Reconnecting to the Citizen: Crowdfunding Research

Cynthia Bellas, MsEd. & Bio Regulatory Affairs, Chief Strategic Officer, IRB Advisors
Cortney Leach, MPA, MLIS Research Development Manager, U. Washington Information School

Summary

30,000 ft. view – Cindy

In the weeds: benefits and challenges – Cortney

Connecting to the citizen

A working vocabulary in science crowdfunding sites – Cindy (Experiment.com, USEED, Consano, Thinkable, RocketHub, Fundly, Indiegogo, SciFund Challenge, and Walacea)

Some lessons learned

Operational and policy considerations for universities

Conclusions and discussion

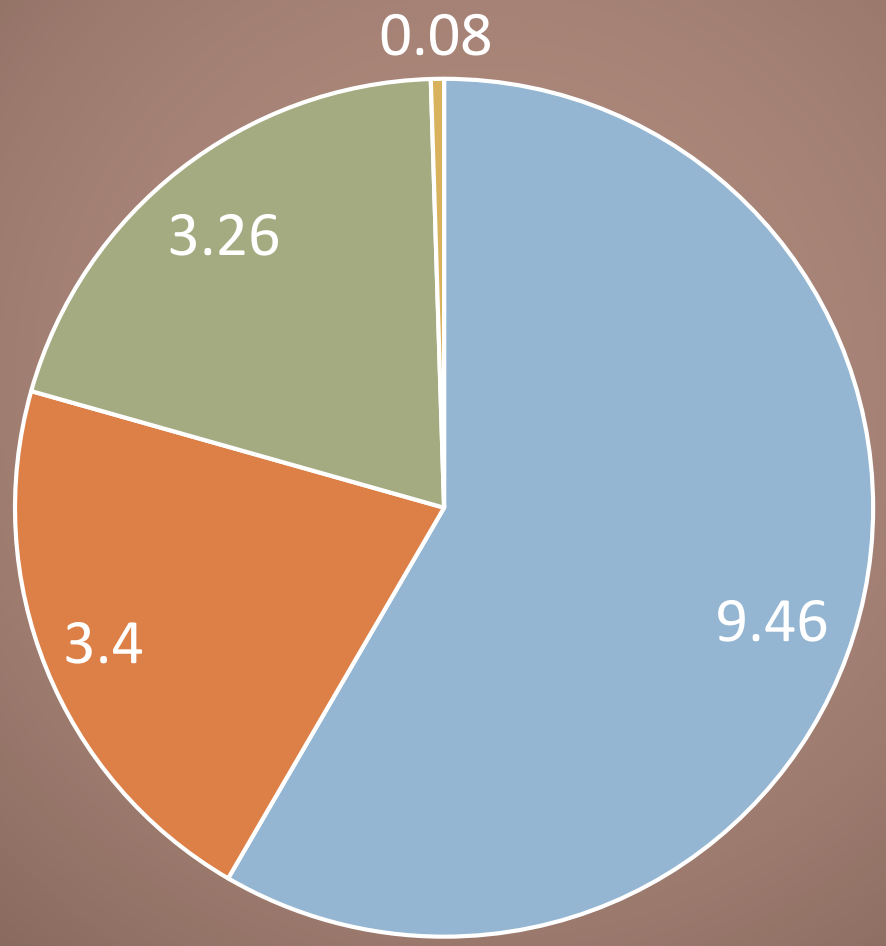
Definition

crowd·fund·ingˈkroudˌfəndiNG/ noun

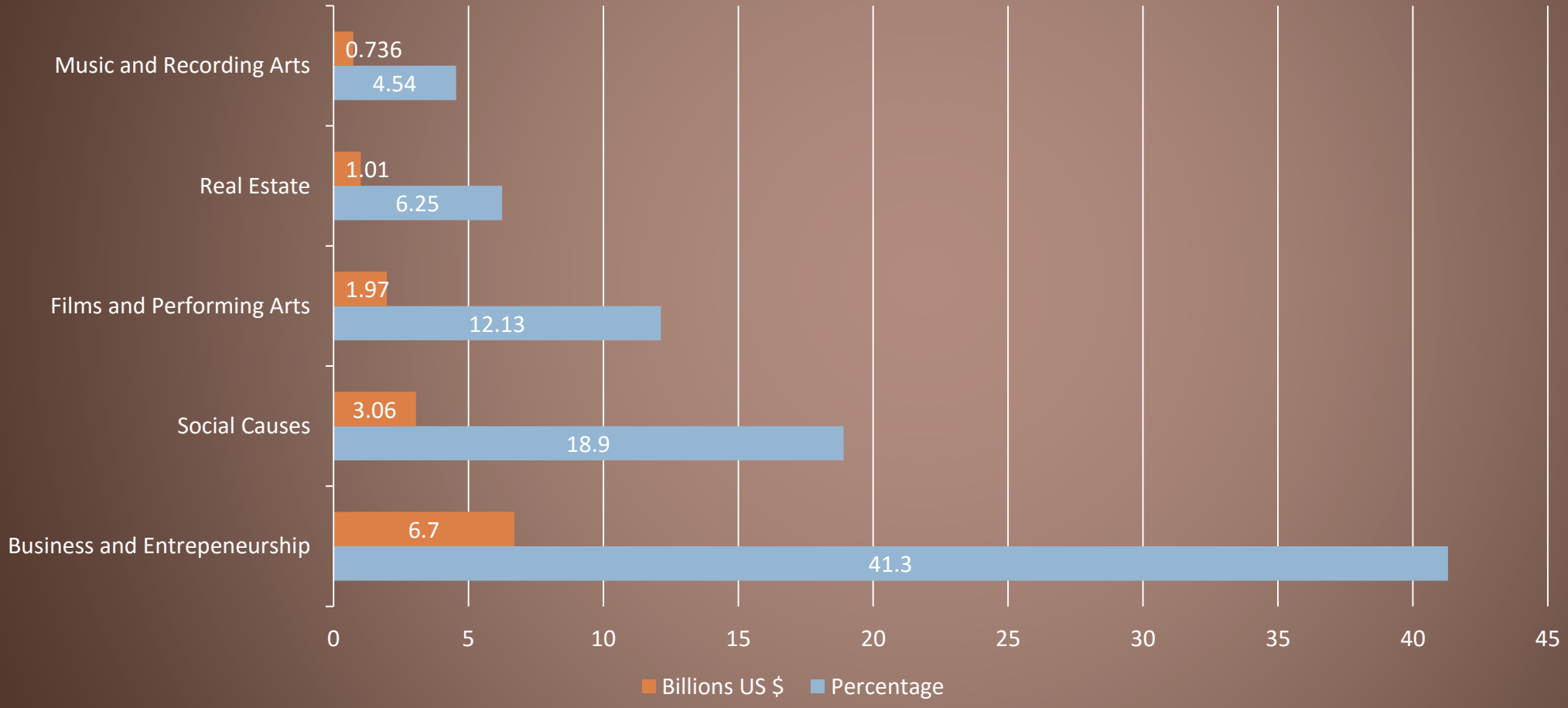
the practice of funding a project or venture by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet.

