



Crowdfunding Platform

Planning Accelerator

This planning guide is designed to help you build a solid foundation for a successful crowdfunding platform in your community. You'll assemble your team, refine your vision and create strategies to connect and empower your community.

Special thank you to Community Funded for providing information for this workbook.



Community Funded Platform Planning Accelerator v0.3.1



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The Glossary

Campaign Creator: The individual or team that initiates and runs a crowdfunding campaign.

Community: A group of people who share a common bond and who are able to collaborate. Your Community is bigger than your geographic location, it is a web of connections spreading across the world.

Crowdfunding Campaign: A fundraising event that usually spans about 30 days and is conducted on a crowdfunding platform such as The Local Crowd. The premise is that lots of people contribute small amounts of money.

Crowdfunding Platform: A crowdfunding website(s) and associated pages, assets, integrations and operating procedures. The Local Crowd is a Crowdfunding Platform.

The Local Crowd Platform: A set of tools, resources and support that allows your organization to run online fundraising campaigns.

(Your Community) Crowdfunding Platform: Your specific locally-branded webpage (with a unique url) where campaigns can be submitted, discovered and funded.

Host Organization: The Organization that has officially entered into an agreement to bring The Local Crowd platform to the community.

Review Chain: The process of approval that a crowdfunding campaign goes through before being publicly launched on your platform.

Super Admin: An admin who is able to access and manage their specific Platform. The Super Admin is usually a member of the Host Organization.

Curators & Advisors (Admins): An admin who is able to access and manage specific portions of their platform / campaigns (with privileges determined by the Super Admin.)

Stakeholder: A person, group or demographic that has a vested interest in or a passion for your crowdfunding platform.

Uber Admin: An admin who is able to access and manage every part of the platform – including all portals and users in the network. The Local Crowd is the Uber Admin for the demonstration sites.

The Foundation: Cornerstones for Success

Bringing a crowdfunding platform to your community is an entrepreneurial exercise involving many of the same steps that must be considered when launching any successful enterprise. Let's focus on the basic elements that underlie the success of your platform.

This planning guide will help you through the steps of building a coalition that supports crowdfunding in your community.

Part I-The Who: Assemble your TLC team and stakeholders

Part II-The Why: Create a vision that will inspire your community

Part III-The How: The nuts and bolts for making it happen

Appendix: Guidelines & Templates

Part I-The Who: Assemble Your Dream Team

- Assemble your Local Crowd Team
- Create your team's Org Chart
- Identify roles and responsibilities for your team
- Identify affinity groups for your team
- Define how the members of your team will communicate
- Set a meeting schedule
- Identify your Community Stakeholders

- A. Fill out this table to reflect your Local Crowd Team - including the needed roles and duties for each member; as well as candidates to fill each role.

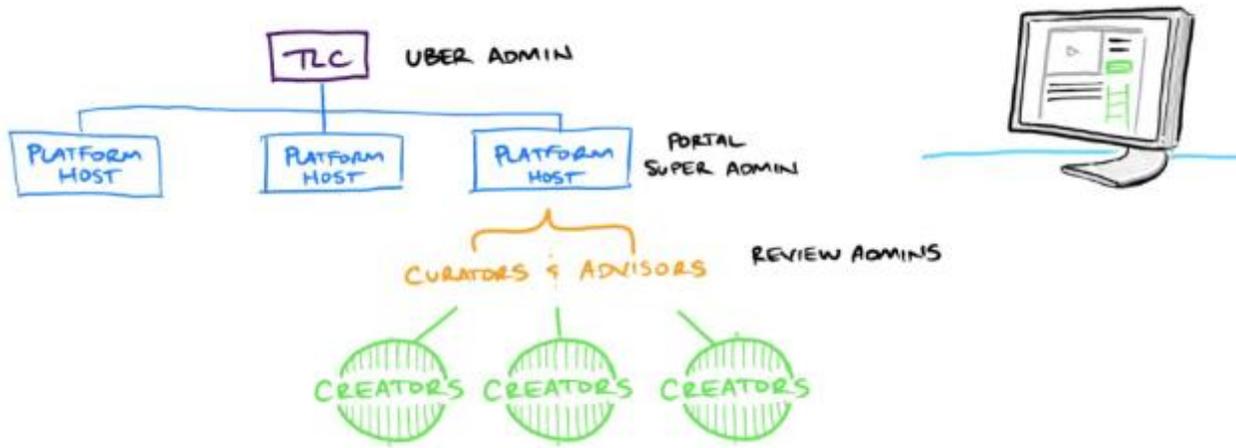
Note: depending on the size of your team, one person may fill multiple roles.

