

BridgeUSA 

BUILDING A MOVEMENT 2024



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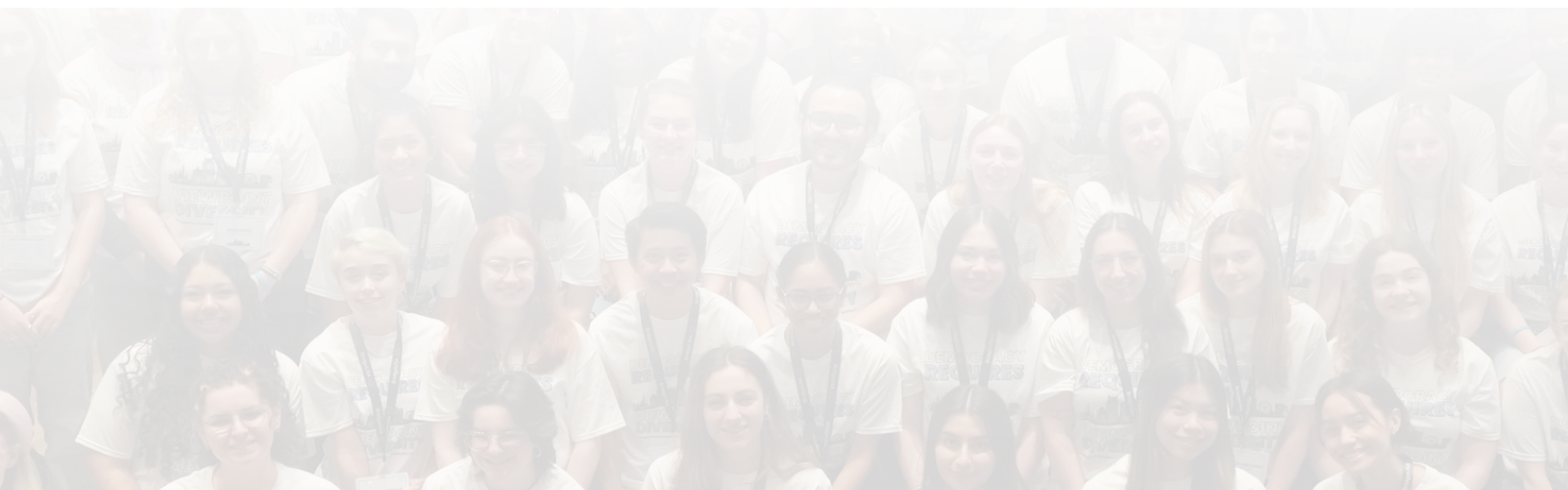
WELCOME

BETTER POLITICS STARTS HERE!



So you've got the basics down, you're building your team and have started hosting discussions. But now it's time to take your chapter to the next level. Now it's time to expand your reach and ignite a movement on campus pushing for more productive politics.

This handbook focuses on how to build consistency and turn your BridgeUSA chapter into an engine for change in your campus politics. We'll cover expanding your programming, working with other campus organizations, adding more positions to your board, and more. It's time to turn your chapter from an events organization into a community, let's get to it.



How to Read This Chapter Guide

You're now in the second handbook in our series. If you have not read through "The Foundations" we highly recommend checking it out to make sure you have not missed anything.

You can check out that handbook here: [The Foundations](#). It focuses on recruiting your initial team, getting registered, general marketing, and basic discussion advice.

If your CDC has given you this handbook that means they believe you're ready for the skills and challenges of building a movement on campus. But if you feel something is missing context it is likely in the previous handbook. As always, if anything is unclear please reach out to your CDC.



BridgeUSA Mission Statement

BridgeUSA is a multi-partisan student movement that champions viewpoint diversity, responsible discourse, and a solution-oriented political culture. We are developing a generation of leaders that value empathy and constructive engagement because our generation will bear the cost of polarization and tribalism for years to come.

