

Indian River Community Foundation

Indian River Community Foundation (IRCF) was established in 2008 with a mission of building a better community through donor-driven philanthropy. Indian River's business is philanthropy, and its main products are the charitable giving accounts established by its clients. It serves its partners in philanthropy in three ways:

- giving through donor advised funds
- creating a charitable legacy through permanent endowments
- using philanthropic capital entrusted to it to find, fund and follow charitable organizations, programs and projects that make the Indian River community better

An Increase of Over 44%



The Challenge

IRCF ended its 10th fiscal year in June of 2018 with \$70 million in 175 charitable giving accounts. By then, IRCF and its clients had awarded more than \$66 million in grants, mostly to nonprofit charitable organizations located in Indian River County, Florida. While one of the fastest growing new community foundations in the country, however, IRCF's operating budget was still not breaking even requiring use of cash reserves to supplement operating income from fees on assets under management. IRCF needed to increase its revenue from contributions to its operating fund in addition to fees on assets under management.

By this time, IRCF had also become one of the most knowledgeable philanthropic resources in its community. Often nonprofit organizations would come to them with needs to see if their donors would be interested in funding them. IRCF also needed to increase its revenue from contributions to a grantmaking fund in order to respond to these increasing requests from local charities.

The Rescigno's Solution

Partnering with Rescigno's, they created a direct mail annual fund program with 3 goals: to raise awareness about the Foundation and the good accomplished through its clients' funding projects; to attract new clients who were interested in philanthropy; to fund more small projects for nonprofits through an annual fund.

Our goals were to increase visibility and generate interest in establishing new accounts and possibly new donations to the grantmaking fund and to build a prospect pool for the foundation for long-term sustainable growth.

To accomplish these goals, Rescigno's partnered with Indian River to create an acquisition program to feed their new annual fund program.

In the first year, we mailed to purchased lists that consisted of high-income residents from the local area, current account holders, better giving donors, and internal prospects. Each year we increased the mailing list, widening our prospect pool.

In year three, after consistently acquiring new donors, Rescigno's worked with IRCF on donor retention and loyalty by increasing the communication with impact reports and postcards. With this communication, IRCF was able to explain to donors how their gifts are making a real difference for individuals and organizations in their community.

This program now serves as a strong foundation for long-term sustainable growth.

The Rescigno's Difference

By developing a consistent donor acquisition program, Indian River, working with Rescigno's, was able to grow their donations by **32% in the first year** and **10% in the second year** for a **total of a 44% increase in donations by year three**. They have brought in **\$28,170 and 13 new donors** through purchased lists, and by year three the program was raising sufficient unrestricted dollars to cover the organization's operating shortfall.

By applying a consistent plan and messaging, including the impact of giving over the last three years, Indian River learned that it often takes four to six direct mail/communication pieces before an individual sends in a gift. That's why it is so important to understand that acquisition is investment that more than pays for itself with the proper attention to "after the gift is received" donor retention strategies.

"Rescigno's understood the unique needs of IRCF as a community foundation as compared to the needs of a typical nonprofit charitable organization. Their team of annual fund experts helped us develop and implement a plan for raising more money to support our community foundation's operations and grant-making activities. They have helped us to improve our financial stability while building our own team's capacity for operating a successful annual fund. I am extremely grateful for this partnership."

Jeffrey R. Pickering
President and CEO
Indian River Community Foundation