

How Strong is Your Civic Tech and Data Ecosystem?

An emergent framework for local leaders, from the Civic Tech and Data Collaborative

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If you're reading this, chances are you believe in the power of data and technology to transform people's lives. And you've probably seen it happen, one project or specific problem at a time. But what if civic tech and data could be applied – systematically – to the most pressing problems of our day, at the local level? What would it take for this to happen, especially for people and communities that have been historically marginalized?

We believe that, in order to achieve this goal, localities have to have robust **civic tech and data ecosystems**. Here are the elements of that ecosystem as we see it:

- **Key Players** including civic hackers and data mavens, local government officials, community groups and advocates, issue area experts, philanthropies, and tech companies
- **A Collaborative Approach** to identify issues, align efforts toward clearly-defined results, monitor progress and adjust over time (for example, [collective impact](#))
- **Knowledge**, common and specialized, of technology, data, community organizing, substantive issues like health or economic development
- **Resources** from time to data to cold hard cash, as well as relationships with people and organizations that can provide these resources
- **Infrastructure**, technological, organizational and civic, as well as **tools** to collect and use quality data, facilitate collaboration across this range of partners, bring communities into the work, and share learnings locally and nationally.
- **Culture and Values**, including a shared understanding of the various components of the civic tech and data ecosystem and a willingness among players to learn from one another.

Example of an Ecosystem in Action: St. Louis

With support from the Civic Tech and Data Collaborative, OpenData STL, Rise St. Louis, and St. Louis County are collaborating on an effort to make the court system more navigable for people with tickets, fees, and warrants. Their work is happening in the context of a wave of reform in response to issues surfaced by Michael Brown's death and the response that followed. Through this process, they hope to be able to deliver better data on what happens to people who are navigating the system, and deepen collaboration between players involved in issues within and outside the criminal justice system.