EBOOK

How online grant evaluation **empowers greater social impact**

The process of evaluating and awarding grants has a lot of moving pieces — from tracking applicants, to answering questions, managing reviewers, and documenting everything for audit purposes. As a grant manager, you're tasked with juggling it all.

To make a difficult job harder, many teams are still managing the grant evaluation process manually, across a patchwork of tools such as Excel, shared drives, and email.

This is not just an administrative burden for already under-resourced teams. It's an obstacle to transparency and collaboration. Not only that, it is limiting your ability to reach the best applicants and award funding to the best suitable candidate to achieve your mission.

It's becoming increasingly apparent to foundations that the status quo of a manual process is no longer sustainable.

Adopting online grant evaluation can help your team in the following ways:

• Lighten the administrative load on understaffed teams;

• Make it easy to get stakeholders involved;

• Deliver clear transparency throughout the process; and

• Facilitate strong funding decisions that achieve your mission.

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Save time and focus on what matters most

The role of the grant manager is changing. In the Stanford Social Innovation Review, Douglas Easterling describes the grant manager role as changing from that of a loan officer at a bank, to that of a strategic partner, who can "support nonprofit organizations in adapting their programs and their strategy so they become more effective in achieving their mission." [1]

However, it's hard to realize a strategic contribution when your time is monopolized by managing the administration demands of the process.

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1 Stanford Social Innovation Review

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A spreadsheet or email-based process is a huge time sink. Online grant evaluation platforms eliminate much of the administrative work of the process, often cutting administration time in half.

With a streamlined and centralized process, it is easy to:

Manage the application process

- Provide clear guidelines about the Grant for applicants
- Receive and answer questions about the Grant through the platform
- Make required documentation mandatory, to ensure that all applications are complete
- Ensure structured format for ease of comparison

Review and compare applications

- Distribute application documents to evaluators for review — all in one platform
- Communicate with evaluators from one platform
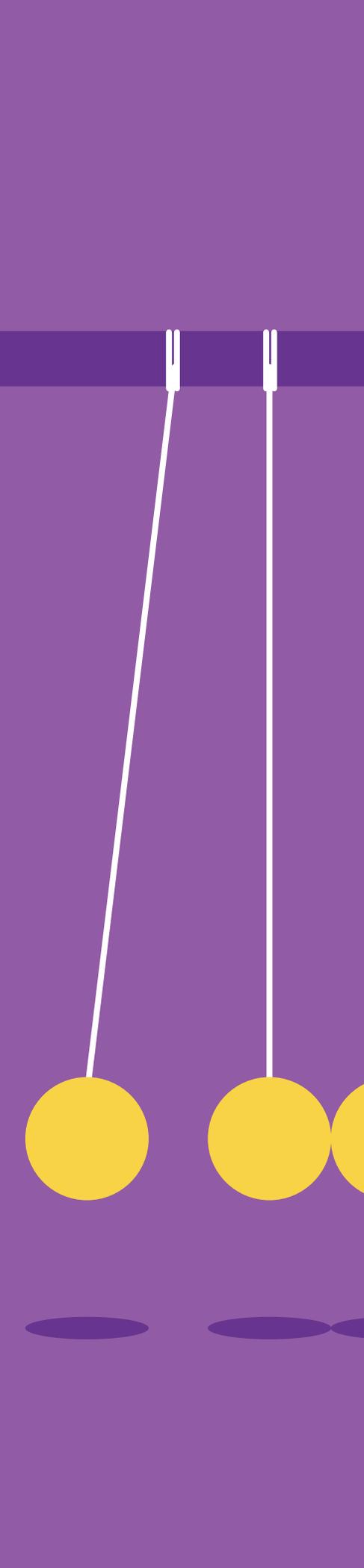- Automatically tabulate reviewers' scores

Report on impact

- View the progress of your grant decisions at a glance
- Easily configure and download reports for audit purposes

The result? You can focus on more deeply engaging with proposals to determine their alignment to organizational goals.

