



# The View From the Top

A Toolkit for Refining the Vision of  
Crowdfunding in Your District

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## A Toolkit for Refining the Vision of Crowdfunding in Your District

Crowdfunding can be an empowering practice for teachers, schools and districts. It can spark creativity, promote autonomy and fuel innovation in teaching and learning. Crowdfunding platforms are easily accessible and teachers are using them. Perfect, right?

Not exactly. When individuals donate money to employees of public organizations, things get complex—and the technology itself cannot adequately manage the process of fundraising for public schools. Districts need to put a policy and process in place.

However, not all crowdfunding policies are effective at mitigating risks for districts and maximizing opportunities for teachers. Those with too much governance lead to missed opportunities and those with too little governance lead to financial risk. So, how can districts find the right balance?

### **START AT THE TOP.**

Superintendents need to set a thoughtful vision for crowdfunding so that district leaders in finance, operations and innovation can work together to create an informed and balanced policy that makes sense for the district and empowers teachers.

In this toolkit we've identified four steps that will help you refine the vision for crowdfunding in your district. Read each step and reflect. Then summarize your thoughts and share them with your team.

## 1

## How Does Crowdfunding Work in Education?

Below are some examples of how crowdfunding platforms can be used to support teaching and learning. Which of these examples should your district support? Which of these examples should not be supported by your district?

|    | EXAMPLE  | SUPPORT | DON'T SUPPORT |
|----|--|---------|---------------|
| 1  | A teacher requests bean bags for his classroom. The bean bags are sent to his school.  |         |               |
| 2  | A teacher requests money for a guest author to speak at a school assembly. The money is deposited into the district's account.   |         |               |
| 3  | A teacher requests a subscription to a math app for her new class set of iPads. The money for the subscription is sent directly to the software company.                                     |         |               |
| 4  | A teacher requests money for a pizza party for his class. The money is deposited into his bank account.  |         |               |
| 5  | A teacher requests funding for art supplies for her classroom. The teacher receives credits that she can use to purchase 20 paint brushes and 10 canvases. The items are sent to her school. |         |               |
| 6  | A teacher requests money to attend a professional conference. The money is deposited into the school's account but credited to the teacher's account.  |         |               |
| 7  | A teacher requests money for winter coats and hats for several of her students in need. The money is deposited into her bank account.  |         |               |
| 8  | A school requests money for the 8th grade trip to Washington D.C. A check addressed to the school is mailed to the school.   |         |               |
| 9  | A school requests money for a new playground. The money is deposited into the district's bank account.   |         |               |
| 10 | An after school dance program requests money for a holiday recital. The money is deposited into the program's bank account.  |         |               |

### Reflect

Which scenarios are you OK with? Which scenarios are **NOT** OK with you?

Do you notice any patterns in your responses when it comes to who makes the request, what is requested and how it's fulfilled?

# 2

## Set Boundaries: What Can and Can't Be Crowdfunded?

At a high level, there are two important boundaries that need to be set for crowdfunding to be implemented successfully: the maximum dollar amount of a request and the donation categories that should be included and excluded from crowdfunding.

Identifying a maximum dollar amount for crowdfunding requests will create a clear distinction between the process for crowdfunding and the process for procurement. Identifying the categories that cannot be crowdfunded will help the district avoid situations that can lead to a misuse of funds or a funding stream conflict.

### Reflect

Does your district have a maximum dollar amount for crowdfunding? For example, anything less than \$1,000 can be crowdfunded, but anything over \$1,000 must go through the district's procurement process. If it does not, what do you think it should be? If it does, should it remain the same?

### Reflect

Here are some examples of the types of donations teachers and schools request through crowdfunding.

|                  |             |                        |
|------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Furniture        | Field Trips | Facility Upgrades      |
| School Supplies  | Hardware    | After School Programs  |
| Compensation     | Software    | Scholarships           |
| Student Clothing | Curriculum  | Classroom Celebrations |

Has your district identified which categories can and cannot be crowdfunded? If so, do the boundaries feel right? If not, is there anything you think should be excluded?

