# National Day of Civic Hacking

Local Lead Press Brief - Revision #1

**KEY TALKING POINTS**

1. The first ever National Day of Civic Hacking will take place across the country on June 1st and 2nd, as announced by the White House. Over 100 events are being organized by members of your community. At these events participants will use technology and entrepreneurial thinking to tackle some of our most pressing social challenges.
2. Civic hackers are engineers, software developers, designers, entrepreneurs, activists and community members who collaborate with others, including government, to invent ways to improve quality of life in their communities. Examples of civic hacks include an app that allows your smart phone to alert the city to dangerous potholes or a website that helps citizens understand how your local politicians vote on specific legislation.
3. Civic hacking as a new form of citizen engagement and volunteerism is gaining momentum; National Day of Civic Hacking recognizes civic hackers are living in your community and are making a positive impact much like your neighborhood cleanup crew or your neighborhood watch group. National Day of Civic Hacking seeks to showcase the value of getting involved in civic hacking in your community.
4. National Day of Civic Hacking unites government and citizens around making information available and useable for good. This type of publicly available information is known as “open data.” As part of NDoCH, 15 federal agencies are opening up new data sets. Getting this data in a usable format, which civic hackers work to do, it empowers you in your daily life and creates opportunities for communities, businesses, and governments to make things work better. An example of this is creating an app that allows you to find the nearest farmers market or healthy food market that accepts food stamps or to find out about transportation schedules and/or delays.
5. National Day of Civic Hacking taps into the power and value of mass collaboration: it provides the building blocks to forge *public-private-people* partnerships. National Day of Civic Hacking is based on the belief that cross pollination between business, government and a desire for social good leads to innovative solutions to complex social challenges.

**OVERVIEW**

The National Day of Civic Hacking is the largest ever national convening of civic hackers coming together tackle issues that are most pertinent to you and your community. The first annual National Day of Civic Hacking will take place in communities across America (including the White House) on 1-2 of June 2013. To find an event near you visit the hackforchange.org website. If you don’t yet see an event, create your own! There is a team of organizers who are here to support you and help you plan the best event possible.

The initiative is a united effort to connect citizens and government in a partnership focused on improving people’s daily lives through technology. This event will bring together techies, entrepreneurs, do-gooders, activists and others like you from across the nation to collaboratively create, build, and invent tools using publicly-released data. For example, civic hackers are behind phone apps that provide important up-to-date information on public transportation schedules, they have created apps that allow you to report dangerous potholes to your local streets department, and they have helped local food shelters identify food excess and shortage in order to redistribute accordingly!

National Day of Civic Hacking is a public-private-people partnership and it is backed by the White House through the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). So far, 15 additional federal agencies have joined the charge including NASA, the Census Bureau, HHS, FEMA, the National Archives, Department of Labor and the Department of Energy.

National Day of Civic Hacking provides opportunities to get people involved in civic hacking a new form of civic engagement, and many of the events are based on proven models provided by Code for America, Random Hacks of Kindness and Innovation Endeavors. To date, 80 cities in 32 states as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have events registered. Over 650 individuals have reached out to help organize, support or sponsor an event. The goal is for the National Day of Civic Hacking to take place in all 50 states and associated territories through about 100 events. National Day of Civic Hacking recognizes the importance of civic hackers to our communities and is a call to action for anyone who wants to join the movement. Following the June 1-2 National Day of Civic Hacking, the White House will to recognize the importance of civic hacking by hosting an event to showcase successful hacks from National Day of Civic Hacking.

National Day of Civic Hacking will bring innovation out of your neighbors and you. It is meant to make innovation within reach rather than something you hear about in tech-savvy cities. It can happen in your city or anywhere. In fact, National Day of Civic Hacking is bringing together first-time community organizers such as those in Bangor, Maine with established civic hacking communities such as those in Philadelphia. Together across America, these events will provide citizens with an opportunity to do what is most quintessentially American: roll up our sleeves, get involved and work together to improve our neighborhoods, our lives and our government.

