

Footbridge for Families

Executive Summary

Community Partner

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Background

Footbridge for Families is a Pittsburgh-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that connects community donations to families in short-term, financial crises. The organization provides a web-based platform for donors to contribute to a pool which is then distributed to third party vendors to help those in financial distress. Our client is the founder and CEO, Kim Eckel, who works in the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. The organization has a prototype WordPress website that was developed and managed by previous student teams. Our team sought to build that prototype into a platform capable of handling a program pilot.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

The organization's core program involves distributing funds to families in need through a central web-based platform. Footbridge would like to demonstrate the viability of their model to potential stakeholders. The existing website served as a channel to spread information about the organization, but lacked crucial components for case management. The platform should increase confidence in Footbridge to establish them in the nonprofit community. We have the opportunity to ensure that this early face of the organization inspires trust in the organization by being well-designed, intuitive, and reliable.

Project Vision

Our team sought to build a case management platform for Footbridge that could adapt to the needs of the developing organization. The platform is the core coordinating mechanism for the organization, and is missing several key features needed to implement the proposed program flow. We can enrich the information collected with updated knowledge of the needs of the organization. Simultaneously, by developing the platform, we can further our client's understanding of the platform's needs.

Project Outcomes

Our consulting team worked with Kimberly Eckel and Footbridge for Families in several different areas to refine Footbridge's business processes, prepare the organization for a major IT build, and spearhead a response to an urgent community need for Footbridge's aid. Our initial goal was to iteratively improve the Footbridge website to prepare existing features for user testing in anticipation of a major IT build. This involved tuning site performance, updating

user interactions with new WordPress plugins, and developing several custom pages for the site.

Late in our semester our goal shifted from preparation for user testing to a more urgent need to implement an emergency platform for COVID-19 to connect families with Footbridge. During the development of the platform, several developers and board members began to attend meetings to absorb knowledge related to the platform. The result of this work was a G Suite workspace with usable dashboards and case management directories managed using existing Google tools such as Forms, Sheets, and App Scripts. To streamline data handoff, numerous video tutorials on the management of the platform were also created.

Project Deliverables

In our deliverables, we included business process documentation and records of changes to the pilot program. Our deliverables for the emergency platform include access to the platform on WordPress front-of-site. We also provide extensive video and textual documentation of the emergency platform and its internal tools. Access to the internal tools is managed through the G Suite directory, which is configured for the client.

Recommendations

We recommend the client begin user testing the emergency platform with the various stakeholders, including, but not limited to, referring partners, case coordinators, administrators, and accountants. Testing the platform will further refine the business flow and prepare the platform for launch. To improve the platform further, we also recommend extending the version control capabilities of the platform and implementing additional communication features on the case dashboard. In doing so, the emergency platform will be able to verify and disseminate information accurately and efficiently.

Student Consulting Team

Nathan Blinn worked on the Client Relationship Management, Quality Assurance and Client Transition teams in this project. He is a junior in Information Systems with minors in Computer Science and Film.

Nora Mattson worked in the Project Management, Client Relationship Management, Quality Assurance and Client Transition teams on this project. She is a junior in Information Systems with an additional major in Science, Technology and Public Policy.

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