A Dissident’sGuide to

Political Crowdfunding

By the collective behind **FIREFUND.com**

Introduction

FIREFUND is a political collective of activists. Starting out in a small, smelly office in Copenhagen, we began coding a crowdfunding platform as a tool for activists to build capacity from their solidarity ties with friends abroad.

This document are for activists with a political project

*FIREFUND.com is a platform for activists with a political project and this document is written for these activists. Our intention is to give you some starting points, if you are considering using FIREFUND as a tool in your protest, campaign, your direct action, strike, demonstration, co-op or whatever strategy you find relevant in achieving your political goals.*

This document is for activists who are new to political crowdfunding

*This document is also written for activists who are somewhat new to the concept of crowdfunding and especially the concept of political crowdfunding. If you've done similar campaigning earlier this might still give you new ideas or perspectives.*

*If you want to read about the platform in general, check out the* website*. This document is not an introduction to FIREFUND, what we do and how we do it.*

Finally, this is NOT a complete and perfect guide for awesome firefunds. This is a go-to resource that might give you an idea of what kind of questions you need to be answering to get started.

We really hope you can use it. We love feedback and critique - but most important: Don't be a stranger! Reach out to your nearest firefund-activist!

You can get in contact with FIREFUND in multiple ways, and also in a way that fits your level of security. Start by sending us an email on firefund@riseup.net, attach your public key if you want to be in contact via encrypted email. If you prefer we can also use signal or Wickr. Specify this in your email, and we can start communicating securely.

With solidarity, The FIREFUND collective

**Our vision of crowdfunding**

We aim to build solidarity

Using crowdfunding as a tool for the movements is a way of connecting, supporting and empowering the struggles that take place every day, all over the world. We can use the strength we have in numbers against those who only have strength in power or money.

We are not alone - we are everywhere. This is the potential we want to unleash and use for our benefit, creating direct solidarity.

We aim to build capacity

The struggle for social justice is global and we should be ready for it. Supporting each other in raising funds and spreading awareness creates ties and networks that help us become bigger and stronger.

By using crowdfunding we aim to build capacity. Crowdfunding requires us to reach out to likeminded for support and help. By creating this link we are already building stronger ties that can be used for political action.

We aim to build awareness

We want to use crowdfunding as a tool to raise awareness for struggles that take place and inspire each other to move ahead. This is the benefit of crowdfunding; raising funds and raising awareness becomes the same thing. The more awareness a campaign reaches, the more likely it is to succeed. Thus, crowdfunding can be used for creating direct solidarity, strengthening the movement and gaining support all at the same time.

This is why we build FIREFUND.

Our mission

Our mission with FIREFUND is to create a direct link between donations, awareness and direct action. We want to abolish the mediators of funding and support. We seek to create a platform where activists, movements and supporters are put in contact with each other through a direct link where the decisions and terms are made by those using it. We want to make the path from support and solidarity to political change shorter. We believe that by putting focus into raising funds for political change creates stronger ties, more awareness, better capacity and a better chance of creating social change from the bottom.

Before the campaign:

1. Defining the project

2. Creating a narrative

3. Deciding on a crowdfunding model

4. Preparing the campaign for launch

1. DEFINING THE PROJECT

From political project to a FIREFUND

We will now be digging into some of the more concrete tools for getting ready for a FIREFUND campaign. One of the first things you have to make clear, is what exactly you are funding, what it contains, why it is important, how you will spend the money after funding them and how you are going to express it to people.

Having a defined a clear project you want to fund makes it easier for people to understand, and later commit to donating to your campaign. We will walk through some of the basic tips on this page.

NEED TO BE: Concrete

First of all, the project needs to be concrete and clear. What are you funding? This also has a lot to do with budgeting, which we will get more into later, but to start off with, it is really important that you define in the clearest manner what you need the money for. If people should be convinced to support your campaign, they need to know what their money and efforts are used for specifically, not just in fluffy terms.

