



December 13, 2013

Mayor's Correspondence Unit
Attn: Open Government Recommendations
Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 300, Washington, DC 20004

Subject: Comments on the Transparency and Open Government Initiative

Dear Mr. Flowers,

Code for DC is pleased to provide our comments in response to the October 25, 2013 Request for Comments on the District of Columbia's Transparency and Open Government Initiative. We applaud the District of Columbia for its efforts to improve transparency and open government in the city.

Code for DC is an all-volunteer organization that works to solve local issues and increase civic participation in Washington. We are software developers, graphic designers, lawyers, parents, policy wonks, journalists, open government and transparency subject matter experts, and all-around civic geeks who want to make the District of Columbia a better place through open data and technology. Our [current projects](#) address issues as diverse as transportation, education, and affordable housing.

The recommendations we present here were developed collaboratively among our [300 members](#). Many of the ideas we discuss were synthesized from a public [work-grouping session](#) facilitated by Code for DC and [DC Legal Hackers](#) in which participants brainstormed responses to this request for comments. This document reflects only a fraction of the insights gained through that process; there are a huge number of big, interesting, and sometimes conflicting ideas from that session not called out explicitly here. [Please feel free to browse them.](#)

We thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important initiative.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact us via email at jgrimes@codeforamerica.org and m Bailey@codeforamerica.org.

Sincerely,

Justin Grimes & Matt Bailey
Co-founders, Code for DC
<http://www.codefordc.org/>

Executive Summary

We appreciate your time reviewing these comments and the spirit of public participation in which the comment period for this important initiative has been offered. In that same spirit, we'd like to offer Code for DC's continuing assistance both as a community group deeply invested in the success of our city and as open government and transparency subject matter experts as this process moves forward.

Our detailed responses to each of the [comment period questions](#) follow. Generally, they can be summarized in five overall recommendations:

1. **Open data policy.** The District should create an Open Data Policy in order to mandate and guide the creation of a permanent legal infrastructure for open data efforts in the District.
2. **Open by default.** The District's data should be considered "open by default," placing the burden of proof on the side of restricting access rather than providing it. A comprehensive index of all datasets maintained by each department in city government should be created, including designations of the potential releasability of each dataset based on its sensitivity. Additionally the District should identify high-valued datasets where resources should first be applied to make new data open.
3. **Transparent community feedback.** The District should establish robust and transparent mechanisms for soliciting and considering public feedback on issues of policy, legislation, and budget. The mechanisms should include both offline and online methods of communication and adhere to a common set of expectations for how feedback is used.
4. **Performance measures.** Transparency is a tool to further the District's policy goals. Open government initiatives should be measured according to how they improve District policy and the lives of residents.
5. **Chief Data Officer.** The District should create a new Chief Data Officer position responsible for advocating for and overseeing good data management and publication practices across government.
6. **Office of New Urban Mechanics.** The District should create an Office of New Urban Mechanics, on the model of Boston and Philadelphia, as a center for low cost experimentation and innovation in policy and urban planning in Washington.

We also recommend that this comment period and the Transparency and Open Government Initiative overall be made as transparent as possible. All comments received and the process for reviewing and prioritizing them should be made public at <http://open.dc.gov>, not only to lend credence to the commitments to openness and transparency that are being made, but to help make connections among those most passionate in the city about these issues and spur further, smarter conversations and policy down the line.

Question one: What government information should be more readily available online or more easily searched?

Code for DC has three overall recommendations in response to this question:

1. The District should create an Open Data Policy that includes strong and detailed open data guidance.
2. The Open Data Policy should enact an “open by default” stance, under which all data maintained by the government is presumed public unless specific justification to the contrary is found.
3. Recognizing that it is not possible to immediately publish all such data for reasons of cost and logistical reasons, the District should work transparently with the community to prioritize “high value” datasets for expedited release and establish a timeline for further releases.

Open data policy

We recommend that the District establish an Open Data Policy to guide the implementation of open data programs and practices over the next several years. The policy should draw on the success of municipal and state open data laws that have proliferated since 2009¹ and recent open data strategies, such as by our neighbors [Montgomery County](#) and the [City of Philadelphia](#). The federal Open Data Policy ([pdf](#)) ([html](#)), is also a useful touchstone.