You also have greater capacity to improve and enhance the grant application process. Whether that's through conducting multi-stage evaluations to pre-qualify candidates, accepting more applicants, or evaluating on more criteria — grant evaluation platforms offer more flexibility without impacting your workload.

With time being a precious commodity for foundations, an investment in an online grant evaluation platform is an investment that pays dividends in your organizational impact.

Ensure alignment through **easy collaboration**

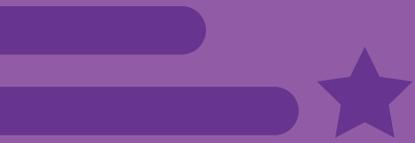**Funders are facing growing demands for greater accountability and collaboration in the grant evaluation process, according to a 2018 report from GrantCraft. It's crucial for foundations to ensure that funding decisions include the perspectives of all key stakeholders. [2]**

2 Philanthropy News Digest

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However, involving more stakeholders in a manual grant evaluation process generally means more work. For grant managers, it is cumbersome to distribute these binders, email files, and spreadsheets and aggregate the scores. On the other hand, it is cumbersome for reviewers to receive and go through application documents.

Grant evaluation platforms make it easy to involve reviewers and segment proposals to give team members transparency into the review processes that matter to them. With one online platform for reviewers to view proposals and submit scores or comments, participation is seamless. Grant managers have visibility throughout, so they can keep tabs on scoring progress and facilitate a decision with scores automatically collected and tabulated in one place.

Grant evaluation platforms help you embrace a wider set of decision-makers, without increasing your workload, leading to better decisions that achieve their desired impact.

Build trust through
transparency

Transparency and accountability are critical components of grant evaluation. However, the demands of reporting can be a drain on your resources as well as the resources of your grantees — especially when relying on a manual process.

Spreadsheets are error-prone and can be modified with a single keystroke. Shared drives can be disjointed and scattered. Emails can easily slip between the cracks. It's hard to keep track of internal communications and decisions when they occur in multiple locations. Relying on these tools to manage compliance requirements can be a source of risk for foundations.

Grant evaluation platforms support transparency in your grant evaluation process and take the pain out of reporting. A grant evaluation tool allows you to collect and maintain all grant applicants' records in a secure, centralized location with exportable audit reports a few keystrokes away.

With all your grant information in one place, you can easily and quickly access grant information, report on impact, and demonstrate accountability to your stakeholders and donors.

Reach the right applicants & **make the best** funding awards

Outdated grant evaluation processes aren't just a strain on grant managers — they are a strain on grantseekers as well. A difficult or frustrating application process takes time away from the very work you are trying to support.

Using an online portal for your application simplifies the process for grantseekers. A straightforward online application process includes the ability to:

- Clearly see requirements

- Ask questions and receive answers from funders in-platform

- Ensure required information is complete on submission, and

- Provide automatic confirmation of receipt

With a smoother application process, grantseekers can focus on the substance, not the logistics, of their application.

With a clear and easy application process, you can attract the best applicants and dedicate your time and skills to the important work of forming partnerships that create positive value for your organization.

Deciding which grantee is the best partner to achieve your mission is difficult — but the logistics of the process no longer have to be. Grant evaluation platforms exist to:

- Remove time-consuming administrative tasks

- Empower easy collaboration in the evaluation process

- Ensure transparency, without all the paperwork

- Simplify the process for applicants, and your organization

Amidst all the decisions you face, the decision to adopt a grant evaluation process should be an easy one. Ultimately, more efficient internal processes translate to more investment in your grantees, and the impact you're able to achieve together.

At Bonfire, we understand the challenges facing foundations, and we are dedicated to providing solutions that help your organization do good work, better. If you're interested in finding out how to bring your manual grant evaluation process online, get in touch with us for a demo today.

Contact us >