

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation cuts expense processing time from 1 week to 4 hours with PEX



About Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving Grandfather Mountain, one of North Carolina's most treasured natural landmarks. Established as a foundation in 2009, following decades of operation as a for-profit business, the organization operates animal habitats, a museum and the famous Mile High Swinging Bridge while serving as a nature park and preserve that educates visitors about conservation and the natural world. The foundation focuses on environmental stewardship and educational outreach in the scenic but rural Avery County region and beyond.

REDUCED EXPENSE PROCESSING TIME BY
95%

FASTER MONTH-END CLOSE AND BOARD REPORTING
Streamlined financial reporting

INSTANTLY ADJUST SPENDING LIMITS AND PROVIDE EMERGENCY FUND ACCESS
Enhanced operational flexibility

"Going from a week and a half to four hours for expense processing has been amazing. I love that I have way more control - if someone needs a boost or we run out of funds, I can handle that instantly. You never know when someone's going to need new equipment or when a new opportunity might pop up for the staff and a purchase needs to be made immediately."

Brittany Simeon, Financial Controller, Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, contracted through Fair Isle Advisors

The challenge

As financial controller, Brittany managed the foundation's expenses across multiple departments during peak tourist season, processing \$30K to \$40K in monthly credit card payments. The organization faced several critical challenges with their previous credit card system. The foundation was managing 25+ individual credit card statements each month, requiring approval from each department manager before expenses could be processed. This created a lengthy bottleneck that delayed financial reporting to the board. Each statement required manual tax extraction since the nonprofit recovers sales tax from North Carolina, compounding the difficulty of an already inefficient process. Processing expenses took 1.5 weeks for Brittany, every month. Hurricane Helene highlighted the need for the team to get funds quickly - damaged infrastructure hampered access to funds and staff support during the critical situation.

The foundation needed a solution that could provide real-time expense visibility, streamline tax processing, and give administrators better control over spending limits while ensuring staff could access funds when emergencies arose in their mountain location.

The solution

The Grandfather Mountain team chose PEX for its ability to provide immediate expense visibility and administrative control while solving their unique geographic and operational challenges.

They started with PEX Prepaid Expense, then transitioned to PEX Credit Expense, using both strategically to meet the needs of a nonprofit in a remote location. They rely on credit cards for daily operations and keep prepaid cards on hand for emergencies.

Real-time visibility allows Brittany to monitor transactions as they happen and adjust spending limits instantly when staff need funds for unexpected purchases like safety equipment or emergency supplies. This flexibility is especially important for a mountain-based nonprofit where operational needs can shift quickly.

PEX's integration with Aplos uploads transactions nightly, eliminating manual data entry. Brittany can now extract tax information per transaction rather than sifting through bulk monthly statements, making tax recovery and reporting much more efficient.

To meet compliance and audit requirements, PEX offers receipt capture and expense categorization. These features help the foundation maintain the detailed records required for nonprofit status and board oversight.

The impact is significant. Instead of spending 1.5 weeks every month on processing expenses - reporting, providing access to funds, recording transactions, managing card statements and extracting tax information - now takes just four hours. That's a 95% reduction in processing time, giving Brittany and the foundation staff more time to focus on the organization's mission.

The results

By implementing PEX, the Grandfather Mountain finance team significantly improved its financial efficiency via:

95%
reduced expense processing time

Monthly expense processing that previously took a full 1.5 weeks now takes just four hours, even during peak summer season when card usage is highest.

Streamlined financial reporting

due to the direct integration with Aplos

Real-time transaction visibility and automated integration with Aplos enables faster month-end close and board reporting, critical for maintaining nonprofit transparency and governance requirements.

Enhanced operational flexibility

due to the ability to instantly adjust spending limits and provide emergency fund access

The ability to instantly adjust spending limits and provide emergency fund access proved invaluable during Hurricane Helene and continues to support the foundation's unpredictable operational needs in their remote mountain location.

