

# CROWDFUNDING AT USC

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## EXPECTATIONS

A team must fill out the [crowdfunding application](#) and be approved before a crowdfunding project can be created. Applications will be reviewed for approval by a formed committee of university-affiliated individuals. Applications become inactive 90 days after submission, but the application may be resubmitted.

### A crowdfunding project should have:



- A **story** with a compelling need that explains the purpose behind the project.
- A **team**, including a project leader and project champions, that helps set up and promote the project.
- A **crowd** of constituents you believe will help fund the project. (Who will you email? How many followers/friends do your social media accounts have?)

There are three phases to a crowdfunding campaign. The team must commit to working on a project for a period of about **10-12 weeks**, depending on the length of the team's campaign, and should be located at the University of South Carolina for the duration of that project.



- **Quiet Phase** — **4-6 weeks** of creating content and a marketing schedule and time for review by the Office of Annual Giving. At this time, it is recommended to get a few lead donors prior to the active phase.
- **Active Phase** — **30-45 days** of active solicitation via email, text and social media.
- **Post-Project Phase** — Anywhere from **three to nine months** of thank yous and updates

The following material and information must be created and collected by the crowdfunding project team prior to the launch of the project. This material can be gathered prior to the crowdfunding project being approved.

- Set a goal (dollars raised or donors participating) and a timeline for how long the project should last.
- Identify one or more lead donors who will commit gifts at the start of the project.
- Decide any perks or prizes for those who give to your project, if applicable.
- Develop an outreach and communications plan to reach potential donors.
- Develop a gift stewardship plan to thank your donors and keep them updated.
- Create content such as images, a project description, a video, etc.

During the process of crowdfunding, the **Office of Annual Giving will help teams in the following ways:**

- Train the team to use the university's crowdfunding platform.
- Teach basic development skills and knowledge.
- Refine the communications plan to potential and current donors.
- Provide dimensions and materials needed to create the crowdfunding project.
- Answer questions related to the crowdfunding project during the three phases of a crowdfunding campaign.

## POLICY

**All crowdfunding activities at South Carolina must be coordinated and conducted using Annual Giving's crowdfunding platform** unless expressly permitted by the Office of Annual Giving. The Office of Research's Experiment platform is exempt from this policy.

- A. Anyone wishing to conduct a crowdfunding project must notify their department's development office prior to submitting an application. If an application is received without a development officer's knowledge, Annual Giving will connect the parties as appropriate.
- B. A committee of development professionals from across campus will review crowdfunding projects monthly as needed. The committee reserves the right to decline applications that do not meet the criteria of a successful project.
- C. All dollars raised must be deposited into a University Foundations account.
- D. Donors to each project are donors to the University of South Carolina and are subject to university stewardship and cultivation efforts.
- E. Crowdfunding users must be part of the South Carolina community via an academic department, student group or other official entity. Crowdfunding projects must support the university's overall mission: the education of the state's citizens through teaching, research, creative activity and community engagement.
  - a. The funds raised must be used as stated in the crowdfunding project's description.
  - b. The team or the use of funds cannot violate any existing university policies or promote illegal behavior.
  - c. If the crowdfunding team members are students, the funds cannot be used in a way that violates the university's Student Code of Conduct.
  - d. At this time, a student group may only use the crowdfunding platform if they are considered an Associated Student Organization as classified by the Department of Student Life.

## DELIVERABLES CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Project name**
- ☐ **Goal amount** — Be prepared to share how and why you arrived at that specific goal amount, with the understanding that Annual Giving may change the goal.
- ☐ **Project tile image** to identify your project on the crowdfunding platform (at least 300x170 pixels and less than 4MB)
- ☐ **Project main image** for project page (at least 606x343 pixels and less than 4MB)
- ☐ Carousel image(s), optional (at least 606x343 pixels and less than 4MB)
- ☐ A video, optional (must be a link available through YouTube or Vimeo)
- ☐ A **project description** for the project page
- ☐ **Short description** (160 characters or less) to identify your project on the crowdfunding platform
- ☐ **Project Leaders** — those who will need access to the back end of the website
  - First and last name
  - Email
- ☐ Project Owners — individuals featured on the main page, four maximum, optional
  - First and last name
  - Photography (optional, 100x100 pixels)
  - Title (optional)
  - Short biography (optional)
- ☐ **Examples of impact** at each giving level (e.g., \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250, etc.)
  - Title
  - Brief description

## BEST PRACTICES

Projects typically raise between \$1,000-\$10,000 based on the team's reach and experience. If this is your first online fundraising campaign, **set a modest goal**. Setting a lower goal allows you to meet this threshold quickly and makes it more likely that people will want to join your successful campaign.

