SOCS

State Open Campaign System

Updated May 28, 2013

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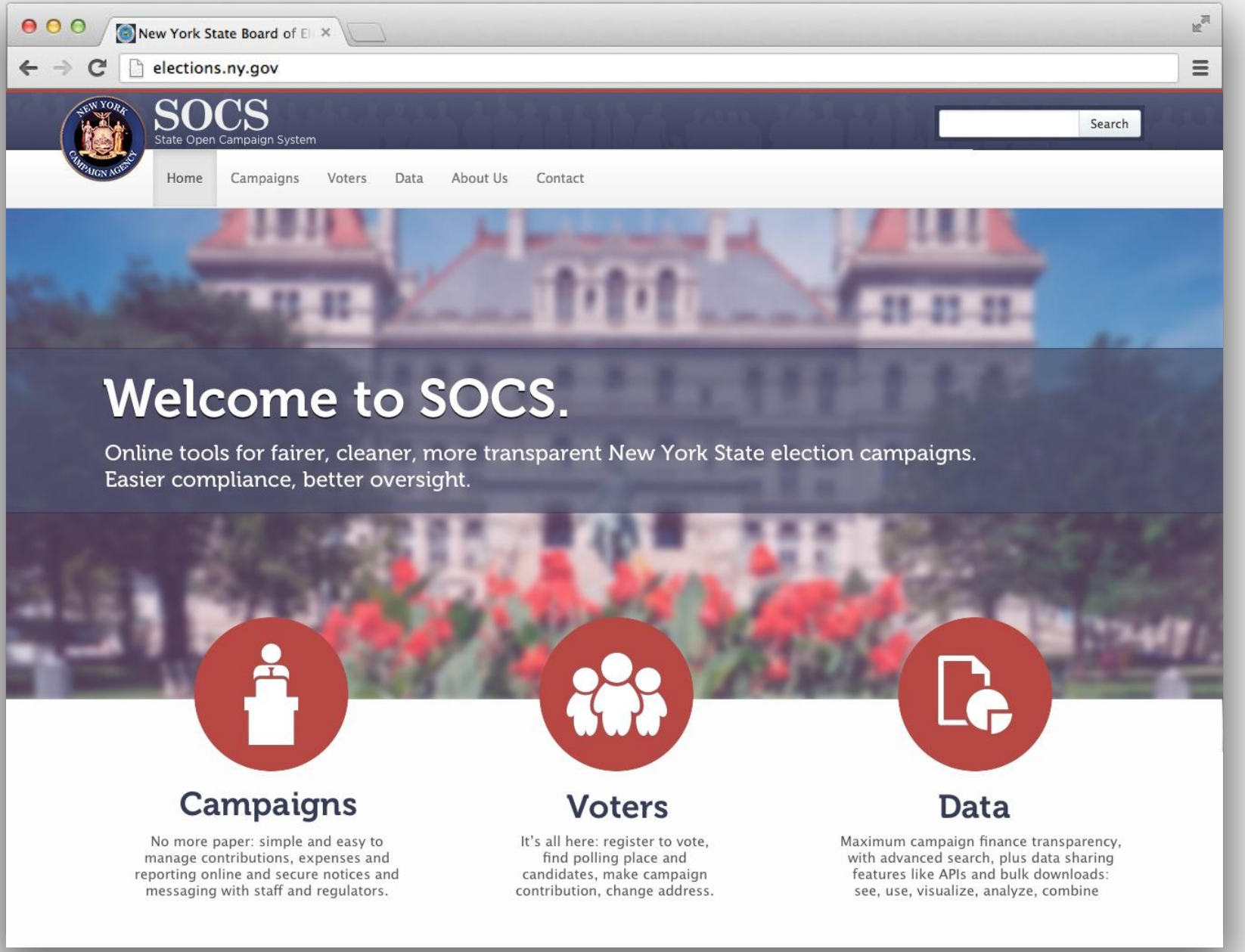
State Open Campaign System

Open Campaigns



SOCS
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Open Campaign Working Group

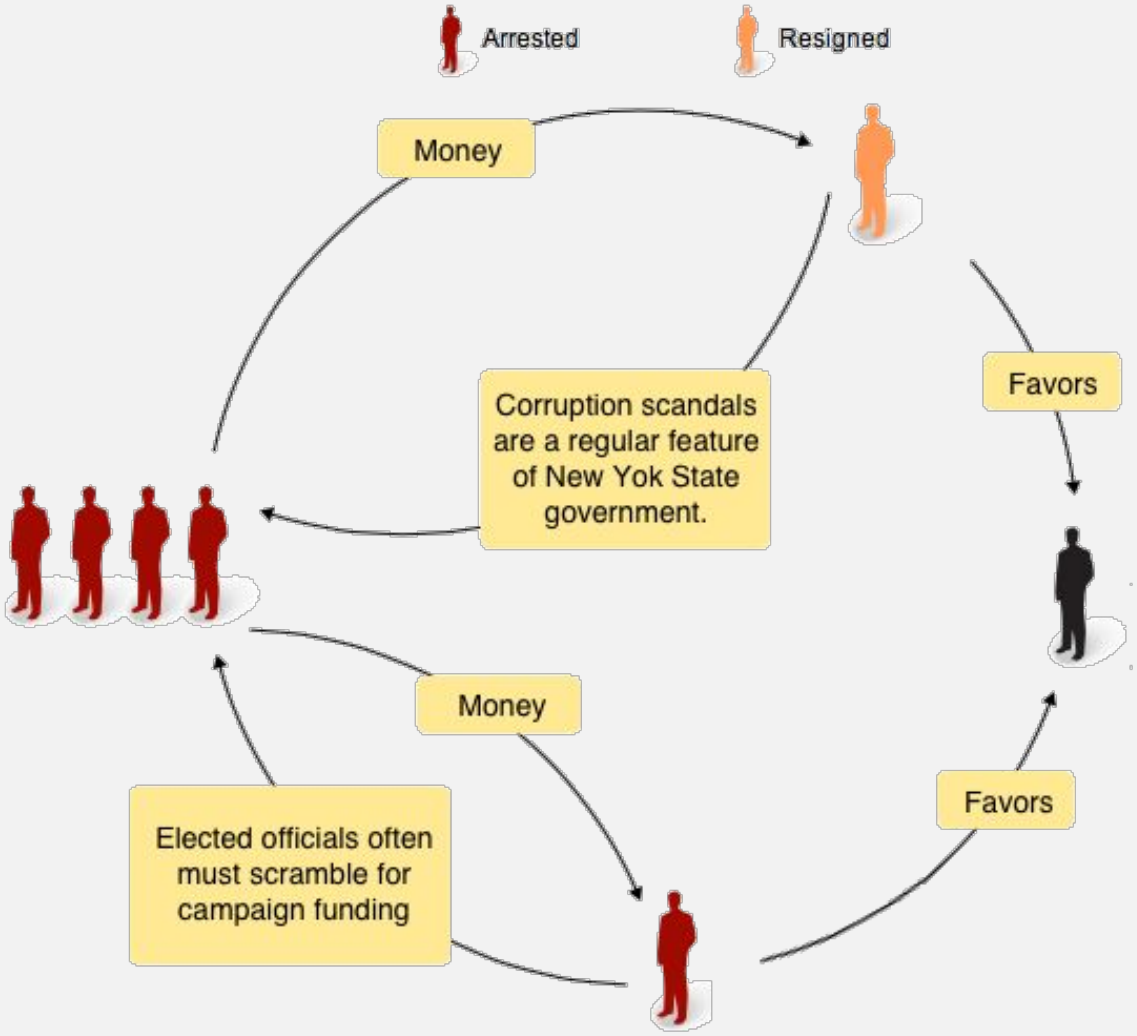
The Open Campaign Working Group includes public minded New Yorkers with experience in technology, elections and transparency.

Members of the group created the State Open Campaign System (SOCS) a proposed state of the art website and database system that uses technology to transform state election campaigns, and make them cleaner, fairer and more transparent.

opencampaignworkinggroup.org

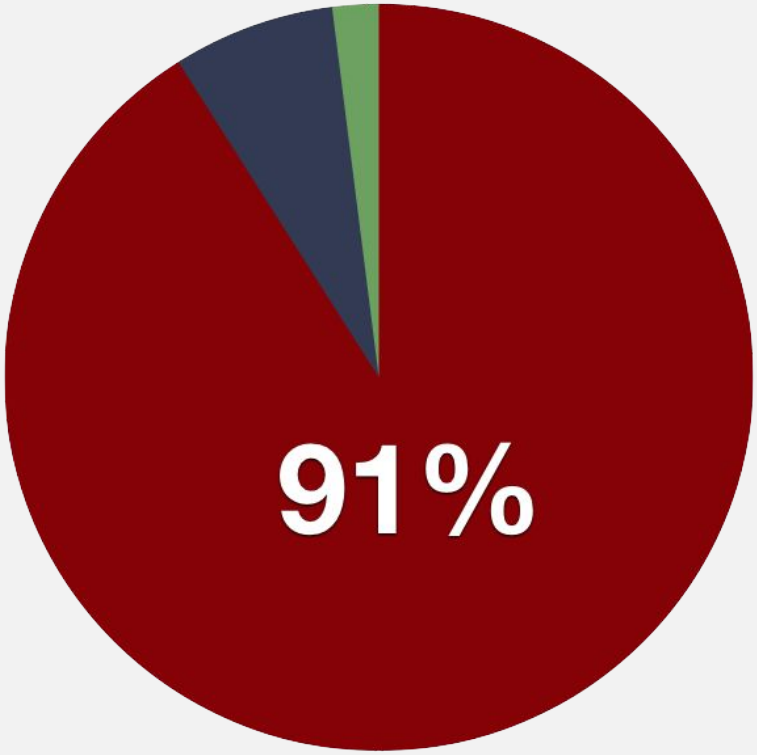
New York State is once again reeling from scandal.

32 state politicians indicted or convicted of a crime, censured, or otherwise accused of misbehaving in the last seven years, including **governors**, and senate **majority leaders**.



New Yorkers are Dismayed.

- 91% of New Yorkers think corruption is a "serious problem" in the state legislature.*
- About 1/3rd of New Yorkers think it's "likely" their state legislator could be arrested for corruption.*



State Board of Elections a "Toothless Tiger"
Reporting and Audit Process Broken Down

- 103,805 violations of state campaign finance laws since 2011.*
- $31 million in campaign funds is “missing.”
- 622 committees with over $12 million in the bank have stopped filing.
- BOE database and technology is "archaic," "inflexible," "prohibitively costly," "impediment to people scrutinizing campaign filings."**

There's a Better Way

New York State can use proven, inexpensive, open source technology.

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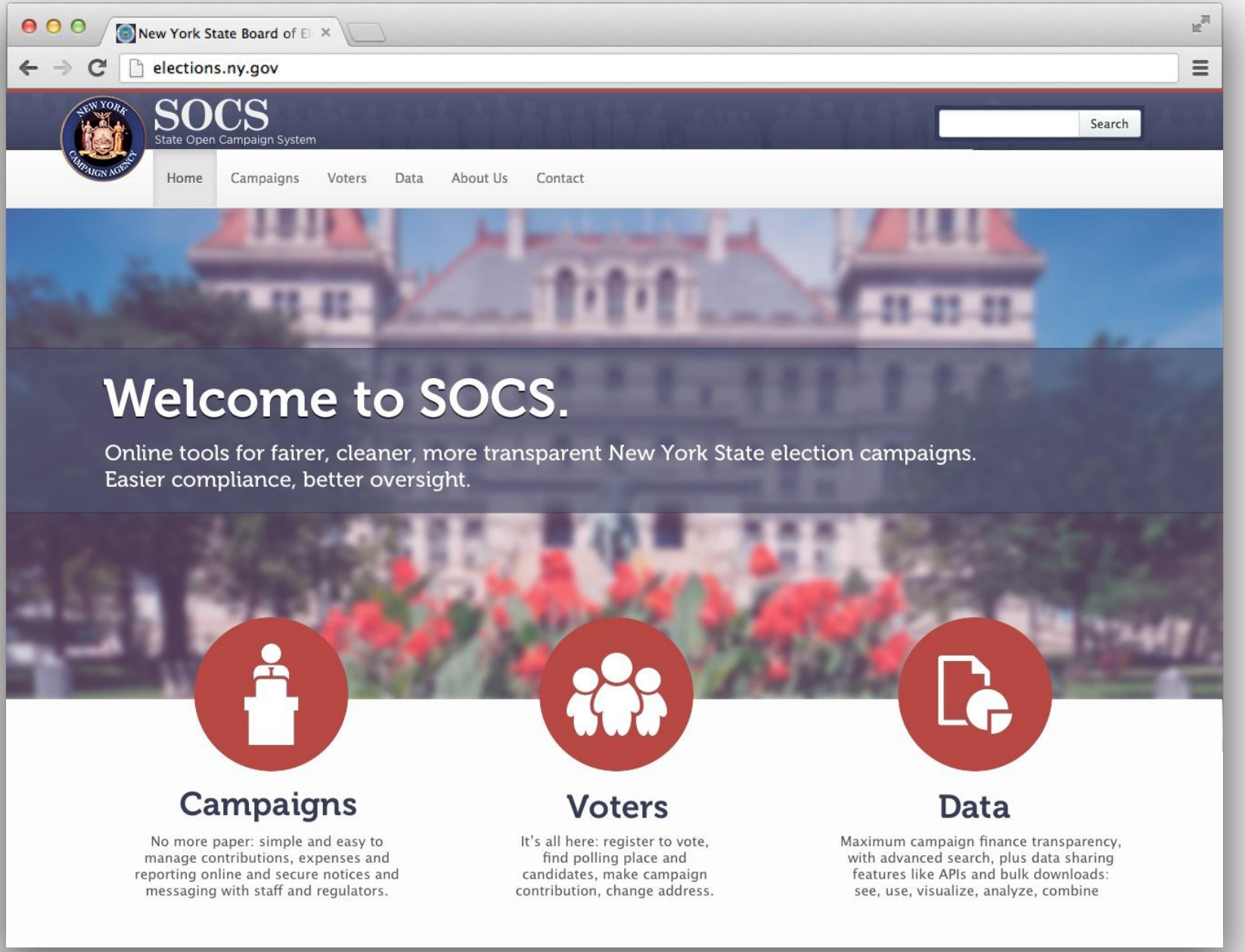
Affordable, Open Source Technology



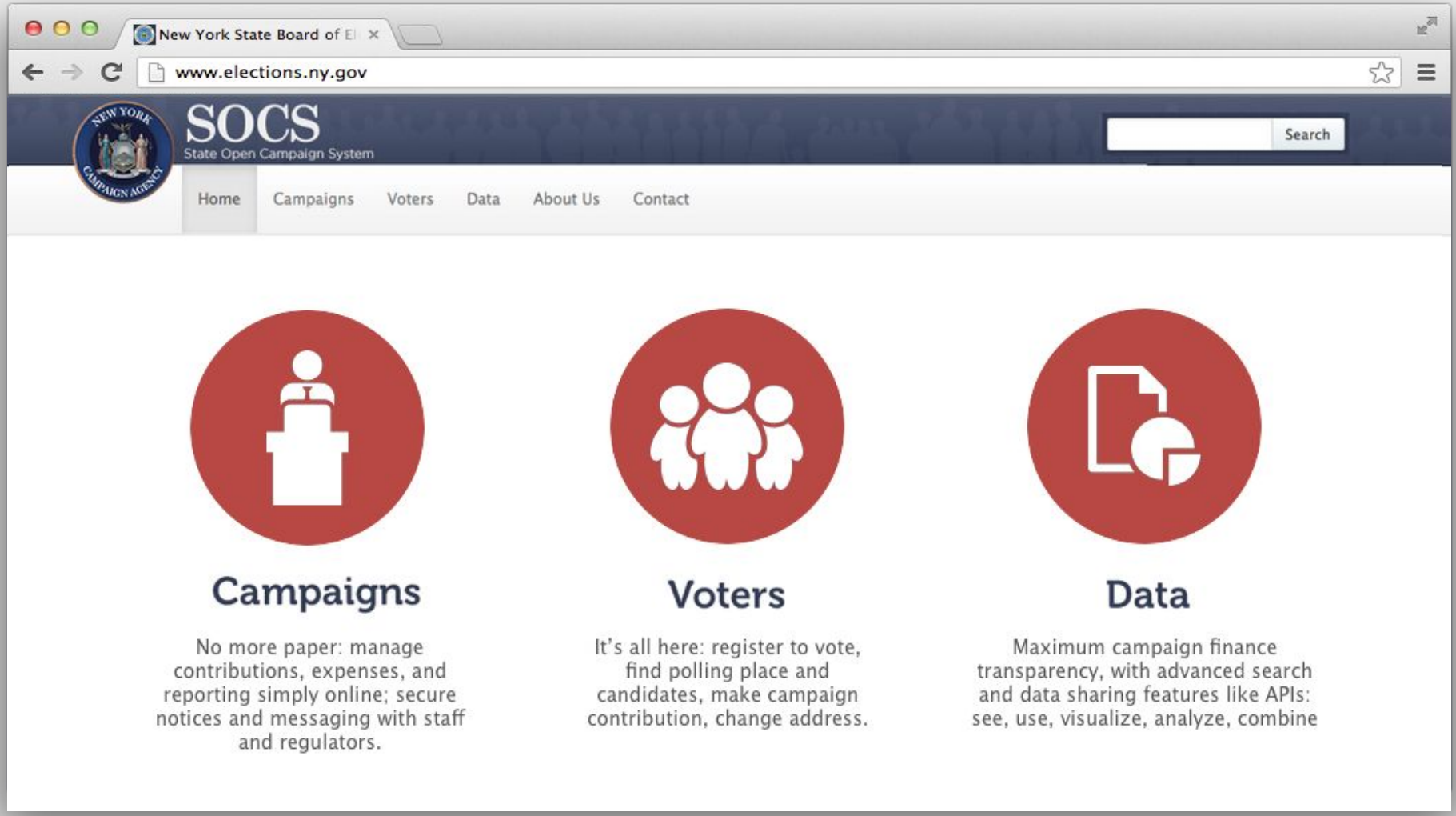
The State Open Campaign System

SOCS is a proposed state of the art website and database. The paperless, online system:

- Increases the transparency and public accountability of state campaigns.
- Makes campaign audits faster and less expensive for campaigns and regulators.
- Saves money and time for campaigns and regulators alike.
- Gives all campaigns the same, powerful, online campaign finance tools.
- Is highly flexible and can work with new campaign finance laws.

SOCS
State Open Campaign System

One Stop Shop



Better for Campaign Regulators

SOCS promotes a virtuous cycle that makes reporting and auditing faster, less expensive and more accurate.

The paperless process results in fewer errors, instant access to information, and vastly improved record keeping.

Digital communications between regulators and campaigns means instant, secure notifications of correspondence and audits..

Our integrated, seamless system means instant access to supporting documentation like scanned checks and receipts for all staff.

Better for Campaigns

Everything is online, in one place.

All records are kept in a digital format, avoiding manual data entry and potential mistakes.

Electronic campaign registration, tracking of contributions and expenses saves time.

Simple, Turbo-Tax style financial management is intuitive: quickly adapt it to any campaign, and integrate with existing fiscal software.

Secure instant messages, notices from regulators streamline the audit process.

Better for Voters

It’s all here. Voters can update their address with the Board of Elections, locate their polling place, and even register to vote through the SOCS site.

Voters also make contributions to campaigns through SOCS, which will be automatically, instantly, and securely be processed into the campaign's accounts.

Better for Government Watchdogs

Total Timely Information Access:

No paper means researchable data is complete and comprehensive.

SOCS provides public access to donor employer and profession data for first time.

A powerful Application Programming Interface (API) permits direct integration of latest data with watchdogs' analytical and reporting tools: no more bulk downloads of potentially-outdated data sets.

Maximum Transparency

SOCS maximizes campaign finance transparency. Data about political campaign spending is available for anyone to easily find, use, analyze and visualize.

All data will be machine searchable and readable. Advanced search features will make data sortable and usable on-site.

Bulk downloads and API streams keep SOCS at the state of the art for data sharing.

Research & Findings

Interviews with Campaigns, Regulators, and Consultants

- Six New York-based **campaigns** and active political **consultants**.
- NYC **Campaign Finance Board** policy and technology staff.
- **NYC Votes** Project with Art Chang, NYC Voter Assistance Advisory Committee
- Leading NGO campaign finance **transparency experts**.
  - National Institute on Money in State Politics
  - Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School.
  - Database consultants for Common Cause NY assessing NYS BOE.
- **Technologists** and the Tech Services Industry
  - PayPal
  - Stripe
  - ActBlue

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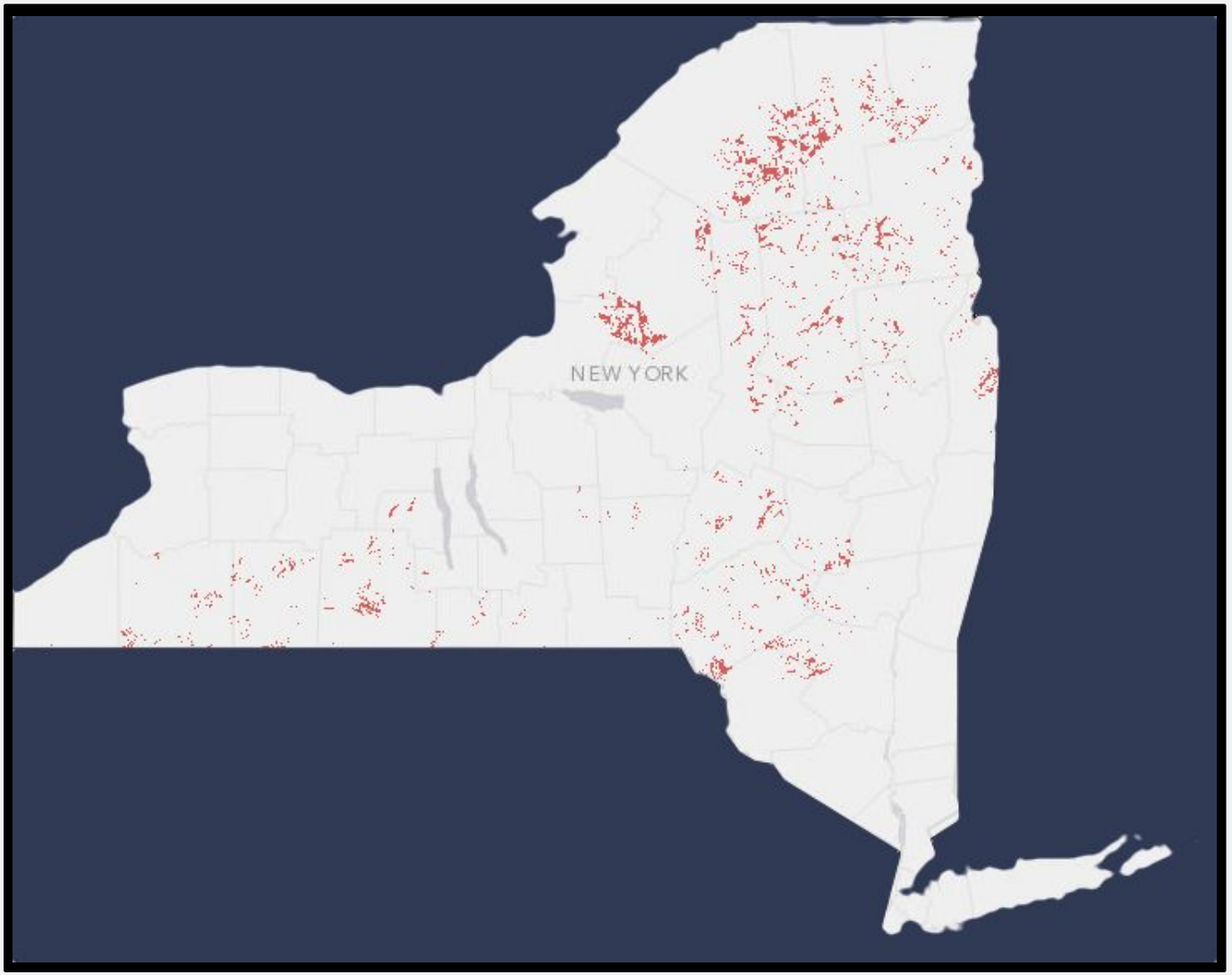
NYS is Wired

92% of NYS residences have access to broadband.

All legislative districts have access to broadband.

= Broadband Access

= No Broadband



Campaign Finance Process in Short

Registration · campaigns need to register with the government as an official political candidate committee

Donation Reporting · campaigns need to report every donation (mostly checks and credit cards) to a government regulatory agency

Fundraising · campaigns typically subscribe to one of a variety of technology tools to manage their donor databases, fundraising events, online fundraising, etc.

Expense Reporting · campaigns need to report all campaign expenditures as well, in addition to often purchasing a book keeping tool to keep track of bank account balances and expenditures

Audit & Enforcement · government officials need to audit campaign's reported donations and expenditures to ensure compliance with the law, and campaigns and auditors need to communicate efficiently to resolve questions

Public Oversight · investigative journalists, watchdog groups, and concerned citizens can go online to track and analyze campaign finance data published by the government

BOE Campaign Finance Data Compares Poorly With NYC

NYS Board of Elections does not include business information, date stamps for amended filings but does include duplicate entries for campaign donors and numerous typos. (Posting more BOE data on the state's Open NY, Data.ny.gov portal is a good step, but the BOE's own databases need work.)

New York City's existing Campaign Finance Information System has superior search functions, and cleaner data with fewer duplicate donor names, date tracking when filings are accepted, and more accessible file formats.

BOE Campaign Finance Technology is Obsolete

Our interviews with campaign treasurers and staffers, and technologists revealed that the State BOE campaign finance technology compares poorly with the NYC CFIS/C-SMART online system. BOE's technology:

1. relies on paper forms, which are expensive to process and prone to error,
2. is inflexible and unable to adjust to changes in campaign finance law,
3. lacks basic online recordkeeping features,
4. offers very limited online form filing
5. is outdated and cannot take advantage of new data sharing technology.

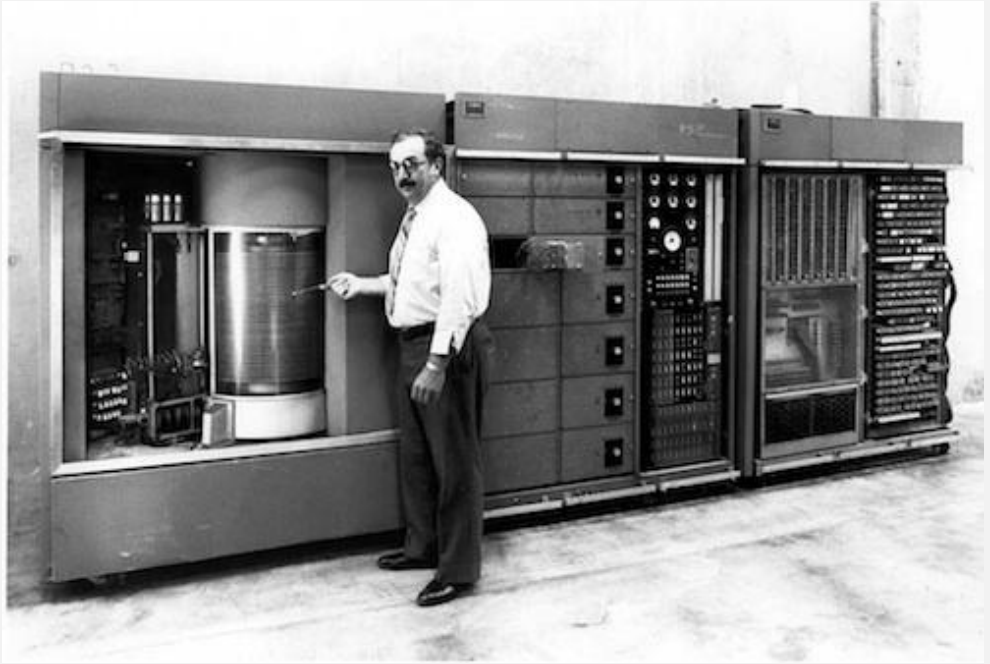
BOE's Three Old Data Systems

The Board of Elections maintains three separate data systems built over 20 years on obsolete, inefficient software:

Candidate Management maintains candidate information.

Electronic Filing is used by campaign treasurers to file their reports.

Financial Disclosure Tracking, Enforcement and Reports accepts the filing data and provides reporting.



BOE plans to upgrade, but has no timeline or description of those upgrades, and continues to inadequate IT funding in the state budget.

SOCS Features

SOCS
State Open Campaign System

Comparing BOE to SOCS

	BOE System	SOCS
Registration	X Mail-in Form	✓ Supports paperless sign-up
Donation Reporting	X Windows app; no bulk import of donations	✓ Spreadsheet-friendly with powerful API; bulk imports
Fundraising	X Initial delay of weeks	✓ Receive donations immediately through SOCS
Expense Tracking	X Separate software with no bulk import	✓ Integrates with donation tracking software; API
Audit & Enforcement	X Hampered by poor quality data	✓ Paperless, automated address verification and de-duping, 100% scanned, digital receipts and records.
Transparency	X Missing standard fields, no APIs.	✓ State of the art open data functionality.

Campaign Communications with Regulators

- In 2011, the New York State Board of Elections sent **9,848** "Failure to File" letters through the postal system.

- SOCS puts all that online:
  - Secure, instant, online notifications from election officials to campaigns.
  - Electronic filing of records and documentation from campaigns.

