

Community-Based Funding

A “How-To” Guide to Supporting your Study
Abroad Experience through Local Resources



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Community-Based Funding

Using Local Resources to your Advantage

Community-Based Funding is—essentially—using your network to fundraise. The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide for students seeking financial assistance from community sources. There are a wide variety of organizations in the for-profit and non-profit sectors that can help you fund your study abroad experience. Corporations, religious groups, small businesses, and charitable individuals are just a few examples of the many groups that actively give financial support – **the key is that YOU ask them for help!**

Before seeking assistance from these community-based sponsors, it is important to carefully consider how to approach them. Companies receive requests for sponsorships and financial assistance all the time, so actively utilizing the following tips can help set you apart from the pack and encourage these organizations to select you as a gift recipient. It's important to note that financial gifts you receive are **NOT tax deductible**.

When seeking financial support from community-based affiliates, keep these helpful hints in mind:

- **Be passionate.** When you approach a potential sponsor, it is important to be excited about your future study abroad program! Sponsors want to support students that are eager and outgoing, and articulating your genuine interest in a Study Abroad program is critical to gaining support.
- **Make it meaningful to you and your future.** Why are you studying abroad? Why is the program you have chosen significant? What are the reasons for going? Make the answers to these questions clear, and connect to potential sponsors on a personal level.
- **Describe the program.** Explaining program details such as activities and coursework is another great way to elaborate upon why this particular program is so meaningful to you. Any detail that you can discuss that illustrates your desire to learn and explore another part of the world can help you find sponsors.
- **Be clear about your needs.** Be up front and forward about your situation. There is a reason you are asking for support, so make it clear without begging. Explain your situation and why community support is so critical to your study abroad experience. Again, it's all about communicating the details.

With these hints in mind, you're now ready to get started on your community-based funding odyssey. In the following pages, you will discover information on the increasingly popular method of crowd-source funding, ideas for creative funding, funding ideas that have worked well for other students, and finally steps on preparing a meaningful, well-written letter to garner support from your community. To help you understand the best way to structure your letter, we will take a look at a real example from a student who attended the ASU: Politics, Culture and Society in Ghana program in the summer of 2011. Her letter afforded her great financial support from multiple donors, and ultimately she was able to make the most of her time abroad.

Crowd-Source Funding

Crowd-source funding is a type of online fundraising that uses the myriad resources of the internet to raise money for a project or cause. Many of our students have found great success through crowd-source funding, and this type of fundraising is gaining steam as an effective—and fun!—method for raising money.

Crowd-source funding is a public affair; you create an online profile, and you can share the link with your entire social network. People can choose to donate money to your cause, provide feedback on your site, and share your profile and link with others. Donating has never been easier. Friends and family no longer have to send you checks in the mail, and you no longer have to stand in line at the bank—all donations can be made electronically through your project page! The convenience of this type of donation makes it possible for friends, family, and even perfect strangers to support your cause!

There are a number of crowd-source funding websites available to you, including [FundMyTravel](#), [Project Travel](#), [IndieGoGo](#), [GoFundMe](#), and [GoGetFunding](#), to name a few. Each site is designed a little differently, but the basic components remain the same:

- Create an engaging profile page to attract friends, family, and generous strangers to your site
- Write a well-articulated and effective explanation of what your project is and why it is important to you
- Identify an obtainable goal that you are trying to reach
- Clearly outline the steps you want your potential donors to take in order to support you
- Network, network, network! Use social media to connect to anyone and everyone who might be willing to support your project
- Express your gratitude to those who choose to donate

While the convenience of crowd-source funding cannot be over-emphasized, we would offer you a few words of advice. First, read the fine print. Most (if not all) of these sites collect a small processing fee per donation. Some will keep your money if you do not reach your goal. Make sure you know what you are committing to. Second, donations will not magically appear. You need to be engaging, persuasive, and effective in your communication and upkeep of your profile. This is your platform for telling everyone you know—and even people you don't—why you want to study abroad, how you think it will enhance your education or your professional goals, and what you hope to get out of it. Be articulate and passionate and just remember—it doesn't hurt to ask! The next page outlines our best tips and tricks for effective crowd-source funding.

Tips and Tricks for Effective Crowd-Source Funding

The key to successful crowd-source funding is that you must **engage** your audience for the duration of your campaign. This is why most crowd-source funding platforms encourage you to create a campaign of 30-45 days. Any longer than that, and your campaign can run out of steam.

