OCE
Where Next Happens

unite
A SmartSimple Unite user

How the Ontario Centres of Excellence Scaled Their Grants Management System To Limitless Heights

ⓘ Synopsis

Ontario Centres of Excellence (OCE) was challenged not only with the high volume of incoming grant applications but effectively managing the diverse needs and requirements associated with each application. Their data was scattered across different software and platforms, which caused delays in their administrative and application review processes. SmartSimple delivered them a cohesive system that integrated all functionality they needed into one, centralized platform to simplify their workflows. This enabled OCE to efficiently manage their processes on a large scale.

> " The demand is always high for grants, but one metric that stands out since moving to SmartSimple is an increase in user satisfaction. "

Farzad Zohouri
Director, Information Systems
Ontario Centres of Excellence

About Ontario Centres of Excellence

Ontario Centres of Excellence (OCE) focuses on ensuring the people of Ontario reap the personal and economic benefits of leading-edge research underway in the province's publicly funded universities, colleges and research hospitals - research that can be transformed into technologies and services that enhance the quality of life and help build a globally competitive, job-creating economy in Ontario.

OCE deploys an experienced team of Business Development Managers across the province to help build industry-academic collaborations and support the launch and growth of businesses. They identify what is needed in different industries by exploring the halls and labs of academia to discover the latest breakthroughs from researchers. OCE then guides industry-academic partners in accessing tailored programs that provide the support and expertise required to commercialize innovations, transfer technologies, and develop promising talent.

Searching for a home for all the data

OCE has different programs that work with startups as well as large enterprises, receiving 2,000 applications every year. Each applicant applies for various funds based on the criteria of eligibility. The initial workflow was the same across each program, but based on the nature of the program, different applications required different elements — for example, programs for social engagement and programs for technology advancement will need different granting needs. OCE's challenge was too many processes surrounding each of the granting requirements.

To accommodate its large-scale application process, OCE used a number of different tools in separate systems. They had a CRM software for contact management, yet had to send data back and forth to their financial software. They then had another tool for document e-signatures while using Zendesk to manage support tickets. "We wanted a centralized place to handle all feedback and requests," says Farzad Zohouri, Director, Information Systems at Ontario Centres of Excellence. SmartSimple managed to create seamless integrations housed in one system. From CRM tools, grant management, reporting, to payments, OCE's platform handled every nuanced application process from start to finish, no matter how complex.

One cohesive system for multiple processes

OCE now has one shared system to manage the flow of every program and can make any changes with more ease. From the information collected at the start of the application to the reporting process at the close-out, OCE has simplified workflows to move the application from stage to stage faster and more efficiently. OCE's process for making system changes, which involve nine Program Managers, is much more manageable and coordinated because everyone is using one centralized system. "We're able to come up with a common solution and implement the solution more easily," says Zohouri.

To ensure they create a system that's relevant to the needs of their applicants, OCE can send a feedback survey to those who have received funding from their system. "Feedback is critical for our process of bettering our programs and making it easier to use while ensuring it provides the necessary reporting functionality to our stakeholders," says Zohouri. After sending the survey, OCE's internal staff can now take feedback from their integrated support system (Zendesk) and input it directly into their implementation process.

> "The demand is always high for grants, but one metric that stands out since moved to SmartSimple is an increase in overall user satisfaction"

powered by **aws**

OCE is hosted on Amazon Web Services

A stress-free applicant experience

"The demand is always high for grants, but one metric that stands out since moved to SmartSimple is an increase in overall user satisfaction." By having an efficient administrative process, OCE can deliver results to their applicants and meet expectations in a clear timeline. Depending on the client and the application information they need, OCE takes up to three weeks for each external application review. Workflows are set up where alerts notify reviewers when they're close to the deadline to keep all parties accountable.

"Application reviewers are happier now since they have all the info they need in one place," says Zohouri. OCE designed a standard base review form for ease and can communicate any issues and concerns as they arise in real-time. "We've managed to receive 3,000 reviews on time, and without the SmartSimple system, we couldn't handle the processing of our grants," adds Zohouri.

A platform on the grow

"We're always looking to enhance what we have," says Zohouri. One feature OCE wants to work on is enabling reviewers to be able to push a button to add the calendar review timeline directly into their calendar. "We're always thinking and looking through the perspective of the applicant and building our system from there, and while we have a close knowledge of our system, there's always room to grow," concludes Zohouri.

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About SmartSimple

SmartSimple is a global leader in cloud-based automation software, offering unique process solutions used by over 300 clients in more than 192 countries. Some of the largest companies in the Fortune 100, as well as global foundations and government agencies, choose SmartSimple to enrich their impact story and create greater efficiencies in their granting processes.

SmartSimple's Unite Solution

SmartSimple's Unite Solution is a robust, end-to-end grants management platform that makes it easy for government and funders to track, manage and report across multiple grants programs, giving a true insight into the impact of your funding efforts. In a single online solution, SmartSimple gives you complete control and visibility over the entire granting process. From the initial call for proposals to reporting on final outcomes, SmartSimple helps funders stay on top of everything from correspondence with applicants, to monitoring budgets and reporting, eliminating hours of paper shuffling and administration. No two funders are alike. That's why the technology behind SmartSimple's Unite Solution comes with the flexibility to fit your unique needs and deliver innovative solutions that transform how you manage your granting programs.

SmartSimple interacts with over 215,000 unique users a month from over 300 organizations in more than 192 countries.

Our commitment to making processes work better and freeing our clients to do more good goes beyond the technologies we create – **it's at the very heart of our business.**

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Discover more.

Contact us to request a demo that's tailored to your granting needs.

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