**PROJECT REPORT**

**ENSE 271**

**Group E**

**(Winter 2025)**

**Group Members:**

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**Project Sponsor:**

Dr. Tim Maciag (ENSE 271 Professor)

**Business need/opportunity**

Our project exists because based on survey findings, charities and non-profit organizations within Saskatchewan have found difficulty in finding a local and reliable resource hub that offers many different opportunities and resources to support their growth and operations. This is why our project, a website made from WordPress, offers essential features that include: Fundraising, grant access, operational support, marketing, storytelling, and more. This ensures great efficiency and tackles some of the difficulties these charities and non-profit organizations have.

**Reflections on project planning, execution, & closing**

**North Star and Carryover customers:**

Our goal was to create a centralized, Saskatchewan-specific Charity Resource Hub to support registered charities and non-profit organizations with credible, accessible, and relevant resources. North Star customers include small to medium sized Saskatchewan based charities, non-profit leaders, administrative staff seeking support and professional development. The carry-over customers would already be established charities and non-profits, such as large sized charity organizations.

**Assumptions and Constraints:**

Some of the project assumptions is that charities lack centralized access to resources, users prefer web-based, self-serve access to information and tools, users prefer a more user-friendly, easy to navigate and an intuitive website to get valuable information, SSCF has the credibility and infrastructure to serve as a trusted hub.

As a team of three (3), we face some constraints during the project, some of these constraints are:

- Limited team member capacity, our team is supposed to be a group of four members, unfortunately one of our members dropped the class, so everyone has a lot of tasks to accomplish.

- Time Constraint (Time- bound development cycle), the key idea is that every activity must be completed within a specific start and end date. There is a due date to present every activity to the customer in person, collect feedback, make corrections when necessary and a due date to get all our files to the team's GitHub account.

- Limited to only one user, it could have been nice to have more than one user testing environment, which will help the team gather more feedback, and watch how every user is able to interact with our design, gather more details about the intuitiveness of our design. Why do we need more feedback from different users, because we as designers are not the user, and all users are not the same, we need to capture some quantitative data, based on measurement and also gain understanding on the quantitative data we collected during testing which is termed as qualitative data.

- Platform limitation (WordPress customization capabilities).

**Summarized Key Findings on affinity diagramming and empathy mapping**

Our key findings in our affinity diagramming and empathy maps were that we wanted to create a website that took care of all the needs charities and non-profits were needing help with. We also wanted to make a website that is simple and easy to navigate so customers would be able to get what they needed to get done efficiently.

**Initial and Evolution of USM**

During the process of the project, we had to change our user story map more than once. We intended our USM to have simple and basic information, but we weren't fully grasping what

needed to be on the USM at the time. The first story map we did for activity 1 was based off what we thought was needed on the website, we made it extremely small and did not have a lot of information on it at the time. The second user story map was then created for activity 2 because we needed to fix what we had and also expand on certain ideas for the website. Inside each MVP. We were a bit off once again because we included donors and did not fully understand how to properly create a great USM. For the last activity, which was activity 3, we created a new USM that featured more ideas and put us on the right track for what was needed on the website.  I think our last USM shows what we as a team were going for when creating this website for the SSCF. We did start out rocky, but we quickly were able to take the feedback given to us and convert that into what we needed in our website into our USM. The MVP that we chose were providing information and tools such as fundraising, granting, marketing, etc. for charities and non-profits, following the North Star Customer's needs.
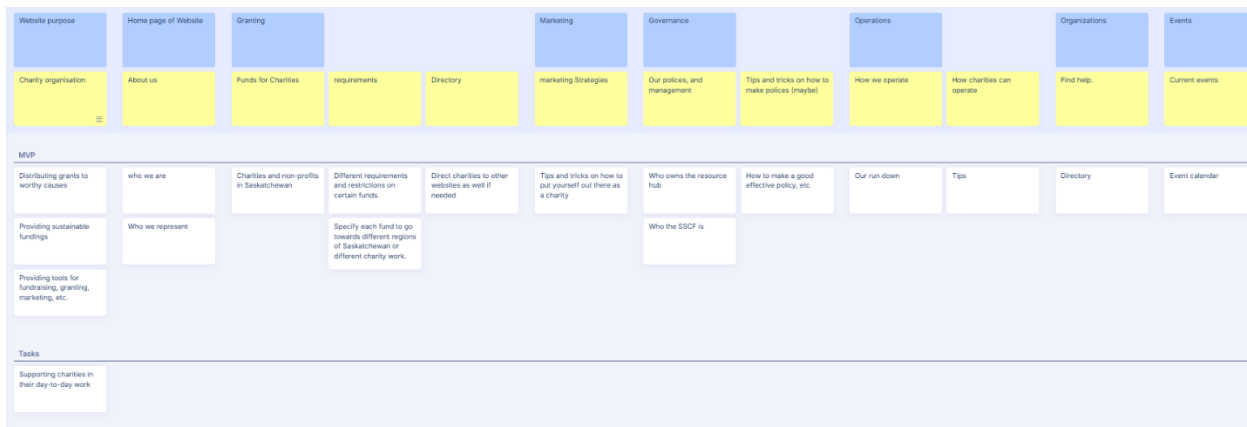


