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# Making Grant Management Outcome Centric With Automated Solution

22nd Apr, 2021



Think of yourself as the grant manager with a multilateral donor agency or a development finance institution. You will have a sheaf of applications, award notices, milestone based project reports and financial documents stacked up on your desk. What if there is a single, seamless solution to melt your worries and simultaneously help the grantees on the other side of the stakeholder fence? That's the aura of transformation which an **automated grant management solution** promises. It aggregates all information once held in silos and unburdens the officials connected with grant management by automating the entire grant lifecycle. And, for the potential grantees (recipients of funds), the system leads to democratization of opportunities by uploading all applications online. What's more, the

system has in-built modules to check the progress on funds spent and track on-the-spot outcomes of projects.

## The Need to Manage Grants Efficiently

For decades, multilateral donor agencies and development finance institutions have been pouring in money to fund investments in priority areas like health, education and food security in the emerging economies of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. But when it comes to gauging the efficacy of funds or appraising on-field assessment of the projects, the donor bodies still have opacity in visibility. *The requirement has become more genuine than utopian after the 2020 Aid Transparency Index has called upon donors (big & small alike) to publish grant performance data - objectives, results, reviews, and evaluations – for public oversight.* An inter-connected **Grant Management System** is needed by all stakeholders for:-

- Real time tracking and reporting of grant lifecycle data to enable timely interventions and corrective actions
- Tracking the flow of grants, terms & conditions as well as amendments
- Identifying and prioritizing non-profit grant opportunities
- Mitigating inefficiencies and traceability issues stemming from overly manual, paper-based business processes
- Applying governance, compliance, and risk management principles across programs and sub-grantees to manage fraud, waste, and abuse
- Balancing the increasing count of grants, awards, and sub-grantees with decreasing support budgets

## A Many-Layered Challenge to Navigate

**Managing funding programmes can be tedious and time consuming when you use multiple systems and can be worse if you rely on paper and spreadsheets. Even the relatively small programmes can involve tracking dozens of applications, reviewers, requirements, and payments.**

Further, many grants include reporting, site visits, or other requirements. To put it succinctly, the challenges hurt whether you are a donor or a recipient. Grant making agencies often face the dual challenge of being both a grantee and a grantor. Agencies must not only identify, apply for, and receive grant funding, but also solicit grant applications, initiate public calls for grant proposals, capture details on the merit of every grant proposal, review possible recipients, and accurately track the use of funds based on defined project milestones. On the reverse side of the spectrum, the state and local governments face a complex, disjointed, and dynamic set of processes.

# Learnings from Fund Management Systems in Rwanda & Mozambique

Rwanda, an African nation, has been one of the front runners in putting in place an end-to-end automated fund management system to manage grants. In sync with the nation's vision to be acknowledged as a 'knowledge economy' by 2050, the **National Council of Science & Technology** in Rwanda has automated the entire lifecycle — award, post award & closeout — of grants issued from the National Research & Innovation Fund (NRIF).

**The system automates the entire process of grant discovery, budget planning, regulatory compliance, proposal submission, administrative reporting and grant monitoring. This enhances the efficiency & impact of grants programs.**

Besides, the system enables organizations to administer the life cycle of grant-making, from evaluating applications and selecting the grantees to tracking the implementation and monitoring of grant compliance with budgets and performance goals. A similar system implemented in Mozambique under the aegis of the Ministries of Transport & Communications and Finance offers insights on how **fund management system** can be streamlined. There, the architecture of an existing Aid Management System is being revised and integrations with multiple ministries & departments is underway. This particular system is capturing aid program details on a nationwide scale.

The next generation Grant Management Systems need to be modelled more on Rwanda & Mozambique's IT driven solutions with thrust on transparency, accountability and outcome driven fund management. Intelligent technologies like Cloud Computing, **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Internet of Things (IoT)** can be tapped for customizable dashboards and **advanced visualizations** for real time status tracking. Technology for ease in fund management offers a leap of faith to both the grantor and the grantee.

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