

Crowdfunding in Public Art

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Introduction

Crowdfunding is “the practice of funding a project or venture by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet.”¹ Crowdfunding sites have provided a platform for individuals and organizations to publicize a project and to bring together a group of financial supporters that is not restricted by geographical location. These sites act as an intermediary, connecting campaigners with supporters while providing a space for the interested parties to communicate.² Located in the non-profit and for-profit sectors, crowdfunding sites have been used by artists and community organizations to raise funds for placemaking projects such as murals, pocket parks, and community gardens. Relying on strong marketing and development campaigns focused on storytelling and fostering personal connections, crowdfunding has shown to be an effective method of fundraising for smaller scale, one-time local projects that have community buy-in and provide a public benefit.

This paper provides an overview of the current state of the crowdfunding field as it relates to public art, looks at the benefits and drawbacks of online fundraising, and highlights techniques for marketing your campaign and engaging with stakeholders. It recommends what to look for when choosing an online platform, offers success stories of projects that used crowdsourcing to fund public art, and advises on how to decide if crowdfunding is right for your project.

¹ Prive, Tanya. "What Is Crowdfunding and How Does It Benefit The Economy." Forbes. November 27, 2012.

² Freedman, David M., and Matthew R. Nutting. "A Brief History of Crowdfunding: Including Rewards, Donation, Debt, and Equity Platforms in the USA." David M. Freedman Chicago. November 5, 2015.

Crowdfunding Overview

Modern crowdfunding started in 2003 when ArtistShare launched as the internet's first fan-funding platform to support creatives. Thanks to the success of ArtistShare, additional crowdfunding platforms were launched that focus on a variety of topics from the arts to social activism to entrepreneurial inventions to creative placemaking.³ After the collapse of the housing market and financial industry in 2008, banking institutions were no longer able to provide the same loans they had in the past. This created the demand for alternative funding opportunities and many people turned to the internet to do so.⁴ Since its founding in 2009, the for-profit site Kickstarter has funded 152,685 projects across the world and is consistently ranked as the most popular crowdfunding platform.⁵ In the past 10 years, this model has also been used in the non-profit sector with the establishment of place-based crowdfunding sites that focus on funding civic improvements and community-led projects. Loby, founded in 2009, is the first crowdfunding site for public administration.⁶ Patronicity is the first civic crowd granting platform to have a state-sponsored partnership.⁷

In 2010, the total raised through online crowdfunding was \$880 million. In 2015, that total grew to \$34.4 billion.⁸ There are more than 600 crowdfunding sites operating around the world with the most popular format being product-based sites that give rewards based on amount donation, like Kickstarter and Indiegogo.⁹ Millennials between the ages of 24 and 35 are most likely to participate in a crowdfunding campaign¹⁰ and tend to be active users of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.¹¹

While these numbers show the growing popularity of crowdfunding, they do not show how difficult running a crowdfunding campaign is. Crowdfunding is a time and resource consuming endeavor that requires long-term personal investment if one wants to successfully raise funds. For every successful crowdfunding campaign, there are two other projects that fail to reach full funding.¹² But do not let these statistics deter you from attempting a crowdfunding campaign if it is the right fit for your project. It is important to be realistic about the benefits and drawbacks of crowdfunding and to take time to consider if a crowdfunding campaign is the best use of your organizations time and resources. This paper can help you make that assessment.

³ Freedman.

⁴ "A Brief History Of Crowdfunding." Startups. May 21, 2018.

⁵ "Kickstarter." Kickstarter. www.kickstarter.com

⁶ "How Communities Are Using Crowdfunding to Finance Public Projects." University of San Francisco. 2017.

⁷ "Patronicity." Patronicity. Accessed October 18, 2018. <https://www.patronicity.com/>.

⁸ "How Communities Are Using Crowdfunding to Finance Public Projects."

⁹ "The Basics of Crowdfunding." Entrepreneur. September 17, 2013.

¹⁰ "How Communities Are Using Crowdfunding to Finance Public Projects."

¹¹ Smith, Aaron, and Monica Anderson. "Social Media Use 2018: Demographics and Statistics." Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. September 19, 2018.

¹² Clifford, Catherine. "Less Than a Third of Crowdfunding Campaigns Reach Their Goals." Entrepreneur. January 18, 2016.

The Benefits and Drawbacks of Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is an emerging field that has gained popularity in the past 10 years. While still in its early stages and constantly evolving, trends have emerged that speak to the strengths and shortcomings of crowdfunding campaigns. While there are strong benefits to running a grassroots fundraising campaign, it is important to be aware of the negative aspects in order to actively address them as you create a project that will best support your community.

Benefits of Crowdfunding

- Sharing Financial Support for a Project

The main benefit to crowdfunding is that it democratizes funding opportunities by taking a financial burden and breaking it down over many people. While contributing \$500 from personal funds may feel daunting for an individual, asking 25 people for \$20 makes the task more manageable. People are encouraged to give what they can, and that amount adds up. If your organization does not have additional funding but has a committed network of supporters, crowdfunding is a way to direct the enthusiasm of your followers towards a project that will benefit the community.

Bringing a campaign online removes geographical restrictions as anyone who has access to the internet can connect with your project, allowing for a greater network of individuals to get involved regardless of their location. This is especially relevant in rural and isolated areas as it provides the opportunity to reach a larger audience outside of their immediate community.

