the initial oversized image and logo with more functional elements, such as an event calendar, based on feedback from our stakeholder, Brooklyn. This adjustment not only improved the visual balance but also added value to the user experience.
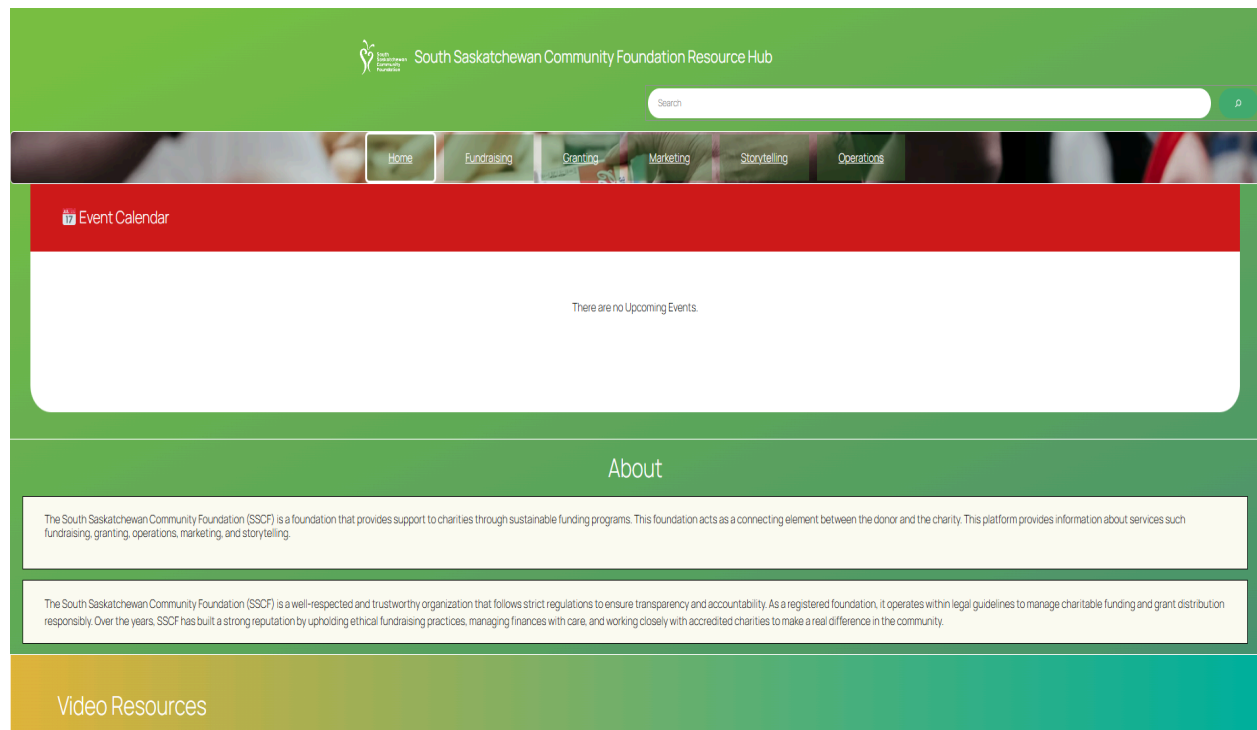
Buttons and arrows throughout the site clearly indicate their purpose and interactivity. These subtle design cues support user intuition, helping users move effortlessly through the site.