We believe that polarization is damaging our country and causing young people to either disengage from democracy or radically engage by fitting a partisan mold. Democracy is in danger if the next generation is disengaged and polarized because young people are the future of our country.

The purpose of BridgeUSA is to build a BridgeUSA community — one in which students from across the ideological spectrum can engage as a group working together to understand — to bridge — the various perspectives behind the important political and social issues of our time.

We rise above party. We do not force unity or compromise. We believe in the BridgeUSA Mindset: Viewpoint diversity, constructive engagement, and a solution-oriented political culture.

The BridgeUSA Mindset

Viewpoint Diversity

The hallmark of education is robust intellectual engagement that is defined by challenge and curiosity. Universities should provide a space that fosters constructive dialogue, exposure to new ideas and beliefs, and opportunity for open-minded and productive intellectual exchanges. No belief should be challenged by just one idea, nor two or three for that matter. Rather, all beliefs should be challenged by a range of perspectives. We use the term “Viewpoint Diversity” instead of “Ideological Diversity,” because we understand that not all ideas stem from ideologies or ideologues.

Constructive Dialogue

Constructive dialogue is a process that transforms unproductive, winner-take-all discussions into dialogue that is engaging, fulfilling, and informative. In order to move the discussion in the direction of understanding and solutions, we must take on certain responsibilities as participants in these conversations. In particular, constructive dialogue includes a commitment to have courage, be honest, and strive for respect. We must have the courage to challenge opposing beliefs and have the curiosity to explore important issues.

Solution-Oriented Politics

Politics has been rendered easy and dualistic, making blind-partisanship the principal mode of political practice. As a result, our system rewards the needs of parties and individuals over the needs of the American people. There is no constructive way forward so long as the focus is on winning political battles instead of finding common solutions. BridgeUSA believes that to achieve action and progress on the issues affecting Americans, we need to be committed to finding long-term solutions instead of waging short-term fights to score political wins.



What is a BridgeUSA Chapter?

A civic space? A listening community? A home for dialogue? All of these fit! BridgeUSA chapters are communities of young people from across the political spectrum who advocate for the BridgeUSA Mindset, work with university administrations to institutionalize the BridgeUSA mindset, and challenge those who seek to further polarize the campus environment. BridgeUSA chapters are multi-partisan and do not endorse or advocate for any political party or candidate.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT.



Our Values.

- **Viewpoint Diversity**
- **Constructive Dialogue**
- **Solution Oriented Politics**

JOIN THE LARGEST GROWING YOUTH MOVEMENT

BridgeUSA is the largest and fastest growing student movement improving our political discourse with over 50 college chapters and 20 high school chapters working to end polarization in politics.

- **Over 3,500 students engaged each semester**
- **Nearly 200 different types of programming per semester**
- **Chapters in 22 states**



Access to exclusive internships



Networking with over 500 like-minded students



Annual student summit



Socials
bridgeusa_



Email
chapterteam@bridgeusa.org



Website
bridgeusa.org

FIRST STEPS

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Pitching BridgeUSA

In order to recruit a leadership team & new members, build relationships with other organizations, get a faculty sponsor, or any of the other various activities associated with chapter development, chapter leaders must develop a compelling pitch for Bridge. To create a successful chapter, you must convince a wide array of people to join in order to have a multi-partisan membership!



Expanding Your Executive Board

As your chapter grows, it is a good idea to think about expanding your executive board. As chapter president operations begin to grow, think about hiring an overall vice president to help manage operations on an executive level. Further, adding a VP of Discussions is a great way to ease into having regular and consistent discussions. Your VP of Discussions can help manage your regular discussions and ensure your chapter is always prepared for them, while other board members can continue working on other events. Whatever growth looks for your chapter, ensure that you are not sacrificing success, and that you have enough executive members to fulfill all the responsibilities of a large chapter

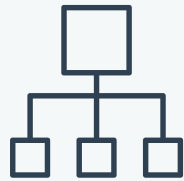
Internal Structure

This document serves as a guide to structuring and maintaining your internal structure as an organization. You should not use this document, especially the chapter roles, as a goal. These roles are to help you think about all that is possible within a BridgeUSA chapter and what additional roles could help you do.

