

Testimonial: Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation



Written by: Don Brackett, Administrative Officer

“We were concerned that the reviewers would not like working online to evaluate applications. This proved unwarranted; we have received rave reviews from the evaluators!” Don Brackett

Highlighted Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elimination of handling large amounts of paper• Better and more timely communication with applicants• Data export capabilities for improved reporting• Flexibility for all users provided by the Grant Lifecycle Manager solution
----------------------------	--

Overview

The Robert & Patricia Switzer Foundation was looking for an online solution for our Fellowship application. Foundant was able to supply a relatively low cost software solution which allowed us to develop a fairly complex online application on a short timetable.

Challenges with Previous Grant Process

Our Fellowship process was paper intensive; we received approximately 350 applications each cycle. Each application was 15-30 pages long and we received four copies of each application. Staff would have to enter contact and application information data into an MS-Access database that we would use to track the application and generate correspondence. During the evaluation review process staff would have to sort the applications once again and ship large boxes of applications to reviewers around the country.

Benefits from Foundant Grant Lifecycle Manager Implementation

- The greatest benefit is the elimination of handling the huge volume of paper.
- All key communication with applicants is now online via GLM and the email templates we developed as part of the system.
- The ease of assigning reviewers and having the reviewers access the applications assigned to them online through a secure login.

While the Grant Lifecycle Manager wasn't designed to handle fellowship applications we found it to be a flexible tool which was readily adaptable to our needs.

Most Welcome Surprise from Foundant Grant Lifecycle Manager Solution

We were concerned that the reviewers would not like working online to evaluate applications. Early in the process several had voiced the opinion that they would have to print out all the documents as it was too

much reading to do online. This proved unwarranted; we have received rave reviews from the evaluators. They find it necessary to print only the top picks and they like the PDF-print feature which converts the application and attached documents into a single PDF file which they may download to their laptop.

Being able to bring the evaluators into the process early with the “demo” site as we were developing the process was a real boon to working out the kinks before going live on a production site.

Conclusion

We will continue to refine our online application and process for next year’s cycle. We plan to automate more of the process with the “eligibility screen” that will be available in a future release.

We have had a great experience working with Foundant. Their support and guidance during the development process was superb and they have been receptive to making changes to the software to meet our needs. Their ongoing service has been great and they are readily available to fix the rare glitches that happen with any online software.

About the Robert & Patricia Switzer Foundation

The Foundation was founded in 1985. We currently have a staff of three: an executive director, program officer, and an administrative officer.

Mission: The Robert & Patricia Switzer Foundation identifies and nurtures environmental leaders who have the ability and determination to make a significant impact, and supports initiatives that will have direct and measurable results to improve environmental quality. The foundation accomplishes this by awarding academic fellowships and project grants, sponsoring professional development activities, and fostering a growing network of Switzer Fellows, environmental practitioners, and organizations.

About the Author

Don Bracket, Administrative Officer, is one of three in the office at the Switzer Foundation located in Belfast, ME. As with many foundation administrators, Don wears many hats including but not limited to managing accounts, program logistics, working with the tech experts, care and feeding of their database, website updates, and working with Foundant to implement and update their online Fellowship application system. He has been with the Foundation since January, 2004 and previously worked at Unity College, a small environmental undergraduate college in Unity, Maine. For the past 15 years Don has been a trustee and administrator for the John Sage Foundation, a small family foundation which gives grants to environmental organizations in Maine.