THE PROJECT BRIEF

Our goal is to co-create with the Beach Institute—Savannah's flagship museum for African American arts, history, and culture—to honor history while shaping the narrative moving forward. This is a design-led movement, enhancing cultural preservation and elevating memory and identity. Students will design visual identity systems, rethink how the Beach Institute tells its story, and build tools that amplify visibility, connection, and pride in the community it serves.

SCAD SERVE student Yuting Zhou, SCAD Vice President Darrell Naylor-Johnson, owner of Freedom Trail Tours Johnnie Brown, The Beach Institute director Dr. Darnise Martin, SCAD SERVE director Priya Padgett, Senior Executive Director of Academic Operations Jonathan Goldstein.

MEET THE TEAM

With such a wide variety of skill sets and majors—including graduate and undergraduate students— our team saw this project from every angle imaginable.

Jared Yost
Project Manager

Eliza Nelson
Project Manager

Haven Burke
Online Team Lead

Dr. Holly Goldstein
SCAD SERVE Professor

Maria Couchell
Research Team Lead

Alex Guerra
Inside Team Lead

Paiten Prescott
Outside Team Lead

Jennifer Graham
Alumni Mentor

Mars Arico
Illustration

Kylie Bromwell
Graphic Design

Pullen Tafadazwa Chenjerayi
Architecture

Alex Clough
Themed Entertainment Design

Elieth Cortez
Graphic Design

Donovan Daniel
Graphic Design

Derick Ma
User Experience Design

Olivia Russin
Themed Entertainment Design

Emma Sellner
Graphic Design

Yuting Zhou
Themed Entertainment Design

Ariana Wilkes
Graphic Design

Lucas Qin
Service Design

KICKOFF
& First Client Meeting

Even before we met with the Beach Institute, we were all buzzing with ideas. We discussed outdoor decoration and signage outside the building, exhibition layout and organization inside, and the institute's online presence. We were inspired by the museum, its current needs and desires, and its curators: Dr. Martin and Mr. Winbush, the Director and CEO of The Beach Institute. We used what we gathered in this initial meeting to guide us in finding the most important ideas to focus on for the next ten weeks.

TOURING THE BEACH INSTITUTE

Our team had the pleasure of being led on a private tour of The Beach Institute by the museum's CEO and tour guide, Mr. Winbush. As he expertly led us through each exhibit, we took notice of ways in which we could enhance the beautiful storytelling of the museum. We took extensive notes, asked questions, photographed exhibits, and documented any and all ideas we had from our first impressions.

HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE

The First Of Its Kind

The Beach Institute was built by freed African Americans to be the first school for Savannah's Black population in 1867. Originally financed by philanthropist Alfred Ely Beach, it served as a center of education for the first seventy-two years of its life. Chatham County Board of Education managed the building until 1988, when SCAD took ownership and started preservation work on the historic school. The journey to rehabilitation led back to the building's purpose of education once more; it was donated to the King-Tisdell Foundation and opened as the Beach Institute African American Cultural Center in 1990.

FIELD TRIPS

Learning Savannah's Black History

MARKET RESEARCH

Freedom Trail African American Heritage Tour

The Freedom Trail Bus Tour allowed us to explore Savannah's deep connections to African American history through stories of struggle, migration, and spiritual strength. The experience helped us understand freedom, not only as liberation, but as a continuation of expression of faith and identity. Ultimately, it reminded us of the importance of retelling Black histories, which continue to inspire hope and preserve the enduring spirit of a community.

Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum

On our field trip to the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, we traveled through expansive, detailed exhibits, learning about the lives and struggles of African American citizens fighting for integration in Savannah. We learned about local Black history through historical recreations, invaluable artifacts, presentations, and recordings of. We also heard the stories of prominent NAACP leaders like Westley Wallace Law and Hosea Williams.

BEACH INSTITUTE & SCAD

Preservation History

The fellowship between The Beach Institute and SCAD has a long history that informed our research. The Beach Institute's building exists today thanks to SCAD President and Founder Paula Wallace and King-Tisdell Cottage Foundation founder and Civil Rights leader Westley Wallace Law's mutual devotion to preservation.

The Savannah Trib

"GEORGIA'S BEST WEEKLY"

Vol. 19 No. 5   Published Each Wednesday, 916 Montgomery Street, Savannah, Georgia · 233-6128   November 14, 1990 through November 21, 1990

Beach Institute Receives $700,000

W.W. Law Receives Keys To Beach From SCAD President
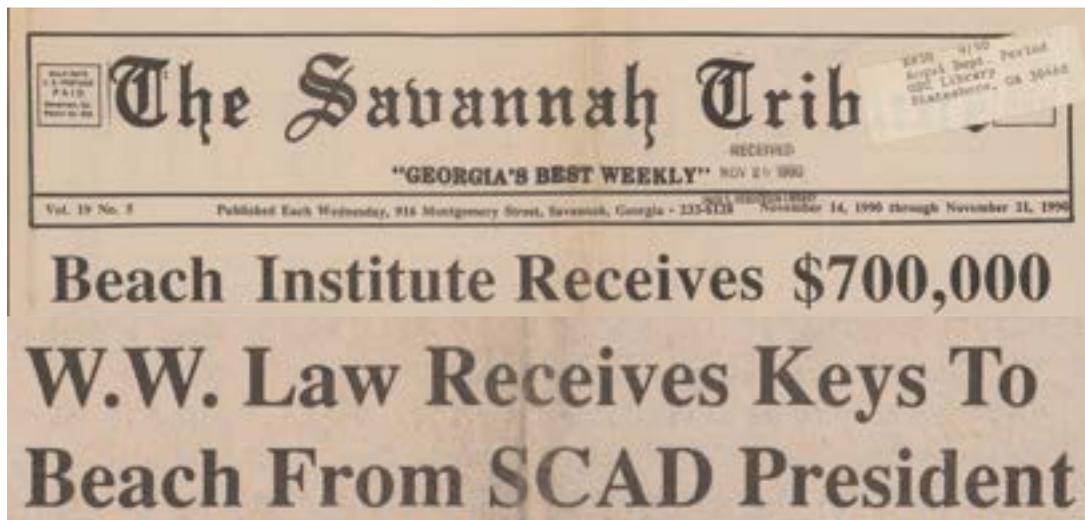
Upholding Law's Legacy

After years of operation as a school, the building was taken over by the Chatham County Board of Education. In 1988, the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) bought the building from the Board. The Beach Institute was given the financial support they needed to kick-start the rehabilitation of the century-and-a-half old building.

In 1989, The King-Tisdale Cottage Foundation recieved ownership of the building after the exterior renovations were completed by SCAD in collaboration with Civil Rights leader W.W. Law. Today, the Beach Institute continues to research, preserve, and teach African American history through its museum and community spaces.

BRAND IDENTITY

Design Choices

In researching and developing the Beach Institute's brand identity, we preserved the integrity of its original logo and color palette while refining the overall design for clarity and cohesion. The design of the logo embodies unification and is inspired by historic Ghanaian Kente Cloth textiles. Typography choices balance tradition and modernity: Baskerville in all caps for headers, Montserrat Bold for subheaders , and Montserrat Regular for body text. Key imagery inspired by African American history and culture further reinforces the Institute's heritage and visual identity.

