**BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM: NNIP AND OPEN SOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Friday morning, 8:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Partners are increasingly taking advantage of advances in open source software development, in part encouraged by the Knight Challenges, which requires that grantees develop their applications with open source software. (See partner examples at <http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/issue-area/234>) Using open source does not reduce the need for technical expertise, but eliminating the cost of ongoing licenses eases the burden of replicating the application in other places. Weave offers the most mature example related to NNIP, but informal collaborations have resulted as well, such as Pittsburgh adapting the Providence neighborhood profiles tool.

NNIP can leverage the talent and experience within the network to foster open source development among our partners at various levels of technical expertise and staffing. For example, the partnership could gather examples of open source applications, develop guides, and host referral lists for technology consultants.

Going beyond single partner projects, sharing ideas on open source projects early and working collaboratively across sites would extend the value of each individual partner’s work.

* Ideas should be more likely to get funded if they are packaged with a ready set of co-developers and/or testers.
* Projects will likely be more robust and more relevant to a broader range of city contexts if multiple organizations are involved in the development.
* Having beta testers from different levels of technological experience would help build the capacity of partners just getting started in this area.
* Projects from multiple sites could bring the network and the partners greater visibility through platforms like the Civic Commons.

This session will present some initial thoughts about the resources within NNIP in this area, give some examples of work going on in Milwaukee, Oakland, and elsewhere, and then begin a conversation on what forums or structures need to be created to fulfill the potential and create a supportive environment for the development of open source applications.

T.J. Maciak from Community Research Institute in Grand Rapids will chair the session.

* Jim Lucht from The Providence Plan will demonstrate the new open source Neighborhood Profiles, developed by Providence and also being implemented by Pittsburgh. (10 minutes)
* Todd Clausen of the Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee will begin the discussion about how to foster collaboration within your own city. He will share the steps they took to form the Milwaukee Data Initiative, which is setting the stage for productive partnerships with the civic hackers. (10 minutes)
* Steve Spiker of Urban Strategies Council will share his ideas of how more informal interaction among sites at early stages could pay-off in small-scale mutual assistance and partnerships, based on his experiences in Oakland developing and re-purposing open source tools. He will share our idea for a cross-site project that would revolve around one or two issues (housing, community engagement or others). (15 minutes)

Discussion Questions

* What are the current barriers to partners’ developing open source applications?
* What is the in-house capacity of partners to develop open source applications? Do we have the experience to develop a guide for working with consultants for those without in-house staff?
* Should NNIP develop ways to better link the partners’ technology staff, or are existing technology listserves, etc. sufficient?
* Are there other organizations we should be connecting with (formally or informally) - Code for America, NTEN (Nonprofit Technology Network)?