

Project SOAR Website: Final Report & Recommendations



New School Practicum 2010
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Introduction:

In our analysis and redesign of the Project SOAR website, www.ethniccommunities.org, we have grouped our recommendations into three areas: Content, Organization/Navigation, and Visual Design. Our suggestions are further broken down into relevant subcategories in order to make the proposed site changes as clear as possible.

From a content perspective, it appears that website visitors use the site primarily for access to the resource library, while largely bypassing all of its other networking and collaborating potential. This could be remedied with compelling advertising of the site's other features and a selective expansion of these components of the site. Together, this would constitute an effective campaign to encourage greater user participation in these areas. The language on the site needs editing, as it is overly technical and may be confusing to users with limited English capabilities. In terms of navigation, the SOAR site is overly vertical, making it cumbersome to browse the resource library, for example, or to search the site for specific information. Lastly, the visual design needs to be more vibrant and dynamic to capture visitors' attention and encourage their use of the Resource Library and Member Profiles sections.

What follows are our specific suggestions for how the SOAR website could be modified to attract and encourage greater participation by ECBOs and other potential site users.

Recommendations:

Content

- **Member Profiles:** Survey respondents raised many questions about the purpose of the Member Profiles section. The potential of this section for networking and collaborative purposes needs to be capitalized upon, but this is only possible if members are encouraged and/or required to flesh out their profiles.
 - To this end, we suggest that when site users click the link to register as members, an introductory paragraph should explain why, for networking and collaborative purposes, users should provide as much information as they can. The paragraph should emphasize that part of the purpose of the site is to provide networking opportunities with other practitioners and organizations, and that users should provide at least their *general location* (e.g. *state*), *organization name*, *email*, and *website*.
 - We also suggest that there be a list of *services* that the user will check off to indicate what their organization does (e.g. *ESL/Computer Training*, *Elderly Services*, etc.) These pieces of information, hopefully, will not be seen as too private to share with other members on the site and will not deter users from participating in the Member Profiles section.

- **Language**
 - *Post a New Topic*: It's possible that this section is used so infrequently because the title does not give enough direction. Changing the title to "Discuss" might encourage more users to take advantage of this feature.
 - *Member Profiles*: According to the survey results, users don't understand how accessing member profiles could be useful to them. Changing the link to this section to "Find Others" might better explain the intention of this section and increase its traffic.

- **Additions/Substitutions**
 - *Blog*: According to the user survey results, only 21% of respondents think that a blog should be added to the site. An alternative way of broadcasting relevant announcements might be a "Recent News" or "Upcoming Events" section. These could be of interest and pertinent to refugee groups in particular, for example news pieces on workshops and community events that are held.
 - *Links to Other Organizations & TA Providers*: 65 % of respondents support adding links to other ECBOs and TA providers to the site. This could be accomplished in the following ways:
 - Adding a Tab on Homepage titled "TA & Other Support"
 - Highlighting organizations in the "Meet the Members" section on homepage
 - Encouraging site users to become registered members and to fill out their profiles with as much detail as possible, particularly including their location, website (if available), and email address.
 - Inserting an interactive map of the United States, where users can "peg" themselves and their organizations. This feature has the added benefits of engaging the users through a visual, interactive display, as well as providing a good overview of where such organizations are located in the United States, allowing members to easily locate potential partners in their area.
 - *"Search" box*: This feature should replace the "Site Index" tab, should be added to a prominent position on the homepage, and should allow users to search for any keyword in any area of the site.
 - *"Sign In and Register" links*: These should be added to the homepage, and should take users to a page in which they can choose exactly which features they would like to sign up for (e.g. registration as a member on the site, listserv, etc.)

- *“Forgot Password” link:* Several respondents expressed frustration that they don’t visit the site often because they can’t remember their user passwords. Currently, members must contact the Project SOAR staff directly in order to gain access to their passwords. The addition of a standard “Forgot Password” box, protected with a security question feature, could both increase traffic for those users who frequently forget theirs, as well as significantly cutting down on the time the Project SOAR staff must deal with such issues.
- *Technical Support Section:* The survey results revealed that users experience several, recurring problems with the site. These frequently asked questions could be put under a category called “Technical Support.” This would make it easy for users to troubleshoot their concerns and would prevent the “Discuss” section from becoming cluttered with repeat inquiries.