Avoid publicly launching your campaign at \$0. **Use your quiet phase to collect donations prior to your public launch.** Industry standard suggests securing 20-30 percent of your campaign goal before your public launch.

**Share the impact of donating** to potential donors in a short and compelling way. Explain the impact in a genuine way that anyone can understand (no high production material is required). **Language is key when asking for donations.** Make sure you tell people what you want from them: to donate to your crowdfunding project, not just to go to your project page. Also, using gifts, contributions or investments rather than donations or money are lighter alternatives that might work best for your potential donors.

About \$4 is raised for each email sent during a crowdfunding campaign. This means **don't be afraid to ask anybody you know who has a connection to you or your cause** through different mediums, like email, text messaging and social media. We typically suggest **20-30 contacts per member of your team**. You will also need to **ask more than once** during the beginning, middle and end of your campaign. Donor activity will typically be less during the middle of the campaign, so don't be discouraged by inactivity, and keep asking.

## GUIDE FOR PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project description is how you will communicate who you are, what you are raising money for and what the proceeds will be benefiting to anyone who visits your crowdfunding page. You want to include all important details of your project while sharing in a concise and easy-to-understand manner. Below are some great topics to discuss in your project description.



- **Who We Are** — Provide an organization or department description.
- **The Impact** — How will it affect students, the university, the community, etc.?
- **What Your Gifts Will Do** — Describe what the money will provide.
- **Call to Action** — Provide them with a task to do by asking them to give.
- **Share this Message** — Ask site visitors to email friends, family and colleagues and to post the link online.
- **Thanks for Your Support!** — Add a short message about the meaning of support.

When writing your project description, avoid using jargon and keep the language simple, so it is easy to read. On the internet, shorter is better. Avoid long paragraphs, and if you can say it in a more concise way, do it. **The most important things to include are who you are, what you are raising money for, why you are raising money and your CALL TO ACTION.**

Fun fact: You can also include images in your project description to break up the text.



**\$19.47**

The Historian

In honor of our first year in broadcast, your gift at this level will fund 8 days of ASCAP licensing.

**Contribute \$19.47**

**\$30**

The DJ

Your gift at this level will fund 12 days of ASCAP licensing.

**Contribute \$30**

**\$50**

The Avid Listener

Your gift at this level will fund 110 days of SESAC licensing.

**Contribute \$50**

**\$90.50**

The Frequency

A nod to our station's operating frequency, your gift at this level will fund 55 days of SoundExchange licensing.

**Contribute \$90.50**

## GUIDE FOR GIVING LEVELS & PERKS

Another way to share the impact of each gift is through giving levels or perks. You can use each giving level or perk to describe how a donation of that size can make an impact. Giving levels and perks live on the right column of a crowdfunding page next to the project description.

Levels is the most common set up among our crowdfunding projects. **At each giving level, you will need to provide a minimum giving amount (ex. \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250), title and brief description.**

Other projects may require perks, where there are prizes provided to donors who give at certain levels. The prizes should be a lot smaller than the amount of their donation. Some examples are T-shirts, stickers and socks. **If your team decides to incorporate perks, you will be responsible for providing the perks and sending them to donors.** You will also need to provide a minimum giving amount (ex. \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250), title and brief description for perks. For tax purposes and the coordination of perks for each donation, **we will need the total quantity of prizes, fair market value and estimated delivery for each perk.** Make sure to give perks to donors at the close of your campaign. If it is easier, you can give perks to donors during the campaign, too.

You can use the brief description for giving levels or perks to provide a specific example of what each giving amount can relatively supply. For example, \$500 could cover the cost of one student's travel expenses for a conference, so \$500 could be the giving amount at that level. This is a great way to share the impact of each donation. If you aren't sure of the impact of each giving amount, feel free to keep the description general or even the same for each level. For perks, make sure to state what the perk is in the brief description for each giving amount, where applicable.

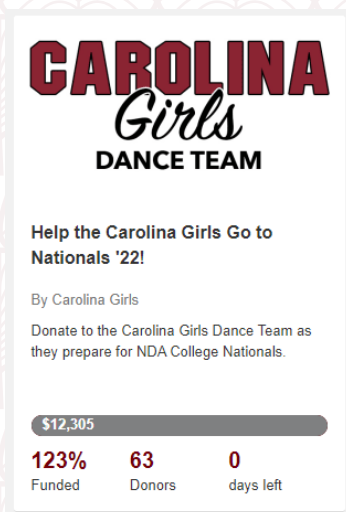
You can also have fun with the giving amounts, so they tie to important aspects of your project. For example, if your organization has been around for 30 years, you can make the title "30 Years of Service," and the giving level could be \$30.