BASKERVILLE

Baskerville

Montserrat

Montserrat
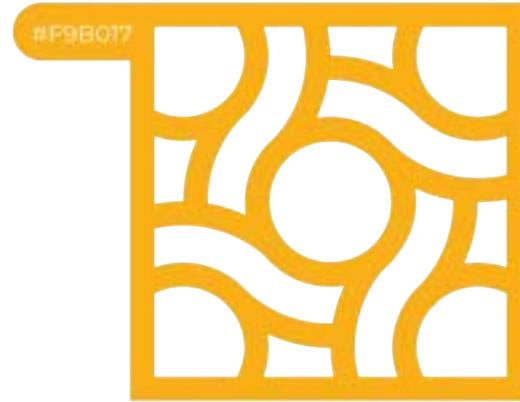
PRIMARY RESEARCH

Surveys

Our research relied heavily on primary sources to ensure an authentic understanding of the Beach Institute's identity and visitor experience. This included conducting surveys that captured firsthand feedback from guests about their experiences, as well as interviews with staff members who provided valuable insight into the Institute's history, daily operations, and community impact. Together, these perspectives guided our design decisions and helped us create a brand identity that reflects the essence of the Beach Institute.

DATA ANALYSIS

Information Provided By The Beach Institute

Context & Market

- Savannah: 11M visitors expected in 2025; $5B tourism revenue
- 27% engage in cultural activities   strong alignment
- High-income visitor base supports premium cultural offerings
- Institutional partnerships growing (SCAD SERVES, schools, civic orgs)

Internal Performance

- ~800 visitors from 275+ ZIP codes (majority non-local)
Unique assets:
- Prestigious collections
- Historic building & strong community goodwill
- Knowledgeable staff and educational mission

Opportunity Space

- Cultural tourism expansion and tour guide collaborations
- Partnership-driven programming (Jazz, STEM, community groups)
- Marketing amplification through Savannah tourism networks

Key Challenges

- Low faculty, parking & accessibility issues
- Limited programming and marketing strategy
- Historic preservation upkeep

Threat Landscape

- High volume of competitors
- Rise of digitilization in museums
- Climate-related damage (mold, humidity)

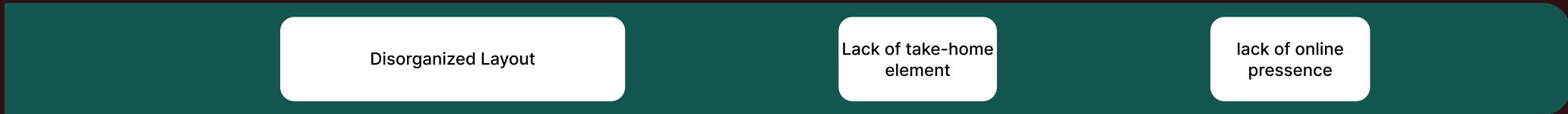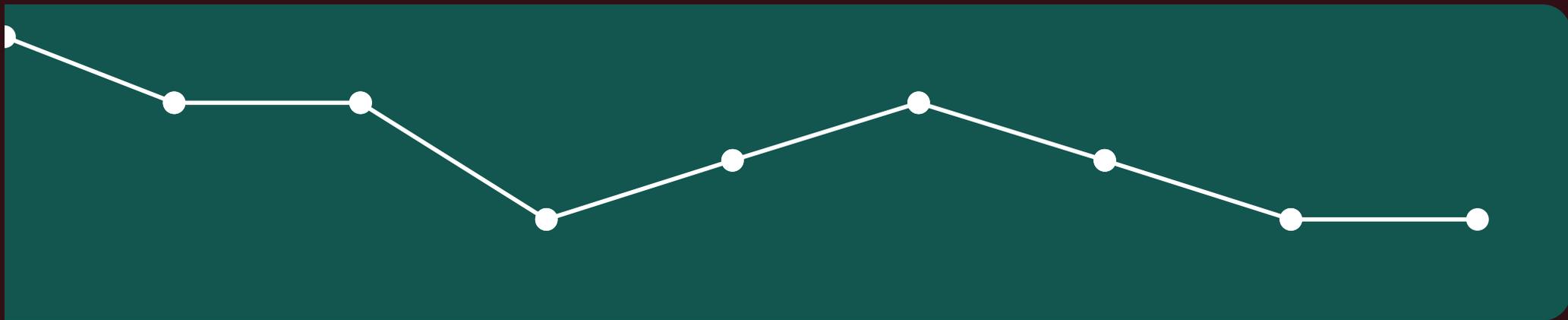

King Tisdell Cottage Foundation 990 Summary
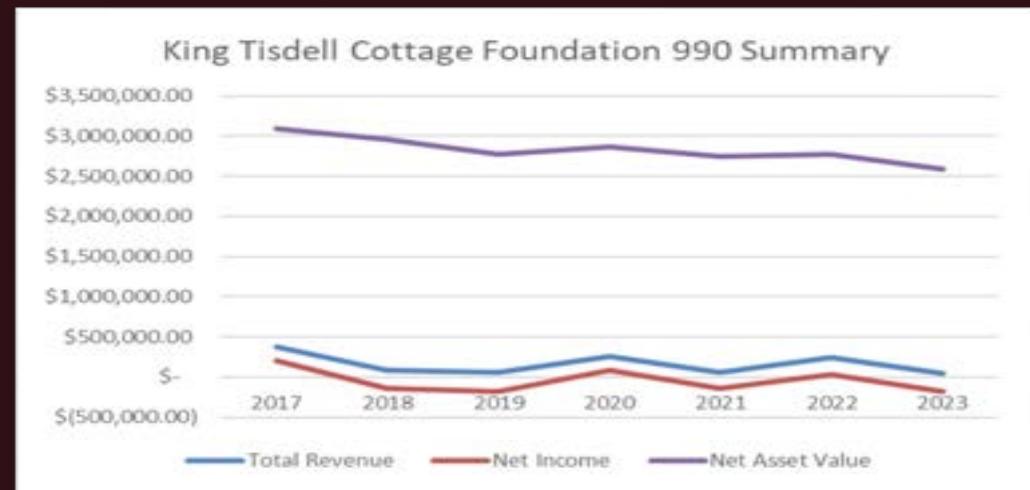
King Tisdell Visitors by Zip Code Last 60 days

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Stages	Awareness		Entry		Explore Exhibition		
Actions	User finds advertisement	Locate museum	Ring buzzer to be let in	Purchase a ticket	Decide visiting route	Explore first floor	
Touchpoints	Advertisement	Exterior signage	Garden	Giftshop entrance	Ground floor hallway exhibits	Ulysses Davis exhibits	Main gallery
Experience							
Pain Points	Lack of public explosure	Unclear signage	Unattended garden	Broken buzzer	Unclear wayfinding	Lighting discontinuity	

Explore Exhibition	Exit	Post-Visit

Explore second floor	Browse giftshop	Giftshop exit	Survey	Follow social/ events

Tucker & Bostic exhibits	Classroom exhibits	Genealogy research	Quilt exhibits	Giftshop souvenirs	Garden	Survey QR code	Social media

Disorganized Layout	Lack of take-home element	lack of online pressence

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

During Fall 2025, we conducted comprehensive research to understand and improve the Beach Institute's visitor experience both on-site and online. Methods included surveys, interviews, archival research, and direct observation. We interviewed with the Beach Institute team, third-party software developers, historic site tour guides, and SCAD historic preservation faculty to gain multi-perspective insights into operations and audience engagement.