At a high level, we recommend that the policy accomplish the following:

1. Enact policies that provide a permanent legal infrastructure for open data practices and data management practices that support the public dissemination of District data.
2. Provide a framework for the development of more detailed policy, procedures, and performance metrics related to open data and data management practices.
3. Mandate the creation of an annual enterprise data inventory for the holdings of every department:
 - a. Using the enterprise data inventory, departments should create a comprehensive public catalog of District government data holdings to further improve data.dc.gov.
 - b. When a dataset is not currently available or suitable for public consumption, information should be provided as to how the dataset may or may not be requested.

High value data

Recognizing that it is not feasible to immediately release all publishable datasets for cost and logistical reasons, Code for DC recommends that the District immediately define and kick-off a transparent process to identify high-value datasets and set timelines for making them open. This prioritization should include consultation with community stakeholders.

Members of Code for DC work on technology projects that address a range of aspects of District life, and in the course of these projects our members have identified highly valued data that we hope the District can make available. In order to jumpstart the conversation around high value data, we polled our members regarding the most pressing needs they see today for the release of specific datasets. Much of the information mentioned below may be available online in some sense, but the ability to use this information is low or sub-optimal because it does not meet basic standards of open government data outlined in our

¹ e.g. in Portland (OR), San Francisco, and New York City (Local Law 11 of 2012), and in New Hampshire (Revised Statutes 21-R:14) and Oklahoma (HB 2197, 2012 session).

response to Question Two. The data priorities of the Code for DC membership follow.

District finances and spending data: Some of our members are expanding access to information on District spending. More and better data on contracts and procurement, the District budget, and budget utilization can help the public—especially journalists—fulfill the important role of keeping government accountable. Use the CSV or JSON formats for this data. Our finances team would be glad to work with the Mayor’s office on identifying particular data items.

District laws: Our Open Laws team has been working with the Council’s Office of the General Counsel on improving access to the District’s laws. We have prototyped a new browser for the DC Code; however, the DC Register is not published in a form that can be easily searched or reused. The [August 30th issue of the DC Register](#) is available as a mixture of PDFs and Word DOCs. Some of the PDFs have searchable text, and some do not. Additionally, the Council’s legislative portal LIMS could be more comprehensive, timely, and structured in machine-readable formats. To see the District of Columbia’s legislative transparency rating as compared to other states, see [Open States’ Report Card](#) by the Sunlight Foundation. We recommend the XML data format for this data.

Advisory Neighborhood Commissions: Some of our team members are building tools to help citizens engage with the ANC system and to help ANC commissioners reach their constituents. Improved reporting requirements, a data feed of upcoming ANC meetings, and a unified portal for ANC documents (minutes, votes, financial reports) would help this team provide more complete information to District residents. See <http://www.ancbrigade.com/> for more information on this project. We recommend the JSON data format and the ISO8601 date/time standard for this data.

Public access and meetings: Our members would like to engage in projects that help citizens attend open meetings. Unified calendars for public government meetings and events would be useful. Additionally, FOIA request logs and metrics such as response times would be of value. We recommend the JSON data format and the ISO8601 date/time standard for this data.

Education data: Our members are developing applications to help District parents make more informed decisions about school choice. Aggregate data on the student population of each District school, especially home neighborhood and attrition rates, would be of enormous value to District parents. We recommend CSV or JSON formats for this data, and GeoJSON to compliment KML and ESRI for geospatial data for neighborhood clusters. Our education project team would be glad to work with OSSE on identifying particular data items. See <http://edu.codefordc.org/> for more information on this project.

Question two: Which document or data formats should be available for online information?

The District's Open Data Policy should also address *how* to make data publicly available. The format, frequency, licensing, and overall informational context in which data is published can have a surprising impact on its utility and can vary significantly by dataset.

Luckily a large amount of work has gone into developing best practices in this area globally. We've summarized the most widely accepting principles below, drawing on specific recommendations from the [Open Government Working Group](#), the [Open Knowledge Foundation](#), and the [Sunlight Foundation](#), among others. The principles include:

1. Information is not meaningfully public if it is not available on the Internet for free.
2. Published data should be "primary" wherever possible. Primary data is data as collected at the source, with the finest possible level of granularity, rather than in aggregate or redacted forms.
3. Data should be made available as quickly and as often as necessary to preserve its value.
4. Data should be available to the widest range of users for the widest range of purposes. It should be available to anyone, with no requirement of registration.
5. Data should be in structured data formats to allow automated analysis and reuse.
6. Data should be in open formats (formats over which no entity has exclusive control), and it should be [license-free](#), meaning there is no license, copyright, or other restriction on use or republication.
7. Data should be made available at a stable Internet location indefinitely.
8. Data should be published in accordance with public input. The public is in the best position to determine what data has the highest value and how it should be published to maximize its usability.
9. Not only should the data itself be open, but the process of creating the data should also be transparent.
10. Data should be accompanied by rich "meta-data" describing its provenance, frequency of publication, known integrity issues and abnormalities, as well as a point of contact who understands the dataset.

