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# FROM MANUAL TO MODERN: TRANSFORMING GRANTS FOR OHIO'S FUTURE



**Award Category:** Digital Experience: Agency/Program Solutions

**State:** State of Ohio

**Agency:** Ohio Department of Health

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**Project Title:** From Manual to Modern: Transforming Grants for Ohio's Future

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## FROM MANUAL TO MODERN: TRANSFORMING GRANTS FOR OHIO'S FUTURE

### Executive Summary

As public health needs become increasingly complex and funding streams more competitive and regulated, it is imperative that state agencies modernize their systems to ensure the Ohioans they serve can continue to receive timely, effective services.

That's why the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) embarked on a strategic technology transformation to implement its new Grants Management Information System (GMIS). This initiative moved the state's previously manual legacy grants process onto a modern Salesforce-based platform. This initiative brings all grant activities into a centralized, automated, and fully auditable environment. The new system enables seamless integration with other agency platforms, allowing for efficient management of grant applications, funding awards, and ongoing compliance. Most importantly, it ensures that subrecipients receive funding in a timely, transparent, and accountable manner, ultimately enhancing the impact of public health programs across the state.

ODH faced significant challenges with its legacy, internally developed grants management system. The decades-old platform was cumbersome, inflexible, and unable to keep pace with the department's evolving needs. Its limitations forced agency staff to rely heavily on manual workarounds, leading to inefficiencies, delays, and an increased risk of errors. Recognizing the need for a modern, agile, and scalable solution, the agency seized the opportunity to reimagine its grants management process.

The state engaged experts in both grants administration and Salesforce technologies, and implemented a comprehensive, end-to-end GMIS. This new solution supports the full grants management lifecycle, from subgrant and solicitation planning, application intake and evaluation, and Notice of Funding Award to award issuance, expenditure tracking, performance reporting, and ongoing monitoring. Built on industry best practices and aligned with federal and state regulatory requirements, GMIS delivers a streamlined, transparent, and accountable approach to grants management, significantly improving operational efficiency and service delivery.

A modernized grants management solution was essential for ODH to effectively support the health and well-being of nearly 12 million residents across all 88 counties in the state. ODH administers over 45 grant programs annually, distributing more than \$5 billion in pass-through funding to 113 local health departments, as well as numerous nonprofits, city agencies, school systems, and other community-based organizations. The legacy system was outdated, rigid, and heavily reliant on manual processes—causing delays, inefficiencies, and challenges in ensuring timely, accurate fund distribution. With the new, modernized solution, the state can now manage the full grants management lifecycle with speed, transparency, and accountability.

The platform empowers both internal users and subrecipients through a fully digital, user-friendly experience that reduces administrative burden and simplifies complex workflows. In a time when public health demands agility, equity, and informed decision-making, this modern grant management system positions Ohio to efficiently deliver critical funding, strengthen community health programs, and serve every corner of the state effectively and equitably.

# IDEA



## The Opportunity

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) faced significant challenges with its legacy, internally developed grants management system. The decades-old platform was cumbersome, inflexible, and unable to keep pace with the department's evolving needs. Its limitations forced agency staff to rely heavily on manual workarounds, leading to inefficiencies, delays, and increased risk of errors. Recognizing the need for a modern, agile, and scalable solution, the agency seized the opportunity to reimagine its grants management process.

The state engaged experts in both grants administration and Salesforce technologies, and implemented a comprehensive, end-to-end Grants Management Information System (GMIS). This new solution supports the full grants management lifecycle, from subgrant and solicitation planning, application intake and evaluation, and Notice of Funding Award to award issuance, expenditure tracking, performance reporting, and ongoing monitoring. The solution also seamlessly integrates with state enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

Built on industry best practices and aligned with federal and state regulatory requirements, the GMIS delivers a streamlined, transparent, and accountable approach to grants management, significantly improving operational efficiency and service delivery.

## Why Does it Matter?

A modernized grants management solution is essential for ODH to effectively support the health and well-being of nearly 12 million residents across the state's 88 counties. ODH administers over 45 grant programs annually, distributing more than \$5 billion in pass-through funding to 113 local health departments, as well as numerous nonprofits, city agencies, school systems, and other community-based organizations.



**WHAT'S AT STAKE:**  
**\$5B in funding, 45 grant programs,**  
**Supporting 12M residents in 88 counties**

The legacy system previously in use was outdated, rigid, and heavily reliant on manual processes—causing delays, inefficiencies, and challenges in ensuring timely, accurate fund distribution. With the new, modernized solution, the state can now manage the full grants management lifecycle with speed, transparency, and accountability.

Automation of routine tasks, real-time access to data, and full auditability ensure strong alignment with federal and state compliance requirements. The platform empowers both internal users and subrecipients through a fully digital, user-friendly experience that reduces administrative burden and simplifies complex workflows.

In a time where public health demands agility, equity, and informed decision-making, this modern grants management system positions Ohio to efficiently deliver critical funding, strengthen community health programs, and serve every corner of the state effectively and equitably.