Archival studies at the Savannah Municipal Archives and Georgia Historical Society provided context about the building's founding, preservation, and role in Savannah's Black community. On-site research encompassed observation of visitor behavior, spatial flow, exhibit storytelling, and signage clarity. The combined findings guided strategies for enhancing in-museum storytelling, improving external wayfinding, strengthening community outreach, and expanding the Beach Institute's digital presence and marketing impact.
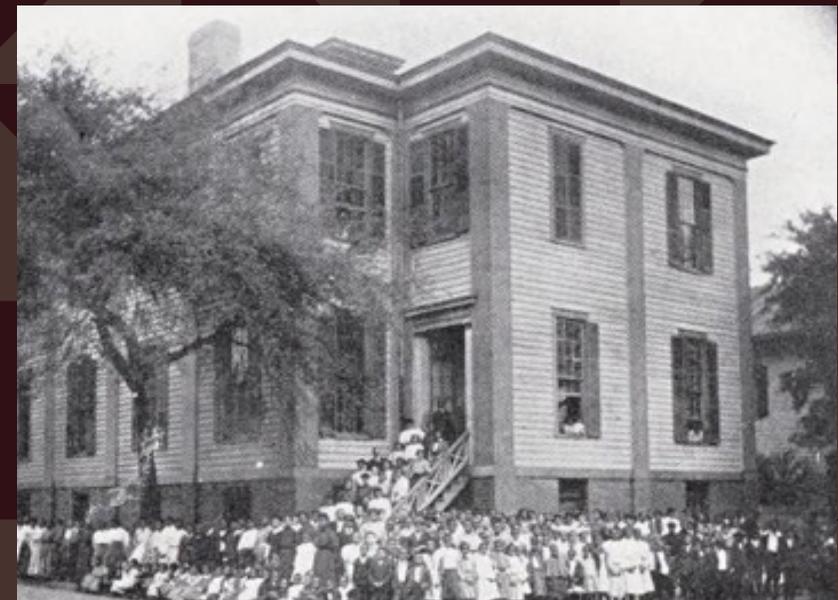
PROBLEM STATEMENT

How Might We enhance the visitor experience inside, outside, and online at the Beach Institute that is interactive, engaging and connects with the local community and visitors?

FIRST CLIENT CHECK-IN

Presentation at The Beach Institute

CLIENT FEEDBACK

Project Proposal

Our initial discussion with the Beach Institute provided valuable insight into their goals, expectations, and vision for improving the visitor experience. The meeting sparked a wide range of creative ideas within our team, from potential design changes to programming and signage improvements. Given the scope and timeline of the project, we had to carefully evaluate each idea to determine what could be realistically achieved. This process allowed us to focus on feasible, time-efficient solutions that would have the greatest impact while still aligning with the Beach Institute's mission and available resources.

Inside

The Inside Team chose to focus on improving exhibit introduction signage to enhance wayfinding and create a more cohesive visitor journey throughout the museum. These introductory signs are designed to help visitors understand the significance of each exhibit within its specific space, providing both context and continuity as they move from one gallery to another. In addition, the team developed a comprehensive map system that divides each floor into its own clearly labeled display. This visual guide not only strengthens navigation but also encourages exploration by giving visitors a better sense of the museum's layout and flow. Together, these updates aim to make the experience more intuitive, engaging, and informative for every guest.

Outside

After collaborating with peers and evaluating what could be completed within the project timeline, the Outside Team decided to design a series of exterior signs aimed at improving visibility and navigation. One key focus was street signage; the team sought to preserve the originality and historic character of the existing directional signage while designing to enhance overall visual appeal and readability. In addition, the team planned a set of larger signs for the courtyard wall's exterior to guide visitors to the museum entrance. These additions are intended to guide both intentional museum-goers and casual passersby, making the approach to the Beach Institute more welcoming, intuitive, and visually cohesive.

Online

The Online Team narrowed its focus to enhancing the Beach Institute's digital presence. This included improving the user interface of the existing website to make it more engaging, accessible, and user-friendly. In addition, the team proposed creating a TikTok page to expand the museum's online reach and connect with a broader, younger audience through short-form educational and promotional videos. To ensure long-term success and consistency, the team also developed a posting schedule and a set of content guidelines outlining tones, themes, and educational goals before officially transferring management of the TikTok page to the Beach Institute.

TEAM IDEAS

DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Ideation to Creation

Research   Ideation   Development   Feedback   Final

Our Design Process

Our process was rooted in research, collaboration, and iteration. This section highlights how our process moved from insight to implementation, transforming challenges into opportunities for connection and meaningful design.

OUTSIDE SIGNAGE

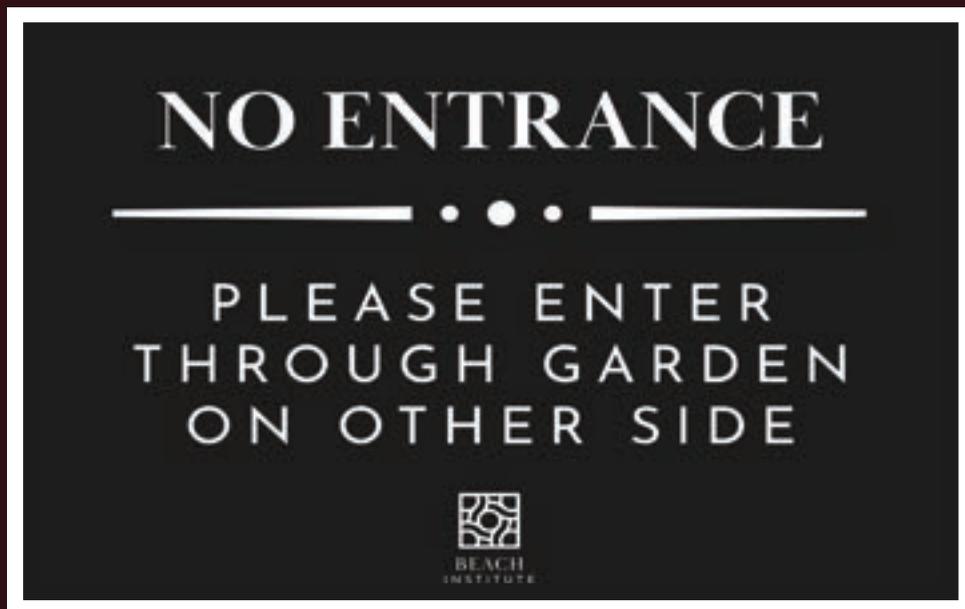This deliverable enhances the story the Beach Institute tells and amplifies visibility.

Problem:

One of the issues we identified early in the project was that the existing entrance signage at the Beach Institute was confusing for visitors. The placement and design did not clearly indicate the main entry gate, causing uncertainty about where to go upon arrival. This lack of visual clarity affected both accessibility and first impressions. Addressing this problem became a key part of our design process, leading us to explore clearer wayfinding solutions and signage strategies that enhance orientation and visitor experience.

Feedback:

In our first iteration of the entrance signage solution, we received feedback that the wording came across as too negative. We were encouraged to re-frame the message in a more positive and welcoming way. We also got feedback favoring our lighter background color option, as it felt more approachable and visually cohesive with the Beach Institute's overall aesthetic. These insights guided our refinements toward a friendlier and more effective signage design.