- Publicity

While the intention of a crowdfunding campaign is to bring in financial resources for a project, it can also bring publicity to a cause or organization. A successful crowdfunding campaign can bring attention to a project, ignite civic pride and awareness around an issue, and strengthen the social bonds and connectivity within the community by bringing interested stakeholders together.¹³ Crowdfunding gives people a sense of control over where their money is going and taps into local expertise to see what improvements a neighborhood prioritizes by looking at where residents are willing to invest.

- Demonstrates Community Buy-In

A crowdfunding page can provide a basis for a grant application and help get the attention of funding organizations. Grantmaking organizations look for community involvement in a project and an application may ask for information that is easily transferable from your crowdfunding page. Speaking on the importance of demonstrating community buy-in, Hope Knight, President and CEO of the Greater Jamaica Development Partnership in New York City, said that “funders want to see community acceptance of a project—something a successful crowdfunding campaign can evidence.”¹⁴ Foundations and larger investors want

¹³ Lorah, Katie. "Let's Talk About Civic Crowdfunding and Government Responsibility." Planetizen. April 4, 2016.

¹⁴ Greene, April. "Looking for Funding? Here's Expert Advice." ArtPlace America. September 14, 2018.

to see mutual buy-in before committing funds to a project and a grassroots initiative like crowdfunding demonstrates a local interest and commitment to a project.

- **Data Collection**

Crowdfunding sites track donor information, donation amount, and date of donation. This provides you with quantitative metrics to track where your donors are located, how much they are willing to donate, and when they are incentivized to give. By looking at this data, you can see trends in donation patterns that will show if your marketing efforts are resulting in fiscal gives and will help you target your outreach campaigns towards similar demographics.

- **Funding Outside of Traditional Systems**

If the current systems do not support the work you are doing, crowdfunding is a way to work outside of traditional infrastructure to fund a project. It allows you to take a higher level of autonomy in shaping what the final product will look like and in deciding how to allocate the funds to support it. Crowdfunding allows for residents to prioritize what their community needs at that time, small details that local government may overlook or not have the funding to support.¹⁵

Drawbacks of Crowdfunding

- **Funding One-Time Projects Over Necessary Improvements**

Crowdfunding brings attention to projects that donors can get excited about but is less successful at promoting simple but necessary improvements.¹⁶ A way to combat this is to include necessities in your project proposal. For example, a community may be excited about a new mural that will help beautify a public park, but the park currently is lacking trash cans and there is garbage on the grounds. Donors are giving because they heard about the mural aspect, but the project leader could also include trashcans in the project budget as adding those will support the overall goal of improving the area.

Civic crowdfunding projects with shorter lifetimes and low maintenance costs have a higher chance of successfully raising funds.¹⁷ Crowdfunding is not a recommended means for funding operational and reoccurring costs. When starting a crowdfunding campaign, it is important to be conscious that you will probably only receive this money once and to plan for how you can use these finite resources to make the largest impact.

- **Cater to Your Constituents, Not Just Your Donors**

Since crowdfunding sites are unrestricted by geographical boundaries, your project donors may not be the same as your project users. While it may be easy to get focused on pitching your project to potential donors, it is important to be critical of your proposal and ask how your project will be serving the community that it is located in. Be in dialogue with your

¹⁵ Lorah.

¹⁶ Moskowitz, Peter. "Crowdfunding for the Public Good Is Evil." Wired. March 16, 2016.

¹⁷ "How Communities Are Using Crowdfunding to Finance Public Projects."

constituents and instead of telling them what you plan to do, ask how you can best support them and be open to new ideas and critiques of your project proposal.

- **Oversaturating the Field**

There are no limits to the number of crowdfunding campaigns that can occur in a certain area at a certain time. While this is a great way to support and promote a diverse range of ideas, this can result in projects competing for a limited number of resources and supporters having to decide to donate to one project at the expense of another. Instead of viewing other projects as competition for funding, view them as potential partners. If multiple projects in a given area share a similar mission, working together may be beneficial for both parties and a way to pool resources instead of competing for them.

- **Unclear Relationship with Government**

The role of government in the evolving world of civic crowdfunding constantly comes into question. Some citizens do not want to give to crowdfunding campaigns as they believe community improvement projects should be funded by tax dollars, not private capital. New models are being introduced that change the way governments interact with crowdfunding campaigns, such as state-sponsored partnerships and sites that support projects led by municipalities. At its core, crowdfunding aims to acquire monetary resources and the unclear fiscal relationship between government and crowdfunding causes concerns as government is meant to systematically weigh priorities to best serve their constituents, not to get caught up in the excitement and immediacy of a crowdfunding campaign.¹⁸

- **Inequity in Crowdfunding**

While crowdfunding is meant to democratize the funding process by getting more people involved, those with pre-existing financial and social media networks are better positioned to run a successful crowdfunding campaign. Because crowdfunding builds off existing connections, those with concentrated networks of higher financial capabilities are situated to have access to more funding than their counterparts who do not have affluent connections. Further research is needed to quantify if crowdfunding is resulting in disproportional investments in higher-income and metropolitan communities at the expense of lower-income and rural areas and how to combat this inequity.¹⁹ This should not disincentivize communities who feel ready to take on the financial burden of crowdfunding from doing so but instead to call on grantmakers and partnering organizations to acknowledge the systematic oppression of marginalized communities and to support matching projects in historically underserved areas.

¹⁸ Pelley, Virginia. "The Rise of Public-Sector Crowdfunding." City Lab. September 15, 2017.