“musicians, filmmakers, and artists have successfully raised funds and fostered awareness through crowdfunding”

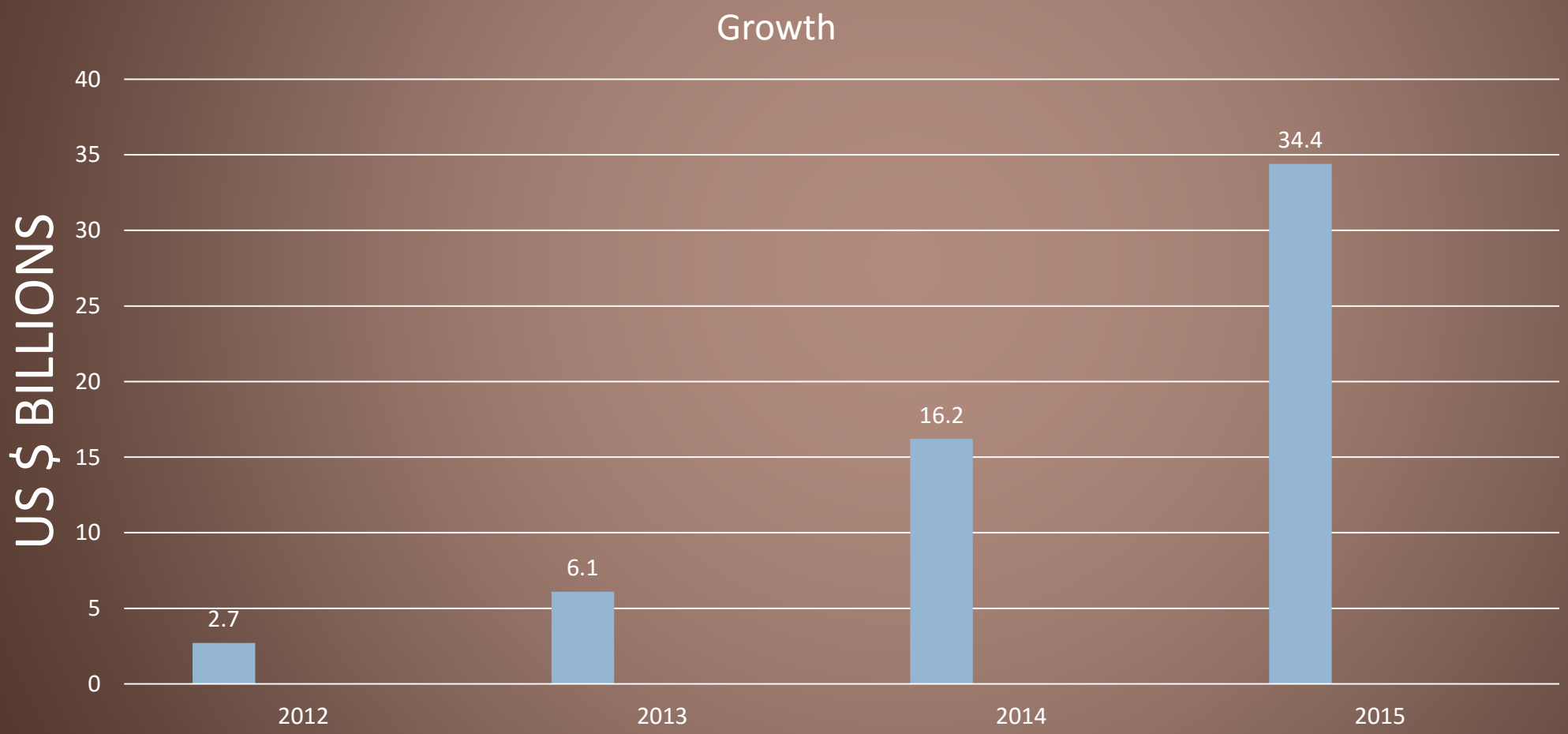
The 16.2 Billion Dollar Gorilla in the Room



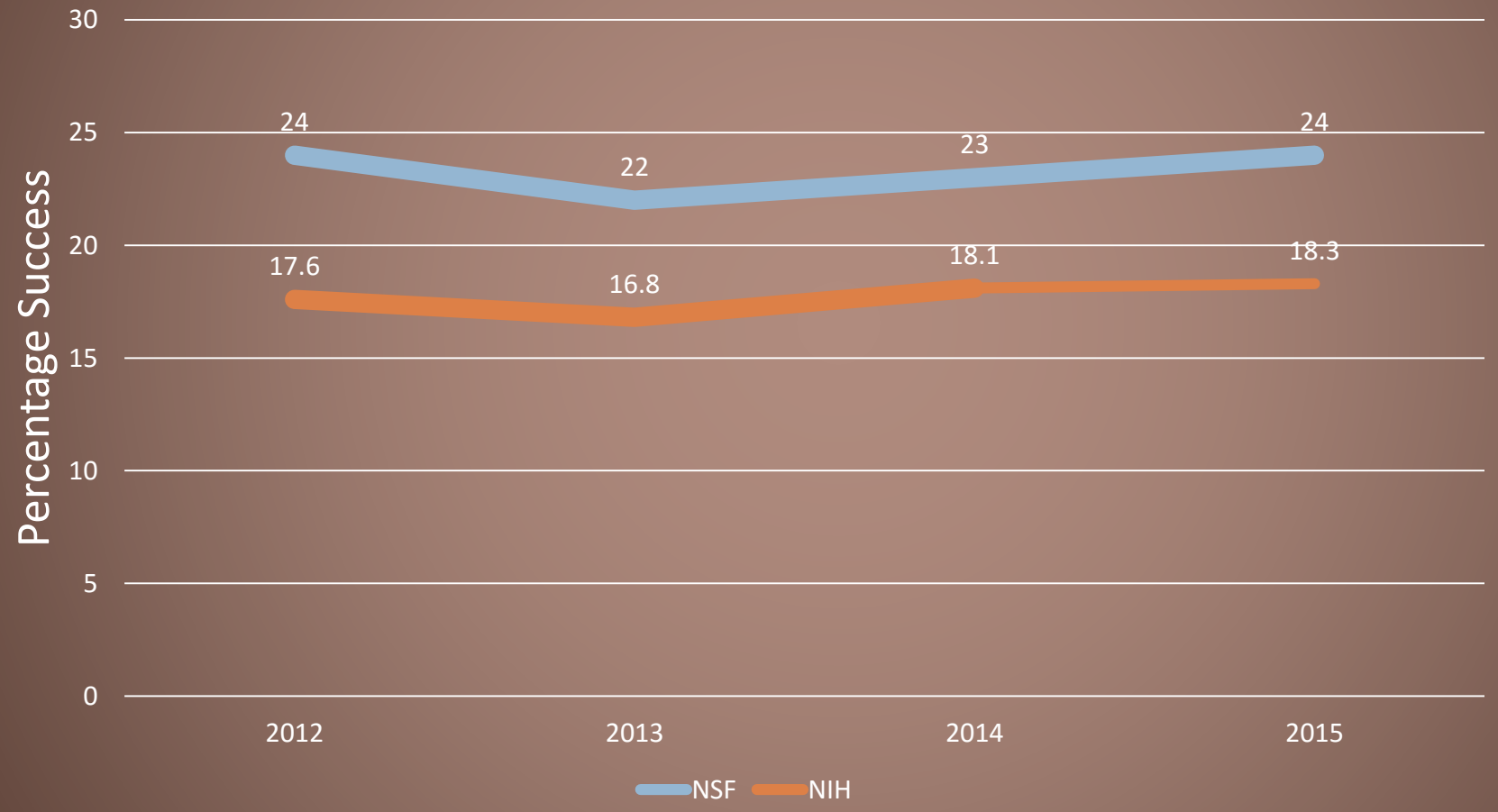
Business and Entrepreneurship



Astonishing Numbers



Why?


