



**MICRO-GRANT PROJECT  
TOOLKIT**

Your guide to start and sustain a successful  
community micro-grant dinner.

Brought to you by Jamie Gilcrease,  
with support of her awesome crew!

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# WELCOME!

Wow!

You are about to embark on an incredible journey. A journey of promoting community-based development through crowdfunding, creativity, democracy, trust, dinner and fun!

I started Souper Starz in the small community of Lead/Deadwood, South Dakota in 2015 and in the first four years, raised over \$17,000 for achievers, dreamers and entrepreneurs! But, it never would have been possible if I hadn't watched an amazing man at a conference share his experience about his passion project - Detroit Soup. After reveling in the fact that such a seemingly simple process could bring community together and raise funds for big ideas, I thought, "I have to do this in my community!". After pairing with a local non-profit organization, Souper Starz was off and running.

We are happy to provide a safe, comfortable platform for people to present their big ideas and raise awareness about their projects and, quite possibly, go home with community-sponsored funding. But this is so much more than the money. Souper Starz is about creating an awareness, giving people a voice and bringing communities so much closer. **COMMUNITY OVER COMPETITION.**

So now it's your turn. The guide we have prepared for you is pretty darn comprehensive and should walk you through the process of starting and sustaining Souper Starz in your community. As you get a few dates under your belt, you will get a better feel of what works best and can then make adjustments. I have no doubt that you're going to rock this!

I am very passionate about this project and would like to be able to connect with you along your journey. As you participate, I would love for you to share with me the breakthroughs, as well as the challenges you are overcoming. This will help me and my team make this an even stronger program.

Welcome again and have fun with Souper Starz!

Love,  
Jamie



## **BASIC IDEA**

### **A community-based crowdfunding dinner**

- Up to six speakers with projects will be allowed 5 minutes ea to share their idea and answer questions from diners.
- These projects can be about ANYTHING.

## **BASIC RULES**

- No technology is allowed to present ideas.
- Presenters must live in community and can present monthly, but can only win once per year.

## **SOUP SUPPER**

The event host also provides soup, dinner rolls, crackers, water and coffee, and even sometimes dessert! Locations can include churches, local diners, VFWs, etc.

## **COST OF ADMISSION**

**\$10 suggested donation/\$5 for students**

All the money collected at the door will be awarded to the presenter with the most votes!

## **GOAL**

The winner goes home with the money raised at the door. Attendees have engaged and participated alongside other people who share in the desire for a better community. Diners have shared resources and ideas with all presenters. Connections have been made. Conversations have been had. People have felt empowered.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Souper Starz is a place for people to gather and feel heard. Souper Starz is not the granter of the funds.

Our job is to plan a dinner that creates an environment where participants can vote on what project wins the money collected at the door. Each individual who walks through the door is agreeing to grant the money to the project they think is the most deserving through democracy and conversation. We then ask past winners to come back to share with the community what they did with the money.

We encourage people to get involved and have a better understanding of what is happening in their community.

## **MISSION**

Souper Starz' mission is to promote community-based development through crowdfunding, creativity, collaboration, democracy, trust and fun.



# WHAT IT IS & WHAT IT'S NOT

## **SOUPER STARZ IS:**

- A way to empower community residents
- A collaborative event
- A platform for connection
- A democratic project of micro-funding
- A way to foster critical dialogue
- A way to establish new relationships and networks
- A way to instill community pride

It is a community dinner that is built to uplift, empower and find stories of awesome individuals within your towns who have fantastic ideas that they might need a little help moving forward. Your job is to create a safe space where the projects and ideas can be pitched. It is up to the community to hold them accountable for following up on what happens with the idea.

## **SOUPER STARZ IS NOT:**

- A competition
- A contest
- About the money

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**COMMUNITY**  
— **OVER** —  
**COMPETITION**



## 1 | UNDERSTAND THE WHY BEHIND SOUPER STARZ

Souper Starz coordinates a place for people to gather and feel heard. There are many people who have great ideas, but may not feel comfortable sharing them or knowing how to get started in making them a reality. Souper Starz holds a space where people from all walks of life can gather, share, listen, learn and thrive.

## 2 | BUILD A COMMITTEE

### Build a committee committed to Souper Starz

Get a group of like-minded leaders to take on the Souper Starz Micro-Grant Project in their community. Members of this planning committee should either live or work (or both) in the community so there is a better understanding of the needs of the people in that area.

### Look for a diverse group of members.

- Young and old
- Nonprofit organizations
- Social groups
- Artists
- Entrepreneurs
- Government officials

## ROLES

Use [RESOURCE #2 - Committee Roles](#) to keep track of role assignments.