¹⁹ Lee, Chang Heon, J. Leon Zhao, and Ghazwan Hassna. "Government-Incentivized Crowdfunding for One-Belt, One-Road Enterprises: Design and Research Issues." Financial Innovation (January 26, 2016).

Marketing and Development Tips and Techniques

Publicizing a crowdfunding campaign is a multi-faceted endeavor that requires investing time in building personal relationships, maintaining a social media presence, and forming community partnerships. A strong marketing plan should focus on engaging storytelling and include informative graphics that help potential donors envision themselves in the transformed space. Since people are going to donate to your campaign because they have a personal connection to the work, you need to identify potential stakeholders and solidify relationships with them to build their trust in your project. Here are some elements to keep in mind when planning a holistic marketing and development strategy:

- Think Short-Term and Long-Term

When planning a crowdfunding campaign, it is easy to focus on short-term objectives, such as raising money and implementing the project. Long-term objectives are just as important, and you must be actively forward thinking to account for concerns you may run into in the future. Funding organizations like to see metrics on project success so how will you measure the impact of your project? How will you maintain the project after its initial installation? How will you continue your presence in the community after the campaign? It is important to continue the relationship with your donors and social media followers after you fund your project as it looks disingenuous if you communicate actively with your networks when you are asking for money and then stop putting energy into maintaining those relationships after you raise the needed funds.

- Establish a Timeline

Having a deadline for ending your crowdfunding campaign creates a sense of urgency and motivates supporters to make their donation before time runs out. Work backward from the projects overall timeline to decide when that deadline should be. If you are painting a mural with student volunteers during their spring break, you want to have the funding in before the expected work start date to give yourself enough time to buy materials and equipment. Always give yourself additional time as a buffer in case something unexpected occurs as you don't want that to impede your projected start date.

Also, consider the time of year in which you are launching a campaign. For example, 31% of philanthropic gifts occur in December²⁰ when people are more likely to give but also when the marketplace will be saturated with numerous organizations asking for donations.

- Know Your Target Audience

While it may seem easy to run your personal social media, being active on social media as an organization is difficult and time-consuming. It takes time and energy to cast a wide net so be intentional with whom your campaign is trying to reach. Millennials between the ages of 24 and 35 are most likely to participate in a crowdfunding campaign²¹ so it may be beneficial to cater your social media content towards that age

²⁰ Gordy, Jeff. "10 Year-End Giving Statistics Every Fundraiser Should Know." NeonCRM. October 30, 2018.

²¹ "How Communities Are Using Crowdfunding to Finance Public Projects."

group. Think holistically about who may be impacted by your project as possible stakeholders may not always be the obvious partners. Your project may have unintended public safety and health benefits that would bring in new potential audience members to your campaign so don't close yourself off when thinking of who your audience will be.

- **Leverage Established Networks**

Two out of three people who make donations do no research before giving. They give to organizations they already know, or to one's recommended to them by friends and family.²² While social media is a great way to keep people updated and engaged with your progress, word of mouth marketing remains one of the most effective forms of donor outreach. Utilize your existing relationships to set a strong foundation for your campaign and to build off mutual connections to reach more possible investors.

- **Collaborate with Local Influencers**

On the national level, celebrities act as social influencers and use their online networks to promote their opinions and preferences to a larger audience. On the local level, your community also has social influencers. Brainstorm possible stakeholders and reach out to those whose networks would be interested in your project. This could be the town mayor who is active on Instagram or a popular local business owner who is well known. Getting their buy-in can be helpful as, even if they don't financially support your project, they can promote your work to their networks and help increase visibility.

- **Create an Engaging Brand**

Being able to speak clearly and concisely about your project is critical as you will have a limited amount of time with potential donors. Having a compelling project title will draw people in to learn more about what you hope to accomplish. Writing a short, one-sentence description of your project will allow you to organize your ideas and easily summarize the main talking points of your project. Be consistent with the phrases and visuals you use when writing or posting about your project. Creating a simple logo and designating a color to graphics related to the project will help create a cohesive and recognizable visual identity.

There are additional resources for arts marketers that provide a closer look into brand building and crafting a digital marketing presence. *The Experts' Guide to Marketing in the Arts* by Alli Houseworth is an example reference text.

- **Know the Limits of Social Media**

Running a crowdfunding campaign entirely on social media lacks the personal connection that is the foundation of community-based crowdfunding. Direct outreach and in-person communication will be the best way to introduce people to your project. Social media isn't the best support system to bring people into to your project, but it is useful to keep those already involved engaged and updated on your progress. Upkeeping an

²² Gordy.

engaging social media presence is time-consuming and may not be a priority if you have limited resources to invest in crowdfunding a project.

- **Foster Community Partnerships**

It takes a village so take advantage of yours. Get your local institutions excited about your project by involving them in the planning process and don't be hesitant to ask them for support. Meet with them one-on-one to start building a relationship and discussing how you can be mutually beneficial to each other. Partner with a neighborhood restaurant to host a benefit night. Work with a local artist to create a promotional sidewalk chalking event. Ask the community center to hang up flyers on their bulletin board. Remember to thank them on your social media pages, include their logos on your crowdfunding site, and keep in conversation with them to cement the relationship long-term.

- **Organize a Matching Campaign**

Donors are motivated to go where their money will have the most impact. Matching campaigns are great motivators as they allow for donors to double their financial impact. Reach out to funding organizations with a mission that aligns with your own and speak with them about providing a matching grant or additional funding towards your project. Funding entities like to see community buy-in on a project and running a successful crowdfunding campaign is a good way to show that your project has local support. Consider making a fundraising push on Giving Tuesday, the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, as it is a global trend for one-time donations when organizations are more likely to provide a match.