Volunteering

Volunteering provides information on opportunities, engagement strategies, and impact measurement to connect individuals with meaningful ways to support charitable initiatives.
→

Campaigning

Campaigning provides resources on fundraising strategies, marketing, advocacy, event planning, and partnership opportunities to help charities and donors maximize their impact.
→

Donor Relations

Donor Relations provides strategies for engagement, appreciation, transparency, retention, and giving options to build lasting donor connections.
→

Categories such as Grant Applications, Community Support, and Marketing each have tailored content. Buttons lead users to more detailed pages, and content is grouped meaningfully using the affinity diagramming insights we gathered early on.
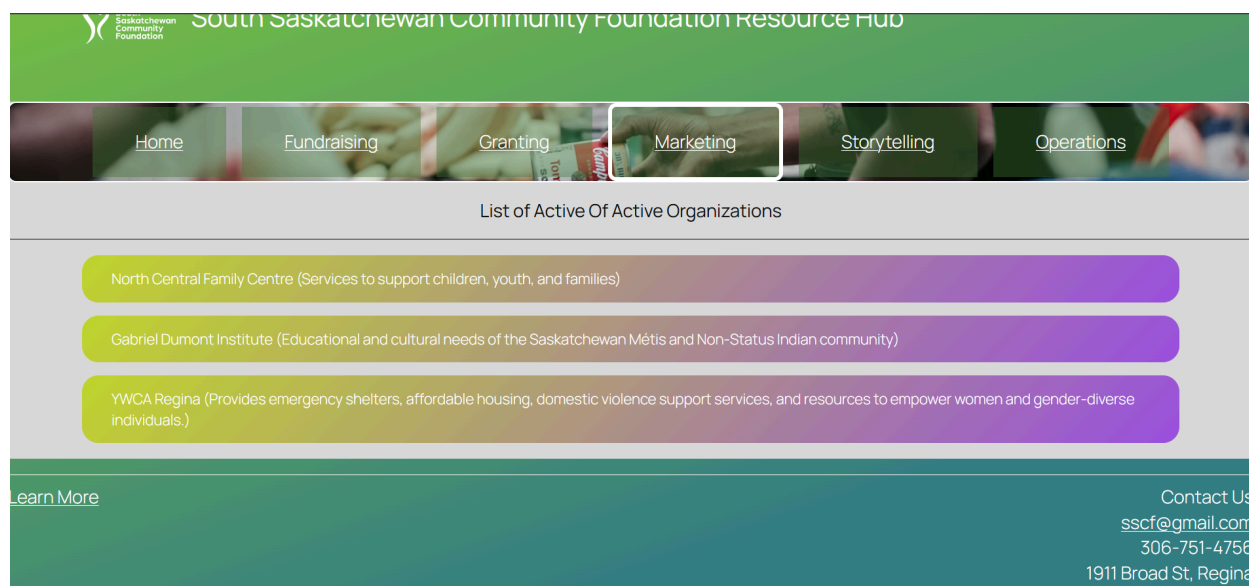
3.0 - Reflections on project results

3.1 - How We Felt About This Project (Likes/Dislikes)

Overall, we really enjoyed this project. What we appreciated most was the opportunity to collaborate as a team and have the freedom to design and contribute our own ideas. Applying the knowledge and skills we gained from lab classes and lectures played a crucial role in the success of the project. Our only challenge was working with WordPress. It was initially frustrating, but we quickly adapted and were able to overcome the learning curve.

3.2 - What Went Well

Our team worked really smoothly together, we each had our own responsibilities, and we understood each other better than ever. We were able to figure out each other's strong ability for the project and divided the work accordingly.

Creating our Figma prototype into WordPress went really well. We were able to create and improve our design on WordPress without using many plugins. We also managed to keep clean, simple and consistent pages throughout our website.

3.3 - What Didn't Go So Well

While we made significant progress as a team, there were a few challenges that hindered the project's smooth progression. One of our group members dropped the course midway through the project, which led to a heavier workload for the remaining team members. This

affected our ability to stay on schedule and required us to redistribute tasks, putting additional pressure on the group.

Additionally, working with WordPress presented some difficulties at the start. We initially struggled with its interface and customization options, which slowed down the development process. Although we eventually adapted, the learning curve was steep, and it caused delays early on.

Another challenge was coordinating our schedules. As we were all balancing this project with other commitments, finding consistent time for group meetings was sometimes difficult. This led to some miscommunication and inefficiencies in the early stages of the project.