30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Percentage Success
24
22
23
24
17.6
16.8
18.1
18.3
2012
2013
2014
2015
NSF
NIH

Profile of Crowdfunding Donor

- Typical donor is between age 35 and 54
- 51% is female, middle class, educated
- Mother typically making medical decisions and philanthropic decisions
- Follows the philanthropy model rather than typical science funding
- Typical project raises about $12,000

@ University of Washington

Sponsored Research

FY 2015: 4,981 awards; $1.3B in grants and contracts

Crowdfunding

USEED: 30 projects, 2,981 donors, 3,185 gifts: $277,642

Experiment.com: 27 projects; 1,658 donors: $177,408

Consano: 3 projects; 190 gifts: $31,146

Why? Small investments can make a big difference

How do spammers harvest your e-mail address?

By Jeff Huang

Backed by Ben Chestnut, Alex Vaschillo, Mike Longwell, Anukul Veeraraghavan, Audrey Roy, Dustin Chang, Dan Knox, Thibaut Labarre, Kristy Katzenmeyer, Bo Lu, **and 5 other backers**

$5,191
Raised

576%
Funded on 5/31/12

Successfully Funded

How does this work?

University of Washington | Computer Science | Social Science | Tax Deductible

Announcing the 2012-2013 Facebook Fellowship Winners

By Alex Hollander on Friday, February 17, 2012 at 8:02am

Brown CS News

Jeff Huang Wins An NSF CAREER Award For Modeling User Touch And Motion Behaviors For Adaptive Interfaces In Mobile Devices

Posted by Jesse Polhemus on March 1, 2016 .

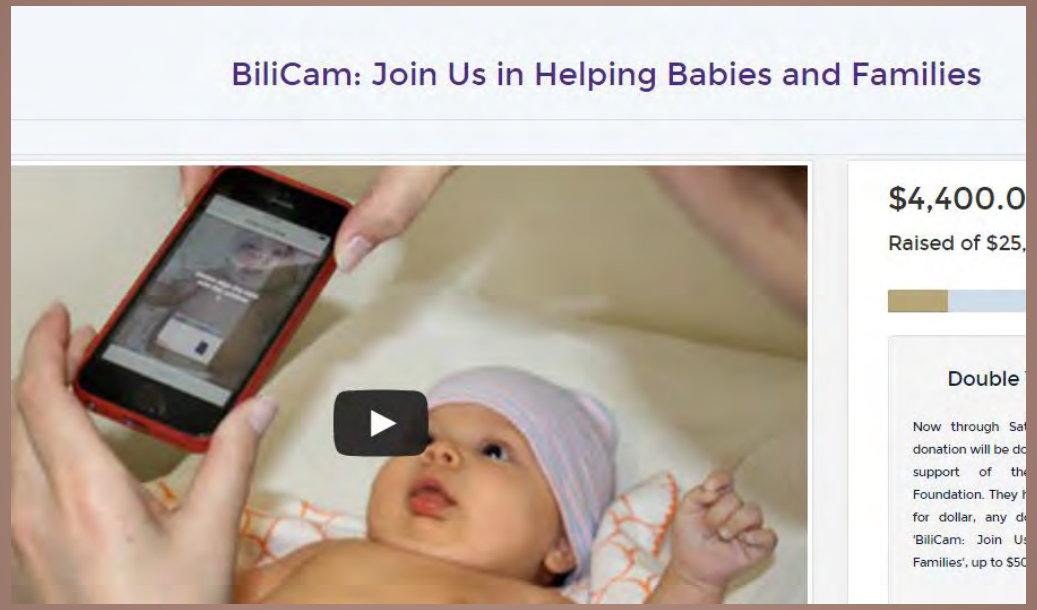
When we're balancing a tablet on our stomach to read in bed instead of holding a smart phone in one hand while pushing a stroller, why shouldn't the user interface be context-specific and ability-specific?

Even a few years ago, asking this question would have been unthinkable or at least highly optimistic, but the pervasiveness of today's mobile devices requires an answer. Assistant Professor Jeff Huang of Brown University's Department of Computer Science is eager to provide it, and he's just won a National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER Award for his work on

Why? Translate energy into outcomes

GIZMODO

HUFFPOST PARENTS



Why? An exercise in citizen engagement

NSF Div. of Earth Sciences *EAR to the Ground* Newsletter, Winter 2015

UPDATE FROM THE DIVISION DIRECTOR

As you know, funds for NSF awards come from American taxpayers. Our elected officials want to be sure the money is put to good purpose. The public wants to know what we discover and why it is important. There has never been a more pressing time for Earth scientists to communicate their work to a broad audience.

Benefits: More than the money

- Seed funding = proof of concept, preliminary data = more competitive proposals
- Test the market: who cares about this?
- Increase visibility for research agendas *and* engage stakeholders *and* raise research funds *at the same time*
- Increase capacity of researchers to communicate and engage the public: "Your crowdfunding campaign is actually *a crash course in the skills that you will need as a researcher in the 21st century*." (Jonathan O'Donnell, RMIT University)

Challenges and risks

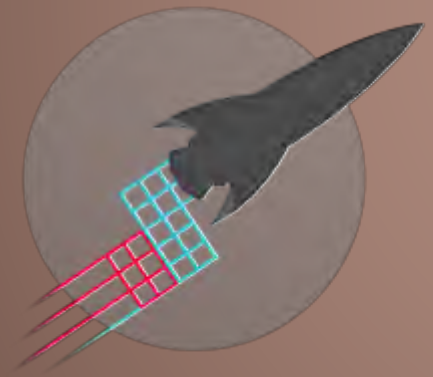
- Faculty tenure and advancement
- It's work, and a new type of work
- Reaching your audience
- Institutional brand
- Platforms: what do they charge (percentage, flat fee, set-up, institutional costs)? All or nothing targets? Terms and conditions, including IP?
- Institutional financial policies, regulatory and ethical oversight
- *Does this change or compromise science?*

Does this Compromise Scientific Research?

"Putting together a proposal that is *attractive to* the public does not have to be as scientifically robust as putting an application in to a panel of experts."

Does this Compromise Scientific Research?

"We don't judge campaigns based on content, as long as the project is legal and tasteful, it has a shot."



ROCKETHUB

An EFactor Group Company

Opportunity

"There has been a lot of focus on trying to encourage more young people into science, but actually that is not the problem. There are a lot of people who want to do research, it is *getting funded* that is the issue."