Iteration One:

NO ENTRANCE

PLEASE ENTER THROUGH GARDEN ON OTHER SIDE

BEACH INSTITUTE

Solution:

HISTORIC STAIRS

PLEASE ENTER THROUGH GARDEN ON OTHER SIDE

BEACH INSTITUTE

OUTSIDE SIGNAGE

Problem:

A major challenge identified at the Beach Institute was exterior way finding, as visitors often had difficulty locating the main entrance or understanding how to approach the building. The lack of clear, engaging signage limited the museum's visibility and missed opportunities to connect with passersby. To address this, we focused on designing exterior signs that guides visitors intuitively while reflecting the welcoming and historic character of the building. Our design inspiration drew from the original Beach Institute sign, blending history with a refreshed approach.

Feedback:

In the feedback stage, we presented both light and dark versions of the exterior signage design. The response was positive overall with a preference for the lighter version. The light background was seen as more inviting and better suited to the building's exterior environment. We also agreed that this direction complemented the Beach Institute's current identity and helped the typography stand out from a distance. We carefully crafted the language on these signs to amplify the story of the building and invite visitors to learn more.

Iteration One:

Solution:
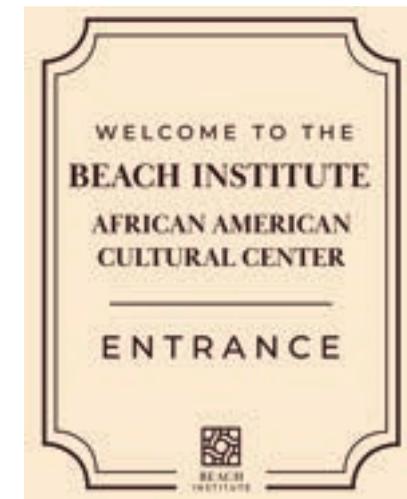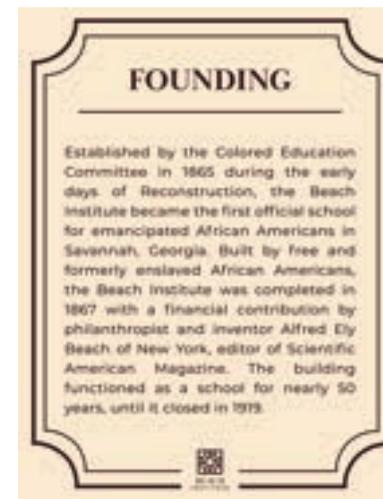
INSIDE SIGNAGE

This deliverable will amplify the identity systems within the museum and help make connections for visitors.

Problem:

Before implementing exhibit introductions, we noticed that visitors often entered gallery spaces without a clear understanding of what each exhibition represented. There was little contextual information to guide their experience or connect individual artworks to the larger themes of the museum. We identified this as an opportunity to design exhibit introductions that provide clarity, context, and a welcoming entry point into each space.

Iteration One:

Feedback:

After feedback from professors and Beach Institute constituents, we implemented design iterations and made changes according to grid specifications and text alignment. We fact-checked exhibit information and added new images, context, and descriptions. Most importantly, we initiated a new QR program for the museum, where inside signage would connect to the out-of-museum experience online.

Solution:

Ben Tucker & Rudolph Valentino Bostic Exhibit

Ben Tucker

Jazz bassist and composer, Ben Tucker (1930–2013) toured the world with his upright bass and co-wrote the Grammy-nominated hit Comin' Home Baby. A self-taught jazz musician, he later became a community force in Savannah, and he established one of the city's first Black-owned radio stations and mentored generations of local musicians. Known as an "unofficial mayor," Tucker welcomed everyone into his circle of music, friendship, and civic pride.

Ben Tucker

Rudolph Valentino Bostic

Self-taught painter Rudolph "Rudy" Bostic (1944–2021) transformed discarded cardboard into vivid, soulful scenes largely inspired by the Bible. Using house paint and other found mediums, he created thousands of works alive with color, movement, and emotion. Bostic's art, both humble and luminous, embodies his deep faith and boundless imagination. Through his inventive use of ordinary materials, he redefined the possibilities of creative expression, celebrating spirituality, resilience, and the extraordinary beauty found in the everyday.

Rudolph Valentino Bostic, "Shepherd"

MAP DESIGN

This deliverable enhances the visitor experience by making navigation clear and engaging.

Problem:

Wayfinding within the Beach Institute proved to be a common challenge for visitors, as the layout of the historic school made navigation difficult to immediately understand. To address this issue, we designed a clear and visually engaging map to help guests traverse through the museum more confidently. The map highlights key spaces, such as exhibits, restrooms, and exits and provides an overview of the building's layout. This solution aims to improve visitor flow and enhance the overall museum experience.

Iteration One:
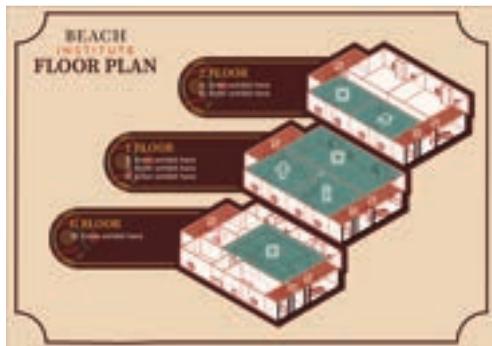
Feedback:

Feedback showed that the client preferred the three dimensional map and lighter color option for its clarity and visual appeal, helping guests grasp the building's layout. We refined
and finalized the 3D map as the preferred version.

Solution:
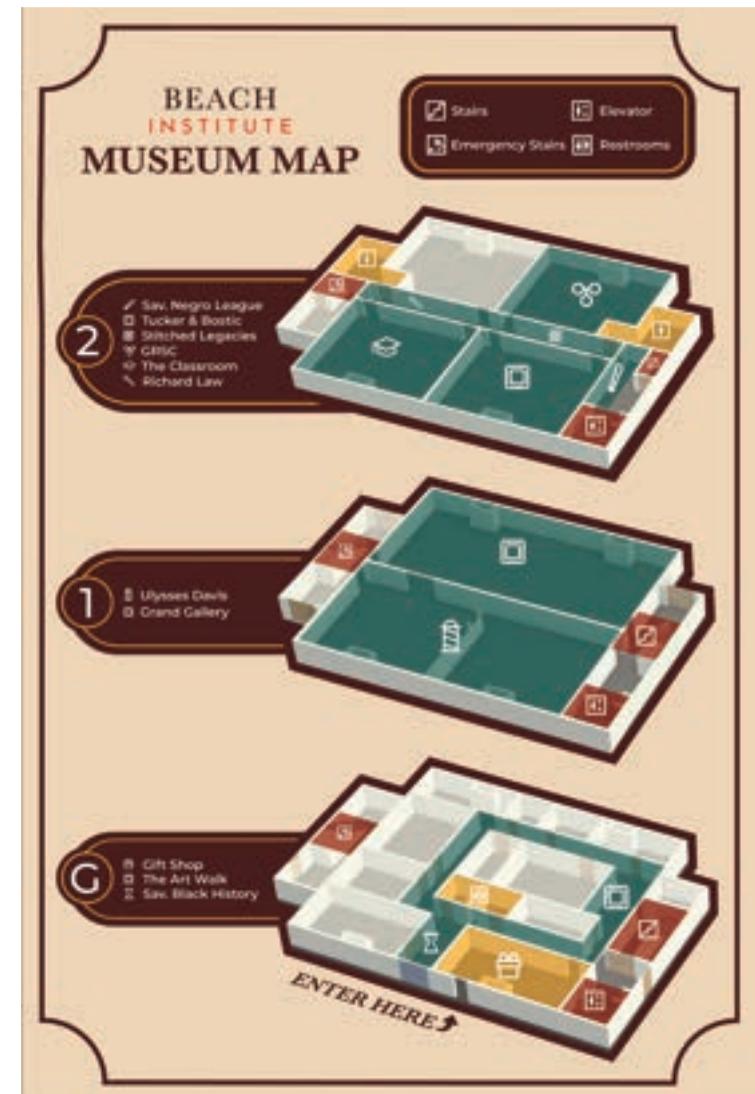
TIKTOK
Increasing Online Visibility

Before developing content ideas for the Beach Institute's TikTok presence, we began by evaluating the target audience and platform dynamics. We analyzed the museum's current visitors and online followers to understand demographic trends, interests, and engagement behaviors.

