



# Collections Advocacy Toolkit

## Crowdfunding for Conservation

Prepared for the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts by



Communications for Arts, Culture and  
Mission-Driven Clients

[www.canarypromo.com](http://www.canarypromo.com)

## Crowdfunding for Conservation

Online crowdfunding is designed to harness the power of individuals to pool small resources to achieve a greater goal. It can be a relatively inexpensive way to raise funds and awareness for specific conservation projects—but crowdfunding also requires careful planning and consistent promotion in order to be successful.

To raise money for specific preservation and conservation activities, organizations can employ a three-phase crowdfunding campaign.

### Phase One: Pre-Launch Activities

#### Engage the Fundraisers

Identify key members of your Board of Directors, staff, and development team who should be involved in a crowdfunding campaign.

- *TIP: your development team may be aware of conflicting fundraising events and may be able to offer additional fundraising strategies.*

#### Choose Your Crowdfunding Platform and Set Up Your Page

[Kickstarter](https://www.kickstarter.com/) and [Indiegogo](https://www.indiegogo.com/) are the most popular crowdfunding platforms and have powered many arts-related projects, but there are hundreds more, including Fundly, FundRazr, GoFundMe, Petridish, Razoo, and RocketHub.

These websites support themselves by charging fees as a percentage of the amount raised. Project creators submit descriptive statements, short video pitches, and a list of rewards for backers. Rewards serve to engage funders and can include acknowledgments, books, photos, postcards, copies of the creative work, talks, invitations to performances, and personalized experiences. For more information about how crowdfunding works, Kickstarter has developed its own [online school](#).

## Prepare a Video

You can draw supporters into the story of your project, institution, and collections by allowing them to visit vicariously through a video. Introduce your institution and where you're located, share photos and interesting facts about the collection that will benefit from donations, and give viewers a clear call to action: share and support during the campaign.

- See tips on creating effective videos and find links to sample videos on Page 7.

## Identify Challenge Grants

Challenge grants can be a great way to supercharge your campaign. If your development office and/or Board of Directors can identify a larger gift that someone would like to give to the campaign, the gift can be announced as a challenge grant partway through the campaign. You'll want to have this arranged before the campaign launch.

- Sample language (for email, social media):  
*We have exciting news. A very generous donor has agreed to match the next \$250 raised if we can reach that goal by midnight tomorrow! Every dollar you pledge will bring us closer to [description of project].*

## Assemble Key Information

Compile contact information and schedules for key spokespeople, including representatives, curators, historians, artists, and/or family members and descendants. You'll want to have this ready for interviews with the media as well as for possibly involving these individuals in your video.

If you don't already have this expertise within your organization, you may wish to identify a local historian who can talk knowledgeably about your project or collections and the historical circumstances surrounding them.

## Leverage Events to Grow Your Mailing List

Review your institution's calendar for upcoming events prior to launch to identify opportunities to collect email addresses and encourage visitors to "like" your Facebook page—the largest possible mailing list and number of followers will set you up for success.

- **TIPS:**
  - *Have a laptop or iPad available for easy sign-up at events.*
  - *Hold a raffle and collect email addresses on tickets.*
  - *Already have lots of friends on Facebook? Ask them to ask their friends to "Like" your page in advance of an exciting announcement.*

## Make Sure Your Website Is Ready

Have a banner or other notification with a link to your crowdfunding page ready to be added to your homepage once the campaign is launched. Your social media links should be clearly visible on your website's homepage.

- *TIP: A prominent invitation on your homepage to sign up for your e-newsletter can be a good way to capture email addresses.*

## Create a Calendar

Create an editorial calendar that plans e-blasts and social media posts to organize announcements, reminders, and a final push for donations during the campaign phase.

## Find New Friends

Research affinity groups on social media: other organizations that support similar efforts to your institution or connect with your audience, or have a special interest in your project.

