For the First Time Ever – "Code for Japan" To Start a Private Engineer Dispatch Program to Local Governments

～Supporting the tablet device distribution project in Namie-town, Fukushima Prefecture, to rebuild the bonds of residents～

"Code for Japan" (representative: Hal Seki), a non-profit organization that helps residents and government agencies utilize technology to solve community problems, has decided to join hands with Namie-town of the Fukushima Prefecture, where residents have been forced to fully evacuate their homes due to the influence of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident caused by the Tohoku Earthquake (March 11, 2011). To help support these people, from April 2014 to March 2015, "Code for Japan" will be starting a "Fellowship Program" (※ 1) which dispatches experienced engineers for the certain period of time.

It is rare that local governments work directly not with IT companies, but with non-profit organizations, consisting of engineers and citizen and centered upon open source software development.

Japan is at the dawn of a new age of progressive "Civic Tech", which requires that citizens take an active role to solve community problems, and to boost public services with technology, starting from here in Fukushima, which is today considered as a "developed" place for tackling many serious challenges head-on.

Open recruitment for engineers interested in regional contribution activities

Code for Japan will cooperate with Namie-town and be responsible for the following three roles.

1) Code for Japan will support the bottom-up application development for tablet device distribution project in Namie-town（※2）, run workshops (group interviews, idea-thons and hack-a-thons) and reflect the citizens' views to determine and develop "tablet devices which are really considered as needed".
2) Code for Japan will publicly seek for a highly-skilled engineering team (consisting of 3 people) who will be sent to and reside in Namie-town. Including support for the above "tablet distribution project", Code for Japan will design communication infrastructures and information services that connect the hometown with townspeople who are still evacuated to various areas of the country.
3) Code for Japan will support the start-up and launching of "Code for Namie" (※3), a community which aims to re-build these disaster-struck areas.

In order to achieve the above objectives, Code for Japan will start the public offering from April 4, for recruiting motivated engineers with both high technological competence and philanthropic attitude. Plans are also being made for holding conferences to further explain about the objectives and requirements. For more information, please check the web site of the Code for Japan.(http://code4japan.org).

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Comments from representative: Hal Seki

Code for Japan has carried out various activities to solve regional issues with Information technology. This is our first shot at introducing such a fellowship program, but by making a full-fledged start in close cooperation with the local government, I'm sure that we will be able to create a mold for future fellowship programs in Japan. With this case as a start, we aim to spread our philosophy, "Think together, create together" to people around the country. Although we have just recently founded this organization, we hope to succeed with both the global network of Code for Japan and with the power and knowledge of experts gathered from all over the country.

Message from the mayor of Namie-town:Tamotsu Baba

In Namie-town, we've been promoting the "residents collaboration-based town development". In the height, the Tohoku Earthquake happened and brought the unprecedented nuclear disaster to our hometown. This disaster broke towns, local communities, and even families apart. Although 3 years have passed since, full evacuation from our town is still required. No matter how difficult the situation is, I want to maintain strong ties among town people and rebuild the community. To achieve this goal, I think now is the time for action with "residents collaboration-based town development". In cooperation with Code for Japan whose slogan is "think together, create together", I want to overcome this crisis in the power of technology and collaboration.

(※1) "Fellowship Program"

The Fellowship Program is a service-year program where civic-minded developers, designers, and product managers create small startup teams and partner with a local government for a year-long collaboration. Fellows and government staff work together to build apps, foster new approaches to problem solving throughout City Hall, and tackle issues the community is facing. Code for America launched this fellowship program from 3 cities in 2011 and it has expanded to 10 cities in 2013 with various breakthrough innovations to government of the US. As for this fellowship program in Namie-town, we adopt municipal staff support system of Reconstruction Agency.

(※2) Tablet device distribution project in Namie-town

It is a project to distribute tablet devices to about 10,000 households evacuated all over the country. By distributing these easy-to-use communication tools, we aim that we enhance information sharing between the city and people, so that we could help people put their lives back in order and maintain strong ties. Staff of office and dispatch engineers to the core Initially, through workshops and events in the course of development, we will also promote participation of engineers from the mistake townsmen. It developed into the use of IT community to address the problem solving of a wide range of town government also after the introduction of tablet devices, CfN is Japan "Civic Tech" of (activities aimed at solving the problems of local residents to take advantage of IT) in the future We aim to be a leading example of the put.

(※3) Code for Namie

We call the team promoting this tablet device distribution project , "code-for-Namie (CfN)" . First we start with dispatching engineers and office staff. Through workshops and events in the course of development, we will also promote participation of engineers around the town. In the future, CfN is aimed to develop into the IT community where town people continuously engage in regional issues to solve after tablet device distribution. We believe this is going to be a progressive "Civic Tech (that citizens take an active role to solve community problems)" in Japan

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