Our research also looked at comparable cultural institutions to identify successful content strategies and tone. This process helped us determine that TikTok could serve as a tool for storytelling, education, and community connection reaching both local audiences and viewers visiting Savannah.

One of our proposed social media concepts is "Wisdom Wednesdays," a recurring TikTok series where short videos highlight pieces from the Beach Institute's collections or current exhibitions. Each video features a brief voiceover providing historical or cultural insight, creating an engaging and educational post.

The series also establishes a consistent and manageable posting rhythm, as videos can be recorded and edited in advance as drafts. As part of our deliverables, we plan to leave the Beach Institute with a selection of pre-recorded "Wisdom Wednesday" videos and several ready-to-post drafts to help sustain the series after our project concludes.
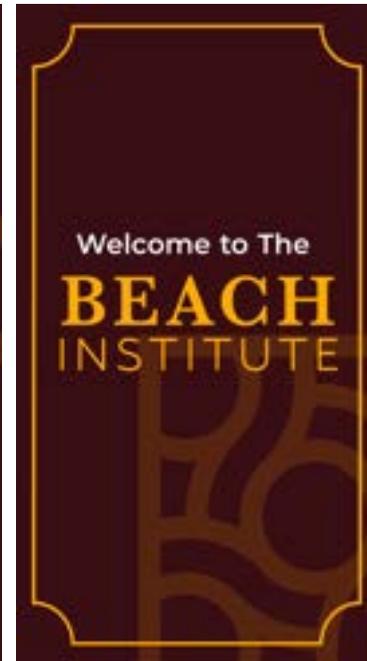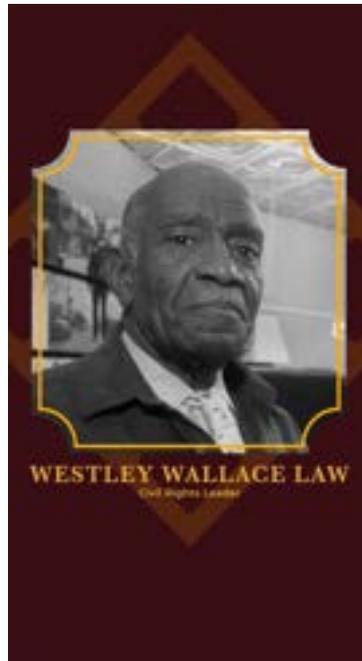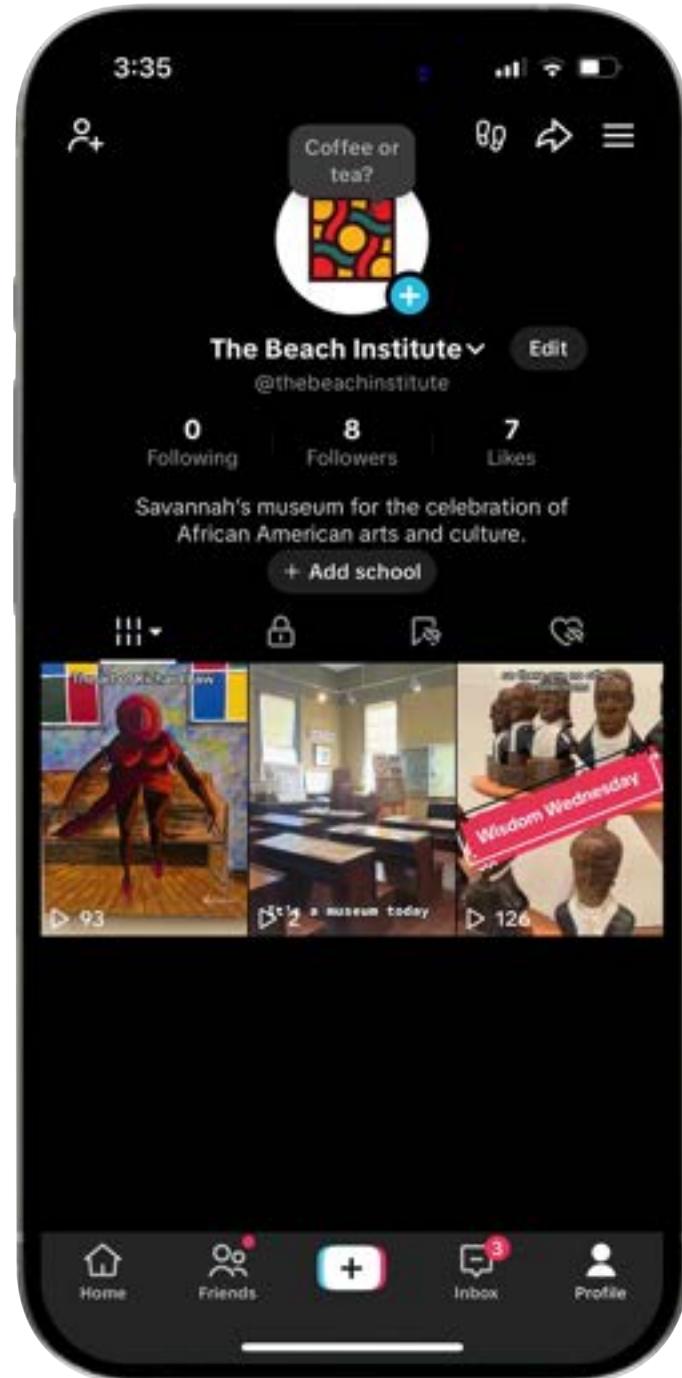
QR CODE SOLUTION