Metrics and Evaluation

Evaluating a project is valuable as it provides context, story, and participation data that can be used to justify your decisions to donors and to provide insight on areas of potential growth.²³ There are a range of ways to quantify an artistic and cultural project and the best methods of data collection will vary depending on the project type, lifetime, location, and stakeholders. While it takes time and resources to evaluate a program, it is important to gather metrics as organizations with evaluation data are more likely to increase their revenues and to better engage donors²⁴ as they have facts and testimony to demonstrate the impact of their work.

- Use Data from Your Crowdfunding Page

A benefit of a crowdfunding page is that the site will collect data for you. It keeps a record of who makes a payment, how much they give, and when they make the donation. You can use this quantitative data to show how many supporters your project had, where they are located, and what age group they belong to. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), a grantmaking organization, looks at the numbers of donors when quantifying the success of a project. They view high levels of donor involvement as demonstrating an investment by the community to see the project completed and to maintain it long-term.²⁵ Crowdfunding sites track this information, so it is readily accessible and transferable into a report.

- Think Qualitatively and Quantitatively

It is difficult to quantify cultural and artistic practices as art, culture, and creativity are locally defined based on community values²⁶ which vary from person to person. Capturing a broader scope of qualitative and quantitative data allows researchers to identify a greater range of cultural participation than conventional surveys alone.²⁷ Arts programs that consistently attract more funding intentionally combine evaluation results with stories to connect with donors on an emotional level while providing data that shows how their donation will make an impact.²⁸

There are four standard methods to data collection: talking to people, getting written information, reviewing documentation and existing data, and observing participation.²⁹ Quantitative data expresses information in numbers and statistics which is easy to collect and analyze. Qualitative data relies on observations of changes with the intent of understanding patterns and relationships. Data are often in the form of descriptions, narratives, and open-ended responses which provides respondents with the opportunity to contextualize the data.³⁰

²³ Jones, Sheri Chaney. *Impact and Excellence*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

²⁴ Jones, Sheri Chaney. "Win More Grants: Integrating Evaluation with Stories." Arts Blog, Americans for the Arts. June 7, 2018.

²⁵ Rowley, Chelsea. "Michigan Economic Development Corporation: Public Spaces, Community Places." Telephone interview by author. October 31, 2018.

²⁶ Jackson, Maria Rosario, Joaquin Herranz, and Florence Kabwasa-Green. *Arts and Culture in Communities: A Framework for Measurement*. Report. Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center, Urban Institute. Washington DC, 2003.

²⁷ *Measuring Cultural Engagement: Quest for New Terms, Tools and Techniques*. Proceedings of Measuring Cultural Engagement amid Confounding Variables: A Reality Check, Gallup Headquarters, Washington DC. Washington DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2014.

²⁸ Jones.

²⁹ *Continuum of Impact: A Guide to Defining Social and Civic Outcomes and Indicators*. Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts. Washington DC, 2017. Page 9.

³⁰ "Understanding Indicators." Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts.

Whichever method best supports your research, make sure you are following ethical and legal guidelines for data collection. One example, "[Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Law and Humanities](#)," published by The National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway, provides an overview on respecting individuals and gaining participant consent.

- Look at Short, Intermediate and Long-Term Impact

The way you evaluate a project in the short term will be different from the methods used to look at the long-term impact. When planning for how you will collect data, differentiate based on timeline and longevity of the project, being aware that the way people interact with the project will change over time and be prepared to adapt your evaluation methods accordingly.³¹ Short-term data may focus on how people are introduced to or initially view a project. Perceptions of a project will change over time as it becomes part of the neighborhood fabric and conducting follow up interviews with users will provide insight into the long-term impacts. Shifting demographics and the associated cultural changes impact who interacts with an artwork and why they engage with the project so looking at changing population trends will also provide insight.

As public art projects are complex and site-specific, a one-size-fits-all approach is not an applicable form of measurement. In Southern Los Angeles, research staff on the Creative Graffiti Abatement Project collaborated with artists to collect data in innovative ways by designing new protocols and embedding data collection in engagement activities to ensure that data collected reflected the intricacies of the community and the project.³² Looking for new models of engagement based on collaboration will allow your data collection to represent shifting perceptions and trends over time.

- Involve Stakeholders

Indicators are defined as "specific measurable changes that can be easily observed, heard, or read to demonstrate that an outcome is being met."³³ Indicators should be measurable and provide insight on what kind of data to collect. Involve a diverse range of stakeholders in defining indicators and in interpreting a project's success to see what they prioritize so program design and evaluations are meaningful and useful.³⁴ Think actively about who you are engaging with so not to overlook an important constituency that has a vested interest in the project. Do not restrict yourself to a geographical boundary as reaching out solely to users of the space would exclude potential future users from your data collection. Asking why people don't interact with the project in its current state can provide important information and uncover opportunities for growth as you plan to measure the long-term impacts of a project.

- Poll Your Established Networks

Throughout your crowdfunding campaign, continuously compile contact information from partner organizations, event attendees, and supporters who demonstrate an interest

³¹ Cleveland, William. *A Study of the San Diego Gathering Place Initiative*. Center for the Study of Art & Community. 2014.

