



News from: **City of Oakland**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 27, 2012

City Applies for Mayors Challenge Grant to Further Spur Innovation in Oakland

Oakland, CA – In keeping with Oakland’s recent efforts to accelerate innovation in the City of Oakland, Mayor Jean Quan submitted an application to Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Mayors Challenge, a nationwide competition that aims to generate bold ideas that solve major challenges and improve city life—and that ultimately can be shared with cities across the nation.

Cities will be judged on their idea’s vision and novelty, potential for impact, potential for replication in other cities, and the quality of the implementation plans. Bloomberg Philanthropies will award \$9 million in prizes including a \$5 million grand prize and four \$1 million additional prizes.

The City of Oakland’s application proposes creating CityLabs, a civic catalyst for creativity and collaboration. CityLabs will bring together cross-sector teams to develop new ideas and deconstruct existing City processes, redesigning them for greater efficiency. Processes around contracting and purchasing, building services and public records requests are potential focus areas, and others would likely emerge.

CityLabs would take the idea of an innovation office to a bold new level. It would provide staff at every level of the organization with processes, workspace, time, resources and incentives to push forward new ideas. In addition, it creates a new process with dedicated ongoing resources that will infuse innovative practices into the work being done citywide.

“CityLabs will engage staff at every level of the organization and put them to work with some of the most talented community members in Oakland,” said Mayor Jean Quan. “We’re seeing an exciting growth in these kinds of ‘hackathon’ group efforts; tapping this collective intelligence and drawing from different points of view will foster new ideas and innovative solutions to challenges faced by the City of Oakland.”

CityLabs would use a human-centered design approach to problem solving and utilize design thinking strategies to determine how the service processes work today, identify and address areas of improvement, and deliver a more valuable, customer-friendly experience to the citizens of Oakland.

The goals of CityLabs are to:

- Develop new ideas and processes that improve service delivery and efficiencies
- Engage citizens and increase collaboration across sectors
- Grow the City’s capacity to innovate through leadership training and investment in new technology
- Accelerate innovations happening in Oakland
- Inspire action oriented results and improve the citizen experience

“With nearly half of the City of Oakland’s workforce eligible for retirement in the next 10 years, CityLabs will help attract new generations of workers who seek a tech-savvy work environment,” said City Administrator Deanna J. Santana. “The program will enable us to compete in the labor market for skilled workers by adapting private sector tools, resources and processes for use in City government.”

Media Contacts:

Sean Maher
Office of the Mayor
510-238-7439
510-423-1568
mayorsmedia@oaklandnet.com

Karen Boyd
Office of the City Administrator
510-238-6365
kboyd@oaklandnet.com

Oakland is one of 305 U.S. cities that applied to the Mayors Challenge. Finalist cities will be selected at the end of October, and winners will be announced in spring 2013.

Other Recent Efforts to Accelerate Innovation in Oakland

The Mayors Challenge application is the latest step the City of Oakland has taken to foster innovation locally. Other initiatives include applying to be a 2013 Code for America Fellowship City, pushing forward a new Open Data initiative, sponsoring this year's Code for Oakland hackathon and City participation in the California College for the Arts Leading by Design Fellowship Program. In addition, the City will soon be promoting a new and innovative creative currency program that will be launched in partnership with Oakland Grown.

Code for America

The City of Oakland has advanced to the finalist stage in the 2013 Code for America Fellowship program, and a public announcement will be made on October 1. If chosen for the 2013 program, Code for America will bring top talent from the technology sector into the City to help build our capacity for innovation. Code for America fellows will work with City staff and the community to identify new apps and tools that address our community's needs, bringing greater openness, efficiency and participation to local government.

Open Data Platform

Earlier this year the Oakland City Council passed a resolution supporting an Open Data initiative introduced by Councilmembers Schaaf and Kaplan. On July 17th Council unanimously approved a report outlining the cost and benefits of implementation and an analysis of the steps necessary to implement an open data system. By sharing data freely, we seek to develop opportunities for economic development, commerce, increased investment, and civic engagement. Publishing structured, standardized data in machine-readable formats creates new opportunities for information from different sources to be combined and visualized in new and unexpected ways, for niche markets to be identified and developed and for citizens to browse, interpret and draw attention to trends or issues with greater efficiency. The City is on track to launch this new platform by January 2013.

Code for Oakland

During the July 21st Code For Oakland hackathon, over 150 civically engaged developers, coders, designers, entrepreneurs, innovators and youth re-imagined ways in which collaboration and technology could help shape, grow and sustain the healthy future of our city. The focus of this year's hackathon was on building apps and technology tools that would drive economic development, improve civic engagement and improve digital education and literacy for Oakland residents. An awards ceremony will be held this evening in City Hall.

California College of the Arts Leading by Design Fellowship

The City is also participating in the California College for the Arts Leading by Design Fellowship Program, which trains senior professionals in design thinking, organizational strategy, leadership and sustainability. Leading by Design Fellow Kiran Jain, a Senior Deputy City Attorney for the City of Oakland, is applying design thinking principles to redesign bureaucracy, change culture within City Hall and rethink the way the City delivers services to its citizens.

#