Session III: Friday, September 15th 10:15 - 11:15am

Location: Lobby

Session Title: Ecosystems framework

Organizer: Katya/Elizabeth

Primary Notetaker: Katya Abazajian

* CfA brigade changes will be toward a membership model
* Randy interested in exploring northern virginia technologists, a little too informal
* Elizabeth, explaining national networks,
  + We’re trying to make sure we’re including the users in our development. Want to be informed by the institutional partners that we’re identifying. We started with our three networks and where they sit. The best way for us to look at an approach is from the three networks.
* Christopher: Cities we’ve seen be successful have a strong government partner, local foundational support, and have a strong civic tech community. What got us in trouble is trying to get brigades to do things they’re not structured to do. Boston succeeded at convening, had NDoCH work. Code for Bosotn, for example, had to take a back seat in the building phase.
* Laura: Relieved to hear that coding shouldn’t live with Code for America folks. Trying to figure out how to structure a project with code for America that would maybe feed into CI:now data and/or from local government.
* Matt: There needs to be a process of growth for the civic tech partner because they have to be at the point where they have backing and are even at the stage of building products
* Sheila: Working on helping low income people to work together collaboratively, and the local government/county is acting as the convener. PSU wants to look at 211 to try to identify what the necessary issues are.?
* Christopher: If you are missing one of the three branches, the three-legged stool falls apart. If government isn’t involved then the policies won’t change and the project won’t get very far.
* Eamon: Have a guy in east lake trying to get city government trying to do open data but they don’t get it at all.
* Matt: The only way to get anything done is to work with government, but the government people don’t have developers in the room to have the discussions about how to design products and incorporate user stories.
* Laura: One thing we’re struggling with is that theres no such thing as “The City” there’s the department heads, the staff, the mayor’s office, etc. You don’t need to have the city leader’s sitgnature on an MOU to make progress, so we’re trying to come at it from many angles. Don’t want anyone to think they can’t get started or get good stuff without the city sign off.
* Elizabeth: I would answer Sheila’s question with a question - on what scale do you want to make the change? It’s not just 10 people dealing with lack of transportation or whatever the issue may be, you want to understand how many people total are affected by the root of the issue. Start out without the local partner there and do teh analysis and then see at what point their attention and will aligns with your findings. We’re looking at how city governments should be harnessing the power of technology and residents to inform policies and programs. “We’re program rich but systems poor.” We see city government not looking at their toolbox. If they’re not informed they go out and get a contract for an app.
* Matt: It seems like you have to be able to be in and out. You want to be on the line in and out of city government. You’re probably going to end up competing with government if you t’re trying to build a better transit app.
* Christopher : for cities it's easier for champions to say the city needs to be the main customer for city data and then everyone outside is secondary. Chicago has someone who is a data contact on the CDO team that has external person. Also someone from every department is on the committee so even if they change mayors because it's automated it'll be harder to take it apart than maintain it.
* Elizabeth : philanthropy can be catalytic. Show what happens when you don't have to use taxpayer dollars to experiment. When you succeed we'll give you the national stage. Accountability means foundations can help cities experiment and then defund what's not working. Example st. Louis, Rise is going to engage everyone they can and prove through community buy in that the city should actually adjust its funding strategy to let this app work.
* Matt: if you are starting this community from scratch it's 6 or 7 years up front. To move quicker and make best use of resources, need to be intentional up front and be a full time job. You get burned out. Went to every groups meet ups, made connections. Three people running and organizing should be minimum.
* Matt: Need diverse groups of people in your stakeholder group to understand and communicate.
* Merissa: community leaders depends on their tech savviness. Determining the value proposition.
* Maybe we need to make more clear the value proposition.
* Laura: well the concepts are kind of abstract. How do you talk to a family foundation about civic tech data ecosystem, they get lost in the words.
* Matt: ask Katie about this. Data intermediary led into civic tech in the explanation.
* Lisa: Miami govt has a data portal but doesn't understand the concepts.
* Elizabeth: learning partner work is more about identifying interests and “creating the table”. Local government keeps coming up in identifying the resources.
* Randy: what's going on in NoVa. Have community meetings, focus groups, identified indicators, collected data, put them into a giant excel spreadsheet. I was the only person interested in the work in the CfA brigade. Interests were not civic really, just random. Should actually be spending time at nonprofits and local community groups to figure out what they actually need.
* Matt: if I could have started over I would start with solution selection and be more strategic in working with people with connections to neighborhoods. Go into product discovery first. If you can do that initial analysis for free, you can start building relationships and get buzz.