



DEPARTMENTS

At Issue
Feedback
Of All Things
Clips
Great Grants
Affinities
RAGs
Reviews
Releases
People
Research
Excerpt

MORE ARTICLES

Government
Update

STAFF

Executive Editor:
[Jody Curtis](#)

Managing Editor:
[Darlene Siska](#)

Associate Editor:
[Allan R. Clyde](#)

Magazine Intern:
[Karen L. Anderson](#)

Art Director:
[Lisa Bouaouid](#)

Production Editor:
[Phyllis Jask](#)

Editorial Assistant:
[Marnee Beck](#)

Advertising Sales:
[Jodie Cook](#)

Webmaster:
[Bill Cavender](#)

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Christopher
Freeman Adams
Mary L. Cleveland
Bill Davidow
Pablo Eisenberg
Peter F. Geithner

Technology

Web-based Grant Applications

Several grantmakers are trying out new on-line proposal systems

by *Martin B. Schneiderman*

Wouldn't it be great to come to work one morning and find complete and accurate proposal information entered into your foundation's grants management system without your staff having to type a single word?

This dream has become a reality for the Bell Atlantic, DaimlerChrysler and Hewlett Packard giving programs. Each has successfully implemented systems that now link grantseekers and grantmakers via the Internet through the use of Web-based grant application forms.

How It Works

I have recently seen these systems in action and they're quite impressive. They all invite grantseekers to use a Web browser to access their foundation's Web site. Once connected, grantseekers can review the organization's latest guidelines and determine eligibility. Then, grantseekers can complete an on-line grant application form.

This approach puts the responsibility on grantseekers to enter complete information, eliminating the need for most follow-up correspondence and rounds of telephone tag. Upon receipt the information is automatically imported into the foundation's grants management system. Bell Atlantic and Hewlett Packard both have custom developed grants management systems. DaimlerChrysler's Web grant application form links to MicroEdge's GIFTS for Windows, a commercial package.

Bell Atlantic reports that within 48 hours of submission, applicants are sent an e-mail advising if their proposal is under review or has been turned down. For those under review, the final decision then takes 2-20 days (compared with 14-16 weeks for paper applications).

Benefits to Grantmakers

An on-line application system offers many benefits. Among them:

Complete information. If required details are missing, the application simply isn't accepted.

Verifying tax-exempt status. The Web's interactive capability permits

Gara LaMarche
Sara E Méendez
Martin B.
Schneiderman
Catherine Sebold

immediate verification of tax-exempt status by checking the IRS database.

Accurate data import. Data import eliminates typos. It's also fast.

Efficiency. The "treasure hunt" for key information is eliminated.

On-line assistance. Answers to frequently asked questions are right there.

E-mail notification. Automatic e-mail acknowledgments of proposal receipt and decision date can be sent.

Optional password protection. A password can be required before accessing the application form.

Some Concerns

Although some grantmakers are already fully committed to this technology, others have some concerns.

Says Suzanne DuBose, Bell Atlantic Foundation president, "Our mantra is 'paperless' and today we receive about 600 on-line requests per month. The entire foundation will go 100 percent cyber on January 1, 2000, and accepting paper will be the exception."

It's only a matter of time before Web grant proposals become commonplace. However, among 40 grantmakers that I recently polled there was widespread concern that some smaller nonprofits and international organizations don't yet have the prerequisite Internet access, e-mail accounts and know-how to use these new on-line systems.

In response to this, Hewlett Packard only requires applicants for higher education grants to use its Web grant application system. Explains DaimlerChrysler Vice President Lynn Feldhouse, "We only invite on-line submissions from nonprofits that we have prequalified and know have the necessary Internet capabilities."

Grantmakers are also concerned that open on-line proposal submission will result in a flood of new unsolicited on-line applications. The challenge will be to design interactive on-line proposals that will result in better, more targeted, submissions rather than just creating additional workload.

The uniformity imposed by an on-line application can be a great equalizer for small nonprofits. Still, some grantseekers have declined to submit proposals only via the Web because they want to submit their own graphical printed materials.

"The potential of using the Web is exciting and we're all still learning how to make the best use of this new technology," says Feldhouse. "We must remember," she cautions, "not to turn the application process into an on-line business transaction. Philanthropy is based on relationships."

Martin B. Schneiderman (mbs@iaa.com) is president of Information Age Associates, Inc., a firm specializing in the design, management and support of information systems for

grantmakers and nonprofits.

Martin B. Schneiderman is president of Information Age Associates, Inc., (www.iaa.com), a firm specializing in the design, management, and support of information systems for grantmakers and nonprofits. He can be reached at mbs@iaa.com.

[Back to Index](#)