³² Laramie Kidd, Susannah. *Arts as Infrastructure*. Report. Los Angeles County Arts Commission. Los Angeles, CA. May 2018. Page 7.

³³ *Continuum of Impact: A Guide to Defining Social and Civic Outcomes and Indicators*. Page 8.

³⁴ *Continuum of Impact: A Guide to Defining Social and Civic Outcomes and Indicators*. Page 24.

in the project. The crowdfunding platform should collect donor contact information which will provide you with a strong base to build on. Use your social media accounts to disseminate information about opportunities to provide feedback, space on public posts for comments, and links to surveys and polls. Emails and mailing campaigns are a targeted way to elicit feedback directly to your network but in person interaction will be the best way to ensure people are engaged in your data collection.

- **Be Realistic About What You Can Achieve**

It takes time and money to collect data and while it would be ideal if you could holistically quantify your impact, it may not be possible to measure all aspects of your project as outcomes of creative projects are often perceptual and intangible.³⁵ Be realistic on how to best allocate your resources as the goal of gathering metrics is to synthesize it into usable information meant for distribution. In the interest of time and clarity, it would be best to focus on one element in which you can gather comprehensive data instead of giving partial attention to the development of multiple differing ideas.³⁶ When deciding what aspect to focus on, refer to the elements prioritized by your stakeholders and grantmakers as this information can be used to apply for grants and to strengthen your project in the future.

³⁵ Laramee Kidd. Page 14.

³⁶ "Understanding Indicators."

What to Look for in a Crowdfunding Site

There are many different platforms that support crowdfunding projects in the for-profit and non-profit sectors. Each site has a unique layout and distinct focus with some supporting projects proposed by individuals and others working solely with registered non-profits. It is important to be aware of your projects individualized needs when deciding what platform will be most beneficial to you. Here are some elements to think about when deciding which crowdfunding site to launch your project with:

- **Project Page Layout**

Creating an engaging and relatable narrative is a critical part of a successful crowdfunding campaign as it allows you to show the public why your project is important and to show potential donors what their funding will be used for.³⁷ The first thing people see when they access your page is the title of your project so take time to come up with a title that will pique people's interest. Under the title, there should be space for a short, one-sentence description of your project. Think of this as the elevator pitch where you can provide an overview of what you want to accomplish through the fundraiser and why your project matters.

The layout of your project page should be easy to understand as it is the first impression potential donors may have with your project. The narrative should flow and have a logical progression that provides context for the project, a description of the intended product, and why it is important for the community before cumulating in a call for financial support. Use a larger font size to create a visual hierarchy that will show how a donor's support, either by a financial donation or by helping to publicize your campaign, will help your project succeed. Consider using wording that will make donors feel like an integral part of your community to help strengthen their emotional connection to the project. When deciding between different sites, investigate past projects on each platform to see what format you prefer and to find one that is most accessible as a reader.

- **Presentation Materials**

The majority, if not all, of crowdfunding sites allow for users to post multi-media presentations on their project page. Having compelling visuals, such as Before and After images, will help donors envision themselves interacting with the completed project and provide a mental break from blocks of text. Videos are an engaging way to tell the story of your project and featuring local residents and project leaders helps form personal connections as potential donors can now put a face to a name. Take note of what forms of media are supported on each site and where these elements can be placed on the page (only at the beginning, dispersed throughout the text, etc.) as these are important elements in crafting a cohesive narrative and can create a compelling argument for why donors should choose to give their money to your project.

³⁷ Greene.

- Short-term Donor Engagement

A site should support continued interaction with donors after their initial give. Many sites have an additional tab on a project page to include updates to keep donors engaged with new developments in the fundraising process or project implementation. Keeping a detailed record of your results is important as organizations with evaluation data are significantly more likely to increase their revenues and better engage donors.³⁸ Providing space for a project budget and timeline is important as it brings a project out of the hypothetical realm and shows donors they are investing in a tangible product with defined deliverables.³⁹ A commenting feature is another way to stay engaged with donors and allows you to be responsive to the questions and comments from your supporters. Keeping donors up-to-date on the progress of their investment will keep them interested in the outcome and be beneficial in forming long-term partnerships, making them more likely to donate again in the future.

- Long-term Donor Engagement

While a crowdfunding campaign aims at funding a short-term project, it is important to think long-term regarding donor relations. When deciding on a site to launch your project, see if you will be able to retain donor information for future outreach. Will you be able to get their name, the amount they donated, their contact information, how they heard about your project, etc. from the crowdfunding site you use? Incentives are another way to communicate with donors. Some sites allow you to offer rewards based on levels of donations, such as t-shirts with a graphic of the project or an autographed print by the artist. This is a good way to say thank you to your supporters and to encourage people to give higher amounts.

- Volunteer Option

Similar to grassroots campaigns, crowdfunding campaigns rely on personal connections and local outreach.⁴⁰ While it is the norm for sites to accept financial donations, some sites provide the opportunity for people to donate their time. 53% of donors on lobby, a crowdfunding site with a volunteer option, also volunteer with a project.⁴¹ Posting volunteer opportunities on the project page give donors who are already visiting your site the chance to get involved in the project, strengthening your personal relationships with them and helping you grow a volunteer network.

- Funds Management and Distribution

Choosing a crowdfunding site is choosing a financial partner for your project. Each site will have a processing fee and will retain a certain percent of the funds raised as commission. It is important to be aware of these fees before starting a project as it may impact your expected funding goal. Look into how users can pay through the site. Does the site accept cash and check donations, or can donors only pay online?

