

Lessons from the Civic Tech and Data Collaborative

Thursday morning 10:15 – 11:15 a.m.

From 2014 to 2018, the Civic Tech and Data Collaborative (CTDC) brought together local government officials, civic technologists, and community data organizations across seven communities to explore how to harness data and technology to benefit low-income residents. Three national organizations with local networks - Living Cities, Code for America, and NNIP – guided the initiative. To provide real-world examples and lessons for the field, local collaboratives in Boston, St. Louis, and Washington, DC created products that use data and technology in new ways to improve services or programs in their cities.

We have seen that when communities combine their technology and data expertise and resources, they can:

- Unlock data to shed light on issues and take action on what they reveal
- Creatively incorporate technology to enhance systems-level solutions
- Build government's capacity to pilot and spread the use of civic tech and data across departments and externally
- Create solutions that involve low-income residents and improve their lives

The purpose of the session is to describe the CTDC, showcase the projects and lessons from two local participants and explore how NNIP should engage and develop relationships with the civic tech field going forward.

April Urban from Case Western Reserve University will moderate and briefly describe her experience as a learning partner from Cleveland. (5 minutes)

- Kathy Pettit from the Urban Institute will describe the motivations for the overall project and the upcoming releases. (5 minutes)
- John Cruz from Rise in St. Louis and Peter Tatian from Urban-Greater DC will provide an overview of their websites YourSTLCourts and Housing Insights and the participating organizations. (10 minutes each)
- April will then ask a few questions of the panelists before opening it up for questions and discussion.

Discussion: (20 minutes)

- What lessons do you have from your own experience in working with civic technologists (whether through brigades, other informal groups or individually)?
- What could the network provide to encourage more working relationships between Partners and civic tech?
- What do you think the network should do collectively in this space?

For more information about the project, see www.neighborhoodindicators.org/ctdc and <https://www.livingcities.org/work/civic-tech-and-data-collaborative>.

LOCAL CTDC PROJECTS

BOSTON: In Boston, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and the city's Division of Youth Engagement and Employment (DYEE) came together to redesign key program elements for SuccessLink, the city's youth employment program, including the application interface, how youth are assigned to jobs, and how the agency communicates with applicants. They were assisted by the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT), Code for Boston, and MIT education experts. The collaborative developed a creative algorithm for matching youth to desired jobs and a system to notify applicants of matches via email and text message. The new Youth Jobs Platform allowed staff real-time access to program operations data and enabled youth to monitor their status throughout the application process. The project demonstrated that tailoring services to meet the needs of youth results in higher participation and frees up staff for program enhancements.

<http://youthjobs.mapc.org>

ST. LOUIS: CivTech St. Louis began as a partnership between Rise, the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, GlobalHack, and LaunchCode. The CivTech St. Louis team recognized that data and technology could bridge the information gap and prevent people from going to jail for nonviolent, mostly traffic, offenses. The result was YourSTLCourts.com, an open-source website and text tool that pulls real-time data on tickets from most St. Louis area courts into a single, easy to use interface. Residents can search by their citation number, their driver's license number, or the location where they received their ticket. Additionally, a short message service (SMS) tool enables residents to receive text messages with court updates. The website also helps residents navigate the court system by providing information about what to expect in court and community service options.

<http://www.yourstlcourts.com>

WASHINGTON, DC: The Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED), the DC Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and Urban–Greater DC partnered with Code for DC to develop Housing Insights, an open-source tool that uses data and technology to help government and community development staff make better investments in affordable housing. The tool compiles diverse data sources to help stakeholders identify projects that are at risk or difficult to replace, understand neighborhood trends, and access information on individual projects needed for action. The project grew out of work by the DC Preservation Network, a long-standing cross-sector initiative led by CNHED and Urban–Greater DC that works to preserve affordable housing in the District.

<http://www.housinginsights.org>

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