

Neil Squire Foundation Improving internal operations through information technology

Context

For national voluntary organizations, information technology can be a critical tool for improving internal operations. The Neil Squire Foundation, which provides educational and career-related services to persons with disabilities, uses technology to help it deliver consistent high-quality services across the country.

Program Description

Over the last two decades, the Foundation has grown from one central office to six offices. This expansion forced it to improve internal operations. For instance, with no standards for information management, employees had developed their own computer databases, which were often lost when the people left the organization.

Recognizing that the lack of standards and coordination hindered its ability to meet its mission, the Foundation created a new position - manager of national information systems – to streamline operations and create national standards. The manager introduced a number of new technologies over time – including a centralized e-mail system, shared databases, which improved the information flow among the offices, and an internal on-line discussion forum where employees from across the country can discuss on-going projects.

Successes/Challenges

Hiring a manager and educating staff on using the technology were critical to the success of the endeavour. Although the re-organization was a large-scale, multi-year undertaking, the Foundation encourages other voluntary organizations with more than one office to consider investing in technology. For the Foundation, the technology has enhanced its ability to offer a more unified service across the country. Just as importantly, the sharing of information and resources has eliminated costly duplication of services and activities among its offices.

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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.