DEEP DIVE



Structure



Leadership Conflicts



Roles Handbook



HOSTING BRIDGEUSA DISCUSSIONS

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As your chapter progresses you will begin hosting more controversial discussions. Not to say that your chapter should become the subject of controversy on campus - we must always create discussions and events that are welcoming to anyone willing to engage in the BridgeUSA way.

But we as BridgeUSA members cannot hide away from the deeply divisive topics that often inflame our campus and national politics. In fact it is our job to take these conversations head on and be the space where our communities can gather to discuss these in a respectful and constructive conversation. This section explores how to tackle these tougher conversations.



Purpose of Events

The purpose of regular discussion events is to build a BridgeUSA community – one in which students from across the ideological and intellectual spectrum can engage with one another not as partisan rivals trying to push their viewpoints, but instead as a group working together to understand the various sides to an issue. The ultimate goal of a BridgeUSA discussion is to not only understand the viewpoint of those who disagree with you, but to also understand WHY they believe what they believe! These events form the backbone of a BridgeUSA chapter. The type of events may differ from school to school, but if you can create compelling and interesting discussions between your fellow students, your BridgeUSA chapter will grow and be successful.

BridgeUSA Discussion Norms

Our goal is to create spaces for constructive dialogue, and these norms are essential! The BridgeUSA Discussion norms form the foundation for dialogue and discourse at BridgeUSA chapter meetings and campus events. Reminding the attendees of these norms before a conversation begins, displaying these norms prominently in a room, or distributing the norms at the start of an event are all ways to reinforce these norms.

After you read the rules, don't hesitate to say that "if you do not wish to follow those rules you can leave now, and if you choose to stay, please abide by the rules."

#1 Listen to listen, rather than to respond.

Instead of planning on how to respond or thinking about what to say next, we should focus our thinking on listening to and understanding the ideas of others before formulating a response.

#2 Try not to interrupt or have side conversations.

We are all here with the best intentions. We want to genuinely engage with others and learn from one another. By not interrupting and talking on the side, we ensure that all voices are heard and respected.

#3 Address the statement, not the person.

When responding to statements, arguments, and comments, we address what was said, not the person who said it. Remember that the discussion is about ideas--not the worth, morality, or goodness of the people who hold the ideas, including those ideas that offend or oppose one's own beliefs or those of others.

#4 Participants represent only themselves and are not representatives of social groups they belong to.

Though we may reflect the views in our respective communities or groups, within the dialogue, no one is expected to represent organizations or groups. Nonetheless, social and personal identities are often of vital importance to the ideas we hold, and when brought up in discussion should be treated with respect. Experiences that stem from identity, not just arguments that stem from knowledge, are welcome in discussion.



Moderating a Discussion

Being able to moderate dialogues and facilitate constructive discussion is the core of our work! Ensuring a productive, empathetic exchange of ideas is BridgeUSA's ultimate goal. However, moderating is a difficult task and it will take practice. You won't feel comfortable as a moderator until you've moderated multiple conversations. BridgeUSA provides moderator training (reach out to your CDC if you wish to participate), but the information is also included here:

ADVANCED MODERATION

[Training Guide](#)



Possible Issues You Will Have to Address

These are some of the most common issues within BridgeUSA discussions. They are listed in order from least disruptive to most disruptive. As a moderator it is your duty to see these issues arising before they become prohibitive to constructive engagement.

As an established and successful chapter, you may have already faced some of these challenges in a discussion, but you should be sure to review this document for other problems that more advanced chapters tend to face. This is not the most exhaustive list of problems you may have to address, if you would like a more exhaustive list or if you happen to face an issue you cannot handle, reach out to your CDC.