Cost Estimate for Website & Database system: <$2 million

Keys to affordability:

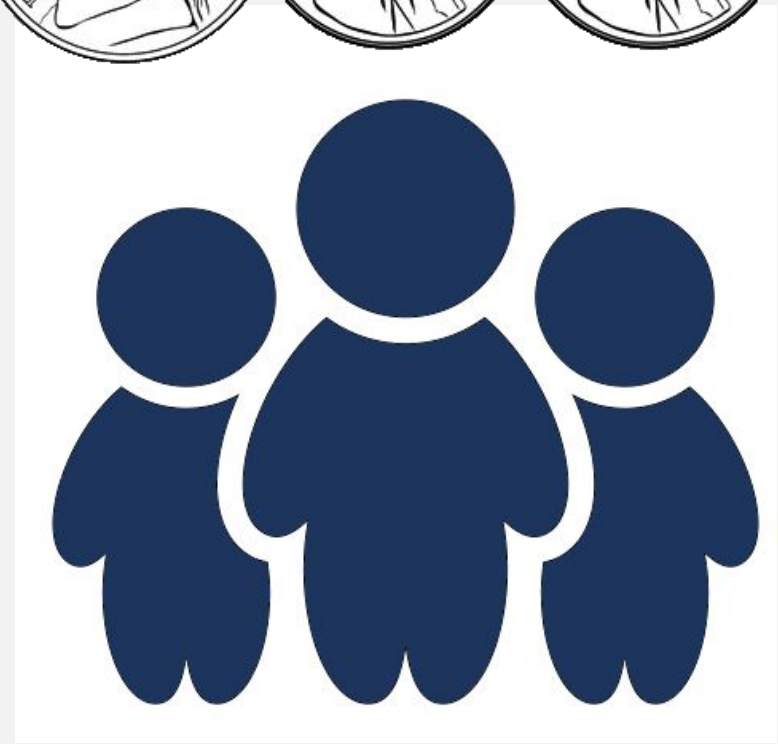
- Open-source database (no license fees)
- Use existing components (e.g.: C-SMART-NYC Votes from NYCCFB, SAGE from NY Senate, and de-duplication tool from FollowTheMoney.org)
- AGILE development process with team of civil servants and consultants

Comparables

- NYC C-Smart: $840k to build over 2 years (in-house)
- NYC Votes app: ~ $2 million (in-kind/donated labor)
- NY Senate's "Bluebird" CRM: ~$250k, 2 years
- FollowTheMoney.org's donor de-duplication & research tool: ~$200k

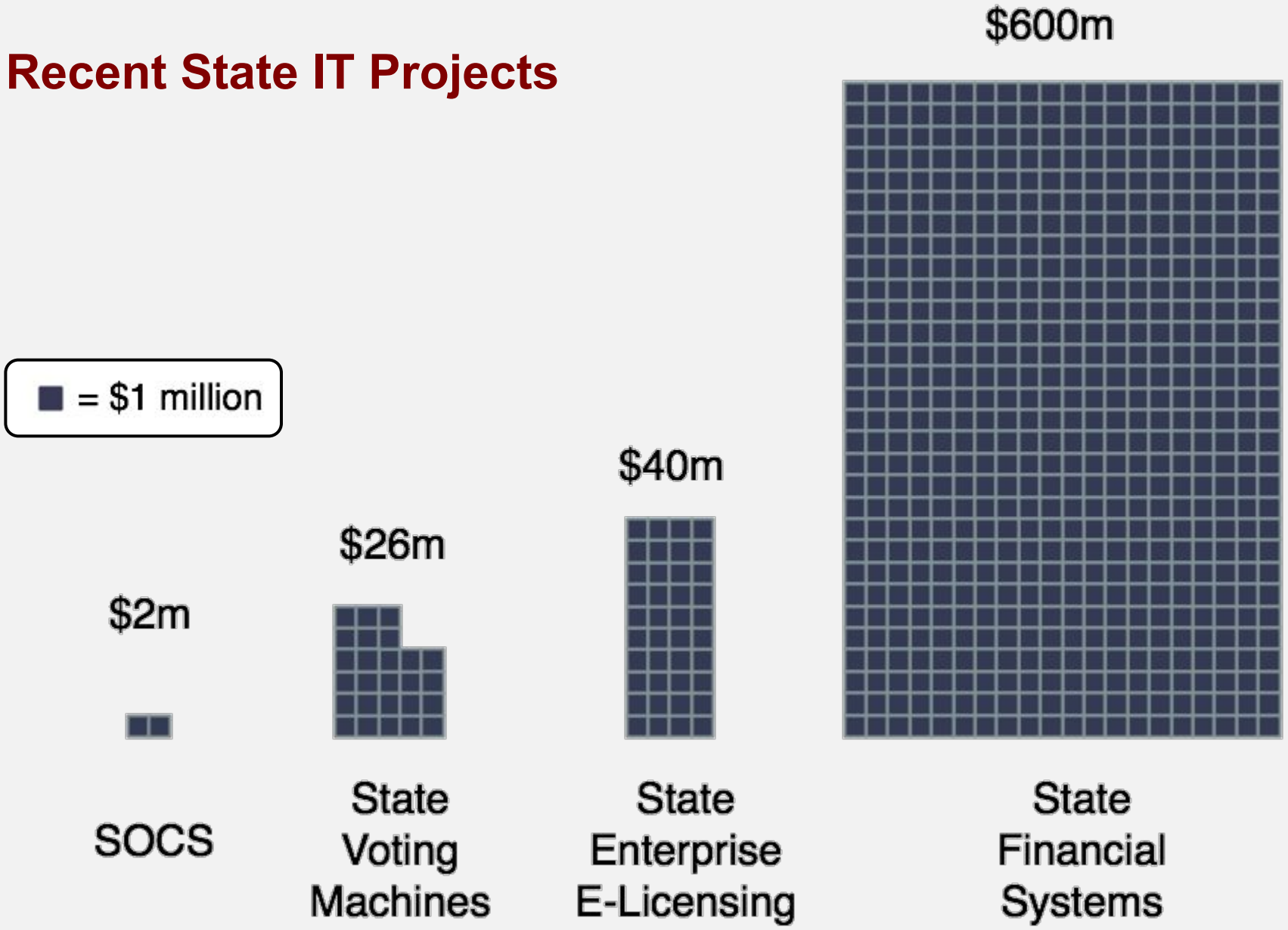
Inexpensive, State of the Art Software

SOCS will cost eighteen cents per registered voter.



Open Source is Inexpensive

Recent State IT Projects



Self-Financing?

SOCS could be configured to process online campaign contributions --- which is being explored by New York City CFB. Transaction fees could generate $2.5 million in annual revenue for NYS* — which could pay for SOCS technology updates and improved online campaign transparency and voter services.

The NYS BOE could offer campaigns reduced credit card processing fees by serving as a "wholesaler" in the credit card processing process for election campaigns.

We interviewed a number of credit card processing and campaign software firms that said the process and technology are **simple and straightforward** within a system like SOCS.

*: $108m credit card donations last election cycle) x (margin between 2.1% wholesale and 3.5% retail credit card processing fees = $2.5m

Use Cases

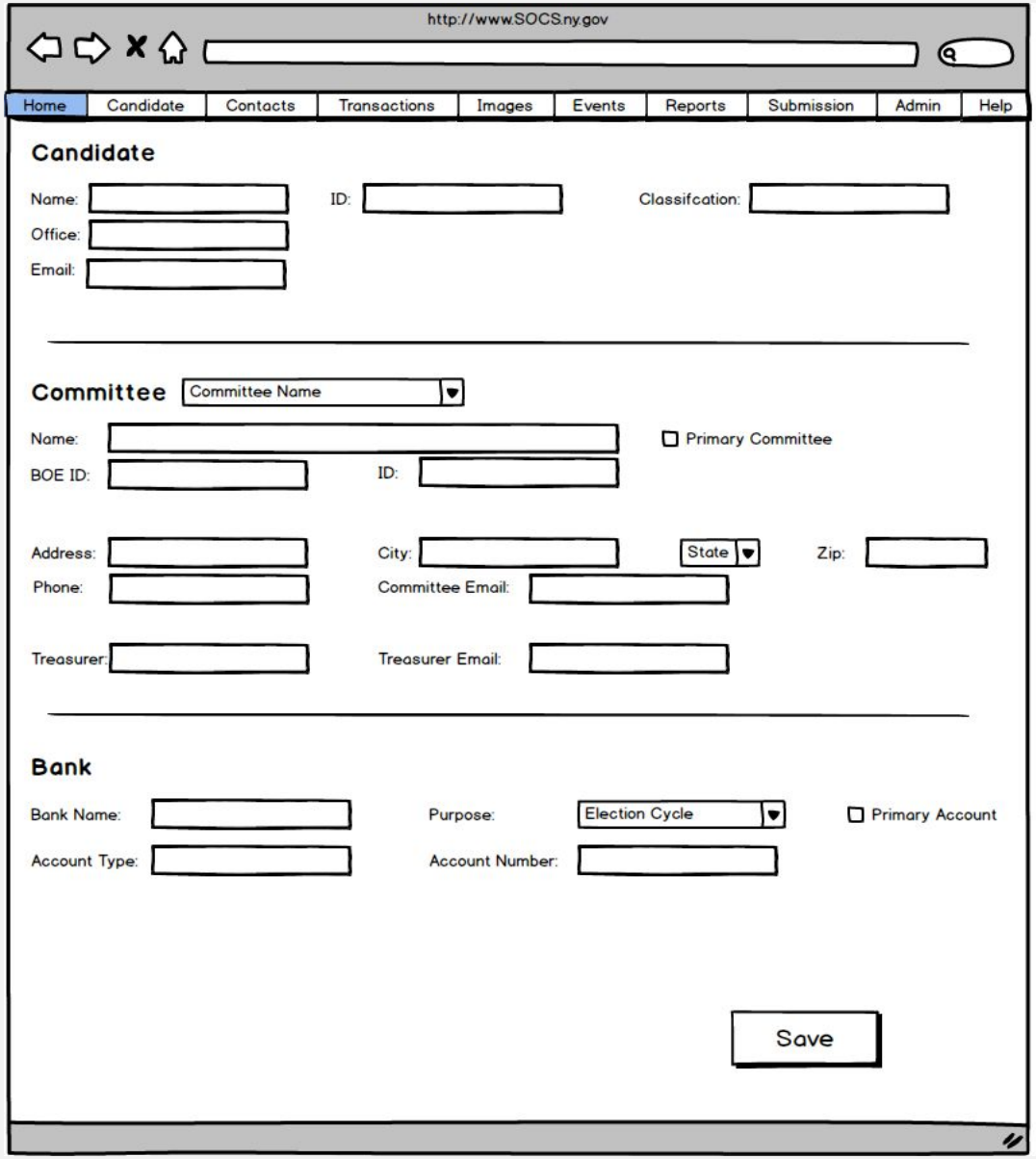
SOCS
State Open Campaign System

Use Case: Registering a Committee

Paperless Registration

SOCS speeds up the process and reduces errors, allowing:

- candidates to register their committee online without any paper fillings,
- regulators to approve a filing and set up an online SOCS account for that Committee with no manual data entry delays or errors
- new Committees to start receiving donations as soon as they have a SOCS account
- public to see immediately who has filed to create a Committee

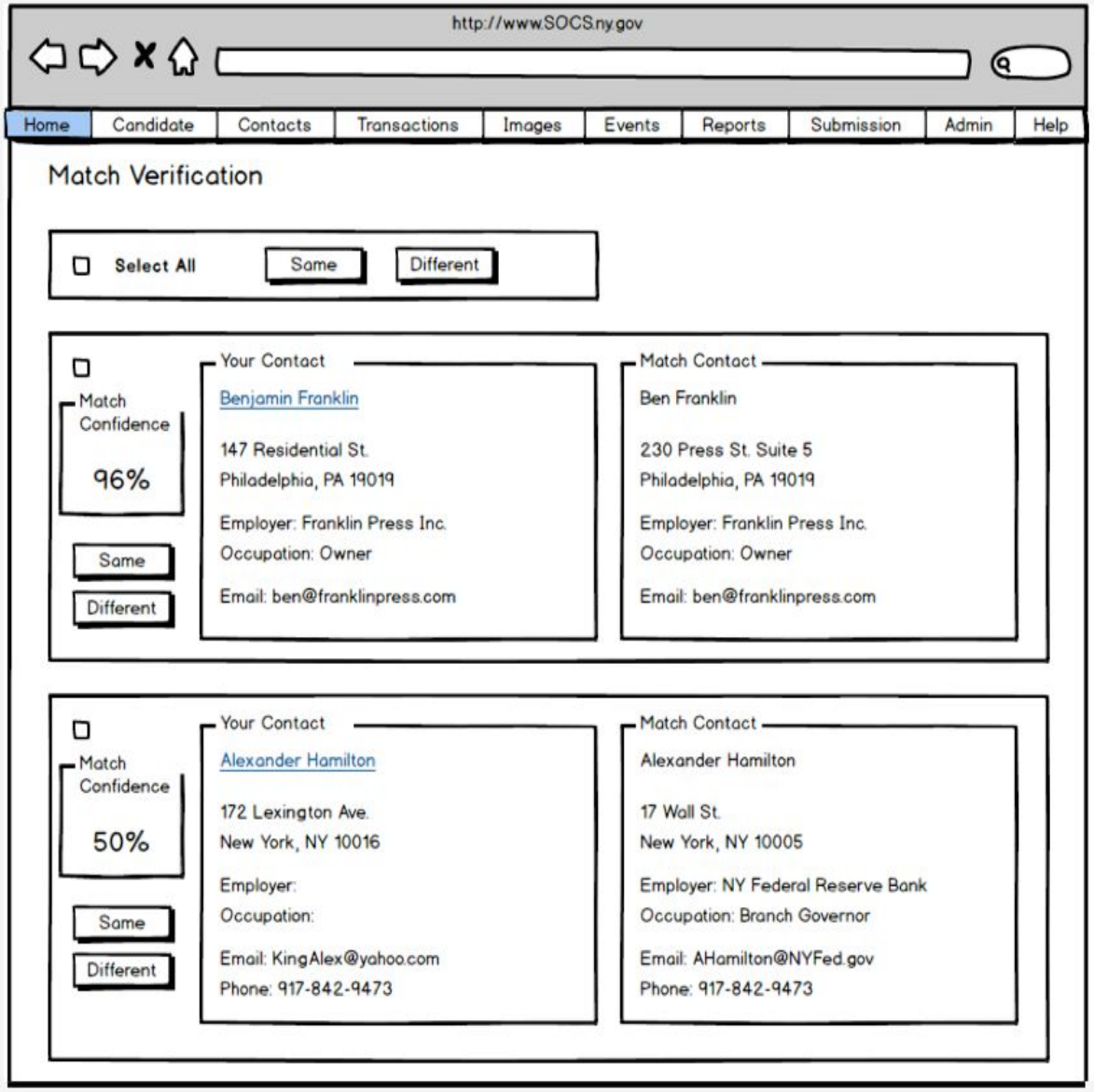


Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Smarter Donation Management

SOCS helps campaigns with compliance, flagging potentially invalid contributions with a sophisticated online database:

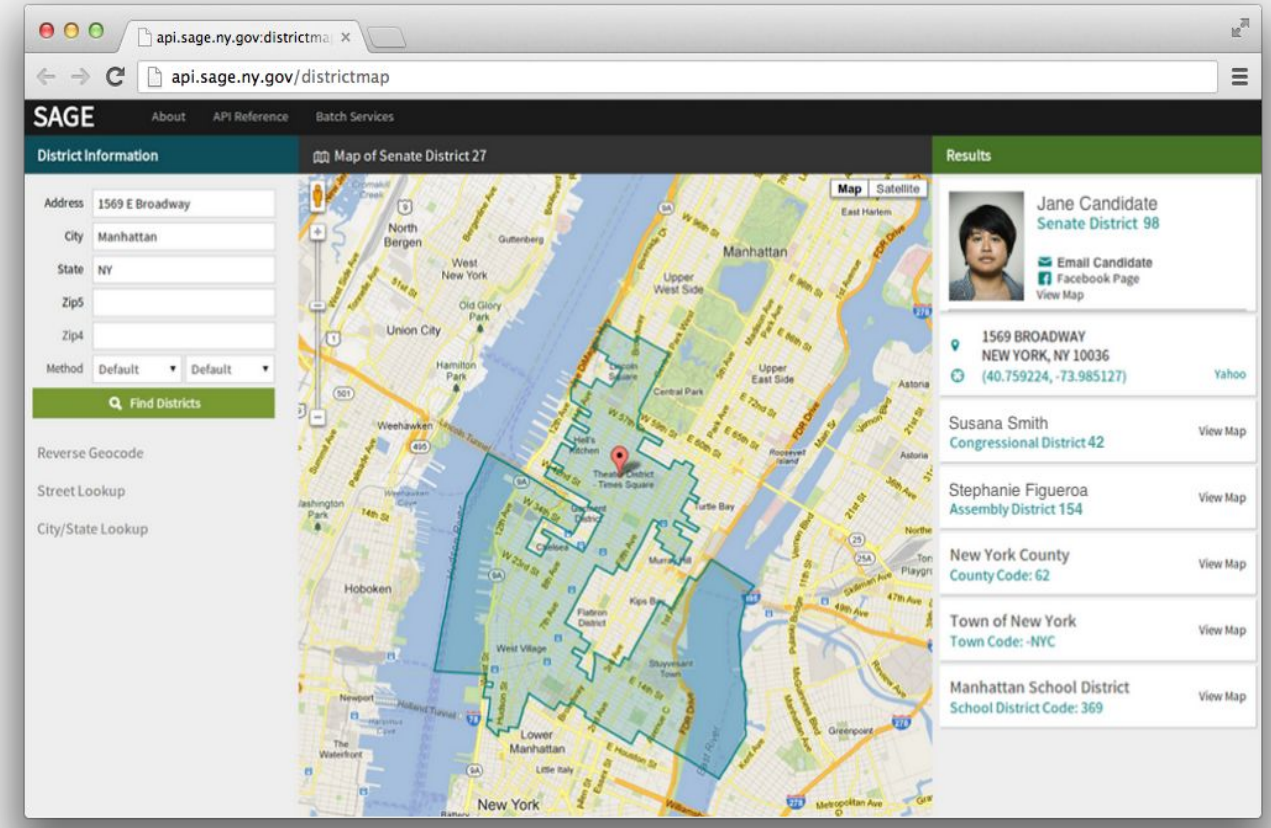
- Similar donor names checked for duplicates against NYSenate statewide registered voter file
- District residence looked up with NY Senate's "SAGE"
- Credit card address-verified donors "whitelisted" as verified
- Flags donations with business addresses
- Sophisticated algorithms de-duplicate similar donor names



Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Automatic Donor Lookup

By using an API and open data technology provided by the New York State Senate, SOCS can cross-reference a donor's address with the data in SAGE to provide detailed district information and donor verification.

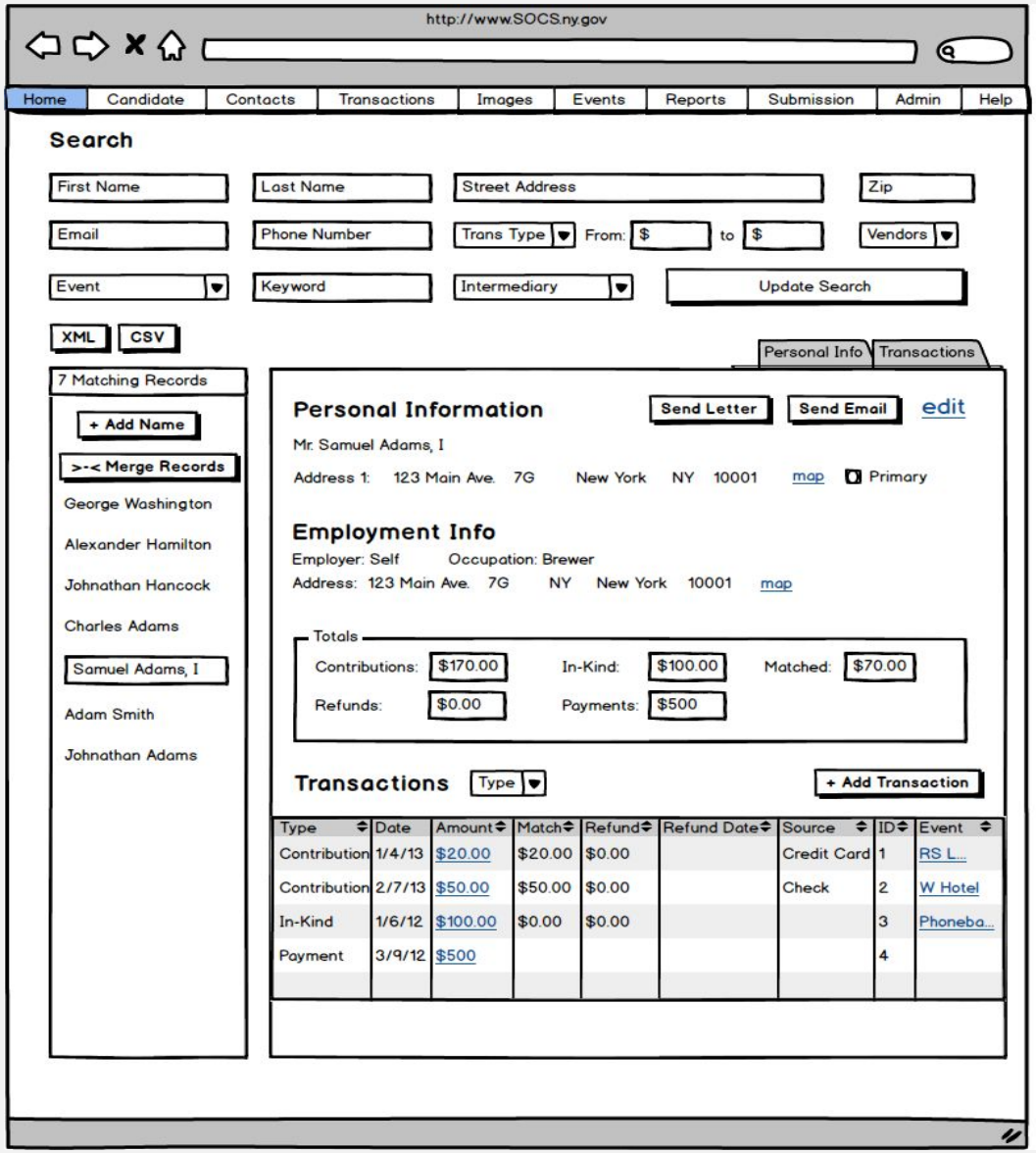


Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Advanced Contact Search

Despite SOCS' automation features, sometimes Committee staff will still need to research individual donors and transactions. SOCS' powerful search features include:

- Full search on multiple criteria
- Quickly identify individual donors
- Generate lists of contributors who satisfy complex criteria.
- Display donors side-by-side to execute bulk actions
- Easily create letters or emails, merging contacts to avoid duplicates

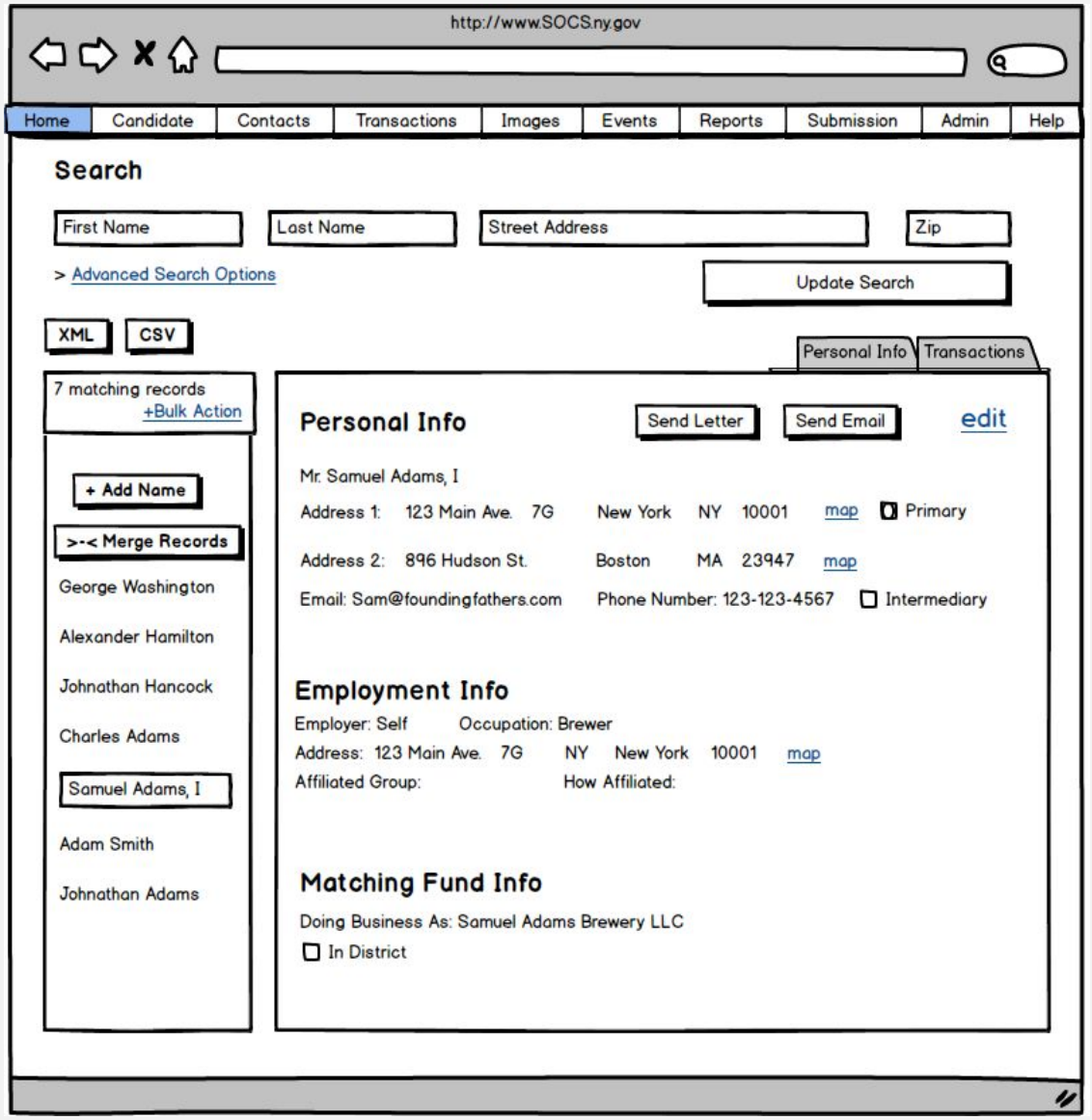


Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Contact Manager: 1

Full search via multiple criteria to quickly identify individual donors or generate lists of contributors who satisfy a certain criteria.

Here, many search options are collapsed in the "Advanced Search Options," leaving only the most common fields for finding a single donor.



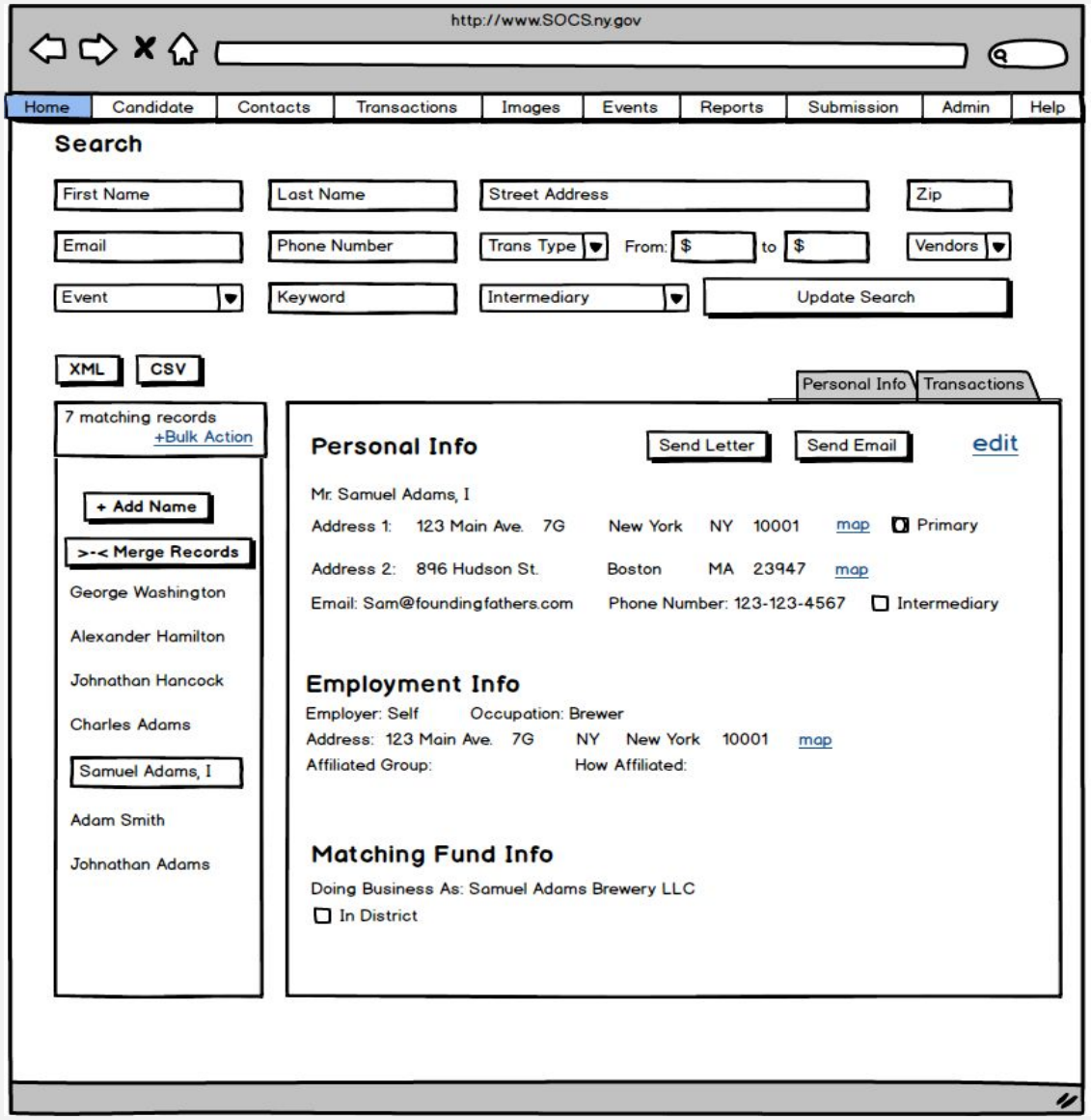
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Contact Manager: 2

Full search via multiple criteria to quickly identify individual donors or generate lists of contributors who satisfy a certain criteria.

Here, the full "Advanced Search Options" are shown.

Again, here you can view the Personal Info Tab.