Role	Duties	Candidates	Contact Info
The Local Crowd Platform Host	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Host Organization • Own the TLC vision and share it! • Serve on TLC Advisory Council • Build relationships with crowdfunding stakeholders • Build/manage TLC community team • Manage & support platform users • Develop SOPs • Data collection (Success Metrics) • Serve as Administrator of TLC Learning Community group, or appoint someone to serve 		
Campaign Advisors & Curators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own the TLC vision and share it! • Build relationships with crowdfunding stakeholders • Informed evangelists for platform within their sphere of influence • Direct potential campaigns to platform (drive campaign recruitment) • Review/approve campaigns for launch. • Learn crowdfunding best practices • Recruit / train campaign creators • Consult potential and active campaign teams • Provide feedback/insights to platform team • Final approval of campaign (Curator) 		
Marketing & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create & execute <i>platform</i> marketing plan • Share campaign updates • Assist in campaign recruitment • Contributor relations & stewardship 		
Content Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video editing • Graphic design • Writing / Editing • Etc. 		
Local Crowd Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community team members act as Informed evangelists for platform within their sphere of influence (example: dean of a college; member of local economic development association) • Direct potential campaigns to platform (drive campaign recruitment) • Participate in all aspects of “barn raising” for campaigns – share campaigns, contribute to campaigns, offer sponsored rewards, etc. 		

This is a comprehensive list of roles, but keep it simple by focusing on what you need **now** while being mindful of how you can **scale** your program in the future.

B. Create your Local Crowd Team Org Chart

You can create your own organizational chart by mapping the roles described in Part A into an organizational chart to help you think about reporting and communication paths.



C. Define Crowdfunding Stakeholders

Let's identify additional Stakeholders - people/groups who have a vested interest in the platform - Here are some common examples:

Examples: Local Community Platform

Government, Development Boards, Local Businesses, Professional Organizations, Non-Profits & Charities, Fundraising Consultants, Artists & Creatives, Entrepreneurs, Incubators, Co-Working Groups, Philanthropic Orgs, Schools, Colleges and Universities, Prominent Community Members etc.

Now, Identify your crowdfunding stakeholders in the table below:

Person, Role or Group	Why Passionate	How / When to Contact

Congratulations! A defined, connected team is the foundation of everything else you'll do. Now, let's focus on the big vision...

Part II-The Why: A Vision to Inspire Your Community!

A powerful vision is the HEART & SOUL of a community fundraising platform. Regardless of what campaigns your platform has on it, your vision defines what your platform IS. Are you just posting online fundraising pages... Or are you providing a platform that will connect, support and empower your community to dream, share and create a better world?

These exercises should be done by your TEAM.
Include any STAKEHOLDERS who are excited to participate!

Pro Tip: “If *they* build it, *they* will come.”

A. Envision your Platform

Having a clear vision of what you want your platform to look like, feel like and be doing in 5 years is an important step for uniting your team and community around a shared goal.

- i. Which of these common outcomes are your team excited about for your crowdfunding platform? Check all that apply:
- Benefit from 21st century tactics
 - Locate and share the stories of your community
 - Strengthen your support base
 - Engage new & younger residents
 - Raise money for ongoing programs (clubs, orgs, teams etc)
 - Spark community collaboration
 - Boost your marketing efforts and effectiveness of all channels
 - Centralize your online fundraising in a holistic platform
 - Create a culture of engaged investment in your community

Make sure you share desired outcomes with your team and stakeholders!

ii. Which of the following common integrations fits your 5 year vision?

- The “Wrong Model” : A hard to find web page showing three or four fundraising campaigns nobody knows about.
Pro tip: don’t do this.



- The “Spoke Model”: An additional tactic/channel along with phone, direct mail, social media, etc. (“Doing Crowdfunding”)



- The “Site Model” : A well branded, well marketed storytelling / empowerment platform actively recruiting and broadcasting the great ideas of your community.