³⁸ Jones.

³⁹ Rampton, John. "The Benefits Of Using A Proposed Timeline." The Huffington Post. June 22, 2017.

⁴⁰ "Why Grassroots Engagement?" Grassroots Solutions.

⁴¹ "About lobby." lobby. www.ioboy.org/about.

It is also important to investigate what will happen to the money raised if your project doesn't reach its funding goal. Some sites offer the user to select a partial funding structure, where your project will receive any funds raised, or all-or-nothing funding structure, where you'll only get the money if you reach your funding goal. Will the site allow you to edit the deadline and donation amount of your project? If you don't raise enough money, will the site return the money to donors or will it put it towards a similar project? These are a few questions to ask when making a final decision on a site.

Sample Platforms

There are 191 and counting crowdfunding platforms in the United States alone,⁴² each providing a unique experience for users. This paper investigates four sites in the for-profit and non-profit sector that have been used to successfully fund public art. While far from a comprehensive list, these examples show how people and organizations across the country have been using a diverse range of crowdfunding sites to support the individual needs of a public art project.

For-Profit

- GoFundMe

GoFundMe focuses on short-term personal projects with no deadlines on project length or limits on donation amount and donor numbers. This means you can continue to fund a project indefinitely, withdraw funds at any time and have access to your funds, regardless of if you reach your goal. GoFundMe acquired Crowdrise in 2017 which is a platform for campaigns run by non-profits and allows for organizations, not just individuals, to claim ownership of a project.

The platform fee varies depending on the project type and the country a project is located in. In the United States, personal campaigns and certified charity campaigns have a 0% platform fee. In the US, the processing fees are 2.9% and \$0.30 per donation.⁴³

- Kickstarter

Started in 2009, Kickstarter is a global site that supports individual projects that are creative in nature. As of 2018, it is the most popular crowdfunding site on the Internet.⁴⁴ While there is no designated section for public art, people have been using Kickstarter to fund projects that are accessible to the public, such as murals, light installations, and sculptures. Every project must create something tangible that can be used or experienced by those other than the artist. Kickstarter operates on an all-or-nothing funding model where no one will be charged for a pledge unless the project reaches its funding goal. The funding goal and project deadline cannot be edited once a project has been launched. As of November 1, 2018, Kickstarter has launched 423,355 projects and has an overall success rate of 36.48%.⁴⁵

Fees are collected only if your project reaches your funding goal. Kickstarter has a 5% fee and there is a payment processing fee of 3% to 5% depending on pledge amount.⁴⁶

⁴² "Crowdfunding Statistics: The Facts About the Latest Fundraising Craze." Fundly.

⁴³ "GoFundMe." Gofundme.com.

⁴⁴ Kim, Larry. "Top 10 Crowdfunding Platforms of 2018." Inc.com. August 06, 2018.

⁴⁵ "Kickstarter."

⁴⁶ "Kickstarter."

Non-Profit

- loby

loby is a non-profit crowdfunding platform that focuses on community improvement projects and neighborhood investment. With concentrated support networks in Cleveland, Detroit, Memphis, New York, and Pittsburgh but accepting projects across the country, loby provides fundraising coaching to help community partners determine an effective campaign strategy, timeline and budget. loby, which stands for In Our Backyard, allows a project owner to edit their fundraising goal and campaign deadlines throughout the life of the campaign so they are not locked into specific amounts or dates. Because of this involved model, loby has an 87% funding success rate with 71% of projects also having a social justice objective.⁴⁷

A 3% donation processing fee applies to all projects. For projects over \$1,000, there is a \$35 platform fee. This fee is waived for projects under \$1,000. For groups or individuals that are not a registered 501(c)3, loby will sponsor your project as a 501(c)3 for an additional fee of 5% so donations can be fully tax-deductible.⁴⁸

- Patronicity

Patronicity is a Detroit-based crowd granting non-profit that partners with grant-making agencies to match funds raised by citizens. Through current partnerships with state agencies in Indiana, Massachusetts, and Michigan, Patronicity staff based in those states advise communities on drafting a grant application and running a crowdfunding campaign. While projects can be located anywhere in the United States, the majority of campaigns are located in those three states. As of November 2018, the Public Spaces, Community Places partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, has successfully supported 174 out of 179 projects with a total of \$42,245,420 invested.⁴⁹

Through the partnership model, if a community successfully crowdfunds their project, the partnering state agency will provide a matching grant towards the project. If the project is not fully funded, the community keeps the money they raised through crowdfunding but do not receive the matching grant. In addition to online donations, Patronicity accepts offline donations at community events and by mail so people who may not have access to the internet can be involved in a campaign. There is a 5% service fee for projects and an additional 2.9% and \$0.30 credit card fee on all online donations.⁵⁰ Patronicity does not support projects run by individuals and all campaigns must be run by a local government or a 501(c)3 organization to ensure that each project has a civic focus.

⁴⁷ "About loby."

⁴⁸ "loby."

⁴⁹ Rowley.

⁵⁰ "Patronicity."

Case Studies

Save the Daises. Cincinnati, Ohio. GoFundMe.

The Northside Bloom mural, located in the reviving Northside Business and Entertainment District of Cincinnati, is a beloved symbol of the community and one of the most photographed locations in the area. Since its dedication in 2007, the mural has deteriorated due to weathering and age. A fundraising team of local residents came together to raise \$15,000 to restore the mural. They reached their goal of \$15,000 through donations by 81 people over 6 months.

