

New Castle County Uses SimpliGov to Process Emergency Federal Grant Funds

Distributes \$322M and Passes External Audit

New Castle County is the smallest but most populous county in Delaware. Each year, the county manages a variety of grants that deliver a diverse assortment of new services for constituents.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) brought the opportunity to issue hundreds of millions of dollars to assist areas including health equity, food insecurity, emergency response, and education.

CHALLENGE

The sheer volume of dollars awarded from the [Coronavirus Relief Fund \(CRF\)](#) and the compliance guidelines that came with them exceeded anything the county was accustomed to. Furthermore, the legislation was continually subject to expansion to cover additional funding needs.

The grant was a substantial benefit to the citizens of New Castle County. The challenge was finding a way to accurately account for all funds allocated to county agencies, municipalities, and community organizations, while being flexible enough to adapt to the CRF's continual expansion of services. Every grant distribution had to be traceable throughout its life cycle without exception.

SOLUTION

New Castle County selected SimpliGov to manage the CARES Act grant distribution process. SimpliGov's no-code cloud architecture enabled New Castle County to initially [go live with a fully compliant CRF reimbursement program in less than 48 hours](#). New Castle County was able to streamline and control the complex process in a way that was convenient for both applicants and employees.

"From an outsider's perspective, it wasn't unreasonable to wonder if our staff would have the bandwidth and capability to administer this amount of money while keeping these comprehensive guidelines straight," explained Michael Hojnicky, Chief of Technology & Administrative Services, New Castle County.

SimpliGov allowed New Castle County to build a centralized CARES Act application page and self-service portal that covered all eligible services, including the first reimbursement program. The connected, [forms-driven framework](#) spanned the entire ecosystem involved in the grant process including:

- Constituents
- Community-Serving Organizations (First Responders, Food Assistance, Municipal Services, etc.)
- County Finance
- County Legal
- Other Contracted Vendors

Using pre-defined criteria outlined in the legislation, the finance and legal team could expedite verification of each applicant's proposal in compliance with the CARES Act. Additional information was requested electronically and uploaded in the cloud into SimpliGov, which was even more beneficial during pandemic-related contact restrictions.

When a request was approved, SimpliGov's workflow automation tool would generate a "certification" letter for [electronic signature](#) as a legally binding acknowledgment of the grant terms and conditions. Once a signature was received, the SimpliGov workflow would generate a finance task to open a purchase order and make sure all vendors were properly registered. Finally, the purchase order would route to accounts payable to issue payment.

As new CARES act guidance was released, New Castle County would easily update form fields, documents requiring signatures, and certification letters.

SimpliGov's dashboards and [document creation](#) capabilities were the keys to controlling the management of such a large grant within regulatory statutes. A dashboard showed all open tasks and owners. Authorized users could view and gather all submissions—including correspondence, documents, and payments—in one system.

"Managing a grant of this magnitude without a centralized digital hub for all activity and documents would be virtually impossible," said Michael Smith, CFO, New Castle County. **"At best, we would have dealt with a recurring headache of lost applications, files buried in individual email inboxes, and miscommunications between the various parties, all of which could have proved costly for us."**

RESULTS

- \$322.8 million in distributions over two years
- Over 1,000 grants fulfilled (50% directly to residents)
- No disruption in operations
- Rapid change management
- Passed comprehensive third party audit with **zero findings**
- Remote application filing and service delivery
- Extended partnership with the State of Delaware to manage 11 mobile COVID testing sites and deliver additional unemployment, childcare, and contact tracing services throughout the state

Additional value was realized by New Castle County when it was able to adopt their forms and workflow templates to fulfill critical [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\)](#) initiatives, including Building Better Communities (BBC) and Reimagine New Castle County Program.

"Thanks to SimpliGov, we could support our constituents and our state within the parameters laid out by the federal government. More important, we are more nimble than ever, able to evolve our community funding operation to meet new federal legislation and ever-changing community needs."

Michael Hojnicky
Chief of Technology & Administrative
Services, New Castle County.