- *TIPS:*
  - *Initiate a relationship with new groups by following them and sending a personal message on social media.*
  - *If you already have a relationship with these groups, ask if they'd be willing to share an important announcement from your organization to their email list and social media followers.*

## Plan a Display

If you're raising funds to treat a specific object, decide the best way to showcase your artifact so that visitors to your institution can better understand what they are supporting and why. If your artifact is not in a condition to be displayed, consider dedicating space to photos of the artifact, a presentation of your video for the campaign, or a display of any other supporting materials that may help put the significance of your artifact into context.

## Phase Two: The Campaign

### Distribute a Press Release

You'll want to distribute a press release to your local media or to niche media that would have an interest in your project and with whom you have a relationship (see Page 2 of the ["Repeating Your Message and Following Up"](#) section of the Collections Advocacy Toolkit for more information on press releases).

## Encourage Participation

Create opportunities to engage supporters and boost their enthusiasm. A few ideas may include:

- Opportunities to donate while visiting (via iPad, laptop, etc).
- If you're raising money to conserve an object, encourage posing by or with the artifact and posting the picture to social media.
- Take your own pictures of guests interacting with your artifact as part of your institution's periodic voting reminders on social media or through your e-newsletters.
- *TIP: School groups are great!*

## Spread the Word Internally

Train docents and other staff who will interact with visitors in messaging about the campaign so that tour groups and individuals who visit outside of events will also be encouraged to participate.

## Update, Update, Update

Send periodic progress updates via e-newsletter and social media, including upcoming event reminders. Celebrate milestones in the fundraising process with your audience. *EXAMPLE: "Thanks to your support, we're halfway to our goal!"*

## Phase Three: Campaign Thank You and Follow Up

Be sure to thank everyone who supported your project—send email thanks and post thank you messages on your social media profiles.

Announce how much was raised and what it will accomplish; consider a post-campaign press release.

# Using Social Media in Your Crowdfunding Campaign

## Getting Started

You may want to practice personalizing, navigating, and posting on one or two social media accounts of your own so that you can begin to plan how to use one or a suite of them for your organization as part of your crowdfunding campaign.

Whether you do this or not, you must eventually develop a strategy and plan what you will do, when, for how long—and most importantly: why. Always refer back to your organization’s direction as expressed in positioning and supporting statements. Remain clear and consistent about your mission as you develop your social media strategy.

Social media strategies must address basic questions:

- What are your long-term goals and immediate objectives for using social media?
- Who are your constituent groups?
- What types of messages do you want to send them?
- How do you want your constituents to interact with you or respond to your messages?
- What metrics will you use to measure success?
- Who will administer and manage your social media sites?
- Who will coordinate and connect your messages to your programming and other development initiatives?
- Do you have a suitable website to build from?
- Do you have photographs, videos, or audio materials that can be used to support your goals?
- Will these efforts address reporting requirements of specific preservation grants or other fundraising initiatives? If so, how?
- What results do you expect to have in a year? Two years?
- Is this activity sustainable in the long run? If not, how will you end it?
- Would it be better to use social media to develop interest and suspense in a single activity, such as a fundraiser, the development of a project, or the process of conserving a significant item?

Depending on the design of your website, social media buttons and badges may be added to it. Place them where visitors to your website can easily spot them. A variety of buttons are provided by the applications, including “Like,” “Follow,” and “Share,” which are the most common. For additional functionality, you can download code from sites such as [AddThis](#).

Social media is a key component of a crowdfunding campaign. Engaging your supporters and harnessing their enthusiasm can make or break your efforts. Below are a few ideas for using your existing platforms to expand your outreach.

## Facebook

- Update your cover photo to relate to your project so that all followers immediately see this update and know that you are participating in a campaign.
- Include a link to your crowdfunding page in your “About” section.
- Create Facebook events for events that will support your campaign efforts. Invite all of your followers.
- Try to post at least once or twice per day about your institution but avoid being overly promotional.
  - DO post periodic reminders about upcoming events.
  - DON’T spam your fans’ Newsfeed with daily reminders (you risk having fans “hide” your updates, negating your efforts).
- Tag affinity groups that are also supporting your fundraising endeavors.
- Keep your followers up to date on progress in both fundraising and project developments (and keep this going after the campaign is done: you can use this time to boost followers and develop a long-term strategy for your social media engagement).