NEED TO BE: Urgent

Urgency is also a key word. You want to create the understanding that it is important that people donate to your project.

Discuss in your group why it is important that people donate for your campaign. What are the consequences if you reach your goal? What are they if you don’t? The important thing to keep in mind here, is that you have much better circumstances for receiving donations if you explain the urgency than if you seem like you are well off either way.

It is all about having faith and confidence in your project and passing this mind-set on to potential donors. And quite frankly, if you cannot explain why it is important and urgent, then maybe you should re-consider doing a crowdfunding campaign.

NEED TO BE: In a budget

When raising funds for something, presenting a budget is something that really helps people understand the urgency. By budget we do not necessarily mean an excel ark with tons of numbers. Just a simple visualization of how the money will be spent.

2. CREATING A NARRATIVE

Find out who your target group is. By target group, we mean the group of people you imagine will donate.

Are you reaching out to the antifa community then you should probably pick a language, argumentation and symbolism that fit that group. On the other hand, if you expect to get the majority of your donations from parties in parliament or formal organizations, you should probably tone down the riot-porn and balaclava-selfies.

Having found your target group, you can get started on your narrative. What is the story you are telling and how is it communicated? What means of communication will you be using to promote your campaign? What type of music will play in your video? Which groups will you contact to help share the campaign, what colors will you be using, etc.

You can spend a lot of time with the narrative going into all the details or you can make a general idea of what story you want to tell with your campaign. The important thing is that you think about who you want to reach, and how – it is a lot of hard work, but you will benefit from it later, we promise!

3. DECIDE ON A CROWDFUNDING MODEL

After you have figured out your budget and how you are going to use the money you will be funding, the next step is to decide what type of funding model you will be using. Is it essential to reach the goal in order to put your ideas into action? Do you have different milestones according to how much you can reach? Do you need all the help you can get, big or small?

You can choose between 2 models:

**The ‘all or nothing’ model.** With pledged donations only, you will only get the funding if the goal is reached.

**The Milestone model.**

You set different goals on a big budget. You reach it all you can use the money for the full package, but you can use smaller goals also. This allows you to ensure different amounts during the campaign.

Also try discussing the elements of your budget in the light of “nice to have” and “need to have”. If all of the elements end on the “need to have” list, maybe the all or nothing model is the right choice, if most of them are “nice to have”, then maybe the ‘anything goes’ model is the right one etc.

4. PREPARING THE CAMPAIGN FOR LAUNCH

"Plans are useless, but planning is essential!"

The key to a successful crowdfunding campaign is in the planning. The more sure you are about who will do what, when they will do it and with what purpose, the bigger your chances are at succeeding and reaching your goal, perhaps even exceeding your expectations.

A crucial mistake to make is to figure out what to do after the campaign has started. You will soon realize that two weeks or 30 days is not as much time as you thought.

This is where this guide should help. There is a lot of stuff you can do, but it all requires you to get organized, make plans and realize them. We will not tell you what do to, but hopefully inspire you to know for yourself and your campaign.

We will now be digging into some of the activities and organizing tips, that has shown themselves useful before, in crowdfunding as well as any other campaigns.

During the campaign

First, we’ll start looking at some of the ways you can get your campaign group organized, in order to realize the goals you have set up for yourselves.

BE A CROWD: Decentralize leadership and ownership

This is really essential to political crowdfunding and political organizing anno 2016. A brilliant aspect of using the internet as a mobilizing platform is that, in theory, you can reach the entire world.

Another positive aspect about political crowdfunding is that you can be almost certain that in many different countries around the world, your country or your city, there is a group working with the same struggle as you towards the same goal, who would love to see you succeed.

Use this!

Reach out to your fellow comrades, tell them about your project and ask them for help. Include them. In other words: Decentralize ownership of the campaign. Be a crowd.

When in contact with these groups, organizations or individuals, try to figure out at what level they want to participate on, what they can contribute with and how they want to do it. Do they bring ideas to the table, do they have something to offer, do they know more than you about reaching the target group in their area?

