Identifying and Implementing Best Practice Crowdsourcing and Crowdfunding Strategies for Public Funded Research

Kieran Conboy and Lorraine Morgan
National University of Ireland, Galway

Position Statement

Introduction

Both crowdsourcing and crowdfunding have received significant attention in recent years and an exponentially greater amount of business is actually executed through the crowdsourcing model. However, despite the hype and obvious benefits, funding agencies have been slow to adopt these innovative models. This is surprising considering that traditional models are often very limited by an over-reliance on public funds, difficulties in sourcing interested contributors and funders (Muscio et al, 2013), a difficulty in enabling multi-disciplinary research (Leydesdorff, 2000), intellectual insularity and perceived nepotism in project selection (Benner et al, 2000), myopic reviews and a finite panel of qualified reviewers. Crowdsourcing and crowdfunding, if used effectively, can solve or at least reduce these issues.

This position statement reflects on the themes and objectives of a research project entitled "Crowdsourcing Strategies for Public Funded Research (CrowdStrat)", funded by the Irish Research Council, which will commence on 2nd December, 2013. We believe these themes and objectives are relevant to the wider research community investigating these phenomena, and hope this workshop will allow us to both share our insights and benefit from the feedback of our peers.

This CrowdStrat project focuses on: (i) reviewing and assessing current international practice regarding crowdsourcing and crowdfunding by research funding agencies; (ii) identifying leading, effective applications of crowdsourcing/crowdfunding initiatives; (iii) investigating the increase in impact of funding agency use of crowdsourcing/funding; and (iv) developing strategies and set of best practices for crowdsourcing/crowdfunding implementation in funding agencies.

Interrogating the literature: What do we know about the determinants of Crowdsourcing/Crowdfunding Success?

The first stage of the planned research will involve a literature review to determine information available on the current state of practice in terms of crowdsourcing and crowdfunding amongst research funding agencies nationally and internationally. In particular, we will focus on the literature surrounding determinants of success and failure of crowdsourcing/crowdfunding initiatives.

A deeper look: Case studies of Exemplar Crowdsourcing/Crowdfunding Initiatives

Several case studies will be conducted on leading crowdsourcing/crowdfunding initiatives, e.g. Cancer Research UK, USEED (crowdfunding platform for higher-education institutes) and Indiegogo. Each case study will involve 8-10 interviews with key decision-makers, managers and solution providers of these initiatives.

Benchmarking: Large-Scale Survey of Current International Practice

Following the case studies, we plan a quantitative, explanatory study to demonstrate the co-relation between research funding agency use of crowdsourcing and crowdfunding and increase in impact. The survey will target a global set of research funding agencies, seeking responses from (i) fund managers, (ii) managers of crowdsourcing/crowdfunding initiatives, and (iii) end customers/users of crowdsourced/crowdfunded projects. The analysis will seek trends across sectors, location, types and size of projects.

<u>Seeking Change: Developing and Implementing a Conceptual Strategic Framework for Crowdsourcing Implementation in Funding Agencies</u>

Conclusions drawn from case studies, focus groups and survey will form the basis of a conceptual framework, along with a set of key metrics, for crowdsourcing implementation within funding agencies. We will then develop, implement and validate a strategy and set of practices for research funding agencies. Using action research (Baskerville 1999; Baskerville and Myers 2004), the research team hope to pilot the use of crowdsourcing/crowdfunding on a number of funding calls.

References

Benner, M., Sandström,U. (2000) ' Institutionalizing the triple helix: research funding and norms in the academic system'. *Research Policy*, 29(2): 291-301.

Leydesdorff, L. (2000) 'The triple helix: an evolutionary model of innovations'. *Research Policy*, 29(2): 243-255.

Muscio, A., Quaglione, D. Vallanti, G. (2013) 'Does government funding complement or substitute private research funding to universities?' *Research Policy*, 42(1): 63-67.