

Ohio Arts Council



Moving the Ohio Arts Council to a sustainable, future-ready grants management solution

“As a [grants management system] that could grow with us, [SmartSimple] struck the perfect balance between being easy to use and still being nuanced enough to handle how we do things... SmartSimple allows us to be nimble and won’t ever hold us back from executing big ideas or initiatives.”

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About the Ohio Arts Council

The Ohio Arts Council is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically. It supports creative expression for artists, organizations, students, educators, and for the public across its communities. The Council ensures that the arts enhance quality of life, enrich education, build Ohio’s economy, and tell our stories.

The Challenge

As a medium-sized arts granting organization, the Ohio Arts Council manages 1,000 to 1,200 grant awards at any given time, while reviewing an additional 1,000 new applications each year.

With the amount of volume that the Council had to review and process, they started looking early on for an online-based systems as a means of streamlining their processes. “We moved away from a paper-based system back in 2005 and were one of the early adopters among state arts agencies to use an online system,” says Dan Katona, Deputy Director of the Ohio Arts Council. “Online systems for grants management were so new [at the time]. It was a really exciting time for us to get involved in such an interesting process.”

The Council’s first system was a custom one, but after 10 years they found that their system wasn’t keeping up with the times or growing with the organization. “Since the system had been custom-built, it was going to take a significant amount of money to update. So much had changed in both the arts and technology landscapes, and what we had just wasn’t meeting our needs anymore.”

Looking for a grants management system that could grow and evolve with the changing times, Dan and his team started their search, and that’s when they found SmartSimple GMS360°.

Selecting SmartSimple

“Right from the start, we were very impressed with both the balance of functionality and power that were the guts of the system,” continues Dan. “Not only was what [SmartSimple] could do impressive, it was user-friendly, accessible and we could work with it without requiring us to hire programmers. We’re a small team without a lot of technical expertise, but we got the training we needed from the SmartSimple team to be able to manage the system ourselves. **As a platform that could grow with us, it struck the perfect balance between being easy to use and still being nuanced enough to handle how we do things.**”

Working with SmartSimple

It had been a long time since they’d really analyzed their granting process, so the team took their time reorganizing how they managed and administered their procedures. “It was great working with the SmartSimple team during this time. They really helped us review and

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revise how we did things, giving us some very intelligent changes and fixes. We discovered things along the way we'd never thought of and were so glad to have the level of support we did."



Feedback from all the Council's users has also been unanimously positive. "Applicants and grantees are reporting the system is really easy to use and functions smoothly. (We've also been impressed with the security of SmartSimple's system). We're not dealing in state secrets, but a big concern for artists is intellectual property; knowing their work is protected and their identities are safe, so a robust and secure site is a big deal for us."

"As a steward of public dollars, we need to be aware and accountable for how and where we spend our money. SmartSimple is very reasonably priced since we only pay for what we use. We are glad to be able to share that we are being responsible with taxpayer funds."

"SmartSimple truly is an infinitely customizable system that makes our work better. We can make changes quickly, tally up information for reports at a moment's notice, and get funding dollars out the door without spending weeks and months getting programmers to set

everything up for us. SmartSimple allows us to be nimble and won't ever hold us back from executing big ideas or initiatives."

About GMS360°

SmartSimple's GMS360° is a robust, end-to-end grants management system that gives you the ability to oversee the entire granting process from the initial call for proposals to tracking acceptance letters and awards. A cloud-based platform, GMS360° offers seamless collaboration between your organization and all associated stakeholders. From data collection and analysis, to fully trackable and reportable options for all your information, the GMS360° system can streamline your grants management process.

About SmartSimple

SmartSimple is a SaaS (Software as a Service) provider specializing in process automation. A cloud-based platform, SmartSimple's technology gives you the ability to track all your data and build automated processes that suit the needs of your organization. Endlessly configurable with highly flexible tracking and reporting features, SmartSimple provides a personalized system that meets your unique business needs; we work with you to create your system, your way.

SmartSimple saves you time and resources – no more printing and shipping of reviewer documentation, applicant communications or board reports. Everything can be created, managed and stored online, making it accessible from anywhere through individualized user portals. That means your community members only see what they need to see in the way you want them to see it.

To learn more, request a demo

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