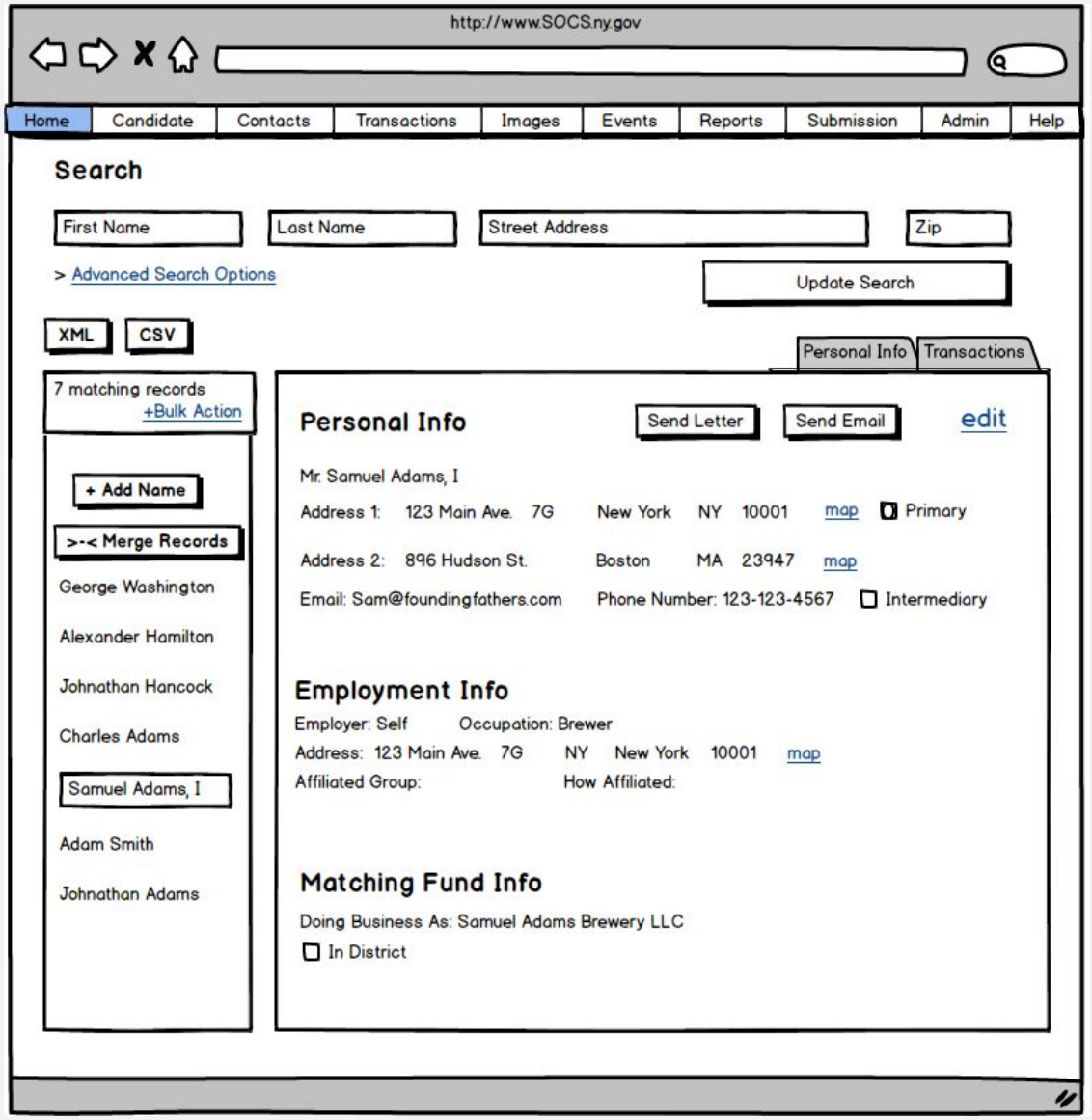
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Contact Manager: 3

SOCS can generate lists of individuals who satisfy certain criteria. These records appear in the left hand column. Displaying multiple names side-by-side allows for the use of bulk actions; like sending letters or emails; or merging potential duplicates.

Clicking a single name brings up that individuals information on the right hand pane. A record has two types of data associated with them: (1) Personal Information and (2) Transactions.

Here we are viewing the “Personal Info” tab.



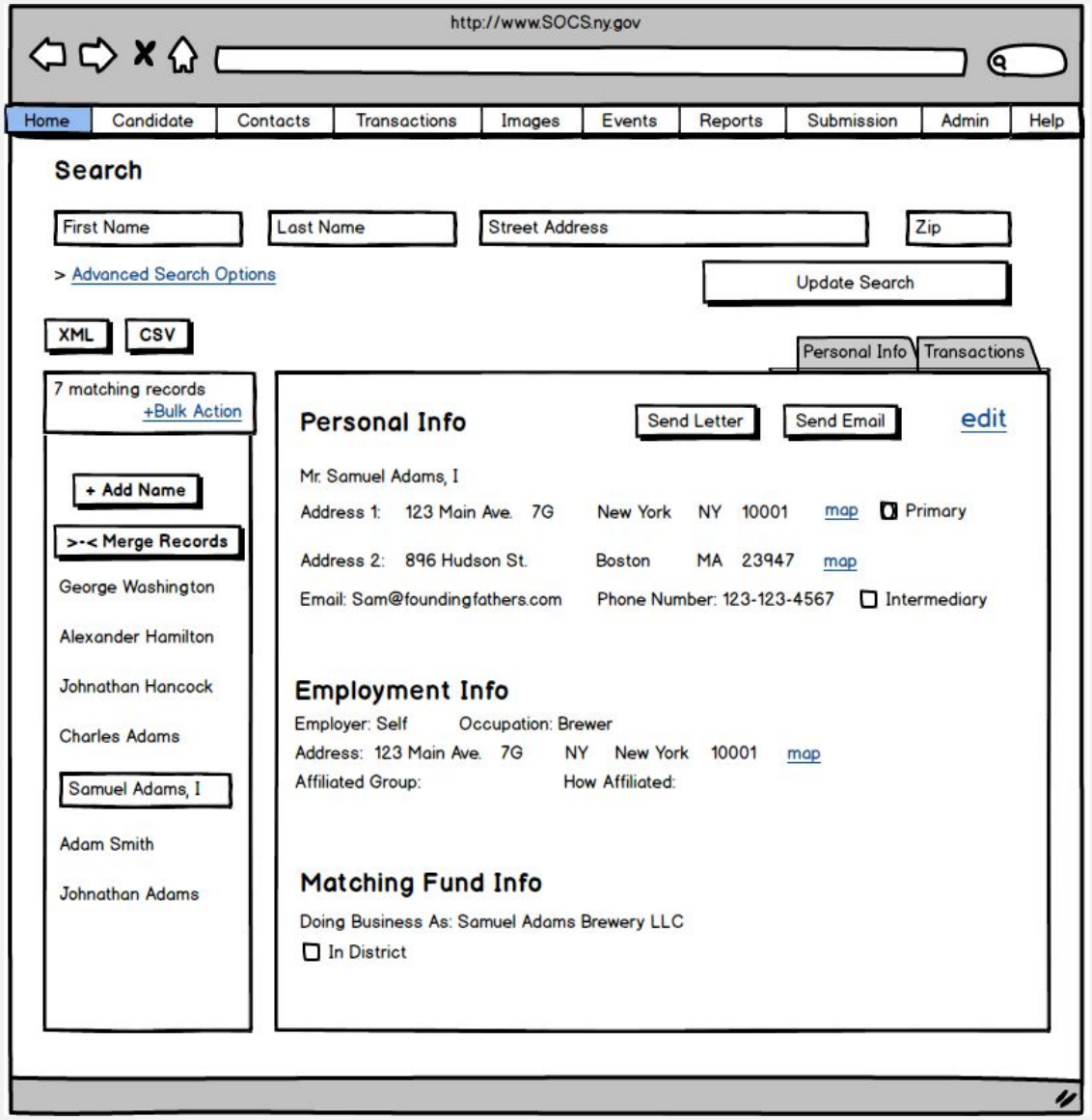
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Contact Manager: 3

In SOCS, a user may have multiple on addresses, emails and phone numbers on file to help distinguish then from others. Any one may be marked as "primary".

A primary address will automatically be checked against the State's geolocation services to render an "In District" verdict instantly and automatically.

The employment info can be checked against a State's Doing Business database to provide an automatic verdict there as well.



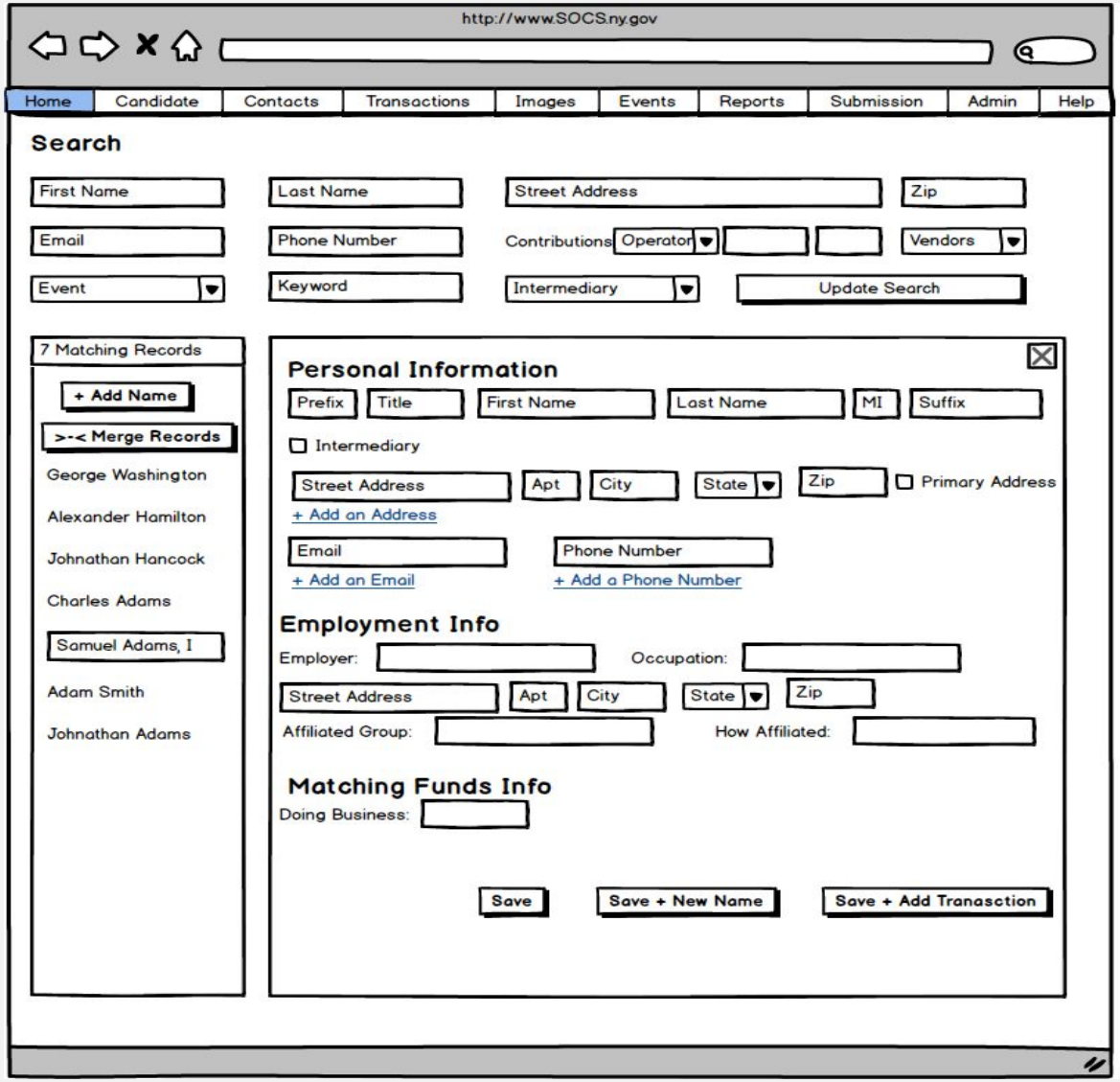
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Editing Contacts

When editing or creating a Contact, all of these fields are available. Again, the in-district information is automatically populated by a check on the Primary address tag.

Here, “Doing Business” is a check box for the user to select in the event that a comprehensive database is not available.

Auto-suggest in the data entry fields help prevent the creation of duplicate records.



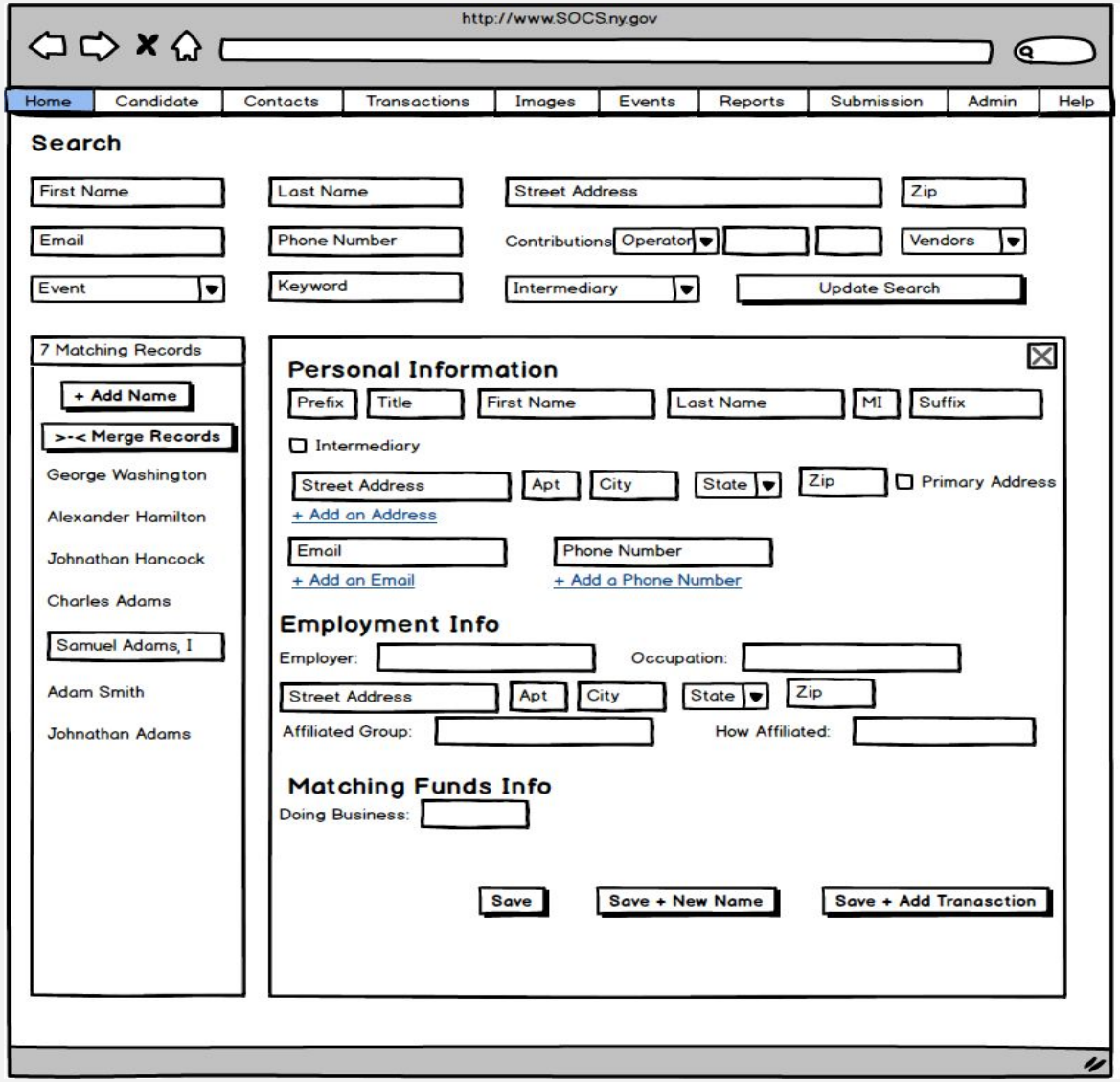
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Removing Duplicate Contacts

Removing duplicates can be done from two locations. The first is Messages, which automatically notify campaign staff that a contribution logged as a new record may actually be a duplicate.

When names enter the SOCS database, an algorithm tries to match it with an existing record. This can be within the campaign database or across all campaigns.

Next, the possible match is submitted to the campaign. Existing campaign data is displayed side by side for human verification.



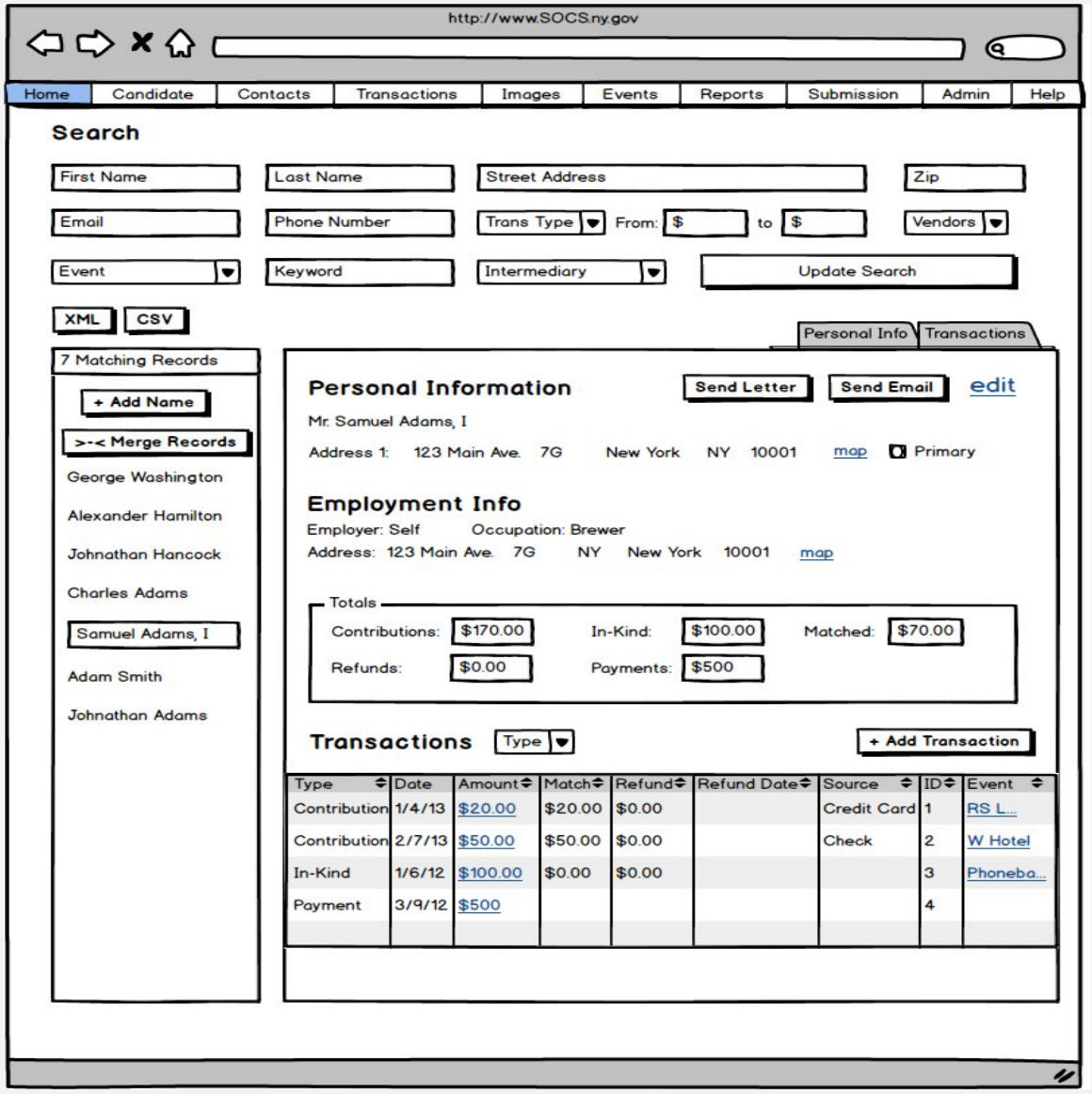
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Contact Transactions: 1

This is a Contact record with the Transaction tab selected.

Supporting documents like receipts, invoices or transaction cards can be uploaded and attached to Transactions.

Clicking on a document will bring up a lightbox with the document image and an option to Download the attached files.



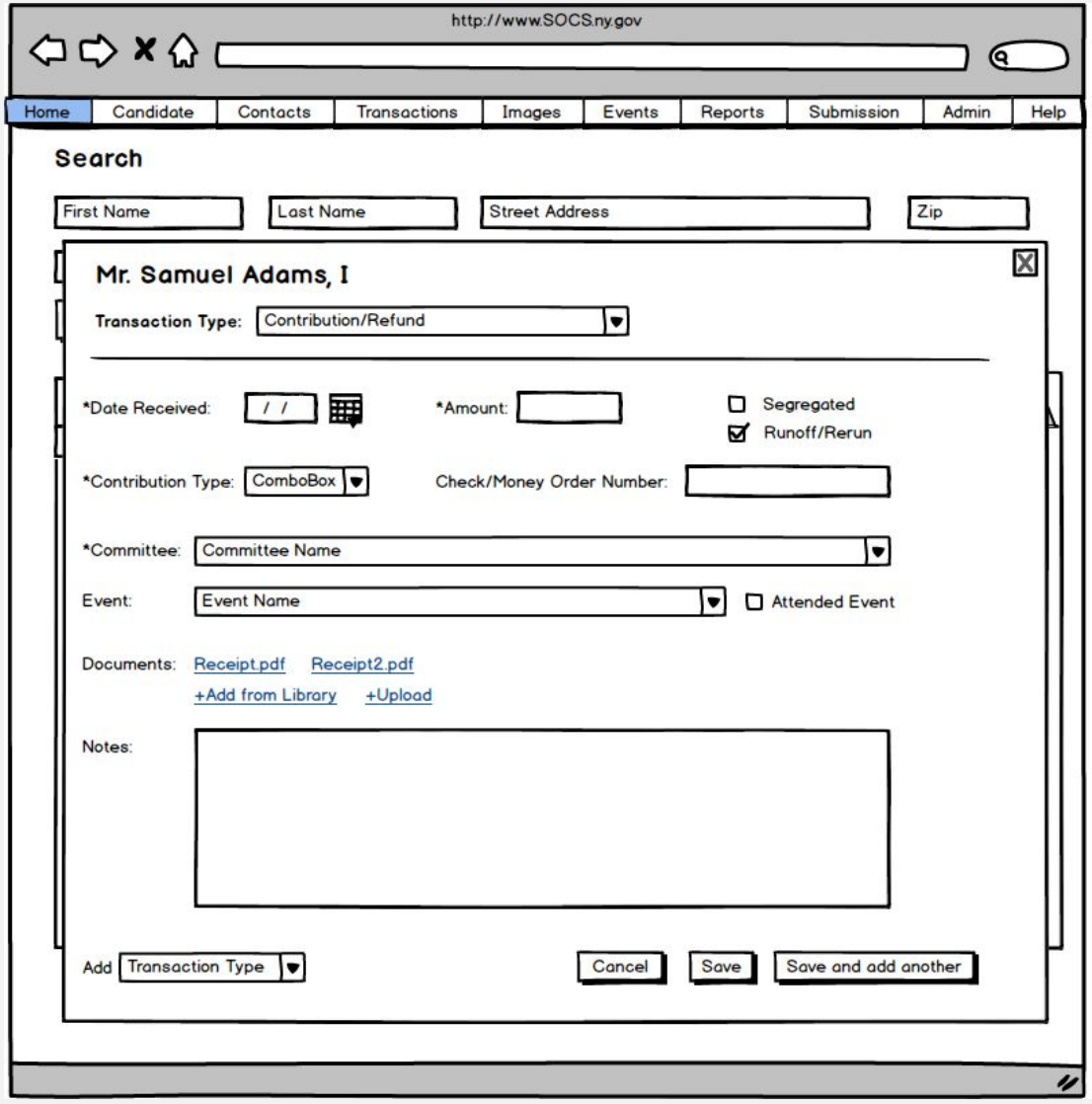
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Contact Transactions: 2

Transaction "Type" drop down options are Contributions, Bill, Bill Payment, and Bill Forgiven.
One of the options in the "Event Name" dropdown is to add an event name.

Here, the "Transaction Type" bar is set to "Contribution""Add" has options of "Bill Refund", "Bill Forgiven"

The search should be auto-populated with the verified information from the Image Verification screenThe Contribution Type can be "Contribution, In-Kind"



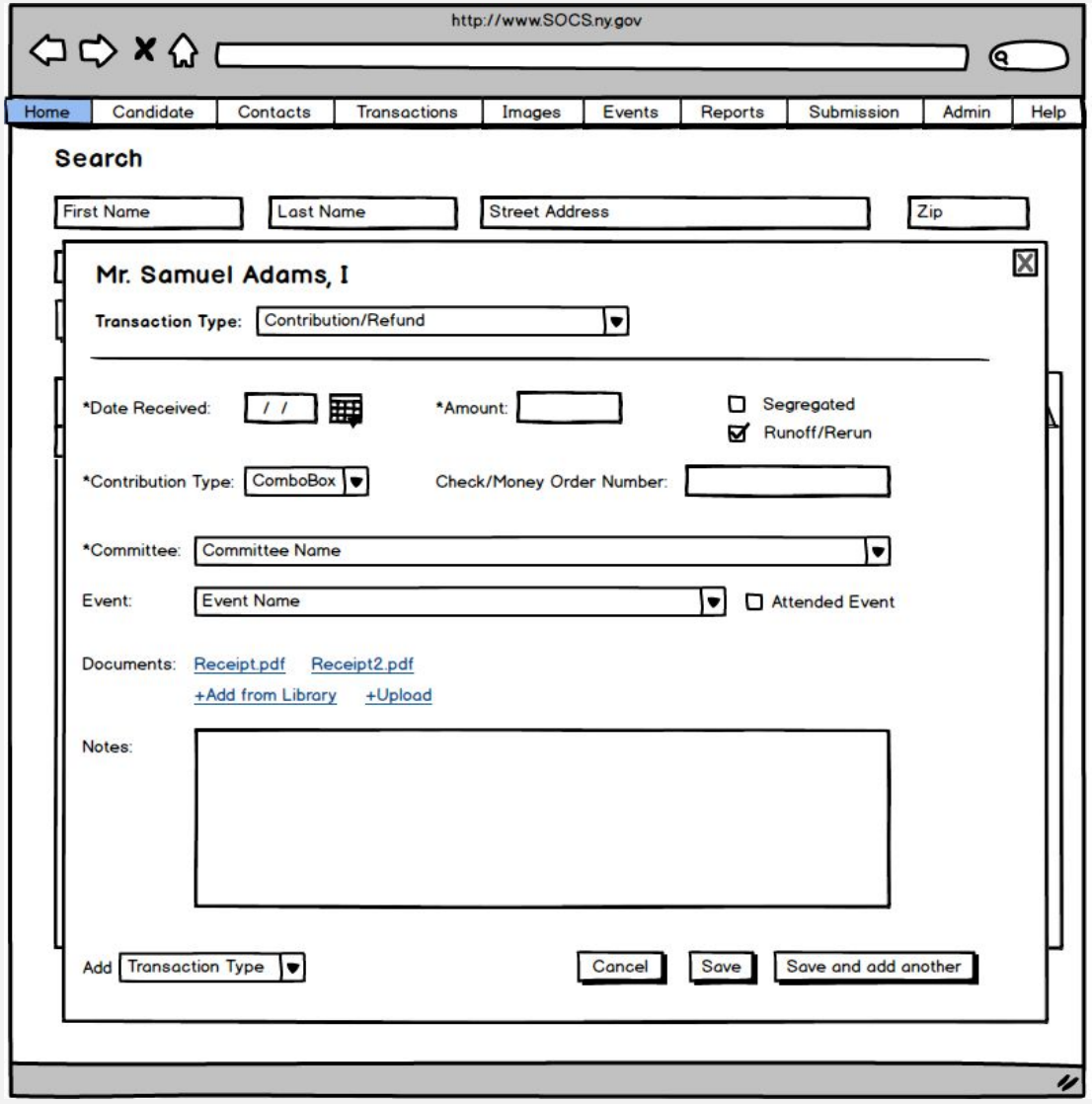
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Contact Transactions: 3

The "Add" button at the bottom allows Transactions to be strung together, such as Refunds of Forgiveness. View the history of a Transaction from inception to completion.

Here, a Transaction is being added to a Transaction History. In this case, a Bill Payment is being added to an Invoice which was added earlier.

There is more than one way to arrive at the Transaction Creation pop-up. In some cases, such as if a user is coming from an Image Verification by hitting "Verify and add to transaction", information will be pre-populated.