### LEADER

The leader keeps track of time lines and member responsibilities, plans, builds agendas and facilitates meetings. Must feel comfortable with communicating with members about duties and follow-up on commitments and tasks.

### SECRETARY

The note taker. This person must be present at all meetings to take clear notes of the goings-on and discussions that take place during each committee meeting. It is



important that these notes are emailed to the rest of the committee within 48 hours of each meeting to make sure everyone stays up-to-date.

The secretary will document the amount of funds raised at each event along with the presenters, winners and proposal submissions for future events. He/she is also responsible for sending event reports back to Souper Starz headquarters. These reports include number of presenters and their topics, amount raised for micro-grant and how many people in attendance.

During the night of the event, the secretary is in charge of either counting the ballots at the end of the presentations, or designating trustworthy people to count the ballots. Find a secluded space at event location for ballot count.

### **TREASURER**

The treasure is in charge of the money coming in and going out at the Souper Starz events. On the day of the event, the treasurer is in charge of taking money at the door. Then, they are in charge of counting the money and writing the check to the winner at the end of the event. If there is an organization backing your Souper Starz events such as a Kiwanis Club, Elks Club or Economic Development, see if they are willing to run the money through their organization. You can you have them write the check for the winner and you give them the money taken at the door. If this is not a possibility, contact us to discuss alternate options.

### **OTHER AMAZING PEOPLE**

These people are AMAZING, willing to volunteer their time and talents and are most definitely the backbone of a successful Souper Starz event. They are in charge of brainstorming and supporting the Leader/Secretary/Treasurer. The “other amazing people” are tasked with helping to find presenters. They should scour their network and encourage friends, family and acquaintances who have a passion to apply. They can also be resources to gather materials for the event. Is anybody in this group part of an organization? Or maybe they work at a place where Souper Starz can be held. Have them use their network and resources to host an event.

## **3 | LOCATION. LOCATION. LOCATION.**

Use **RESOURCE PAGES #4 + #5 - Initial Location Inquiry + Location Site Planner**

The people who will be attending your Souper Starz event should be at the front of



your mind when scouting for locations. If attendees aren't comfortable, they may not return. Some things to consider when choosing a location are accessibility, comfort and familiarity. We have had more than 100 people at some of our events, so make sure your location is large enough to accommodate all your potential guest. One of the main things to consider is if the location space is able/willing to provide soup for the event. **Use RESOURCE #7 - Location Materials Checklist).**

How should you proceed when making contact at potential event locations?

**Be authentic and be prepared.** Make sure you aren't distracted, tired or multitasking. Treat this phone call as an opportunity to get another person(s) involved in Souper Starz. They could become a valuable partner or they might know someone who has a space that you haven't even considered but might be perfect. Maybe they or someone they know has a dream community project and would like to present. Or, they might be willing to donate to Souper Stars and make the dream possible for someone else.

Being prepared includes having some questions ready including:

- **Pricing** – Are they willing to donate the space and provide the soup?
- **Process** – How do they schedule and accept dates?
- **Dates** – What is their availability and does it match yours?
- **Size of space** – Will it accommodate everyone?
- **Noise level** – Is it a busy restaurant? The presenters need to be heard.
- **Audio equipment** – Is a microphone with speakers available? (not required)

**Use your resources!** Many of your committee members may have connections to spaces that could be perfect for your event - and let's be honest, it's much easier to ask someone you already have a connections with.

**Start making connections!**

Make a list with phone numbers and contact information of the potential event locations. Set aside a time to start reaching out. Use **RESOURCE #4 - Sample Location Inquiry Sheet** to help you with your first calls until you get comfortable.

**Here are some places to consider:**

- Churches
- Fraternal organizations (Elks, Eagles, Masons, etc.)
- VFW
- Restaurants
- Schools
- Community Center



## 4 | PICK YOUR DATES

First, don't try to do this monthly - it's a lot of work and we don't want the burnout setting in. We have found through trial and error that monthly, January through May works best for our area - living in the Black Hills, we relish in our summers and want to soak up every ounce of sun. However, you may look at holding your event every other month or even quarterly. Try it out, you can make adjustments for following years.

### Things to consider when choosing your dates (and things to work around)

- Holidays
- Town sporting events
- Other events in the community (fundraisers, etc.)
- School functions

## 5 | FINDING PRESENTERS

The presenters are the foundation of Souper Starz. So, how do we find people to present their ideas? First, let's create a list of people who have had or could have a positive impact on your community. These are the people you can ask to share information about Souper Starz. They will have ideas of presenters. Have these people guide presenters to fill out a proposal application.

