
Client Story

The Endowment for Health

From Standing in Line to Submitting Online: The Endowment for Health's Web-based Application Process

The Endowment for Health is a statewide, private, nonprofit foundation dedicated to improving the health of and reducing the burden of illness for New Hampshire's residents, especially those who are vulnerable and underserved. It was created in 1999 following the sale of Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Hampshire to Anthem Insurance Companies. Since 2001, the Endowment has awarded 691 grants to 219 organizations totaling more than \$30 million to support a wide range of health-related programs and projects in New Hampshire.

Sue Fulton is the Grants and Financial Manager at the Endowment, and is an original staff member. "In the beginning, we had three months to give out \$2.8 million," says Sue. "After meeting with MicroEdge for a demonstration of GIFTS, we knew we had to start using it. We didn't even have an office yet."

The Endowment receives about 150 grant applications per year, but the volume of paper was overwhelming for Sue, the only grants manager at the Endowment. It was challenging to effectively communicate in the guidelines the exact number of copies required for each document in the proposal. "That resulted in a lot of paper I didn't need – and a lot of waste," says Sue.

Sue also noticed that most of the applications were received right before or on the due date. At times, there would be a line of applicants out the door of the Endowment's office to submit their proposals by the deadline. Some would call her from other parts of the state to say they were on their way

and hoping to make it there before the end of the business day. According to Sue, "Racing through the snow in New Hampshire is not a great situation. I knew there had to be a better way."

When considering the move to an online application process, the Endowment reached out to other GIFTS users who went online with IGAM, the Internet Grant Application Module. Based on their feedback, Sue felt comfortable that it was the right solution. "Others had been using it for some time, and since it integrates with GIFTS, it just made sense," says Sue.

The Endowment was proactive about communicating their transition to an online process to their community partners (grantees). They kicked-off each program year with a workshop to present what was new for the upcoming year. At the 2006 workshop, they demonstrated the application process with IGAM to introduce it to their community partners and provide the opportunity to ask questions. They also chose a handful of community partners to try out the online process before rolling it out to everyone. "The only issues we experienced with the initial group were related to verbiage," says Sue. "You have to be careful to use the right language so you are clearly communicating instructions."

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There was some concern among the Endowment staff that not all grantees would have Internet access or would be hesitant to trust an online system. Fortunately, that concern turned out to be a non-issue. Sue was surprised at how quickly the community partners adopted the new process. "I made myself available to anyone who was having a problem," says Sue. "The feedback I heard was that it was actually easier for them to send everything online. It was a complete success."

The Endowment continued to fine-tune their new process throughout the first year. For example, Sue added a separate link to the Endowment's website that was for returning grantees, so they could easily retrieve in-progress proposals. Although paper applications are still accepted, the Endowment is receiving all submissions online.

In addition to providing their community partners with a more efficient and less wasteful application process, the Endowment also experienced operational improvements. Application data is brought right into GIFTS from IGAM, eliminating the need to enter each proposal into the system. They also don't have to worry about running out of storage space for paper files since the documentation is stored electronically. Sue was pleased they could achieve all of this, even without an IT staff. "Implementing it [IGAM] was not only cost effective, but easy as well," says Sue.

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