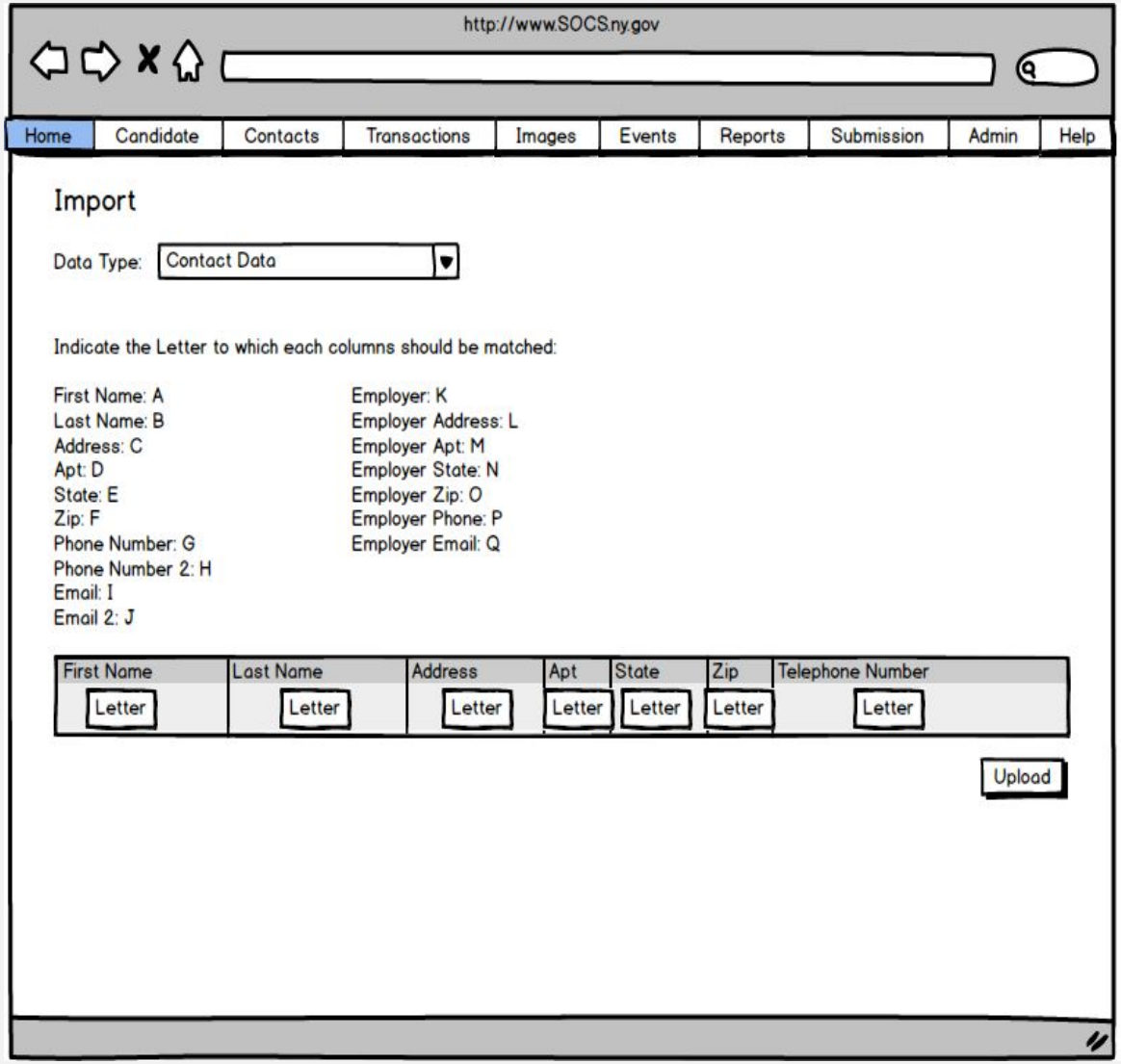
Use Case: Campaign Contributions

Importing Bulk Donation Data

SOCS allows bulk uploading of all transactions from commonly used third-party accounting software like Quickbooks, which manage campaign finances.

SOCS saves time and reduces clerical errors by supporting:

- bulk upload of donation data from spreadsheets
- programmatic “API” integration with leading online accounting software, such as Quickbooks Online



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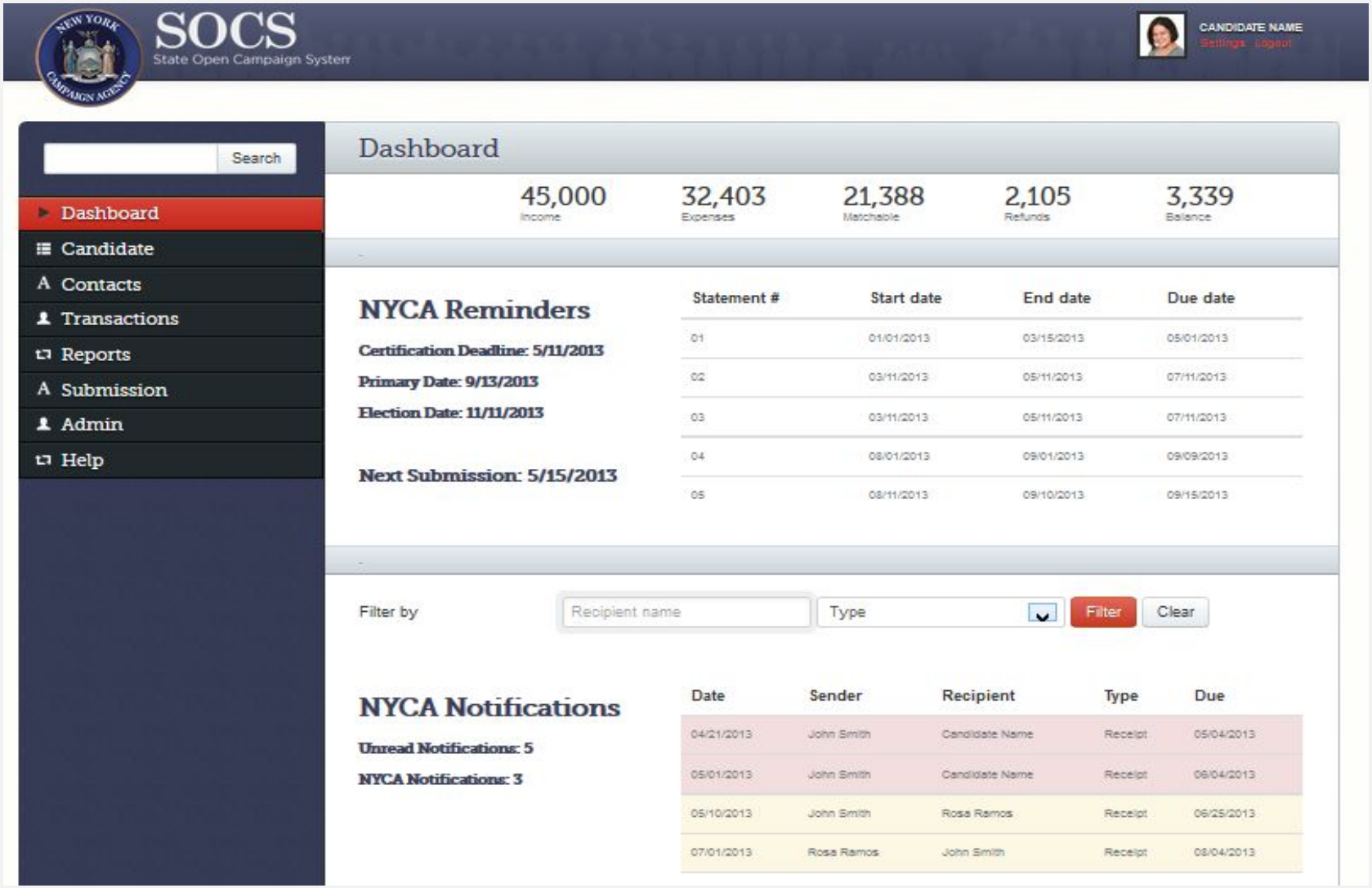
Use Case: Compliance

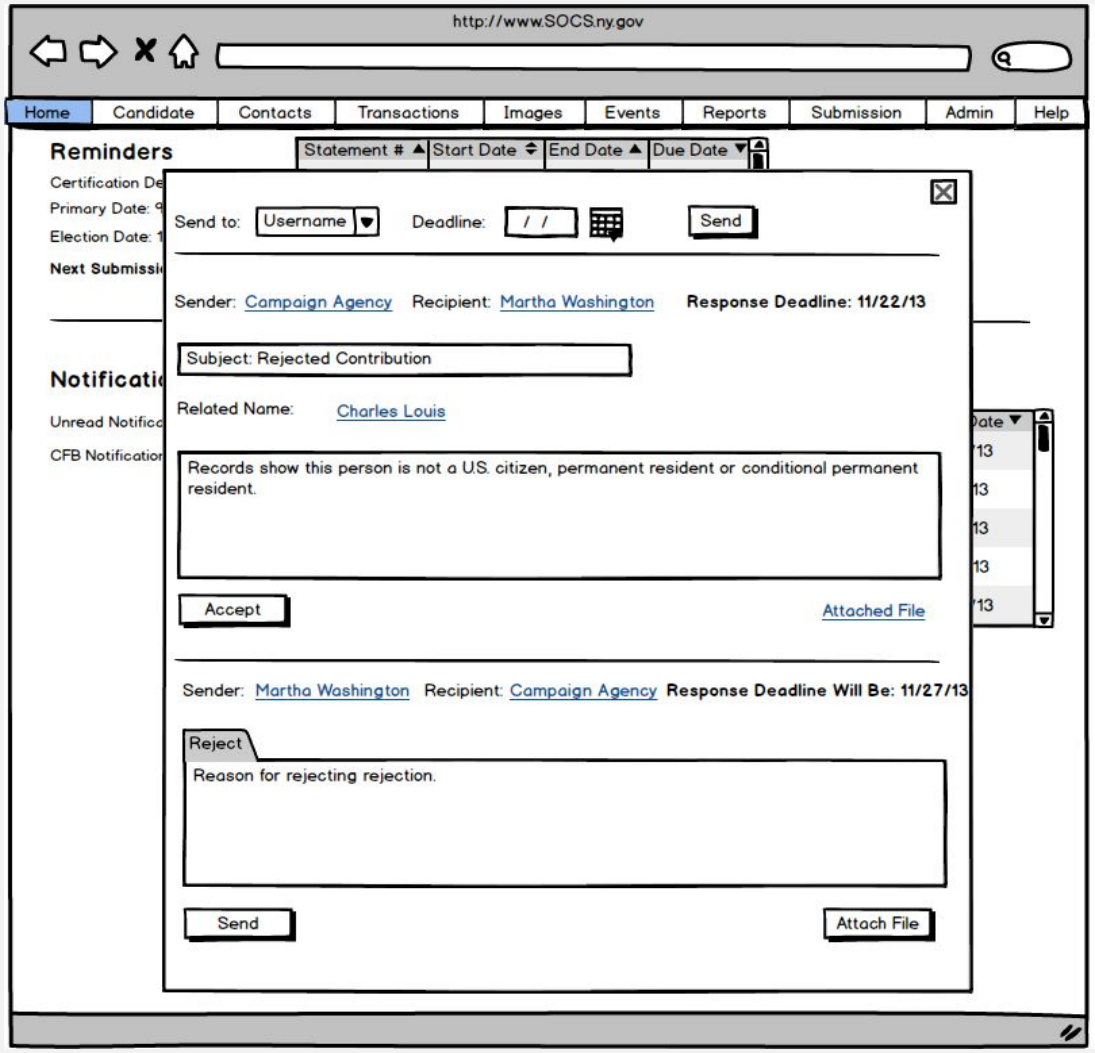


Use Case: Compliance

Smart Workflow

Most campaign finance violations are the result of human error and could be avoided or more quickly resolved with efficient online collaboration tools.

SOCS provides “workflow” tools to help Committee staff process transactions faster, and to provide secure, direct messaging between auditors and Committee staff.

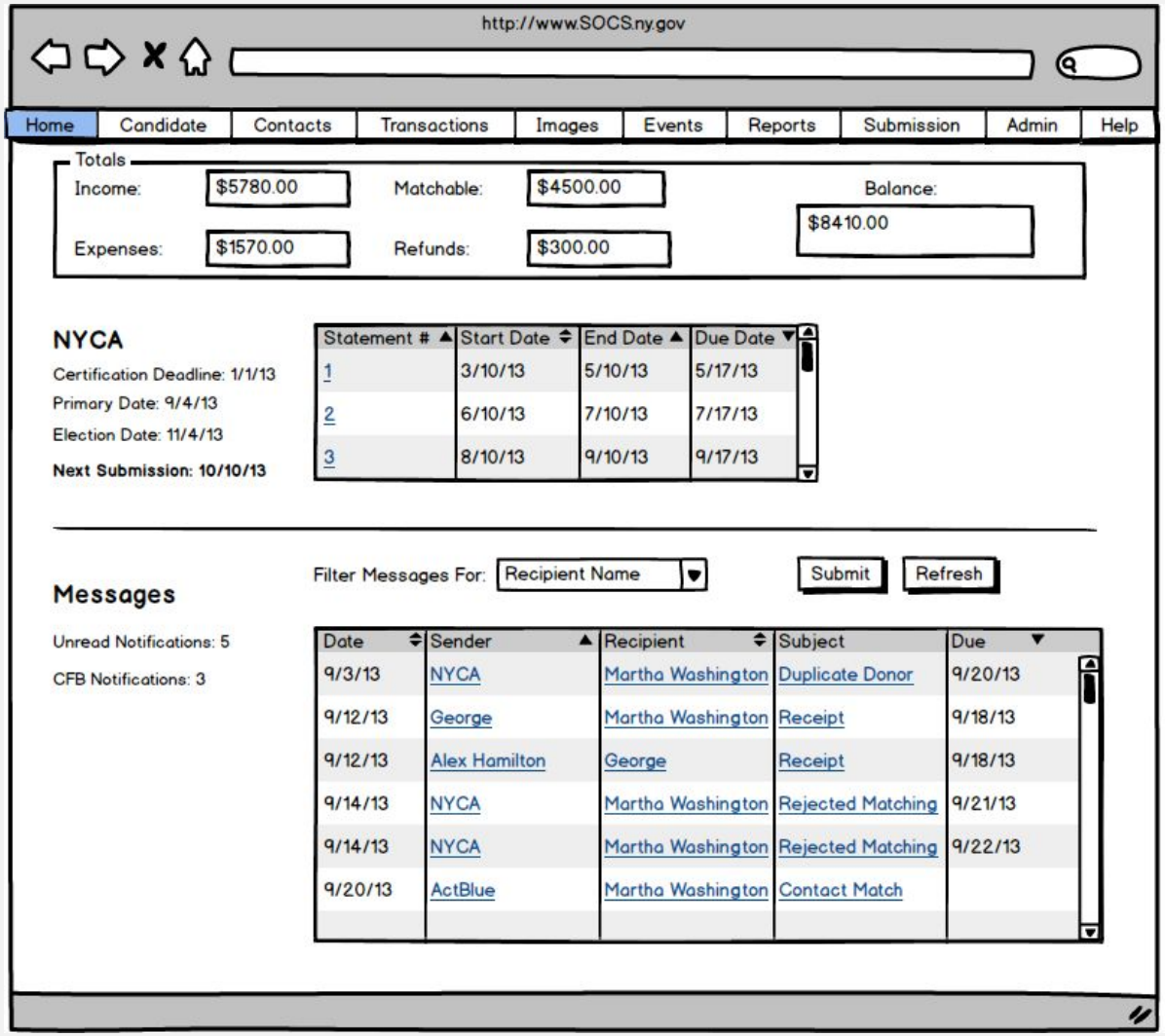


Candidate Homepage

This is the dashboard for a campaign admin user. The SOCS system anticipates multiple users with varying permissions as to what they can see and do within a campaign's filing workflow.

For a user with full permissions, when he/she logs in, he/she will see an abbreviated heads up of the cash totals for their campaign.

Additionally, SOCS displays reminders of approaching filing deadlines and other important dates in the campaign cycle.

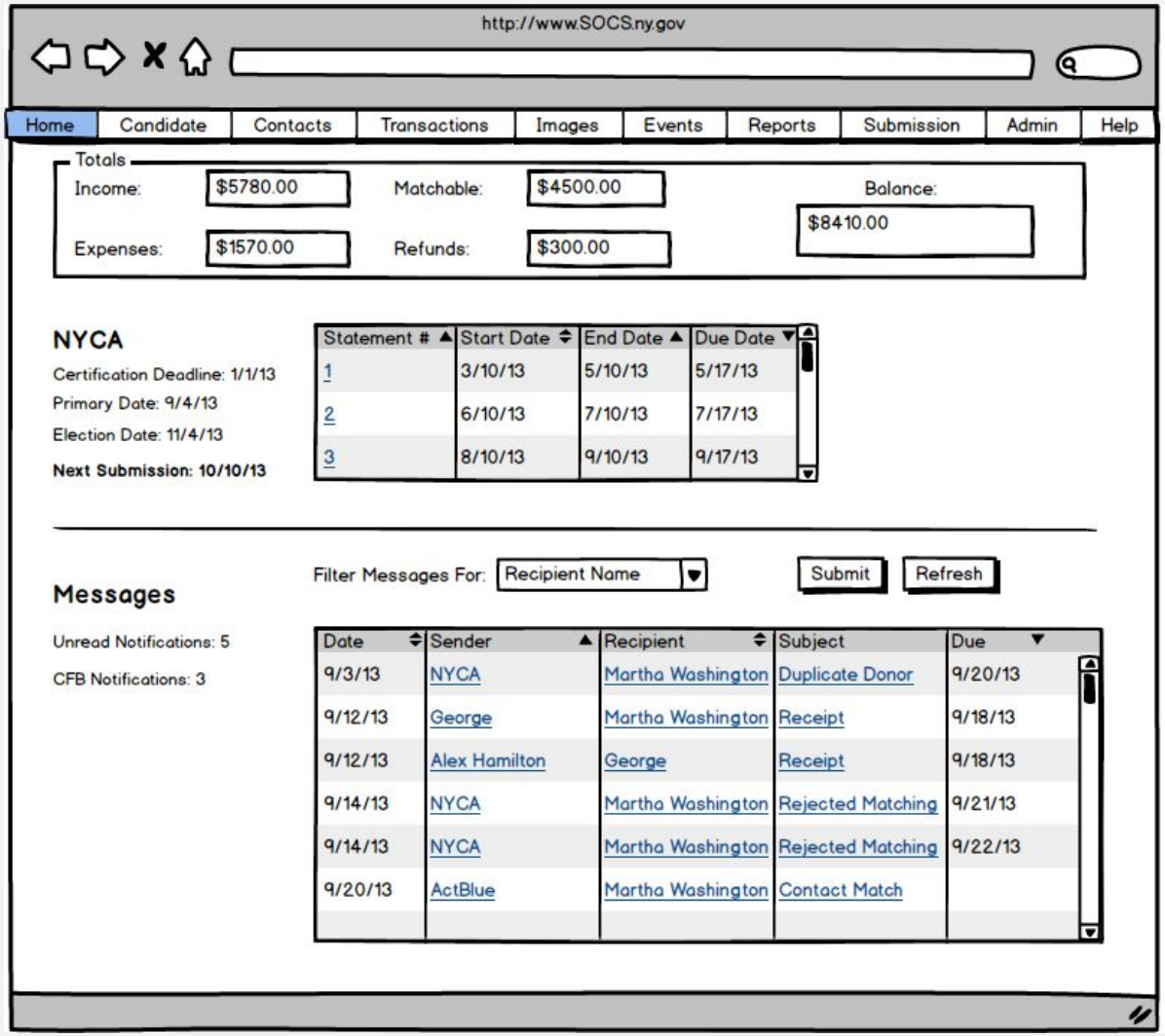


Candidate Homepage

The homepage also displays Messages. Messages allow internal campaign users and the Campaign Agency to send tasks to one another using preset workflow options.

Normal users can only see Messages where they are the recipient. Since this is an Admin, view, though, all messages are viewable with their due dates.

The Filter by recipient allows Admin's to look at specific users' Messages, including themselves.

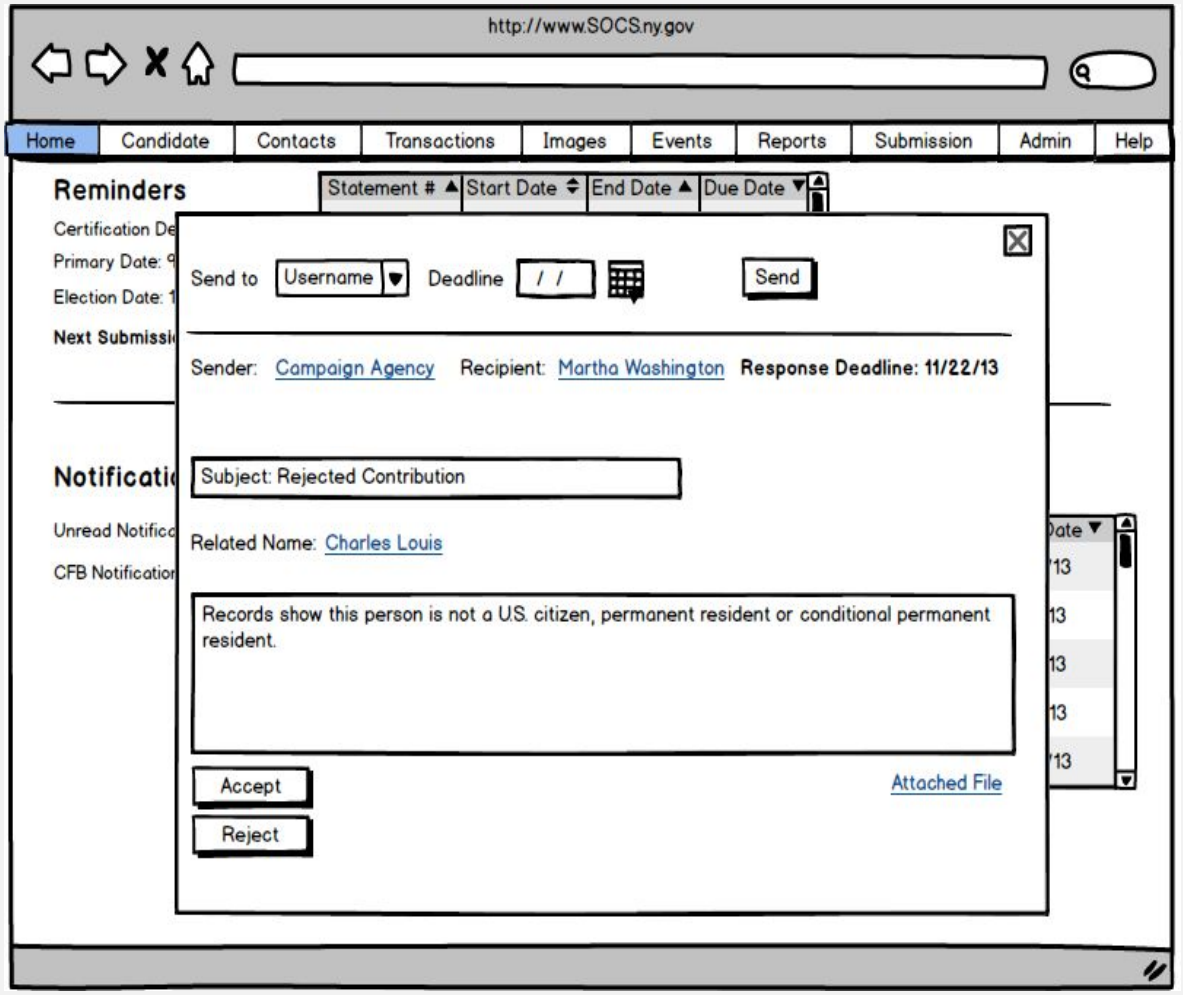


Use Case: Compliance

Receiving a Message

Here a Campaign staffer has received a notification that a contribution has been deemed unacceptable by auditors.

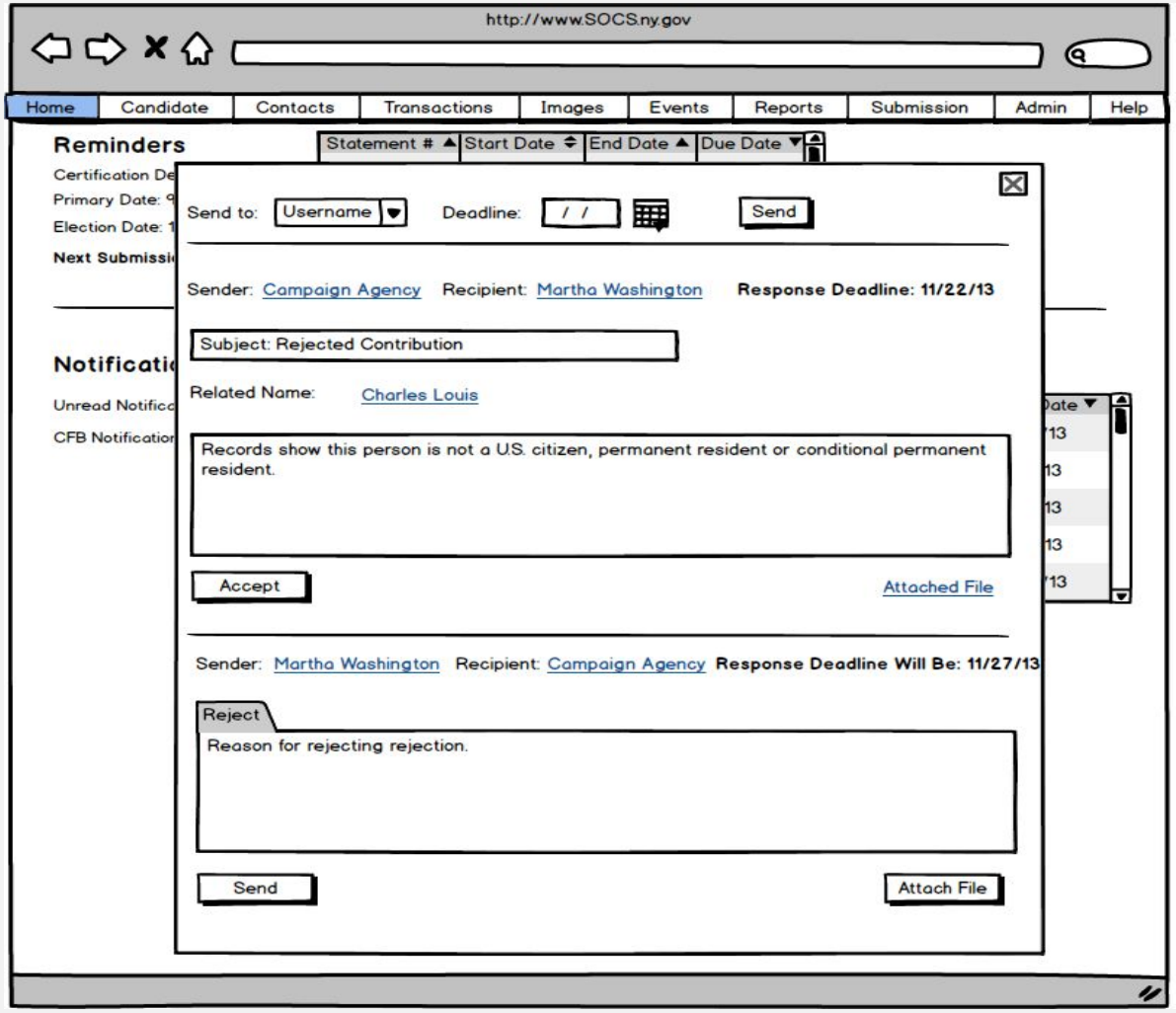
This is a pop up that the campaign gets if they click on the notification. Auditors can batch rejected contributions in near real time instead of waiting to send all rejections at the end of an official audit.



Contesting Rejection

In the rejection workflow, a recipient of a rejection Message prompts user to respond with an explanation and is able to upload corroborating documents. This is then sent directly to the auditor for review in their Message inbox.

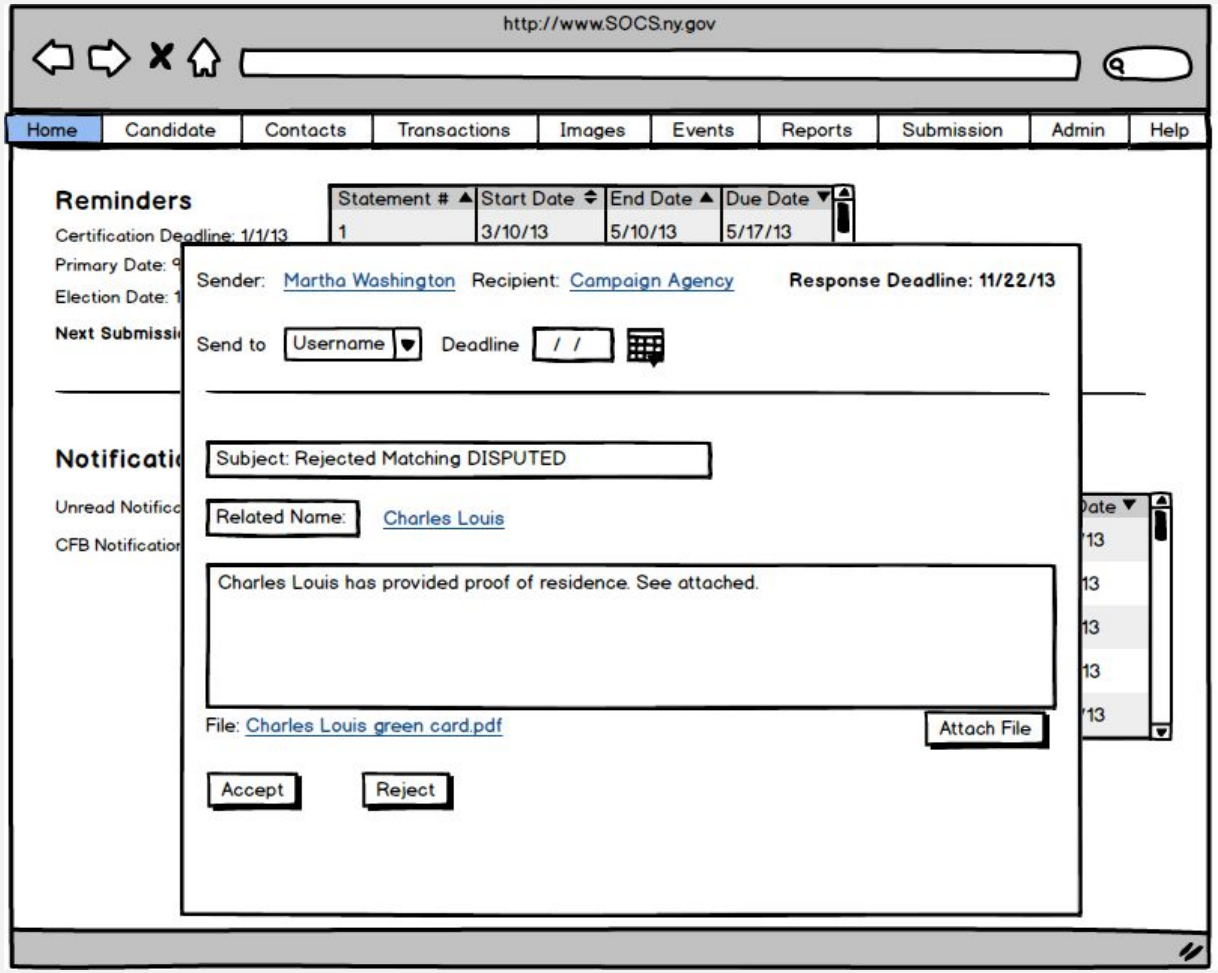
This gives the user the ability to directly contest or accept auditor's rejection of a contribution.



Contesting Rejection

A complete rejection Message sends the explanation with documentation for review by auditors or regulators.

Allows the user to respond to the Auditor with digital files with proof.

