COVID-19 INNOVATION SCREENING TOOL PROPOSAL FOR ALLEGHENY COUNTY

OVERVIEW

According to "Initial Labor Force Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Allegheny County", conducted by the Pitt University Center for Social and Urban Research, 16.7% of Allegheny County workers had a change of employment due to COVID-19. According to that same study, 38.8% of recently unemployed workers haven't yet applied for unemployment. More than ever, people need access to government services, and now, as always, people are either not aware of them or unsure how to apply.

A key tool in fighting that is screening tools. A comprehensive screening tool with information on a wide range of programs available to Allegheny County residents, available in the form of a website, would help bridge the gap between eligible users and actual users.

The Objective

The main problem our group hopes to tackle is the lack of resources for assessing eligibility for government aid programs. Our team's efforts are focused on aiding recently eligible applicants through government programs application processes and creating a lasting resource for the Allegheny County's communities. We are aware that the county currently does not have a resource that serves as a screening tool for most programs. Therefore, we hope to address the county's current needs.

- · Need #1: Creation of a tool that can estimate a person's eligibility for a variety of programs
- · Need #2: Lesson the burden on community organizations and provide a more accessible tool

OUR PROPOSAL

Our team consists of Carnegie Mellon University undergraduates working in coordination with university administration. As of now, Gabriella Ardiles, majoring in Information Systems, and Anna Gerchanovsky, majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering, is serving as project managers. Aaron Satyanarayana majoring in Behavioral Politics, is heading project research, coordinating research, and compiling information on government aid programs. The rest of the team, consisting of Parikshith Radhakrishnan, majoring in Chemical Engineering, Pranav Reddy, majoring in Business Administration, Rishi Dalal, majoring in Business Administration, and Charles Mansfield, majoring in Behavioral Economics who are aiding in both project research and web development.

We want to create a website to host a screening tool for Allegheny County residents. Our main goals for this project are ease of use, making sure that the screening tool is helpful and straightforward enough to encourage enrollment in government aid programs rather than contribute to preexisting barriers for applicants. We also are aware that, in the course of the project, certain complications may arise. Thus, we are in communication with the Information Systems department at CMU in the event we need professionals who specialize in web development. To create this tool, we would like to collaborate with the county, explicitly asking for the county to handle expenses and labor in hosting the website and providing information necessary for the screening tool itself. We believe that this collaboration with Allegheny County would provide transformative results, as we would help the county boost enrollment in government aid programs, ultimately helping the well-being of the community. In return, we would have the resources necessary to continue working on our project and see it come to fruition.

Rationale

As a group, we have looked at Allegheny county specific demographic statistics to infer who has most likely recently fallen below income thresholds for government aid programs. However, if this project proves successful, we will potentially expand beyond Allegheny County. One of our tool's greatest advantages is a small learning curve, which is especially important for people struggling to make sense of government aid resources and availability. Also, a large percentage of our users would most likely be 65 years or older. Thus, there was a more considerable emphasis placed on the accessibility of these resources and its simplicity.

Our target users are recently unemployed due to COVID-19, and people who are either unaware of their unemployment benefits or are unsure how to go about obtaining services information because the process may be too complicated.

One of the main frustrations that people have faced that our solution will relieve is time-consuming research for aid eligibility and questions on information that is hard to search in a browser. Our solution consists of a multipurpose website that is quick and simple to use and takes up less of our user's time while delivering instant eligibility results.

Some of the needs that our solution is addressing is mainly providing information about anti-poverty programs. We will partner up with local organizations to serve as a hub for Allegheny county. To be more specific about our website, we will provide information on government aid programs for people affected by COVID-19.

Executive Strategy

Implementing the screening tool as a website will allow it to be the most successful and help the largest portion of population. A website is easily accessible, which is a high priority for us to increase enrollment. We also don't expect the screening tool to be an end all be all, as it only gives likelihood of eligibility. Some users will also likely have to use other resources, such as enrollment assistance problems, so our website will be the easiest, most convenient first step in enrollment.

Implementation Approach

The following is a description of our project methods, including the project's development and reasons for why we suggest developing the project as described. Our group aims to create a fully functional and dynamic web page that hosts the screening tool referenced above. The implementation process can be broken down into three individual sections.