- The “Hub Model”: A holistic, centralized platform integrated with your other tactics where contributors can discover, support and follow the campaigns, programs & funds they’re passionate about.



B. Create Your Vision Statement

A clear vision is at the heart of every successful Local Crowd platform. Crafting a vision statement will help you concisely communicate your overall goals and will serve as a tool for motivation and strategic decision making for your team and organization.

Let's create a powerful vision statement step by step:

- i. Determine who will play a role in crafting the vision. Host a workshop or conduct interviews with key stakeholders who represent a cross section of your organization / community.

- ii. Collect answers to the following questions:

What are the core values of your organization / community?	
What do you do right now that aligns with these values? Where are you not aligned with these values?	
What is the best possible future of your community in five years? How can the TLC platform support that?	

Who does your team serve and what do you want to do for them?	
What will success look like if you accomplish all of these things?	

iii. **Create your vision statement:**

- Collect ideas/versions from your team/stakeholders.
- Dream BIG. Focus on what success looks like 5 or 10 years in the future.
- Speak in the present tense and use clear, concise language.

Congratulations! A clear vision, mission and brand will be indispensable assets for the long-term success of your platform. Now let's focus on putting a timeline and strategy in motion!

Part III- The HOW: Organizational Integration

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

-Buckminster Fuller

Now that we have clarity on the big vision and the team driving toward it, let's look at how to catalyze positive change by inspiring participation and providing clear paths for your team and community to follow.

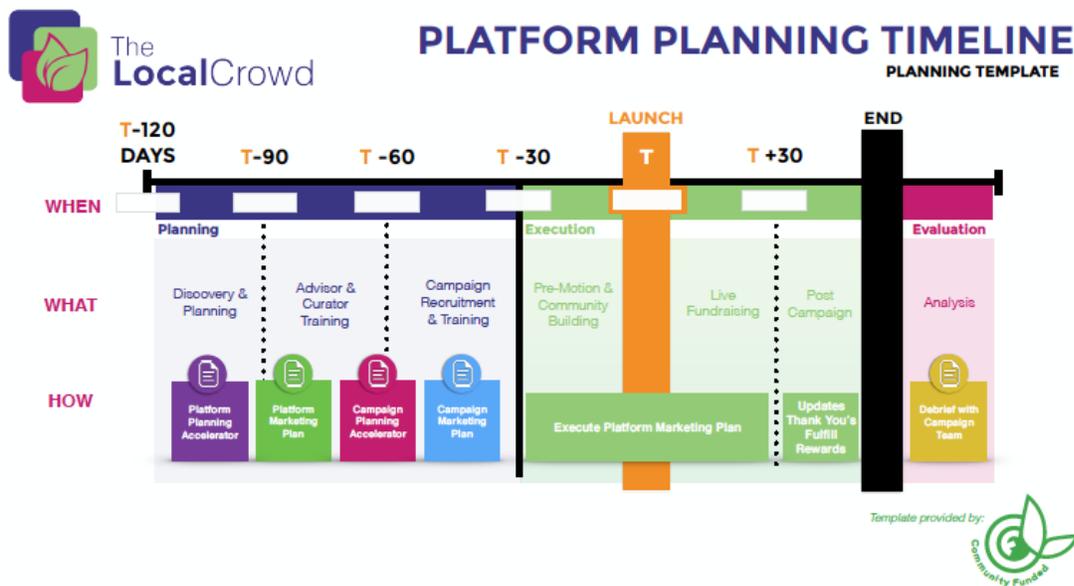
When someone says “Great! What's next?” You'll know just what to tell them. Many of these steps and related materials will be covered during the on-line training sessions.

- Determine Timeline for Launching Your Platform
- Learn the Technology (Platform Admin) and Develop Platform Guidelines
- Complete a Platform Marketing Plan (Guidebook)
- Create Your Community Landing Page
- Campaign Advisor Training for Advisors and Curators (Guidebooks)
- Recruit Campaign Creators (Sample RFP Process)
- Provide Campaign Creator Training and Advising
- Pre-motion and Outreach
- Launch! And Share the Love

A. Determine Timeline for Launching Your Platform

Let's start by laying out the timeline for this process to unfold in your community. Allow yourself enough time to complete the training, recruit campaign creators and train the campaign creators on building successful campaigns.