- **Interact** with your audience. Provide updates on your progress, post little tidbits about the country to which you are going, and keep your audience engaged.
- Make a **video**. A video helps your potential donors to get to know you better and interact with you on a more personal level.
- Make it **personal**. How will this program affect you? How does studying abroad coincide with your personal, academic, and professional goals? Tell *your* story in a way that compels your audience to want to donate to your campaign.
- Keep your story **positive** and **upbeat**. Don't frame your story in a sad, woe-is-me way. You want to demonstrate that you are going to work as hard as you can to make studying abroad a reality, and crowd-source funding is one of the ways you are going to find success. Stick to the positives, and avoid sentences like "I won't be able to go if I don't receive this funding."
- Create **meaningful incentives** for your donors. Some ideas are below:
 - Say thank you. No matter how much or how little a donor gives, always make sure to say thank you. Ideally, this would be by sending a thank you card, but whatever way you choose to say thanks, just make sure you do!
 - Create donor tiers. If you donate \$1, I will give you access to my blog or Facebook page. If you donate \$5, I'll send you a postcard from my study abroad location. If you donate \$25, I'll bring you back a (insert item here) from my program location. Get the idea? Make it fun for your donors!
 - Think about ways to give back. You want to show your donors that you are invested and this isn't all just about take, take, take. Consider offering "specials" such as "For the next 12 hours, anyone who donates \$50 or more, I will donate 2 hours of my time to community service."
- Share your **campaign link**. Remember that successful crowd-source funding doesn't have to be about *just* receiving donations. The key is to continually expand your network of people who have access to your campaign. Therefore, consider asking people to share your link with their networks so that your campaign link is widely disseminated as possible.
- **Ask** specifically. Make sure that your "asks" are specific. "Today is the first day of my campaign; *will you give \$20 to jumpstart my campaign?*" or "I'm halfway to my goal; *would you be willing to donate \$10 to get me to 100% of my goal?*"
- Check out fellow ASU student, [Carli G.'s, Kickstarter campaign](#) to see an example of how successful crowd-source funding can be. Make sure to watch the [videos](#)!

Ideas for Creative Funding

The following bullet points list some ideas that have helped students in the past fundraise for their study abroad programs. You can use these ideas for your own purposes, or even think outside the box and come up with something entirely new!

If you select a program that helps you achieve your long-term goals, it will be easier to solicit funds from external sources. Keep in mind that local, regional, and national groups, as well as individuals, are all possible contributors. They include:

- Heritage Groups that have interests in specific countries (i.e., Japan American Society)
- Civic groups (Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions Clubs, etc.)
- Agencies and Foundations
- Travel Agencies
- High School Alumni Associations
- Professional and Business Clubs
- Media (newspapers, magazines, T.V., and radio)
- Sororities and Fraternities (local and national chapters)
- Charitable, Ethnic, Religious, and Campus Organizations

Direct, informal appeals often work best. Be specific on how you intend to spend the funds (airfare, program fee, tuition, etc.). Include a photo or video of yourself with your request so that the receiver will establish a personal connection with you. Make donating as easy as possible (cash, check, or online donation) so that you're more likely to get an actual donation rather than a promise to donate. Don't be afraid to follow up if you haven't received a response! Enthusiasm, creativity, and perseverance on your part – and not fearing rejection – will likely take you a long way. Remember that every little bit helps!

In exchange for financial support, you might consider a pledge to “give something back,” such as regular updates while you are abroad. Alternative actions include:

- Writing an article about your program
- Leading a discussion or seminar
- Creating a website or video to promote your experience
- Promoting educational and business exchanges
- Contributing to community service and outreach
- Helping others to have a similar international experience
- Bringing back a representative “token” gift from the place you visit that shows you were thinking about and appreciative of your donors

