

Washington Traffic Safety Commission



How the Washington Traffic Safety Commission modernized their NHTSA grants management to save lives and administrative time.

At a Glance

A sluggish paper-based system hampered the Washington Traffic Safety Commission's nuanced and complex government-funded granting process. With all the detail work required to manage federally funded grants, they wanted to move to an electronic-based system.

SmartSimple Cloud helped them centralize their process into one platform enabling them to invoice, manage projects, and track program impact in an all-in-one platform.



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Debi Besser
Program Manager



SmartSimple client since: 2017

Type of giving: Grants

Old system: Paper-based system with Excel spreadsheets and Word documents

SmartSimple product/services:

- SmartSimple Cloud for Government Funding

Key pain points:

- Too cumbersome of a process handing papers back and forth between staff resulting in loss of information.

New system must-haves:

- A centralized system to cut down on administrative time with invoicing, reporting, and grantee management

Request a demo and learn how to transform your NHTSA grant disbursement and reporting with our grant management software for SHSOs.

About Washington Traffic Safety Commission

The Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) is Washington's designated highway safety office. They work in collaboration with numerous other state and local public agencies with the goal of reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero by 2030.

More paper, more problems

"Traffic safety is about saving lives and reducing traffic fatalities and one of the ways we do this is by managing grants," says Pam Pannkuk, Deputy Director for WTSC. To promote traffic safety, WTSC receives federal funds on an annual basis and manages programs for each of those funds. These programs include providing high visibility enforcement, school zone grants, community coordination, and the prevention of impaired and distracted driving. Yet, working with eight program managers, it was difficult to have a streamlined process as everything was printed and managed in paper files in filing cabinets. "Every program involved so much paperwork. We spent a lot of time shuffling papers to our managers, and it delayed a lot of our program progress," says Pam Pannkuk.

Another complex component added to WTSC's process was tracking their funding from both federal and state agencies. This reporting was tracked from invoices that were managed through spreadsheets and PDFs. Often, this process was met with delayed results since papers and spreadsheets were exchanged back and forth between program managers, grantees, and the finance department. "Too much administrative time was spent on tracking down the information we needed," says Pam Pannkuk.

WTSC sought to depart from paper files to an automated system where grantees could not only apply for grants online, but they could also monitor grant status and see their budget status as well. They wanted a robust system that could easily manage their contracts and programs.



The search for a better system

Finding a new system was a lengthy process. With the help of a contracted project manager, they defined their unique process. Then WTSC put out an RFP for a system that SmartSimple responded to. Six other companies responded, and they had demos from each system. “We selected SmartSimple because of how configurable it was, and the price points were right,” says Debi Besser, Program Manager for WTSC. Besser continued by saying, “we liked the flexibility of the [SmartSimple Cloud] system, and it was so user-friendly,” referring to the quick up-to-date access to application statuses and granular functionality of all the records in the intuitive user portals.



Invoicing and federal management reviews made easier

After SmartSimple Cloud configured a system that met the Commission’s needs and requirements, they officially launched their system called WEMS, short for WTSC Enterprise Management System.

WTSC needed a system that they could control the look and feel of. Along with centralizing their data, they also needed a system that could accommodate changes in federal regulations. With their SmartSimple Cloud platform, they were able to create interactive displays with individualized views and dashboards with all the relevant information they needed. “We can now see all the invoices and the statuses they’re in — if they’ve been submitted, approved, and even request more information if we need. This helps with processing,” says Debi Besser. The WTSC staff used to work with paperbased spreadsheets and physically pass them to the program manager and sometimes they would get lost. “There was a lot of movement on paper. Now it’s all very visible,” continues Besser.

One major shift since modernizing their system is shedding unneeded administrative time. “Documenting communication has been helpful. We can forward emails and make notes, and our invoicing process has been a complete shift in transparency,” says Jerry Noviello, Program Manager for WTSC. Instead of having to pick of the phone

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Debbie Johnson
Finance Director

or take time to draft emails to contact the department, grantees can go into the system and look at what invoices have been submitted and what’s been paid and stay on top of their budget.

Having all of the grant information in one central system made things easier for their federal oversight agency. They recently went through a federal management review, which is similar to an audit. “In the past, we would get out all the paper-based/paper folders, and they would have to come on-site and comb through all the records to make sure the all the monitoring and finances looked good. Now the federal agency can do the review from their regional office in Seattle since our new system is cloud-based,” says Debbie Johnson, Finance Director for WTSC. What was once a cumbersome review process became simplified. “The headquarters office in DC heard about the ease of our SmartSimple Cloud platform, and we provided a demonstration of the system for them,” continued Debbie.

New programs to save more lives

Expanding on their current system, they have the flexibility to add in programs with ease. “We’re planning a project to gather enforcement data about officers’ activity,” says Erica Stineman Communications Consultant for WTSC. “This includes warnings, tickets, arrests, to ensure safety on the road”. WTSC is confident in its ability to continue to evolve their programs proactively into the future.