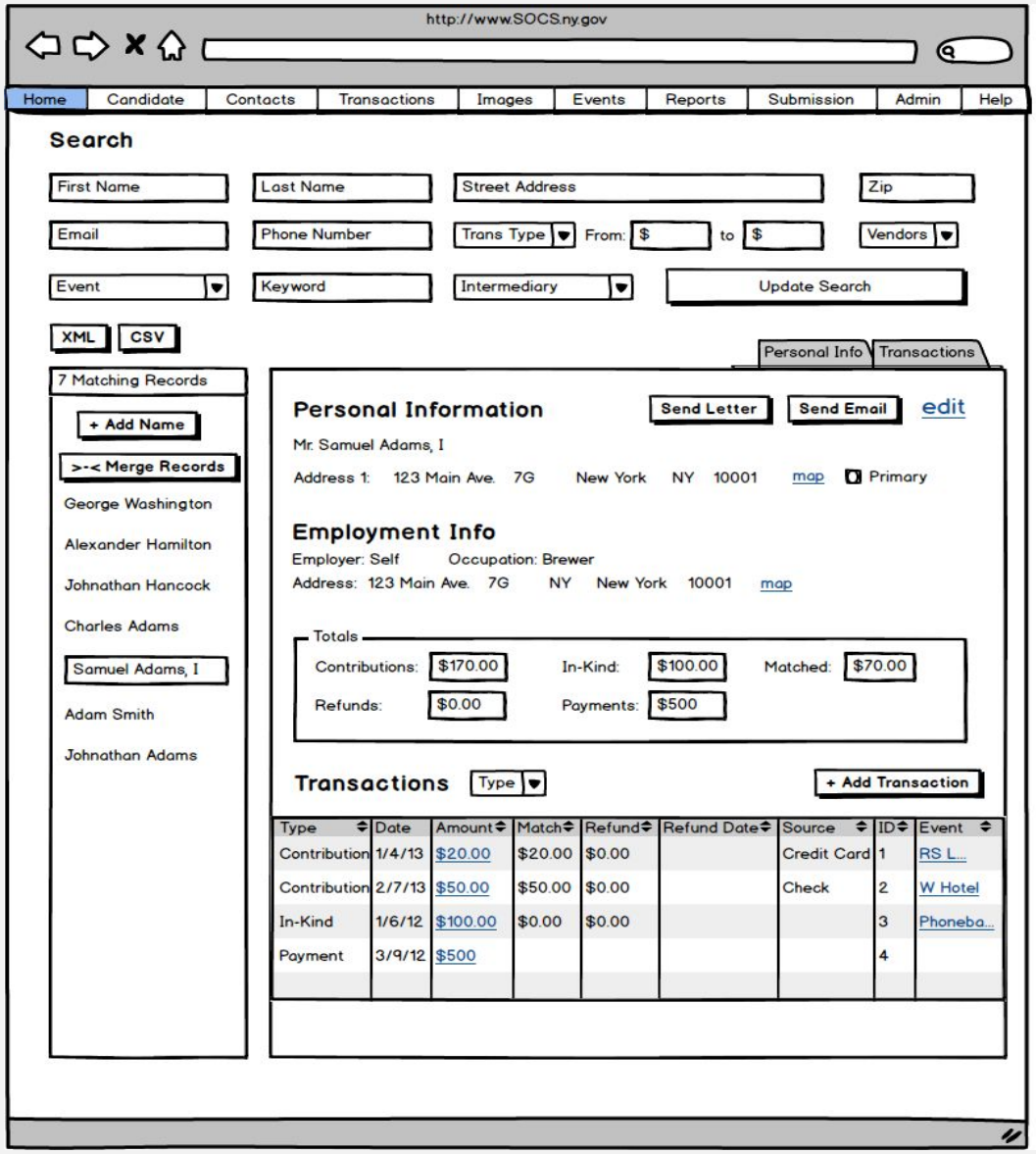


Use Case: Compliance

Researching Contacts

Despite SOCS' automation features, sometimes Committee staff will still need to research individual donors and transactions. SOCS' powerful search features include:

- Full search on multiple criteria
- Quickly identify individual donors
- Generate lists of contributors who satisfy complex criteria.
- Display donors side-by-side to execute bulk actions
- Easily create letters or emails, merging contacts to avoid duplicates

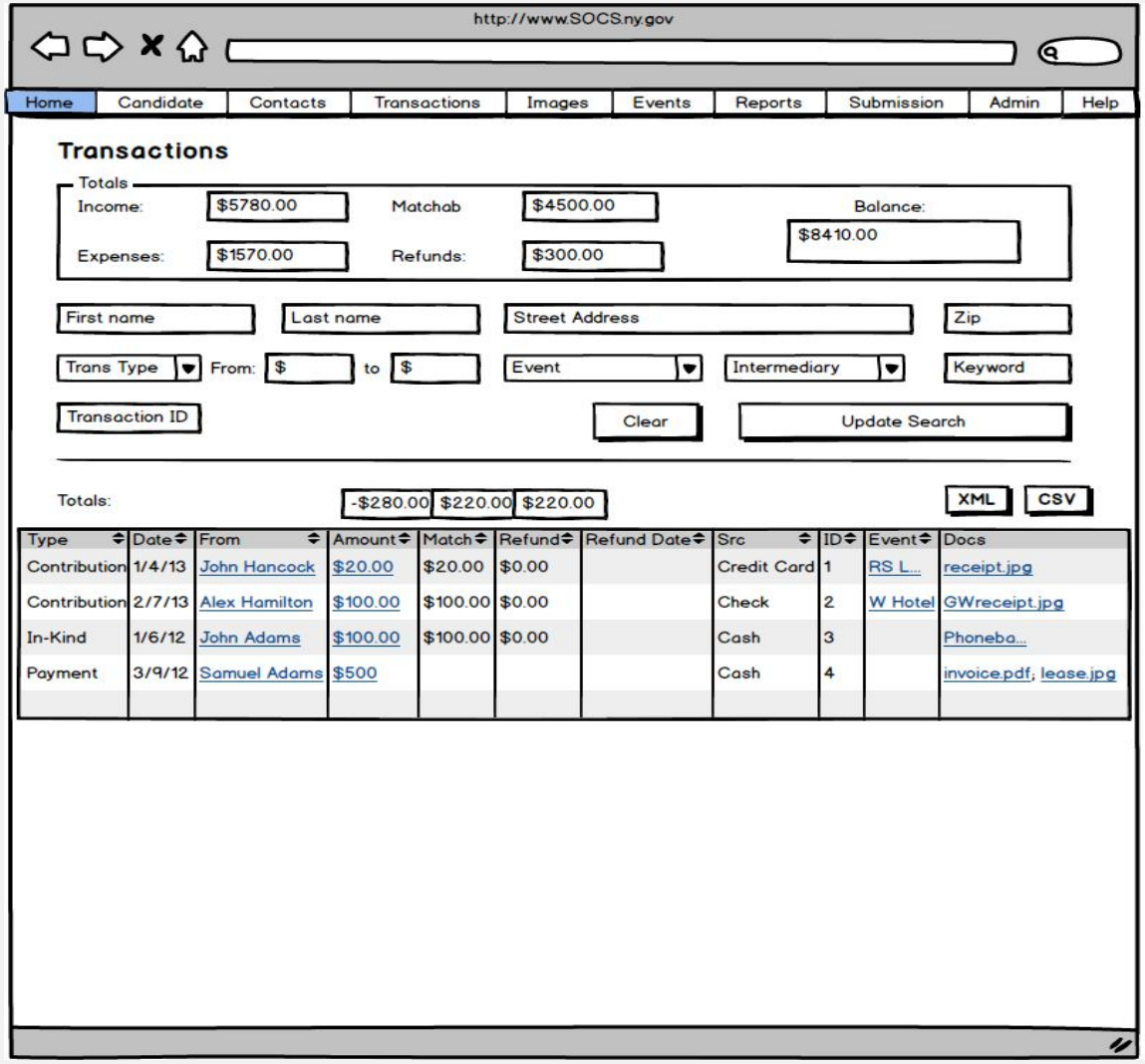


Use Case: Compliance

Search & Analytics

SOCS' search and reporting tools are useful for Committee Staff and the Public, but are of particular use to auditors.

- Bulk upload of donation data from spreadsheets for speedy analysis
- Programmatic "API" integration with leading accounting software such as Quickbooks Online
- Full suite of dynamic charts and generated reports
- Easy export to and integration with third-party "big data" fraud analysis tools

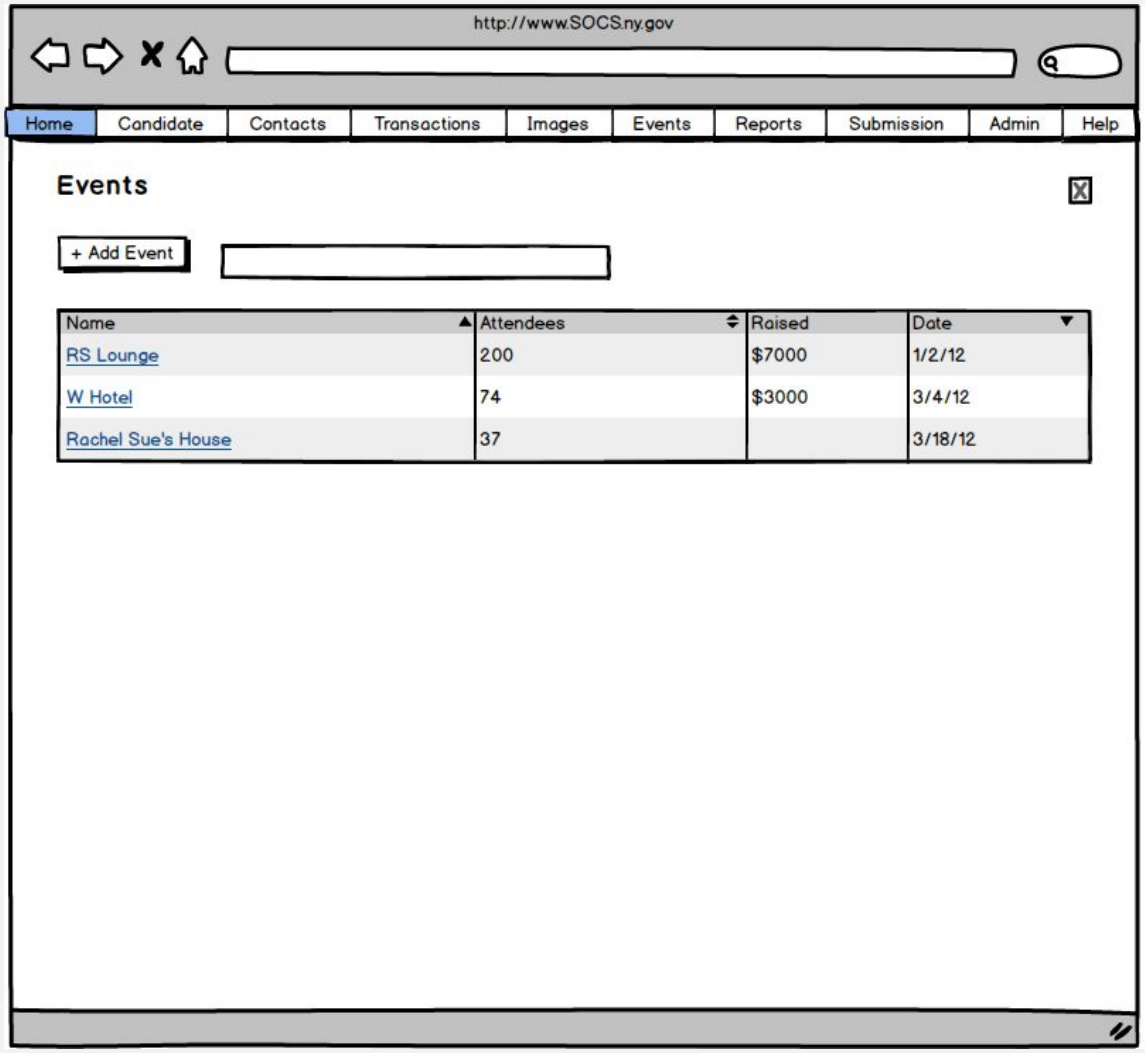


Use Case: Fundraising

Events Management

The SOCS Events dashboard lists previous fundraising events, when they were held, and the amount of money raised.

From here, users can add events or inspect previously-held events. Clicking on a previously-held event pops up a lightbox with more detailed information about the event. Users may also use the search box to sort through many events rapidly.

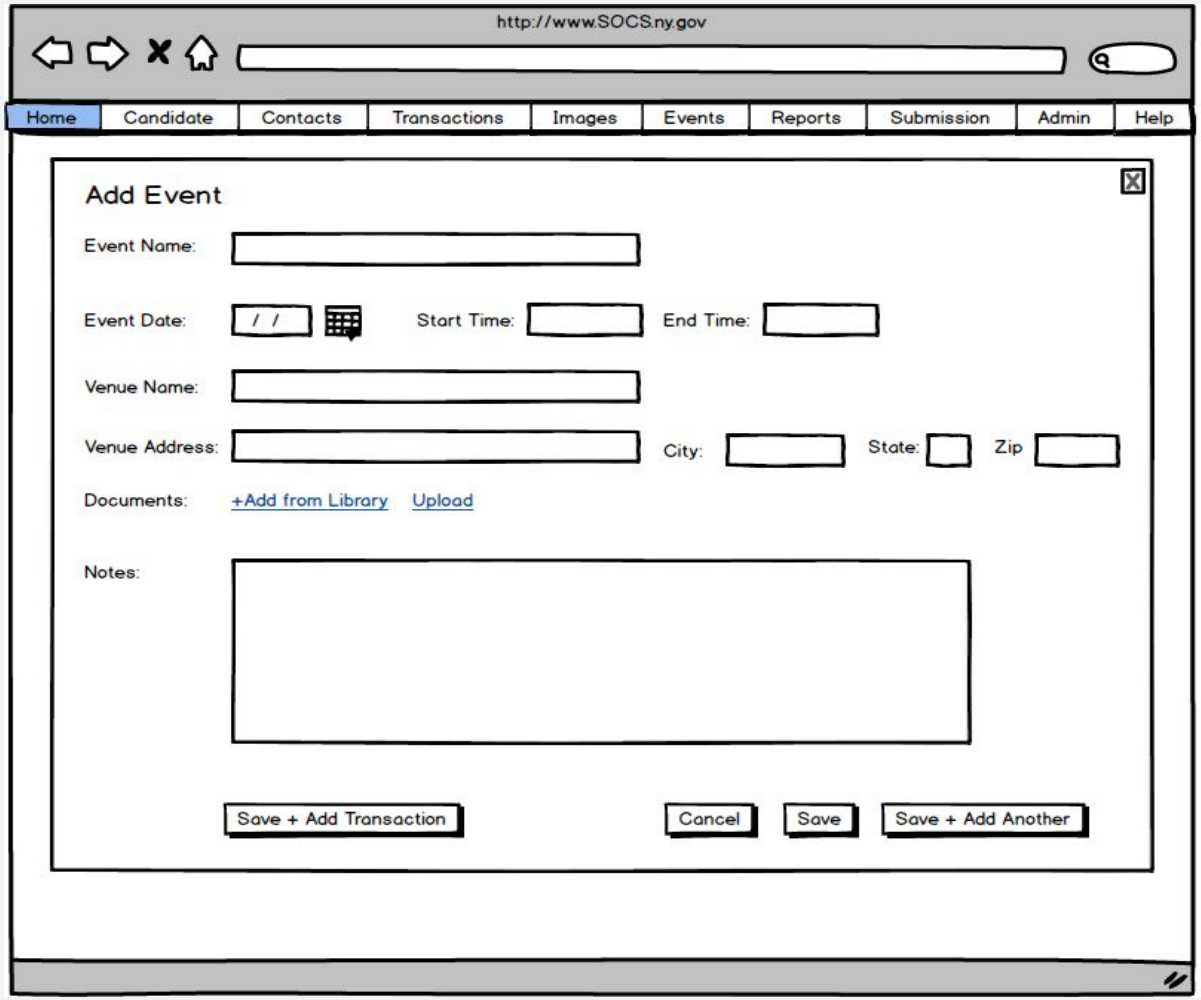


Use Case: Fundraising

Creating Events

SOCS has a series of buttons at the bottom to allow for an Event to be created and Transactions to be added, or another Event to be created, in a single click.

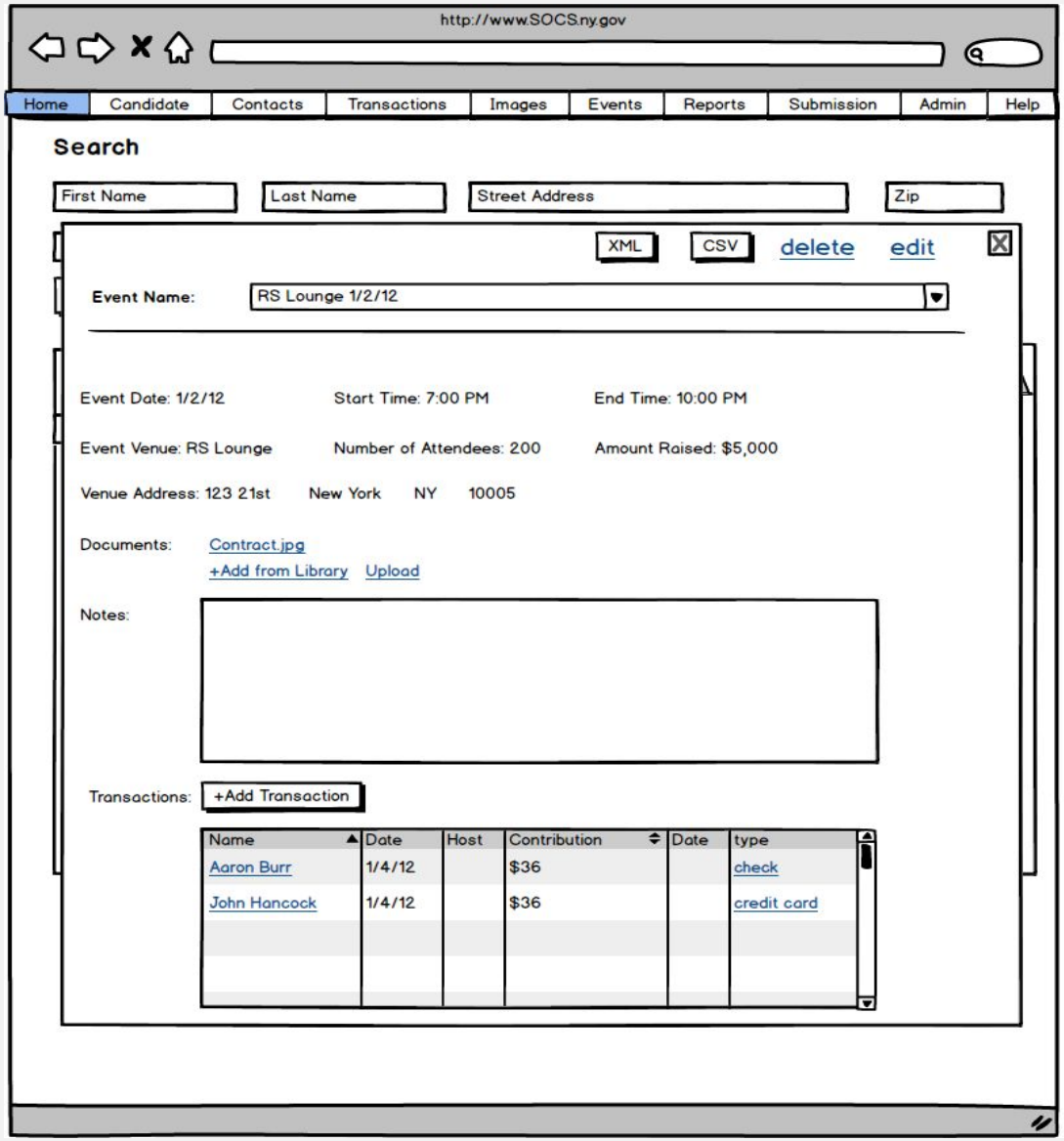
The "+Add Transaction" will take the user to the Transaction Search where they can select a Transaction which took place at the event. Upon confirming, it will return them to this pop-up. Save and add another allows for rapid creation of multiple events.



Use Case: Fundraising

Examining Events

The "+Add Transaction" will take the user to the Transaction Search where they can select a Transaction which took place at the event. Upon confirming, it will return them to this pop-up.

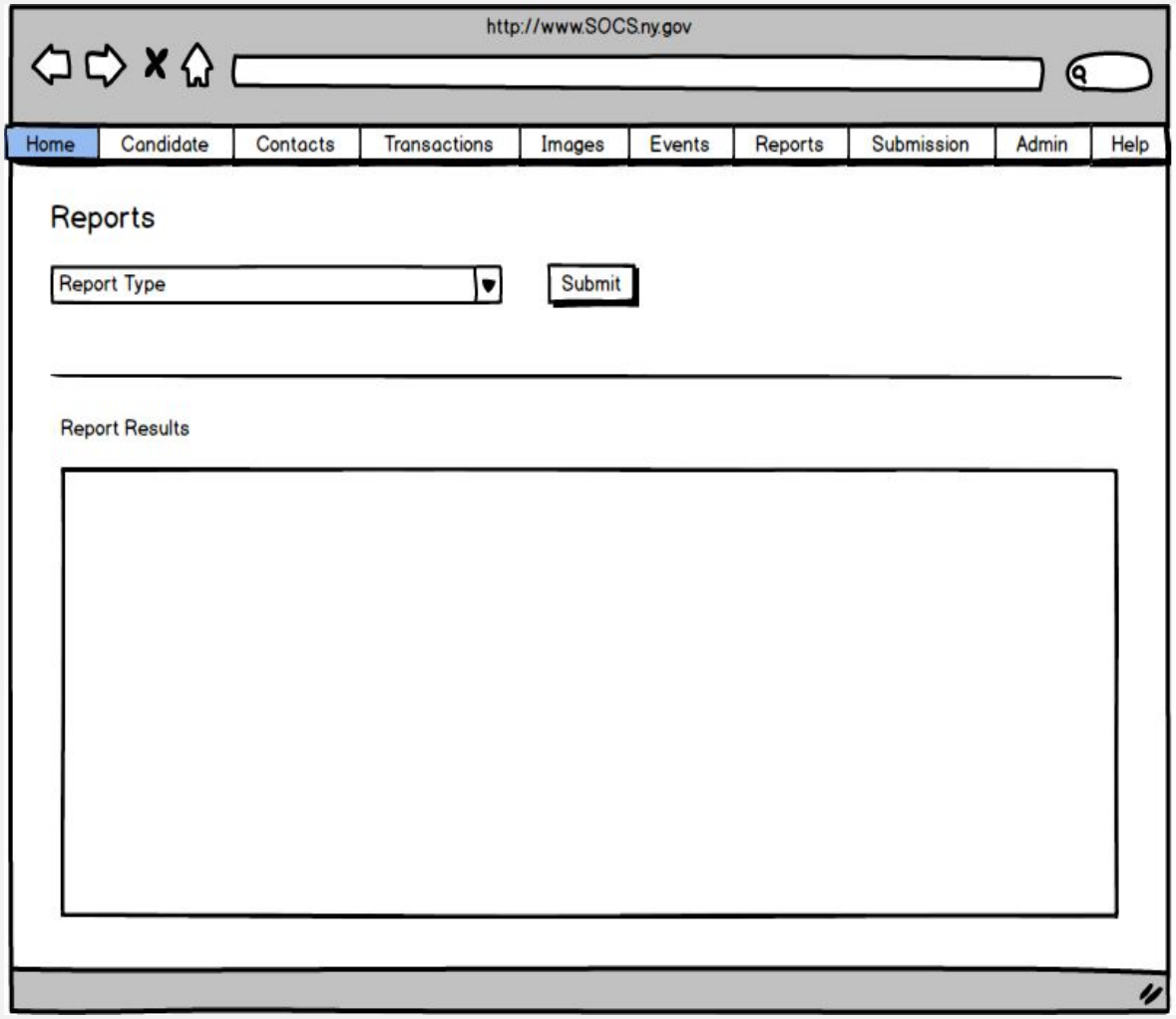


Use Case: Fundraising

Creating Reports

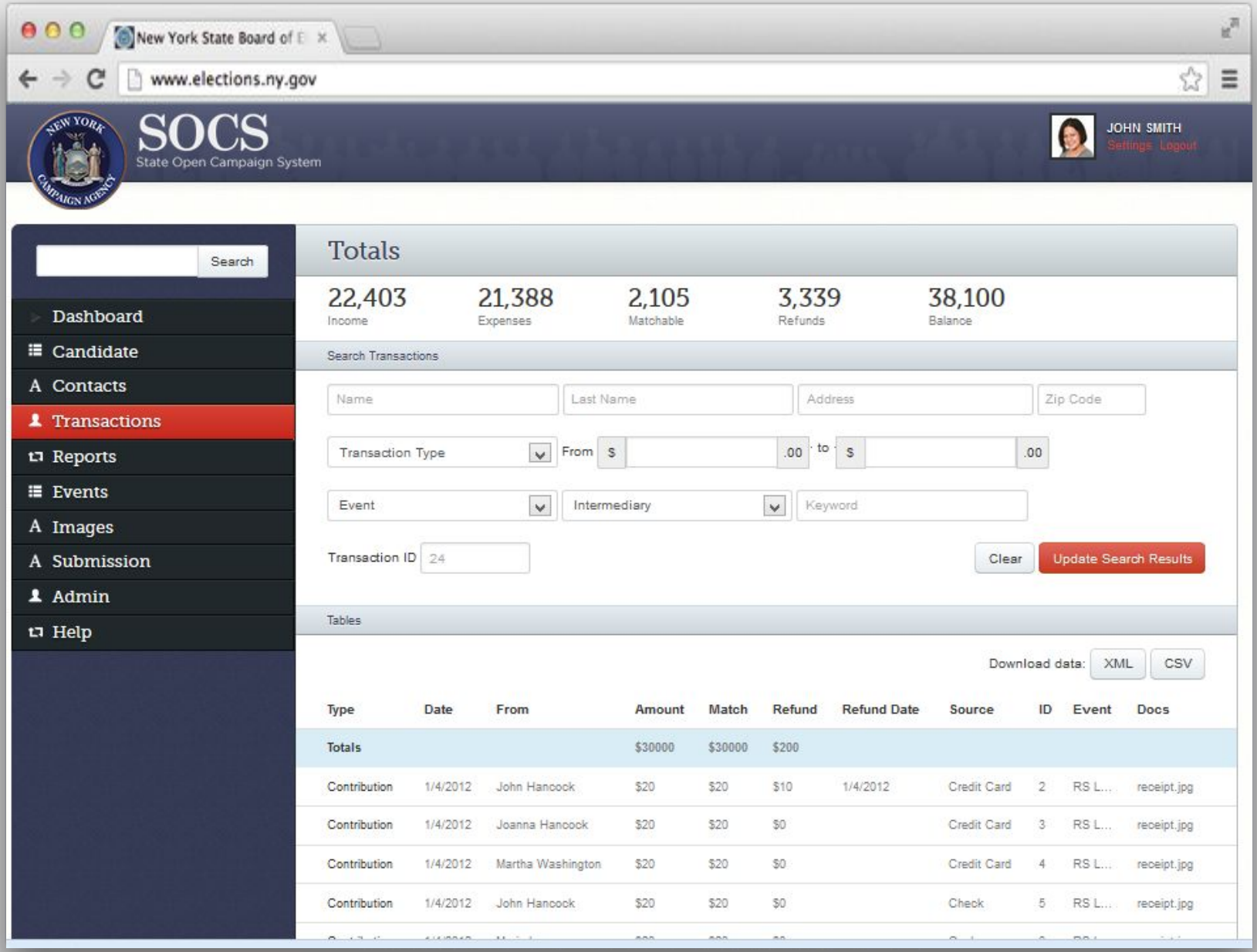
SOCS will generate reports based on pre-defined queries of the most common requests. Each of these queries can be adjusted to fit various parameters.

However, the long and complex reports list in other campaign management software is simplified by the introduction of the more robust Transaction and Contact search functions in SOCS.



SOCS
State Open Campaign System

Use Case: Tracking Expenses



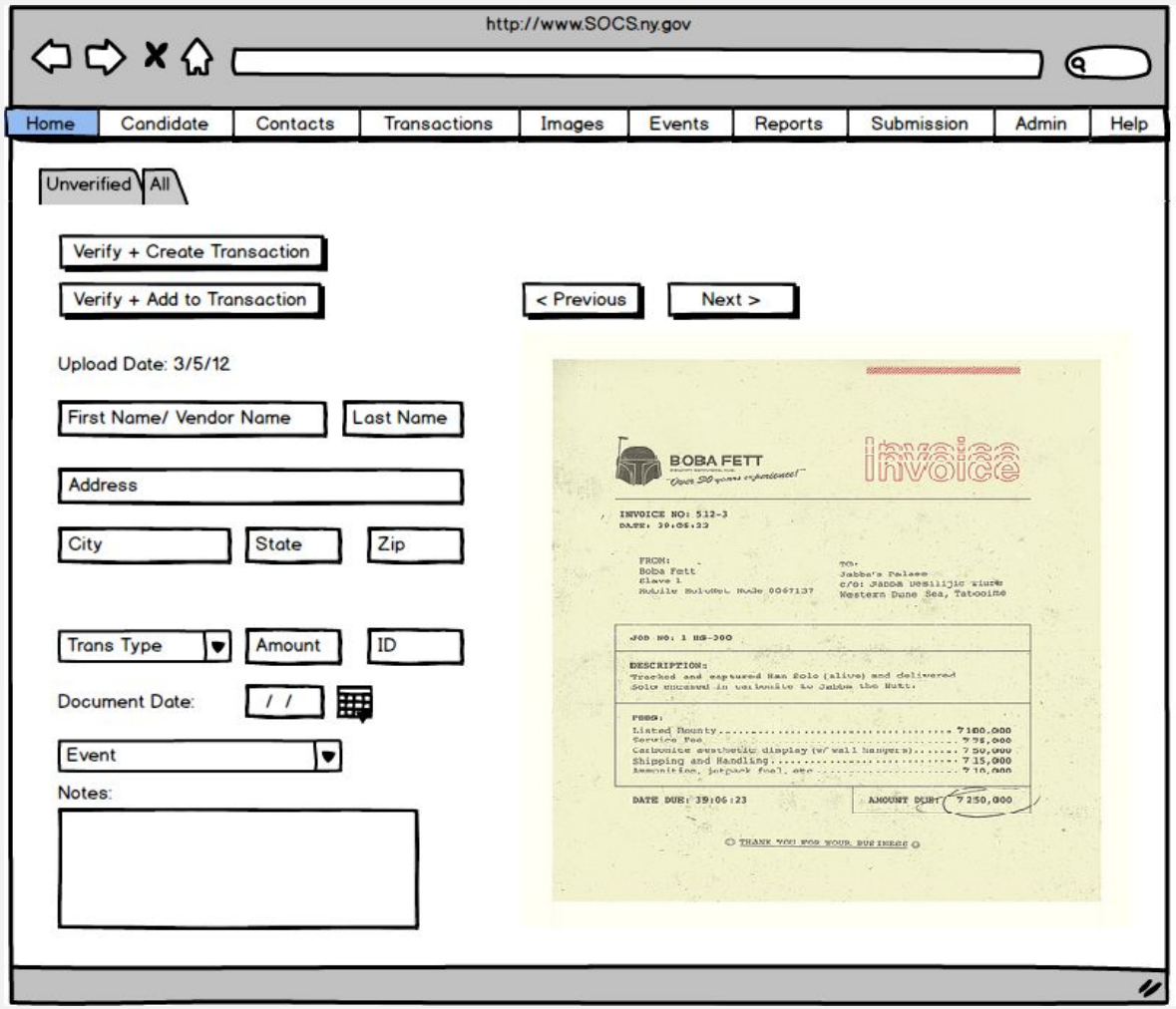
Use Case: Tracking Expenses

Online Receipts

Most campaigns are required to keep a paper receipts trail of expenditure for up to 5 years.

