

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Los Angeles Regional Food Bank



“This influx of money has changed the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, not just for this moment, but for the future.”

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—Roger Castle, Chief Development Officer

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank saw a COVID-related surge in giving, with over 62,000 new donors in 2020—15 times more new donors than the previous year. For Chief Development Officer Roger Castle, the opportunity to identify and prioritize prospects for major gifts was unmistakable. With wealth and modeling insights from Blackbaud, his growing team acted decisively and secured an increase in major gift dollars of more than 450%.

Los Angeles Regional Food Bank leverages data intelligence to swiftly pinpoint high-priority donor prospects for major gifts

If Los Angeles County could be its own state, it would be the 10th most populous state in America, with 10 million residents, many of them in need.

“LA is very affluent, but we also have lots of people who go to bed hungry,” said Chief Development Officer Roger Castle of the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, one of the largest food bank operations in the U.S. “Even before the pandemic, hunger or food insecurity was a significant problem with 1 in 5 people in the county considered food insecure.”

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank is powered by Blackbaud solutions for:

- ✓ Predictive Modeling
- ✓ Prospect Research
- ✓ Data Enrichment Services
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Fundraising and Relationship Management
- ✓ Merchant Services

With Blackbaud’s flagship cloud solutions for fundraising and online marketing firmly in place, LA Regional Food Bank stepped up and into the spotlight to answer the COVID crisis. Annual giving revenue jumped 358% in 2020 and remained 183% higher in 2021 than 2019 as the Food Bank increased its reach of people helped from 300,000 to 900,000 each month—a number that persisted through the pandemic.

An influx of new donors played a key role in making it possible. “We saw 62,738 new donors in 2020,” Castle said. “To put that in comparison, in 2019, we acquired 4,271 new donors.”

Yet LA Regional Food Bank’s development team also saw an opportunity for long-range impact by retaining large numbers of donors and identifying those who were most likely to give major gifts, including support for a \$165 million, five-year comprehensive campaign already underway. To make the most of the opportunity, they needed the right set of data intelligence tools—and they needed to act fast.



“Timing is everything in fundraising. Using Blackbaud data insights to prioritize who might need more than an invite to a Zoom call was a top priority.”

—Roger Castle,
Chief Development Officer



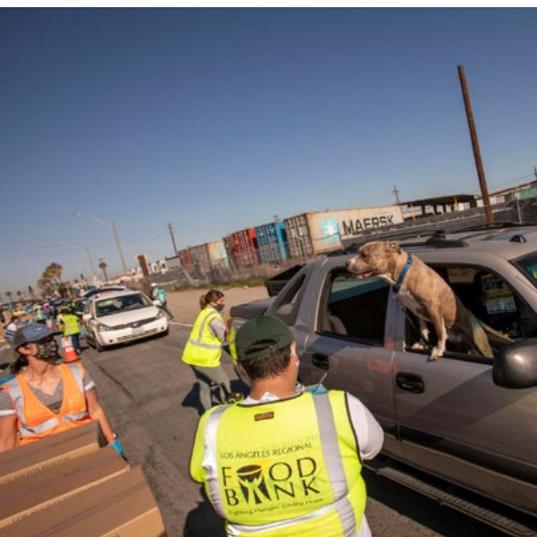
A Believer in Wealth Insights

The answer was clear to Castle: Blackbaud’s wealth insights, along with the strategic guidance of Blackbaud consultants, would allow his team to move swiftly and effectively and would integrate with the other cloud-based solutions LA Regional Food Bank already relied on. “I’m a huge believer in wealth analytics, and I’ve used Blackbaud products for about 20 years now.”

Given the LA Regional Food Bank’s size and easy opportunities to involve entertainment superstars, Castle’s situation might not seem fully relatable to everyone in fundraising. One favorite celebrity moment of his came when Dave Grohl rallied other members of the Foo Fighters to stage a rock show and barbecue in the Food Bank parking lot. But Castle, who is originally from Tennessee, has also worked with muscular dystrophy and cancer foundations, and before he joined the Food Bank as chief development officer in 2017, he spent much of his career in nonprofits working in database administration.

