Big Lottery Fund

Managing over £4.4 billion of funding for good causes.

Big Lottery Fund (BIG) is the largest distributor of national lottery money to good causes in the United Kingdom. Its mission is to bring real improvements to communities and lives of people most in need. The organization does this by using money raised by The National Lottery to fund projects for health, education, environmental and charitable purposes.

Each year, BIG receives thousands of applications for funding. Most of the funding goes to voluntary and community sector (VCS) organizations because they are well placed to help BIG achieve their mission. BIG distributes money through a range of funding programs. Some are UK-wide, while many others are designed and run by their country directorates in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In 2011-2012, BIG made 13,652 funding commitments totaling £877 million to groups across the UK, ranging from £150 to over £150 million. During this time, BIG received more than 24,000 applications while also managing 26,000 awards they made in previous years.

WHAT BIG LOTTERY FUND NEEDED
Grant management made it easy.
BIG reaches into the heart of communities in the UK and helps those most in need, in the form of grants. The recipient could be disabled youth receiving a Paralympics visit; rural communities in Scotland being supported to become more resilient and sustainable; a publicly funded music studio for young people; or social and environmental projects to build stronger local communities.

VCS organizations that count on BIG to award grants are increasing in number. in 2007, BIG decided to strengthen the grant management process. They wanted to do this in a way that would not only handle increasing volumes of applicants but also cope with the distribution of funds and changing business environment — without making major alterations to existing applications. The solution needed to be easy-to-use, resilient and effective in terms of cost and changing functionality.

"In the last five years, BIG has been able to broaden their horizons and become the leading grant allocation body – managing money on behalf of other bodies. The grant management system by CGI has played a big part in this evolution. Some of the innovations developed by CGI, such as system support for decision making, have been labelled as world leading.

Miranda Collett
Head of Data Management
BIG Lottery Fund

OUR ANSWER

Big changes coming through.

We designed, built and implemented the Merlin suite — now the established portal for BIG. It's the primary business tool used by BIG's grants officers and managers, and aids other departments like finance, particularly in reporting and payment of grants. Users benefit by rapid access to the system, the ability to self-configure workflow for funding programs and resilience through hosting the system across two sites.

Users can access the application with the help of duplicated server farms located at different physical sites. They need to simply click on another link from the start menu. This enhances robustness in the event of outages.

OVERVIEW OF WHAT WE DID

We upgraded the core Merlin application from client server to a web-based application that could be accessed from the portal. We followed it up with a successful data migration from other funding databases into the Merlin database.

With core Merlin, the applications that support the funding process, we provided the primary grant management application for BIG. Grant payments are processed based on data-driven models and include:

- A workflow based approach for funding requests from data capture through assessment, award to monitoring (that is, full lifecycle) wizard features to guide data input through particular paths — these depend on the type of funding program, tailored to the application form being captured
- Financial and management reporting items
- Easy integration of products to support IT accessibility such as JAWS for people with sight impairments.

For inquiries:
- Bespoke interface for creating ad hoc reports based on a snapshot from the end of previous day
- Integration with MS Office tools for advanced analysis using graphs and pivot tables.

For team tracking:
- Task submission and authorization tool — workflow based, utilizing emails
- Configuration management
- Software control for all.

For administration:
- CGI accessible area for monitoring and support
- Self-service area for users.

Portal features:
- Have zero sign-on (no need to enter any user authentication - derived)
- Are driven by individual's role (via groups) for example: training areas, live user zones, test zones
- Integrate well with BIG's business-wide ICT implementations allowing benefits such as single sign-on.

A SUCCESS STORY

Now, five years later, BIG has every reason to be satisfied with the way the grant management process has been re-engineered and ironed out.

To put it simply, people from various departments of BIG now rely on the system instead of using lists. For example, the finance department can define and manage the distribution of grant money to successful applicants using the payments functionality provided by us. Grants officers can provide data about applications to help decide who is to be awarded money. Managers can easily access a range of reporting features — both pre-defined and ad-hoc — through a separate application for enquiries.

WHY WORK WITH US?

Public sector organizations, including local and central government agencies, looking to cut costs or improve service have depended on us for their transformation programs. They have succeeded thanks to our excellent understanding of the challenges these organizations face and the intelligent use of innovation.

We have over 35 years of combined experience in public sector payroll and HR. We continue to invest in public sector templates across multiple platforms and services.

KEY BENEFITS

The system:

- Has been resilient to business change
- Has the ability to smoothly integrate new funding programs
- Has not cost BIG more to run than what was originally planned.

For more information, please contact us at government@cgi.com or visit www.cgi.com/government.

cgi.com/government