SOCS eliminates this onerous burden on former Committee staff, and improves oversight, by:

- Supporting attachment of pictures of receipts to each expense item at the time of entry.
- Programmatic “API” integration with leading online expense tracking software like Expensify.



Use Case: Tracking Expenses

Paperless Smart Forms

Most campaigns are required to keep a paper receipts trail of expenditure for up to 5 years.

SOCS eliminates this onerous burden on former Committee staff, and improves oversight, by:

- Supporting attachment of pictures of receipts to each expense item at the time of entry.
- Programmatic “API” integration with leading online expense tracking software like Expensify.

Use Case: Tracking Expenses

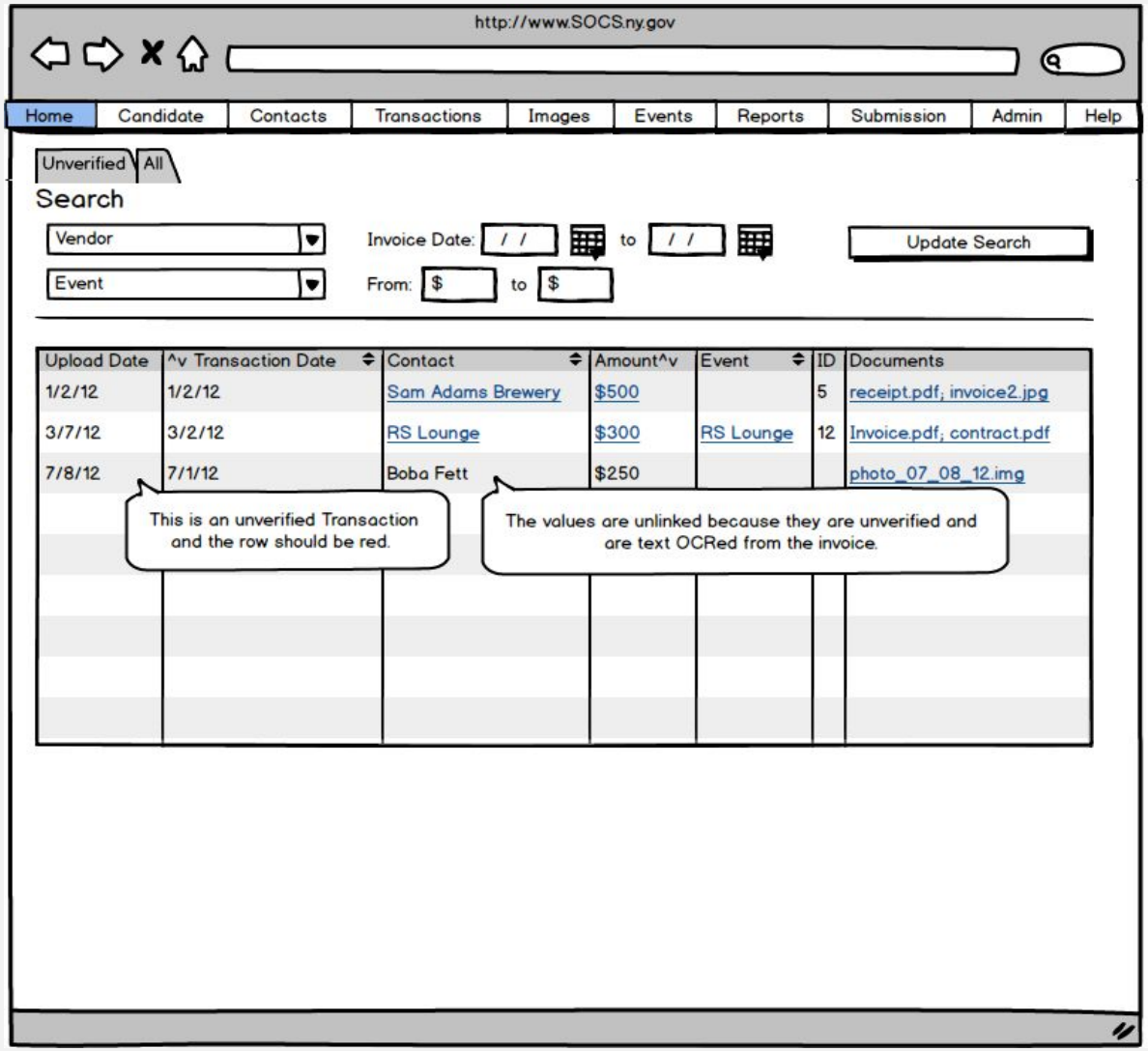
Digital Receipt Management

This is the "Images" page. It displays a list of all of the images of receipts for expenditures currently sitting in the system.

Some are verified, others are queued from scanning or mobile upload for verification. In this view, the "All" tab is selected.

Contacts and Amounts are automatically read

Clicking on an image brings up a pop-up for a Transaction Search.



Use Case: Tracking Expenses

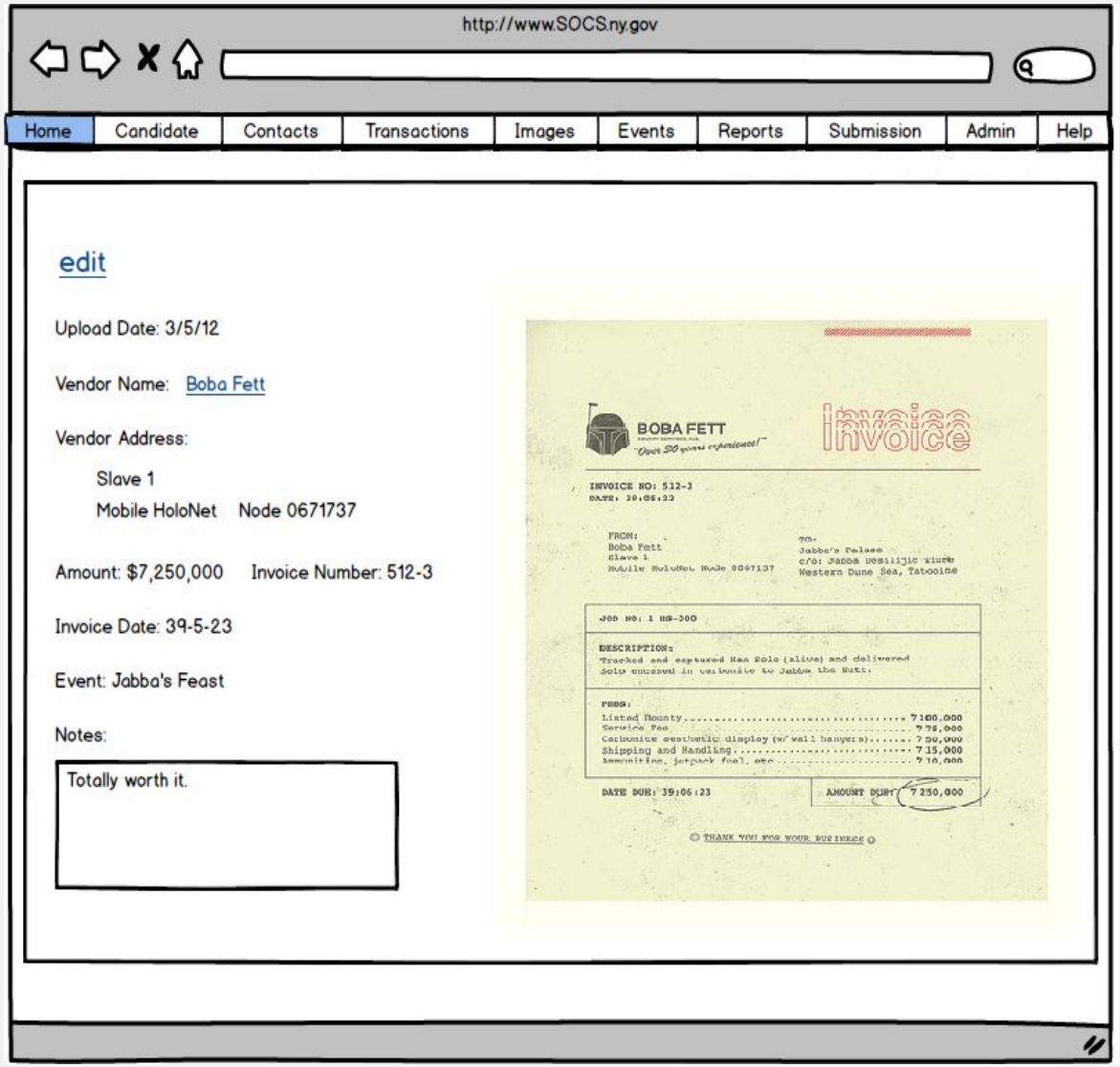
Digital Receipts

Clicking on an image brings up a pop-up for a Transaction Search. Even if an image is already verified, this view is available.

Here, OCR'ed data is displayed to the left of the image for manual verification and possible editing.

From this screen, workflow exists to add this document to an Event, a previous Transaction, or a new Transaction.

Auto-suggest in the data entry fields help prevent the creation of duplicate records

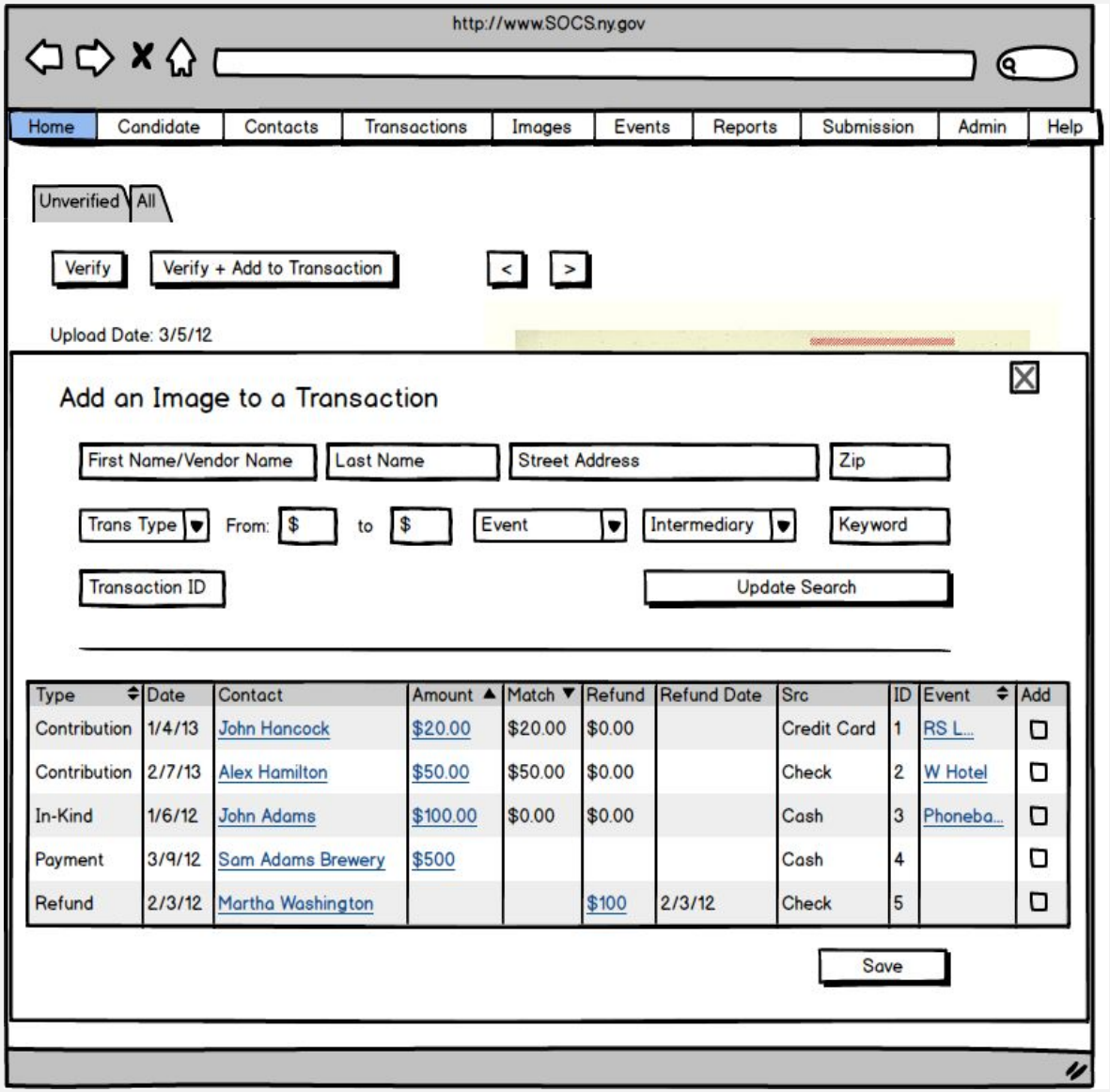


Use Case: Tracking Expenses

Connect Receipts to Transactions

Clicking on the "Add Transaction" to virtually any other piece of content will bring up a pop-up screen with the Transaction Search tool.

Intuitive workflows make it easy to add this image to any existing transaction by using advanced search on multiple fields.



Use Case: Tracking Expenses

Recording Transactions

Creating transactions is easy with SOCS, even if users are not importing bulk data via spreadsheets.

Auto-suggest in the data entry fields help prevent the creation of duplicate records, and saves time.

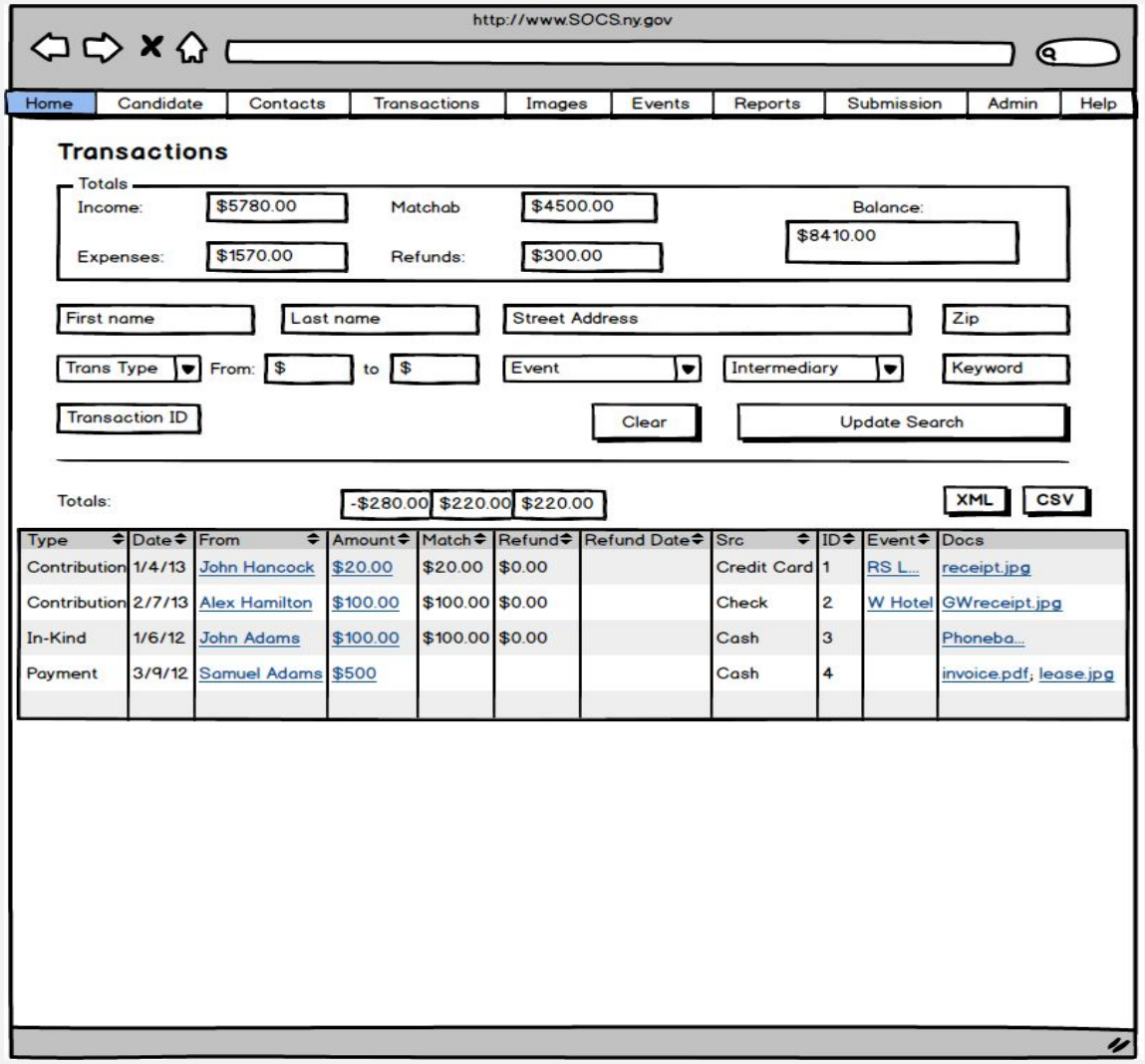
Use Case: Tracking Expenses

No More Paper

Transactions page shows the totals for the campaign from inception to date.

The advanced search function is exposed to filter and sort tables of Transactions.

A sortable table is available with totals for the columns, allowing quick reference to the totals involved in a specific search.

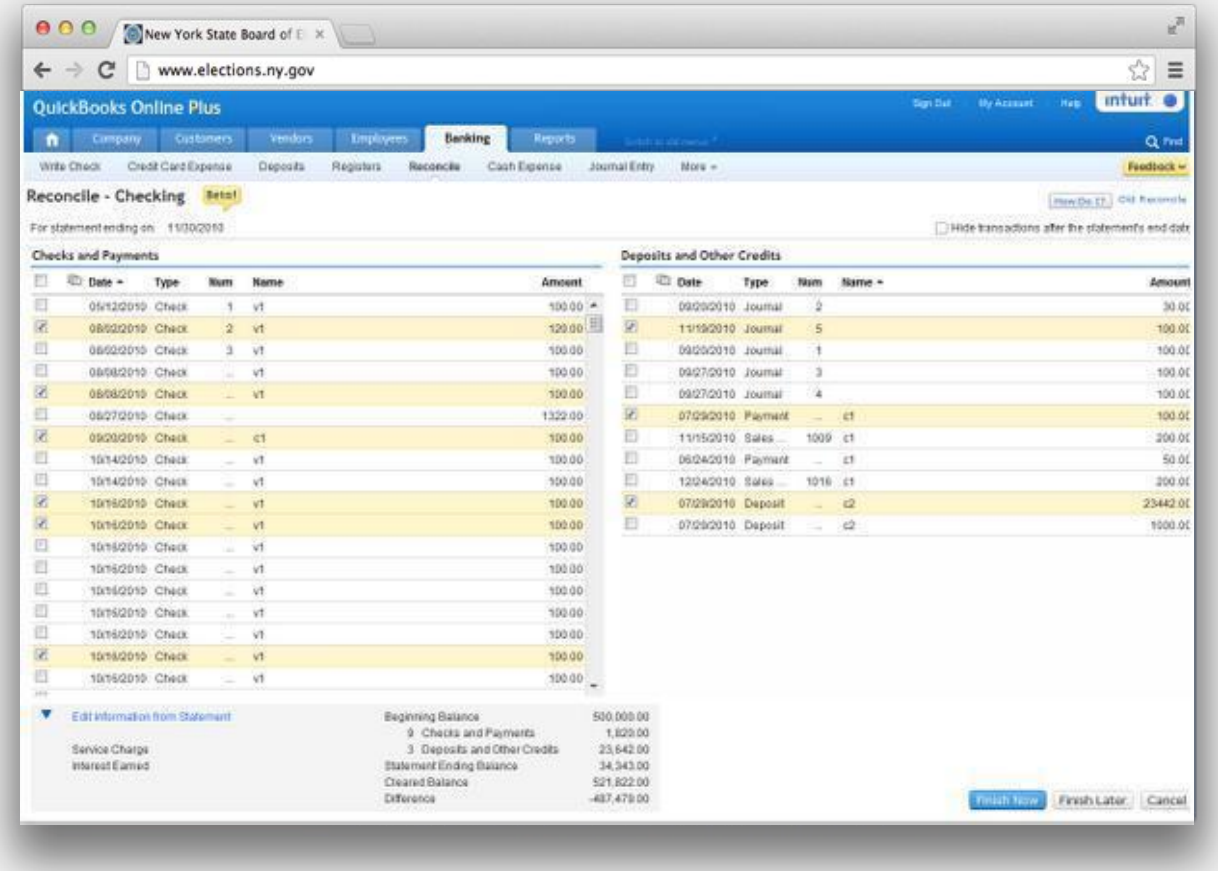


Use Case: Tracking Expenses

Imports From Accounting Software

SOCS can upload donation data from commonly used accounting software like Quickbooks. This saves time and reduces data entry errors.

SOCS effectively integrates with accounting software via programmatic API.



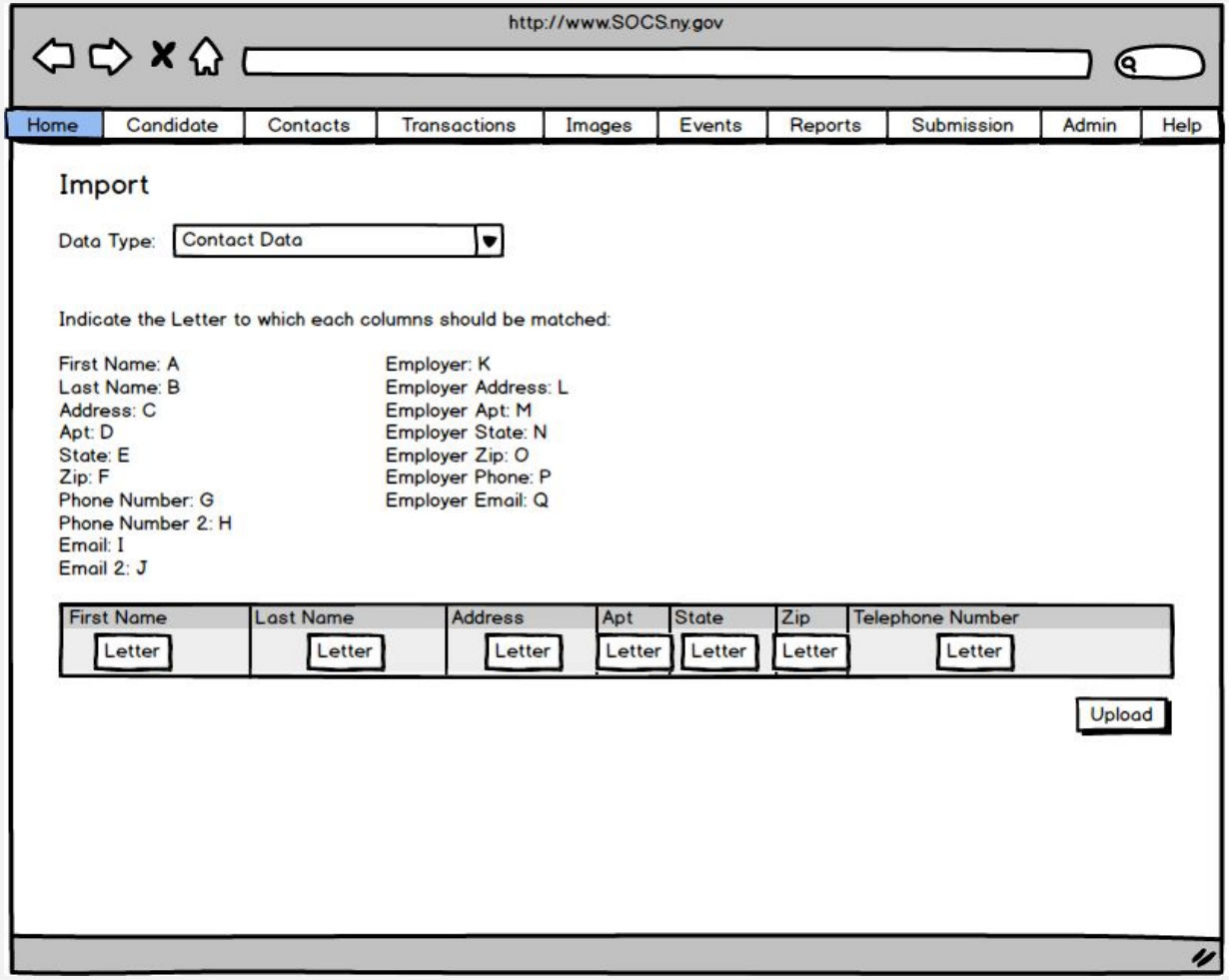
Use Case: Tracking Expenses

Importing Transactions

SOCS makes bulk importing of data from spreadsheets easy.

Upload a spreadsheet, select the type of data from the menu (for example, Contact Data), and match your columns to the data SOCS data fields.

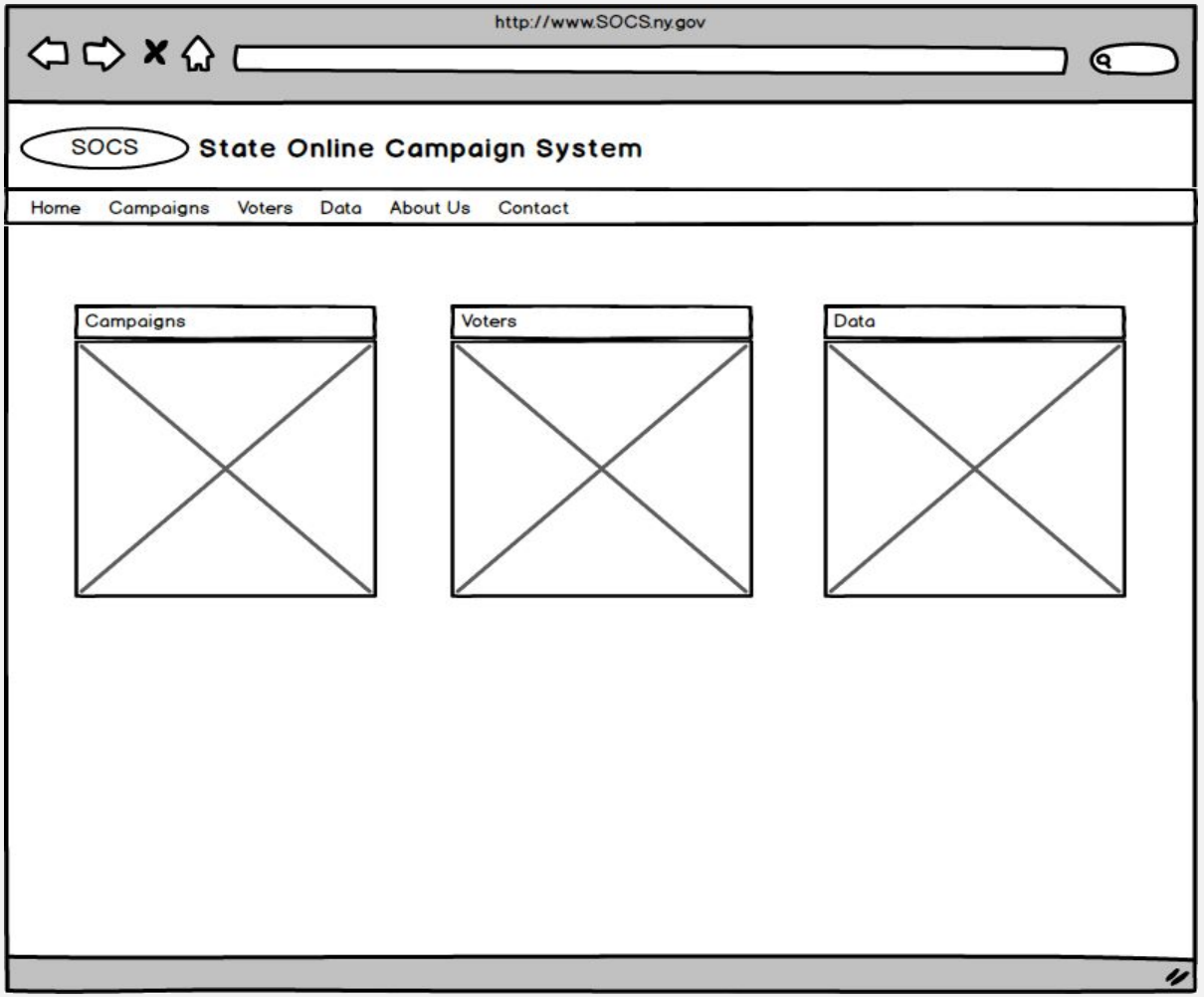
By removing the need for staffers to manually enter contacts, clerical errors can be almost completely prevented.



Use Case: Government Watchdog

Public Facing Home

SOCS is for more than just campaigns and state regulators. Good government groups can take advantage of the powerful transparency dashboard for members of the public.