He encourages all nonprofits to consider wealth screening—no matter the moment or the size of the organization. In fact, when he first started at LA Regional Food Bank, he used Blackbaud tools to do wealth screenings that helped green light and set the stage for their \$165 million comprehensive campaign, though the screenings were on a smaller scale than what the Food Bank has pursued during COVID-19.

“Really, the prospects are already there in your database,” Castle said. “Wealth screening is a great way to bring the cream to the top.”





With the success of a \$165 million comprehensive campaign, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank could add a 256-square-foot building to boost programs, efficiency, and storage capacity.

Timing is Everything

LA Regional Food Bank implemented data insights from Blackbaud early in the COVID crisis during June of 2020. Using predictive modeling with guidance from Blackbaud’s seasoned consultants, the development team soon created a list of 2,000 top major gift prospects, culled from a growing database of more than 300,000 supporters, and as the pandemic continued, they expanded the list to 3,000.

“Timing is everything in fundraising,” Castle said. “Using Blackbaud data insights to prioritize who might need more than an invite to a Zoom call was a top priority.”

Based on the “sheer volume and capacity” of those high-priority listings, and the fundraising momentum his team gained before the pandemic, he made a compelling case to the CEO to add two more development positions to cultivate and steward major gifts. In 2022, the Food Bank also expected to hire a planned giving director to cultivate and steward those who exhibit indicators of planned giving propensity.

Castle was confident the return on investment would be well worth it, and while securing major gifts can be a long-game endeavor, the move has already yielded early results.

The Food Bank already had a major gifts program, but with their new use of analytics and the new hires, major gifts revenue rose from \$3.1 million in 2019 to an annual average of \$17.3 million the next two years, including 11 \$1 million+ gifts to the Food Bank’s \$165 million comprehensive campaign.

Because of the all-around success of the campaign, the five-year campaign will be completed in 2022, a full year ahead of schedule.

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3,000

top major gift prospects pinpointed



3

staff positions added for major gifts and planned giving



450%+

increase in major gift dollars



11

\$1 million+ gifts in 2 years



Thankful They Were Prepared

There's a line in the 2001 film *Spy Game* that resonates with Castle in which the character played by Robert Redford asks, "When did Noah build the Ark?" and answers his own question: "Before the rain."

Even before the pandemic, Castle pushed his team to make technological advances that included migrating to the intuitive cloud-based solution Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT® from an earlier generation of Blackbaud fundraising and relationship management software. And with his leadership, the food bank fully implemented Blackbaud Luminate Online® to boost engagement through online fundraising and marketing automation.

"We put all these new systems in place before this deluge of new donors came in," Castle explained.

Using Raiser's Edge NXT in concert with Luminate Online and now Blackbaud's data insights has been a powerful combination for the LA Regional Food Bank, allowing the development team to finely tune email messages to giving levels and audiences, including volunteers. In fact, the team increased the number of email sends to donors from five to almost 90 in the first year of the pandemic, "but we're not sending to everybody, every time."



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The impact of their overall fundraising success is tangible. In fulfilling their \$165 million goal for Building Hope: The Campaign for a Brighter Future, LA Regional Food Bank could acquire a 256-square-foot building for expansion of programs as well as increased efficiency and storage capacity—needs heightened by the pandemic.

"This influx of money has changed the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, not just for this moment, but for the future," Castle said. "This new building that we'll be able to renovate will increase our capacity two-or three-fold, and that means a lot more food getting out to the community and the people that need it."

Work smarter and secure more major gifts.

[Learn more](#)

About Blackbaud

Blackbaud (NASDAQ: BLKB) is the world's leading cloud software company powering social good. Serving the entire social good community—nonprofits, higher education institutions, K-12 schools, healthcare organizations, faith communities, arts and cultural organizations, foundations, companies, and individual change agents—Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, data intelligence, and expertise. Learn more at www.blackbaud.com.