

Crowdfunding in Extension

Higher education institutions face long-standing budget challenges made worse during the pandemic. Extension feels the squeeze, too, all the way to the local level leaving specialists scrambling for more resources. Many fundraising experts recommend crowdfunding as one potential tool.

Kale Monk, Assistant Professor in the MU Department of Human Development & Family Science and State Specialist for HES Extension, said that “although crowdfunding is certainly not the panacea, it is a legitimate resource used by many industries to provide crucial support while encouraging buy-in from community members.”

What is Crowdfunding?

According to Kale, when people hear the term “Crowdfunding” they automatically think of websites like gofundme.com and rule out the possibility of organizing a fundraising campaign because they assume it is just going on Facebook and asking their friends and family for money. While gofundme.com can be a critical tool, there are many specialized platforms that offer resources to connect with potential donors.

When choosing the best crowdfunding platform for your project, Kale recommends that you consider (a) the target audience, (b) the different features offered, and (c) the cost of each platform. In terms of features, for example, Kale said that some sites offer tutorials and staff consultants with knowledge of marketing and how language should be crafted to attract the most donors. In terms of costs, many sites charge fees for hosting the campaign on their site, marketing and advertising your project, and payment processing.

Kale offers step-by-step recommendations and provides example platforms for developing a crowdfunding campaign in a [Journal of Extension article](#) and he suggested a helpful [video based on the article, featuring his co-author](#).

Mizzou Give Direct

In a recent conversation with James Preston, chief development officer for MU Extension & Engagement, Kale learned that the University has a crowdfunding resource called Mizzou Give Direct. Kale said this might be a helpful resource for Extension Specialists looking to fund particular initiatives.

James cited three reasons to use Mizzou Give Direct crowdfunding tool versus an outside online vendor:

- It’s better for the researcher – external crowdfunding vendors typically charge fees of 8 – 15%. MU’s processing fee is only 5%. Also, any money raised is kept regardless of whether or not the goal is met, which is not the case with many outside vendors. A Give

Direct page will go online in 1-2 workdays from initiation of project once copy and graphics approved.

- It's better for the donors – ensures full tax-deductibility and proper receipting of gifts
- It's better for Mizzou – gifts count toward campaign totals and donor participation statistics, which positively impacts MU's national rankings

To initiate a Mizzou Give Direct project, contact James at prestonjo@missouri.edu, or call 573-884-8570. If you choose an outside vendor, notify Preston and provide updates if possible.

Additional Readings and Resources

Hill, P., Swadley, E., & Esplin, K. (2017). Crowdfunding in Extension: Leveraging relationships to offset declines in traditional funding. *Journal of Extension*, 55(2), Article 2TOT6. Available at: <https://archives.joe.org/joe/2017april/tt6.php>

Mitchell, Michael, Michael Leachman, and Kathleen Masterson. 2017. "A Lost Decade in Higher Education Funding." Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Available at: https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2017_higher_ed_8-22-17_final.pdf

Monk, J. K., Vennum, A. V., & Kanter, J. B. (2019). How to Use Crowdfunding in Extension: A Relationship Education Example. *Journal of Extension*, 57(4), Article 4TOT3. Available at: <https://archives.joe.org/joe/2019august/tt3.php>

Page, C. S., & Kern, M. A. (2018). Creating and implementing diverse development strategies to support Extension centers and programs. *Journal of Extension*, 56(1), Article 1FEA4. Available at: <https://archives.joe.org/joe/2018february/a4.php>