Natalie Jonk, Founder, Walacea

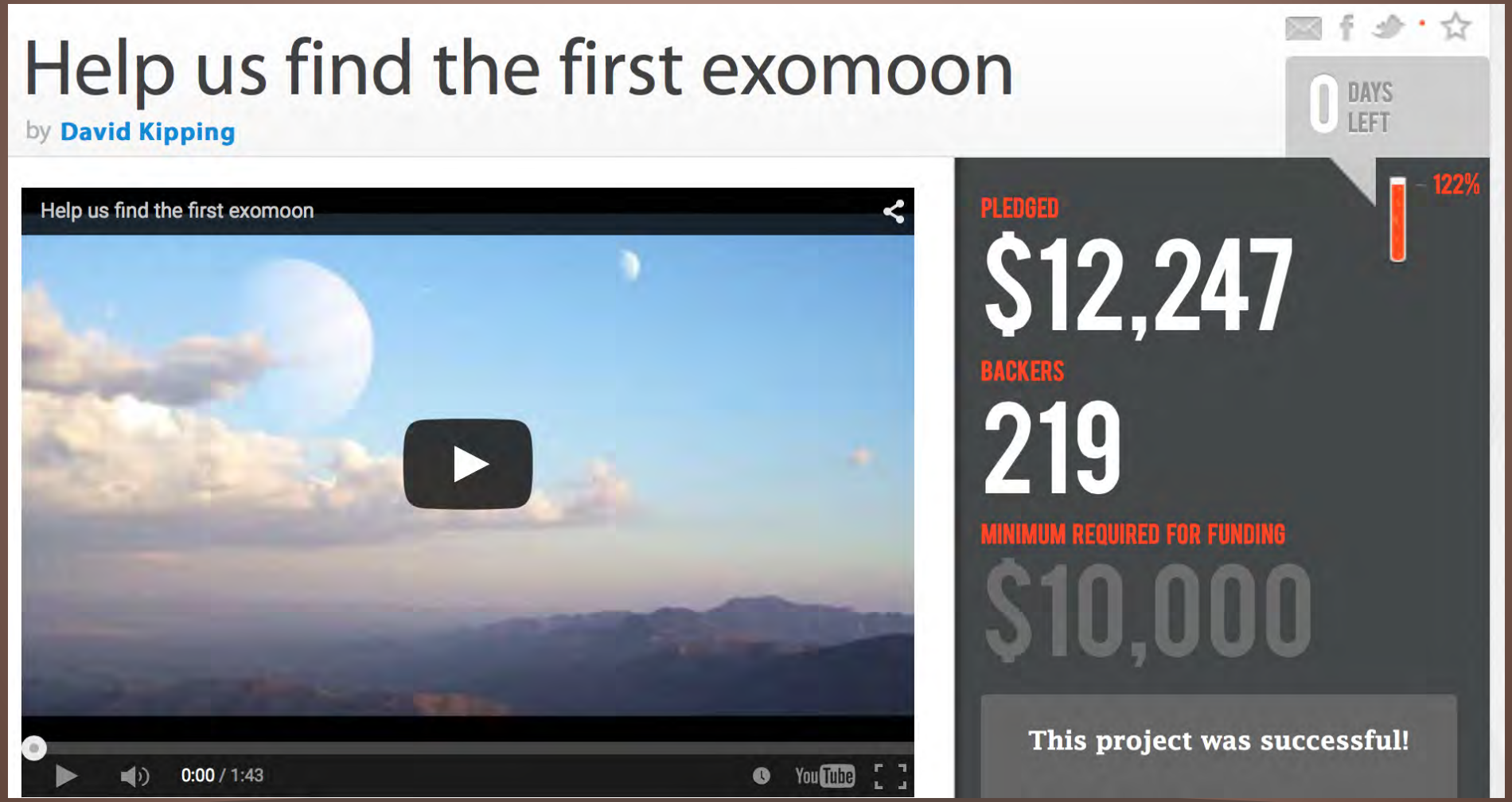
Transforming the PI and the Public

"If crowdfunding does become an appreciable part of the mix down the road then we might see more scientists deliberately thinking up projects that would have a direct public appeal."

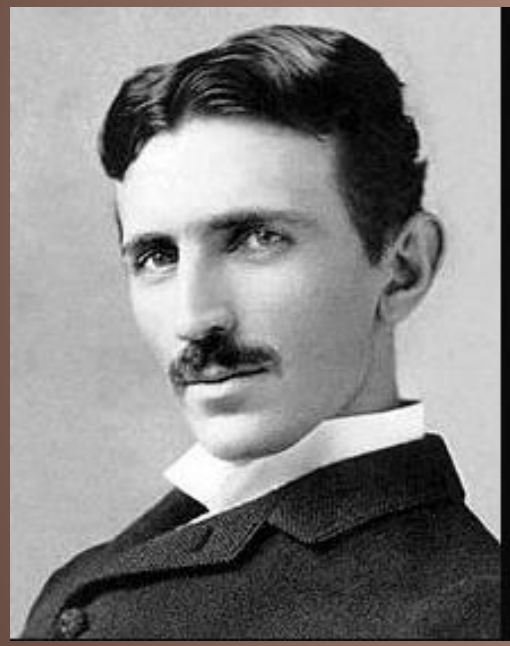
"But equally it might change how the public sees science. Scientists might become better at explaining the value of research that's happening anyway, and non-scientists might become better at tuning in to it."

Citizen Interest

Not so fast Dr. Kipping…



It’s the Passion that Counts



I do not think there is any thrill that can go through the human heart like that felt by the inventor as he sees some creation of the brain unfolding to success... such emotions make a man forget food, sleep, friends, love, everything.

(Nikola Tesla)

Successful Crowdfunding Project

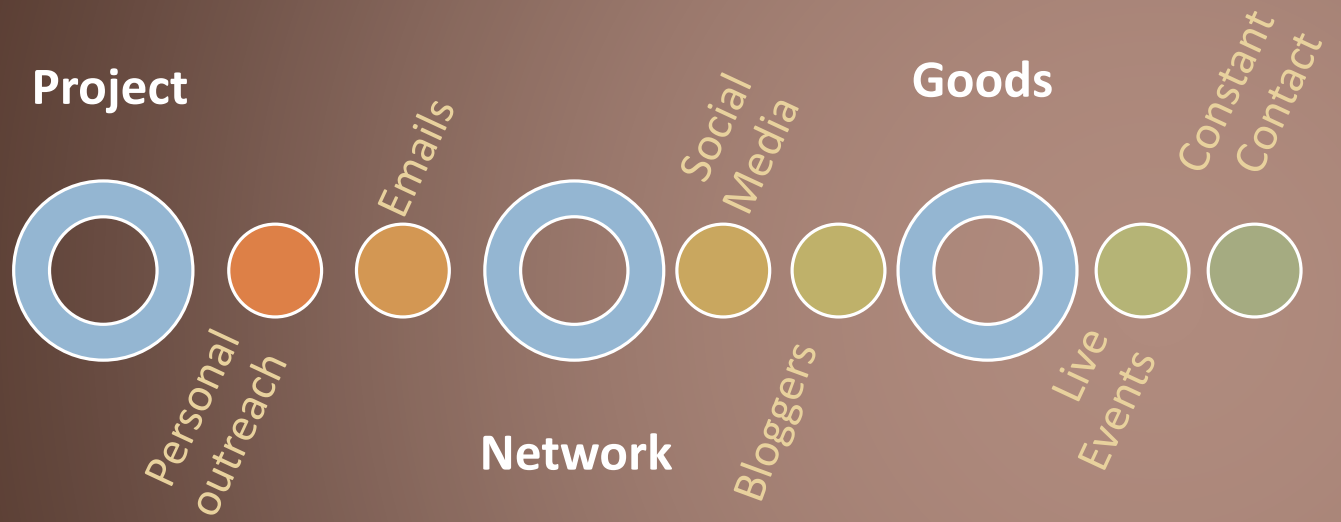
Avo is a unique self-cleaning fish tank. It requires no filter cleaning or water changes making fish keeping simple and beautiful.