Save the Daises multiplied their impact by partnering with local businesses to fundraise and promote the project. Local restaurants hosted benefit nights, such as a Karaoke Crowd Fundraiser, and pledged to donate a portion of their revenue towards the mural restoration. Having fundraising events is a great way to publicize a campaign, to get the community involved and to have in-person interactions with donors.

Crowdfunding campaigns are most effective when geared towards a finite, short-term project and Save the Daises set a hard deadline of June 2018, so the restoration could take place during the summer months. It is popular to use crowdsourcing to fund and get people excited about a new project, but it can also be successfully applied to restoring an existing piece of work.

Project Site: [Save the Daises](https://www.gofundme.com/save-the-daises)

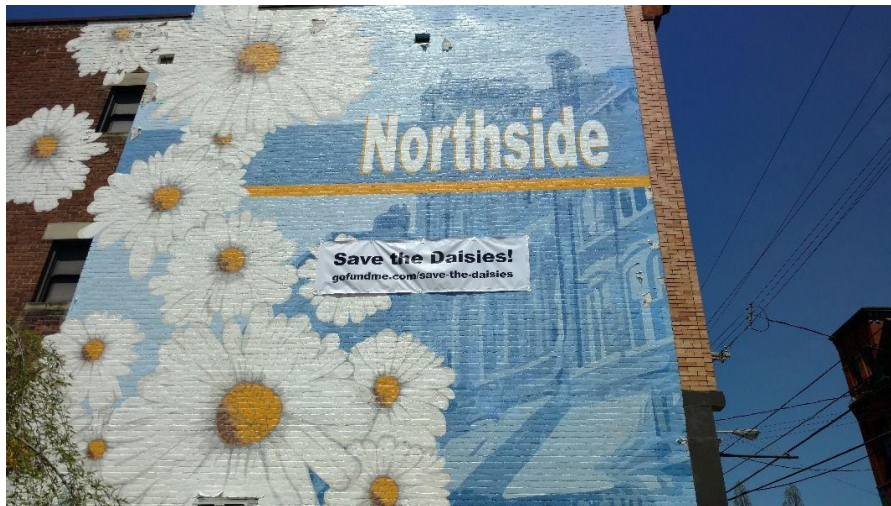


Image found on Save the Daises GoFundMe Campaign, www.gofundme.com/save-the-daises.

The Enchanted Highway. Regent, North Dakota. Kickstarter.

Started in 1989 by Gary Greff in hopes of bringing attention to his rural community, the Enchanted Highway is a collection of giant scrap metal sculptures representing local themes and wildlife alongside the highway in western North Dakota. Now a tourist destination, Gary turned to

Kickstarter to fund the 8th sculpture in the series titled The Web. The project exceeded its goal of \$15,000 and raised \$20,793 from 411 backers in 30 days.

Over the years, The Enchanted Highway had built a network of locals and tourists and used these connections to successfully raise funds through their crowdfunding campaign. They used Kickstarter as much of their audiences are tourists passing through on the highway. The top city where backers came from was Fargo, North Dakota which is a 5-hour drive from Regent. The project leader posted a video with a strong narrative describing the project and provided continuous updates to keep donors informed on their progress. Kickstarted enables donor rewards so supporters received photographs and prints of the existing sculptures depending on their level of donation, providing an additional incentive. 10 backers donated \$500 or more and will have their name welded into the sculpture which is currently being fabricated.

Project Site: [The Enchanted Highway](#)



Image found on Enchanted Highway Kickstarter Campaign, www.kickstarter.com/projects/1477189188/the-enchanted-highway-the-worlds-largest-sculpture.

The Bridge That Bridges. Cleveland, Ohio. loby.

The Bridge That Bridges is a mural project located on a bridge over the Interstate-90 which cuts through downtown Cleveland, separating the up-and-coming Campus District of downtown from the Cedar-Central Neighborhood. The project used a mural to create a physical representation of and spur dialogue about the racial divide created by the construction of the highway during urban renewal in the 1950s. Through a dialogue-based design process run by Neighborhood Connections, a grassroots grantmaking and community building program of the Cleveland Foundation, a diverse range of community members and stakeholders came together to design the mural. During the 5 months of the project, the community was able to raise \$2,115 on loby to complete the project.

The Bridge that Bridges used their project page to clearly display information to potential donors. A public timeline set goals which allowed donors to track the progress of the project. A detailed budget page laid out the expected revenues and itemized costs and described how much it would cost to paint certain areas of the murals, so donors could directly correlate their

donation to project impact. Describing how donations relate to project costs is a method to build trust with current and potential donors as it shows them the impact their contribution will have.

Additionally, the project organizers used lobby to call for volunteers which gave the opportunity for financial supporters to give their time as well. This provided an opportunity for people to become more involved and to transform a single donation from a supporter into a long-term relationship, making them more likely to donate again towards future projects.

Project Site: [The Bridge that Bridges](#)



Image found on News 5 Cleveland, "The 'Bridge that Bridges' the Racial Divide in One Local Community."

Beyond Walls. Lynn, Massachusetts. Patronicity.