*The Final USM*

**Summarize prototyping activities and usability Evaluation**

Our prototyping process followed a structured and iterative approach, beginning with low-fidelity sketches on paper and then the high-fidelity wireframes on Figma. These early concepts focused on simple layouts to visualize navigation flow, core hub functions and clarity of content. We created several wireframe variations of the homepage, navigation bar and other pages.

During this project, we got valuable feedback from Brooklyn, our North Star Customer, in our presentations. This helped us refine our prototypes more. The feedback we received were:

- Do not include donation or volunteer features – This was strongly reiterated and helped us narrow our design focus.
- Remove or rework the Granting Page - To ensure it doesn't imply we're offering funding.

- Styling revision – She reminded us to use Georgia font for headers and Aerial font for menus.
- Navigation clarity – Brooklyn had some questions about how to navigate the site better, and that opened new ideas for us on how to make the layout better; For example, we made a separate "Events" page for upcoming events and past events.

**Design Concepts Linked to People-Centred Design**

A few examples of the things that we learned from the class topics that we incorporated into our project are:
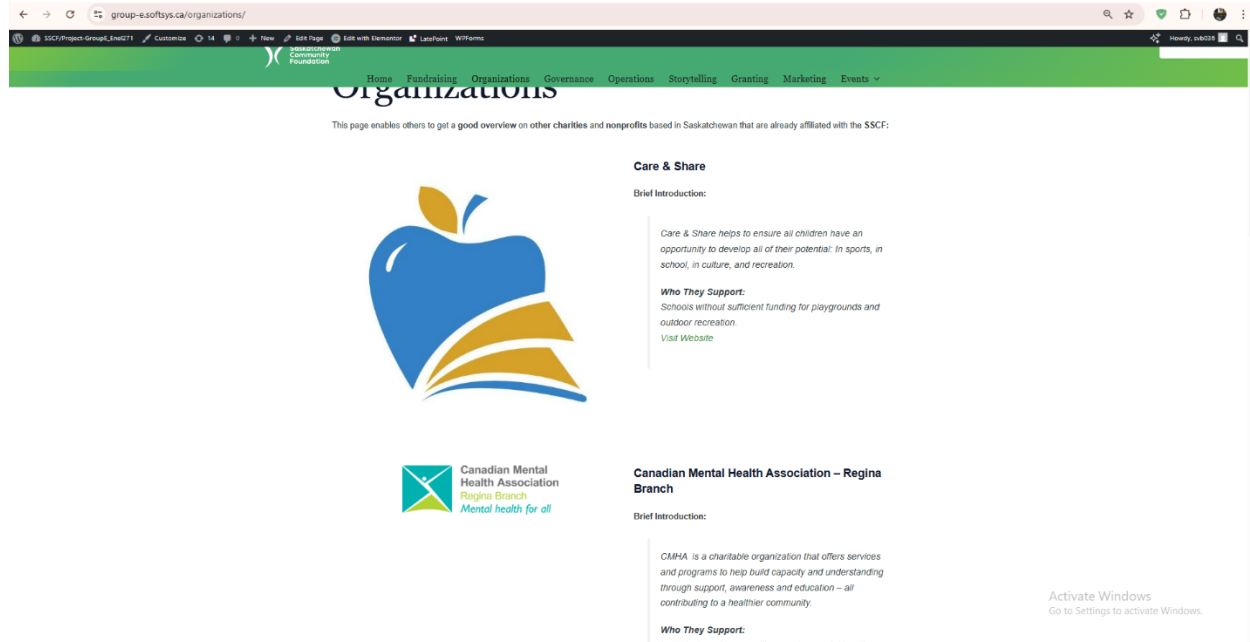
1. **Affordances**:
   Buttons and links were styled clearly (e.g., underlined and blue font) to signal their functionality. Events are categorized as collapsible months to invite interaction, and downloadable PDFs are labeled clearly with icons (e.g. the Fundraising page).

