

# From Manual Review to Global Coordination

*How Access Now used OpenWater to streamline 1,800+ proposals and coordinate 500+ sessions*

## OVERVIEW

Access Now is an international human rights organization that defends and extends the digital rights of people and communities at risk. The organization hosts an annual global summit, RightsCon, focused on the intersection of technology and human rights, convening experts, advocates, policymakers, and technologists from over 150 countries.

The summit features 450+ sessions spanning 18 thematic tracks and is built through a fully community-sourced program that receives more than 1,600 proposals each year.

## PROBLEM

The RightsCon team oversaw their Call for Proposals manually with Google Forms and spreadsheets, but as submissions grew from under 800 to over 1,800, the process became increasingly difficult to manage.

Staff personally assigned reviews, collected feedback, and tracked data across disconnected files. They couldn't apply conditional logic, manage late proposals efficiently, or capture diversity metrics in one place. The manual system caused delays and inconsistencies, making it difficult to run a global, community-sourced summit at scale.

## AT A GLANCE



### INDUSTRY

Charity

### SOLUTIONS

OpenWater

### WEBSITE

[accessnow.org](https://accessnow.org)

“ *Before, everything was done manually. Now we receive, review, and communicate with submitters entirely within OpenWater.* ”

- Senior Program Coordinator at Access Now

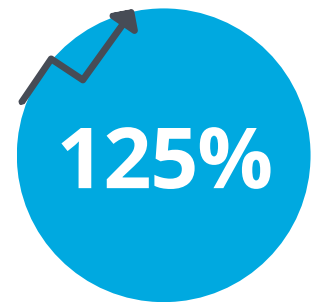
## SOLUTION

Access Now implemented OpenWater to centralize proposal intake, review, and communication for RightsCon. Staff assign proposals by region, apply conditional logic based on session type, and automate scoring and review workflows. More than 80 program committee members evaluate sessions within the platform, with feedback and ratings stored in one place.

Access Now also uses OpenWater to manage its Community Support Fund, visa invitation letters, and a speaker gallery, reducing manual coordination. All review stages, applicant data, and communications are handled within the system, improving accuracy and efficiency.

- ✓ **Centralized proposal intake** and review across 1,800+ submissions.
- ✓ **Automated** scoring and feedback from over 70 program committee members.
- ✓ **Consolidated** all communication with applicants into a single platform.
- ✓ **Reduced errors** and saved time by eliminating spreadsheet-based workflows.
- ✓ **Enabled real-time tracking** of diversity metrics and reviewer input.

## THE IMPACT



**Increase in Proposal Intake Without Increasing Staff**



**Reviewers Rated the Process as Easy**



**Improved Reporting Accuracy and Reduced Data Loss Risk**

“ *Each year we incorporate new programs - OpenWater scales with us as we grow.* ”

- Senior Program Coordinator at Access Now