DEEP DIVE



Addressing Problems in a Discussion

Types of Discussion Events

Now that you have a solid base of attendees and a discussion schedule, it's time to take your engagement to the next level and explore more innovative formats and larger-scale events. Embracing a variety of discussion event types can unlock the potential for even more productive conversations. Some things to consider are the size of the group, the seriousness of the event, availability of moderators, and your end goal.

At this stage, you should have around 10-15 regular participants, meaning you now have the opportunity to delve into more contentious topics, experiment with different formats, and host larger events. It may even be worth considering the inclusion of a dedicated board position responsible for planning discussions, further emphasizing the importance of these interactions within your organization. By capitalizing on this momentum, you can foster a dynamic environment that continues to drive meaningful conversations and engage a broader audience.

Frequency of Gatherings

You can now think of BridgeUSA Gatherings as being one of two categories. BridgeUSA chapters host both small, regular, student-led discussions as well as larger, more produced events. Regular discussions are where participants will learn and practice the skills of constructive dialogue and will change their bad dialogue habits over time. You should host these discussions regularly. Every 2 weeks is most common, but every week is doable, though more work for your chapter. Large events involve partnering with multiple organizations or inviting speakers. The purpose of these events is twofold: A) getting the BridgeUSA message out to the broader campus community, and B) showing that dialogue is possible even at the highest levels.

Picking a Topic for Your Discussion

Selecting a topic that is engaging and interesting will set your event up for success! We encourage you to create a mix of gathering topics that are local (e.g. student housing on campus) and national (e.g. immigration in the U.S.). For a list of potential topics currently relevant in the news, check out the [Trending Topics](#) list!

Additional inspiration for types of topics can also be found in the list of BridgeUSA [Discussion Plans](#).

As you look to scale your chapter with a solid base of members, now is the time to consider hosting discussions or events on more contentious topics, such as immigration, gun control/rights, or abortion. These topics have been incredibly divisive in the national dialogue, and will require a lot of preparation in terms of moderation. By this point, a moderator should have extensive experience moderating less contentious topics and feel comfortable in their role.



More contentious topics means it is ever more important to raise the BridgeUSA Norms of Discussion during your discussions and events – introducing the topic and framing it using the Norms of Discussion and the importance of healthy deliberative dialogue may be critical to setting the stage for a more controversial topic.

Consider running topic ideas by your CDC for inspiration and tips on how to moderate the topic effectively!

DEEP DIVE

Possible Topics & Questions



Discussion & Event Operations

There is a lot that can go into the pre-planning process of a discussion or event. From deciding on the date/time to the intricacies of marketing, below is a checklist of things to know to execute effectively on your discussion or large event.

We also recommend you download and use our Template Task List (available as both [Google Sheets](#) and [Google Docs](#)) to organize and plan for who is doing what, and when tasks/projects are due:

Executive Team Task List

Task	Assigned to	Status	Due Date	Notes
Schedule two tabling sessions for March 30 discussion	Name1 ▾	Not Started ▾	March 15	
Create Bridge The Gap event graphic	Name2 ▾	In Progress ▾	March 25	
Make Divvy funding request for pizza	Name3 ▾	Complete ▾	March 10	
Create presentation for March 23rd discussion	Name4 ▾	Blocked ▾	March 19	
	Unassigned ▾	Not Started ▾		
	Unassigned ▾	Not Started ▾		

As your chapter grows your checklist will lengthen and should include:

- **Date & Time**
- **Location**
- **Topic & back-up topic**
- **5-8 Questions**
- **Research sheet**
- **Multiple graphics for different size posters or social media posts**
- **Marketing timeline with duties and who is responsible for them**
- **Room set-up**
- **Price of marketing materials and food**
- **Staff list of guiders outside the room, someone to check people in, who is bringing food, who is setting up chairs, moderator, and back-up moderator if needed**