2. **Gestalt Principles**:
   We used **proximity and similarity** to group related content. For example, each charity listing has a uniform layout (name, intro, support description, website), allowing users to quickly scan and compare organizations. Grouping months under each year in Events History also follows good Gestalt practice.

3. **Constraints**:
   We intentionally limited site features. No donation buttons, no login forms, and no unnecessary interactivity — this helped us keep the user experience aligned with project goals. These constraints also made the site more accessible and less overwhelming for users unfamiliar with tech-heavy platforms.

*This image showcases the design concepts linked to people-centred design, such as affordances (clickable links), gestalt (proximity and enclosure), and constraints (no unnecessary interactivity).*

**Final WordPress Solution Summary**

The usability testing and feedback we got from the customer during check-ins were instrumental in refining the final design solution on WordPress. Putting people-centered design as the primary objective of the project, we were able to create an intuitive, accessible and relevant hub for Saskatchewan charities.

After refining our prototype, we implemented the final project design on WordPress, customizing it through Elementor page builder, Elementor Essential Addons and Astra theme. The key features of our final site design are as follows:

**Home Page:** This page is the very start of the page that includes who we are as a resource hub but also who the SSCF is because we are tied back to them. The page is very simple because we wanted to have the focus on the bucket list instead of having a lot of information on the homepage**.**

**Fundraising Page:** Large image of library shelves, serving as a metaphor on where to find resources about how to fundraise. The page consists of tips and tricks on how to fundraise, how to plan a small and large campaign and links to sites that offer more resources about fundraising for charity. This page reflects the feedback asking for resources on how to fundraise for a charity organization.

**Organizations Page:** This page enables others to get a good overview on other charities and nonprofits based in Saskatchewan that are already affiliated with the SSCF; It shows a list of these charities that includes the name, a brief summary of what they do and who they support, and a clickable link that will take the user to their website. The design principles that were incorporated were:

- o **Affordances**: Website links are clearly styled and invite user interaction.
- o **Constraints**: We kept the page content minimal, resisting the urge to over-explain or add extra categories.
- o **Gestalt**: Uniform structure across entries makes the list scannable and easier to navigate.
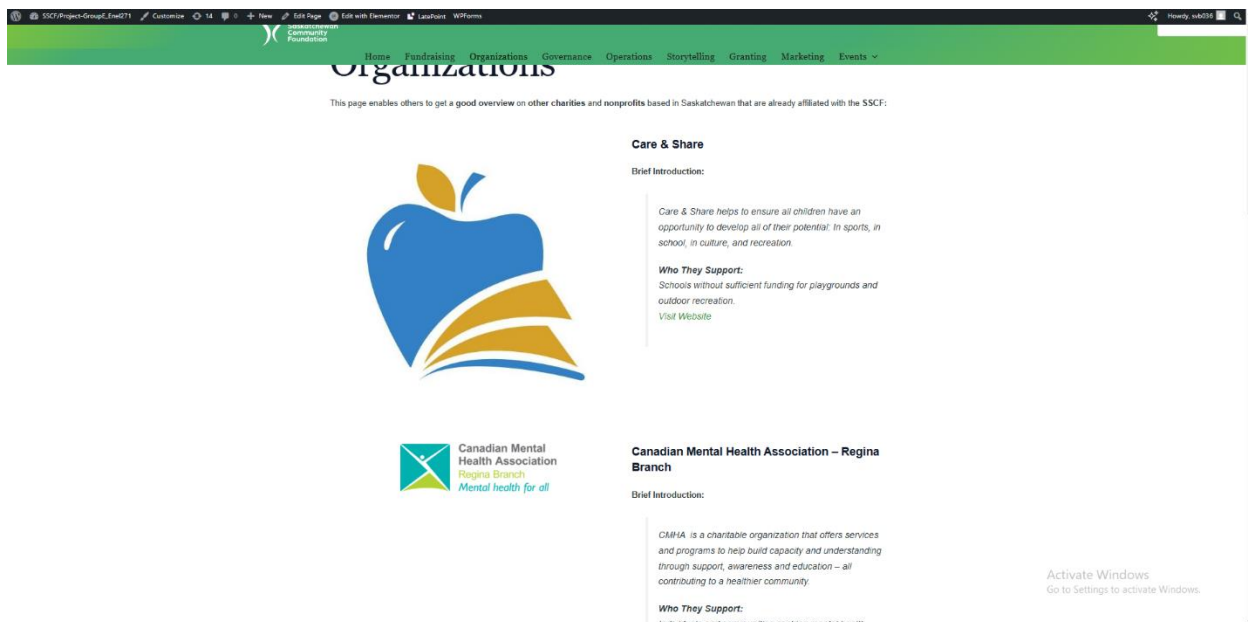


*The Organizations Page*

**Governance Page:** This page outlines the principles, rules, and guidelines that maintain the integrity and effectiveness of our platform. It contains the hub purpose and scope, code of conduct and prohibited activities.

**Operations Page:** This page enables others to get a good overview of other charities and nonprofits based in Saskatchewan that are already affiliated with the SSCF.

**Storytelling Page:** an image consisting of a laptop keyboard, a pen and jotter, this reflects the metaphor of documenting your story. The page provides you with information on how to write a story and form a good story. The page reflects the feedback from the customer asking for resources on how to tell and form a good story.

**Granting Page:** This page outlines a few organizations that offer grants to those charities and non-profits in need of funding and help financially. Each organization has an image right above each organization showing the logo of the business and under that is the name of the organization and a brief description of them. They are all neatly stacked and

**Marketing page:** The marketing page acts as the communicator about who the SSCF are, what this site offers, and how the site can benefit the users. The design principles that were incorporated were:

- **Similarity and Proximity**: We grouped content into clearly labeled chunks (such as "Who can benefit from the hub?" and "Key Benefits").
- **User-Centered Design**: We kept the wording simple, inclusive, and trying to spark delight by resonating with the user.
- We kept the interface lean and direct to ensure good **natural mapping**.
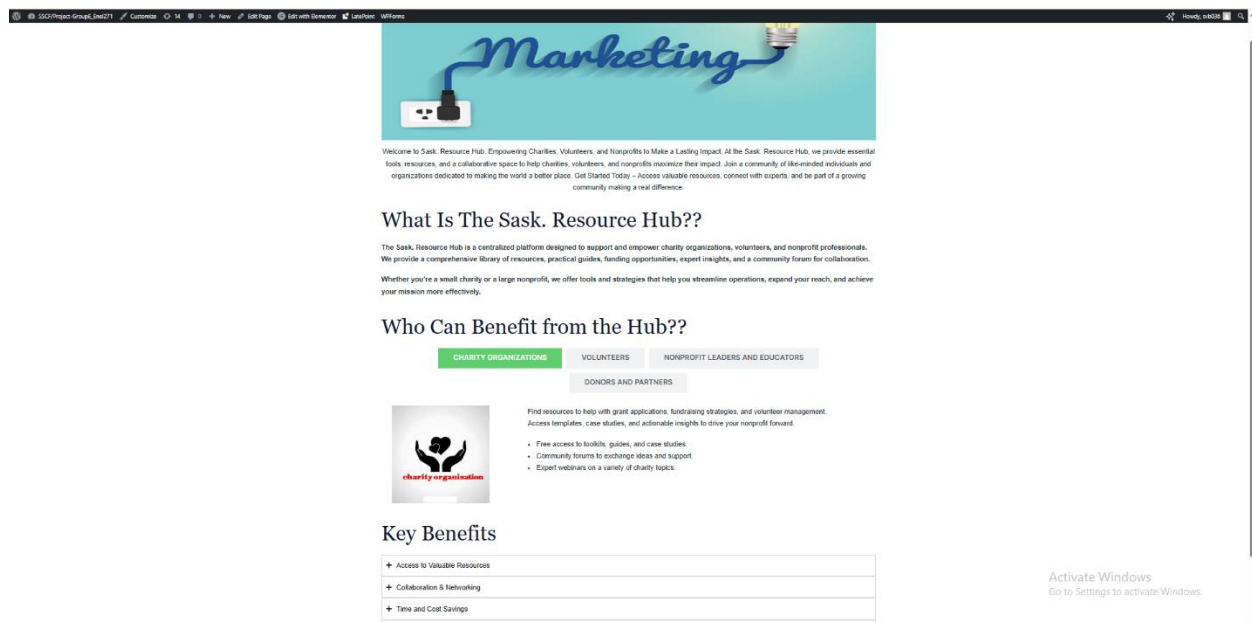