**3.4 - Translating Prototypes into WordPress Reality**

We were largely successful in translating our Figma prototype into a functional WordPress site. While not every detail from the prototype was replicated exactly, all the essential elements required for the site were successfully implemented. The buttons, signifiers, and video links worked as intended. We also made some minor adjustments to the color scheme and aesthetic to enhance the user experience and ensure consistency across the site.

3.5 - How People-Centered Design Influenced Our Approach

The concepts we explored in our people-centered design lectures were instrumental in shaping our design process. We took Don Norman's philosophy to heart: "Design is not about making things look pretty, it is about making complicated things easier." This perspective guided our focus on simplicity and usability, ensuring the website was not only functional but also intuitive for users.

We also applied key ideas from our early lectures, such as prioritizing user needs, creating clear navigation, and reducing cognitive load. These principles helped us create a user-friendly experience that emphasized accessibility, clarity, and efficiency, ensuring the site met the real needs of its users while remaining straightforward and easy to navigate.

Also, The individual menu items within the main navigation bar are positioned in close proximity to one another. This grouping signals to the user that these elements are related and belong to the same functional category – the website's main navigation.
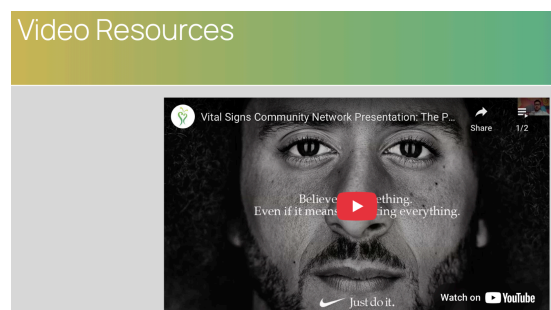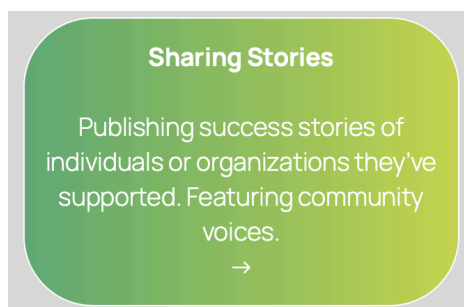
3.6 - What We Would Do the Same on Future Projects

Our team identified several successful strategies that contributed positively to the project and should be replicated in future endeavors:

- **Prioritize a Strong User-Focused Structure:** Commencing the project with thorough discussions and a dedicated focus on the user's needs and information architecture proved to be a foundational strength. This approach ensured the website was logically organized and intuitive to navigate.
- **Employ Consistent Visual Elements:** The deliberate use of consistent colors and shapes throughout the design fostered a sense of familiarity and brand cohesion, contributing to a more unified and professional user experience.

3.7 - What We Would Do Differently on Future Projects

We recognize the value of diving deeper into the capabilities of WordPress, particularly by exploring its wide range of features and plugins. Taking the time to actively investigate and experiment with various functionalities could open up new possibilities for our team, allowing us to create more efficient, flexible, and high-quality solutions in future projects.

Looking ahead, we aim to incorporate innovative elements to further enhance our projects. We plan to explore and implement more interactive design elements to increase user engagement and create a more dynamic and engaging experience.

4.0 - Appendix

For our final WordPress design, our group chose to keep it minimal and relied on the built-in templates to help structure the existing header, footer, and overall colour scheme. The starter template allowed us to customize the overall visual of our design without relying on external themes or plugins. In our design, we did not use any third-party plugins. At the start of our design process on WordPress, we initially used plugins to help enhance our design, but during the testing phase, we were finding that the plugins were causing our website to crash. Some of the plugins we were planning to use were: Google Analytics, AMP, TaxoPress, and many more. With that, we decided not to continue to use plugins and ditch them. As we currently have no plugins with our design, this means that there are no ratings, history updates, or metrics to report on. Our approach focused on the usability and performance of the website over having to depend on external plugins.