



Civic technology group plans training for community boards, Council



Civic Innovation Fellows participants. (BetaNYC)

By MIRANDA NEUBAUER 5:27 a.m. | Nov. 9, 2015

The civic technology group [BetaNYC](#) is expanding its plans to provide technology training for community boards and Council members with the help of a \$50,000 grant from the Fund for the City of New York for its [Civic Innovation Fellowship program](#).

BetaNYC executive director Noel Hidalgo discussed the plans this past week with community members.

BetaNYC is overseeing the CIF program and curriculum in partnership with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, expanding on a pilot program she launched last fall with CUNY Service Corps students.

The CIF program aims to expand the "digital footprint" of an organization that is often a pipeline for Council members and agency commissioners, Hidalgo said.

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"Once it's fully implemented, this program will help Community Boards make better, data-driven decisions about local development, quality-of-life issues, and budgeting," Brewer said in a statement.

As part of the program, 11 CUNY students are currently in an eight-week bootcamp learning about how community boards function and

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about data analysis. Afterward, they will be assigned to Community Boards for an eight-month internship.

The program is one touchstone of BetaNYC's vision of an academy offering a civic technology curriculum for interested policy makers and residents — including an expanded fellowship program helping community boards citywide as well Council members and

staff. Another touchstone will be a small consulting service for government officials.

The group also expects its weekly "hack nights" to evolve to differentiate more between dedicated, work sessions for intensively vetted community technology projects as well as more public, informative events known as Beta Talks leading up to a [School of Data](#) event in the spring.

That event is envisioned as a more structured version of previous Code Across New York City events, where CIF fellows and others can present their projects, get feedback on them and then work on them further before the National Day of Civic Hacking in early summer.

The group, which began as an online meet-up in 2008, has grown into an influential innovation laboratory and advocacy group pushing for implementation of the city's 2012 open data law along with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

Before, its funding had come primarily from Code for America — of which it is a member — as well as Microsoft, Accela and Hidalgo's private funds.

But the group had trouble getting income from the city for municipal contracts without a recognized, New York-based primary fiscal sponsor, Hidalgo said. "That hindered some of our projects," he said. "It was a complication."

Now, the Fund for the City of New York will support BetaNYC and its [CIF program](#) with a \$50,000 grant; BetaNYC will also keep getting some support from and be affiliated with Code for America.

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