Screening Tool

The first of these processes being the creation of the screen tool. In order to create a tool that would serve as a proper gauge of someone's eligibility for government aid programs, our group would need access to specific information on these programs. For instance, we would need access to all the government programs' qualifications to create an appropriate tool that makes adequate estimations of eligibility. The tool should take the central questions of these applications and compile them into a straightforward screening tool that ballpark estimates whether someone should apply for any particular program. Thus, simplifying the process of determining eligibility by creating a universal tool for a large number of programs.

Graphics

This stage of development consists of creating wireframes and user stories to create an aesthetically appropriate design for the website and easily maneuvered webpages with a straightforward layout. This aspect of design focuses on the accessibility of the website and its usability.

Web Development

In this section of implementation, our team plans to use Flutter, an open-source UI software development kit to create the web pages. Our team will utilize the wireframes to create a dynamic webpage that is supported on mobile devices. While our team will take charge of the backend creation of the website, we're under the assumption that another third party will be taking care of the maintenance and hosting needed to maintain the tool.

Implementation Specifics

Screening Tool Specifics

The screening tool will consist of a one-page questionnaire which the user will fill out and a results page, based on the information provided. The eligibility page will be available in a pdf version to download and/or print.

Questionnaire

The first page, the questionnaire, will collect information that is necessary to identify what users are eligible for. Each question will provide a tax form and field where the information it is asking for can be found. A general compilation of information we will need to collect includes:

- income: gross, net, and modified adjusted gross income, cash income minus deductions
- assets, such as the number of vehicles per household
- household and personal information
    - list all members of a household
    - if any household members attending school, which school it is
    - if filing as a couple, individual, or household
    - for every member of a household
        - age, gender, any disabilities, and citizenship status
        - if pregnant, nursing, or less than 6mo postpartum
        - if they are a dislocated worker
        - if already receiving any benefits
            - if so, which ones
        - any barriers to employment
- accounting info: bank accounts (credit, savings) if any, outstanding debt, average expenses per month, rent
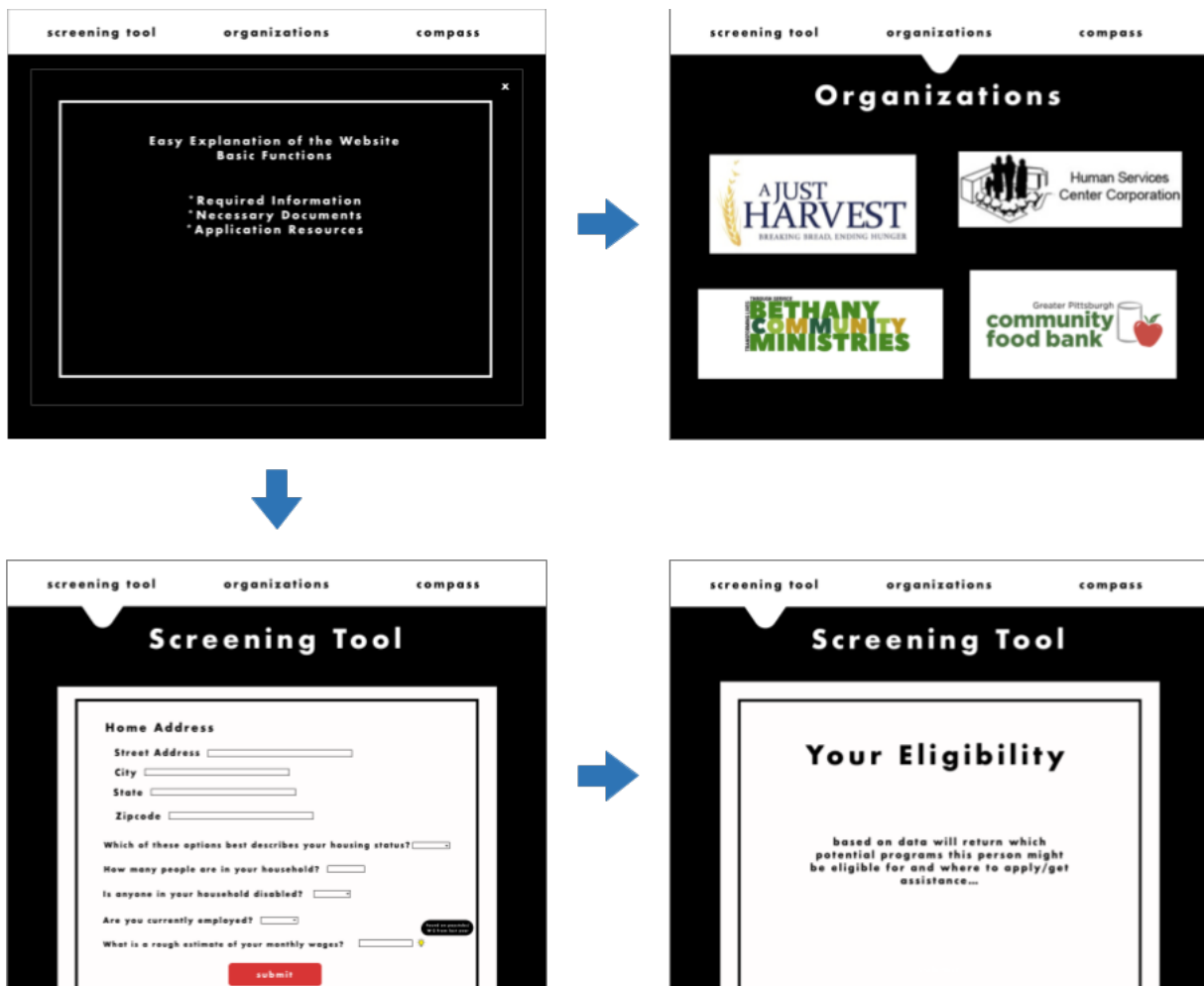
Eligibility