Located 10 miles north of Boston, Lynn is a city of 90,329 that was a center of industry in the 19th century.⁵¹ In recent years, residents and business owners have expressed concern over safety and walkability in downtown Lynn, especially under the poorly lit railway overpasses that cut through the downtown. Beyond Walls is a project run by community members that uses public art to address safety concerns and to increase walkability in the downtown area. The crowdfunding campaign funded LED lighting to increase visibility in the underpass, murals that reflect the cultural makeup of Lynn, vintage neon light signs in the downtown business district, and a sculpture paying homage to Lynn's industrial past. In 2 months they raised \$80,655 from 1388 patrons, surpassing their goal of \$50,000. Through Patronicity's crowd granting partnership with MassDevelopment, MassDevelopment provided a \$50,000 matching grant, bringing the project total to \$130,655.

Beyond Walls was a successful marketing campaign that included a compelling video where residents described the projects and its projected benefits, Before and After images showing users interacting with the space, and detailed updates with images of the project installation. These visuals told an engaging story and showed residents the potential of these underused spaces. Since the project was working towards revitalizing the community, numerous

⁵¹ "Brief History of Lynn." City of Lynn. 2018.

past residents or people with family ties to Lynn donated remotely to the campaign, showing that support networks can extend outside your direct community. Supporters also could see the impact of their donation doubled as through the partnership with Patronicity, MassDevelopment would provide a matching grant through its Commonwealth Places program once Beyond Walls reached its crowdfunding goal. As donors are more likely to go where their money will have the most impact, access to a matching grant is a great way to show donors how they will increase their influence by choosing to put their money towards to your campaign.

Project Site: [Beyond Walls](#)



Image found on Beyond Walls, www.beyond-walls.org.

Is Crowdfunding Right for Your Project and Organization?

Crowdfunding is not an easy task to accomplish. You must be realistic about your goals and the resources you can commit to a crowdfunding campaign before publicly launching your project on a platform. Crowdfunding has proven to be a successful method of funding a variety of public art projects across the country but that doesn't mean that all projects will benefit from a crowdfunding campaign. Here are some things to keep in mind when deciding if crowdfunding is the right fit for you:

- Does your organization have the resources to put towards a crowdfunding campaign?

Crowdfunding is a time-consuming endeavor that may put additional strain on both your organization's fiscal resources as well as your staff members time commitments. Successful crowdfunding campaigns lean heavily on an engaging social media presence which requires funding to execute and people to upkeep. The majority of supporters will be giving because they have a personal stake in the project and forming personal relationships with potential donors takes time, energy, and manpower that not all organizations are able to spare towards an additional project.

- Will your organization and community be all right if this project isn't funded?

Smaller temporary projects with low maintenance costs have a higher chance of successfully raising funds.⁵² Crowdfunding best supports one-time projects as opposed to recurring events or operational costs for an organization. If this is an additional project or one-time renovation your organization would like to take on, crowdfunding may be the right choice. If you are looking to fund your baseline of operations and programming, crowdfunding may not be the best fit.

- Is there community buy-in?

In order for a crowdfunding project to be successful, there must be a crowd to fund it. Before investing your organization's time and money into launching a crowdfunding campaign, speak with community members and a diverse range of stakeholders to see if there is an interest in the project. Ask your constituents what they would like to gain from your project and draw from their local expertise to learn how your project can best support the community's needs and interests.

- Does your project adhere to current municipal laws and regulations?

Public art is site-specific, meaning that projects may be regulated by state and local zoning codes, comprehensive plans, and other planning documents. Do your research on these policies to see if you'd be able to execute your project under current regulations and if not, if you are able to apply for a variance if you so choose to.

⁵² "How Communities Are Using Crowdfunding to Finance Public Projects."

- Do you have a plan for upkeep of the project?

A crowdfunding campaign is a great way to gather excitement around a new project, but what will happen to the piece after it is installed? You should have a detailed and forward-thinking maintenance plan before starting a crowdfunding campaign as upkeep costs will be an additional expenditure to include in your proposal budget. If you predict your project will have unmaintainable upkeep costs, you may want to consider adapting your initial proposal to be more cost-efficient in the long run.

- Does your public art project adhere to best practice for project development?

As more and more communities continue to embrace public art, there are best practices to consider as projects are developed. Established best practices range from artists engagement to copyright and ownership of the artwork which are helpful to review for both permanent and temporary projects. Review the "[Proposed Best Practices for Public Art Projects](#)," a list of 29 national accepted practices as developed by the Americans for the Arts Public Art Network Advisory Council to see where adjustments may be needed in the development of a public artwork.

Conclusion

A crowdfunding site is an asset to promote a project and to engage with donors but at the end of the day, it is just a platform to present an idea to an online audience. It will not do the work for you. While these sites have proven to be a successful vehicle for connecting donors to a cause or project, it falls on the project lead to take the initiative to publicize a project, to develop a network of support, and to manage a project budget and timeline. Before embarking on a crowdfunding campaign, it is important to step back and ask if crowdfunding is the best method to financially support your project given your current resources. Investigate how your peers used crowdfunding to reach their goal, to learn from their process, and to see what worked and what did not. A successfully funded project may be the end of your crowdfunding campaign, but it is only the beginning of your work. Implementation of a project, continued engagement with community and donors, and upkeep of a public artwork are just as important as the fundraising of a project.

Crowdfunding is a tool for raising funds for public art projects and a way to engage community in your work. This is an exciting moment as crowdfunding is providing an additional outlet for funding public art and allowing for increased participation in a project. New artworks are being developed through crowdfunding that enrich the physical environment and diversify the narratives that are being expressed. The field of crowdfunding has shown tremendous growth in the past ten years and is likely to continue to expand to provide more opportunities for artists and communities to take initiative to fund the projects that they deem as valuable.

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