

Case Study: Transforming Student Management at Idaho Youth Challenge Academy

“What a team at Folder Wave! Enhanced our dissemination of information and collection of data, and greatly increased our communication abilities. Highly Recommend!” **Guy Bonner, Programs Coordinator, Idaho Youth ChalleNGe Academy**



Background

The Idaho Youth Challenge Academy (IDYCA), a division of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, is a transformative program that aims to give at-risk youth a second chance to become responsible and productive citizens by helping them improve their life skills, education levels, and employment potential. While the program was already achieving tremendous success in changing lives, its legacy technology presented obstacles to growth and efficiency.

IDYCA relied on an outdated Microsoft Access database to manage student records, requiring extensive manual data entry and duplicate processes. The paper-based application system made file completion slow and reviews cumbersome, as a single folder had to physically move from desk to desk. Communication and outreach efforts were also time-intensive, with staff relying on manual processes and years of Excel spreadsheets stored on individual computers.

Despite these challenges, the program's impact and mission remained undeniable. However, the leadership recognized that to expand their reach, streamline processes, and achieve ambitious new goals, they needed a modern platform to drive innovation and support their vision for the future.

The Vision

In early 2021, the former Director of Idaho's Youth ChalleNGe program envisioned a scalable, user-friendly technology to transform the daily operations and data reporting of National Guard ChalleNGe programs nationwide. That vision is now a reality with FolderWave—a dynamic platform designed to help programs thrive and grow.



Results and Impact

Since implementation, IDYCA has seen remarkable improvements in operational efficiency, data security, and user satisfaction.

- **Efficiency Gains:** Automated workflows and centralized data management eliminated redundancies, allowing staff to focus on recruiting and counseling students.
- **Streamlined Admissions:** The online application portal improved accessibility and reduced barriers for prospective students, increasing application completion rates by 50% halfway through the cycle (as reported by leadership).
- **Enhanced Reporting:** Program-specific data collection allows for targeted reporting, including federal RAND and Data Call reports.
- **Proactive Communication:** A well-structured email flow reduced the volume of parent inquiries, shifting staff efforts from reactive to proactive engagement.
- **Data Security:** Advanced encryption and compliance with federal standards ensured data remained protected.
- **Scalability:** The system's modular design provides a scalable model for other state and federal programs.

Client Testimonial

"FolderWave has allowed us to gather Admissions, Residential, and Post-Residential information and place it in a "one-stop-shop" digital database. We are impressed with the ability to gain a clear and concise picture of the state of Admissions at any point in the admissions process while allowing staff to have accurate, up-to-date information that is readily available. Additionally, having

information at our fingertips has been invaluable in intervening quickly during cadet crisis moments. Finally, the task of updating Post-Residential contacts/placement, the efficiency of data extracts/reports, the ability to prepare for and receive an NGB Audit, as well as the capacity to cross-communicate with our Mentor Pro alumni app has proven to be a game-changing development that has revolutionized the way data is collected. The FolderWave team is regularly in contact to continue pioneering this path forward and adapting to fit the needs of the ChalleNGe family nationwide. We are ever grateful for FolderWave and its innovation.” **Melissa Brouwers**,
Interim Director, Idaho Youth ChalleNGe Academy

The Solution

In October 2021, FolderWave was selected as the technology partner to bring this vision to life. The team collaborated closely with IDYCA to implement a robust, cloud-based Student Management Database System tailored to their specific needs while also laying the groundwork for growth.

Key components of the FolderWave solution included:

- **Paperless Case Management System:** A secure, always-available, accessible-anywhere platform that streamlined workflows, reduced paper use, and ensured seamless information sharing. Each phase of the cycle is clearly defined, from recruitment to enrollment to post-residential and past alumni.
- **Online Application Portal:** Simplified the admissions process by allowing students and parents to submit applications, upload documents, and track progress in real time.
- **Custom Reporting Tools:** Automated reports provided critical insights for federal (RAND and Data Call) and state-level reporting requirements.
- **Role-Based Security:** Ensured appropriate access for staff while safeguarding sensitive personally identifiable information (PII) and personal health information (PHI).
- **Integrated Communication Flow:** A strategic email communication system that supported recruitment and enrollment, cutting down on phone calls and inquiries. This allowed staff to focus on engaging with youth and their families.
- **Legacy Data Migration:** Historical student records were migrated seamlessly to ensure continuity and preserve institutional knowledge.

A Model for the Future

FolderWave’s technology and business process services empower organizations like IDYCA to achieve their strategic vision. By streamlining every aspect of the enrollment journey—from recruitment to enrollment to alumni tracking—FolderWave supports programs in aligning their operations with long-term goals.

Looking ahead, IDYCA plans to build on its success by further increasing its enrollment numbers and leveraging the platform to support the growth of Youth Challenge and add a Job Challenge program.