A typical timeline can be 4 – 6 months, but every step is important and you don't want to launch before having all the key elements in place.



Enter your key milestones/dates on the timeline below:

- Think about important dates / events that may coincide with your platform's launch. Include things like meet-ups, parties, fundraisers, travel, holidays, etc.

- Enter the date that you are starting the planning process with your team (T-120):

- Add 30 days for the start of the team's campaign advisor training (T-90):

- Add another 30 days to determine when you want to issue an RFP to recruit campaign creators and start the training and process (T-60):

- Add another 30 days to promote the platform and outreach to all stakeholders. This is when you should be pre-promoting the platform launch (“Pre-Motion” at T-30):

- Add 30 days to that date for your **PLATFORM LAUNCH DATE (T)**:

B. Get to know the Technology and draft campaign guidelines.

- Identify Super Admin contact for your portal
- Authorize additional Admins (Advisors and Curators) for your portal
- Log-in to the TLC dashboard and tour its functionality (APPENDIX A)
- View Portal Admin training videos in the Help section
- Identify chain of review for campaign approval
- Draft the campaign guidelines for your platform (see APPENDIX B)

C. Complete the marketing plan for community platform (Platform Marketing Workbook)

- Organize your network of contacts and building your community lists
- Compile email databases with lists of contacts from team members and stakeholders
- Load your contact lists into the My Communities (Optional)
- Determine communication channels and messages
- Develop social media schedule for promoting platform and campaigns
- Create press release regarding new resource for community and send out to your contacts (sample)
- Promote, promote, promote

D. Create Content For Your Community Landing Page.

Prepare key elements of the Community Landing Page for thelocalcrowd.com/communities website. All information should be e-mailed to The Local Crowd support team and your page can be created.

- Name of Your Community - What do you want your community to be called? (i.e. Oregon Together, The Laramie Community; The Teton Valley Community, Goshen Funded)
- Banner Image - This image displays at the top of your community countdown page. Dimensions should be 1200 x 300px
- Home Page Content: This is where your campaigns will live
- About Us may include vision statement for your platform as well as information about the host organization and
- Campaign Guidelines -include guidelines template specific for your platform
- Campaign Resources- This could be a link to TLC training resources
- Links for social media activities- Be sure to include your Facebook and twitter pages
- Idea Submission Form
- Video (optional)
- Countdown Clock

E. Learn About Campaign Creation and Success Strategies.

All team members should complete the Campaign Advisor training and create a practice campaign.

- Review best practices for campaign creation process
- Review projects from other communities to gain experience
- Create a project that your team can review and edit



F. Recruit Campaign Creators with RFP Process (See Appendix C)

- Prepare and promote RFP process to potential campaigns

G. Offer Campaign Creation Training for your team and community members

H. Pre-motion and Outreach

- Ask your contacts and team members to direct their family and friends to the website.
- Create an event around the launch of your project.
- Send invites to event.

I. Launch! And Share the Love

- Thank donors at event and let them know how their gifts made an impact
- Monitor posts and donations on website
- Monitor social media feeds
- Send updates to donors and potential donors via email. Keep the energy positive!
- Send donors, both in-kind, cash, and reward thanks via email or mail
- Sit down with the Local Crowd for a conversation about what worked, or didn't regarding the platform



APPENDIX A

Accessing Your Community Platform

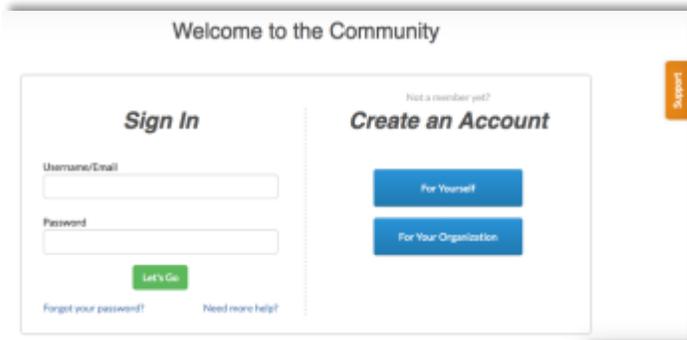
Your community's crowdfunding website will live as a page on The Local Crowd website as pictured below. The campaigns created in your community will appear on your community platform.

