



SERVICE YEAR ALLIANCE

Service Year Crowdfunding Guide
For Service Year Corps Members

February 2018



WHAT IS CROWDFUNDING?

Crowdfunding is a method of gaining capital through the collective effort of raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people. This approach taps into the shared efforts of friends, family, and supporters, primarily online through social media, email outreach, and crowdfunding platforms, and by leveraging these networks for greater reach and exposure.

Benefits of Crowdfunding with Service Year Alliance

Service Year Alliance's step by step process will aid you in raising the funds you need to launch you into your service year, or fund projects that you are working on during your service year. We have pulled together the tips and tricks to raise the most money in the least amount of time.

What Can I Crowdfund For?

Relocation Assistance

We know deciding to do a service year that requires you to move can be a difficult financial decision to make. It would be great if all organizations could offer financial assistance for relocating service year corps members, but we understand that with limited resources that isn't always possible. If done well, crowdfunding can really pay off and help reduce the stress of moving.

Supplies

Are you working on a project and need additional supplies to enrich your service year? We recognize sometimes you need additional supplies beyond what your organization is able to provide. As a service year corps member, you can choose to crowdfund with Service Year Alliance as a way to help cover costs of service projects throughout your service year.

What cannot be crowdfunded for with Service Year Alliance?

Service Year Alliance understands that currently serving AmeriCorps members are not allowed to fundraise for their living allowance, or the living allowance needed for a future AmeriCorps member. For this reason, we are focused on supporting service year corps members who are in need of relocation assistance or garnering supplies needed for service projects. We always encourage you to speak to your supervisor to determine whether this is something you should be doing as a private citizen, or if this effort can happen as part of your service hours.



Three-step Crowdfunding Model

Service Year Alliance has broken crowdfunding into a three-step model in order to secure the best odds for a successful outcome. The three steps are planning, managing, and finishing your campaign. Crowdfunding campaigns can take as much as a few weeks to a month of planning to ensure it is successful and you should expect your campaign to be live for up to 30 days.

Step 1: Planning Your Campaign

A lot of effort goes into a successful campaign, and the majority of it happens during the first step, which makes up about 60% of the work. This is when you will create your plan, film and edit your video, and figure out what your outreach will look like, including who you think will donate.

Step 2: Managing Your Campaign

The second stage is launching and managing the actual campaign. During this time, you will be busy sending out emails, posting on social media accounts, and even making personal phone calls to potential donors to ask them to contribute.

Step 3: Finishing Your Campaign

During the final stage of your campaign you will be sending out a final thank you to donors to reflect upon your experience. You'll also provide feedback on your experience to Service Year Alliance.

Step 1: Planning Your Campaign

Talk to your service year supervisor to make sure that crowdfunding with **Service Year Alliance** is right for you. If you are crowdfunding for relocation funds, this will happen before your service year and you will be doing that as a private citizen, and the hours put into your campaign will not count towards your service hours. If you are crowdfunding for supplies needed for a service project, you might be able to count them towards your hours, but your supervisor will know best.

Tell Your Story

The first step in planning your campaign is telling your story. This story will involve why you need this funding, how much funding you need, and when you will need this funding by. Your story is the reason your audience becomes donors and will frame why your campaign is necessary. This will also help you to build the body of your campaign page.

- The key items to include in your story are:
- Why are you doing a service year?
- Where will you be doing your service year?
- What is standing in your way? (Why do you need these funds to be able to serve?)

Determine Your Funding Goal

Use the following [worksheet](#) to help you figure out how much funding you need to raise through your campaign.

A traditional campaign will typically last 30 days, divide your fundraising goal by 30 to see what you will have to average in donations every day to reach your goal. For example, if your goal is \$2,000, that means you would have to bring in roughly \$67 a day. Is your network engaged and large enough to support your goal? Remember \$67 a day might be possible for the first few days, but will you still be able to get \$67 a day by Day 22?

Craft your Pitch

Once you determine your story, turn it into your pitch. This is your elevator pitch, and what will persuade donors to support to your campaign. Your pitch should not necessarily include the anecdote shared as your story, but instead it should be a brief summary of your overall mission and motive behind running a campaign and should be between 15-30 seconds. It should highlight what you will be doing during your service year or the project you will be able to accomplish with the funding you raise. Make sure that you are confident in your ability to pitch your campaign to everyone you run into.

It is key to have a successful sales pitch in your crowdfunding campaign. Just like if you worked in the sales department of a company, you need to sell potential donors on the concept of donating to your campaign. The biggest tip is to be specific. For example, a less convincing or generic pitch would be “we are looking to raise \$2,000 for a day of service.” Instead, think about saying “It only takes \$0.29. With \$0.29 we can make one meal. But at [organization], we don’t like to think small. In one day, we can make enough meals to feed 10,000 people, but to do that we need your help.” Simple changes in language make a huge impact.

