



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

### Synopsis

The Ohio Arts Council decided to get a custom-built system to manage the up to 2,000 awards they handle at a time. After 10 years, however, the system was dated and they needed a platform that was flexible, able to change as arts granting processes and practices did. SmartSimple provided complete configurability, a high level of transparency and the powerful security they needed to meet their complex reporting needs and protection for the proprietary information that flows through their system.

### Key Stats

**Client Name:** Ohio Arts Council

**SmartSimple Client Since:** 2014

**Type of Giving:** Grants

**Dollars Granted:** \$13 million since 2015

**Old System:** Custom

**Key Pain Points:** An outdated system requiring an extensive overhaul that was going to be very expensive to upgrade.

**New System Must-Haves:** Complete operational transparency, robust reporting capabilities, a high level of security and ease of use for staff and applicants.



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*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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*Dan Katona  
Deputy Director, Ohio Arts Council*

## 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 cities and towns. The Council ensures that the arts enhance quality of life, enrich education, build Ohio's economy, and tell stories of communities.

## In the beginning

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 volume of information the Council had to review and process, they started looking early on for an online-based system as a means of consolidating 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."

## A limited custom-built system no longer meeting their needs

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 Revere Arts.

"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."

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Ohio Arts Council is hosted on Amazon Web Services

## An opportunity to update and integrate processes

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 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.**"

In particular, the Council enjoyed working with SmartSimple President, Cameron McLean, and Systems Solutions Architect, Bob Longworth. "Cameron and Bob were great to work with," adds Dan. "They never told us they couldn't do what we asked for and they never made change requests seem like they were unreasonable. Even when we transitioned [from Implementation to Support], we were never made to feel like our questions were too trivial or that we were asking too much."

## A well-received solution

Feedback from all the Council's users has also been overwhelmingly 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 configurable 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."



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## About SmartSimple

SmartSimple is a global leader in cloud-based automation software, offering unique process solutions used by over 250 clients in more than 192 countries. Some of the largest companies in the Fortune 100, as well as global foundations and government agencies, choose SmartSimple to enrich their impact story and create greater efficiencies in their granting processes.

## About Revere Arts

SmartSimple's grants management solution, Revere Arts, is an intelligent IT solution designed specifically for arts and cultural funding agencies. Some of the largest funders at the state and federal level put Revere Arts to work to support their investments and take charge of every aspect of their granting.

While no two funders are alike, Revere Arts has the flexibility to address any unique need – transforming how you award grants. Intuitive dashboards and a host of visualization options bring focus to outcomes reporting, giving meaningful intelligence to your impact story.

SmartSimple's commitment to making processes work better and freeing arts agencies to do more good goes beyond the technologies we create – it's at the very heart of our business. We strive to push the limits on the most complex process challenges in granting; putting our clients first and delivering innovative solutions that exceed your grants management needs.

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**Michael Reid**  
Co-Founder, Chief Operating Officer  
SmartSimple



SmartSimple  
interacts with over  
**60,000** unique users  
a month from almost  
**250** organizations  
in more than  
**192** countries.

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## Discover more.

Contact us to request a demo that's tailored to your granting needs.

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