Discussion & Event Checklist

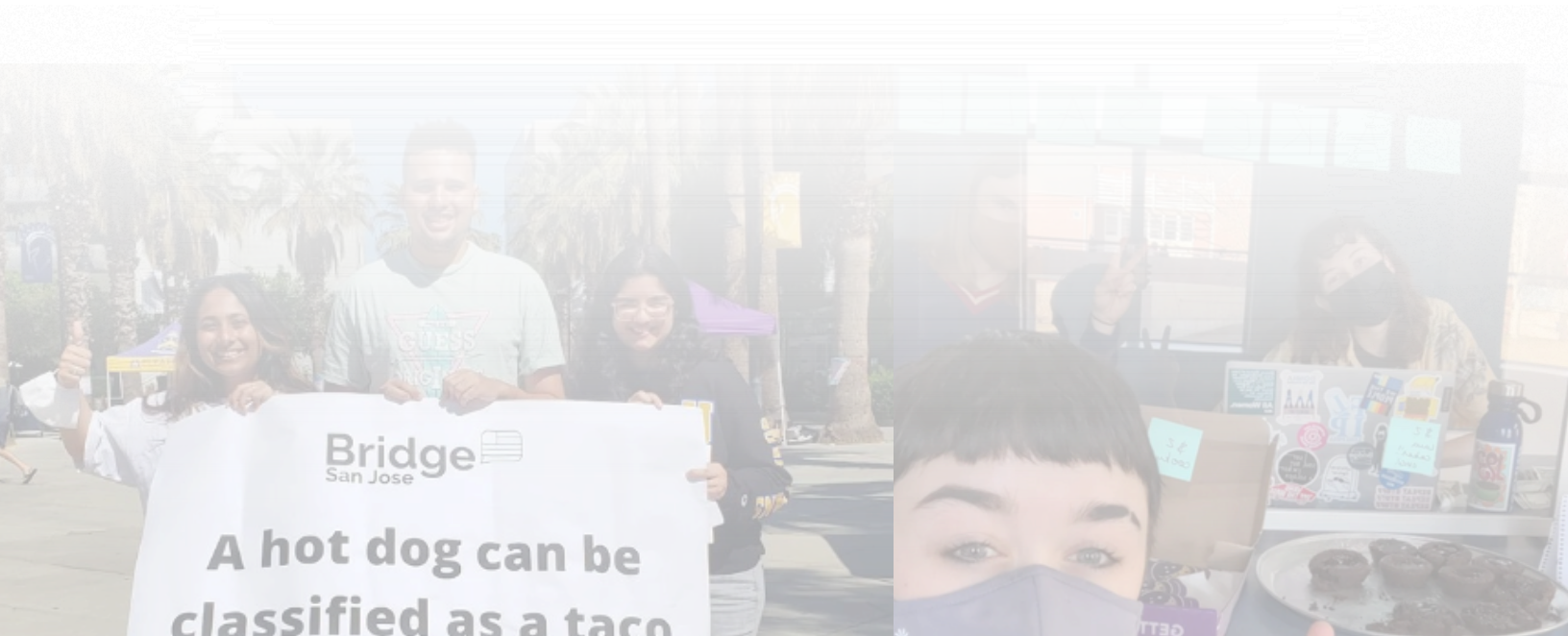
DEEP DIVE

Discussion & Event Checklist



MARKETING & OUTREACH

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Branding Guidelines

Having a consistent brand for our movement across all campuses ensures that students know what we stand for, and what things they can expect from you at your school.

Please use these branding guidelines for the creation of your chapter materials.

Not every chapter document or marketing material has to follow this, and you can modify these guidelines to reflect specific event topics.

Style Guide

TOOLKIT



Marketing Timeline

Discussion Events:

1 Week Before

- Have the topic finalized and have digital marketing material and flyers ready to go.
- Book tabling times if necessary
- Post on Social Media
- Make announcements in group channels (Slack, GroupMe)

5 Days Before

- Begin tabling (Collect emails here)
- Message people on social media to attend
- Email professors

2 Days Before

- Repost on Instagram Story
- Continue social media messaging

Day Of

- Have a tabling session earlier in the day
- Send a big reminder in group channels and message everyone individually (**do both!**)
- Send reminders to professors if they agreed to attend.
- Post one more time on social media (Story or Post)

Day After

- Make post on social media
- Message people who attended, thanking them for coming
- Stay in touch with everyone for the next event!

