NASS IDEAS Award, 2018

Program Title: 2017 Delaware Open Data Challenge

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Brief Description: The 2017 Delaware Open Data Delaware Challenge and Fellowship Grants provided structure, funding and support for the ideation and prototyping of new and innovative technical applications that utilize open data, using civic advocacy, nonprofit collaboration and government data.

Subject Area: Civic Technology

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Executive Summary

History –

In 2016, the state of Delaware wanted to better engage citizens and technologists to solve government and community problems. Our hypothesis was that if government invited citizen participation—in problem formulation, problem solving, idea generation and execution—then participants would provide meaningful innovation in areas of high need in our state. Itself an experiment, the Secretary of State's office proposed the Open Data Challenge, a series of events coupled with a grant competition built together with community partners to ideate, evaluate, prototype, build and test technical solutions to improve our state.

In order to set the stage for the Open Data Challenge, the state first needed to launch our open data portal to offer the data in one place and in many formats. Former Gov. Jack Markell signed an executive order in January, 2016 creating the Delaware Open Data Council and charging its members with prioritizing datasets for open access. State agencies worked together through the Council over nine months to ready the portal for launch. Through community outreach and engagement, we asked for ideas and suggestions for datasets to include in the portal. In October of 2016, the state launched the Open Data Portal, a website that hosts state agency data that the public can easily interact with.

After launching the portal, the Secretary of State's office started to build plans for the Open Data Challenge. The office partnered with Open Data Delaware, a community based advocacy group, the Technology Forum of Delaware, a tech industry group, and Tech Impact, a nonprofit that assists other nonprofits with technology needs. Through collaboration with these groups, we outlined a strategy to build the skills of participants, foster ideas, and recruit nonprofit and community partners to provide the "problem statements" for Challenge participants to tackle.

The 2017 Open Data Challenge was a series of events designed to solve community issues and cultivate civic technology skills. The kickoff to the series was the 2017 Idea Challenge, hosted in March by the Technology Forum of Delaware. The next monthly workshops focused on building technical skills. The final event was the 2017 Open Data Challenge Weekend, a 48-hour long hackathon hosted in June by Open Data Delaware.

Winners were selected by a panel of judges at the conclusion of the 2017 Open Data Challenge Weekend. The two winning teams were awarded grant funding from the Secretary of State's office ($7,500 for 1st place and $2,500 for 2nd place) for their work during that weekend, and were eligible for a second grant award (for a total prize of up to $12,500 for 1st place and $5,000

for 2nd place). We designed the grant award to incentivize teams to continue working on their idea after the weekend concluded.

Significance –

The 2017 Open Data Challenge was a conduit to innovation for our state, our partners, and the team participants. The grants provided funding to support the development and prototyping of technical applications that utilize open data.

From the state's perspective, we want citizens, technologists, researchers, businesses, advocates and anyone else with an interest to be able to easily access government information and data. We believe that open access facilitates ideas, new thinking and problem solving. We want to allow people to consume data in the formats they want, when and where they want.

Government can't expect, and shouldn't try to anticipate, all of the uses of open data. We are shifting our focus – instead of trying to anticipate the demand from the public, we are committed to making as much data as possible available to the public, and then encouraging people to make use of it. The Open Data Challenge is a conduit for this mission.

We actively encourage the private and nonprofit sectors to work with the data we're posting to help us solve challenging issues. By providing more information through interactive formats we'll improve public trust in our government and engage new stakeholders to make better public policy.

Impact and Results –

Mixing public government data, proprietary data, and research data together can create better decisions and improve communities, organizations, businesses and government. A 2013 McKinsey study[1] estimated that open data can "unlock significant economic value" (estimated at more than $3 trillion a year globally) and can "become an instrument for breaking down information gaps across industries, allowing companies to share benchmarks and spread best practices that raise productivity."

The 2017 Open Data Challenge facilitated data sharing, innovation, and collaboration to solve community problems. Together with business, nonprofits and government, the Open Data Challenge involved hundreds of collaborators over five months.

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[1] http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/business-technology/our-insights/open-data-unlocking-innovation-and-performance-with-liquid-information

The 2017 Challenge hosted five targeted workshops curated by our partners. At the first of these events, the Idea Challenge, a group of Delaware nonprofits pitched "problem statements" that, if solved, could help the organizations better deliver their services in the community. This set the stage for challenge participants to begin thinking of ways that technology and data relate to public policy objectives. Other workshops throughout the challenge helped the participants build the technical and design skills needed to create solutions.

More than 50 people participated in the final event, the Open Data Challenge Weekend in June. At the start of the weekend two nonprofit partners presented challenge prompts for teams to solve with prototype solutions built over the course of two days of civic hacking. Network Delaware, a statewide nonprofit focused on community engagement, wanted to know how to direct its large pool of service-minded young people to the areas of greatest need. The Food Bank of Delaware outlined a similar challenge: Too few volunteers during the Food Bank's busy hours, and a surplus of volunteers available in off-hours. Both organizations wanted to better match and organize volunteers according to local needs.

Two teams were selected as the winners of the Open Data Challenge Weekend: Community Coders (working with Network Delaware) and Team STTP (working with the Food Bank of Delaware). Community Coders proposed a website with interactive application features to better recruit, organize, and enhance volunteering sign-up, retention, and engagement for the organization. STTP proposed a digital inventory system (replacing a paper based system) for the Food Bank of Delaware to help them keep real time records of what was in their warehouse, and alert staff and volunteers that certain items were running low. Further, STTP proposed a volunteering mechanism where those looking to help could sign up to receive notifications when there was a local need (for example, offering to pick up excess food from a bakery or grocery store on nights or weekends, or alerting volunteers that specific items are needed for a local pantry or warehouse.)

Supporting Materials.

Press Releases

[Coders to Compete for Grants in 2017 Delaware Open Data Challenge](#)

[Governor Launches Open Data Portal](#)

[Governor Signs Executive Order to Increase Transparency and Access to Public Information](#)

2016 Delaware Open Data Portal Launch News

[DelawareOnline (Wilmington News Journal) - Delaware public records gold mine: new open data portal](#)

2017 Idea Challenge News

[DelawareOnline (Wilmington News Journal) - Open data comes to Idea Challenge](#)

[Technical.ly Delaware - This civic engagement project wowed judges at Idea Challenge 2017](#)

[Delaware Business Times - 2017 Idea Challenge brings nonprofits and tech community together](#)

2017 Open Data Challenge News

[Technical.ly Delaware - Ever wanted to do a hackathon? Check out what Open Data Delaware's doing](#)

[Technical.ly Delaware - Winners of this year's Open Data Challenge get grant money from the state](#)

[Technical.ly Delaware - This year's Open Data Challenge did not disappoint](#)

Open Data Challenge Website: [opendatachallenge.com](#)

Delaware Open Data Portals: [data.delaware.gov](#) and [checkbook.delaware.gov](#)

Former Deputy Secretary of State James Collins (left) and other speakers at the 2016 Open Data Launch event.

Governor John Carney welcoming attendees to the 2017 Open Data Challenge.

Team Community Coders: 1st Place Winners of the 2017 Open Data Challenge

Participants in the 2017 Open Data Challenge.