If you succeed in sharing ownership over the campaign and the wish to succeed, the next step is to **decentralize the leadership.**

This needs to be done no matter what scale you are working on, if it’s your local community, the whole country and especially if it is an international campaign. The important part is to share the common goal and work together.

If people are on board and want to see you succeed, and are even able to participate on many of their own terms, you will end up with a strong team of crowdfunding ninjas working their ass off to reach the goal. Again: Be a crowd.

WHO: Meet-ups /Campaign Group /HQ

**Campaign group:** As we mentioned before, planning is everything. A whole other thing is coordinating and implementing your planning into action. For this, a campaign group is a really effective tool. The basic objective of the campaign group is making sure that everything is going according to plan. Keeping track of the schedule, making sure there are people on the tasks that needs to be executed, making sure the right materials are produced, coordinating activists. In general keeping an overview of the plan and making sure it is followed through. How hierarchical you want to keep this, is of course up to you and your general way of organizing. The only thing we can say from experience is that, according to your ambitions and funding goal of course, it is often too much work for one person, hence the group.

**Meet-ups**. Meet-ups is a really effective tool to boost the reach of your campaign. Setting up an event where you invite people supportive of your cause and work together in a limited amount of time, while chilling the fuck out, can get you really far in terms of outreach, support and/or disposure. You can have several of these during the campaign, depending on your needs.

These meet ups can be made both physically where you are based and operate, as well as online. If you succeed at reaching out to an international, or just bigger than your community, network, these events can be hosted on social media as well.

The meet-ups are smart in the sense that when you get people together, they motivate each other and you can be able to get really far in your outreach with just a few hours of work, get more people included and in that way quite effectively decentralize ownership.

**Headquaters**. Setting up a central base from where all the planning and coordinating takes place, makes coordination a lot easier and more effective. If you have a central place where people can be directed towards, turn up, come and give the latest news etc. You will be working twice as fast, plus it gets easier to keep track of all you activities and your schedule if you keep the planning in a central space.

This can also be done online, for example in a chat group a thread on reddit etc, but we definitely want to recommend you to have a physical headquarter, if it is a local campaign engaging your local community.

HOW: Making plans and making sure they are realized.

A TIMELINE

For the activities you want to make, who will do them and when, can be all or nothing when it comes to carrying out plans, depending on your ambitions of course.

Try finding out how many hours everyone on your team has to carry out actions and coordinate, maybe pr. week during the campaign. Find out what actions you want to carry out, estimate how much time they will take to carry out, and then compare this to the hours everyone put off and the total amount of time you have.

When planning activities and coordinating work you also get a lot more control of keeping track on the campaign.

DO WHAT ACTIVISTS DO

Mobilize. When it comes to raising awareness and getting people to support your campaign, there is little difference from organizing a demonstration, an action, a workshop, festival or presentation. The same methods work.

The difference between classic crowdfunding and political solidary crowdfunding is that you are not selling anything. You are reminding a crowd of people that, right now, they should put their resources into something they know is important. Having people giving some money, or spending time raising them for your campaign is not a very different commitment as to go to an event or a protest – you just need to make them understand that it is important.

Therefore, the same methods of mobilizing solidarity and raising funds will most likely work out.

You will probably know more about which mobilizing strategies is most likely to succeed in your community. You know best and the following chapter are just ideas for inspiration.

Content & Activities

During the campaign there are a lot of different tools to be used to spread information about your campaign, making people understand the urgency, what you are raising funds for, and get support for your campaign.

It is with these materials, as with everything else: Your imagination sets the limit and most definitely there are many more options than the ones we will be presenting, but we've gathered a list of some tools that has shown themselves to be successful over and over again.

Video and materials

*Good* video material is by far the most successful method to getting information out about your campaign. A video talks to future supporters on many levels. You can present information in an exciting manor while also providing visuals and sound that frames the narrative around the story you are telling. A good video takes time to make, and it should therefore be a priority if you decide to make it. If you do not feel like you have the resources to produce a video that matches your ambitions, the energy is better put in other activities.

