The Great Northern Arts Festival

**Context**
For The Great Northern Arts Festival Society (GNAF), technology has proven to be a simple solution to the problem of isolation: it has made it possible to communicate more easily with the volunteers and stakeholders all across the three Canadian territories involved in the festival.

**Project Description**
The GNAF Society quickly grasped the advantages of using information technology and the Internet to reduce the costs of coordinating the hundreds of artists and dozens of volunteers who take part in the event.

Internally, the society is fully connected: it has set up a network of five computers, maintains databases on the artists who have participated in the festival since it began in 1996, and has entirely computerized the Society's administration and accounting functions.  In fact, liaising with granting agencies is the only activity that has not been computerized.

The Festival's Artistic Director, Darrin White, has also taken the time to revamp the site using as a basis the questions and comments e-mailed to the GNAS by the general public.  He has added an on-line artist application form for the Festival and completely reworked the architecture of the site.

**Successes/Challenges**
The Society has used the questions and information requests submitted by the public to update the content of the GNAF site and cut down on the number of calls the organization receives, thus reducing long-distance telephone charges.  Although technology can seem expensive for non-profit organizations, Mr. White emphasizes that the cost is worth it because, in the end, the time saved largely offsets the initial investment.

http://www.gnaf.ca

*These best practices are an excellent way of sharing your experiences with other organizations in the voluntary sector. If you also have positive experiences on the use of technology in the voluntary sector, the IM-IT Secretariat will be pleased to post your stories. Please contact the IM/IT Secretariat by e-mail at imit@ic.gc.ca .*