



## Contents

- Purpose
- What is crowdfunding?
- How does crowdfunding work?
- What does it cost to use a crowdfunding website?
- How do I start a crowdfunding campaign?
- Crowdfunding Websites

## Purpose

Many people with disabilities use Assistive Technology (AT). AT items can cost a lot. Crowdfunding is a new way to raise money to pay for these items. This tip sheet can help you decide if crowdfunding is a good choice for you.

***Assistive Technology (AT):*** AT or adapted equipment means any item a person needs to keep up or do better in school or at work, or to help with daily activities. There are many kinds of AT items. They can help people walk, talk or hear, and more. AT services help a person to choose, get or use the AT item.

## What is crowdfunding?

Crowd-sourced funding, best known as crowdfunding, is a new way to raise funds to support a cause or meet a need. This includes fundraising for personal causes or medical needs, such as buying assistive technology (AT) items.

Crowdfunding is done online, using a computer or a smartphone. It relies on peer-to-peer networking on social media platforms, most often Facebook and Twitter. Successful crowdfunding may also include reaching out to local newspapers, or radio and TV stations.

## How does crowdfunding work?

People or groups use fundraising websites to set up crowdfunding accounts to ask for donations. First, fundraisers write statements that tell their stories. They describe what they need and ask others for donations. Next, they make a plan to spread the word about their campaign. Then they share their news and updates on social media.

## What does it cost to use a crowdfunding website?

Many crowdfunding sources charge a fee to raise money on their websites. Fees range from 3% to 15% of the donation total. In other words, based on a 5% fee, the site would charge \$5.00 on a donation of \$100.

Crowdfunding uses a third party to collect the funds. Most often, the third party is a credit card company or PayPal. The companies charge for each donation made. The usual charge for this is 2.9% of the amount donated, plus a \$.30 charge for each donation. In other words, the third party would charge \$3.20 for a donation of \$100.

Crowdfunding sites use one of two models. One is “keep it all”. The other is “all or nothing”. Some sites offer both models. The “keep it all” model allows fundraisers to access funds right away, and keep all donations. The “all or nothing” model means fundraisers have to set goals. If the goals are not met,

all funds are returned to those who made donations.

## How do I start a crowdfunding campaign?

Follow the steps below to get started. If you don't use social media, reach out to family and friends for help. And check out the crowdfunding sites listed below for more information and support.

1. **Set up Facebook and/or Twitter accounts** if you don't have them. Reach out to family and friends to let them know about your campaign.
2. **Research crowdfunding websites.** Look at the most successful fundraisers on the sites. Check out site reviews. Read their rules, including tax information. Study funding models and figure out the cost to use each site. Some sites tell you how to let others know about your fundraising.
3. **Take time to write your statement.** Your story should be brief and clear. It should inspire people to give to your cause. Adding high-quality photos will help tell your story. Some sites allow you to submit videos.
4. **Describe the assistive technology device you want to buy.** Tell people what you need, and why you need it. Include a photo of the device or an online link, if you have one.
5. **Create an outreach plan.** Use the social media on the crowdfunding sites to get word out to family and friends. Ask them to share your story. Most fundraising sites are connected to Facebook and Twitter. Sites that include videos are connected to YouTube.

6. **Be patient and don't give up!** Ask twice. Share personal and campaign updates on the site and on social media. And don't forget to thank your donors!
7. **Consider holding an event to kick-off your campaign.** Share news about the event and your campaign with local media outlets.

## Crowdfunding Websites

### [Gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com)

- Free website
- Payment processing fee of 2.9% of each donation + \$.30 per transaction
- Personal causes, and musicians, inventors, and businesses
- Option to use Facebook to set up campaign
- Customer support
- Keep it all or All or nothing

### [Fundrazr.com](https://www.fundrazr.com)

- Fee-based website (5% site fee; plus credit card fee of 2.9% of each donation + \$.30 per transaction)
- Personal, charitable, entrepreneurial, creative, and political causes
- Direct integration with Facebook and Twitter
- Based in Canada
- Keep it all or All or nothing

### Rally.org

- Fee-based website (5% site fee; plus credit card fee of 2.9% of each donation + \$.30 per transaction)
- Personal and groups, social causes and nonprofits
- “Online Fundraising 101” FAQ
- Keep it all

### Fundly.com

- Fee-based website (4.9% site fee; plus credit card fee of 2.9% of each donation + \$.30 per transaction)
- Personal, charitable and political causes
- Option to get started with Facebook
- Free mobile app to manage campaign by phone
- Keep it all

***Disclaimer:*** This tip sheet is for information only. It cannot guarantee funding. Iowa Compass makes regular updates to give current and accurate information. We cannot be held liable for any outdated or incorrect information.

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