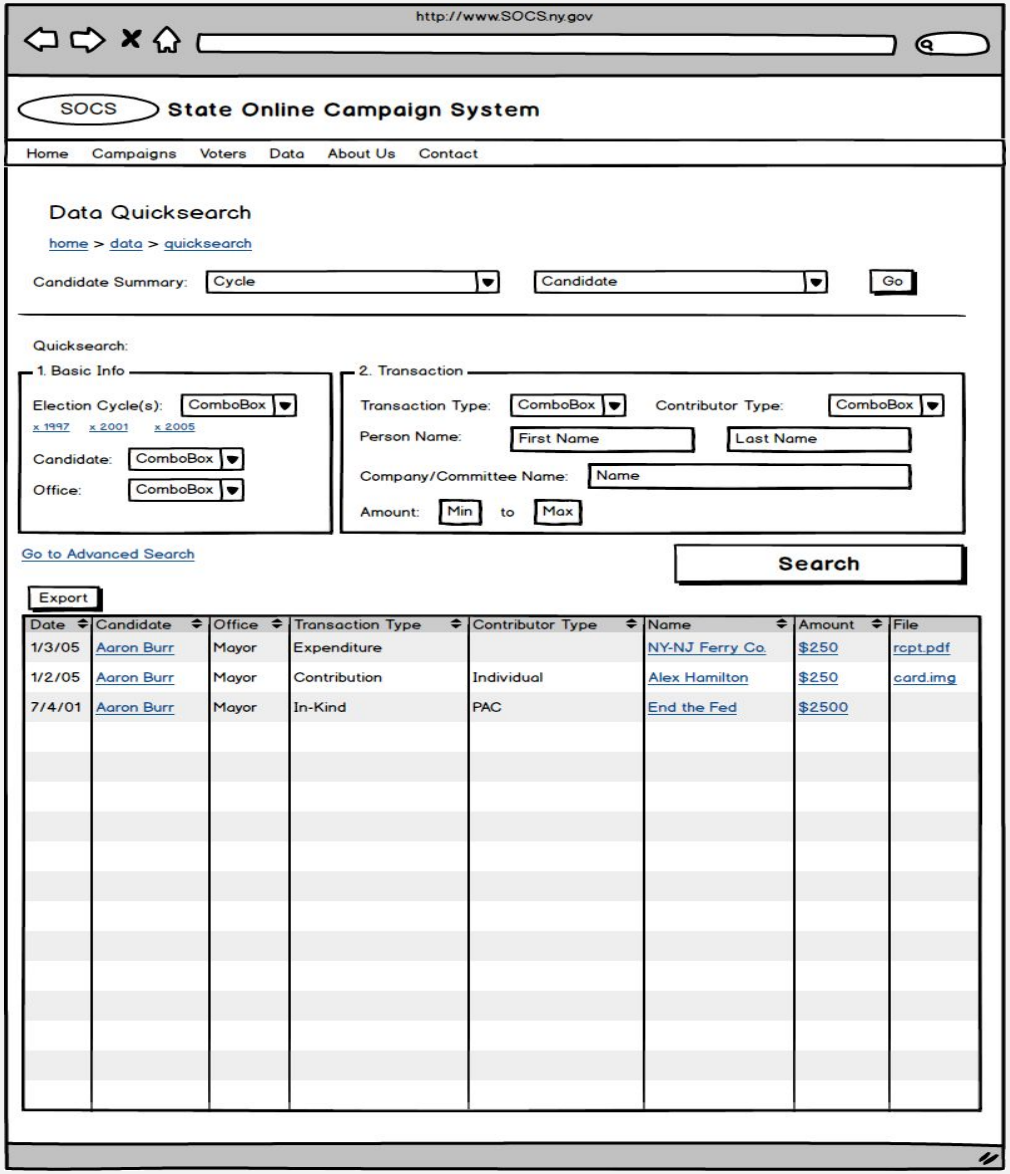
Use Case: Public Education

Data Quicksearch

The SOCS Quicksearch makes it significantly easier to find Candidate summaries and add a even more additional search options to the C-SMART model.

For example:

- search across multiple election cycles
- filter by transaction type, contributor type
- display Company or Committee name and
- sort by Transaction Amounts.



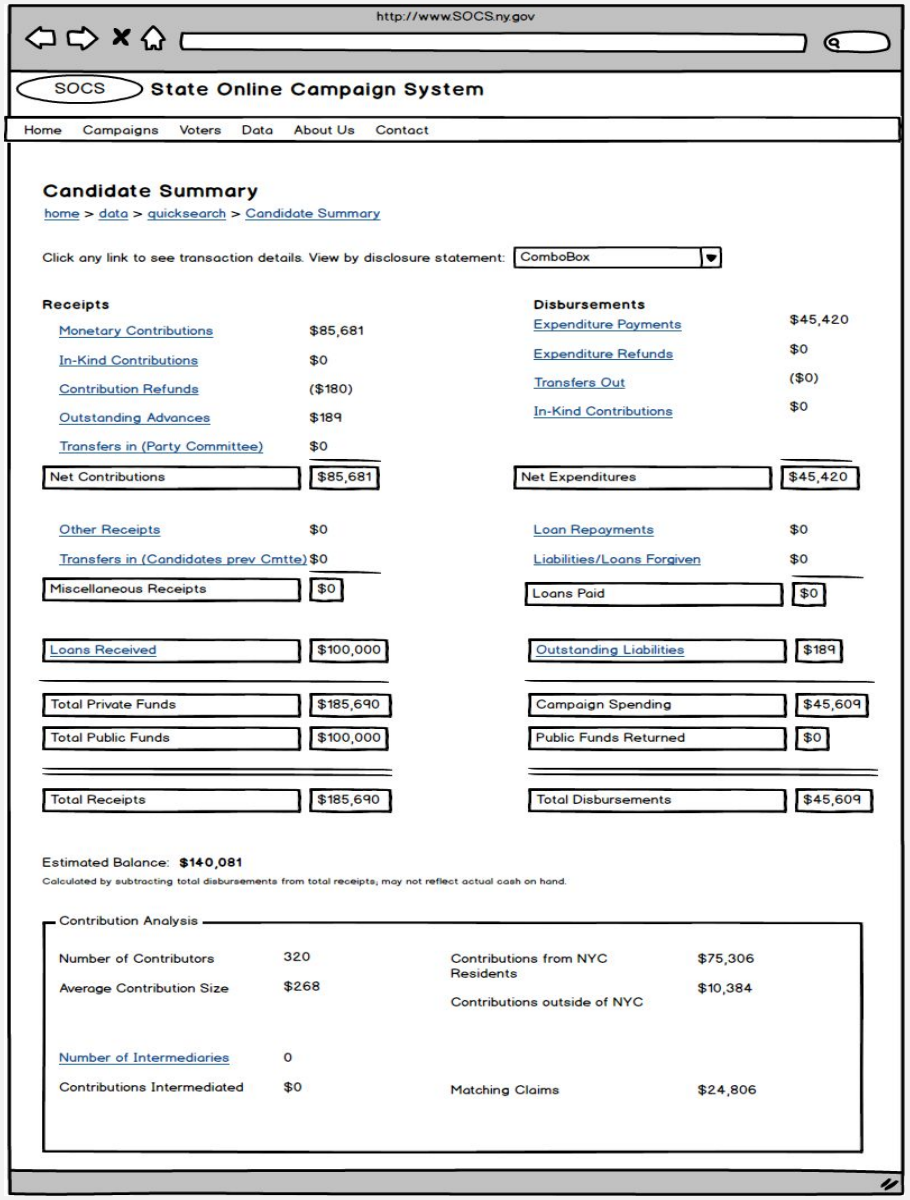
Use Case: Public Education

Data Quicksearch

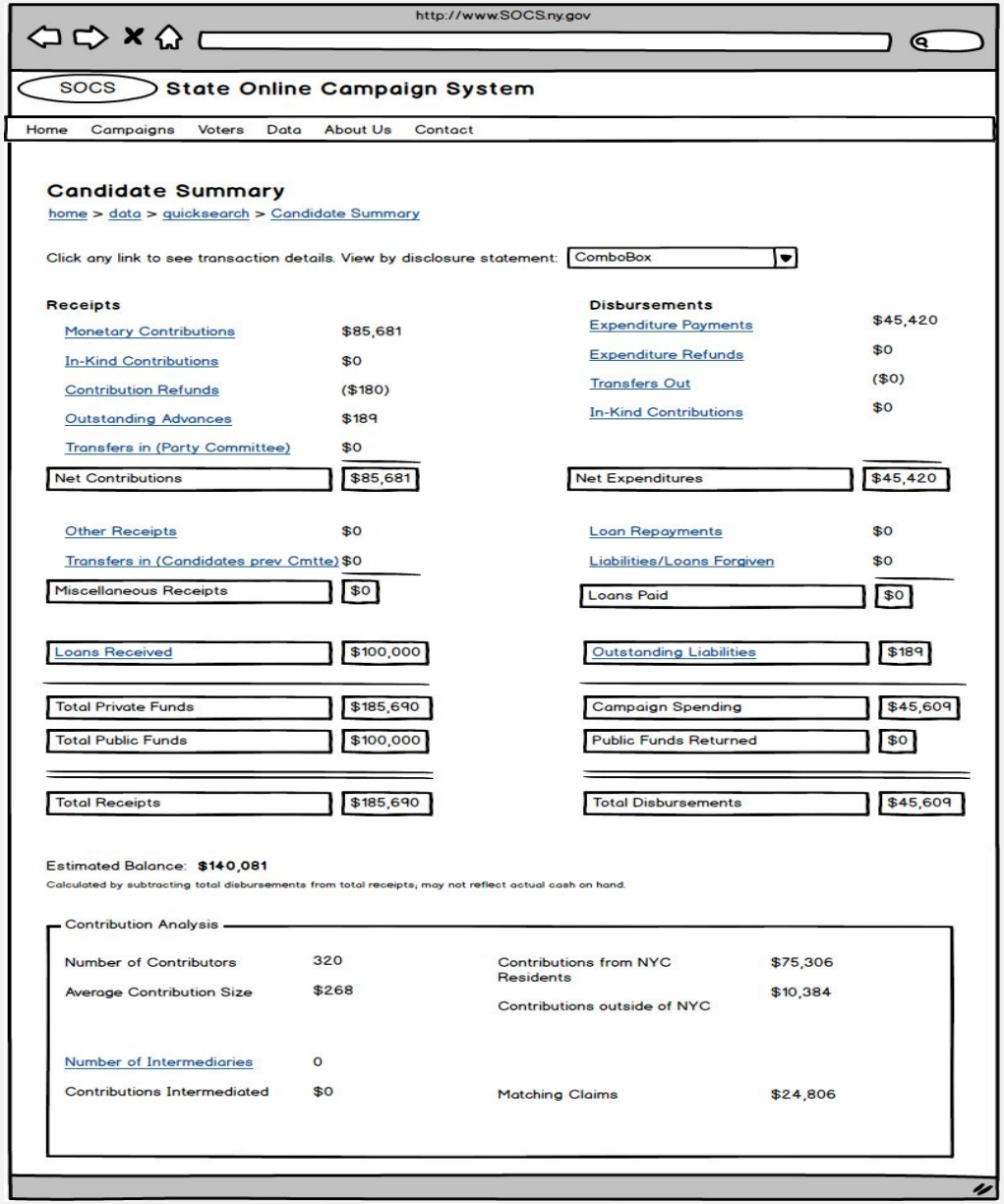
Summaries display contributions by type:

- Monetary
- In-kind
- Refunds of contributions
- Advances
- Transfers from parties

The summary also displays totals for loans, liabilities, public and private fund receives

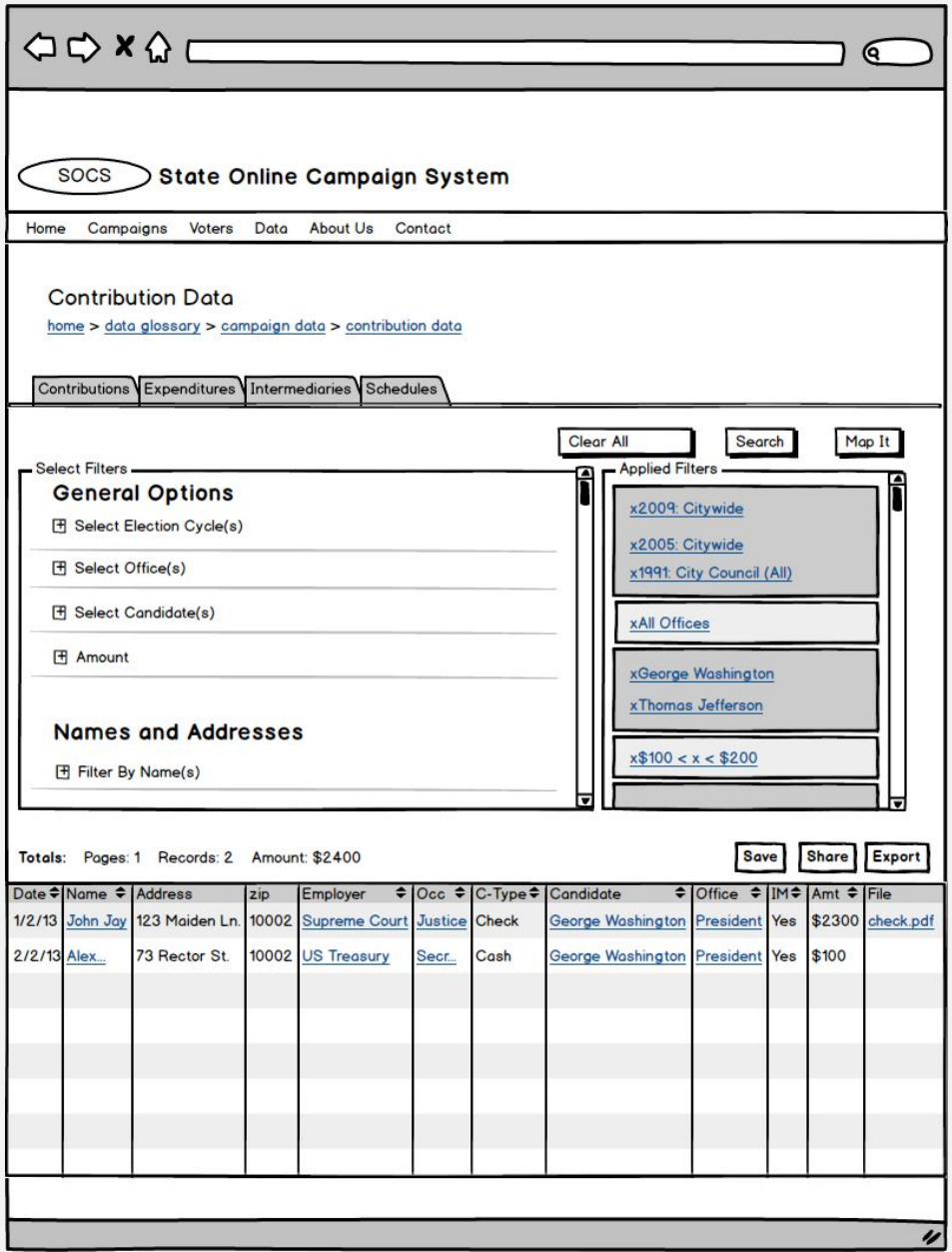


Candidate Summary



SOCS
State Open Campaign System

Campaign Contribution Default Search



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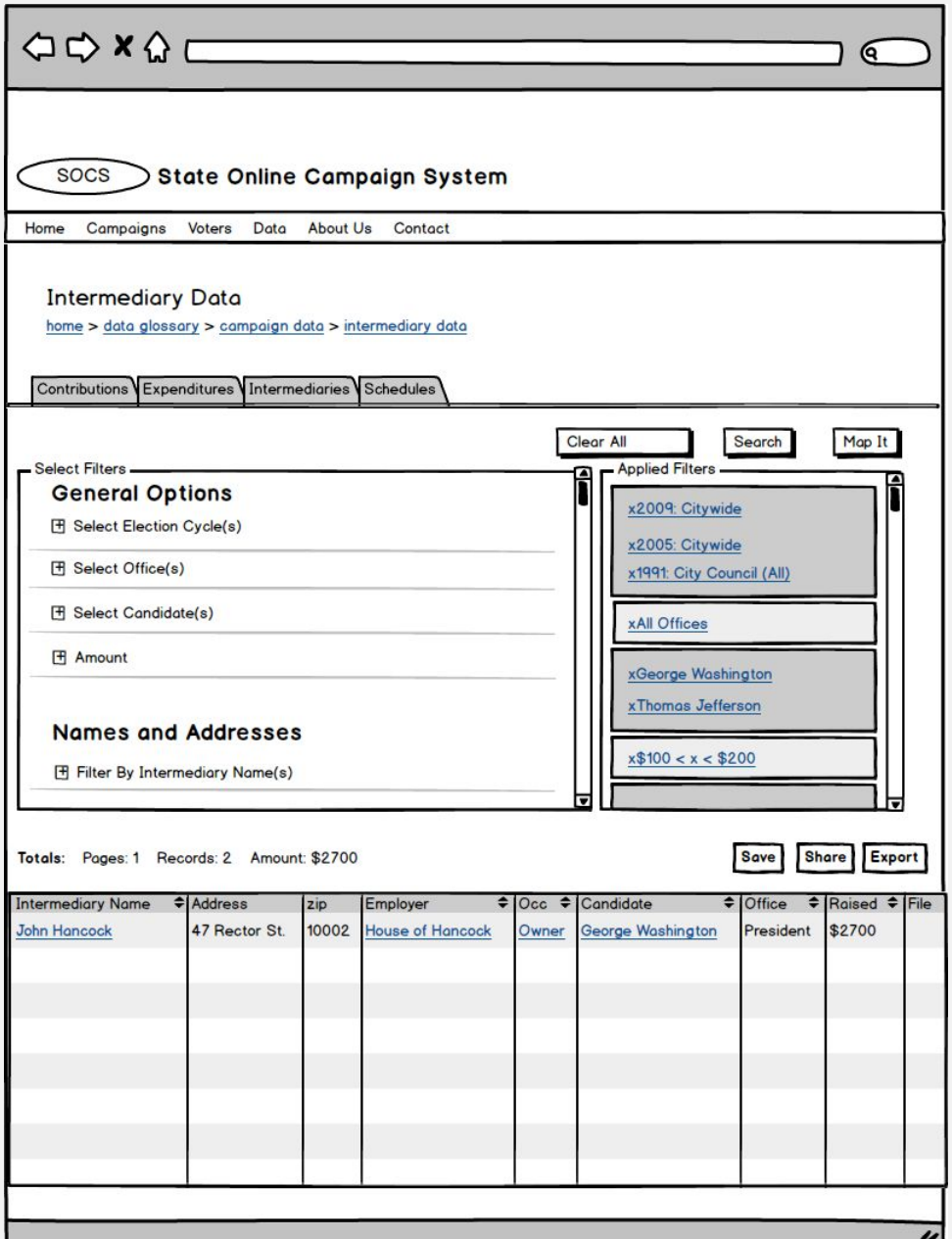
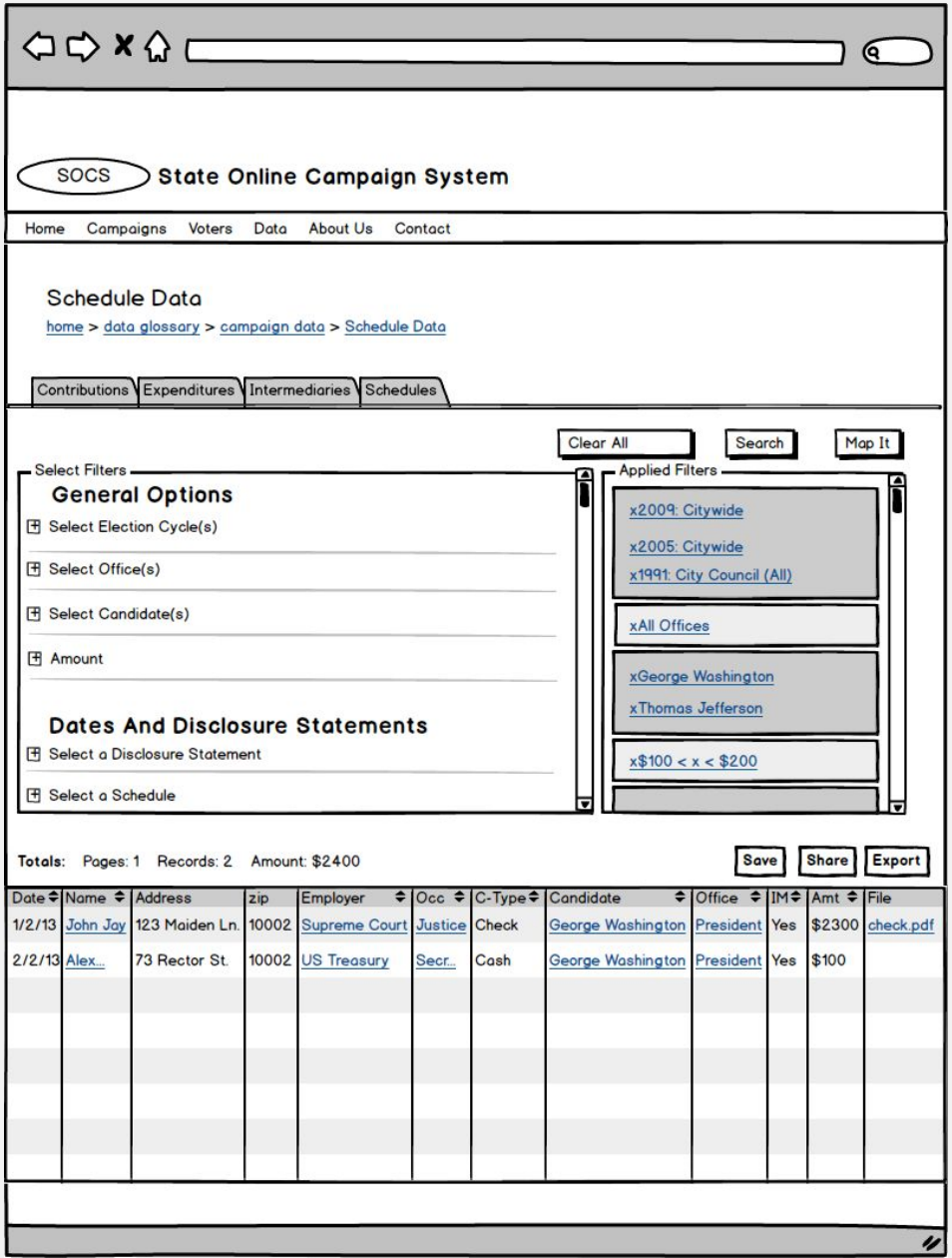
State Open Campaign System

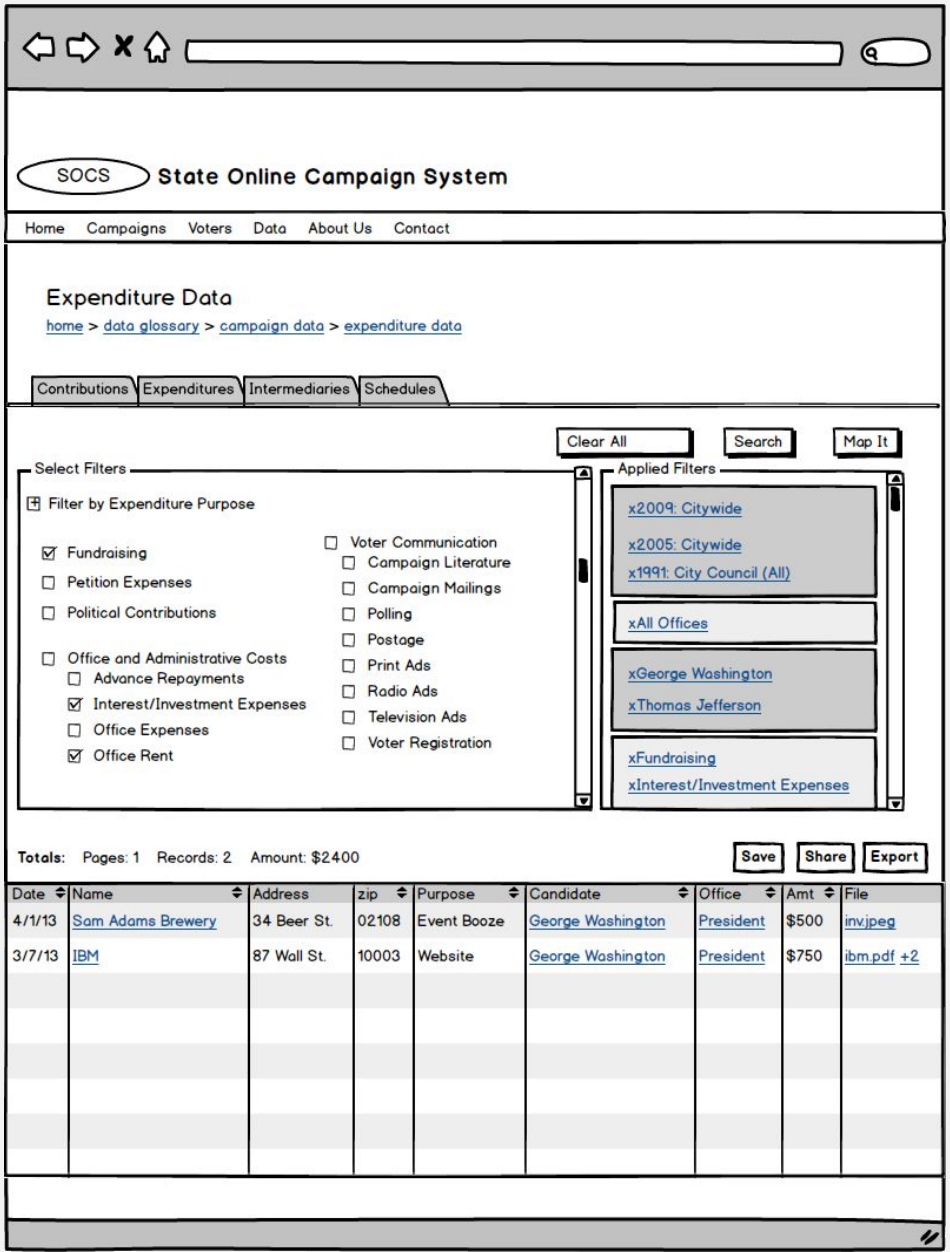
Campaign Intermediary Search



Campaign Schedule Search



Campaign Expenditure Default



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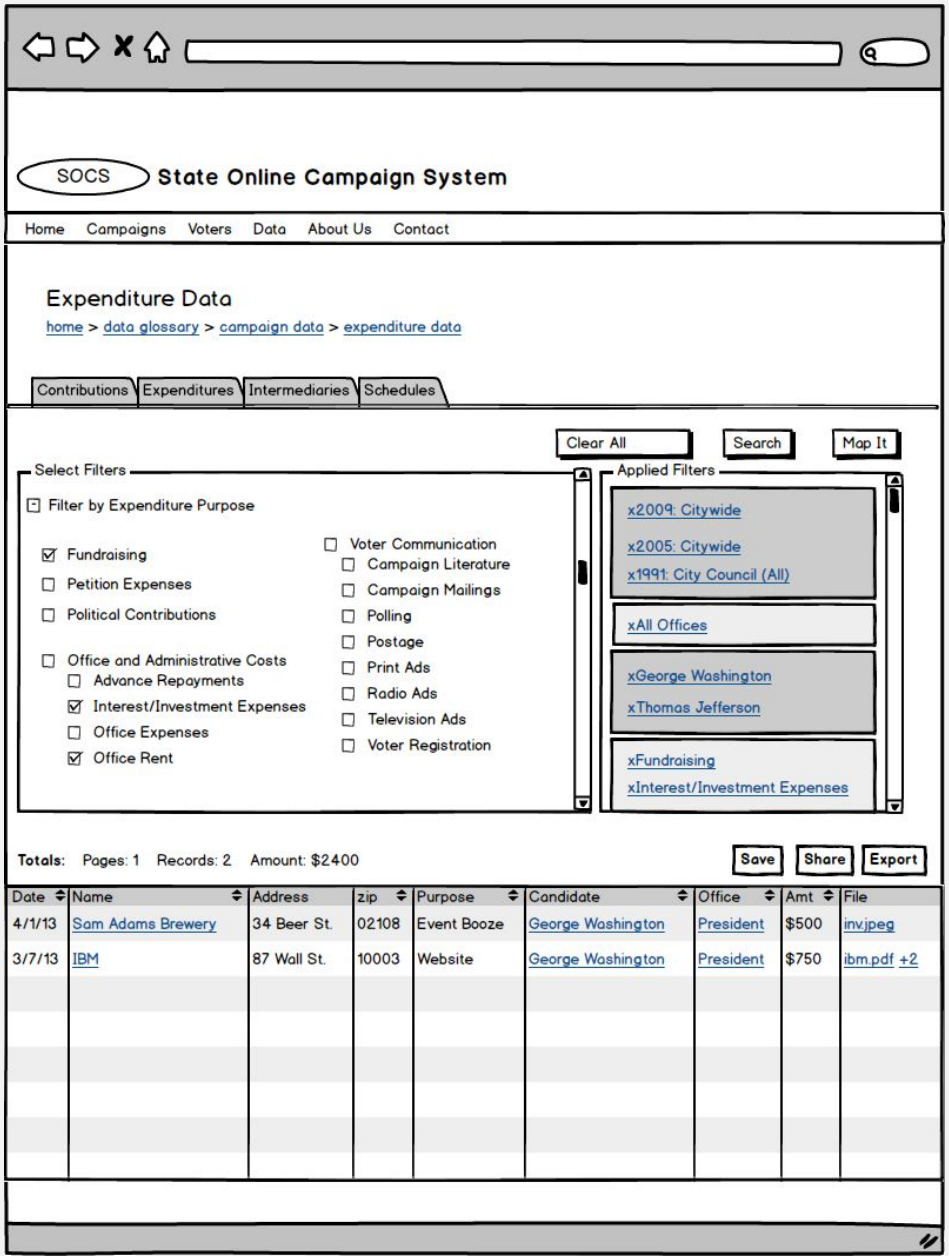
Campaign Expenditure Purpose



