

## GIFTS™ saves MLA 28% on cost of each grant

### The Creation of MLA

When the Library and Information Services Commission and the Museums and Galleries Commission merged in 2000 the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) was formed. Both Commissions had operated a variety of grant programmes and made extensive use of specialist consultants.

The merger resulted in substantial staff turnover in the team responsible for administering awards. The consequences of this and other post-merger problems included:

- Delays in the service offered to grant recipients and consultants
- The onus of award management falling on commissioning teams
- Hold-ups in the tracking of financial commitments.

The decision to procure an electronic award management system was taken to try to remedy these problems rather than to achieve immediate cost benefits.

### Benefits from the offset

Denislava Ivanova has been Grants & Procurement Manager at MLA for around six and a half years. Having joined the organisation shortly after GIFTS™ was purchased Denislava has been able to compare life before and after the installation of GIFTS™. "Not all grants were transferred over to GIFTS when the system was purchased so I was able to compare the laborious nature of looking for grant information in many Excel spreadsheets to the easy way we could

view information in GIFTS, it meant we were able to quickly respond to queries over the phone whereas using the old system meant delays in responding. Service was much improved due to the use of GIFTS."

The MLA grants team found GIFTS™ also delivered the following unexpected advantages:

#### GIFTS™ as a communication tool.

The nature of the software means that MLA staff with only a minimum understanding of grants can still respond to queries using GIFTS™, on schemes that are completely unknown to them. This has not only released pressure on the grants team but has also meant a better service for those contacting the MLA.

#### An intuitive system.

MLA has found that the intuitive nature of GIFTS™ has helped enormously where there have been changes in staff as "picking up work on GIFTS is very easy."

#### Making full use of GIFTS™ functionality.

GIFTS™ has proven to be a great value purchase for MLA. The organisation uses GIFTS™ to capture information on contracts and tenders. They now benefit from having all their procurement information in one place and have saved the cost of purchasing additional contract management software. This extra use of GIFTS™ means MLA has a history of all suppliers, for example how

many times they have tendered for a project and how many times they have been rejected.

#### Working remotely.

The MLA grants team have found the ability to work from any location to be very useful. The MyGIFTS™ module allows you to access the GIFTS™ database remotely via the internet without the need for any other software.

#### A catalyst for change.

Before GIFTS™ was purchased many employees from throughout the organisation were awarding grants, via email for example. One important benefit of the software has been that it has facilitated the transition from a culture of devolved responsibility to a centralised system of awards where contracts and tenders are controlled by one team. Thanks to the security features in GIFTS™, only the grants and procurement team are now able to award grants.

#### Helping to plan ahead.

MLA awards a large number of individual grants with all information captured in GIFTS™. This allows the MLA grants team to give exact financial information on all allocated funds to their finance team to better enable them to plan ahead.

*“Service is much improved due to the use GIFTS”*

*“GIFTS has proven to be a great value purchase”*

### Allowing a deeper level of involvement in the grants process

Denislava Ivanova, Grants & Procurement Manager, has seen her role evolve since the introduction of GIFTS™. She says, “GIFTS™ has enabled me to participate more coherently in the grants process, and not just the back end of the process.”

### National Audit Office recognises efficiencies of grant management technology

In a recent report by the National Audit Office (NAO) entitled “Making grants efficiently in the culture, media and sport sector”, the MLA was held up as an example of where “Effective use of IT can improve the efficiency and quality of grant-making”. The report went on to say that “the greater use of technology can support the streamlining of the grant-making process, and reduce costs by, for example, automating the application stage or parts of the decision making and awards stages of the process.”

### GIFTS™ saves MLA 28%

In 2005, three years after first installing GIFTS™, MLA carried out a cost benefit analysis of the grants management system. They established that for each award they were making a saving of £192 compared to costs before GIFTS™. This saving takes into account an increase in staff costs, amortisation costs of software costs and annual support costs.

If one is cautious and credits GIFTS™ with contributing to only half of this cost reduction this still translates into an annual figure (based on 2004/05 volumes) of c£40,000 in savings.

In its 2008 report the NAO said “The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council found that by introducing new grant

management software in 2002 the cost of making a grant decreased by 28 per cent after taking into account the costs of additional software support.”

### The Museum Accreditation Scheme

The Museum Accreditation Scheme is a museums standards administered by MLA. Accredited museums must adhere to published minimum standards in how they care for and document their collections, how they are governed and managed, and on the information and services they offer to their users.

“GIFTS has helped enormously with the transformation of the Museum Accreditation Scheme from paper based to electronic/online.” says Denislava.

Museum applicants apply using online forms from anywhere in the UK, the internal team retrieves the applications via the IGAM module. Assessors then link into and evaluate the applications using the GIFTS MyGIFTS™ module, which can, again, be accessed remotely.

If you would like to find out how GIFTS™ could benefit your organisation please contact :

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