Each community will have a unique URL such as the sample outlined for Laramie, Wyoming: <https://thelocalcrowd.com/communities/laramie/>



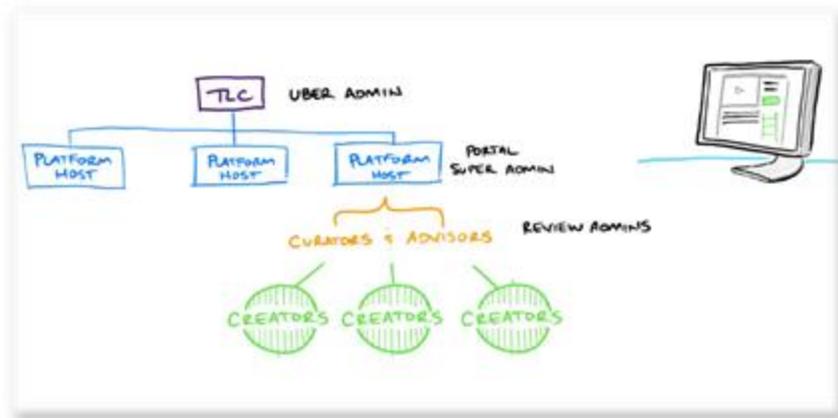
Log Into Your Community Platform

The Local Crowd's crowdfunding functionality uses sophisticated "Embed Code" from Community Funded Inc. that generates a full featured fundraising platform on your page of The Local Crowd website. This embedded, hosted solution requires minimal setup and maintenance, and ensures your platform will always be up to date. You can access your platform using the LOG-IN button on the top right of The Local Crowd home page.



The User Hierarchy of Your Community Platform

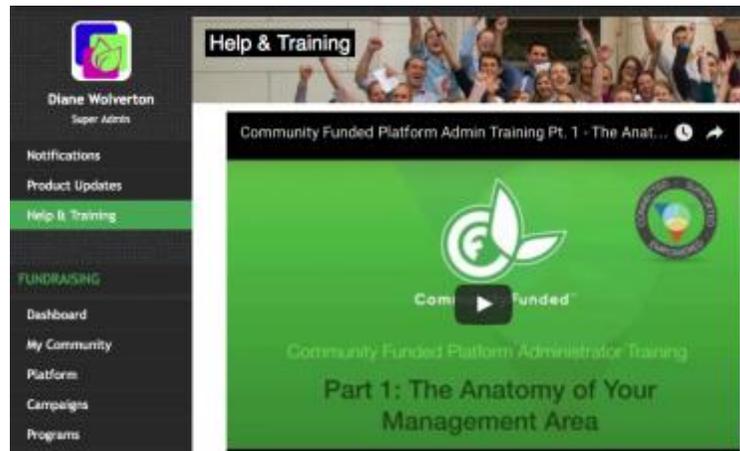
An individual from each community's team will be authorized as a SUPER ADMIN and will receive an e-mail with their LOG-IN credentials. The SUPER ADMIN will then authorize additional ADMINS for the community's platform. These ADMINS will then receive an e-mail that provides a username/email and password for logging into the website.



For now, all curators and advisers will be created as an ADMIN and their roles will be defined by their place in the campaign approval chain as designated by the SUPER ADMIN. Curators will be included in the campaign review chain and Advisers will not. Advisers can still review the campaigns but they will not be able to approve a campaign.

Help & Training Materials for Platform Administrators

Once you have logged into your account, take time to explore this tool. On the left menu bar there is a HELP & TRAINING tab that includes some video instruction for navigating your platform.



APPENDIX B

Crowdfunding Platform Guidelines Template

Incorporating guidelines into the process of signing up campaign creators to use your crowdfunding platform can help to ensure that campaign creators understand the process, the platform's expectations, and streamline the campaign creation process. Use this example as a starting point to craft your crowdfunding platform guidelines.

Describe Your Platform

Include a short section describing how your organization uses the crowdfunding platform. Feel free to include this definition: "Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project (or campaign) by raising many small contributions from a large number of people, usually online." The platform provides potential contributors access to the crowdfunding community, which allows them to view and support campaigns.

Points to Include

Typically, campaigns are marketed through personal networks. Campaigns are created by organizations, businesses, and individuals for the benefit of the community. You decide where those limits are enforced and who is eligible for participating on your community platform.