Videos fall under the category of shareable materials. It is like passing out flyers – you just don’t have to go out on the street, but you can broadcast it worldwide instantly.

The same goes for pictures, GIF’s and even the good old flyers and posters can be made viral.

You need to prepare this content to express what you are doing, what you want people to do and why to do it, while creating a narrative for yourself and your campaign that will make people tell their friends about your awesome project.

You should also write articles, press releases and use the media as a platform to spread your campaign.

SoMe-strategy Being on social media is, if not essential, then A REALLY GOOD IDEA. For the reasons mentioned above.

Social media is super effective, and even more effective if you spent a little time thinking about and planning how you use it. The social media is something that can also be used in different scales. If you have the resources, in theory, you can choose to present new content and materials to be shared, every day on every social media. Most groups will not be able to pull this procedure, so in most cases you will have to choose 1 or more platforms you are going to focus on, and then plan what you will post when. Social media can be used for a lot of things, so it is also just a matter of being creative.

Again, planning can make a huge difference in the result of your social media strategy. If you have a master plan for what should happen and when, you will find yourself in a lot of control and much better overview than if you open your computer every day and ask: ”should I post something today? What should it be?”. Another point is that you and your crowd can coordinate Twitter-storms or making people donating their facebook-updates through thunderclap or other Some-channels. Then you’ll reach out for good. A well-planned strategy is also needed to decentralize the leadership on the communication-effort during the campaign. And it is definitely a good fall-back position to go to, if the campaign is going slow.

Final check-list / good practices

Here’s a list of basic things that are good to have under control during a campaign:

Shared content

If you are more people on the coordinating team, try to make sure that you share the content you produce, so that everyone has the timeline, activist plan, press material by hand. No gatekeepers, no bottlenecks!

Continuous production

Keep producing materials and plans during the campaign. Put time in your week schedules for this. Make sure you put of the time to be able to react on ex. critique, shaming or unexpected solidarity. This can also help you be fast and reactive on the way the campaign seems to be going. Should you do more?

Design manual

Continuous production is made easy by having a design manual, as a shared content. This way you will always be able to produce more flyers, photos, videos etc. that follows your narrative, because you already settled on how your expression is – and if you did it well, you do not have to organize a bureaucracy to verify and correct all content before it is shipped online.

Review and spellchecks

Always spellcheck and review. No matter how big of a hurry you are in, make sure you have time to read it through. Be certain that you will get the kind of exposure you are hoping to. Everybody makes type-O’s, but it looks like you are way more in charge of your shit if they are not there.

Recurring and constant evaluation

Be sure to evaluate what you are doing, and how it is working and do not wait until the campaign is over. How much depends on you but having a “how is it going according to plan and ambition” meeting every week, every three days or even every day is something that can really better your result because you are also learning throughout the whole process.

Use your network & local community

Our kind of crowdfunding depends on solidarity - from our friends, comrades and network, both locally and internationally. Therefore the usage of your network is essential for your campaign to succeed.

You have to think strategic and be creative at the same time to be able to use the full potential of your political network. This is relevant before you launch your campaign and all the way to your goal.

Of course we recommend you to always stay in contact with your network continuously - keeping them updated, mobilize more activists and make sure everyone is onboard with the plan - but we want you to think out of the box to build even more capacity and assuring that you reach your goal.

Research done on crowdfunding shows that early funding is essential for a campaign to succeed. The basic idea is that the closer a campaign is to achieving its goal, the more people will chip in to fill the remaining gap, as people in general act on what other people do. Seen in a positive light, this means that it is easier to get campaigns done than it is to even get them started. Seen the other way around, it means that getting started is actually the hardest part, as it will only get easier from that point onwards.

Ensuring that you have a guaranteed amount of initial funding can be used to signal to people that your campaign is really doing well, increasing the possibility that they will also donate.

