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City of Oakland Selected as 2013 Code for America City

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Oakland, CA – Code for America announced today that the City of Oakland has been selected to participate in the 2013 Code for America program. Code for America connects forward-thinking cities with top talent from the tech industry to develop reusable civic technology. Partnering cities will not only solve a critical problem using technology, but also help cultivate the next generation of tech-savvy, civic leaders.

The City of Oakland is committed to Open Government, transparency and innovation and is seeking to identify web-based solutions to break down cumbersome bureaucratic processes and emerge with better systems that will help cut costs, increase efficiency and provide better service to the public.

The 2013 Code for America Fellowship program will provide guidance on setting up infrastructure and engaging an organizational culture shift to fully take advantage of Web 2.0 and 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 communities needs; bringing greater openness, efficiency and participation to local government.

"The City of Oakland is fortunate to have creative, committed and tech-savvy residents and community partners," said Mayor Jean Quan. "We are excited for change and committed to leveraging the power of apps, software and the Web to make Oakland a more efficient, transparent and participatory City. Code for America will surely have a positive, long-term impact on our community."

Through the Fellowship program, Code for America is partnering with local governments to help them catch up. The private sector has evolved exponentially over the past decade adopting new technologies and new ways of working, however, local governments, including the City of Oakland, have not adapted at the same rate, and have fallen behind. Using technology, Code for America helps local governments keep pace with the community they serve by creating and implementing new applications, and by demonstrating new ways of resolving local challenges.

"Being a Code for America city will help us better meet the expectations of our innovative citizens," said Oakland Councilmember Libby Schaaf. "We're excited about harnessing technology to build more efficiency, effectiveness and transparency in Oakland government."

"Oakland is home to some of the world's leading technology companies," said City Administrator Deanna J. Santana. "It makes sense that cutting-edge innovations being grown and launched locally by private sector businesses could be applied to our work in City Hall. City services should benefit from the same efficiencies that private sector products rely on."

(more)

Oakland is one of 29 U.S. municipalities that applied to the 2013 Code for America program. The other eight municipal governments for the 2013 program are the City of Kansas City, Kansas; the City of Las Vegas; the City of Louisville, Kentucky; New York City; the City and County of San Francisco; the City of San Mateo; the City of South Bend, Indiana; and Summit County, Ohio. Founded in 2009, Code for America held its inaugural fellowship in 2011 with 19 fellows and three cities. In 2012, Code for America grew to connecting 26 fellows and eight cities. The Code for America Accelerator Program, launched in April 2012, will support civic startups, and their Brigade program helps organize developers locally to reuse and deploy civic software. Code for America is re-imagining government for the 21st century.

The City of Oakland's 2013 fellowship program is funded by: Akonadi Foundation, The William H. Donner Foundation, The Robert A.D. Schwartz Fund, The Mitchell Kapor Foundation, Accela and Pandora.

Other Recent Efforts to Accelerate Innovation in Oakland

Participation in the 2013 Code for America fellowship program will be a catalytic in step the City of Oakland's efforts to foster innovation locally. Other initiatives include applying to the Bloomberg Mayors Challenge, 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.

Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge
The City of Oakland 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 can ultimately be shared with cities across the nation. 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. Finalist cities will be selected at the end of October, and winners will be announced in spring 2013.

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 17, 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.

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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 was held at City Hall on Thursday, September 27.

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.

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