Large Events:

2 Months Before

- Have an idea of the event ready (Big picture!)
 - Start planning your outreach strategy to different people on campus
- (Think about organizations, professors, or administrators who might help you promote the event)

2 Weeks Before

- Repost on social media
- Check in with everyone's tasks and make sure everyone is on the same page.
- Keep messaging students and others involved.
- Table for the event!

Day Of

- Table for the event!
- Repost on social media
- Give an incentive for day of sign-ups.

1 Month Before

- Begin advertising the event on social media and in-person
- Print flyers, post around campus
- Message friends and people you know.
- Make first post on social media
- Reach out to the outreach contacts you've collected

1 Week Before

- Repost on social media
- Keep messaging students and outreach.
- Post one more time on social media (Story or Post)
- Table for the event!

Day After

- Send follow up to everyone who attended
- Post on social media

In-Person Marketing

This guide is meant as a comprehensive list of the various ways to find students for BridgeUSA in general. These can be used to find an executive board, recruit more students each semester, bring students to events, or even send a survey out to your school. Before we get to the list of methods, a few general tips:

DEEP DIVE

In-Person Marketing



Social Media

As you grow, you can utilize social media in a broader context through video content alongside your current programming. At this point your chapter should have a regular and frequent presence on social media. It's time to branch outside of just posting about discussions and events and start making statement posts, interacting with people on campus, or using interactive methods like polls and "question" posts to engage your audience.

TOOLKIT



Social Media Content Sheet



Outreach

Expanding outreach can be very beneficial to a growing chapter. Think of expanding beyond the current forms, whether that be in-person or digital marketing. A combination of the two, such as Instagram combined with flyering can really make a difference and establish your name on campus. You should create a large list of all the relationships your chapter has, and all relationships you want to create. This will help you understand the people you have available to you, as well as decrease any potential confusion in reaching out to the same people.

Expanding your outreach

Utilizing Professors and other methods to reach students

- Staff Directory (Look up “University name Staff Directory” to find administration at your school.)
- Other organizations at your school (Using the club list, you can reach out to clubs for potential partnerships and start fostering those relationships.)
- Continue other methods of directly reaching out to students whether that be Instagram or tabling/flyering on campus.

Resources

Here are digital templates that you can use for your chapter! These will hopefully give you the first step in creating a legacy on your campus, reaching more students.

