Our Project

• Crowdfunding is web-based fundraising
• Approach has proven successful in urban areas
• Often used to fund “green” projects
• Can this approach be used to help small rural communities
The Copper Basin
Environmental Transformation

- Acidic pollution from production process denuded the Copper Basin region
- Area has been largely restored due to decades of remediation
- Despite these efforts, stigma of the Basin “moonscape” remains
Economic Transition

• Copper production ceased in the 1980s
• Community lost jobs and residents
• Now embracing outdoor recreation and tourism
• Vision to become “the greenest small town in America”
Last year, UT ATP students partnered with Ducktown to assess emerging technologies in rural communities.

Contour crafting uses a quick drying concrete to quickly build industrial parts or even entire buildings.

3D Printing was recommended to develop job skills and improve employment opportunities.
Copper Basin Learning Center

• An arts and education program associated with Copper Basin High School
• Expressed interest in obtaining a printer for their STEM and arts programs
• We decided to help crowdfund a 3D printer as a case study for our research
Process

• Determine feasibility – could this approach work for our project?
• Also needed local buy-in
• Met with local stakeholders, including students and educators
• Set a realistic and attainable goal - $2,500
• Worked with UT and TVA media relations to develop a media strategy
• Developed media and web content
• Developed social media strategy
Process

• Chose a platform
• Used Indiegogo – visible, well-established, and had a community funding area
• Created a page on the platform
Process

• We launched in mid-October
• We spread the word through news stories in several publications and social media posts
• Maintained enthusiasm through regular updates
Donation Trends
Project Outcomes

- 1138 site visits and 227 referrals
- Average donation $54 (National Average $58.51)
- Funds raised $2,632 (National Average $2,099)
- 48 Donations
- Donations split between local donors, UT donors, and others
- Furthest donor: Italy
Lessons Learned

• Barriers
  - Competing demands for local funds
  - ATP class constraints
  - Digital divide
  - Lack of familiarity
• Incentives may have increased donations
• Local expectations need to be realistic
Recommendations

- Small communities must find a good partner
- Continuous engagement
- Build awareness ahead of time
- Strong anchor team of people
- Best for small special projects
- Should be used sparingly
Civic Crowdfunding Guide

• Using our research, we developed a guide to help other Appalachian communities
• Available for download
• Shared with UT IPS, development districts and UT Appalachian partner communities
Conclusions

- Crowdfunding is a valid method for rural communities.
- There must be realistic expectations – million dollar projects are the exception.
- Best for modest public goods things like gardens and green improvements.
- Partnerships are key – they expand both resources available and the donor pool.
Donors

Jack Rosko
Chase Amelung
Elmer and Della Bernard
Sally Peretz
Gary W. Dunavant
Linda Skeen

Ford Family
Polk County News
Angie Cook
and other anonymous donors
The Team