



2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

We Are All Innovators: Engaging Communities through Civic Technology

City of San Antonio, Texas

#Robust External Partnerships

Population: 1.493 million

Innovation

Criteria:

- Initiative fundamentally changed a process, product or service (fundamental)

OR

- Initiative builds upon existing knowledge to improve a product, process or service (incremental)
- The initiative substantially stretched the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.

Describe Your Innovation

(When and how did this innovation get started? Do also detail how the program or policy innovative, how it has changed previous processes, products, or services, and how it has substantially stretched or improved the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.)

San Antonio has experienced a rapidly growing technology and startup ecosystem in recent years, but the City has struggled to engage this sector, particularly startups who find it difficult to overcome bureaucratic barriers to doing business with the City. To help breakdown these barriers, the CivTechSA program was launched in October 2017 as a partnership between the City of San Antonio's Office of Innovation and Geekdom, a local co-working space, incubator, and leader in the startup and tech ecosystem in San Antonio. The goal of the CivTechSA program is to connect students, entrepreneurs, and the tech community with the City to solve community challenges and grow civically-minded tech talent. There are four pillars that engage different segments of the tech ecosystem: 6-12th grade students and teachers; university students; entrepreneurs; and startups. City departments submitted challenges ranging in complexity to be addressed by different pillars of the program, resulting in customized tech solutions for the City.

In the first year of CivTechSA, the 6-12th grade program focused on training teachers to incorporate civic engagement, technology, and entrepreneurial principles into their curriculum to inspire students to give back to their community and pursue entrepreneurial careers. University students were paired with City departments, who provided data and guidance for students to help solve challenges. The entrepreneur program included a variety of events and workshops, such as a startup weekend and datathon. The startup component was a 16-week residency in which 2 startup companies were embedded in City departments to solve specified challenges. Participants at all levels of the program gain skills and knowledge about developing and pitching ideas, building a business case, and creating civically-focused startups. In turn, the City has been able to stretch the boundaries of how it addresses problems and engages the community, and expand its capacity for innovation.

Collaboration

Criteria:

- Initiative demonstrated engaging stakeholders both internal and external.
- Initiative demonstrated high performance teaming, breaking down internal silos.
- Strategic partnerships and or community networks were developed as a result of the initiative

In less than 200 words, what individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your program? How does the innovation engage stakeholders or demonstrate high performance teaming? What strategic partnerships and/or community networks, if any, were developed?

The City's Office of Innovation was the primary initiator; however, Geekdom was engaged early on to help develop the program and is an equal partner. Geekdom has become a catalyst for San Antonio's downtown tech district and has helped bring together the tech community, forming close partnerships with numerous tech-focused community organizations. CivTechSA has leveraged those existing partnerships to help engage participants, gain buy-in from the tech community, and maximize the impact of the program. Partnerships with organizations such as SA Works, Youth Code Jam, CodeUp, and TechStars have been instrumental in successful events like a job shadow days for high school students and a civic tech startup weekend. CivTechSA also developed partnerships with 2 high schools and 3 universities to promote civic engagement and entrepreneurial principles among students. In addition to the 15 external partners that CivTechSA has worked with, the program has engaged city departments. At the beginning of the year, the Office of Innovation issues a call for challenges, asking departments to submit challenges they would like to see addressed through the CivTechSA program. In total, 18 departments submitted 30 challenges and the program worked directly with 10 departments in the first year.

If a private consultant was used please describe in detail their involvement, identify the consultant and/or firm and provide contact information. Maintain a 100 word maximum.

The City contracts with Geekdom to manage day-to-day operations of the program. Geekdom hired a full-time program manager to act as the point of contact with external stakeholders and partners, engage and recruit participants, and manage the logistics for events and meetings. The contract also including funding for the development of a website for the program, which Geekdom subcontracted, and for marketing and promotional materials. The point of contact is Anna Gutierrez, Geekdom Director of Programs, who can be reached at anna@geekdom.com or (210)373-6730.

Significance

Criteria:

- Initiative addresses an area of concern for the majority of local government organizations.
- Initiative can serve as a model and replicated in other jurisdictions.

Please describe the extent to which you believe your program or policy initiative is potentially replicable within other jurisdictions and why? To your knowledge, have any other jurisdictions or organizations established programs or implemented policies modeled specifically on this project? Please also provide verification of the replication.

We believe CivTechSA is replicable for any jurisdiction wanting to bridge the gap between government and the local technology sector. If not the whole program, individual components of the program are definitely replicable depending on each jurisdiction's assets and resources. The startup residency is modeled after San Francisco's Startup in Residency (STiR) program, which has already been replicated in several jurisdictions and is continuing to expand. Even without a partner like Geekdom, who had existing relationships in the tech community, other jurisdictions can create partnerships with local tech incubators, accelerators, or tech-related career development programs to engage local entrepreneurs and startups. Jurisdictions can also connect with local schools and universities to work on incorporating civic engagement and entrepreneurial principles into their curriculum, or providing the schools challenges to address through existing STEM classes. To our knowledge, no other jurisdiction has established programs modeled after CivTechSA.

Effectiveness

Criteria:

- Initiative addresses a community or organization need.
- Initiative has achieved tangible results.
- Initiative improved the organizational culture or the traditional approach to problem solving.
- Initiative has received recognition for its achievements, i.e. independent evaluation, national recognition, local press, etc.

Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain?