TOOLKIT



Social Media
Guide



FINANCES

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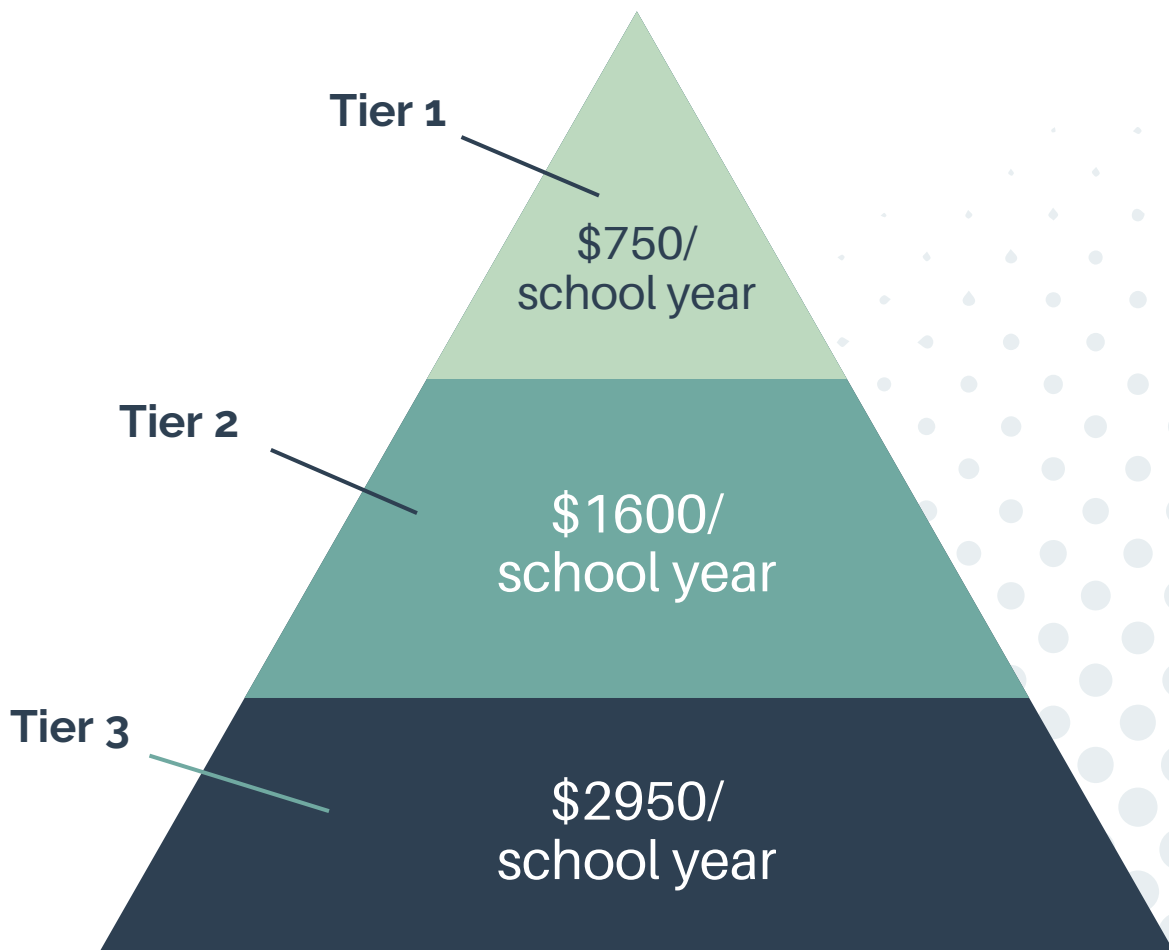


What is Your Chapter's Budget?

BridgeUSA funds chapters based on a tiered system, based largely on the amount of time your chapter has existed. For example, a chapter in their second academic year is generally a tier 1 or tier 2 chapter, which ranges from \$750 to \$1,600 for the academic year. That number increases to up to \$2,950 after being a chapter for three academic years.

You can visit your Chapter Sheet to see information such as your total budget for the academic year, amount spent, and amount available to request in your budget.

For detailed information about finances from BridgeUSA, please visit the [2023-2024 Chapter Funding Handbook](#), which details the system used, how to request and spend funds, and additional rules for chapters using BridgeUSA funds.



Budgeting

Budgeting for all your income and potential expenses throughout the year ensures that you will have money needed for each event, discussion, or project! We recommend to sit down as a team when the school year starts and most importantly, update it throughout the school year.



Finances

Budgeting

DEEP DIVE



Conclusion



You've made it to the end of the Building the Foundation Handbook! Remember what we said at the start of this handbook:

BridgeUSA was built by young people for young people. You are fully capable of making your BridgeUSA chapter the home for dialogue on your campus! Never underestimate what you can achieve. When the going gets tough, you have a community of young people ready to help.

If you have any questions or concerns, reach out to your CDC or to Ross Irwin. If something isn't covered, we've likely encountered it before and might have materials related to the situation, so don't hesitate to reach out if you can't find something.

Now it's time for you to start building on these best practices and expanding your chapter. Remember that the end goal of a BridgeUSA chapter is to create a shift in campus culture to embrace viewpoint diversity, constructive engagement and a solution-oriented politics. Throughout your time in BridgeUSA, you should constantly be expanding your chapter's operations and advocate for a political future that is built on empathy, dignity, and solutions.