From a technical perspective, Code for DC also strongly recommends that the District migrate its open data catalog (data.dc.gov) to a modern open data catalog platform. When the District first implemented its open data catalog in 2006 it was groundbreaking as one of first examples of its kind. Since then, however, there has been tremendous advancement in data catalog technology. Many U.S. cities and national governments currently use either the open source solution [CKAN](#), or [Socrata](#), which is commercial. Both platforms would improve the accessibility, discoverability, and usability of the city's open data holdings by orders of magnitude, and a number of other strong competing offerings exist in the marketplace.

As a side note, Code for DC currently runs its own CKAN-driven data catalog to manage and maintain community datasets relating to DC, which is available at <http://opendatadc.org>.

Question three: How might advisory committees, rulemaking, public hearings, social media, or emerging technology be better used to improve decision-making?

Question four: What alternative models exist to improve the quality of decision-making and increase opportunities for citizen participation?

We are providing a combined response to questions three and four because Code for DC, and the open government community as a whole, firmly believe that the subjects of improved decision making and increased citizen participation are inextricably linked. In short, we strongly believe that the District's government will be effective in proportion to the quality of its engagement with its citizenry.

We suggest three specific areas for improvement and innovation:

1. Establish a new umbrella strategy for community feedback that encompasses off-line, telephone/SMS, and web-based mechanisms.
2. Explore participatory budgeting as a technique for more thoughtful engagement.
3. Create a policy framework to support the creation and official recognition of community-sourced datasets.

Community feedback methods and social media

Social media and other electronic communications, such as email listservs, have special potential to target communications to those who most need specific information and to allow motivated citizens to opt-in and dive deeply into all aspects of their government in real time. They also present specific challenges given the potential volume and frequency of communication and in ensuring that those who are most affected are not left out due to digital access issues and differing rates of adoption of specific digital tools.

Code for DC recommends that the District create a robust new community feedback strategy, adhering to the following principles:

1. **Don't rely too heavily on online communications when seeking feedback and allocating resources.** A [2012 Pew study](#) found that one in five Americans does not have internet access. Even more strikingly, it found that those without access were disproportionately the disadvantaged groups most dependent on government services, including “[s]enior citizens, those who prefer to take our interviews in Spanish rather than English, adults with less than a high school education, [...] those living in households earning less than \$30,000 per year” and those living with illnesses and disabilities. Locally, the [broadband access map](#) provided by the District paints a picture of a city in which the poorest wards have equivalently poor digital access. These realities mean that, despite the striking advantages of online communications in terms of cost and response time, DC should remain cognizant that using these mechanisms as sole or primary sources for public participation and community feedback risks increasing social and economic disparities and creating public policy blindspots.
2. **Make feedback mechanisms more transparent.** Today, DC Government does a good job of reaching out to the public via social media on a wide array of issues. However, it is not always clear how the feedback it receives is leveraged. One prominent example of this issue is [Grade.dc.gov](#), which is intended to help citizens “better engage with your government and help government agencies to improve the quality of their services.”² While we strongly support this goal, we generally join in the “collective shrug” [described by the Washington Post](#) in response to how this tool has been

² <http://grade.dc.gov>

implemented. The fact that “it’s some what less than clear what the grades represent” due to the lack of transparency of the algorithm used by the vendor, as well as the fact that the source feedback is not readily provided on the site, means that the tool is generally ineffective. An equivalent tool built with greater transparency could have been highly effective.