- **Created by**
- Susan Shelley / Noux
- **591 backers** pledged £99,678 to help bring this project to life.
- https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/avo/avo-the-self-cleaning-tropical-fish-tank/description

Unsuccessful Crowdfunding Project

- **Health and growth status amongst Cape Verdean families**
- Biological anthropology
- $199 raised of $10,000 goal
- **About the Researcher**
- **Ana Lucia Andre PhD candidate**
  Loughborough University
  School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences
- **Ines Varela-Silva, BSc, MSc, PhD, FHEA**
  Loughborough University
- Read Ana & Ines's Story
- **Project Timeline: Start:** *April 2014*

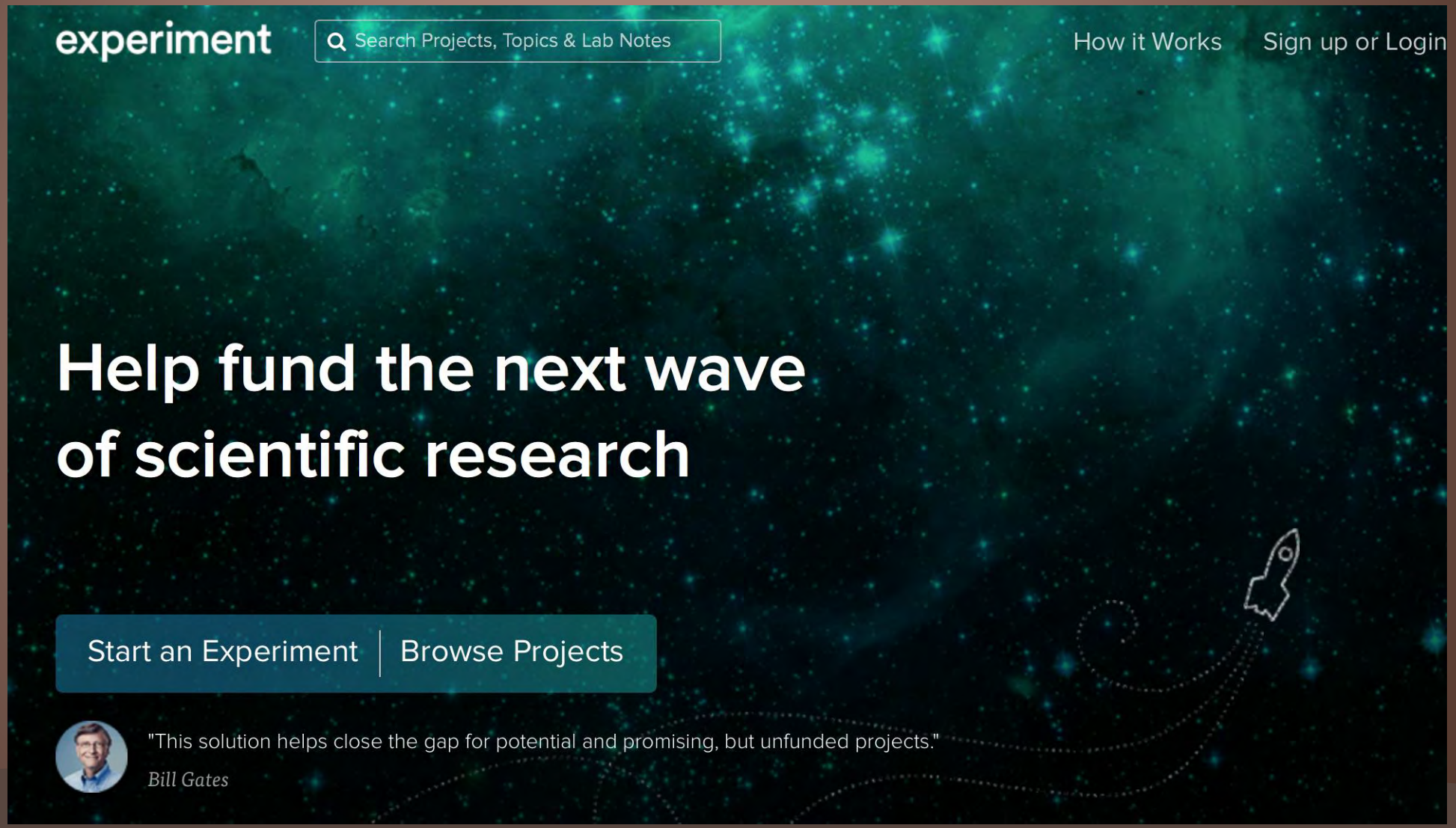
- https://www.consano.org/projects/39-health-and-growth-status-amongst-cape-verdean-families


Project
Personal outreach
Emails
Network
Social Media
Bloggers
Goods
Live Events
Constant Contact

= Success

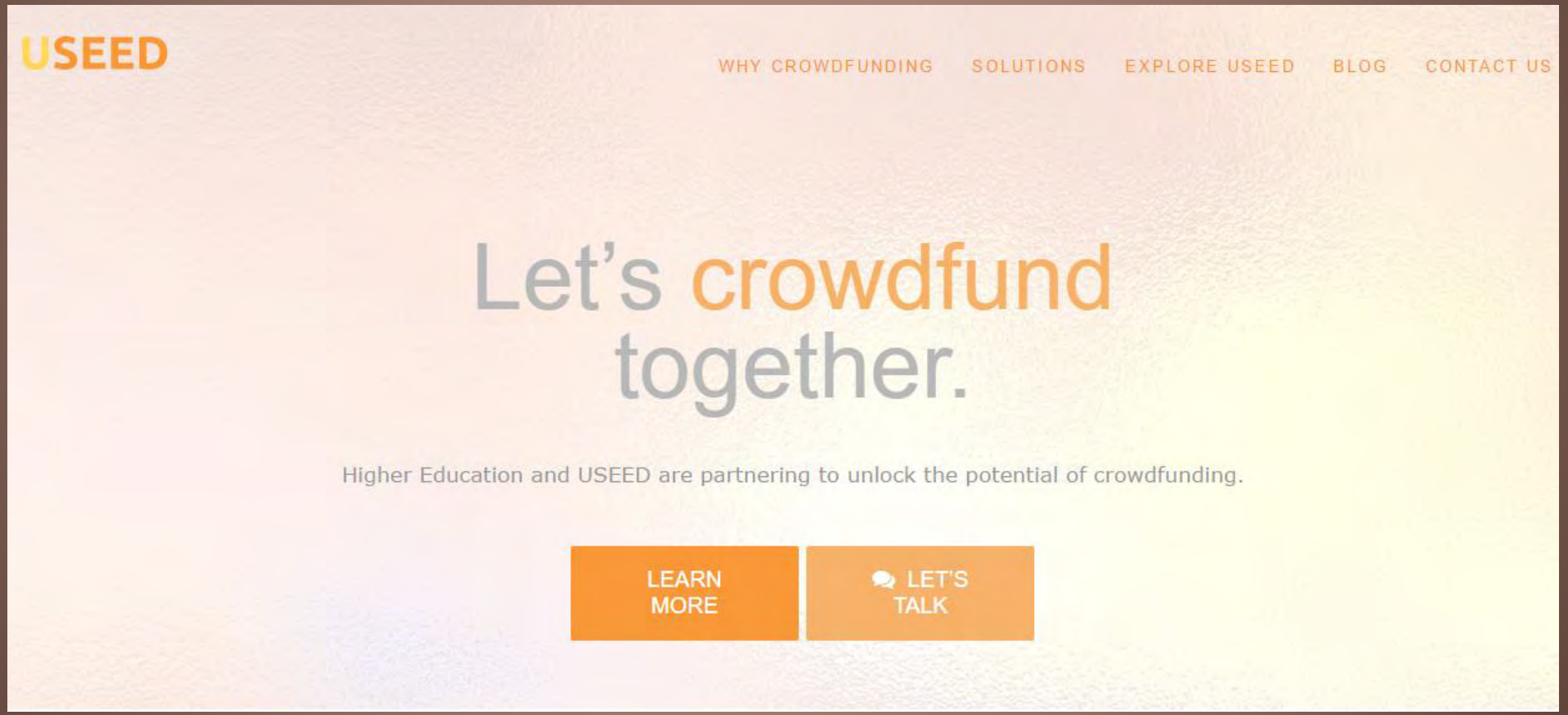
Experiment.com (formerly Microryza)

