

## Finding Grants: Washington, DC's Success Story

### OVERVIEW

#### CHALLENGE

The Mayor's Office of Partnerships and Grants Development (OPGD) in Washington, DC used a manual process to find and track grant opportunities. But, like any city, they sought ways to obtain more grant monies to expand services to citizens and drastically reduce the time spent finding them.

#### SOLUTION

Grants.gov helped OPGD dramatically streamline the process of searching for and alerting agencies and organizations to potential grant opportunities, all while establishing a model system for grants information.

#### WHY GRANTS.GOV?

A single website that allows users to find and apply for more than \$400 billion in competitive Federal grants, Grants.gov is a single source for users who search and apply for grant opportunities across all 26 Federal grant-making agencies.

**“By partnering to launch and link DC's Grants Information Data System to Grants.gov, the DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer and OPGD are supporting the Mayor's vision of ‘Making Government Work’ for all District agencies and nonprofit service providers.” Lafayette Barnes, Director, OPGD**

### USER STORY

The Mayor's Office of Partnerships and Grants Development (OPGD) is a small, nine person office in the District of Columbia Government that provides information about competitive Federal, city and foundation grants to government agencies, local nonprofit and faith-based organizations in Washington, DC. The Office also offers grant and capacity-building training; reviews all requests by District officials to solicit, accept and use donations; and facilitates partnerships between District government agencies and nonprofits in order to maximize resources, expand services, and address common challenges.

Until January 2005, most of the Office of Partnerships and Grants Development (OPGD) grant information activities were based on a manual process that involved numerous staff members and hours of production – a big job for such a small office.

Now, with the support of Grants.gov, the new process – the **Grants Information Data System (GIDS)** – moves away from less efficient practices and uses technology to enhance the services it provides.

#### **The History of the Manual Process**

Before GIDS, the OPGD team provided grant information to their agencies, partners, and nonprofits through the *Funding Alert* – a short newsletter-type document. The content for the

*Funding Alert* was gathered by researching the Federal Register and other grant resources daily. Team members also identified the competitive Federal grant opportunities available to DC government agencies. That information was then typed into an Access database and sent as a FAX to appropriate agencies.

Despite receiving confirmation sheets, the team was never really certain that the large (sometimes 50+ page) FAXes were received by the intended recipient – if at all.

#### **Sowing Seeds of Change**

The process began a transformation nearly two years ago, when OPGD created an internal email newsletter for DC government agencies called *Federal Grants Bulletin*. The bulletin, sent via email to a comprehensive list of grants management personnel, included brief descriptions of grant opportunities, deadlines, funding available, and a list of the agencies that OPGD thought fit the eligibility requirements. At the end of the year, a full report of all the opportunities was emailed to the agencies for comment on their grant applications and results. But that was not enough.

While delivery to the desktop was virtually immediate, the process still relied on manual steps. Greater efficiencies were needed. And quickly.

## **Grants.gov Brings Automation Into the Equation**

With GIDS, OPGD has thrown away the fax machine and developed a completely automated, database-driven process that incorporates an XML extraction from Grants.gov. Now, all Federal, District, and foundation grants are available online; DC agencies are able to enter information about their grant application activities and update their grant status online – allowing better tracking and reporting. What’s more, the Grants.gov-supported GIDS allows the public to access information online about current Federal, District, and foundation grants available to community-based organizations in the city.

“Working with and linking to Grants.gov as they built, expanded, and improved their online grants system has helped us throughout our own online grants project process.” Gretchen Greiner, Manager of Research and Communications, OPGD

### **GIDS is divided into three modules:**

1. Internet Module for the public. This includes grants geared towards local nonprofit, faith- and community-based organizations. Any grant-seeker can go to the website and search for grants online without registering.
2. Intranet Module for DC agencies. This includes all the grant information that the public can access, plus more information on grants available to local governments only. Representatives of DC government agencies must register to access this module.
3. Administrative Module for OPGD administrators. This includes access to all grants data, reports, user accounts, the Grants.gov data extraction process, publication generation, etc.

### **GIDS Illustrates Efficiency at Work**

Every evening, GIDS automatically requests a grants list, and Grants.gov responds by providing a data extraction (XML file) that is based on certain criteria. Once the file is received, the system automatically sends an email to the System Administrator and other designated parties that the grants have been downloaded into GIDS. The Administrator reviews the grants and validates them based on DC standards.

OPGD has reduced the time required to search for grant opportunities and compile and send lengthy faxes by more than 2/3. At the end of each week, two publications are automatically generated from GIDS and then sent to subscribers. With a new, automated process, the OPGD team is free to dedicate more time to responding to the growing needs of organizations within the local DC community.

**One District + One Website = Grants Success.**

### **Grants.gov Features:**

*Advanced Search Options* – Search a wider selection of grants, from a broad search to searches for more specific subject areas

*Downloadable Applications* – Applications can be completed offline when and where convenient for users. Applications are easily distributed via email as an attachment and submitted electronically at Grants.gov upon completion

*Content-Sensitive Help* – Customized help and solutions based on the page being viewed so users do not have to hunt and peck for the right help or lose their place on the site

*Online Tools* – Enhanced FAQs, quick reference guides and online demonstrations guide users through the application process, along with lots of resources to learn more about Grants.gov. Applicant Support Center with helpful links and grant-writing resources to prepare planned and concisely packaged applications

*Personalized Support* – Complementing the online help and support features, Grants.gov also provides users with a dedicated Customer Support center accessible via email or phone

### **About Grants.gov**

Grants.gov is the single website unifying Federal grants. Through Grants.gov, state, local, and tribal governments, colleges and universities, non-profits, research institutions, and other organizations can access, find, and apply for grants from more than 900 grant programs representing over \$360 billion in annual grant funds offered by the 26 Federal grant-making agencies.

*Grants.gov, one of 24 E-government initiatives, is a collaborative effort led by 26 Federal grant-making agencies and 11 commissions, including: Agency for International Development, U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury, and Veterans Affairs, the Environmental Protection Agency, Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Science Foundation, Small Business Administration, Social Security Administration, Corporation for National and Community Service, African Development Foundation, Appalachian Regional Commission, Barry Goldwater Scholarship Foundation, Christopher Columbus Foundation, Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, Inter-American Foundation, James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation, Japan-U.S. Friendship Foundation, and the Morris K. Udall Foundation.*