The most significant obstacle for CivTechSA in its first year was the procurement process for the startup residency program. Out of the 30 challenges submitted by departments, 7 were selected and included in an RFQ issued by the City. Startups were able to select one of the 7 challenges and propose a solution that, if selected, they would develop during the 16-week residency. The RFQ was unlike typical procurement documents produced the city government since we didn't have clearly defined solutions in mind to the challenges being proposed. As in many cities, our Procurement Division is risk-averse and resistant to change so it was a difficult task convincing them to try something new. We modeled the RFQ after San Francisco's STiR RFQ, but had to work closely with the Procurement and Legal teams to make it work for state regulations and with the vision for the CivTechSA program.

As a first year pilot project, we also struggled with setting clear expectations upfront regarding performance metrics. There were a lot of unknowns as to what metrics to track, which will be addressed moving forward into the program's second year by building performance measurement into the contract with Geekdom.

What outcomes did this program or policy have? Could you share one or two objective measures that demonstrate these outcomes? Ultimately, how did you measure the change based on the intervention, and why do you believe in the credibility of this assessment?

In its first year, CivTechSA engaged over 200 participants, 10 City departments, and 15 external stakeholders. Thirteen civic challenges were addressed through all pillars of the program. These are partnerships that would have

otherwise not been created and challenges that would have otherwise not been addressed. The biggest outcome this program has had so far is establishing a mechanism for the City and the tech community to work together. The program has also helped cultivate a network with academic institutions, including high schools and universities, in which students are provided with hands-on experience with real-world challenges.

The partnerships the program has been able to establish and the rate of participation shows that there is an appetite within the tech sector to engage with the City and to give back to the community by developing meaningful solutions.

Goals for the second year of the program include doubling participation, sourcing challenges from the community, and engaging all 7 universities located in San Antonio.

Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage.

The program has received coverage in over 25 local and national media stories and has had consistent discussion over social media. Much of the media coverage has been focused on the startup residency component, but other components have been promoted through social media, especially during and after key events like the CivTech Startup Weekend. Some media stories are listed below:

GovTech, "San Antonio Launches CivTechSA, a Variation of STiR with an emphasis on Students"

Texas Public Radio, "San Antonio Partners with Geekdom to Solve City Problems with Technology"

San Antonio Business Journal, "Year in Review: Major San Antonio Tech Milestones in 2017"

Statescoop, "San Antonio announces 7 challenges in civic tech residency program"

KSAT, "Local company hopes to improve city's utility assistance program with app"

Presentation

Criteria:

- Presentation will be delivered by a team.
- Presentation will be highly interactive and engaging.

Example Social Media Post

CivTechSA is growing San Antonio's tech talent, promoting civic engagement, and creating ways for startups, entrepreneurs, and students to collaborate with the City to solve community challenges! @InnovateSA @Geekdom #TLG2019 Learn more: <https://www.civtech-sa.com/>

Please write an abstract or short description for your innovation that would make conference attendees say "Well, I need to attend this session!"

The City of San Antonio is leveraging the creativity and enthusiasm of entrepreneurship to promote community progress. In October 2017, the City's Office of Innovation partnered with Geekdom, a local collaborative co-working space, to launch CivTechSA, a program dedicated to building bridges between city government and the local tech

community. CivTechSA pairs City departments with middle and high school students, university students, entrepreneurs, and startups to solve community challenges. Through this unique program, the City is expanding its capacity for innovation while encouraging civic-minded growth in the local tech and startup ecosystem and receiving customized tech solutions to city problems. Participants in the program are being introduced to government work and development opportunities while giving back and making a difference in their community. CivTechSA has become a one-stop program for growing the local tech sector, fostering civic engagement, and solving community challenges.

How will you make the session creative and unique?- How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?- Include a description of how your session will facilitate group activities and/or interaction.- What will attendees be able to have as an actionable "takeaway" from the session?

Our plan for this presentation is to mimic a startup weekend, which was one of the most attended events held in CivTechSA's first year. In a typical startup weekend, participants would have 54 hours to share ideas for a solution to a challenge, form teams, develop a minimum viable product and business case, and pitch their solution to a panel of judges. We'd like our session to be a mini version of a startup weekend.

After we present on CivTechSA and show a short video, we'll ask the attendees to form groups and begin thinking about how they might integrate this program into their own cities. The teams will identify a challenge their city is experiencing and how a civic technology program like CivTechSA could help address that challenge. Then we'll bring the teams back together to pitch their ideas to the rest of the group. Not only will this activity give attendees the opportunity to get creative and reflect on how CivTechSA could be applied in their own community, but they will also leave with a starting point for a pitch to take back to their city leadership.

Anything else you would like to add?

In addition to building bridges between the tech community and the City to solve community challenges, CivTechSA also has an economic development component. A long-term goal of the program is to create a tech talent pipeline, in which participants can become engaged with the program in middle or high school and remain engaged throughout college and into their careers as entrepreneurs. Part of this goal is to retain talent in San Antonio as the city currently struggles with students moving away for college and talented entrepreneurs moving to seek opportunities in other cities. Through this program, we want to encourage local tech talent to remain in San Antonio and showcase the opportunities that exist for them here. Geekdom's mission is to create a San Antonio ecosystem where the next 10,000 tech jobs will be born. CivTechSA is one way the City and Geekdom are helping further one another's goals while also solving problems and benefiting the community as a whole.

Finally, we'd like to share this video, which shows City and community perspectives on the program after its first year: <https://vimeo.com/284798575> (password: geekdom)