

As one might expect, The Home Depot, a company with such broad recognition and presence throughout North America is often the partner to whom so many within the community turn for project funding. The Home Depot Foundation was created in 2002 to further the community building goals of The Home Depot by providing additional resources to assist nonprofit organizations throughout the United States and Canada. In 2005, the company along with the Foundation invested millions of dollars to make a visible impact in communities throughout the U.S. and Canada. The Foundation is dedicated to creating healthy, livable communities through the integration of affordable housing built responsibly and the preservation and restoration of community trees.

The Home Depot Foundation and The Home Depot Community Affairs Department work closely together to help build and empower communities for sustainable prosperity. The Home Depot's areas of focus for supporting communities are in constructing and refurbishing and maintaining play spaces; refurbishing and maintaining community gathering places; building, refurbishing, maintaining affordable housing and transitional housing; and rebuilding structures damaged in weather-related disasters. The Company and Foundation share the same GIFTS® grants management system and IGAM internet grant application module for intake of requests - but this was not the original structure of the grant intake system, as you will read.

#### Soaring volume of requests

According to Vivian Walker, The Home Depot Foundation grants administrator, as the Foundation became more known to communities around the country, it reached a point where they were receiving 400 - 600 requests for funding each quarter for four program areas. Each request arrived via email or U.S. Mail, and each page of the request had to be reviewed by several staff members in order to determine if the request was even eligible

for consideration under the Foundation's guidelines. With such a tremendous volume of requests arriving at the Foundation, the task of simply responding to every applicant was all-consuming.

#### A complete shift to online submissions

Through strategic planning and evaluation of their grantmaking programs, The Home Depot Foundation determined a need for an online submissions process to help manage the many funding requests coming into the organization. The Foundation transitioned from four program areas down to two and went from an all-paper application process to an entirely online one using IGAM's integrated web forms for giving, along with their existing GIFTS grants management platform. "What I like about the system is that it has so many different capabilities. With IGAM we were able to manage, design, create and customize the solution to fit our needs," claims Vivian.

#### More time for strategy

IGAM has made a big difference in how Vivian and her team work. "IGAM has had a tremendous impact on our giving. It has not only allowed us to get the eligible and competitive proposals we really want to see, but it also allows us to devote more time to reviewing the proposal in-depth than we could before," claims Vivian. "This way we can work more closely with our grantees to ensure that our programs are successful for both parties." Additionally, with the added efficiency of an online application process, The Home Depot Foundation has introduced new programs that can be more easily administered. It uses an "eligibility quiz" to help filter requests that are not competitive or do not meet the guidelines, which saves the staff from having to review a large number of ineligible proposals that are

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outside of the program focus areas of the Foundation's guidelines. "If we didn't have the eligibility quiz out there, we'd probably still be seeing a tremendous volume of submissions," contends Vivian. "With IGAM linked to the eligibility test, we now receive approximately 50 competitive requests for each of our two program areas, whereas we used to get 400 - 600 requests representing the four program areas."

### Tight security

"Using Branch Security also helps with the integrity of keeping the Foundation and Corporate data separate and secure to only those that need to access it," comments Vivian. "Branch security allows me the flexibility to be able to implement different processes and programs for the Foundation and Community Affairs concurrently, while keeping the information separate and secure." Branch security also allows the Foundation and Corporation to meet the IRS arms-length requirements that the separate entities operating functions and information are not to be commingled.

### Two-staged application enables quick project overview and keeps volumes to a minimum

Within the last year Vivian has implemented a two-stage application process to further help in administering two new programs that supplement the array of funding resources the Foundation can offer communities. Applicants must first meet the stage-one requirements in order to access and complete the second stage of the application. This staged process enables The Home Depot Foundation to review project eligibility and decide whether the organization will be invited to submit a full project application for award consideration.

### CommUnity Impact grants are managed separately

The Home Depot's CommUnity Impact Grants program, which is awarded through the community affairs department, receives a tremendous volume of submissions. In a period of less than two months, over 4,000 grant

applications have been started. "IGAM has been a great benefit in helping us manage our CommUnity Impact grants" declares Vivian. "It has enabled us to be more responsive to a larger number of applicants in a timely manner." The two-staged application is also being used with the eligibility quiz, applications and the grant reporting form. This procedure allows the grant request and grant report information to be contained in one record, reducing the volume of records stored in the GIFTS database.

### Facilitates measurement with national partners

Like many other giving organizations, The Home Depot understands how vital it is to ascertain the impact of their grantmaking. Working in partnership with many national nonprofit organizations to provide grants that will ultimately serve many communities and causes adds another level of complexity to the evaluation and award process. Recently, with their online process in place, the company structured a unique method for collecting and compiling the data that determines the impact of their giving. "We have our national partners submit aggregate data for their affiliates, and it makes it much easier for us to manage the measurement data that we receive," states Vivian. Using IGAM, The Home Depot collects data on how many volunteer hours, prep hours and number of volunteers requested, and on the back-end how many showed up, etc. There is also a section to list the completed projects, drilling down on specific details such as how many items (e.g., bookshelves) were constructed. Vivian can easily run aggregate reports to get a top-line view of the company's collective contributions. "This way we know exactly how our grants and volunteers are being used and the impact that we are making in communities across the nation and abroad."

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