The second page will return which forms of government benefits the user (or member of the user's household) is eligible for. Forms of government benefits we would like to refer users to include SSI, SSDI, SNAP, Free or Reduce School Lunch and

Breakfast, WIC, Medicaid, TANF, subsidized housing, childcare subsidies, WIOWA, job corps, and rent and mortgage assistance.

For each program the user is eligible for, we will specify which household members are eligible (if applicable), explain where users could get enrollment assistance, provide a link to the application (if available), and a page with information about this program. The pdf version will simply list the programs and people eligible. The hope is that users will be able to print this pdf, which will help with organization and if users end up seeking enrollment assistance.

Wireframes

Resources

We are reaching out to Allegheny County for help because we need some resources to complete this project. As mentioned in the Implementation Approach section of our proposal, we would need access to more accurate and detailed information about the enrollment eligibility than available publicly online. We would also like assistance from the county with hosting and maintenance of the website. We can create a functional website and demonstrate it, but we would select Allegheny County to provide what

is necessary to host the website online and be publicly accessible. We would also ask Allegheny county to cover any expenses that occur during the web development portion of implementation, including but not limited to software fees and server charges. Currently, this list consists only of Sketch, a graphics editing software. We want to maintain open communication with the county to bring up any needs that arise and work together to make sure we can meet each other's requirements.

PRICING

The following table details the pricing for delivery of the services outlined in this proposal.

Services Cost Category #1	Price
Web domain and maintenance	$15.00
Web Hosting	$36.00
Web Developer – Back End	$1000.00
Web Developer- Front End	$500.00
Web Design	$500.00
Total	**$2,051.00**

Disclaimer: The prices listed in the preceding table are an estimate for the services discussed. This summary is not a warranty of final price. Estimates are subject to change if project specifications are changed or costs for outsourced services change before a contract is executed.

CONCLUSION

If successful, we would like this to serve as a prototype for not only more counties, states, or even countries, but also all economic problems, not just our current state of COVID-19. We believe this project has the potential to go even beyond COVID-19. For instance, if there is an impending recession or depression in the near future, we think this idea could still be a potential solution.

We look forward to working with Allegheny County and supporting your efforts to foster community growth and prosperity. We are confident that we can meet the challenges ahead and stand ready to partner with you in delivering a useful product. If you have questions on this proposal, feel free to contact any of us at your convenience. We have listed our names and contact information below. We will be in touch with you next week to arrange a follow-up conversation on the proposal.

Thank you for your consideration,

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