Visual Design

- **General**
 - Since Project SOAR is in charge of designing and maintaining the site, we suggest that it would be appropriate to create a SOAR logo which would be displayed in a prominent position on the homepage and emphasize its connection to the website.
 - We know that the color palette of the website is as yet undetermined, but we suggest using the tool <http://kuler.adobe.com> in order to assist with this decision.
- **Homepage**
 - In order to eliminate confusion for the user and promote ease of use, the site would have both prominent navigation tabs and only a few major elements.
 - To promote interest in connecting with other organizations, there would be a “Meet the Members” section. This would be a brief profile of a member organization and associated photo or organization logo that would change each time the user left and returned to the homepage, as well as 2 links: one to the featured organization’s website, and one to the “Find Others” section.

Organization/ Navigation

- **Homepage:** Clarity and ease of navigation is of prime importance. The homepage should be structured so that the user can clearly be directed to the information for which they are searching. The following is a list of elements we believe should be included on the site's homepage. Please see mock up for visual explanation.
 - Project SOAR logo
 - Primary tabs:
 - Find Others
 - Discuss
 - Resource Library
 - Organizational Spotlights
 - TA and Other Support
 - Search box
 - Sign Up/ Register link
 - Forgot Password link
 - Technical Support
 - Main elements:
 - Acknowledgement of ORR
 - Brief organizational profiles linked to "Find Others"
 - US map (linked to map in "Find Others")
- **Resource Library:** Needs better organization, a directory that stays in sight while users explore this section, and documents grouped by type of resource.
- Survey results indicate that the Resource Library is the most popular destination and that users would like to see this area expanded. However, judging by the free responses, many of the resources that users would like to see "added" to the site (such as more information on locating and securing funding) are already present somewhere on the Resource Library; the users simply haven't found it. This indicates a significant need for reorganization of the Resource Library more than anything (though apparently any additions would also be welcome.)
 - Menu/Directory: Rather than a single directory block at the top of the page, where the user must scroll down and back, in order to search for various topics, the directory should be a scroll-over feature, located at the left hand side of the screen, offering additional detailed pop-up options. This menu should remain in sight, no matter how far down into the documents the user scrolls. A horizontal display of the directory is ideal. Additional tabs in

the directory, such as Annual Workshop Materials, Tip Sheets/Weekly Highlights and others, can be added.

- Categories and Subcategories:
 - The categories should be reworded for clarity. For example, the current topic “External Relations” could be renamed “Networking”. In addition, a less technical language, such as “Resource Development” could be replaced with “Grants & Funding Opportunities” to facilitate and simplify navigation.

- Sorting the Types of Resources
 - Each type of resource, whether it is a tip sheet, Powerpoint presentation, manual, etc, can be organized so it is clear what each one is. We suggest that each type of resource under each category is grouped together and highlighted with designated color.


[Find Others](#)
[Ask a Question](#)
[Resource Library](#)
[Organizational Spotlight](#)
[News / Updates](#)
[TA & Other Support](#)

[forget your password/username?](#)

[meet our members](#)
[collaborate](#)
[local organizations](#)


Susan Bergeron



The League of Women Voters

VP of Public Relations

Location: New York, NY

Website: www.lww.org

[Member Directory >>](#)

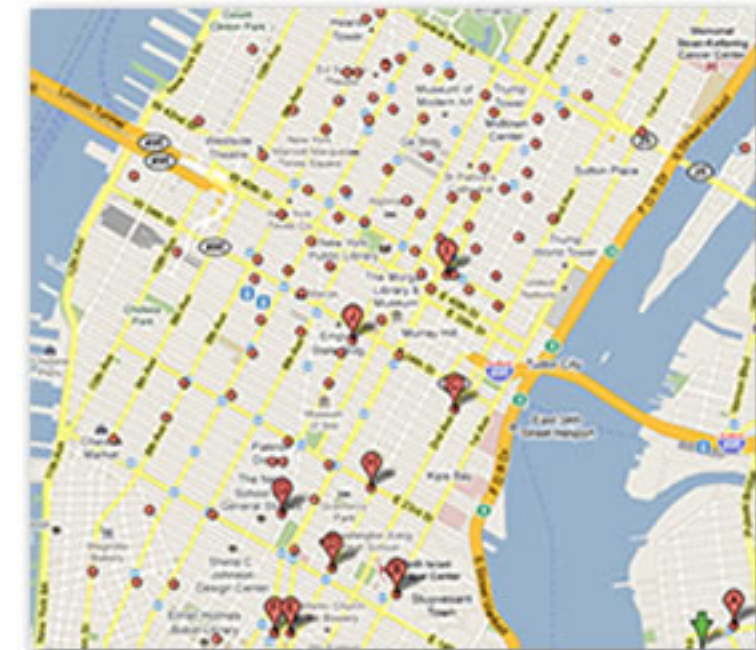


Last Discussion Topic:

Your ORR Grant: Purpose, Eligibility, and Reporting Requirements

This Month's Discussion Topic: Your ORR Grant: Purpose, Eligibility, and Reporting Requirements October is the month to get better acquainted with ORR's mission, history and structure and a good way to start the new fiscal year. Click on the Discussion Topics tab on the left of this page to discuss closing out tips or to ask questions about it with your colleagues.