## Twitter

- Follow your affinity groups, significant thought leaders in your industry, and other Twitter users who may help support your efforts.
- Follow back your new followers and acknowledge their support via Twitter.
- When your organization or the campaign as a whole is mentioned, retweet it to your followers. This includes updates from local/regional/national news outlets in addition to your members or fans.
- To encourage others to retweet your content, keep some messages shorter than 140 characters to give users some room for the retweet or their own commentary.
- Include relevant hashtags in your tweets such as #history, #conservation, #preservation, etc. to bring your tweet into other conversations.

## Creating a Video for Your Crowdfunding Campaign

Videos can be produced on a range of budgets. The key to a successful video is not in money spent, but in planning and editing.

- **TIPS:**
  - *Limit your video to two minutes to keep viewers engaged.*
  - *Interview a charismatic board member or expert on your team who can talk about the significance of the project and why or how an artifact needs to be conserved.*
  - *Don't forget your call to action—make sure to ask viewers to share and donate to support your project.*

### Key Best Practices

*Myth: Video is really hard—I need professionals right away.*

“Videos don't need complexity or polish to be effective. Do you care that ["David After Dentist"](#) wasn't shot in HD? 88 million viewers don't. I started [my video blog](#) in a dorm room with a cheap webcam, free editing software, and no technical experience. My "webby" production values imbued me with a raw authenticity I couldn't have achieved otherwise. Sometimes you don't need professionals—you just need a MacBook.”

– from [Five Myths About Making Web Videos](#) by James Kotecki, digital media specialist

*Tell your story (from the heart).*

“Your story is everything. People aren't so much getting behind the idea as they are getting behind your passion to produce it... It HAS to have heart,” says [Nathaniel Hansen](#), an indie filmmaker who has raised over \$350,000 on Kickstarter to date.”

– from [Kicking A\\*\\* & Taking Donations: 9 Tips on Funding Your Kickstarter Project](#) by Todd Anderson at 99U

*Find Some Help and Pay Attention to Details.*

“I always advocate finding a team to help you with your video and updates, especially those who make media professionally or even as a hobby,” says Hansen. “This will remove much of the stress of creating the video from your plate as you delegate to those with skills beyond your own. But if you're a one-person team, and you'll be filming yourself with your webcam or phone, be absolutely certain you have decent lighting (natural or otherwise) and good clean audio.”

– from Fast Company's [How to Make a Kicka\\*\\* Kickstarter Video](#) with input from Nathaniel Henson, award-winning filmmaker and media artist.

*Also See:* [15 Lessons from a Video Newbie](#)

## Examples

[Longwood Gardens](#): Top of the line, professional budget.

Goal: To introduce Go Beyond—Summer exhibit.

Length: 3:10

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1jvk1vHg5c&feature=share&list=UUHMP1vVm6vrp4PVD7fZJw>

[Sculpture Gym](#): No budget, simple, fun, informational, personal.

Goal: To introduce the concept of the Sculpture Gym and compel funding to match Knight Arts Challenge grant funds.

Length: 3:16

Video: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/philasculpturegym/philadelphia-sculpture-gym>

Result: \$10,011 pledged, original goal for \$8,000. (*Of note: no one pledged more than \$250*).

[Smithsonian Institute](#): High budget, good examples of using still photographs and narration in addition to live footage. Also directly includes an 'ask' for funding.

Goal: To raise \$125,000 in funding for Yoga: The Art of Transformation exhibit.

Length: 2:21

Video: <http://asia.si.edu/support/yoga/default.asp>

Results: Raised \$176,415.

[National Parks Conservancy Association](#): High budget, follows a docent on a tour of the historic site and ties into larger story of New York's treasures.

Goal: To raise awareness for an historic site.

Length: 2:56

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o\\_E2C6Zo308](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_E2C6Zo308)

[Lancaster County Conservancy](#): Super low budget, no script, just footage together with text.

Goal: Political action / to raise awareness for an historic site.

Length: 2:56

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V12dxL7pwrM>