3. **Timeliness of decisions that are driven by public input.** In addition to making feedback mechanisms more transparent, DC can increase the rate of public participation by ensuring that government is more nimble in response to feedback and adheres to clearly communicated timelines. For instance, the release of departmental revenue projections *after* the approval of the city’s annual budget significantly reduces the efficacy of public participation in the budgeting process. A clearly communicated timeline for the release of revenue projects ahead of the budgeting process would result in a significant increase in public participation in this critical dialogue.
4. **Create standardized methods and expectations for responses to community feedback** Citizens should expect similar ease of contacting all players in government and similar response times no matter the department or individual being contacted and no matter the communications channel. Lack of responsiveness, long and unpredictable response times, and confusing communications channels create systematic disincentives to public feedback and participation. There are many ways this problem can be solved. For example: the District could establish a process for filtering all Twitter mentions of politicians into a suggested queue and alerting the relevant parties.
5. **Provide separate “marketing” and “information” listservs.** Many electronic mailing lists maintained by the city today suffer from a high noise-to-signal ratio which reduces participation and the perceived importance of any given message communicated over these lists.
6. **Reduce the use of surveys that don’t have specific, measurable outcomes.** The overuse of surveys can result in “survey fatigue” that will reduce participation and the quality of responses over time. The District should focus on fewer, higher quality surveys that seek higher response rates to critical questions. Inter-departmental coordination may be needed on this issue.

Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is an innovative and effective way to develop citizen engagement and more effective decision-making in funding priorities. While specific recommendations for implementation are well beyond the scope of this document, we strongly urge the District to consider opportunities to implement participatory budgeting, be it at the city, program, or ANC level. (A good overview of participatory budgeting in theory and in practice around the world is [available on Wikipedia](#).) The recent [National Action Plan for Open Government](#) published by the White House highlights the efforts of several cities on this front—including Chicago, New York, and San Francisco—and mentions available funding for participatory budgeting efforts through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 2014, the Obama Administration also will work with partners at the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative, the National League of Cities, non-profit organizations, philanthropies, and interested cities to achieve a wide variety of goals around open government and participatory budgeting. Given the District’s Transparency and Open Government Initiative and our location, it is only natural that the city should explore involvement in this process.

Community-sourced data

Often, community initiatives and service providers generate datasets that are of high quality and clear public interest. The District should develop a policy framework that supports the development of high-quality community-sourced data and processes by which it can be absorbed as official ‘public’ data. For instance:

- Community resource directories (for instance by the city’s 2-1-1 system).
- In the event of a crisis, community leaders are the first-responders; DC might develop an emergency management plan that can receive reports from the field through viable open data inputs.

Question five: What performance measures are necessary to determine the effectiveness of open government policies?

We appreciate the District's focus on effectiveness and performance measures. In our response below, we suggest a variety of measures that can be used to measure effectiveness. Generally, the effectiveness of open government policies and programs should be measured by the improvement they create in the lives of DC residents. We recommend that performance metrics accompanying open government and open data policies take the following overall areas, borrowed from the [Open Government Partnership](#), into account:

1. **Accountability:** "There are rules, regulations and mechanisms in place that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments."
2. **Technology & Innovation:** "Embrace the importance of providing citizens with open access to technology, the role of new technologies in driving innovation, and the importance of increasing the capacity of citizens to use technology."
3. **Citizen Participation:** "Seek to mobilize citizens to engage in public debate, provide input, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative and effective governance."
4. **Transparency:** "Information on government activities and decisions is open, comprehensive, timely, freely available to the public and meets basic open data standards (e.g. raw data, machine readability)."

To these four categories, we add a fifth:

5. **Government Efficiency:** Quantifiable cost savings, reduced error rates, and increased response times for key government services.

The bad news is that, given the broad range of technologies, goals, and stakeholders involved, there is no single metric (or type of metric) that can be used to measure the success of all open government efforts, and performance measures must be considered on a case-by-case basis. The following are examples of well-tested approaches that can be brought to bear as needed.

Measuring quality of life improvement through a comparative spending analysis

A common approach to metrics is to compare a program to the next best alternative. Consider the reduction in daily commute times that has resulted from the availability of real-time Metro and bus arrival times from WMATA. The cost to WMATA to reduce commute times through open data was certainly orders of magnitude less than the cost of system-wide track maintenance that would be needed to have the same reduction in commute time. In this case, see whether the open data program has been cheaper *per minute reduced in aggregate commute time* compared to other WMATA improvement projects. Then apply this technique to other open government programs.

Measuring public trust and participation

Programs aiming to increase public trust and participation can be measured in units of meaningful public engagement. For open meetings efforts, how many more residents are participating in meetings, or how many new good ideas were incorporated into District policy because of greater openness at meetings? Or, how well does the public understand the purpose and methods of government programs, and how usable are the District's information products (e.g. printed voter guides, online services)? Are these measures getting better? Avoid measuring casual or thoughtless participation, such as website clicks or app downloads. These measures are attractive because they are easy to collect and inflate participation numbers, but an improper metric can be

as damaging to public trust just as a good metric can improve it.