Initial funding

So how do you get that initial funding? This is something that you have to consider, and thankfully, a lot of options exist, especially if you have done a well-organized soft launch.

Having connections established, throwing support parties, handing out flyers, ringing doorbells and other 'old school' funding methods will become a lot easier carrying out. As the initial funding (say, around 30 percent) requires a lower amount money to be donated, this would be somewhat easier to collect than collecting for the campaign as a whole. And that's a plus!

With that being said, getting early funding i.e. by having 33 % of your goal reached within the first three days is not a guarantee that your campaign will succeed. Let's say your campaign has reached 90 % of your goal with five days left. There might be the possibility that funding stops because people believe that "others" will do the rest, and if everyone thinks so, the campaign will fail. This is why it is a good idea getting in contact - already before you launch your campaign - with i.e. organizations that are able to pledge the remaining, say, 1000 $ in case the campaign won't get it from elsewhere. This can be one way of thinking in alternate funding opportunities.

Get creative - old school still rocks

If your campaign is already running but you need the final pledges to reach your goal, we are sure that it will help you to 'go old school'. Crowdfunding is dependent of the social medias, but that doesn't mean that you can't get money out of your local community like you have been doing for years. We recommend you to throw a party and donate the profit to your campaign. Or go out there and ring some doorbells, hand out flyers or whatever you are able to do. The main point for us is that you use your network the best way possible. And we believe that you are able to be creative in your own community while building capacity. This will heighten the visibility of your campaign around your neighborhood and can be used for more awareness on social medias as well. At last, this might be the way to reach your final goal and succeed. And hey - who doesn't love a good support party for the right cause?

AFTER THE CAMPAIGN

Prepare the ending

Just as the launch and the full campaign will be thankful for planning and preparing, so will the ending. Both the last days of the campaign and in the aftermath in the week after of the campaign. If you succeed or fail you will need to know what you will communicate, where and how. Finishing a campaign with style has a lot of advantages such as keeping supporters content with their choice of supporting, keeping support for the next time you use it, future reputation and networking.

Aftermath communication

Success or failure, when finishing up a project of any sort, there needs to be some sort of post-communication. There is no doubt it is much more enjoyable to communicate success than a failure, but regardless of the result they are mutually important.

It can be a good idea to thank the people helping out and supporting, explaining your next move and give a little evaluation of the process and your situation as a group. .

Debriefing

Debriefing a campaign is really important, for many different parts because it is here you learn from what you just did. If everything was a big success, you can do it another time, or maybe just the essential parts that were *most* important. Also, debriefing just makes you sure if everyone is on the same page. If the right people know they have been a good help, if you agree on what was successful or not, what could have been done different and would the outcome have been.

Contribute to the FIREFUND community

Debriefing will also allow you to do something we highly recommend; contributing to the firefund community. Share your experiences with other activists who have done the same, or are about to. Let them know what you learned from the process, what others could do, what they shouldn’t do. Share contacts and network, material, etc. and help contribute to more successful campaigns in the future.

Feedback FIREFUND

After you figure out what you did wrong and right, please let FIREFUND know the same, from your point of view. What were your expectations for the cooperation, did it follow through? How was communication? How has the experience been as a whole? Just as with the community, we can use this to better ourselves and be better at facilitating crowdfunding, which in the end will mean more happy activists with successful funding.

Conclusion:

We really hope this guide has been useful and that you now have a clearer idea of what to do and what it takes when starting out a crowdfunding through FIREFUND.

If the info in this guide seemed obvious, then it seems you were ready to start a crowdfunding after all, and in that case you should just go nuts. If there are still questions unanswered or stuff you are in doubt about – feel free to write us and ask. That way we can also make sure these questions or doubts are added to the guide for future use.

Either way, we wish you the best of luck on your crowdfunding campaign and look forward to cooperate with you. We hope you will soon be swimming in dollar bills and solidarity.