

INTRODUCING



What makes a nonprofit successful? Specifics vary, but one constant is allocating staff time wisely. **Simplify** is a new approach to applying for grants. It eliminates the repetitive elements of grant applications, so nonprofits can spend time advancing their missions rather than completing unnecessary paperwork.

What is Simplify?

Nonprofits tailor grant applications for different funders. Most applications, however, include the same core elements, such as organizational data, contact information, a board of directors list, financial statements, and so on.

Simplify is a data-sharing and standards-setting process that helps funders more easily access this frequently used information from grantees. Standards setting creates a consistent format for core organizational information. Data sharing happens through GuideStar Exchange, which already connects nonprofits with current and potential supporters. Nonprofits enter their core information once, and then it is automatically added to every grant application they complete for any participating funder. The service is provided at no cost to the nonprofits.

Why develop Simplify now?

A generation ago, when all grant applications were submitted on paper, an organized development officer could have a package of this basic information and easily add it to every application.

Today, many grant applications are online, but they aren't consistent. Because foundations use a variety of separate software platforms, information is not transferrable. Nonprofits, therefore, need to repeatedly complete forms that provide the same basic information.

Simplify eliminates this recurring task. It allows grantees to keep their current data in one place (the GuideStar Exchange), so it's easier to maintain and share information about themselves. And it allows funders to easily access this information, streamlining their grant application process. The result: Grantmakers get quality data, grantees save valuable time, and everyone benefits from a more efficient process.

What kind of standards will Simplify set?

Data sharing only works if everyone in the philanthropic community formats information consistently.

Simplify's standards-setting process addresses issues such as whether the data field for a phone number uses dashes or periods as well as what types of information will be included in boards of directors lists.

What information will Simplify provide?

Simplify will begin with core information that most grantmakers need from applicants. Over time, it will likely expand to include additional information. Nonprofits that already have their information in the GuideStar Exchange will not have to add it again. When Simplify expands to offer funders additional information, participating nonprofits will be invited to update their profiles.

How will grantmakers and grantees use Simplify—now and in the future?

Grantees will maintain their core information in the GuideStar Exchange. They will key it in once and update it in one place. When grantees complete online applications, they will be able to include this core information with one click.

For e-mail and paper applications, a funder will pull a grantee's core data from Simplify into the funder's grant-management system.

Ultimately, Simplify will be the center of information integration, the heart of thousands of smooth exchanges of information each day. This seamless, automated information flow will allow funders and grantees to manage the grantmaking process more efficiently so, together, they can focus less on process—and more on purpose.

What is the cost of participating in Simplify?

Simplify is free for nonprofits. Foundations will pay a nominal fee per year to access the Simplify API (the programming code that will allow their online application and grant management systems to interact with the GuideStar Exchange).

Who is behind Simplify?

Simplify was created by GuideStar and the Technology Affinity Group (TAG).

TAG is a membership organization of technology professionals working in philanthropy that helps foundations use technology to advance their philanthropic goals. GuideStar is the leading organization in collecting nonprofit information and facilitating information sharing between nonprofits and grantmakers. It maintains a database of all tax-exempt organizations registered with the IRS.

The idea for a grantee database grew out of recommendations from the Grants Managers Network's Project Streamline, which found that grantseekers wrestle with application and reporting practices that often are disproportionately burdensome.

How will Simplify be managed?

GuideStar and TAG are creating an independent standards-setting body that will manage the standards for Simplify data and determine which additional information should be added to the Simplify database over time. This body will include representatives from TAG, GuideStar, funders, vendors, and sector-wide organizations.



Simplify is a new approach to applying for grants. It eliminates the repetitive elements of grant applications, so nonprofits can spend time advancing their missions rather than completing unnecessary paperwork. Grantees will enter and maintain their core organizational information in one place, and then this information will automatically be added to every grant application they complete for any participating funder. The result: Grantmakers get quality data, grantees save valuable time, and everyone benefits from a more efficient process.