### Community contacts to consider:

- Schools
- Religious organizations
- Nonprofits
- Clubs
- Artists
- Business owners

### So, what does the application look like?

Keep the questions simple. The purpose of the form is to encourage people to apply to present. Make sure you have a few different ways for them to apply. We have an application they can fill out right on our website (once you purchase this toolkit,



we coordinate with you to add your town), they can print off an application on the website or they can pick up a paper copy of the application at a local business. If you allow paper applications, make sure there is an easily accessible spot where they can pick up and drop the completed applications. The business you choose should be open regular hours. Find a sample application in the resource section (**RESOURCE #15- Sample Application**).

#### **QUESTIONS WE ASK:**

- Name
- Email
- Phone number
- Brief overview of the project
- Anticipated date of completion
- Why should your project be chosen?

#### **WAYS TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO APPLY:**

Some people may have reservations about applying for a number of reasons. Here are some positive things you can tell a potential applicant.

- Their application doesn't need to be a novel.
- It can be short, quick and to the point.
- Your idea can be about anything.
- Age is just a number! Speaking-age children through all walks of life are encouraged to apply.
- Again, **COMMUNITY OVER COMPETITION!** You aren't competing against other presenters. Everyone is sharing their ideas and their passions in hopes of making a connection.

#### **APPLICATION SELECTION:**

- Set a deadline for people to apply. If you have more than 6 applications, you will need time to sift through them and choose which six will present at the next event.
- When deciding on which 6 will present, cast your own personal judgments aside. Don't disregard projects that make you feel uncomfortable. The community will decide if it's a good fit for their community by voting or not voting for it.
- Don't get caught up on the person who will be presenting the idea. Their



character will come out during the dinner and it's up to the diners to decide if they are worthy of the money. We aren't the ones who stifle potential.

- Don't limit the night to a certain "theme" of projects. The vetting process exists so your night has a variety of projects for the diners to choose from.

**Things to think about:**

- Is the project feasible?
- Does it relate to the community and the people who live in it?
- Will it make the community better?

Souper Starz is not about you, your agenda or your political platform. It is a safe place where people from all walks of life can come together, create a network and present their ideas. Your job is to create the space, make sure it is safe for all ideas to be presented and fairly count the votes to determine the winner. It's also your job to challenge the diners to ask questions and to stimulate conversations.

**PREP YOUR PRESENTER**

Make sure you communicate with your presenters what they can expect at Souper Starz. It's so important that they are prepared. There is no technology allowed during a presentation, but they are encouraged to bring props if it better helps demonstrate their project. Presenters who are more prepared seem more trustworthy and people are more apt to vote for them. We do have a sample email that you should send to your presenter once they have been chosen ([see RESOURCE #16 - Sample Email to Presenters](#)).

Your presenters should be encouraged to invite EVERYONE they know. It's 100% okay to "stack the deck." It's a fair assumption to say that the more people that are there to support a presenter, the more votes they receive.

## **6 | MARKETING**

**LET'S FIND SOME DINERS!**

These are the people who will be paying \$10 at the door and voting for which presenter gets the money. Most importantly, these are the people who are part of this network of people who are willing to give their time and money to make their community a better place. The micro-grant is funded by them, not Souper Starz.



Use your network on this one. The word can spread by you simply planting the seed with people you know. Also, your presenters are a HUGE resource when it comes to word of mouth. Again, the more people that are there to support a presenter, the more votes that presenter receives.

## MARKETING METHODS

**Committee members' networks:** Use everyone who is involved in Souper Starz already. Have all the committee members tell their friends, family and associates. This responsibility is not solely that of the leader. It's the entire committee's job to spread the word.

**Social media:** We have had great success using Facebook and Instagram for our events. Be sure to make a Facebook Event as these show up in different places throughout Facebook. If you have a little money to spend on advertising, boost a Facebook event to make the reach even larger. There are sample materials ([RESOURCE #13 - Example Social Media Materials](#)) for posts and events.

**Community calendars:** There are numerous calendars that you can post your event on for free. These include chamber calendars, city calendars, neighborhood newsletters and email lists.

**Talk about it:** Word of mouth is the best form of advertising. Talk about it. Talk about it. And then talk about it some more.

**Go to networking events:** Mention and explain Souper Starz at networking events that you may already be going to such as chamber mixers and committee meetings.

**Flyers:** Hang flyers around town at restaurants, grocery stores and popular gather places for people in your community to see. ([RESOURCE #14 - Sample Flyer](#))

Once people become familiar with Souper Starz, marketing will be easier and easier. They will see an event on Facebook and automatically share it because they understand the importance. During your events, make sure you mention future dates.



