

COMPARE: Philanthropy Pitfalls

So you're excited to make a difference, but how can you make sure good intentions translate to a positive impact? Philanthropists need to consider the complexities that come with trying to change the world, like those around relationships, money, and power. In this activity, you'll learn how to recognize and avoid common pitfalls in philanthropy.

Part I

There are a number of common pitfalls that you might encounter in philanthropy. In this part, you will work with your group to analyze one pitfall. Then, you will share your findings with the rest of the class.

1. Follow your teacher's instructions to select one of the topics below. Then, go to that section, study the resource provided, and answer the questions.
 - ☐ [Group 1 - Crowdfunding](#)
 - ☐ [Group 2 - Voluntourism](#)
 - ☐ [Group 3 - Good, Bad, or Scam?](#)
 - ☐ [Group 4- Misdirected Disaster Relief](#)
 - ☐ [Group 5 - Nothing About Us Without Us](#)

Group 1 - Crowdfunding

ARTICLE: [Considering the Role of Crowdfunding in the Philanthropic Landscape](#)

You've probably seen a friend or relative share a crowdfunding campaign and ask for donations. Crowdfunding is a popular way to raise to raise money for individuals or causes. Read the article to learn more about the pros and cons of crowdfunding. Then, answer the questions.

2. Describe your experiences with crowdfunding sites, like GoFundMe or Patreon. Have you ever created a campaign or donated to a campaign?
3. The article makes the following claims about crowdfunding. For each statement, decide whether it is a pro, it's a con, or it's complicated.

a. Crowdfunding can make people feel good about giving directly to someone in need	Pro	Con	Complicated
b. Crowdfunding channels the most support towards people with the most compelling stories.	Pro	Con	Complicated
c. Crowdfunding gives recipients control over how they spend donations.	Pro	Con	Complicated
d. Crowdfunding donors generally don't engage long-term with the campaign's recipients or cause	Pro	Con	Complicated
e. Crowdfunding platforms typically charge lower fees compared to the overhead costs of nonprofit organizations	Pro	Con	Complicated
f. Crowdfunding campaigns have a narrow focus on individuals and do not address broader societal issues	Pro	Con	Complicated

4. Choose one of the statements above and write a brief reflection explaining why you chose the answer you did.
5. Choose one statement where you circled "Con" or "Complicated". What is one way that donors could avoid that potential pitfall?
Note: This could include a strategy for donating to crowdfunding campaigns or an alternative to donating to crowdfunding campaigns.
6. Crowdfunding is a large industry that has grown significantly in recent years. Overall, do you think the growth of crowdfunding has a more positive or negative impact?

Group 2 - Voluntourism

VIDEO: [Poverty is Not a Tourist Attraction](#)

If you've ever looked up volunteer opportunities, chances are you've encountered voluntourism programs. These programs are popular and often targeted at young adults who want to have a positive impact on the world. Watch the video to learn more. Then, answer the questions.

2. Jamilla describes her experience participating in two voluntourism programs. Based on her descriptions, what is voluntourism? Write a definition in your own words.

 3. What is Jamilla's primary criticism of voluntourism programs?

 4. Jamilla describes feeling discomfort about the promotional content created about her volunteer work. Study [this infographic](#) about what you should consider before posting to social media when volunteering or traveling¹. Choose 1 tip and explain why it's important.

 5. Why do you think so many people are drawn towards participating in voluntourism programs?

 6. Your friend was excited about their upcoming volunteer trip, but has started to worry that it might have some of the harmful attributes of voluntourism. Help them brainstorm some more beneficial ways that they could channel their desire to do good. What are some alternatives?
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¹ <https://www.radiaid.com/social-media-guide>

Group 3 - Good, Bad, or Scam?

VIDEO: [The Smart Person's Guide to Giving](#)

When you're ready to donate, how can make sure your donation has a good impact? Watch the video to learn what differentiates a good charity, a bad charity, and a scam. Then, answer the questions.

2. People often evaluate charities by their overhead ratio: the percentage of revenue they spend on programs.
 - a. Fill in the blank: A charity is typically considered good if it spends at least 75% of the money it raises on programs.
 - b. What are the pros and cons of evaluating organizations based on their overhead ratio?
 3. The video mentions the disconnect between the person donating money and the person impacted by the donation. Besides cost-effectiveness, why might it be important to get feedback from those impacted?
 4. What are 3 strategies can you use to avoid scams?
 5. Fill in the blanks: After a disaster, donations to related charities _____
(*increase, decrease, stay the same*) but overall charitable donations _____
(*increase, decrease, stay the same*)
 6. Hypothesize: what might be the advantages of a nonprofit receiving a steady stream of donations, rather than irregular increases and decreases?
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Group 4 - Misdirected Disaster Relief

ARTICLE: [7 Ways You Can Help After a Natural Disaster](#)

After a natural disaster, people want to jump into action to help. Read the article, starting at “Create a fundraiser” to learn about some of the dos and don’ts of disaster relief. Then, answer the questions.

2. What are 2 ways that you can help after a natural disaster?

 3. What are 2 things that you should NOT do after a disaster?

 4. Why is it important to take the time to figure out what supplies are really needed during a natural disaster?

 5. You are considering organizing a supply drive or volunteering after a disaster. How can you learn more about the specific needs in the affected area?

 6. Think about your community relationships, organizations, and networks.
 - a. If you experienced a disaster, who might you turn to for support?

 - b. If you were organizing a supply drive or fundraiser, who would you ask for donations?
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Group 5 - Nothing About Us Without Us

ARTICLE: [Participatory Grantmaking Is Your Future](#)

Philanthropy often excludes the very people who are most impacted by an issue. Read the first 5 paragraphs, stopping at “Nothing about us without us is our beacon at the Disability Inclusion Fund (DIF)”. Then, answer the questions.

2. Why was Whirlwind Wheelchair International’s strategy effective, according to the author?
3. The article describes how the people who fund philanthropic organizations are often disconnected from the people who are impacted by those organizations. What is one disadvantage of that disconnect?

Read the next two paragraphs, starting with “Nothing about us without us is our beacon...” and stopping at “In the committee’s early grantmaking meetings...” Then, answer the question.

4. The author describes how the Disability Inclusion Fund (DIF) uses a committee to making funding decisions. This is an example of “participatory grantmaking”.
 - a. Who is included in DIF’s decision-making committee?
 - b. How does DIF’s approach differ from traditional philanthropy?

Finish reading the article and answer the remaining questions.

5. According to the article, what is one advantage of funding smaller organizations that are less well known?
6. Throughout the article, the author mentions the phrase “Nothing about us without us,” which is often used in disability justice work.
 - a. In your own words, describe what “nothing about us without us” means.
 - b. Why is this an important concept to incorporate in activism and philanthropy?

Part II: Share Out

In Part I, each group focused on a different aspect of philanthropy that includes possible pitfalls. Now, you will summarize what you learned and share the most important takeaways with each other.

7. Complete the chart below for one pitfall described in your group's resource. Then, follow your teacher's directions to share out and complete the table for the other groups.

Group	What is one pitfall to avoid?	Example	How can you avoid this pitfall?
Group 1 The Limitations of Crowdfunding			
Group 2 Voluntourism			
Group 3 Good, Bad, or Scam?			
Group 4 Misdirected Disaster Relief			
Group 5 Nothing About Us Without Us			