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Get Outside Alliance -

Team 2 Lessons Learned Report

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## Project Summary

Get Outside Alliance (GOA) is a small but impactful nonprofit that aims to inspire and empower individuals to engage with their local state parks and natural environments through volunteerism. Through their work, they strive to promote environmental education, foster stewardship, and enhance the recreational opportunities available in our state parks.

The Get Outside Alliance team is composed of three Houston-based volunteer founders with little expertise, time, or resources to develop tools that provide in-depth demographic data that lets the team identify and recruit volunteers. Without these types of tools, the Get Outside Alliance team will not be able to scale and continue to create meaningful opportunities to engage with the Texas State Park and Wildlife System efficiently and effectively.

As a response, team two partnered with the Get Outside Alliance team with the goal of creating a dashboard that shows demographic data for areas surrounding State Parks. Our main goal was to create an easy-to-use dashboard for the GOA team that gave them all the demographic information they need. The Get Outside Alliance team had two main requirements for the final deliverable: 1) the tool has to be easy to use and 2) the tool has to be free.

## Project Outcomes

Overall, the project was successful. Team 2 was able to create deliverables that can grow with Get Outside Alliance.

The original scope for the project was to create an easy-to-use dashboard that fulfilled Get Outside Alliance’s requirements and our team’s goals. We were initially limiting the data to only include areas surrounding parks within a two-hour drive of the Greater Houston Area. After exploring the data, we were able to open our scope and include all State Parks within Texas. This also allowed us the added benefit of truly customizing what data the dashboard was showing to the GOA team.

Our team was able to keep the deliverables completely free by using publicly available resources. Through Google Cloud, we integrated the dashboard into a private page on the Get Outside Alliance website. By using the United States Census Bureau’s website and developer tools, our team was able to create an automated workflow that keeps the data in the dashboard up to date. The dashboard is built into three sections that allows the Get Outside Alliance team to navigate the data very easily. With extraordinarily little actual technical requirements to keep the dashboard operational and updated, the Get Outside Alliance team can focus on the growth of their organization.

## Project Risks

Our project was centered around a very niche subject and required reliable data sources about this niche subject. Our team and the Get Outside Alliance team have been very aware of the risk that this could have posed to our final deliverables since the start of the project. By originally limiting the scope to areas within a two-hour drive of Houston, our team was able to explore what data was available to begin with. During our initial exploration, our team quickly saw that it was not necessary to leave limit the scope if we had focused the demographics to a county level first. Team two and the Get Outside Alliance team were both in agreement that if time permitted, our team would include city demographic data as well.

The technical aspect of the project was also a risk of its own. We had one team member serve as technical lead who developed the code framework that the rest of the team worked on. Had this team member not been able to complete the project or class for whatever reason, the final deliverable would not have been as successful or easy to use. Other risks we considered were standard to most projects such as team conflict, and illness. Our team was able to proactively mitigate these risks through control systems and timelines.

## Project Timeline

The timeline for the project did not veer too much from the actual schedule. Once we started the development of the project, we shifted our milestones from timeline milestones to sprint based milestones. The shift to working in sprints helped our team work more effectively, especially with the coding.

Actual development on the project had started slightly later than planned due to a shift in due dates. Once development started in the first week of April, our team started viewing every week as a sprint. We had a list of things we wanted to accomplish and who oversaw what during the sprint. This made the length of the project much more manageable and allowed other team members to learn from each other.

Regardless of working tactics, our team and the GOA team agreed on a hard deadline the week of the presentation. By setting this specific deadline, it helped our team organize so that we were ready for the presentation. It also helps the Get Outside Alliance team because they are guaranteed a product before their main planning period begins.

## Project Control System

Before starting the project, our team made sure to have a control system in place for three primary areas. We had a separate control system for conflict resolution, change, and quality control. For quality control, our team made sure to keep everything in a centralized place in OneDrive. We also had multiple people working together on the same component in different coding environments. This allowed us to spot check for any potential problems in the future. We have a centralized GitHub repository where the code lives. Everyone on our team has access to this repository so there is no risk of losing the code. Our project manager keeps hard copies of files on her computer just in case we lose a document.

Our team has a flexible change control system. Typically, if someone has a suggestion or a feature that they want to change, the team member will bring up the proposed change on GroupMe. The team then votes on whether to bring this proposed change to the client. These votes can take place during a team meeting or even on GroupMe. This flexibility of where the vote happens gives the most amount of equity to the team because of the variance in work schedules between us.

The system that we focused the most time on was the conflict resolution control system. Being a team of five that all have our own opinions and working styles, our project manager wanted to create an environment where conflict does not have to arise. Luckily, by the end of the project, there were no disputes within the team. Everyone did their part and the project manager made sure that everyone was reminded of weekly deadlines.

## Project Assessment

Overall, our team was satisfied with our final deliverable. Our team was able to build something from scratch for a great organization. We did have to adjust our objectives and scope as we went along to better suit the project. The main goal of this project was to create an easy-to-use dashboard for the Get Outside Alliance to better understand their volunteers. What we were able to create was a completely automated and self-sustaining tool that can grow with the organization. They have access and ownership of every deliverable and hopefully will be able to adjust it to their needs as they see fit.