Content Creation and Outreach

Outreach is a critical component to hosting a successful crowdfunding campaign. Your outreach is the only way that people will know about your campaign. Preparing all of your content ahead of time will help ensure a smooth campaign. In your outreach, you are going to want to pair your story and pitch with different kinds of digital media such as photos, videos, and infographics. Posts that contain pictures or videos are more likely to catch someone’s eye over a post that is just text. Be sure to highlight where you will be serving and why you decided to serve!

Social Media

Social media is a good tool for publicizing your campaign to bring in donations. It is important to strategically use social media and not push supporters away. Donors respond better to quality over quantity, so it is crucial to make high quality posts rather than constantly pushing out subpar posts. Make sure to always include pictures in your posts because your supporters are more likely to see your post if you are able to catch their eye with a powerful photo or video. Always make sure to have a strong and clear call to action.

When a nonprofit crowdfunds, it is recommended that they work on content for the two major social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter. However, as a service year corps member, we recommend you put up content on platforms that you and your peers use most also such as Snapchat and Instagram. [Click here to learn about a couple great strategies to try out!](#)

Video

Videos make campaigns seven times more successful. Creating a video does not need to involve taking a trip to Hollywood to hire a production team. It can be as simple as recording a heartfelt video with your phone about why you are crowdfunding. Viewers can tell when someone is passionate, and that will drive them to want to contribute. Being yourself and including a strong call to action will help you produce a video that will compel people to donate. [Click here for more tips for creating a powerful campaign video.](#)

Step 2: Managing Your Campaign

Use these tips to help you navigate your campaign once it goes live. Your work is not complete once you launch your campaign. You need to become an active promoter of it. Recruit others, like your mom, dad, neighbors, and best friends, to publicize your campaign efforts within their own networks.

Gaining Momentum

It is best to establish a few large donations early. Securing these pledges before launching helps ensure a successful outcome. Campaigns that raise at least 20% of funds in your first few days are more than 80% likely to become fully funded. Finding pledges will start your campaign off on the right foot. The sooner other potential donors see that your campaign is up and running and off to a strong start, the more willing they are to want to support you. It is much harder to convince someone to support a campaign that does not have any momentum behind it.

Psychology of Donations

The days you should expect to receive the most donations are the first and last days of your campaign. On average 9 out of 10 contributions to your crowdfunding campaign will come from your own efforts. The rest is traffic from the platform to your campaign page. This means that 90% of donations need to come from a carefully planned and executed campaign that you lead. The good news is that charitable giving is contagious. Donating to charitable causes, especially online campaigns, becomes the social norm once people see that their peers have donated. Encourage your close friends and family to share your campaign with their networks. The wider audience your campaign reaches will help ensure success.

Launch Day

This is the day you've been waiting for. Get ready to start spreading the word all over Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram! Make sure you are having fun with it. Your potential donors will be able to tell that you are having fun, and it will make them want to participate in the fun too!

Now is the time to follow your content calendar. This starts with launching any emails and social media posts. Be aware of how you are reporting statistics about your campaign. Never round up numbers to say "We've raised about 50% of our goal," "About 30 people have supported our campaign," or "There has been about \$1000 raised." Seeing specific numbers makes individual donors see how their donation will have made an actual difference: "We are 53% funded by 29 donors," or "We've raised \$1023 in 13 days" is a more compelling way to present your statistics.

Step 3: Closing Your Campaign

Congratulations!

Your campaign is over, and you're almost done the crowdfunding process. Here's how you can navigate the final steps of wrapping up your campaign including looking at your results, sending out your final emails, and providing Service Year Alliance with feedback from your crowdfunding experience. Continuing to keep supporters updated on the success of your campaign and the impact it has on your service year – this will help with donor retention. Donors like to see how their money is put to use before they are prompted to donate again.

Reflect Upon Your Experience

Once your campaign is complete, you will be asked about your experience crowdfunding with Service Year Alliance. This will help us fine-tune our resources and support to assist future service year corps members in building stronger campaigns. Service Year Alliance will send you a [feedback form](#) to collect all of your final thoughts, but you are always encouraged to reach out if you have any problems or concerns.

We hope this handbook helped you navigate the process of setting up and running a crowdfunding campaign of your own. In order to help us better support service year corps members in the future, we would love to hear all about your experience.

A man and a woman are sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop screen. The man is wearing glasses and has a mustache, and the woman is smiling. They appear to be in a home office or a casual workspace. The background shows a desk with a laptop, a speaker, and some papers. The overall tone is positive and collaborative.

READY TO GET STARTED?

Start your campaign on
GoFundMe!



A BETTER YOU.
A GREATER US.