

LIFTING THE LID ON NGO BEST PRACTICE



ACQUUM
CONSULTING HAS
BEEN WORKING
WITH THE FRED
HOLLOWS
FOUNDATION FOR
TWO YEARS TO
PUT IN PLACE BEST
PRACTICE
BUSINESS
INTELLIGENCE

Read on to learn how
it was done.

By AcQuum Consulting

A focus on data driven business intelligence to deliver transparent, robust, and accurate reporting on cash flow and operational results directly allows The Fred Hollows Foundation to save the sight of more people. They have aligned the entire organisation to their mission of having the right data at the right time to drive sound decision making. They also have been able to grow their levels of funding by providing a direct line of sight to every cent spent to save sight.

"A focus on data driven business intelligence to deliver transparent, robust, and accurate reporting on cash flow and operational results..."

DO COMPLEXITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY GO TOGETHER?

How do you have complete transparency and line of sight on cash flow across 25 different countries, delivering hundreds of sophisticated services to make sure you maximise every single cent donated?

The Fred Hollows Foundation is an outstanding study of best practice when it comes to managing their expenditure to deliver maximum outcomes for their community. They formed a partnership with AcQuum Consulting to put in place a business intelligence system that allows them to have complete transparency on every dollar spent, and insights into how best to allocate funding for the most significant impact.

Requirement #1

TRANSPARENCY

The Foundation's mission is to save as many people from avoidable blindness or vision impairment as possible. To do this, they receive generous support from everyday people who believe in their cause as well as from governments, institutional donors and corporate supporters.

Their duty is to not only those people whose eye sight they are saving, but also to these donors. They deserve to know exactly how their donation has been spent and what difference it has made.



PHOTO: MICHAEL AMENDOLIA



"THE TYPICAL CULTURE IN AN NGO IS THAT EVERYONE BELIEVES IN THEIR PURPOSE. THEY ARE ALWAYS ASKING HOW BEST TO SUPPORT THEIR PURPOSE. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO THE DATA HELP THEM ANSWER THIS QUESTION."

Daryn Deiley, COO,
The Fred Hollows Foundation

Requirement #2

LINE OF SIGHT AND EFFICIENCY

The Foundation has to date, over their 27 years, restored sight to 2.5 million people. They approach their mission to save sight in a way that makes it sustainable for each community, not only training the surgeons to perform the life-changing procedure but also providing the facilities to deliver ongoing services. They also work to enhance the existing health care services, as well as advocating for eye health at government level.

A clear line of sight across this incredibly complex program of work, across 25 different countries was needed. Data visibility would then enable much more effective coordination and teamwork between the head office and the teams in the field, leading to efficiencies in the way they deliver to the hundreds of different communities they serve.

Requirement #3

ACCOUNTABILITY AND BETTER DECISION MAKING

Some critical challenges for The Foundation were around cash management and data visibility. Up-to-date information was needed to both understand precisely where they had spent the money and to connect the relevant operational data to 'outcomes.'

As soon as the cash to outcomes was established, the business intelligence system enabled data-informed decisions to deliver maximum impact for each cent spent.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE AND TRANSPARENCY ENTERED THE ROOM?

The end solution for The Foundation allows them to have a granular line of sight from head office to in-the-field implementation, right down to individual project implementation line items – no dollar is missed.

To achieve the above, The Fred Hollows Foundation partnered with AcQuum Consulting, specialists in business intelligence systems.

Chief Operating Officer, Daryn Deiley recognised that it had to be an iterative and collaborative process that took the entire Foundation on the journey – not just the finance team. His goal was to make the best data accessible to everyone within the organisation to “drive action in the right way and right time” consistently and measurably.

Deiley also commented, "we now have a much better understanding of the cost to undertake our work."

As a result, all staff, Deiley stated, have a “much better-aligned understanding of how finances work through The Foundation, which in turn, drives efficiency, robustness, and accuracy." He believes that "the typical culture in an NGO is that everyone believes in their purpose. They are always asking how best to support their purpose. Transparency and access to the data helps them answer this question."



FOR THE FOUNDATION, RIGOUR IN THEIR REPORTING AND CASH MANAGEMENT ENABLES THEM TO:

- Connect the money directly to project outcomes and community impact, i.e., number of people receiving sight saving surgery or other treatment.
- Provide transparency for their community on funding expenditure and return.
- Improve opportunities to secure funding by being able to provide the accountability that major funders seek when looking to donate.
- Drive efficiencies and empower regional teams with real-time reporting, which helps with responsiveness in the field when teams need it.
- Simplify audit and compliance reporting via customised dashboards to save time on data collection and reporting and jump straight to data-driven program optimisation activity.
- Provide oversight on the complex operating environment in various countries and address currency exchanges and different tax reporting requirements.
- Enable inbuilt request and approval mechanisms from countries, back to head office to provide rigour across borders, particularly relating to money transfers.
- Deliver reporting and dashboards so that every decision is backed by data from a single source of truth that can be trusted.
- Proactively manage risk and reputation with demonstrated transparency and accountability.

HOW TO DELIVER A BEST PRACTICE NGO BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE SOLUTION

AcQuum Consulting worked consultatively and iteratively with The Foundation to tailor a business intelligence platform that connects cash management to operational activity, at every location and cost centre within the organisation.

ITERATION AND ENQUIRY

The process for undertaking this kind of project was necessarily iterative as it needed to take into account what was not known. As data was made visible, it revealed gaps and questions on processes that they were able to pause and address. The additional benefit was that the BI solution was responsive to people within the organisation and what they needed to do their job well. Quite often, “seeing” the data gave rise to change for the better. Had a defined solution been determined at the outset, it would have missed these crucial aspects that drove the success of the project.



SPEAKING THEIR LANGUAGE

The process also allowed internal change management to occur, allowing staff to interact with their cost centre data in a manner and style that made sense to them. The project was not just a data project, but a cultural shift in the organisation to focus on data-driven insights and decision making. For many NGOs, this is a struggle not yet resolved.

AcQuum Consulting designed the interface using the organisation's language, so the staff were able to quickly and easily learn to drive the platform and self-serve as they needed.

REVEALING THE DATA

The BI system is platform-agnostic, bringing together data from different underpinning systems into one cohesive dashboard as the source of truth. The time staff previously spent trying to 'interpret' or 'find' the data is now put into analysis and optimisation.

AcQuum Consulting continues to design and enhance a BI system that is customised and responsive to The Foundation's mission

SUMMARY

The Fred Hollows Foundation is leveraging its business intelligence to grow as an organisation and to save as many people as possible from avoidable blindness. It's a sophisticated program of work to deliver on this mission.

AcQuum Consulting continues to design and enhance a BI system that was customised and responsive to The Foundation's mission, providing the many layers of detail that connect funding to outcomes, as well as driving insights for better decision making. They have been able to address some of the most challenging issues that an NGO faces: from providing regular and transparent reporting on outcomes to their donors to being able to understand exactly how effective their dollars are being used and to see how they can do things even better.

These positive outcomes will support the entire Fred Hollows team to expand and grow to see Professor Fred Hollow's original vision much closer to being realised.

"FUNDERS ARE MORE SOPHISTICATED AND OUTCOMES-FOCUSED."

Daryn Deiley, COO,
The Fred Hollows Foundation