

Company seeking money to build space telescope

May 29 2013, by Donna Gordon Blankinship



Peter Diamandis, co-chairman of Planetary Resources, an asteroid mining company based in Bellevue, Wash., talks to reporters Wednesday, May 29, 2013, in Seattle about his company's plans for the world's first crowd funded space telescope. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

A U.S. company that wants to send robots into space to mine precious metals from asteroids has found another way to use the expensive technology it's developing for its space venture.

[Planetary Resources](#) Inc. announced Wednesday it plans to launch an extra [space telescope](#) in early 2015 to be used by the general public to take pictures of their favorite constellations, or to do their own research for the benefit of the world.

People who want to join the operation will have to contribute toward the \$1 million price tag. For instance, for \$200 a member of the public can aim the telescope once and take a picture. For \$450, they can take three pictures.

People also can pay more and donate their telescope time to school children or professional researchers.

Planetary Resources co-founder Peter Diamandis said the Bellevue, Washington-based company hopes schools and science museums will be the primary beneficiaries of the project.

"Our goal is to democratize access to space," he said.



Officials with Planetary Resources, an asteroid mining company based in Bellevue, Wash., talk to reporters Wednesday, May 29, 2013, in Seattle about their plans for the world's first crowd funded space telescope. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

The company doesn't need the public's money to support its [asteroid](#) mining efforts, Diamandis added. They see the donations as more of a confirmation that people are really interested in taking part in [space exploration](#).

After Planetary Resources announced its plan to mine asteroids more than a year ago, the company was flooded with public response to the project.

They received some 50,000 emails from people who wanted to get involved. About 3,500 filled out a five-page job application. Another 2,500 wanted to invest.

The public fundraising effort is their way of harnessing this information and "building a community who can go on this epic journey with us," Diamandis said.



Volunteers send out messages on social media on behalf of Planetary Resources, an asteroid mining company based in Bellevue, Wash., Wednesday, May 29, 2013, in Seattle to raise awareness of the company's plans for the world's first crowd funded space telescope. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

Diamandis also wants to make a public statement about the way entrepreneurs are taking over [space development](#) from the governments that have paid for all such work in the past.

"Space is a business," he said.

Planetary Resources' main business remains asteroid mining, Diamandis emphasized.

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