

Success story

Easing the burden of accounting



The challenge

With 2,700 local units each managing their own accounts using various manual or simple systems, the Girl Guides of Ontario faced inefficiencies, data security concerns, and challenges in transitioning financial records between short-term volunteers.



The solution

The Girl Guides of Ontario partnered with their long-time Sage ERP consultant, BAASS, to develop an online banking solution that simplifies accounting for local units and the provincial office, allowing volunteers to manage invoices, request funding, view balances, and approve expenses through a customized web portal.



The result

The Girl Guides of Ontario implemented a paperless banking solution with BAASS that streamlined accounting by eliminating the need for mailing checks and invoices, consolidating individual bank accounts into a single account to reduce fees and increase interest earnings, and allowing units to use prepaid purchase cards while enhancing security and efficiency in managing expenditures and reimbursements.



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Organization
Girl Guides of Canada
Location
HQ - Toronto, Ontario
Industry
Not-for-Profit Industry
Sage Partner
BAASS Business Solutions



Girl Guides of Canada

Girl Guides of Canada was among the founding members of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, back in 1910. Girl Guides of Ontario is the Provincial Council and serves more than 34,000 girl members plus an additional 8,000 adults across the province with programs, camps, and enrichment opportunities aimed to help each member reach their potential.



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Looking for a Better Way

Traditionally, each of the 2,700 local units had its own bank account, its own set of cheques, and its own system for managing cash. "Some of the units used simple software for managing their accounts receivable, accounts payable, and cash — but most units used spreadsheets or manual systems," explained Lily Mak, Finance Manager for Girl Guides of Ontario.

Thousands of disparate accounting systems added up to inefficiency. Unit volunteers are not typically accountants and most perform their work from home. This meant that sensitive banking information often ended up on home computers.

Unit volunteers generally serve for a year or two, then the data and programs have to be transferred to the next volunteer. Without a reliable, easy-to-use system, that transition was often difficult. "We knew there was a better way out there, but we weren't sure just how to get there," says Andrea Chiu, banking coordinator for the organization.

Enlist the Experts

Girl Guides of Ontario turned to its long-time Business Partner and Sage ERP consultant. BAASS. "We trust BAASS and knew they had the expertise and skill set to solve a complex problem like this," Mak says. "They have been our accounting system support for many years.

BAASS assembled a team of business analysts and engineers to work with Girl Guides of Ontario to design and implement an online banking solution to streamline and simplify accounting for both the units and the provincial office.

The solution would enable unit volunteers to log in to a customized web portal and perform a variety of functions, including entering invoices for reimbursement, requesting funding for new purchases, viewing account balances, and approving expenses.

Benefits Across the Organization

"It is an entirely paperless solution," says Chiu. "We have eliminated the need to mail cheques to our units, and our units no longer need to mail invoices and other documents to us. Not only does that save on postage and cheque stock, but by eliminating paper, we cut out a whole labour intensive step in the process, making the whole system more efficient."

The benefits realized by merging all of the individual bank accounts into a single account are significant. The units each save on bank service fees and no longer need to make frequent trips to the bank branch. By combining the funds of each unit into a single account, Girl Guides of Ontario is able to strategically invest the money, significantly increasing the interest earned. "That is money we can reinvest in the organization," Chiu adds.





Streamline Processing

Units now receive a purchase card, a prepaid credit card loaded with a modest dollar amount to be used for small expenditures. BAASS developed an import utility from the issuing bank that brings the purchase transactions into the application and displays them for the units to review and confirm.

The process further reduces the time and costs associated with paying for supplies or services by eliminating the need for paper-based purchase orders and invoice processing.

Requests for larger expenditures or reimbursements are initiated through the web form. An electronic workflow routes the request through a series of approvals, ensuring best practices are followed. Cheques are being phased out as each unit volunteer is reimbursed using EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer), a Sage ERP module that BAASS integrated into the solution.

As the units deposit cash from dues or cookie sales, those deposits are automatically associated with the appropriate unit through a customized deposit ticket. A second import utility brings the file from the bank into the application, enabling each unit to review and confirm the deposits that they have made.

"Our goal was to ease the accounting burden on our units and streamline the purchasing and expense reimbursement between the units and the provincial office," explains Mak. "We've definitely succeeded in that goal. We receive great feedback from our units, and are saving time and money at every level. In addition, it is a secure, efficient, and easy-to-use system that helps the organization conform to good business practices." Mak concludes, "BAASS was able to guide us successfully through the whole process, including the technology infrastructure, workflow, and controls."