Specify the host organization for administering The Local Crowd platform. Be sure to describe how the funds are disbursed directly to the campaign creators. It may be helpful to link to the community portal if there are further governing rules that could affect campaign creators.

Specific Eligibility Requirements

Provides examples of the types of projects and organizations that are eligible to participate on the platform. If there are specific project types that will not be considered (illegal activities, multi-level marketing schemes, etc.) then also include that information.

By including an idea submission process, you can screen the projects prior to approving them for the platform.

Campaign Content

Ensuring that your campaign creators put their best foot forward and adhere to content guidelines and organizational brand standards helps control quality of content and manage your brand. Below are examples of the types of content standards used by one organization. Adapt as you see fit.

1. All campaign content must represent the community in the best light possible. The host organization offers advising on campaign creation and the campaign creator accepts responsibility to review available training materials.

2. You should also be considerate of people, businesses, or organizations that you mention in your description and/or video. Make sure they know you are mentioning them.
3. Videos: all videos must be posted to a video hosting platform such as Vimeo or YouTube.
4. Adherence to recommended content and structure will ensure a successful review process (campaigns with too many errors will be rejected). Campaigns with a word count of 300-500 words raise the most money (according to GoGetFunding.com). Campaigns with descriptions over 500 words will be returned to draft mode for editing. You can find our style guide here. (link)

Campaign Goals

This is a chance to tell potential campaign creators where established goal limits are detailed. Alert potential campaign creators to other requirements related to the campaign's goals. You can also use this space to detail when and how raised funds will be disbursed.

For instance:

1. Crowdfunding campaigns should set goals that may be a stretch, but ultimately are attainable with a solid marketing plan. Asking for too much or too little can affect your campaign's chance of success.
2. Determine if you want to indicate a cap on the amounts that can be raised. For example, you could determine that some student organizations will have a \$3,000 cap.
3. The average gift in our pilot run was \$50. Divide your goal by \$50 to determine how many supporters you will need. Remember, industry standard gift size is about \$80 for student-aged campaigns, and about \$78 industry-wide.
4. Different target populations may have different levels of spending. So take that into account when calculating goals and the number of supporters you

think you will need. Remember it is always better to exceed your goal than to fall short.

5. The Platform Host and Designated Curators may suggest revising goals that do not seem attainable or do not have a solid marketing plan to back them up.

Campaign Timeframes

Use this section to detail your recommendations. Industry recommendations appear below.

The ideal campaign will be 20-40 days in duration. This gives people time to get the word out about the campaign, but still instills a sense of urgency, which is an important part of this fundraising tool and the crowdfunding model overall. With limited time to support, many potential supporters go ahead and donate the first time, rather than waiting to donate “later.”

Crowdfunding campaigns should be time intensive, as you post updates and communicate with your supporters and potential campaign supporters.

For campaigns with longer durations or “open” campaigns with no discrete goal or end date, ongoing messaging more closely models more traditional fundraising methods. Much like annual fundraising rounds for public radio, most open campaigns still need concentrated outreach efforts during specified timeframe.

Campaign Review Process

Use this section to detail the entire review process you have put into place and to detail what potential campaign creators must comply with to be approved for launch on your platform.

Typical things that administrators may want to review include:

1. Video Content and quality
2. Spelling and Grammar
3. Campaign Description

- a. flows well, clearly describes how the funds benefit the organization or community
- b. includes clear, well-cropped images
4. Social media links that work
5. Rewards (if applicable) are sanely priced and have clear descriptions

Campaign Marketing Plan

Marketing plans are essential for campaign success. Feel free to use the Marketing workbook, or adjust as you see fit.

Every successful crowdfunding campaign has had a marketing plan! Remind your potential campaign creators that crowdfunding isn't magic - it takes work, and it's best to be prepared with a well-crafted marketing plan.

Well before you launch your campaign, identify stakeholders who will give to, promote and champion your campaign. Campaigns are more likely to succeed once 40% of your goal is raised, especially if the first 20-30% comes in in the first week. Identify people who will promise to give before you launch, and get their gifts in within the first few days after the campaign launches.

