

## City of London, Ontario



**How the City of London, Ontario built a grants management platform that evolved with their growing needs.**

### At a Glance

The City of London had a completely paper-based system to manage their granting activities. All signatures had to be physically collected and were only accepted on original, printed documents. Every application had to travel between the applicant, reviewers, and the city's granting office, making it difficult to properly track and organize them.

Because of all the back and forth, grant reports took a great deal of time to complete. Reports were shared as blank templates which meant they were often submitted without all the required information. Once the city implemented SmartSimple Cloud, everything was organized and centralized online. They saved hours of time in processing applications, building reports and tracking all aspects of their granting program.

**SmartSimple client since:** 2015

**Type of giving:** Grants

**Dollars managed:** \$1.8 million annually

**Old system:** Microsoft Office, paper

**SmartSimple product/services:**

- [SmartSimple Cloud for Government Funding](#)

### Key pain points:

- Too much paper
- No centralized document storage
- No online document signing capabilities
- Reports extremely time-consuming to complete

### New system must-haves:

- Cost effective
- Online application and tracking
- Intuitive to use
- Able to evolve
- Strong security features

"SmartSimple Cloud is making our work supporting organizations so much easier. We have eliminated many of the time-consuming aspects of our old program and can now focus on other priorities. Our team has more time to support and empower our grantees, helping to build the capacity of the organizations the city funds."

**Jen Carter**

Manager, Policy and Strategic Issues



City of London, Ontario is a SmartSimple Cloud user

**Request a demo and learn more about SmartSimple Cloud for Government Funding at [www.smartsimple.com](http://www.smartsimple.com)**

### About the City of London

London is a Canadian city located in Southwestern Ontario. With a population of over 380,000, the city boasts a vibrant art scene as well as several historically significant sites and museums. London is home to one of Canada's largest universities, the University of Western Ontario, and one of Canada's largest colleges, Fanshawe College. Their granting activities align with the city's strategic plan, and work to advance the priorities of Strengthening our Community, Building a Sustainable City, and Growing our Economy. The city funds a number of different organizations from large non-profits to smaller, grassroots organizations.

### Drowning in spreadsheets, contracts, and photocopies

The City of London's manual, paper-based system was in desperate need of an overhaul. "With all the grants being on paper, nothing was, or even could be, automated. Staff were using an Excel spreadsheet to try and administer grants, track awards, and maintain reporting data," said Jen Carter, Manager, Policy and Strategic Issues.

"There were reams of paper going back and forth between us, our finance department, our grantees and reviewers. The system also involved stacks of contracts that needed original signatures, which then had to be filed. But the biggest pain for us was reporting. Reporting is a very important part of our granting process, and we need to be accountable for how public dollars are being spent. Our team worked very closely with organizations to assist in completing reports, but with



a paper-based system, this took several rounds of edits.”

“We had a large volume of photocopied documents - mostly applications - that we would add handwritten notes to. At times it was difficult to tell if those notes had been incorporated into the most recent versions of our documents. Applications submitted to the city were frequently missing information which involved a lot of back and forth to gather missing data.”

Through their strategic plan, London’s city council directed the municipal granting team to modernize the process so that they could better support local organizations and residents. One way was by providing a simple, online application and tracking system that everyone could use.

### Seeking a community-friendly solution

When conducting a comprehensive review of other technologies, they were looking for a “perfect fit” to keep up with the unique way their operations were running. They chose SmartSimple Cloud as their flexible solution to track and report the complex funding and disbursement structures. “Other systems didn’t allow for the flexibility that SmartSimple Cloud did.”

The city had considered a Microsoft-based CRM, but it would have cost upwards of \$300,000, an amount significantly higher than what was budgeted. “Because we are using public funds for important investments to enhance our community, it’s critical for us to be accountable for every dollar we spend.”

“The City of London’s grant applications also have to be intuitive, so it was important to build a system accessible to all levels of computer competency so anyone could apply for funding with minimal assistance from us. We have a variety of different groups using the system, including older adults applying for small neighborhood improvement grants, environmental groups looking to beautify the city by planting trees, and large, established organizations with a strong aptitude for completing grant applications.”

**“Through our research, we discovered that SmartSimple Cloud was the perfect solution. They provide a cost-effective platform with the ability to be configured based on our business process, as well as the ability to adapt to our business needs for the future.”**

**Jen Carter**

Manager, Policy and Strategic Issues

“Among our other requirements was ensuring we implemented a system that was highly adaptable; able to change as the priorities of the city do. We needed a solution that could easily grow and work for the city over the long term. And, as a municipal government department, it’s extremely important that we adhere to very high security protocols. Jen did some online research and discovered the Idealware Consumers Guide to Grants Management Systems. “It was a great resource to begin our search for a grant management system, and helped us identify the right vendor for an online system to suit us.”

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“SmartSimple Cloud offered a nearly endless range of configurable features and functionality. It was exactly what we were looking for to make our grant process more efficient, and move entirely online.”

### An adaptable future for the city’s granting process

Having never been through a major system implementation before, Jen was appreciative of the guidance and support provided by the SmartSimple team. “The implementation process gave us the perfect opportunity to reevaluate how we managed our granting program from every angle. We were entirely open to new ideas and to be challenged about our current process in order to develop a system that would be both efficient and effective. Our SmartSimple

implementation team was able to adapt and adjust to all the parts of our granting process, making the program much easier to manage.”

“SmartSimple Cloud is making our work supporting organizations so much easier. We have eliminated many of the time-consuming aspects of our old process, and can now focus on other priorities. Our team finally has time to support and empower our grantees, building the capacity of the organizations the city funds.”

“We’re very happy that we chose SmartSimple Cloud for our grants management system. We really appreciate the ongoing, open dialogue between SmartSimple and their clients to evolve the platform; they use our feedback to continually improve the system and make certain it is reflective of the needs of their clients. SmartSimple actually takes our suggestions into consideration, which is reflected in new features that are added through quarterly upgrades. SmartSimple Cloud truly empowers me to use and configure new functionality on my own; that means, technically, I can build new pieces of our system on my own.”

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### **A time-saving solution to grow with**

These substantial process improvements ensure the city’s reports are now automatically sent to organizations complete with past due reminder emails. “Organizations submit their reports to their board members for approval through SmartSimple Cloud, and we’ve eliminated the need for physical signatures. With the ability to create workflows to automatically send out reports to grantees, reporting is already set up to be entirely managed through the system for the next 3 years.”

Jen has been so thrilled with their SmartSimple Cloud platform that she has recommended SmartSimple Cloud to other municipalities as well as other departments at London City Hall.

“The City of London will be bringing more departments online with SmartSimple Cloud. With the range of highly private and personal information that other departments manage, they quickly saw how SmartSimple Cloud would align with their security requirements and provide a cost-effective solution that supports city staff to better serve our community.”

“SmartSimple is invested in supporting us to meet our growing business needs; not just the needs of my team, but for all the residents of London. With the ability to constantly enhance our system and adapt to change, SmartSimple Cloud will be a valuable partner for years to come.” ●

