

ScaleFunder Case Study

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SENTINEL HIVES



PARTNERSHIP ABSTRACT

Opportunity

The University of Maryland's department of entomology is home to significant research related to the health of honey bees. During the course of their active research, the opportunity arose to launch a pilot program that could monitor in real-time the health of honey bee colonies through what are known as Sentinel Hives. The researchers' goal was to build at least eight of these Sentinel Hives near campus as well as throughout the state.

Partnership

UMD began utilizing the ScaleFunder platform in the spring 2014, recognizing that adding the ability to match the funding needs of its campus with a new crowdfunding vehicle would be a perfect marriage of interests. The campaign also benefited from tremendous partnership, collaboration and support from area beekeeping associations and research collaboratives. The project leaders' direct knowledge about bee aficionados and their past giving patterns was extremely beneficial in this campaign.

Results

After initially setting a goal of \$8,000 to fund eight Sentinel Hives, the campaign tripled that number with a final count of \$24,105 from 156 donors. Not only did the campaign generate success with grassroots and corporate gifts, but one alumnus who heard about the campaign after its launch generously volunteered to do a matching gift challenge! The suggested giving levels for the campaign clearly had an impact as 90% of gifts exactly matched those levels.

To learn more and to schedule an online demo with ScaleFunder, visit www.scalefunder.com.

OPPORTUNITY

A couple of years earlier, the University of Maryland's department of entomology received a U.S. government grant for specific bee-related research. Over the course of conducting that research, one item that materialized was the need, and desire, to study the health of honey bees in real-time through Sentinel Hives. Unfortunately, the financial resources to establish the hives and conduct that research were not part of the grant. Therefore, new funding had to be acquired.

Enter the University's new crowdfunding platform, branded "Launch UMD," which could enable the project team to engage the beekeeping community for the needed support. Conducting a crowdfunding campaign for Sentinel Hives during the fall was very advantageous for multiple reasons. Not only is that a preferred timing for giving by many bee enthusiasts, but acquiring the funding in the fall would enable all of the pieces to be in place to set up new hives when the weather returned to warmer temperatures come springtime. The crowdfunding campaign ran from late September through late October 2014, providing the perfect opportunity for funding to be turned into action.

PARTNERSHIP

The ScaleFunder platform has enabled the University of Maryland community to have an opportunity to match up the needs and interests of its students and faculty with the ability to generate funds that inspire innovation and social change. The Sentinel Hives crowdfunding campaign combined the efforts of not only the development team, but also faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and a collaboration of bee-related researchers called "The Bee Informed Partnership."

Among those individuals directly responsible for the crowdfunding campaign's success was one of the "Bee Informed" project managers. Partnership with "Bee Informed" on the campaign better enabled outreach and gift solicitations to area beekeeping

enthusiasts and associations, all of which have a vested, and often deep personal, interest in honey bee health. These partnerships also played a role in securing media coverage of the campaign, including the local NPR station.

RESULTS

The group started out with a modest goal of \$8,000, but far surpassed those expectations, generating \$24,105 from 156 donors. Those 156 donors represented a broad spectrum of donor types and ranges as the median gift for this campaign was just \$20.

Among the 156 donors was an alumnus who, upon receiving an alumni-targeted email about the new Sentinel Hives campaign from the College of Computer, Mathematical, & Natural Sciences, generously volunteered to issue a \$5,000 matching gift challenge. Although this alumnus also happened to be on the University's Board of Trustees as well as the College's Board of Visitors, the matching challenge was an unexpected boost to the campaign.

The updates tab within the crowdfunding platform was extremely beneficial during the second week of the campaign. That week, the project group made two updates, the first of which was to announce the challenge match. The other update answered some direct questions about the benefits of these hives to beekeepers. The second week of the campaign averaged more than 10 gifts a day and yielded almost 50% of the total gifts received for the entire campaign.

Facebook was a significant factor in spreading the news as the campaign's homepage was directly shared on Facebook 61 times. By the end of the campaign, 651 visits to that homepage were directly attributable to a Facebook link. The video created as part of the crowdfunding effort was extremely popular with almost 900 views (which are in addition to the nearly 700 video views tracked separately on the YouTube channel where the video was posted).

Gamification was incredibly successful for this campaign as nearly 90% of the gifts fell directly on one of the seven suggested amounts, almost all of which were on one of the \$100 and under levels.

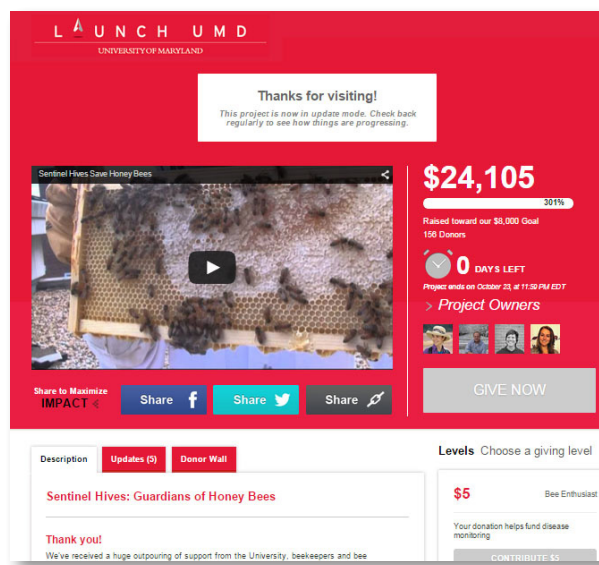
The most popular giving level for this campaign was just \$20, which project leaders expected given their direct knowledge of charitable giving within the beekeeping community. That knowledge and pre-campaign preparation enabled the leaders to establish more attractive donor levels and goals. Only the four recommended levels of \$100 and above included any direct donor perks; the three lowest levels (\$5, 20, 50) were solely symbolic. The most popular of the donor perk levels was \$100, where the perk was an invitation for donors to tour the University's bee lab.

The campaign not only succeeded at the lower individual levels, but also on leadership levels. Multiple gifts of \$1,000 and above were made to the campaign by various beekeeping associations. This is in addition to the \$5,000 matching gift challenge that materialized only after it launched.

Finally, project leaders incorporated remarkable stewardship within their campaign planning. Every donor to the Sentinel Hives crowdfunding campaign, regardless of giving level, received a personal, hand-written thank you letter for their generosity and support. This type of stewardship could undoubtedly pay dividends in future funding efforts.

ABOUT THE RUFFALO NOEL LEVITZ SCALEFUNDER PLATFORM

ScaleFunder makes it easy to leverage online fundraising efforts to engage with supporters, motivate prospects, and acquire new donors. ScaleFunder features a custom branded platform for your organization; enables supporters to see and feel the impact of their gift; dynamically showcase projects and the impact of giving; an easy ability for donors to share the campaign through social media; and the inclusion of tiered giving impact levels. All of this is integrated with your payment processing system to deliver funds within your existing business process framework.



“This project was so successful because the team had an outstanding marketing strategy and because of the news-worthy nature of the subject matter. The team knew exactly who to ask for support and was able to talk about the science of honey bee health in a way that everyone could understand.”

Nora Pittmann | Manager, New Donor Strategies | University of Maryland, College Park