

NewERA412

Executive Summary

Community Partner

Taili Thompson

Maggie McGannon

Student Consulting Team

Ryan Eckert

Warren Glasner

Victoria Liang

Background

Our clients are Taili Thompson and Maggie McGannon, who represent NewERA412. NewERA412 is a program of ReEntry412, a volunteer-led nonprofit dedicated to helping returning citizens (previously incarcerated individuals) return to society after leaving prison. *The mission of NewERA412 is to increase the political equity and social capital of all justice-involved persons.*

Project Description

Project Opportunity

In Allegheny county, it has been a known problem that the largest indicator of incarceration is the exposure to violence itself. This means neighborhoods that are already violent are more conducive to even higher crime rates via positive feedback loop. There is no centralized online location for resources for individuals at risk for incarceration or leaving incarceration. Some organizations send out street outreach workers in order to reach out to returning citizens from within their own community to help provide these resources. However, the big problem lies in connecting these two solutions, as there is currently no good infrastructure that establishes a connection between resources, street outreach workers, and NewERA412.

Project Vision

We set out to create a mobile-responsive website that serves as a centralized hub of resources for returning citizens. This website also tracks street outreach engagement by tracking referrals and whether users followed up on referrals, seeking to demonstrate the impact of street outreach for our client's donors.

Project Outcomes

Our primary outcome for this project is a custom Ruby on Rails application with two major goals: 1) A centralized hub of updated and relevant resources for returning citizens; and 2) A way to track referrals made from our client's street outreach team to returning citizens to demonstrate the impact of street outreach workers (SOW).

A major feature of this project was implementing SOW impact tracking, which we accomplished through several steps. We created a transaction model in our Ruby on Rails (RoR) application that tracked when SOWs sent referrals to users which includes information on the resource and user account. We also developed account creation and authentication in order to track reentrants over the long term.

Throughout this process, we created design artifacts including a user flow diagram, an entity relationship diagram, low to high fidelity wireframes and prototypes, and conducted user testing of our application with our clients and a street outreach worker.

Project Deliverables

Our final deliverable is the NewERA412 Resources Website, currently and temporarily deployed on <https://newera412.herokuapp.com/> with a more permanent solution being hosted by a third party software developer, Responsival. The key functionalities for admins are to create and edit resources, view all users and SOWs, and view a list of referrals made by SOWs. Administrators can track metrics about transactions, users, and neighborhoods, in order to help capture the value of SOWs interacting with the formerly incarcerated. Users can view all resources, view referrals made to them by SOWs, and indicate whether they used a resource or not. SOWs can view all resources, share resources to users, and keep track of their referrals to users.

Recommendations

Our primary recommendation for future development is to increase utility by implemented automated emailing. This would send a message upon referral, and could be used for account recovery and other functions. After that, we would recommend improving the application for SOWs by streamlining resource sharing and adding the ability to share multiple resources at once. For Admins, we think there is value in being able to show summary statistics based on the transaction logs. Finally, we would recommend developing a means to print data in a presentable manner, enabling resources to be shared in an analog fashion if necessary.

Student Consulting Team

Ryan Eckert served as the technical development lead and client relationship manager. He is a third year Information Systems major with minors in Game Design and Computer Science and will be graduating in May 2020. This summer, he will be working as a consultant in the Marshall Islands as part of the Technology Consulting in the Global Community (TCinGC) program.

Warren Glasner was the backend development lead. He is a fourth year Information Systems major with a double major in Human-Computer Interaction and a minor in Physical Computing and will be graduating in May 2020. This summer, he will be working as a software engineer intern at Dick's Sporting Goods.

Victoria Liang was the design and frontend development lead. She is a third year Information Systems major with a double major in Human-Computer Interaction and a minor in Design and

will be graduating in May 2020. This summer, she will be working as a design intern at Capital One.