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[ECBO Home](#) > [Resource Library](#)

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- [Ask a Question](#)
- [Resource Library](#)
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[forget your password/username?](#)

- External Resources
- Financial Management
- Governance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Best Practices
- Organizational and Program Start Up
- Organizational Management and Planning
- Media Communication Strategies Resource Handbook
- Links
- Annual Workshop Materials
- Weekly Tipsheets/Highlights

Advanced Search

Keyword
 Last Name
 Organization
 Location

Resource Category

- External Resources
- Financial Management
- Governance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Best Practices
- Organizational and Program Start-Up
- Organizational Management and Planning
- Media Communication Strategies Resource Handbook
- Links
- Annual Workshop Materials
- Weekly Tipsheets/Highlights

Document Type

- Presentation
- Manual
- Tipsheet
- Fact Sheet
- Document



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ECBO Home > Resource Library

- Find Others
- Ask a Question
- Resource Library
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- News / Updates
- TA & Other Support

[forget your password/username?](#)

Organizational Management and Planning

- External Resources
- Financial Management
- Governance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Best Practices
- Organizational and Program Start Up
- Organizational Management and Planning

Setting SMART Objectives
[Click here](#) to download the PowerPoint from the June 25th training call on SMART Ways to Find Money and Improve Services.

Effective Leadership
[Click here](#) to download the presentation. This presentation, developed by the ECDC Consortium, explores five important areas of leadership: core elements of effective leadership, organizational leadership, staff leadership, community leadership, and building partnerships.

Sustainability Fact Sheet
[Click here](#) to download the document. This fact sheet looks at the impact a leader has on his or her own organization, and how organizational stability can be achieved through: shaping workplace culture, maintaining strategic balance, engaging in strategic planning, and measuring programmatic and organizational improvement. This fact sheet was developed by the ECDC Consortium.

Basic Qualities of a True Leader
[Click here](#) to download the document. Developed by the ECDC Consortium, this fact sheet describes some of the qualities that true leaders possess.

Leadership and Women at a Glance
[Click here](#) to download the document. Developed by the ECDC Consortium, this fact sheet explores the role of women leaders in ethnic communities. The barriers that women leaders face, and the unique contributions that they make, are examined.

Reporting
[Click here](#) to download a Project SOAR tipsheet on reporting well. If you manage an ethnic self-help or a supplemental services grant, progress reports to ORR are due twice a year.

Three Leaders Who Made a Difference
[Click here](#) to download the document. Created by IRC, this resource is a compilation of leadership case studies. Throughout the articles, these real-life nonprofit leaders discuss the personal decisions and events that have led to their influential role within their communities.

Effective Leadership
[Click here](#) to download the highlights of the 3rd Quarterly Grantee Conference Call on June 26, 2007 on Leadership Development. This document outlines the Leadership Development Presentation during the 3rd Quarterly Grantee Conference Call on June 26, 2007. Included is information on identifying potential leaders and helping them gain the confidence to lead, Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE) leadership programs, and the Nonprofit Executive Leadership Institute (NELI); the facilitators' contact information is also provided.

Setting SMART Objectives
[Click here](#) to download the document. This SMART objectives sample will help get started on formulating program goals and objectives. What is SMART? Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time Bound!

- Media Communication Strategies Resource Handbook
- Links
- Annual Workshop Materials
- Weekly Tipsheets/Highlights

Presentations
 Factsheets
 Tipsheets
 Documents



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Find Others

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username

password

sign in

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SEARCH

Register Your Organization

First Name

Last Name

Title / Position

* Organization

* City

* State

* Website URL

Description

*Required

Organization Services (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy Refugees & Analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Skills/Literacy/Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Health Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Refugee Women's Leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ESL | <input type="checkbox"/> Refugee Youth Leadership & Programming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Literacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Resettlement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Literacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Business/Micro Enterprise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home Buying | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Corps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Trafficking | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Development Accounts | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration/Citizenship/ Family Reunification | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interpreter Services | |

Register



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