## GUIDE FOR IMAGES/ VIDEO



**Project tile image** — This image identifies your project on the crowdfunding platform main page (crowdfunding.sc.edu) and will link to your project main page.

The image must be at least **300x170 pixels**, and the file size must be less than **4MB**.



**Project main image** — This is the primary image on your project page. This image will also be used as the social share image if another image isn't selected.

The image must be at least **606x343 pixels**, and the file size must be less than **4MB**.

**Carousel image(s)** — (optional) These are additional images to rotate with the project main image on your project page.

The image must be at least **606x343 pixels**, and the file size must be less than **4MB**.



**Social Share Image** — (optional) This image is used when sharing the site through Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn or through a link.

The image must be at least **600x315 pixels**, and the file size must be less than **4MB**.

## Cocky's Reading Express 2022

Thank you for your donation of \$5.00. Share the cause with your friends to amplify your impact.



Facebook

Twitter

LinkedIn

## Thank You Image

— (optional) This image appears on the confirmation page after a donor makes a gift on your crowdfunding site. No image will appear otherwise.

The image must be at least **606x343 pixels**, and the file size must be less than **4MB**.

## National Fellowships Support Fund



Share to Maximize  
IMPACT >



# \$5,255

105%

Raised toward our \$5,000 Goal  
23 Donors



PROJECT HAS ENDED

Project ended on March 15, at 11:59 PM EDT

> Project Owners



**Video(s)** — (optional but preferred) The video rotates with the project main image on your project page.

### **Tips for videos:**

- The video must be published on YouTube or Vimeo. Then the link can be added to Scalefunder with a preview of the video.
- The video should be about 60 to 90 seconds long. This is a great length to tell your story while keeping the audience's attention for the entirety of the video.
- The video should state who you are, what you are raising money for, why you are raising money and your call to action.
- You can film your video in a variety of ways. It doesn't have to be an over-the-top production. Use what you have or have access to use. The more personal the video feels, the better.
- It should also have visual interest or some way to hook your audience. Consider what works best for you. That might be images, multiple people, a compelling story or humor to get the audience interested in your story.

## **GUIDE FOR COMMUNICATIONS DURING CAMPAIGN**

An essential aspect of your crowdfunding campaign is your communication to potential donors. They will not know about your campaign unless someone tells them. Therefore, it is suggested that you create your communications plan prior to the start of your crowdfunding campaign.

You can communicate to potential donors through social media, email, text or whatever way works best for that audience.

Some helpful tips when creating your communications plan are:

- It is a good idea to send communications at the kickoff of the event, an update during the middle of the campaign, depending on the length of it, and a final push of your crowdfunding campaign.
- Personalize your communication based on your audience. This may require creating small lists within your contacts to send different communications.
- Keep the language simple and the communication concise.
- The most important parts in your communication are your call to action and being clear on how to give.
- Avoid using links other than the link to your crowdfunding project. You don't want your recipient to get distracted by other links and not get to your project page. If you want to provide links for people to learn more, put the additional links in your project description.

## **COMMUNICATIONS SAMPLES**

Below are some sample emails and text messages to use in communicating with anyone you are asking to give to your crowdfunding campaign at the start, middle and end of your campaign. Feel free to make them your own and personalize them for your campaign and audience.

**Start of the Campaign:** Provide an introduction of the campaign and information on how to give.



## Start of Campaign Email

Dear [recipient's preferred name],

I hope you are doing well! I wanted to let you know that I am raising money for [cause/project name], and I would appreciate your help in making our goal possible. We are trying to raise [goal amount] by [deadline/date] for [group name].

Every donation, no matter how small, helps us to reach our goal. We plan to use the money to [list goals for the money in as much detail as possible].

[Include a relevant or personal anecdote that relates to your campaign and/or goal.]

You can **donate** on our crowdfunding site today [make bolded word a hyperlink to campaign page]. Feel free to share it with others, too!

Thanks in advance for your support. Please let me know if you have any questions about my fundraising efforts or cause.

[Sincerely/Best/Thank you/etc.,

Your name]

## Start of Campaign Text Message



Hey! I wanted to let you know I am raising money for [cause/project name] and would appreciate your help. We are trying to raise [goal amount] by [deadline/date]. You can **donate** and learn more about what we are raising money for today [make bolded words a hyperlink to campaign page].