*The Marketing Page*

**Events Page:** This page allows users to stay up to date with upcoming events, workshops, and learning opportunities here in Saskatchewan. There is a big calendar on the page that shows upcoming events, when they are happening, what time, and who should attend. The design principles that were incorporated were:

- **Affordances**: Each event is formatted as a card or block that's visually clickable.

- o **Constraints**: We stuck to 2–5 event listings max to avoid overwhelming the user.
- o **Gestalt (Proximity & Similarity)**: Consistent event formatting and vertical spacing improves readability and visual grouping.
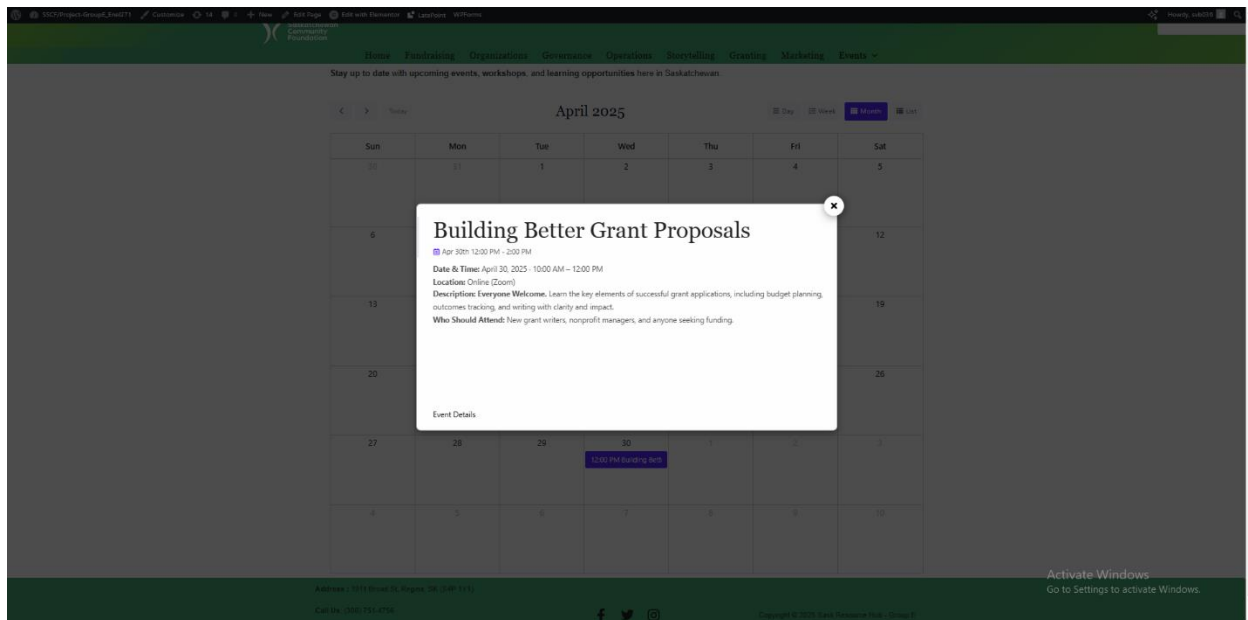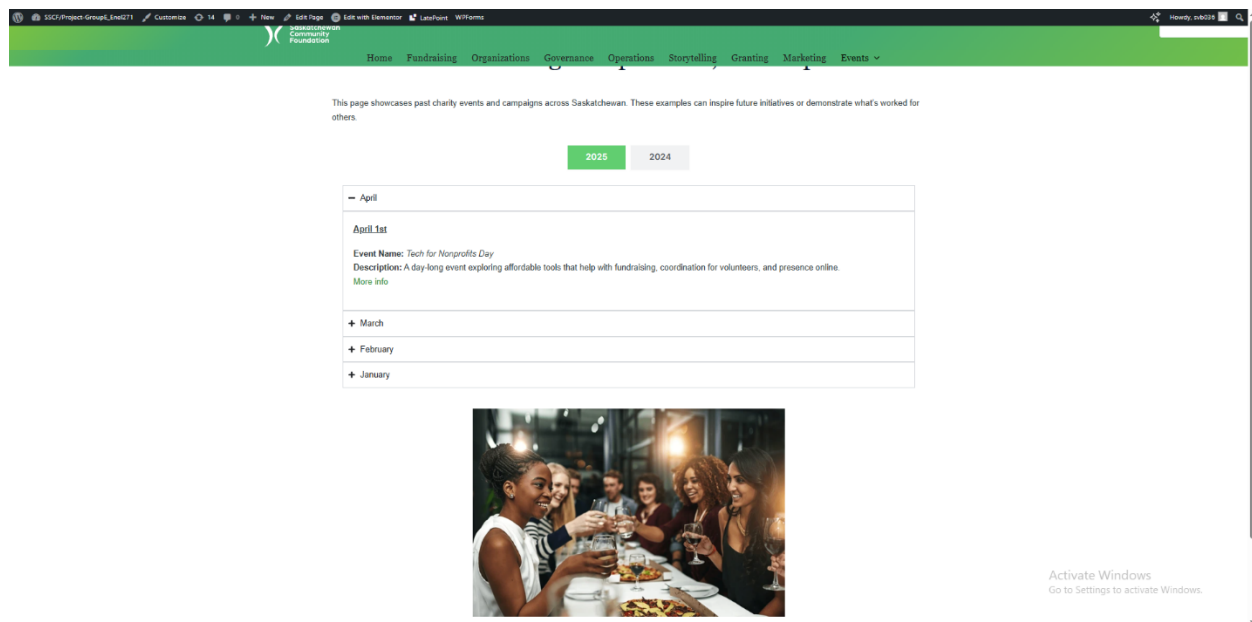


*The Events Page*

**Event History Page:** This page showcases past events the SSCF were a part of. These can let the users know what they missed and get a good grasp on things that they did. The events were organized by year (2024, 2025), then by month, with each month featuring all the events and a summary. The design principles that were incorporated were:

- Using the "design for error" mindset, we made sure that if a month had no events, it still appeared (but with "No featured events"), avoiding confusion or assumptions of broken functionality.
- Cultural constraints guided the layout since most users are used to reading timelines top-to-bottom and left-to-right.
- Visceral processing; The chronological design and visual clarity created a feeling of calm and order.

*The Event History Page*

## Reflections on Project Results

The project was definitely both rewarding and challenging, the collaborative aspect of the work, as it allows every team member to share ideas and expertise to solve a real-world problem for Saskatchewan's non-profit sector. The steps and process from the first activity to the final presentation of building a Sask. Resource Hub tailored specifically to the needs of local charities was motivating, and the team is proud to contribute to a project that had clear benefits for the community.

