



CLIENT STORY

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

PROFILE

Foundation Type: Community Foundation
System: Host*Net
Number of users: 8 active users
Assets: \$305 million in 415 funds
2003 Giving: \$70 million distributed in 3,300 grants



Background

In 2003, The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region celebrated 30 years of dedication to philanthropy in the Greater Washington region. The mission of the Foundation is to facilitate individual, family and organizational philanthropy to help improve the quality of life in the metropolitan Washington region.

In 2003, the Foundation raised \$100 million and created 63 new funds. In addition, 42% of their existing donors added to their existing funds. The Foundation gave away \$70 million and made 3,300 grants. Since 1998, the Foundation has used the Foundation Information Management System (FIMS) from MicroEdge to administer their giving programs.

In July 2002, the Foundation moved offices and took the opportunity to implement Host*Net, MicroEdge's application and data hosting service for FIMS. Host*Net is a subscription service which allows community foundations to store their data at the MicroEdge Data Center and to use applications maintained and powered by the Data Center.

Kenny Emson, the Foundation's Chief Financial Officer, wanted to improve the security of their data. "We used to take up an entire office to handle the technology side of things and it was getting pretty uncomfortable," he says. He wanted their data stored at a secure facility.

"All I had to do was take a look at my current office and I realized it didn't look very safe. We're two blocks from the White House and I just didn't feel secure."

"When the building closes for any reason, staff can work from home and access the entire database. They have that access at their fingertips no matter where they are."

Making the Move from FIMS to Host*Net

As part of their move in 2002, the Foundation worked with the MicroEdge Data Center. As Kenny says, "It was such an easy process. They basically just accessed our server, collected the files they needed and put them on their server. When the moving guys dropped [our file] server, it didn't even faze me!"

Kenny adds, "The beauty of it was that the move took two days, but we had access to FIMS [via Host*Net] for the whole two days. Our staff was able to work from home while the movers were setting us up in the new office." Kenny believes that making the switch to Host*Net around their move was a great idea, and that it worked really well for them.

Host*Net improves staff productivity

Working in Washington, DC means dealing with traffic problems, frequent protest marches and having a disaster policy in place. Now that the Foundation uses Host*Net to access their FIMS database, staff can access the database "anytime, anyplace, anywhere." Kenny says, "On snow days, or protest days, people are still expected to do their work. When the building closes for any reason,



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staff can work from home and access the entire database. They have that access at their fingertips no matter where they are."

And Kenny believes that this type of flexibility has definitely increased staff productivity. He says the Foundation established procedures to allow staff to work from home. "We have lots of parents in the group and we've been able to structure procedures to allow people to do some of their work from home. It's probably allowed two people to keep their jobs." He adds that some staff work in the evenings and on the weekends because they can access Host*Net at any time. As he says, the Foundation needs to respond to their donors quickly and efficiently.

"Customer service for our donors is key. Now we can provide better donor service, all the time."

Access speed has not been a problem. In the office, a T1 phone line provides a fast connection to the Foundation's data. From home, staff members access Host*Net through their regular phone lines. Kenny says, "Even when I connect via my home phone line, I find [Host*Net's] performance to be reasonably quick and not a problem. The old dial-in process to the server wasn't efficient; Host*Net is at least five times better as far as data entry and being able to access the system."

Host*Net is a key component of the Foundation's disaster plan

The Foundation offices are only two blocks from the White House, so having a disaster plan in place is critical to their operations. Before the Foundation switched to Host*Net, they made a tape backup every evening and a staff member took it home. Kenny says, "It wasn't easy when we tried to recover our data. We realized our backup wasn't as good as what we thought we had in place." Even their technology consultant had difficulty restoring data off the tape backups.

Today, the MicroEdge Data Center handles all of the data backups, and the Foundation has complete confidence that even in the event of a disaster they will have immediate access to their data. Kenny says, "You cannot underestimate the importance of this. A disaster can take place and we're up and running immediately. We don't lose access, whatever happens. We can walk home and keep working. It's a huge relief to us that we won't be down."

Reduced computing and support costs save the Foundation money

Before they moved, the Foundation used an entire office for their file servers and other technology requirements. Today the Foundation needs just a little phone room to handle all their technology needs. They also outsource their Microsoft Office and email applications, so they don't have a file server in their office at all. Kenny says, "As rents get more expensive in the District, this is much more cost-effective."

Kenny says they used to have a technology consultant who helped them maintain their servers. He worked regular business hours, so if he had to shut the server down for any reason, staff were unable to access the data they needed. When the MicroEdge Data Center does server maintenance, they do it during the hours when people are least likely to need to access their data, thereby significantly reducing the downtime associated with server maintenance. Additionally, Kenny says, "We no longer have to pay a guy to come in and fix our server every week. All of those issues are gone."

In addition, the Foundation no longer needs to buy expensive computers. Kenny says, "We're buying less and less hardware. Our computers don't need to be souped up; they just need to be able to access T1 lines." If the T1 line goes down, which it does occasionally, the Foundation has their staff stay home and work until it comes back up.



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MicroEdge support keeps the Foundation up-to-date

With Host*Net, updates to FIMS are installed on the servers at the MicroEdge Data Center, which means the Foundation always has the latest version of the software at their fingertips. When an update is installed, one or two of the Foundation staff members review it carefully, then send an email to the rest of the staff outlining the new features and functionality.

At the Foundation, four staff members are the FIMS experts; they can usually answer everyone else's questions. When new staff are hired, the Foundation usually gets them some MicroEdge training time. For the Capital Region Foundation, Host*Net is the right solution, since it gives them 24-hour access to FIMS from their office, homes or on the road.

Host*Net advantages:

- Access to FIMS data "anytime, anyplace, anywhere."
- Data securely stored, backed-up and maintained at the MicroEdge Data Center.
- Improved staff productivity because Host*Net allows for job flexibility.
- Hardware and technical consulting costs reduced.
- Software is always up-to-date since the Data Center manages their upgrades.

Host*Net is a MicroEdge application and data hosting service for FIMS and FoundationPower and delivers all of the functionality and flexibility of FIMS to any computer with Internet access.

