

Irving Harris Foundation



How the Irving Harris Foundation elevated their customer support service offerings through a modernized Grants Management System.

At a Glance

Prior to switching to SmartSimple Cloud for Grants Management, Irving Harris Foundation had been steadily seeing their fees rise with their previous solution, Microedge GIFTS, yet these higher fees did not translate into a better customer experience. The Foundation wanted an improved, online solution for their expanding staff. GIFTS price points were unreasonable and their solutions were below average.

By moving to SmartSimple Cloud, Irving Harris Foundation experienced dramatic improvements in service delivery by opting for its Premium Support Services offering. The Foundation was also able to modernize their antiquated paper-based processes with automated workflows and realize significant efficiency gains with features such as online document signing.

SmartSimple client since: 2013

Type of giving: Family Foundation

Dollars granted: Between \$10-15 million annually

Old system: MicroEdge GIFTS

SmartSimple product/services:

- [SmartSimple Cloud for Grants Management](#)
- [Premium Support](#)

Key pain points:

- Over-reliance on manual processes
- Limited functionality of an old and dated system
- No integration capabilities
- Declining customer support

New system must-haves:

- Easy to use online application for grantees
- A true content management system
- More responsive customer support
- A central repository for data
- Easy file sharing capabilities

“The more we use the system the better the team here feels about SmartSimple Cloud. Everyone is finding the automated workflows much more efficient than our manual process ever was. Foundations are typically slow to get with the times, but now I feel like I’m way ahead of the curve.”

June Matayoshi
Grants Manager



Irving Harris Foundation is a SmartSimple Cloud user

Request a demo and learn more about SmartSimple Cloud for Grants Management at www.smartsimple.com

About Irving Harris Foundation

Irving Harris Foundation is a small family foundation based in Chicago. They provide grants to not-for-profit organizations focused on enhancing early childhood, reproductive health & justice, arts & culture, Jewish culture and social justice.

Their mission is to enhance the quality of life for children, families and communities by advancing human potential, social justice, equality, creative experience and expression. They invest in initiatives that focus on the healthy social emotional development and well-being of young children and their families through community vitality and creative development.

Increasing costs put pressure on the Foundation to find another solution

The team at Irving Harris Foundation had been using GIFTS since the early 1990s. “Back then, there were only two users, and since our grants were donor-advised there was no need for reviewers,” says June Matayoshi, Grants Manager.

When GIFTS was purchased by Vista Equity Partners however, things began to really change. “Suddenly our fees were going up for no real reason we could see, and they were pushing us to go with GIFTS Online. They were still building the system and we could already see that it wouldn’t be able to meet our needs.”



With a wide range of grants management systems now available in the market, June and her colleagues decided to look around for an alternative. “We were seeing more and more foundations going online and we wanted to keep up with the times. We had an increase in program staff and things were getting unwieldy and more difficult to track. Everything was everywhere, coming in on paper, by fax and email.”

The Foundation brought in a consultant to help them sift through all available options and bring forward the grants management systems they wanted their team to look at. “We considered Fluxx, but many didn’t like how it looked, and FoundationConnect was much too complex for our needs. We looked at GIFTS Online again, and it was just under par. The switch would have been unreasonably expensive too.”

“SmartSimple Cloud had a clean, simple look, and that was a big draw for our staff. We were very excited by the potential we could see for us by choosing SmartSimple Cloud.”

Moving to an online platform

The transition from a desktop and paper-based system to a completely automated, online platform took some time, and there were some challenges along the way. “We thought we’d just transfer our information to SmartSimple Cloud and go, but moving from paper to online takes a bit more work. Fortunately, the SmartSimple team found solutions for us to get the data we needed in the right format to eventually switch everything over to our new platform.”

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Grants Manager

While the transfer of data didn’t go as smoothly as they would have liked, SmartSimple’s post-implementation support won the Irving Harris team over. “The move from implementation to support was excellent. We were really made to feel like we were starting a new relationship rather than just another business contract.

We decided to go with Premium Support Services as our support option and I have to say it’s priceless. We have an amazing Dedicated Support Representative who is always willing to help us with anything we need.”

Extending system capabilities with integration paves the way to greater efficiencies

Irving Harris Foundation’s Dedicated Support Representative helped them find efficiencies through their automated workflows, as well as getting them set up to use Signority, an online document signing platform and one of many that integrate with SmartSimple Cloud. “The ability to integrate directly with an online document signing program has been a massive benefit to our overall process. We used to have to print, scan, fax, and email every contract, so Signority has been one of the biggest process improvements for us.”

“Signority means I can manage year-end much more effectively because contracts are sent back to us so quickly. Our team has managed to cut overall contract processing in half, saving a significant amount of time. The automated reminders are a huge advantage - no more having to chase people down to get their signatures.”

“The more we use the platform, the better the team here feels about SmartSimple Cloud. Everyone is finding the automated workflows much more efficient than our manual process ever was. Foundations are typically slow to get with the times, but now I feel like I’m way ahead of the curve. It’s hard to believe I ever managed all the work I had to do using paper documents and faxes. I would absolutely recommend SmartSimple Cloud to any organization stuck in a paper process rut.” ●