Experiment.com

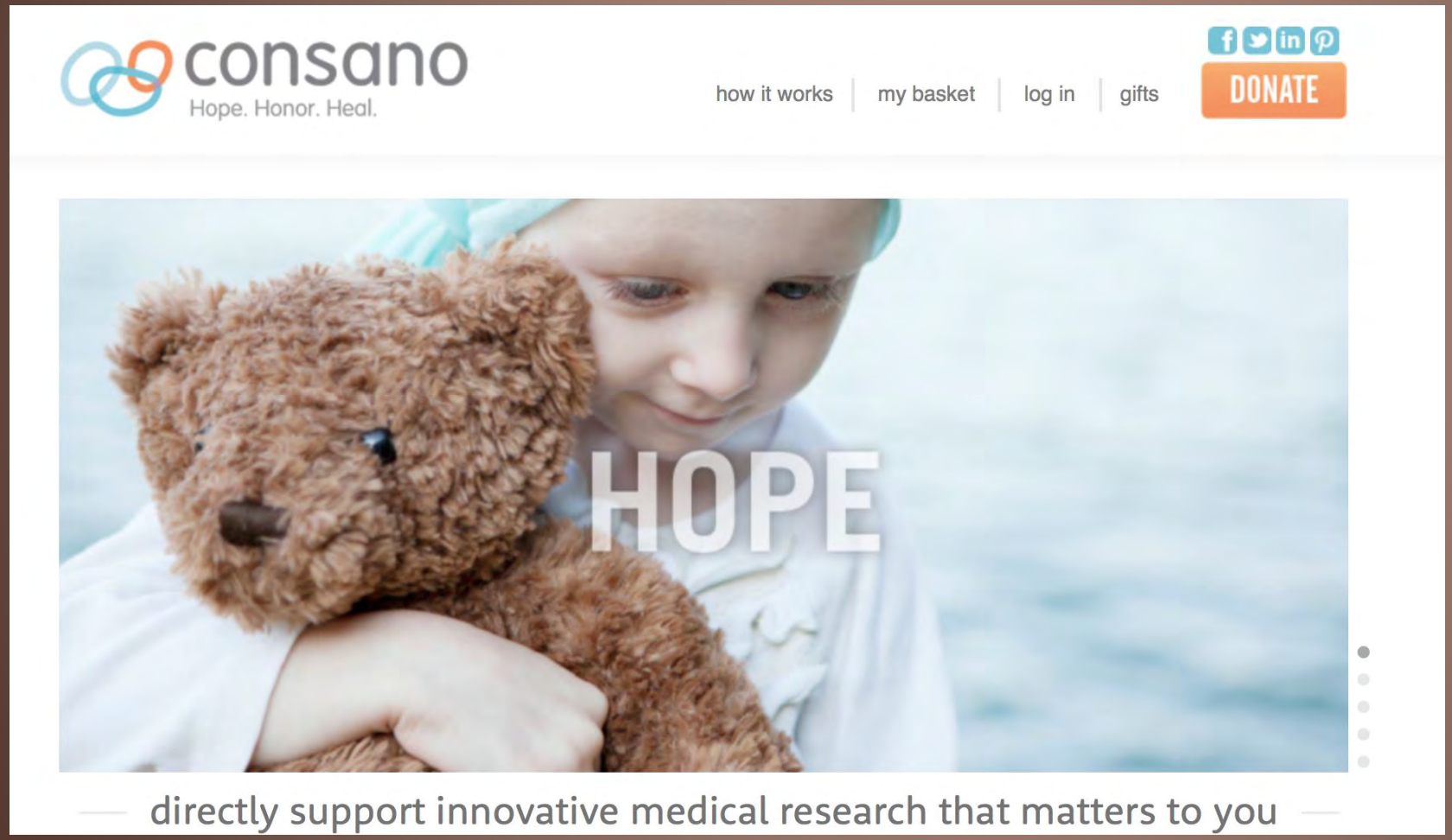


USEED

USEED


USEED
WHY CROWDFUNDING
SOLUTIONS
EXPLORE USEED
BLOG
CONTACT US
Let's crowdfund together.
Higher Education and USEED are partnering to unlock the potential of crowdfunding.
LEARN MORE
LET'S TALK