## 7 | THE DAY OF SOUP

All this prep work and the day has finally arrived! Congratulations! Use **RESOURCE #9 - Dinner Role Descriptions** to help assign roles to your committee members and volunteers. We have also provided you with a more detailed agenda (**RESOURCE #12 - Sample Agenda**).

### SET UP

Make sure the your committee arrives early to the space. We have found that people can start showing up 45 minutes early. It's best if the **Welcoming Committee** is at the door and the **Money Taker** is already there to collect the \$10 and give them the ballot before they even enter. The **Set Up Team** should see if the host needs any help setting up tables, chairs or the serving table. Make sure the entrance table has a few pens for people who want to write checks. Once someone pays, be sure to hand them a ballot. Sometimes people know who they want to vote for ahead of time. This is okay. They are more than welcome to cast their vote right away. However, if people come and in and they aren't sure who they are voting for, encourage them to take the ballot to their seat and vote at the end (this is the preferred way anyway). Have the ballot box available at the entry table for early voters.

### SET THE SCENE

Make sure there are plenty of pens at the tables for people to vote at the end of the presentations. We also put a few pads of Post-Its on the tables for diners to write down available resources for the presenters. So, if a diner knows someone that can help one of the presenters, they can write down that person's name and phone number/email address. This is an easy way to get people to network and share resources. These Post-Its can then be put on a resource board for presenters and fellow diners to see. Yes, the money is a great exchange to help the winning presenter progress in their project but you will find that money is the least interesting part of Souper Starz. It's the connections between humans that becomes the most empowering.

### FOOD

A Souper Starz event is definitely about the presenters, diners and projects to improve the community. However, soup is also an important component (it is in the name, after all). In a perfect world, the event hosting the dinner provides the food. If the event is being hosted at a restaurant, this is a perfect time for them to test out a new recipe or reach a whole new audience who may have never been to their



place or tried their food before. If your event is at a church, many church members will volunteer time and resources to provide the food. We have found having a few options for soup goes over the best with diners. A classic such as chicken noodle is a great idea along side something more adventurous such as Italian wedding or beef and barley (not really adventurous, but you get the idea).

## PRESENTATIONS

Presentations need to be 5 minutes, TOPS. Have the **Timer** time it on their phone or with a stopwatch. This ensures that all presenters will have enough time to present their ideas and keep the attention of the diners. After each presentation, give the diners an opportunity to ask questions. The MC should try to keep it to 2 or 3 questions per presentation. Encourage diners to talk to the presenters after all presentations have been completed to keep the event moving.

Encourage the presenters to arrive 30 minutes before the event begins. This way they can get a feel for the space and greet any diners who have come to support them. There may even be diners who have questions about their project before their presentation and this gives them time to have that conversation. It's also a great time for presenters to talk to each other. Who knows? Maybe there is an opportunity for collaboration between them. Remember, this is a place for networking, and it is strongly encouraged.

## VOTING

Give a voting ballot ([see RESOURCE #18 - Sample Ballot](#)) in the door with each \$10 that is paid. If someone wants to pay \$20, they receive 2 ballots. We have had instances where someone collected money from people who wanted to support her project but couldn't attend the event. She came to the door with envelope of money, and she received a vote for each \$10.

Once all the presentations are complete and all questions have been asked, tell the diners that it is time to vote for the project they feel deserves the funding. Have the **Ballot Collector** walk around and pick up the voting ballots. Then, the **Ballot Counters** count the votes. We find it is easiest if you make piles of votes for each presenter, then count the pile of ballots. If there's a tie, split the money equally between the presenters.

Once all the votes are counted, announce the winner to the diners. This is an exciting time and should be treated as such. Get excited about the process and be excited for the winner!



## 8 | LEARN AND IMPROVE

It's so important that your team meets shortly after a Souper Starz event while everything is fresh in your minds. Be positive during these meetings. Share what you are excited about along with what you are going to work to improve. Let's face it, your first Souper Starz event probably won't be perfect. But, we hope that by supplying you with this toolkit, you can be prepared for what is needed. So, when something isn't perfect what do you do? You improve! You talk about your successes and how you can expand upon them and you talk about things that didn't go well and how to improve them.

### FOLLOW UP

Since collaboration is the name of the Souper Starz game, after each event you host, we want you to share with us:

- How many people were in attendance?
- How much money was raised?
- Who won?
- What were the presentation topics?
- What worked great for your event?
- What needs improvement?

After each event, please send an email to [WeRockedIt@souperstarz.com](mailto:WeRockedIt@souperstarz.com). We send out a newsletter with information from other communities and how Souper Starz has helped improve communities through crowdfunding, creativity, democracy, trust, dinner and fun!