Connecting The Physical And Digital Museum Experience

Inside

Online
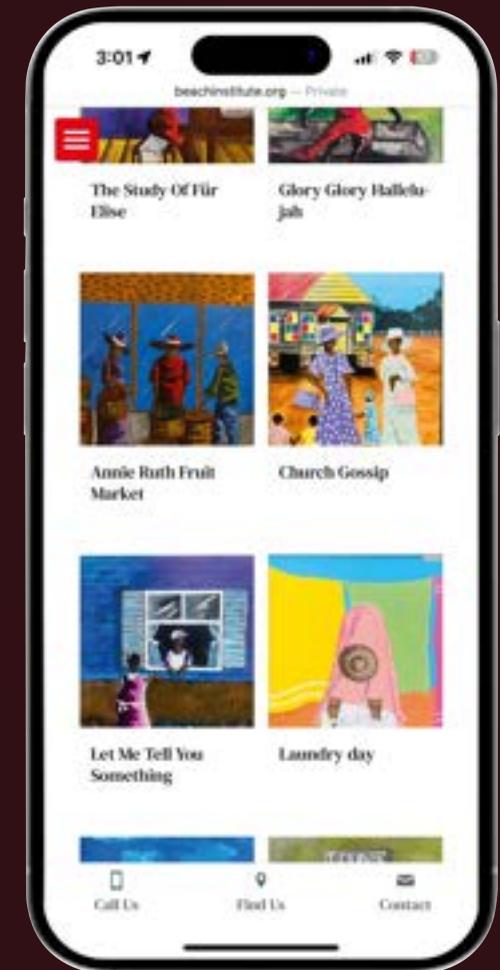
COLLABORATION

Designing in action
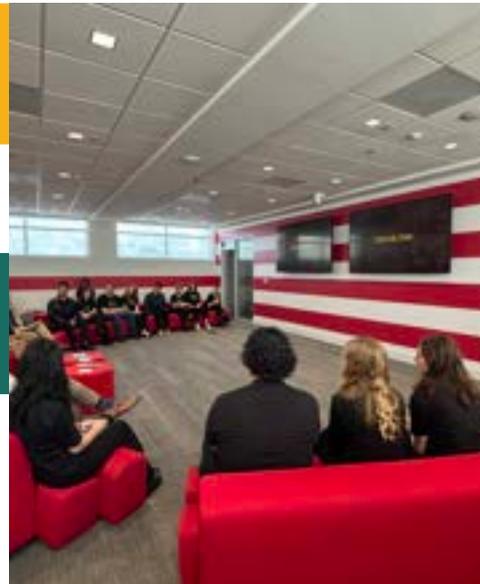
Connecting past and present

Preservation in storytelling

HIDDEN HISTORIES

Increasing Storytelling Online

As part of our research process, we developed a Hidden Histories feature page for the Georgia Historical Society site highlighting The Beach Institute and its preservation. This concept emerged from our goal to surface underrepresented stories that connect to the Beach Institute's legacy and the broader narrative of African American history in Savannah. Our research lead translated archival findings into a clear, engaging layout that encourages visitors to explore beyond familiar narratives. Through this process, we highlighted how design can serve as a tool for education, storytelling, and preservation.

FINAL DELIVERABLES

Inside

Outside
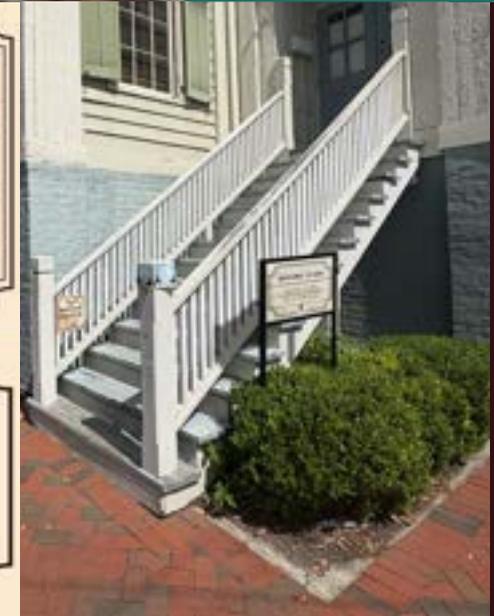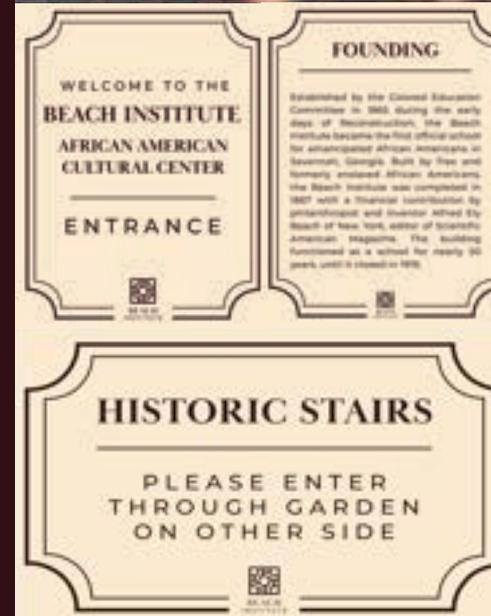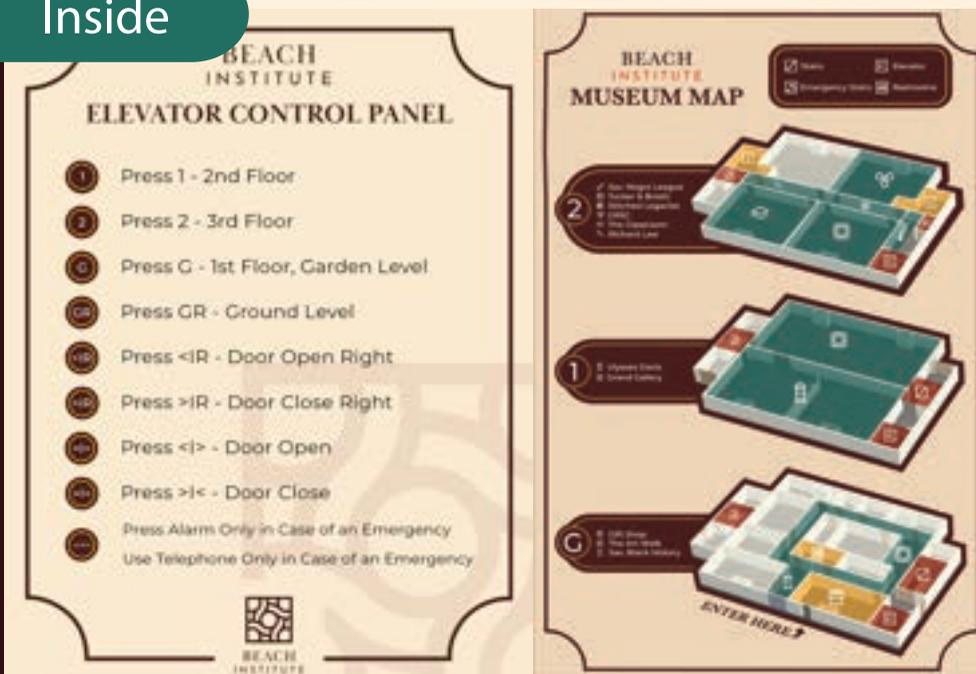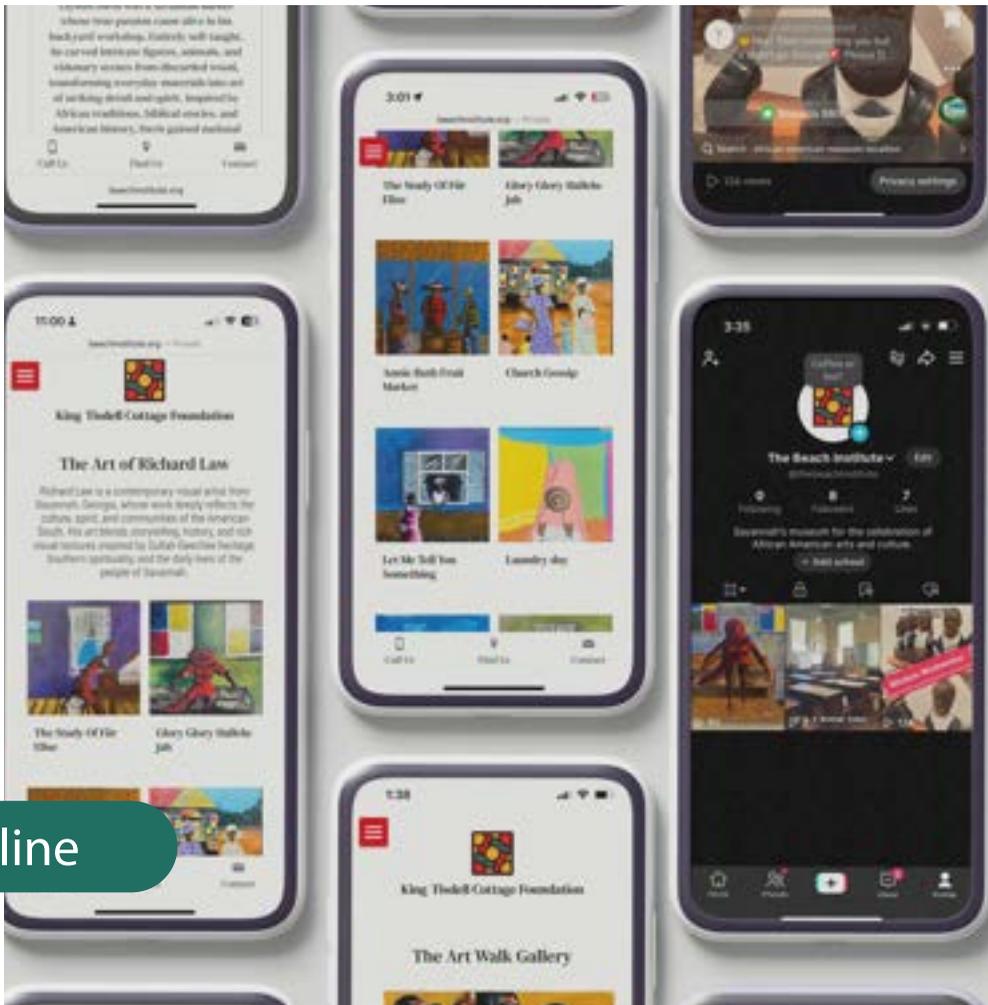
Online

