

PBS' 'Nova' seeking periodic-table fans to fund TV special

January 31 2017, by Lynn Elber



This undated image released by WGBH shows David Pogue from NOVA's "Hunting the Elements." NOVA is partnering with Pogue in a Kickstarter campaign that invites fans and science lovers to take part in the production of "Beyond the Elements," a new cross-platform project that explores how molecules make up our entire known universe. (Cara Feinberg/WGBH via AP)

Geeks of America, PBS' "Nova" wants you to open up your minds and wallets for a sequel to its sleeper 2012 hit film on the periodic table.

A Kickstarter campaign for \$1 million to finance "Beyond the Elements" from public TV station WGBH Boston launched Tuesday. The follow-up to "Hunting the Elements" will bring puckish tech reporter David Pogue back as host.

Money alone isn't the goal for the drive at novakickstarter.com, said John Bredar, WGBH's vice president of national programming.

"What really excites us is the opportunity to team up directly with 'Nova' fans and science lovers," Bredar said in a statement about the campaign tagged "Make Science for All."

"Hunting the Elements" gave viewers a closer look at the elements of the periodic table. The sequel shows how those elements combine to form the millions of substances in the world.

Why was a subject that's the dread of many a high school student the right project for crowdfunding? Because it has a vocal fan base, Bredar said in an interview.

After the original program aired, WGBH began hearing from teachers and others asking, "'Hey, when are you going to do another show on the [periodic table](#)?'"

 he said.

"Once we got over the fact that there was this seemingly loyal group of people we were hearing a lot from" and then added in Pogue's own following, Bredar said, WGBH decided the show fit the model for a successful campaign.

If more than \$1 million is raised, additional goals can be met including interactive classroom materials, a 360-degree virtual reality experience and free distribution of copies of the two shows to all U.S. public high schools, WGBH said.

Making the show will take up to 20 months, Bredar said. The program will be made even if the campaign falls short but will take longer while funding is sought, Bredar said.

The online fundraiser isn't a first for a PBS program or its filmmakers. WGBH, for instance, relied on it to help fund an oral history project tied to the program "Last Days of Vietnam" for its "American Experience" series.

"When you think of it more broadly, PBS has been in the crowdfunding game from the get-go," Bredar said, with its reliance on viewer contributions as an adjunct to federal funding.

Federal money represents 15 percent of public TV stations' funding overall, with the rest provided by private and corporate donors. Most of that approximately \$400 million is divided annually among 1,500-plus locally owned-and-operated TV and radio stations nationwide.

"Nova," in its 44th season, is a top-rated prime-time science series with an average audience of 5 million weekly viewers.

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