**Middle of the Campaign:** Share any updates from the campaign, and remind them to share the campaign with others.

## Middle of Campaign Email

Dear [recipient's preferred name],

As you have heard, I'm raising money for [cause/project name]. I wanted to give you an update that [we reached amount raised, percentage of goal, etc.].

I can't thank you enough for any support you and others have provided for this campaign! We are getting closer and could really use your help to get to [goal amount] by [deadline/date]. Here is how you can help:

**Donate** on our crowdfunding site today [make bolded word a hyperlink to campaign page].

Share this campaign on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

Send the campaign link to family and friends through emails and/or text messages.

Thanks in advance for your support. Please let me know if you have any questions about my fundraising efforts or cause.

[Sincerely/Best/Thank you/etc.,

Your name]

## Middle of Campaign Text Message



I just wanted to update you that [we reached amount raised, percentage of goal, etc.] for [cause/project name]! I could really use your help to get to [goal amount] by [deadline/date]. Please **donate** [make bolded word a hyperlink to campaign page] and share my campaign link with others to get me to my goal. Thanks!

**End of the Campaign:** Give a reminder of how many days you have left and how close you are to reaching your goal prior to the close of your campaign.

## End of Campaign Email

Dear [recipient's preferred name],

Thank you for your support so far! We have only [amount] days left until we close out our campaign for [cause/project]. We have currently raised [amount] but are trying to raise [goal amount] by [deadline/date].\*

If you have not done so yet, please consider giving a donation and asking others in your circle to do the same. We appreciate every donation, no matter the size, because it gets us closer to [list goals for the money].

You can **donate** on our crowdfunding site today [make bolded word a hyperlink to campaign page].

Thanks in advance for your support. Please let me know if you have any questions about my fundraising efforts or cause.

[Sincerely/Best/Thank you/etc.,

Your name]

*\*Only applicable if you have not reached your goal by the time of your final campaign email*

## End of Campaign Text Message



Thank you for your support so far! We have only [amount] days left until we close out our campaign for [cause/project]. Please consider **donating today** [make bolded word a hyperlink to campaign page]. I would appreciate any donation you can give.

## We're almost there!

April 01, 2022

Thank you to all who have donated!

We are at 71% of our goal and have five days left to hit the \$5,000 mark.

Currently, we have two students from The Daily Gamecock and two students from SGTV (they have their donation page [here](#)) in Minneapolis, MN to cover the NCAA Women's Final Four Tournament and your donation will help cover those expenses.

The majority of our funding comes from revenue, so a large expense like travel across the country has a big impact on the budget. We can make it happen, but your help can lessen the impact of the expense while allowing our staffers to cover a huge national story!

Please share with your networks if you can, we appreciate the support!



## GUIDE FOR UPDATES

Updates through Scalefunder are perfect for communicating with your current donors through email or providing information during your constantly changing campaign on your project page. Updates are typically short and can include a video (linked from YouTube or Vimeo) or an image.

A project update will post on the “Updates” tab available on the project page. You can make the update visible to anyone who is on the site or only those who donate. Scheduled updates are sent through email to all donors of your project who are in Scalefunder.

Updates are great for providing the progress of the campaign, a last-minute appeal, a thank you message, an announcement of a special gift, a special testimonial or anything else you might want potential or current donors to know.

Updates are optional but are a great way to keep your audience in the loop on the progress of your campaign.



## GUIDE FOR STEWARDSHIP COMMUNICATIONS

When you close out your campaign, stewardship is a required component in crowdfunding with the university. Stewardship is thanking donors and communicating the effectiveness of their giving. It is best to deliver the first stewardship communication within a week of the campaign. Any other stewardship or communication can be delivered within a year of the campaign and prior to any other giving efforts you may have.

Here are some ways to say thank you:



- Provide a personalized thank you video to donors.
- Send emails thanking donors for their gift.
- Write handwritten letters to donors.
- Send a personalized message to donors who give over a certain dollar amount.
- Post a thank you update on your project page.
- Post a thank you message on social media.
- Send a text or call donors you have a personal relationship with.

Here are some ways to keep donors informed:



- Share the results of your campaign with donors.
- Tell donors what impact was made through their gift (e.g., how many students were helped through the money raised?).
- Provide anecdotal stories from those who benefited from their donation.
- Share an update of the dollars in use (e.g., share about the trip that was funded through the dollars raised).

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Annual Giving at [scgiving@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:scgiving@mailbox.sc.edu).