Research

41

FUTURE DIRECTION
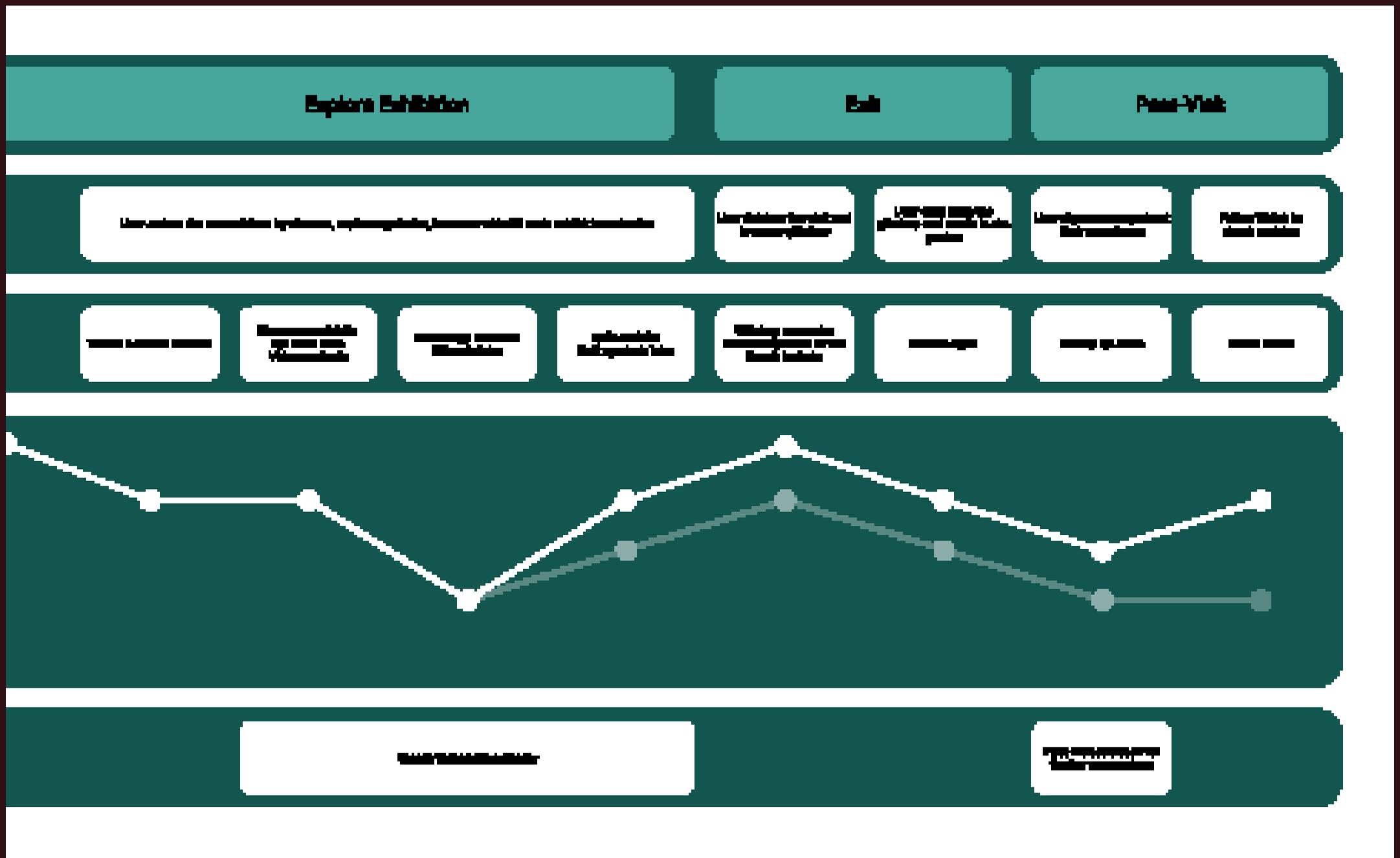
Inside, Outside, Online