# 3

## What Outcomes Should Your District Optimize?

What else matters to your district? Crowdfunding tools have different capabilities and can promote various outcomes such as more choice for teachers or better data for tracking financials. Below is a list of some potential outcomes and how they relate to the platform comparison chart.

| OUTCOMES   | WHERE TO LOOK IN THE PLATFORM COMPARISON CHART |
|--|--|
| Maximize requesting and spending flexibility for teachers in a secure way. | Request   Fulfill                              |
| Heighten administrator oversight of campaigns.                             | Verification   Receiver   Approver             |
| Ensure administrator awareness of received donations.                      | Receiver   Report                              |
| Expand opportunities to access additional funding streams.                 | Access   |
| Increase exposure of campaigns beyond the user's personal network.         | Exposure                                       |
| Ensure appropriateness of requests.  | Approver                                       |
| Gain access to in-depth data about campaigns within a school or district.  | Report   |

### Reflect

Which outcomes are most important to your district? Why?

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Now look at the corresponding criteria in the platform comparison chart to find out which platform(s) best support each outcome.

# 4

## How Will the District Approach These Common Concerns?

While some tools can help districts avoid common concerns, none of them can mitigate every risk. Districts need to ensure that policy, process and platforms work together in concert to maximize the benefits of crowdfunding.

### Reflect

How will your district approach some of these common concerns? Put a checkmark in the column(s) that you think would be best.

| COMMON CONCERN   | POLICY | PROCESS | PLATFORM |
|--|--------|---------|----------|
| Is the <b>purpose</b> of the campaign educationally appropriate?   |        |         |          |
| Does the campaign <b>protect</b> private information? (E.g. student, teacher, district)                  |        |         |          |
| Does the request <b>align</b> with district initiatives? (E.g. academic, social)                         |        |         |          |
| Does the request <b>meet</b> the district's technology requirements?                                     |        |         |          |
| Does the campaign <b>use positive language</b> to describe students, teachers and staff in the district? |        |         |          |

### My Vision

What's the vision of crowdfunding for your district? Write a summary of your thoughts.

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# What's Next?

You've done the work, now it's time to share your vision with your team! Use your reflections to get started revising your district's crowdfunding policy and process, and make sure that your vision is well reflected. Then, take another look at the platform comparison chart and identify which platform(s) best meets your needs.

## PLATFORM COMPARISON CHART

| Criteria  | HOW IT WORKS            |   |                 |                           |                              | HOW IT MANAGES  |                           | HOW IT HELPS |        |
|---|-------------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------|
|   | User                    | Verification  | Request         | Fulfill                   | Receiver                     | Approver        | Report                    | Exposure     | Access |
|  Adopt A Classroom.org                       | Teachers                | User account must be associated with a verified school/district               | Goods           | Credit for Goods          | School                       | Not Applicable  | Teacher, School, District | No           | Yes    |
|  CLASSWALLET<br>(With GoFundMe Integration) | Teachers, Schools       | User account must be associated with a licensed district                      | Money, Goods    | Credit for Goods or Money | District                     | School/District | Teacher, School, District | Yes          | No     |
|  DonorsChoose.org                          | Teachers (Public only)  | User account must be associated with a verified school/district (Public only) | Goods           | Direct Purchase           | School                       | Platform        | Teacher, School, District | Yes          | Yes    |
|  FUNDLY                                    | Teachers, Organizations | Not verified  | Money           | Direct Deposit            | Teacher, Organization        | Not Applicable  | Teacher                   | No           | No     |
|  gofundme                                  | Teachers, Organizations | Not verified  | Money           | Direct Deposit            | Teacher, Organization        | Not Applicable  | Unavailable               | No           | No     |
|  livingtree                                | Teachers, Schools       | User account must be associated with a licensed district                      | Money           | Direct Deposit            | District                     | School/District | Teacher, School, District | Yes          | No     |
|  PledgeCents                               | Teachers, Organizations | User account must be associated with a verified school/district               | Money, Services | Check, Direct Purchase    | School, Organization, Vendor | Platform        | Teacher                   | No           | No     |

The term "organization" refers to a group that is associated with a school, but not financially supported by the school such as an after-school program, a community group or a parent-teacher association. The term "teacher" refers to any school-based staff.

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