Ideas that have worked for other Students

- Waive holiday and birthday gifts and request financial gifts or loans instead.
- Write a creative letter to all your relatives, asking for financial support in exchange for monthly emails while abroad and a presentation and dinner upon return.
- Ask friends to join you in raising money by painting, cleaning or washing cars.
- Organize an event where you and/or some friends donate instruction for a couple of hours (cooking, quilting, yoga, karate, computer skills, dancing, sign language, stained glass, woodworking, etc.).
- Collect used books, CD's, computer software, etc. and have a sale.
- Ask your church, synagogue, or temple to sponsor a special offering, dinner, or raffle and give the proceeds for study abroad.
- Organize a radio talk show and solicit contributions.
- Approach stores for donated supplies such as clothing, camping gear, etc.
- Find out if your parents' employers have a scholarship program for their children or find out if your employer will make a cash advance to be paid back through payroll deduction. No harm in asking!
- Double work: sell T-shirts at a dance marathon.
- In exchange for the use of your car while you're gone, have a friend or sibling make all or part of your car payments.
- Organize a can drive in the residence halls.
- Collect cans during football tailgating. Be sure to identify yourself and your purpose so fans will readily pass on their cans and bottles.
- Work for the Department of Police and Public Safety (DPPS) for special event parking.
- Sell coffee and baked goods with a sign stating your purpose.
- Host an art show and sell your original artwork.
- SAVE, SAVE, SAVE!



Sample Letter

Seeing What Works

1. Dear Prospective Sponsor,

My name is _____ and I am a junior at Arizona State University (ASU) in Tempe, AZ. I am majoring in Global Studies (International Relations) with a concentration in Violence, Conflict and Human Rights and minoring in Economics. I am a Dean's List student, and I have begun to pursue an international business certificate through the W.P. Carey School of Business.

2. Ever since I volunteered at Casa Maria, a Community Food Bank for the homeless in Tucson, I developed a passion to make a positive impact on the lives of those less fortunate. As a student majoring in Global Studies, I am ready to express this passion in an overseas internship experience that will help me to learn firsthand about my interests. **ASU's Politics, Culture and Society in Ghana** program from **May 20th to July 1st** is the perfect program to better understand my interests in policy, international business, human rights, and international development. I am especially interested in the development of Africa and eliminating the negative connotations associated with the continent. My career goal is to work for a U.S. agency specializing in public and international affairs, and so this period abroad will give me vital experience I will be able to cherish and use for the rest of my life.
3. Over the course of this study abroad program, ten other ASU students and I will get to study the culture, politics and society of Ghana. We also will have the opportunity to explore international relationships between the U.S. and Ghana. We will travel throughout the state of Ghana to places such as the Cape Coast Castle, Volta Lake, local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), the W.E.B. Du Bois Center, the National Parliament, and the Gold Mines in Obuasi. All of this will be combined with classes at the University of Ghana. In addition, we will work with the Ghana Constitution Review and the Women in Peace and Security Network-Africa to gain practical experience with governmental affairs and non-profit work. I will help advocate for women's rights, work on policy issues, and help review Ghana's new constitution. This study abroad and internship experience is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I am extremely excited for.
4. As you can imagine, embarking on this on this trip depends on financial support. The program fee is \$2,845, which does not include tertiary fees, day to day meals, international airfare, and personal and medical expenses. The program fee does include all tuition, housing, local transportation, excursions, and workshop events. My fundraising goal is **\$1,000** to cover those expenses not included in the program fee. So far, I have been fortunate enough to receive a tuition waiver, earn an academic scholarship, and work part-time to help fund my expenses, but this is not enough. I ask for your help in making a donation towards this study abroad program in Ghana. Your contributions will help me complete my university program requirements and will help me take part in life-

changing opportunity.

5. The following table details my current financial situation:

Program Fee for Ghana	\$2,800
Travel Fees	\$1,800-\$2,300
Meals	\$600
Personal Expenses (Wi-Fi, calling cards, etc.)	\$500
Medical Fees	\$400
Books and Supplies	\$100
Application and Confirmation Deposit	\$450
Parents' Contribution	\$300
Estimated Earnings through Work and Scholarships	\$5,000

REMAINING NEED: \$1,000

6. I hope you can help me reach my goal. I hope you see the value in what will be accomplished during my time abroad, and I would be extremely grateful if you could help sponsor my participation in this trip. By making a contribution of any amount towards my goal, you would be helping me achieve my dream. Your company can reach me in one of three ways:

- Phone/ E-mail
- Residential Address
- Also contributions can be sent to the ASU Scholarship Office: P.O. Box 870412, Tempe, AZ 85287-0412. If you choose this option, please include my name, ASU affiliate ID number, and program term on the check.
Please note that contributions are NOT tax deductible.