"We must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future."
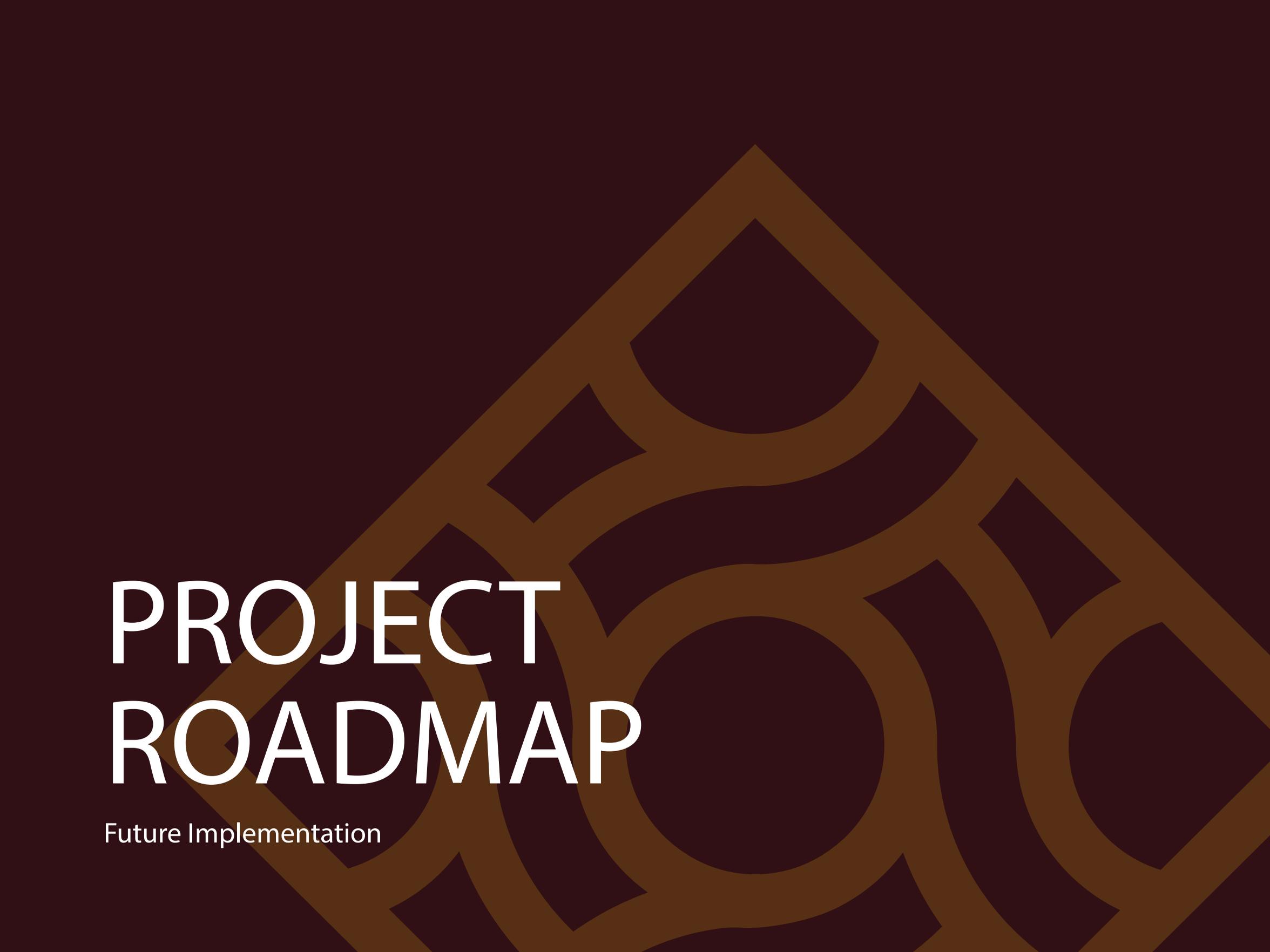
- Martin Luther King Jr.

FUTURE CUSTOMER
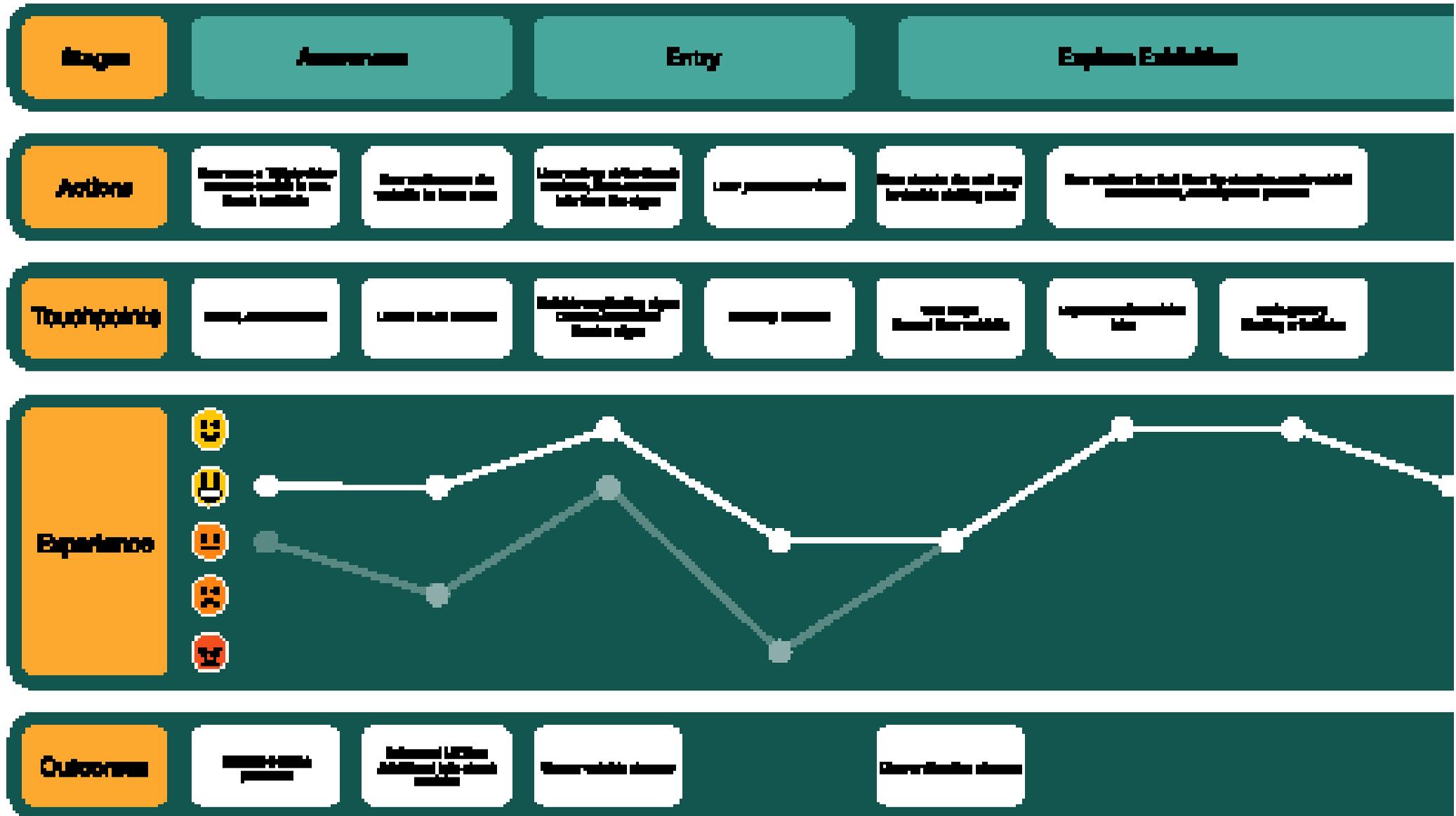
JOURNEY MAP

PROJECT ROADMAP

Future Implementation

Phase 01

Launch & Testing

- Install signage & wayfinding
- Test QR system on key exhibits
- User testing feedback on website
- Launch and update Tiktok

Phase 02

Evaluation

- Analyze feedback and metrics
- Update QR code art information
- Evaluate Tiktok views and engagement

Phase 03

Expansion

- Complete digital archive
- Keep consistent TikTok schedule
- Connect with visitors and community through events

Phase 04

Long-Term

- Future sustainable growth
- Develop online presence through socials and website