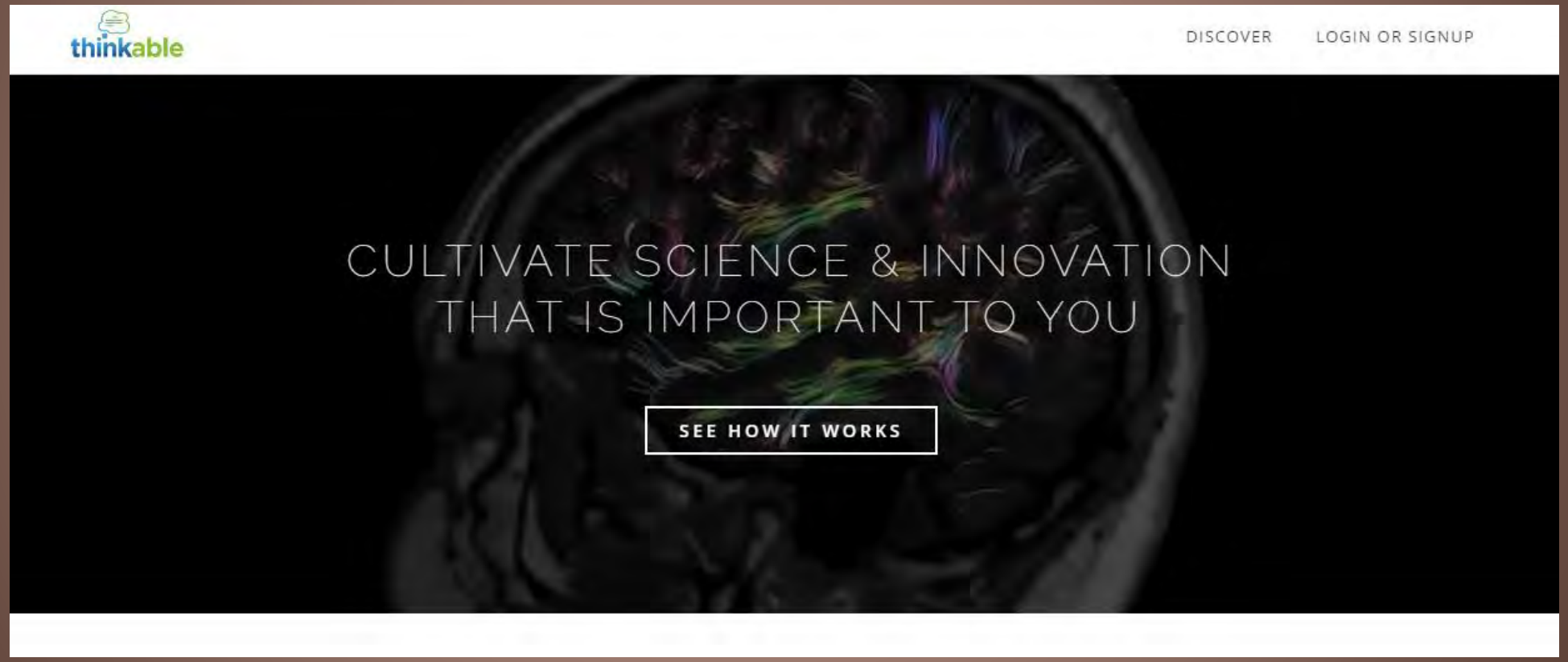
Consano



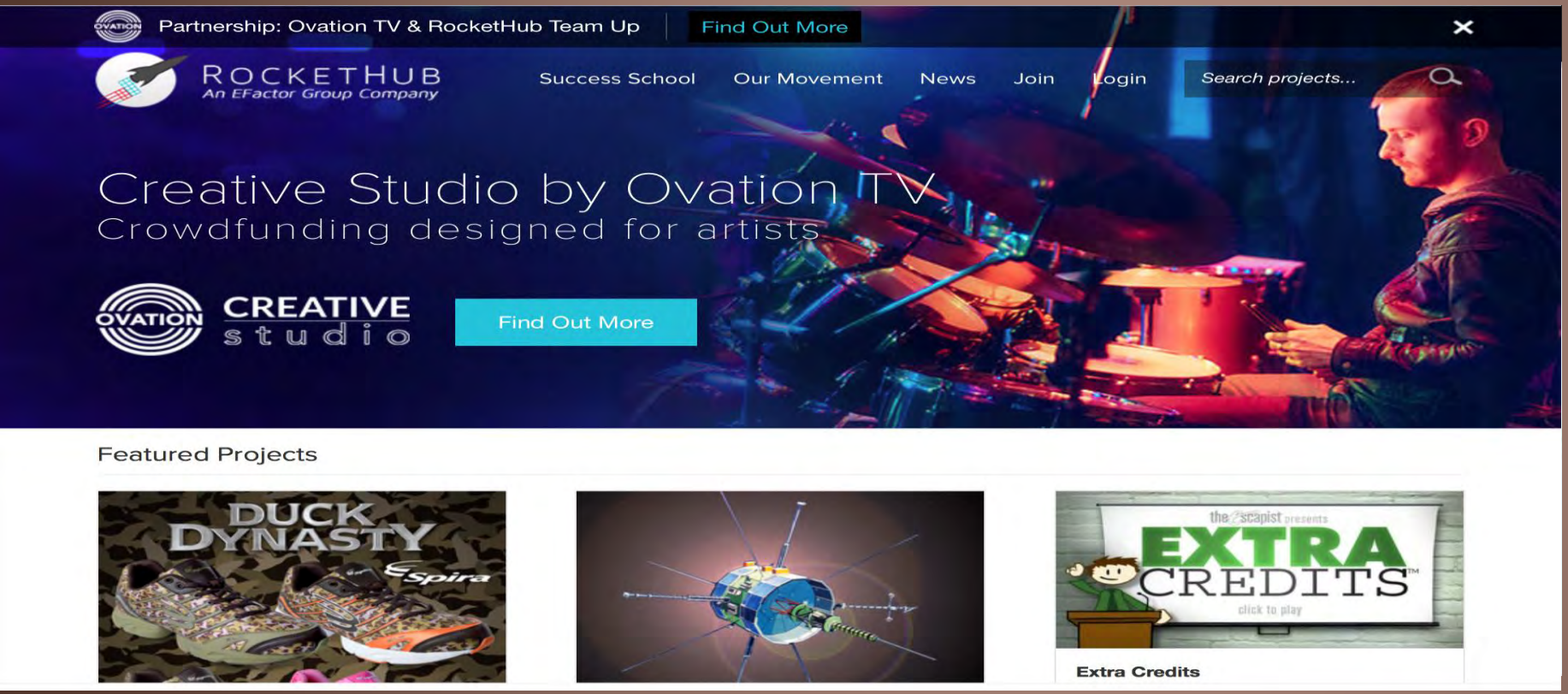
Consano

Thinkable

Thinkable



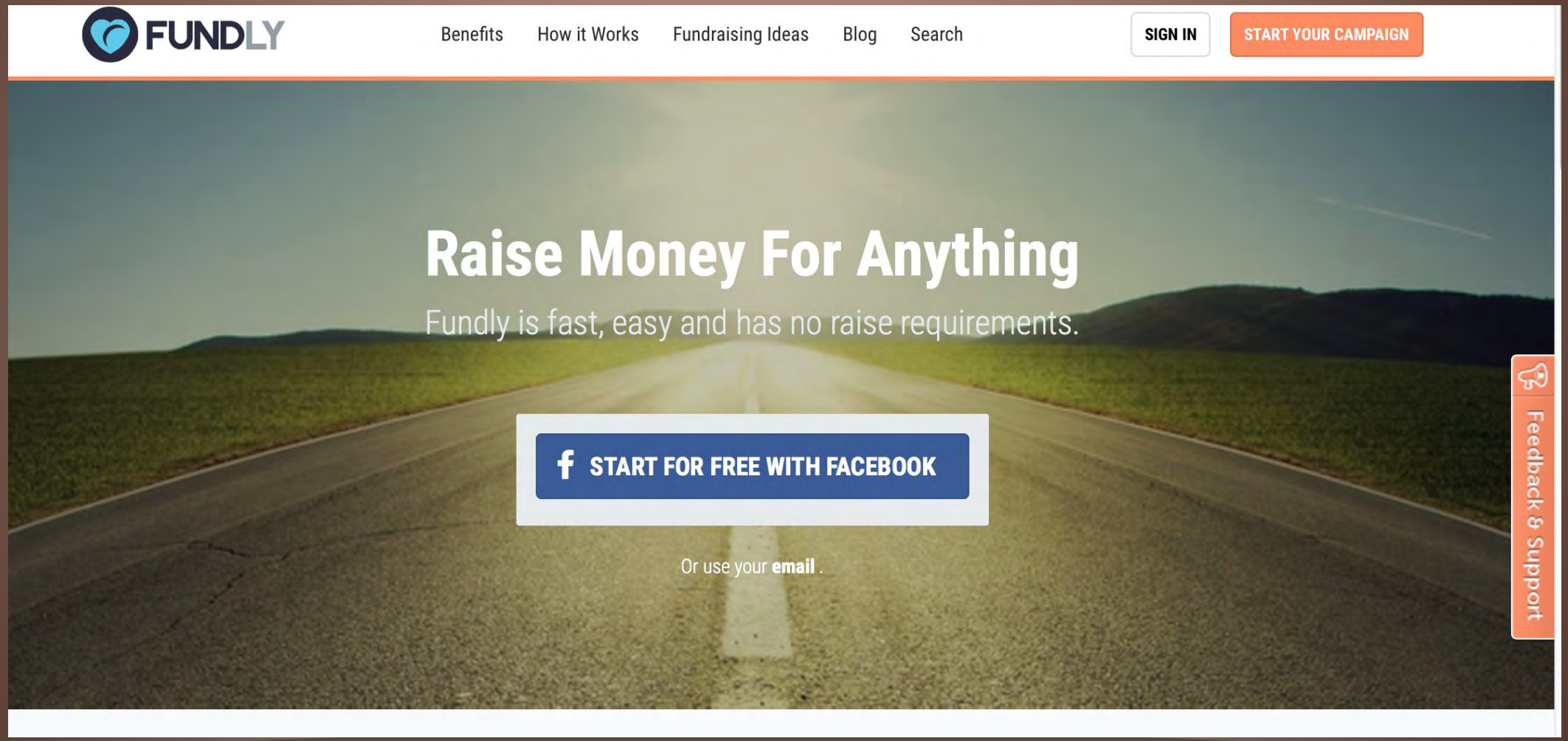
RocketHub and A&E



RocketHub,NY, by A&E **PROJECT STARTUP**

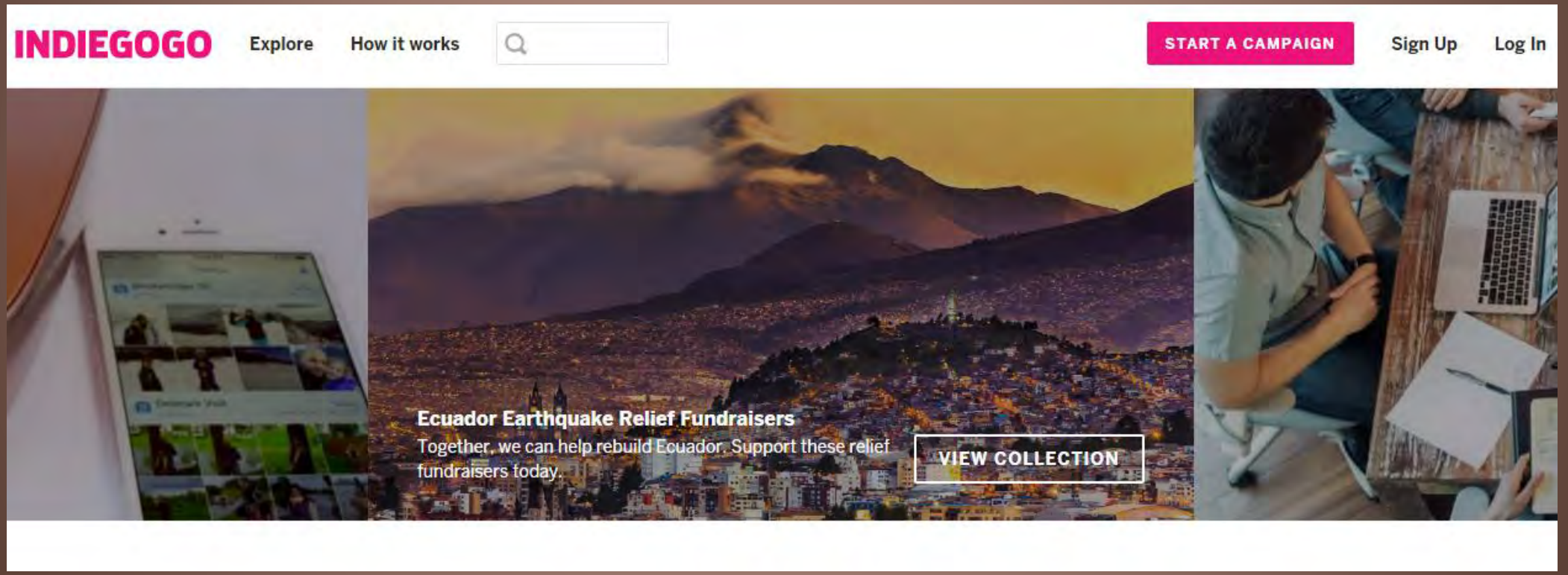
Fundly

Fundly

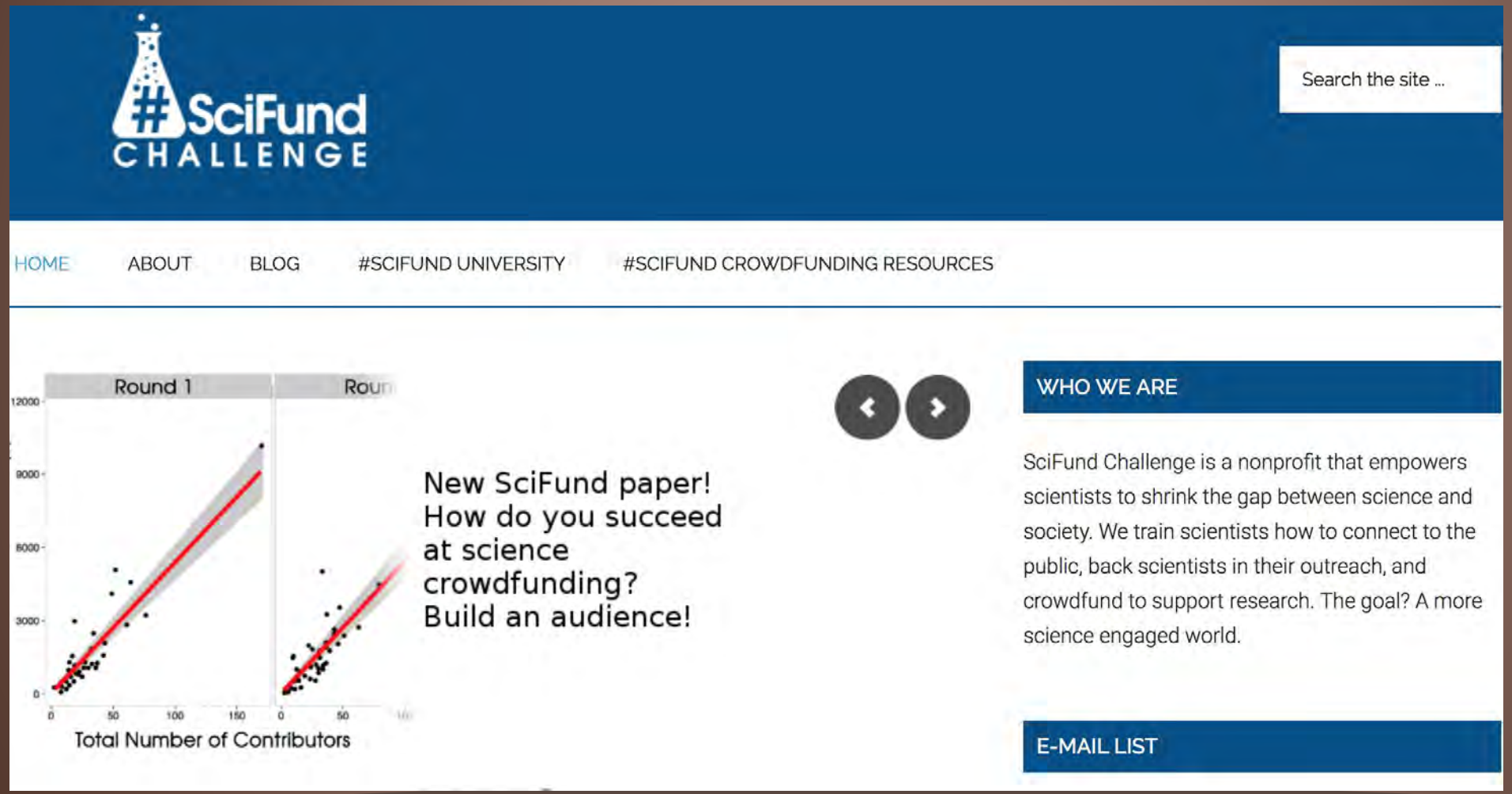


Indiegogo

Indiegogo



SciFund Challenge



SciFund Challenge

Walacea

Walacea

Operational and Policy Considerations

- What should a policy include? *Contact Cynthia!*
- Does institutional involvement create valuable endorsement, and what are the liabilities and risks, including ethical matters?
- Who controls marketing and campaigning?
- Managing expectations and returns. Should funding be restricted to small-scale feasibility studies?
- Should all funding pass via the University rather than directly to the PI? Should we charge overhead?
- Agreement of Terms and Conditions, including IP. Financial issues, such as income
- How do you know if it's working? Institutional data considerations.

Conclusions

- Crowdfunding offers some interesting possibilities!
- Part of a faculty development, research promotion/engagement strategy?
- Part of a diversified funding portfolio?
- Reputational and ethical issues?
- Publicly appealing projects may not reflect where research is needed.
- Best for smaller projects?
- Where does this sit in a university?

Questions & Answers

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION WELCOMED