According to GoGetFunding.com, campaigns with a day-to-day marketing plan raise 180% more than those without. Day to day marketing can include asks, campaign updates, thank you messages, and social media posts. Your marketing plan should include personal contacts, phone calls, email, and social media.

Stewardship

Stewardship is just as essential for long-term success in the crowdfunding sphere as with other fundraising methods. Use the information below as a starting point to discuss your policies regarding individual campaign stewardship.

Crowdfunding offers strong tools for stewarding contributors (thanks and updates). Campaign managers will commit to updating their campaigns a minimum of once per week while the campaign is live. Additionally, upon completion of the campaign (whether it meets its goal or not), they will also agree to post a thank you message to all of their contributors. Ideally, when a campaign is completed and the funds have been utilized for their intended purpose, campaign managers will post one last update.

Support & Technical Issues

If campaign creators are experiencing technical difficulties during campaign creation or through the life of the campaign, their first step should be to contact the customer support organization as linked to the platform. Platform admins can communicate directly with The Local Crowd team on questions regarding the crowdfunding process and support of technical issues.

Other Things You Should Know

Use this section to cover any additional issues. Include contact information for the designated curator(s) and platform administrator(s) here.



APPENDIX C

Sample Request for proposal (RFP)

Welcome to the Local Crowd!

Introduction and Background

Are you familiar with the term *crowdfunding*? Crowdfunding is the process in which an entrepreneur or organization asks a large number of people (usually through the Internet) to contribute a certain amount of money for a specific cause, project or business.

Do you have a project that could benefit from crowdfunding?

The Local Crowd website combines the power of Internet crowdfunding with a strong educational focus designed to increase the knowledge base of rural residents and their capacity to use crowdfunding to raise money and contribute to their communities. As The Local Crowd model becomes fully active in a community, it can serve to create more opportunities for entrepreneurship and employment, a greater and more diverse economic base, more options for growth and a better quality of life for rural residents. The program has the potential to develop a new funding ecosystem ultimately revitalizing local businesses, encouraging entrepreneurial activity and creating a new way for community members to support projects they care about.

Opportunity Available to You

[Community Host] has been selected to a Local Crowd Demonstration Site as part of a USDA research project. We are inviting businesses and organizations in [region, city or community] to take advantage of this innovative new program. We are looking for businesses/organizations that have a specific project that could benefit from crowdfunding and who are interested in being part of the Demonstration Site project.

Project Qualifications

The ideal projects for the pilot should:

- Be less than \$10,000
- Keep it simple. Target a project that the public and your customers will be excited about. It is important that the public understands the project and can see the value in it. Some examples are new signage or improvements to your facade, new

equipment that would help you serve your customers better (i.e., new latte/juicer, customer service equipment) etc.

- Provide an economic benefit to your business—and ultimately the community you serve. How will the desired project expand your customer base, deliver a better (or expanded) service or strengthen your existing business?
- Be ready to begin working on your fundraising efforts by [Insert Date.]

Business Responsibilities

The business will need to be responsible for the following:

1. Must attend an orientation meeting with [Insert Host Name or Name of Campaign Advisor].
2. Follow crowdfunding best practices as described by your Campaign Advisor.
3. Adhere to the “three keys of success” promoted via The Local Crowd platform:
 - a. YOU make it happen
 - b. YOU fund it
 - c. YOU share with your personal network
4. Form a Campaign Team that will actively promote your fundraising project to their personal networks
5. Work closely with the [Insert Host Name] team to leverage training, marketing and community outreach tools.

What a Business Will Receive

- Support from the local project team as the business/project prepares to launch the crowdfunding campaign
- Marketing, outreach and community education using all local media, including social media
- Opportunity to receive funds raised via the crowdfunding campaign for the designated project

How to Apply

To be have a project considered for the Demonstration Site project, please submit a 1-2 page proposal to [insert contact email] by [Insert date and time submissions are due.]

Please outline the following:

- Project description and cost
- Business need
- Benefits
- Why the project should be considered
- Name of individual at business/organization who will be the primary person responsible for the project

[ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS]

To have a project considered for the Demonstration Site project, please visit [Insert TLC URL For Host Community] and click on the Submit an Idea tab. Complete the form and submit by [Insert date and time submissions are due.] [Include hot link to the Idea Submission tab.]

Questions?

Please reach out to one of the following individuals for any questions:

- [Insert Your Contact Information]