The toughest problems we face are both hyper local and universal. And so, National Day of Civic Hacking gets communities together over two days, but helps you share and communicate with communities across America about issues you care about most. Anyone can participate to collaboratively create, build, and invent new solutions using publicly-released data, code and technology. You don’t have to be an expert in technology, but you do have to care about your neighborhood and community to participate.

The many benefits of the National Day of Civic Hacking include:

* Liberate open data that can inform better problem solving in every community.
* Engage citizens to contribute to changing their communities and cities through open source, open data, entrepreneurship and code development.
* Demonstrate a commitment to the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration to fuel innovation.
* Exercise the interest of government in using open data and technology, in partnership with others, to address your local community’s felt needs.
* Promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education by encouraging students to utilize open technology for solutions to real challenges.
* Encourage large scale partnership and mutual understanding.

Intel is the national sponsor of the event and the operations team led by SecondMuse includes Code for America, Innovation Endeavors and Random Hacks of Kindness.

To get involved with National Day of Civic Hacking, visit http://www.hackforchange.org.

**FAQS**

What is National Day of Civic Hacking?

National Day of Civic Hacking is an event when citizens from around the country will work together with local, state and federal governments as well as private sector organizations with the common goal of improving their community through technology. A band of motivated citizens can create smartphone apps that track the exact locations of public transit vehicles, allow cities to efficiently understand and address the maintenance needs of their citizens, and enable communities to easily share neighborhood news.

When and where will it take place?

National Day of Civic Hacking will take place in cities across the United States on the weekend of June 1-2, 2013. Check the [www.hackforchange.org](http://www.hackforchange.org) website to find the closest event to you!

What is a civic hacker?

“Civic hackers” as we think about it for the National Day of Civic Hacking are engineers, technologists, civil servants, scientists, designers, artists, educators, students, entrepreneurs, community members – anybody - who is willing to collaborate with others to create, build, and invent open source solutions using publicly-released data, code and technology to solve challenges relevant to our neighborhoods, our cities, our states and our country.

Many people have negative connotations of what a person that is a ‘hacker’ means. How are ‘civic hackers’ different than the negative perception that exists about hackers?

To us, a hacker is someone who uses a minimum of resources and a maximum of brainpower and ingenuity to create, enhance or fix something. Although in some circumstances it is used in a negative sense, the term is not inherently negative, nor does it even have to be related to technology.

Who is leading the National Day of Civic Hacking?

National Day of Civic Hacking is a national initiative to promote transparency, participation and collaboration between governments, companies and citizens. The success of this initiative depends on people like you getting involved in developing solutions and connecting them to your neighbors, family and friends. Events will take place in cities all around the country. The primary sponsor behind the initiative is Intel, with additional support from RallyDev. The operational lead for National Day of Civic Hacking is SecondMuse, a collaboration consulting firm, who is working with Code for America, Innovation Endeavors, and Random Hacks of Kindness as organizational partners.

We are also excited to share that National Day of Civic Hacking is also being supported by a variety of government partners including the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, White House Office of Digital Strategy, NASA, Department of Energy, Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, National Archives and Records Administration, National Science Foundation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Peace Corps, USAID, United States Patent and Trademark Office, the State of Maryland, the State of Nevada, and the State of New York.

Why should I care about growing a hacking community in my city?

Communities of civic hackers open a city to limitless potential for improvement through technology. A growing, diverse, strong civic hacker community will result in apps, software, and other new technologies born out of volunteerism and civic duty. These technologies can aid in just about anything you can think of: a food distribution system that enables excess food to be redistributed to food programs throughout the city by simply texting your shortage or excess to a centralized database.

How do these apps and new technologies get implemented?

Each new technology has a unique path to implementation. The key to the development of technologies that make their way out of the hackathon environment and into your community are public and private partnerships. One path to sustainability is that a group of volunteers develops a new app to connect low-income residents to the nearest free tax preparation site over the course of National Day of Civic Hacking. Following the event, the volunteers reach out to economic justice groups in their community so they can promote their services using the app, seek a sponsor to offset the cost of the text message usage, and work with government officials to promote the app as well as the availability of free tax prep in your city.