7. I would be happy to meet with you at any time to discuss my academic achievements, extracurricular activities, and more about the program in Ghana. If you would like to meet, please contact me at _____. Also, if you wish, I would be happy to keep you informed of my progress throughout the summer with updates from Ghana via my personal blog. On my blog, I would recognize my sponsors by listing those that have been so generous on my behalf. In addition, I would be more than willing to give a presentation and/ or write an article about my experiences in Ghana for your organization. Upon completion, I will also be able to make a valuable contribution to our great community.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration, and I hope to meet with you soon!

Sincerely,
(Your Name)

Understanding the Sample Letter

Getting the Full Picture

*Note: All gray highlighted sections in the sample letter are important personal details that should always be changed to your specific information. These notes are meant to help you better understand the main points to take away from each section of this sample letter.

1. Right off the bat, the student has begun to introduce and tell the reader about herself – what she is interested in, what her concentrations are, and some of her own personal accolades. **Creating a short and sweet introduction draws the reader into your letter** and encourages them to read more. The key to the introduction is to keep it simple; if you are too long-winded right away, it can be a turn-off for your potential sponsors.
2. In this section, the student elaborates on her concentration and introduces the program itself. Notice how she explains why this program is so important to her – it will give her a chance to experience Africa first-hand and pave the way for her future career. **Explaining why a program means so much to you is critical because sponsors want to support students that are really going to make the most of their opportunities.** It does not matter if you are studying art history in Florence or urban planning in Brazil – as long as you are passionate and genuine, sponsors will respond to you!
3. In this section, the student begins to describe the program in further detail. You do not need to make an exhaustive list like this if you do not want to – the main idea is to communicate what specific parts of the program excite you. **Passion and vigor are key components** of the entire letter, but especially in this section. Write with a positive and energetic tone that makes the sponsor excited for you to go on this program!
4. Asking for a gift is always the most difficult part of the letter, but there are a few key tips that can help you ask in a way that is polite and effective! Firstly, **be confident.** If you clearly state what your goals are, as this student did, you are telling the potential sponsor exactly what you are looking for. Secondly, explain what you have done so far to support yourself. **Illustrating your own initiative** in going abroad is a way to show just how committed you are to studying abroad. Lastly, tell them exactly how their gift would be used and why it would support you. This student did a great job detailing how a sponsorship could potentially help her positively influence the lives of others. **Being up front and honest** is an important step that can be extremely rewarding.
5. **Breaking down the costs of your program** is a good way to show to prospective donors the physical analysis of your program costs. This is important because many institutions need to show in more detail what their philanthropy is going towards. It also emphasizes the secondary costs for things like airfare and books that often go overlooked.

6. Here, **it is important to stress how a sponsor’s contribution will help you.** You have built the letter up by highlighting your interests, goals, and situation – now is the time to ask for a gift. Once again, it is important to tell your reader how their impact will be felt. You can also use the information from the ASU Scholarship Office to have gifts sent directly to that department. **Please note that gifts of this nature cannot be issued a tax-deductible receipt.**

7. When concluding, it is important to demonstrate **your sincere appreciation of a sponsor’s gift.** By pledging to keep them informed, create a special project when you return, or mention their generosity in other ways (like a blog), **companies will see that they too stand to gain from supporting you!** Always close with a thank you, and be sure to leave plenty of contact information.



Student Testimonial

The way that I have received the most money is through the letter that I sent out to basically everyone I could think of. Friends, family, coworkers and a few businesses that I've had any kind of connection to in the past have been extremely supportive. A good connector for them was the fact that I had various outlets where they could keep track of me and see what I'm doing. I would have to say the letter is the biggest thing to get out asking for donations. But having social media sites for sponsors to get to know me and contact me and keep up with me I think encouraged them a bit more to help out. Different sponsors were impressed with different areas, so providing as much information as I could think of was the best route for me.

For instance, one private owned business I sent a letter to did not respond, so I went in to their business and casually talked with them. Then I suggested that they "like" my Facebook page for my program group. Once they did that, they were able to see links to things I had done and what I planned to do in the near future. They were so impressed with me so that they ultimately donated to my cause!

The letter is key, as is following up with the sponsors through social media.

One last note- I think it's a good idea to NOT to ONLY send your letters and request for donations to the people you are closest to and feel comfortable asking for money from. I have a very large family and, while they were supportive, the majority of my support has come from relatives that I have never even met, neighbors, business contacts from years ago, etc. This was surprising! I was skeptical at first to ask these people for money, but they helped out the most!

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