# IDEA



## What Makes it Different?

There are several key differentiators which set this project apart. The state chose a platform designed for scalability, one that not only supports ODH's grants management needs but is also adaptable to other business areas. This flexibility enables grant program teams to easily configure application forms and requirements based on their unique needs. This empowers them to adjust without reliance on IT resources. Unlike other grants management systems, which are often rigid or require complex back-end customizations to make changes across program areas, this solution is built to evolve with the agency's needs, making it more responsive, adaptable, and future-proof.



## What Makes it Universal?

Grants management is a common need across state agencies, each with dedicated teams responsible for administering and tracking federal and state funds. Every agency that receives federal funding is held to the same rigorous compliance standards, making the need for a modern, auditable, and efficient grants management system universal.

ODH recognized this shared need and developed a flexible, scalable solution that could be leveraged by other state agencies as desired. This sharing of resources can help other agencies reduce development time and cost. For example, the Ohio Department of Children and Youth is actively adopting ODH's solution, demonstrating its adaptability and cross-agency relevance. Additionally, after seeing ODH's GMIS, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services requested a copy of the code for their internal development and integration with the state ERP.

The ODH Financial Affairs Office provided a demonstration of the application to various chief financial officers from other states showcasing the streamlined process of the GMIS and its ease of use.

# IMPLEMENTATION



## What Was the Roadmap?

To ensure the grants management system met the needs of all users, ODH decided to build its own solution. By involving subgrantees and program staff in the business process redesign and implementation, ODH successfully delivered the required features and functionality.

The multiyear project was split into two phases. **Phase 1** included standardizing business processes across programs and documenting detailed requirements. **Phase 2** included engaging a partner to design, build, and implement our solution.



## Who Was Involved?

The implementation of GMIS was a true team effort, bringing together multiple units within ODH. Strong stakeholder engagement from the Grants Services Unit and program areas, along with strategic product ownership by the Office of Financial Affairs and local health department commissioners, was instrumental to the project's success.

The willingness of a state agency to truly embrace the idea of having an end user so closely involved in design, demonstration, testing and approval has truly led to a software system that was met in the field with enthusiasm. My peers knew they had a voice at the table...

Krista Wasowski, MSW, MPH  
 Health Commissioner  
 Medina County Health Department



Working in close partnership with technical and functional architects, the business vision was translated into a robust, scalable system. Business analysts played a key role in capturing process flows and requirements, while developers, testers, and project managers drove the execution and delivery of the solution.

From the outset, change managers were engaged to support a smooth rollout and maximize user adoption. Every team member contributed through cross-functional collaboration, aligning expertise across subrecipients, technical, and operational areas to deliver a transformative, enterprise-grade solution.

# IMPACT



## How Did We Do It?

ODH's solution was guided by three core principles: standardization, scalability, and modernization. We adopted a standardized approach to align all grant programs under a unified, consistent process, creating a foundation that is inherently scalable across programs and teams.

Most importantly, this was not just a lift-and-shift of our legacy system to a new platform. Our goal was to truly modernize how we manage grants by transforming processes to be fully supported within the system, with built-in traceability, automation, and robust reporting capabilities. The result is a future-ready solution that drives efficiency, accountability, and transparency across the grant lifecycle.

To prepare our people for the transition, we implemented a comprehensive change management program — the first of its kind at ODH. This initiative featured over 100 communications, approximately 120 live training sessions, and approximately 70 training and job aid materials. We used surveys to monitor change adoption and had a dedicated training environment for end users to practice in before go live.

## What Did the Project Make Better?



### Faster Grant Delivery:

Streamlined the full grants process, reducing time from solicitation to fund distribution to local agencies.



### Flexible Applications:

Allowed users to customize application requirements per grant program, without IT support.



### All-in-One Portal:

Centralized submissions, pre-award, expenditure requests, reporting, and change management in a secure online system.



### Automated & Auditable:

Automated tasks and approvals with full traceability for audit and compliance.



### Fully Digital for Subrecipients:

Eliminated repetitive data entry through a fully digital, user-friendly application experience.



### Real-Time Reporting:

Enabled instant access to grant data for federal compliance and better decision-making.

# IMPACT



## How Do We Know?

Here is what agency users and ODH staff are saying about the new system — real quotes highlighting their experiences and insights:

“Big win is having a one-stop shop. Our current system, as we all know is very antiquated. It will be nice to have a system that can handle extensive reporting; and a more modern platform to work from.”

“Easier to use and more user friendly”

“Reporting capabilities!!!”

“Overall seems more intuitive and easier to use than the current GMIS.”

“More streamlined with some of the new functions that are integrated in the new system.”

## What Now?

Now that the system is live, ODH is focused on continuing to enhance the platform to meet the evolving needs of both agency employees and the Ohioans they serve. In future phases, ODH plans to fully retire its legacy grants system, as well as related systems such as the provider database, consolidating functionality into the modern grants platform. This unified approach will drive greater efficiency, reduce system redundancy, and deliver a more seamless experience for all users.