

THE ROBERTS ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT FUND (REDF)

Project: A Workforce Development Platform

Link: redfworkshop.org

PROBLEM

REDF is a pioneering venture philanthropy that creates jobs and transforms lives and is a leader of a national movement of employment-focused social enterprises. REDF is the only philanthropy in the United States that invests exclusively in social enterprises focused on employment. They advise and connect enterprises, and help them measure their impact so they can grow to serve more people.

Before our work together, REDF already had existing expertise, tools, and resources that help social enterprises create jobs. However, REDF's practice - funding and consulting with individual capacity building organizations - wasn't a scalable model. They needed a way to help their target market, the social entrepreneurs starting and running these organizations, acquire the skills, knowledge, and resources they needed quickly and easily.

APPROACH

We started our work with REDF with a research and planning phase, followed by an iterative and agile design and development process.

We first surveyed and built an inventory of the services and tools that we could consider digitizing. Many of the services and tools were ill-defined, so we spent time with REDF prototyping many of the services and tools as Excel spreadsheets. We then identified commonalities among the services and tools, and catalogued and prioritized the tools by difficulty and importance. Moving into the process of building, we wrote user stories and began user experience design, interface design, and development. Our UX, UI, and development teams, designed and built the system together - iteratively and in phases. Our designer team researched and user tested features all along the way.

RESULTS

We co-created a beautiful, responsive mobile optimized web app that is equipped with tools, shared resources, and community features. Some key highlights of the platform include:

1. **Mobile First**

Given that over half of browsing occurs on mobile devices, we focused on making REDF Workshop a fantastic experience across devices. We carefully considered each design element across platforms to create a single, unified result - no matter the device. We used a "Pattern Library" - a deconstructed set of design elements that allow us to easily prototype out new features or elements. This allows us to move quickly while maintaining consistency and quality across the platform, since every little design detail has been

thought of already. We would be happy to further demonstrate how pattern libraries work upon request.

2. **Dynamic Community**

Our platform for REDF allowed users to share their needs and interests, search for other users who shared a similar profile, and then connect. The target user base for REDFWorkshop.org is aspiring social entrepreneurs who require access to foundational tools, knowledge, and community in order to realize their vision for change. Since our users come from various demographics, we also extended the platform to accommodate multiple languages.

3. **Engaging Educational Content**

We created a front-end design framework to showcase many different types of content, including articles, speakers, downloads, and videos. We designed and built this content library on the robust and scalable Wordpress CMS.

4. **Custom Backend**

We then integrated the CMS with a Ruby on Rails backend to create a custom application that allowed users to associate their favorite pieces of instructional content with their account.