We’ve seen examples of civic hackers partnering on projects around food justice, access to affordable summer programs, as well as information about shelters and housing, just to name a few. Oftentimes, as the technology is introduced to the community, it is adapted based on feedback from users and groups that use it as a tool to achieve their mission. The most successful hacks are those that come out of a weekend of shared brainpower, but are then embraced and adapted by local agencies and citizens who benefit from the new technology.

Can I help plan an event in my city?

Yes. National Day of Civic Hacking will be only as strong as our volunteers—we need people like you from all 50 states who are willing to lead the planning of an event in your community and commit to collectively working together to improve government. Are you a current or future leader of a civic hacking and open government community, ready to stand up, be counted, recruit new members, and work together with other leaders? We want you!

Who can participate in the National Day of Civic Hacking?

Anyone can participate in National Day of Civic Hacking. It requires individuals with a broad range of skills. We are looking for engineers, technologists, scientists, designers, artists, educators, students, entrepreneurs – we are looking for you if you have a passion for changing your community and are willing to contribute.

What type of event will the National Day of Civic Hacking be?

National Day of Civic Hacking is not your normal event - and it will not be the same type of event in each city. Depending on the local needs of your community, Hack for Change might be an [**hackathon**](http://hackforchange.org/events.html), [**brigade meeting**](http://hackforchange.org/), [**block party**](http://hackforchange.org/events.html) - or something else entirely.

How can companies or organizations get involved?

We are looking for organizations who are interested in supporting events in cities around the nation. Support by organizations may include:

1. [**Contribute data, code or a challenge to support the event**](http://hackforchange.org/submit.html)
2. Support the planning of a local event by contributing resources or funding
3. Promote the event and encourage subject matter expertise, employee and citizen participation
4. Attend the local National Day of Civic Hacking

How can city, state and federal government help?

We are looking for city, state and federal government agencies who are interested in supporting events in their communities around the nation. Support by government and/or city leadership may include:

1. [**Contribute data, code or a challenge to support the event**](http://hackforchange.org/submit.html)
2. Promote the event and encourage subject matter expertise, employee, and citizen participation
3. Attend the National Day of Civic Hacking

Are you looking for sponsors?

Yes, we are looking for organizations who share our passion for improving the world around us and want to help make the National Day of Civic Hacking a reality at either the local and global level. If that is you, [**get in touch**](http://hackforchange.org/signup.html)!

What specific types of challenges are we expecting to see get solved?

National Day of Civic Hacking will focus on addressing challenges of civic relevance to communities and local, state and national government. There will be a series of challenges defined by federal agencies that may be worked on at events across the United States. There will also be challenges defined locally or regionally and presented at individual events. For example, can a civic hacker in your community create an app where you can take photos of historical records, describe and share the images so others have access to them. Can people build apps that leverage statistics about every neighborhood in the nation to create useful tools that look at everything from commute times to median income to poverty rates. Or is it an application that helps you document where your neighborhood could benefit from community greening projects?

**Remaining to answer:**

Citizens from many cities will be doing the good kind of civic hacking, what are some of the anticipated results?

Part of the beauty of civic hacking events is that you are never totally sure of what will come out of each event! You may start out looking at mapping voting patterns by neighborhood, but realize along the way there are tons of city council minutes discussing issues important to your community, and end up building a user-friendly system to search those minutes by topic and neighborhood. While we can’t tell you what hacks will emerge from your event, we can guarantee that we have been working with your local community event lead to make sure all the elements that foster creativity and production are present throughout the weekend (i.e. food, access to wi-fi, other smart, active people, open datasets, etc.).

How will the National Day of Civic Hacking advance the open government movement?

This is the largest ever civic hacking event to take place across the United States of America. It is representative of a movement that is underway to leverage the power of technology and engaged neighbors to minimize barriers between government and citizens. National Day of Civic Hacking is truly about citizens stepping up to their role in government from the local to the state to the federal level. The White House and many other Federal Agencies are critical partners in this movement; they are hosting events of their own and opening up information and datasets that have never before been available so that civic hackers can build tools to improve government and our communities. NDoCH represents the movement toward a truly collaborative government/citizen relationship of the future.