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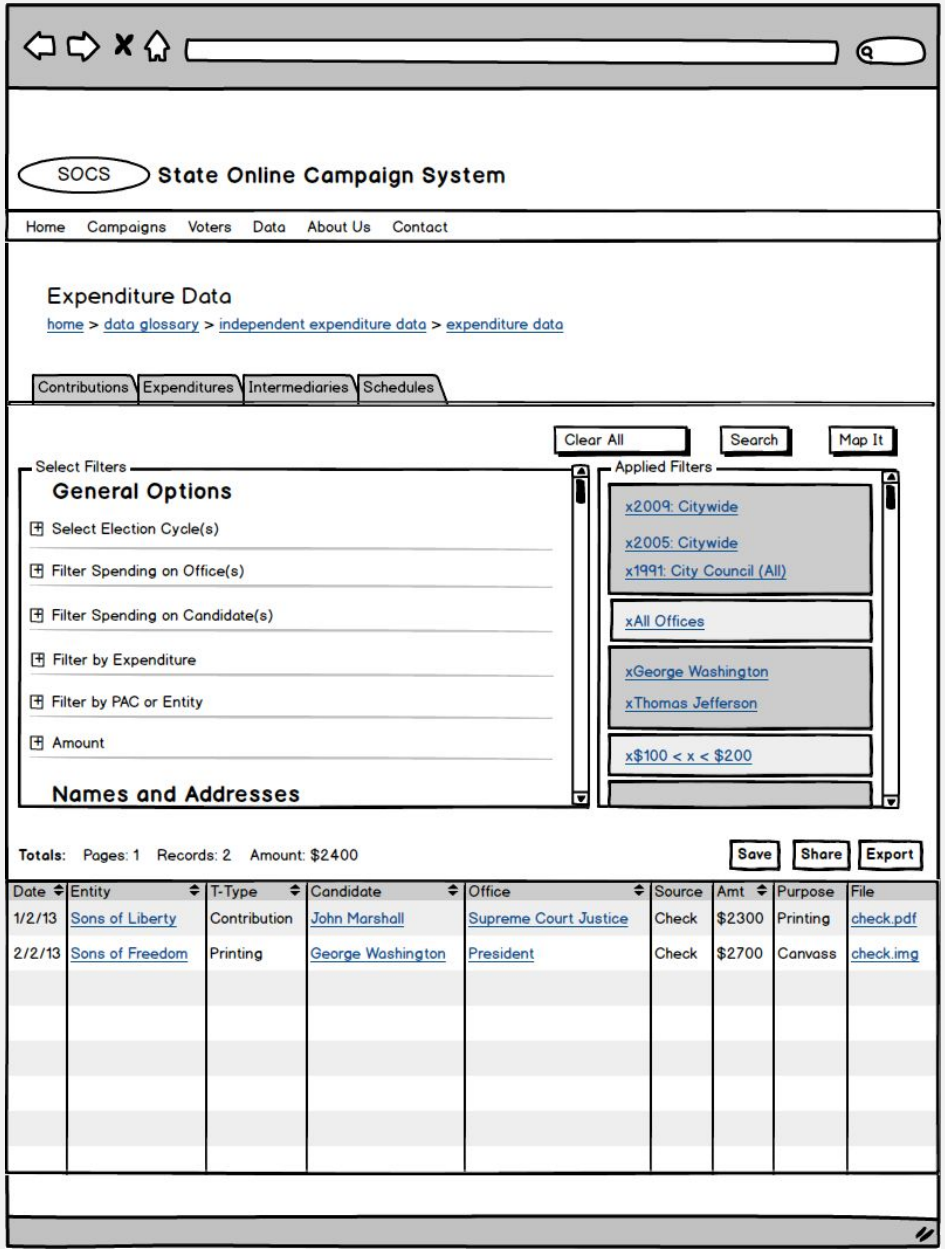
Independent Expenditure Search Default



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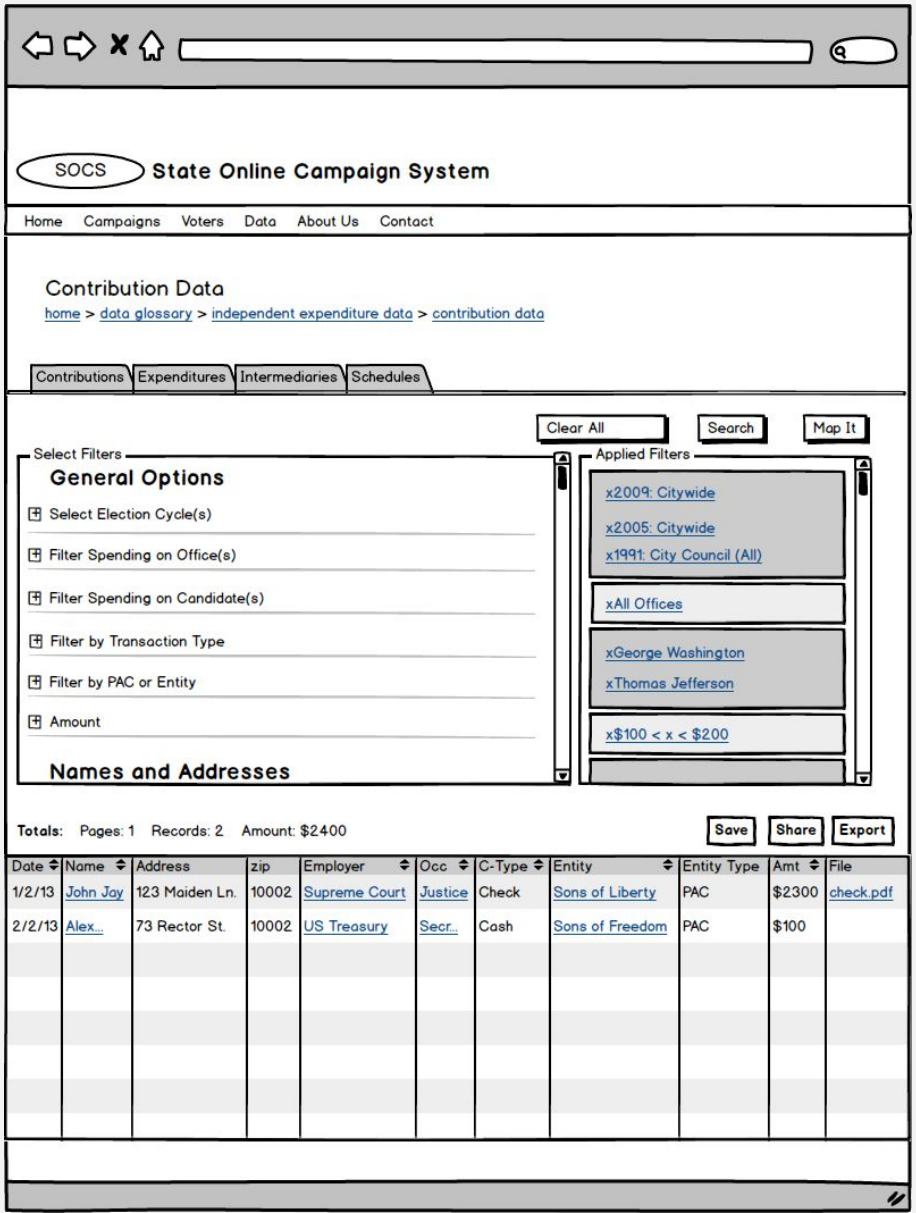
State Open Campaign System

Independent Expenditure Contribution Search



SOCS
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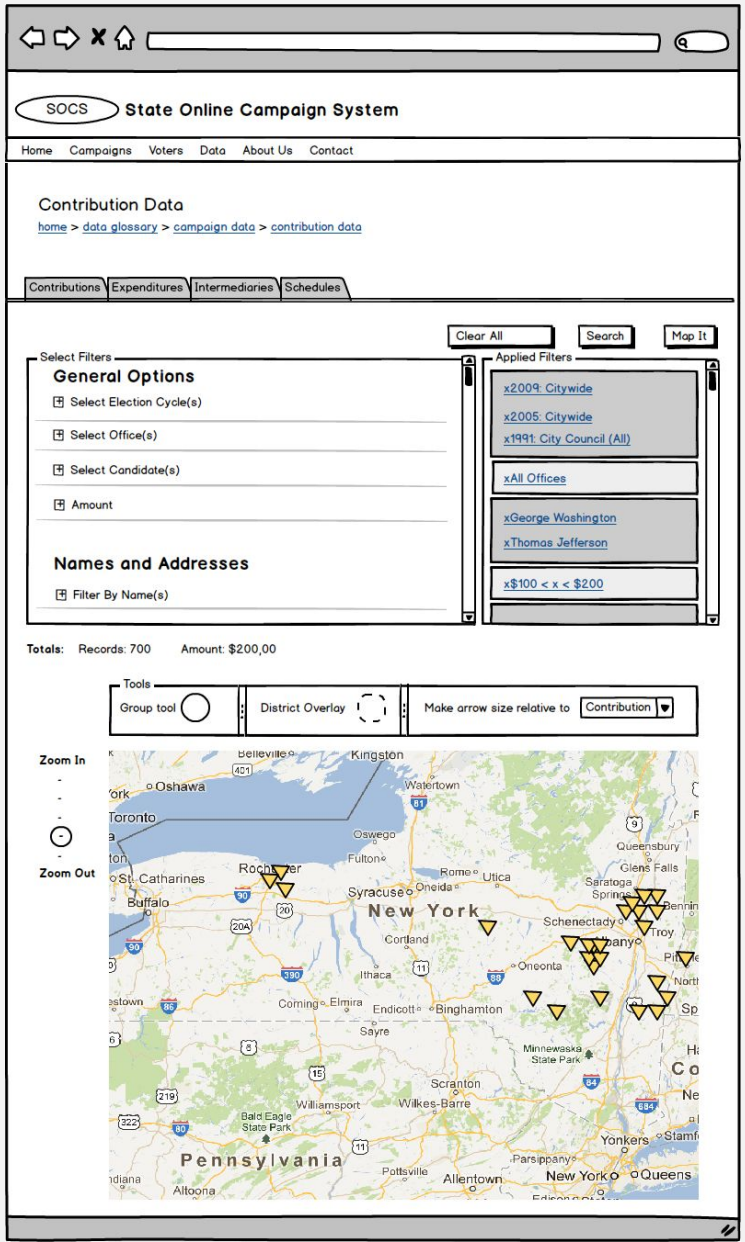
Mapping Contributions Wireframe



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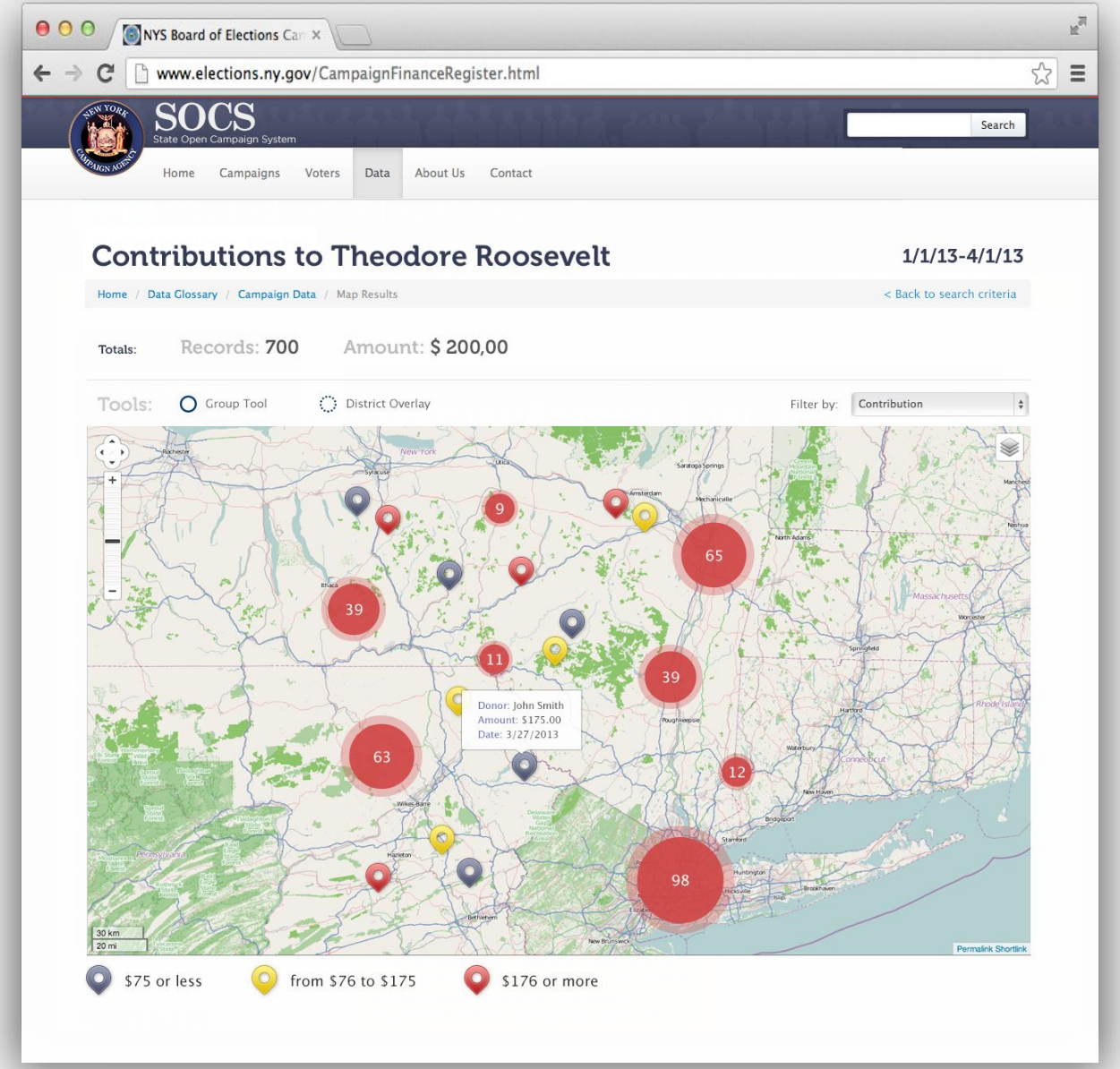
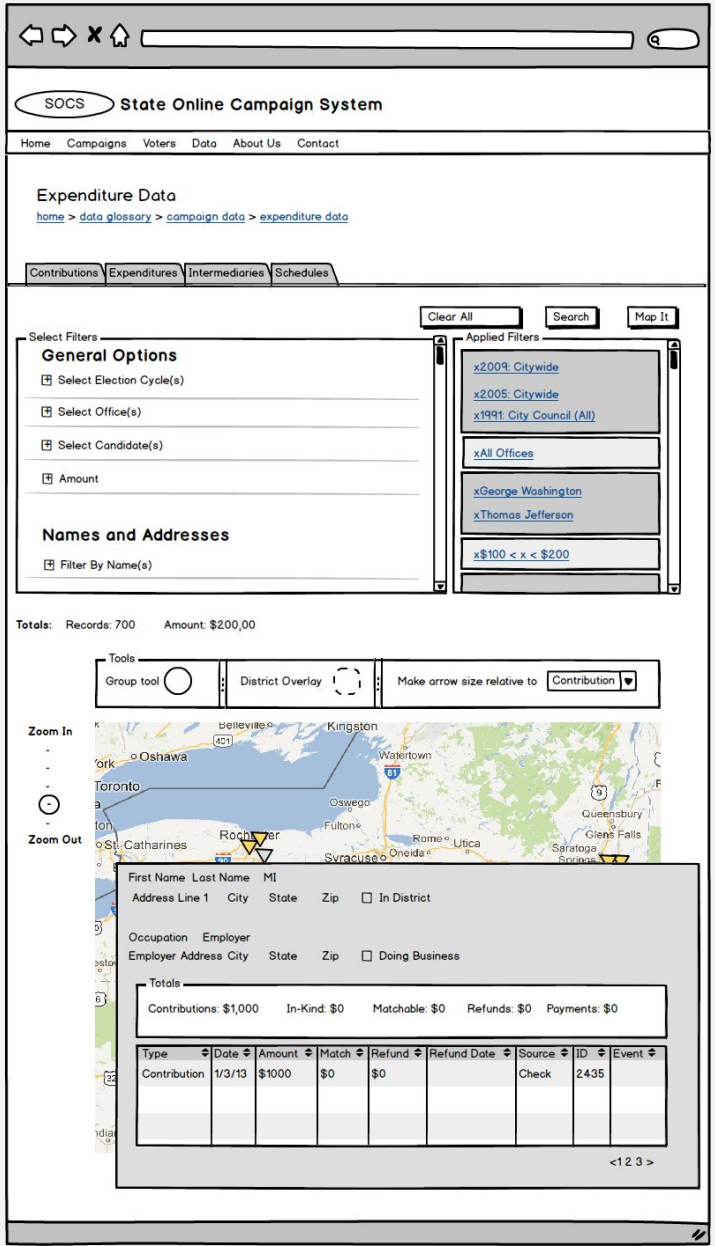
Mapping Contributions Mock-Up



Mapping Contributions Pop-Up



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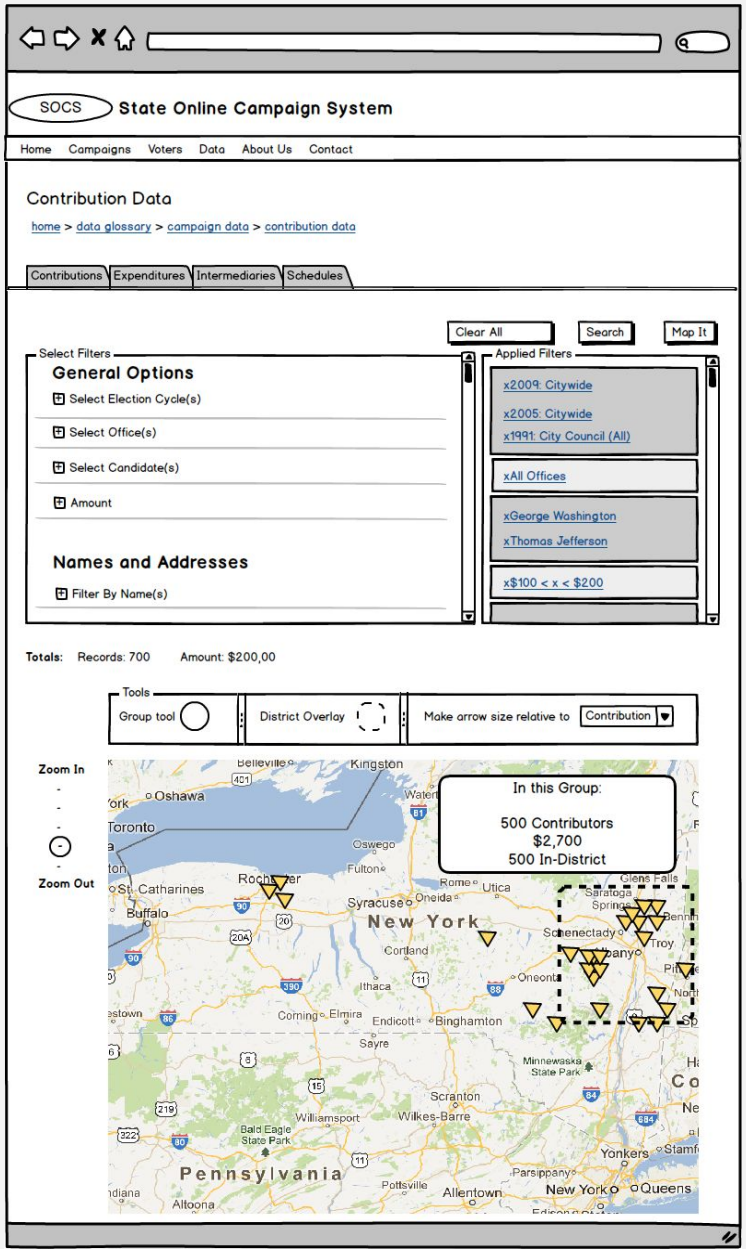
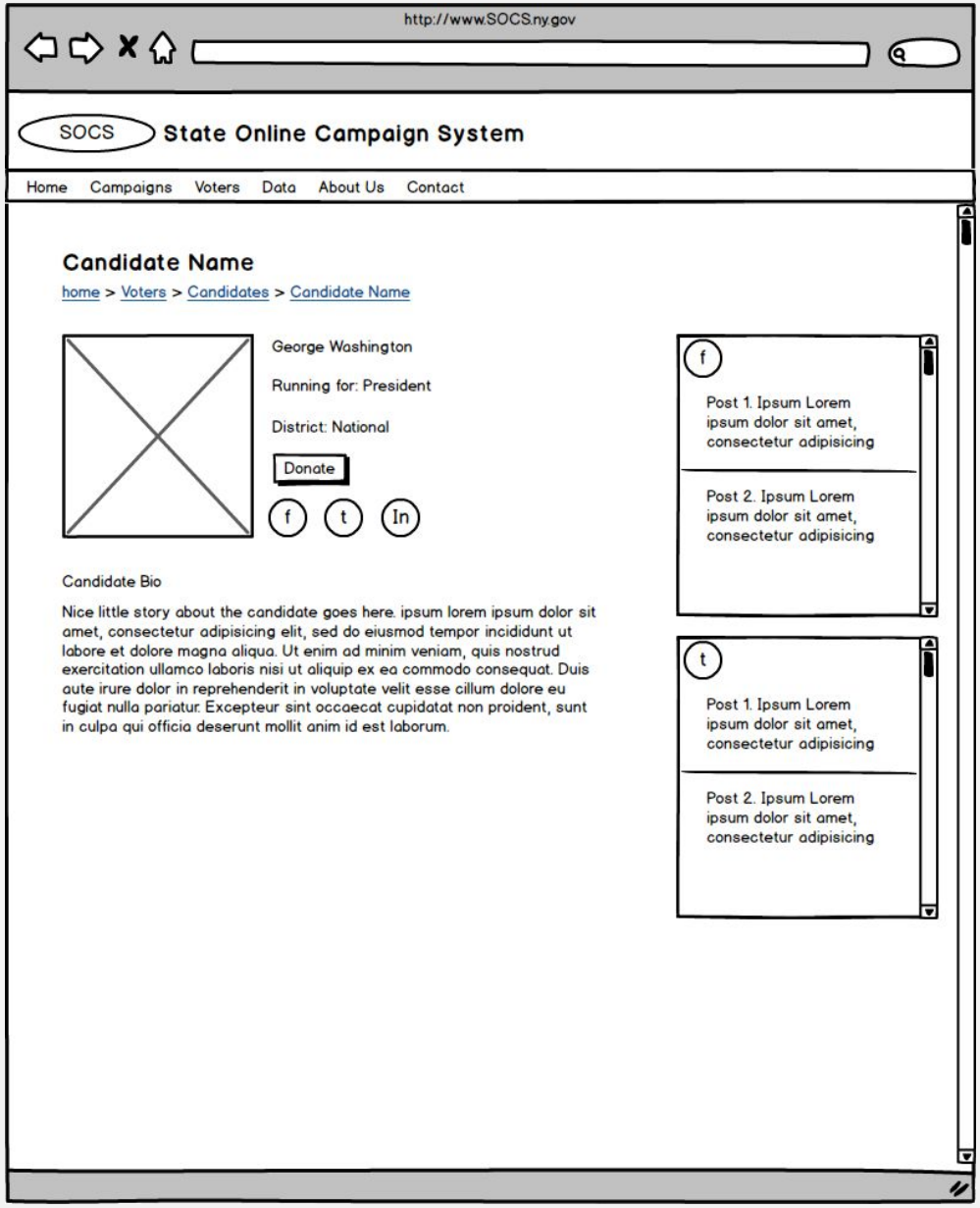
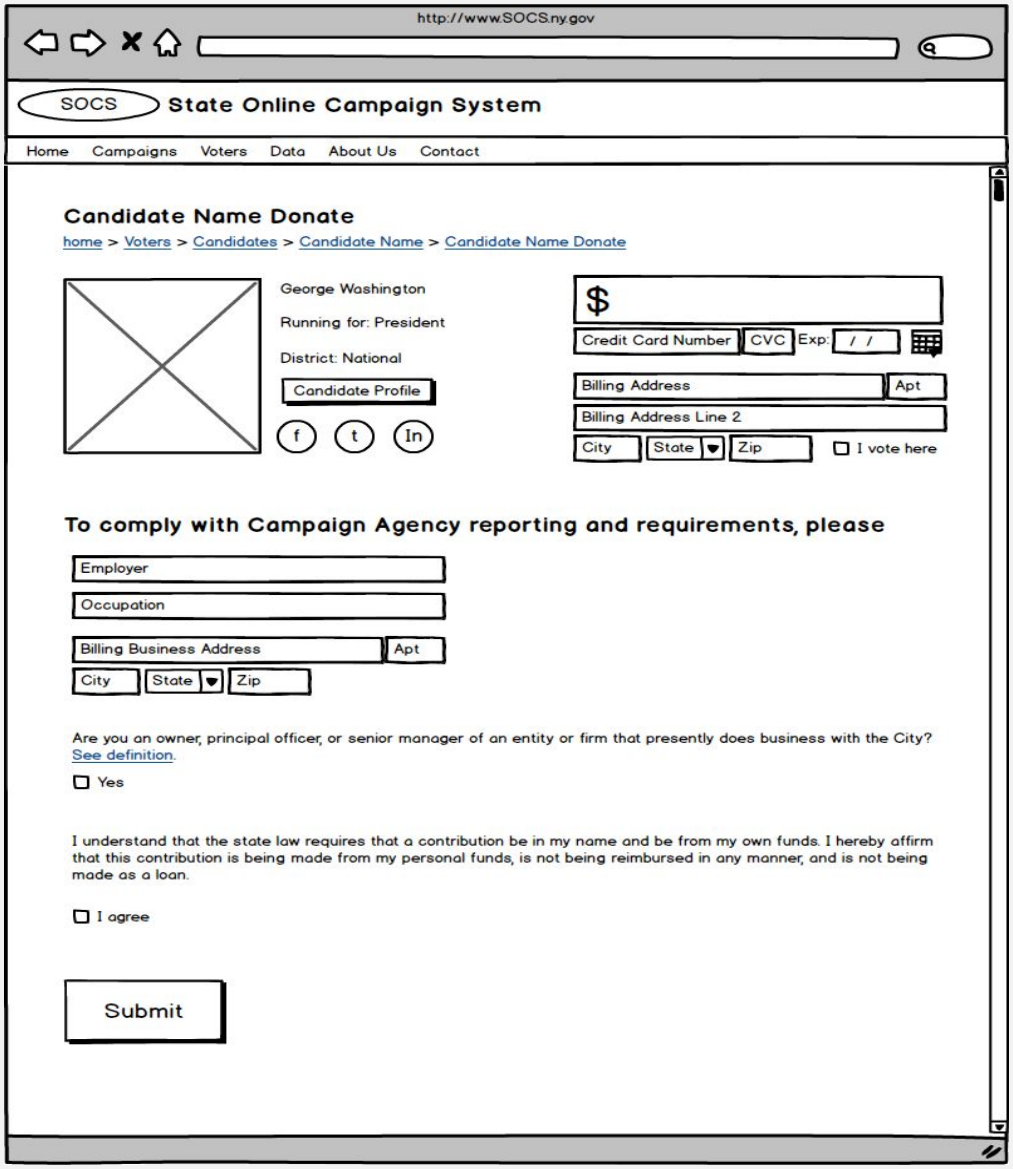
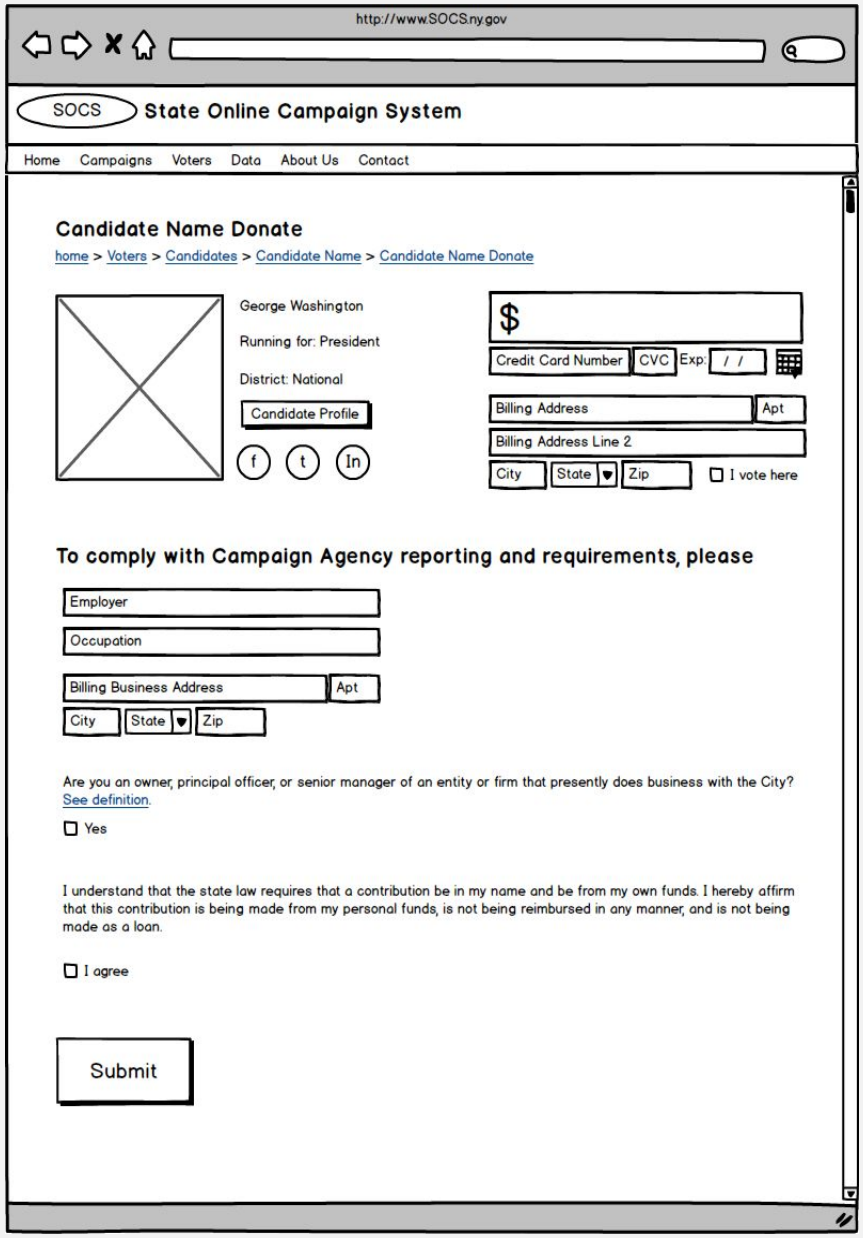
Mapping Campaign Donors



Campaign Profile Pages



Fundraising with SOCS



Donations Page