### What went well?

The project was successful in several areas, our team worked well together, with each member bringing valuable skills to the table, design skills, prototyping, USM creation, WordPress development and most importantly the brainstorming process. The team collaboration was a success.

Conducting user research and applying empathy mapping from the first day of the project helped us understand our target users' needs. The user centered approach helped and guided the design to be relevant and user-friendly. Keeping the content focused on Saskatchewan-specific resources was a goal that we managed to accomplish, which allowed us to create a sense of relevance and trustworthiness among potential users.

**What didn't go well?**

While we were working on our Wordpress website it was quite difficult learning the software in such a short amount of time. Sometimes boxes or images wouldn't stay the size they needed, or the image took up too much space and disrupted everything that was around it. We weren't able to make our filter plugin work and that really hindered our websites layout. We also were barely keeping up with the activity deadlines and our work was definitely rushed and messy.

**How successful was your team in translating ideas into Wordpress?**

Our prototype in Figma was simple but it needed a lot of innovation because we need more space, and some pages wouldn't have worked with some of the information we needed to display. We also had to change our header and because during our second activity check in Brooklyn brought up the question of if we used this layout could we explain our bucket list in the future so we had to change our layout quite a bit because we needed to include more meaningful pictures as well as  layout and style that could be easy to read and look at but also have the chance to grow in the future.  So, to answer the question, we weren't very successful in incorporating our ideas into WordPress because some of the layouts weren't offered as a free option in WordPress, so we had to go with what we had.

**Did the lectures help?**

The lecture videos helped us but also hindered us because our group does consist of 1 CTCH student and 2 engineering students. None of us had a lot of experience with **WordPress.** Our CTCH student did have a tiny bit **of** experience, but it was very limited because it was for art purposes. The lectures did help us think about how to make a user-based design without incorporating what we would have thought looked good to us. We had to keep the sentence "you are not the user" in the back of our minds because we had to think outside of the box to try because we as people try and create what we think is perfect to us but in his instance it wouldn't be perfect for others(users) so that information hindered our designing quite a bit.

**What would you do the same?**

We would do the same process of creating an USM and also creating a Figma prototype because we think that is a key part of creating a website because then you have a plan, and you also have an idea of the process of how you want to go about creating the website.

**Opportunities and design ideas on future work:**

If given the opportunity to continue to work on this website if we had more time, we would make the layout more consistent, so everything is not all over the place but also the customer does not get confused on where to go if navigating between pages because in our website our pages are all differently laid out. We would include many more plugins because then we would have more time to test them out and get more feedback on what the client wanted or liked. We would have also made the events page more beneficial in finding new and old events but as well as finding the upcoming events instead of having just a giant calendar and no information. But if given more time this website would look completely different but also look simpler and more accessible to everyone.

## WordPress Themes and Plugins

**Elementor page Builder:**

- **User Rating:** 4.9 out of 5 stars, based on over 1,000 reviews.
- **Last Updated:** Regularly updated, with the latest version released in April 2025.
- **Active Installations:** Over 17 million active installations.
- **Functionality:** Elementor is a drag-and-drop page builder plugin for WordPress that allows users to create custom layouts and designs without any coding knowledge. It offers a live editing interface, and responsive design controls.

**Essential Addons for Elementor:**

- **User Rating:** 4.9 out of 5 stars, based on over 3,500 reviews.
- **Last Updated:** Regularly updated, with the latest version released in April 2025.
- **Active Installations:** Over 2 million active installations.
- **Functionality:** This is a comprehensive addon plugin that extends the capabilities of Elementor by providing additional widgets and design elements. It includes features like advanced accordions, post grids, pricing tables, and more, enabling users to create dynamic and feature-rich websites.

**Astra Theme:**

- **User Rating:** 4.9 out of 5 stars, based on over 5,000 reviews.
- **Last Updated:** Regularly updated, with the latest version released in April 2025.
- **Active Installations:** Over 1 million active installations.
- **Functionality:** Astra is a lightweight and highly customizable WordPress theme designed for speed and performance. It offers a variety of pre-built website templates and is fully compatible with popular page builders like Elementor.