Other signs of success

We also suggest looking for:

- Press uses of the District's open data or press mentions of open government successes,
- Research and policy reports based on the District's open data,
- New relationships built with civic organizations (e.g. neighborhood groups, churches, etc.),
- New applications built using government data and the number of users of those applications,
- Whether a dataset's immediate consumers report that the data is of high quality,
- Other municipalities and states replicating District success stories,
- Growing percentage of public data that have been published, and
- Reduction in FOIA administrative costs and reduction in FOIA backlogs and response times.

We also recommend measuring whether open government programs are helping government services reach its intended audience or whether their beneficiaries are becoming more or less representative of the District population as a whole (e.g. is the employment rate of the beneficiaries out of step with the employment rate of the District at large, and is any discrepancy getting better?).

Question six: What are the limitations to transparency?

From our perspective, “transparency” is an ideal, like “good government.” Transparency is not merely the publication of a government record. It is a set of practices, including proactive disclosure, open meetings, plain language, and so on that create a more informed public and lower the burden on the public of staying informed. In this view, transparency supports a municipality in accomplishing almost any goal.

There will always be nonpublic government information, but we urge that any limitations imposed on transparency be narrowly and clearly defined, general in applicability, set in law (e.g. the FOIA exemptions in DC Code [§ 2-534](#)), and reviewable in a court of law. What is not clearly exempt from public disclosure is should be considered public and made available to the public in manners that promote access and reuse to the greatest extent possible.

The value of open government programs is never transparency itself but whether the District’s policy goals are being achieved effectively and efficiently and whether those policy goals meet the needs and will of the people. Rather than thinking in terms of more or less transparency, we urge the District to instead consider transparency as a tool that will help the District meet its policy goals.

Question seven: What policy impediments to innovation in government currently exist?

There are currently several significant impediments to innovation in the District government. Chief among them are:

1. The reactive rather than proactive approach to policy and planning.
2. A lack of defined roles and strong mandates for relevant offices.
3. Jurisdictional problems.

Reactive approach

We are generally concerned that the District has a reactive, rather than proactive, approach to experimentation on policy and transparency matters. This can rise from several key causes, such as:

- Risk aversion around issues like privacy and liability creates a culture in which data is treated as “closed by default” instead of as a public resource that is open by default.
- Silos and bureaucracy within government create inordinate political inertia when trying to create innovative new efforts, especially those that require transparency or significant investment in the release of data.
- Administration changes in DC create an air of uncertainty around any innovative effort, including open data and open government. Structures and accountability should be created to prevent administrative changes from halting important initiatives.

In our response to Question Eight, we recommend structural changes to help ameliorate this dynamic.

Role definition and mandate

Another significant impediment to innovation is the current lack of definition around the responsibilities and enforcement powers of the current Office of Open Government and the FOIA Office. The lack of clear role definitions and a strong mandate for these offices leads to general confusion around policy and process across the government. Departments do not always understand their responsibilities and lack a common understanding of goals and priorities. For example, departments may inaccurately believe they are exempt from requirements like those imposed by the District’s FOIA statute. At times they may not understand the value—or even the possibility—of proactive data publication and other innovative practices.

The lack of clearly defined roles around open government and open data also results in a pipeline problem for these specialized skillsets. Without a clear understanding of the operation obligations and return on investment of open data and open government programs, departments will not see the need to invest directly in positions related to that work and will have trouble justifying the expenditure. There is no shortage of highly motivated talent that could assist DC in building out these capabilities, but without clear roles that have clear mandates to affect policy, that talent will be hard to recruit or nurture.

In general, DC Government should work to create more positions for data specialists, such as Data Quality Analysts, statisticians, and data architects throughout the government, not just within the technology offices.

Jurisdictional problems

The Administration should work with other municipal data owners, such as WMATA and the National Park Service, to make datasets available in a coordinated, comprehensive way. For example, geospatial shapefiles

describing the boundaries of national parks within the District should agree whether they are provided by the city or NPS.

Question eight: What changes in training or hiring of personnel would enhance innovation?

Code for DC recommends the creation of a new position and a new office in city government: a Chief Data Officer, responsible for the implementation of many of the open data policies and practices recommended above, and an Office of New Urban Mechanics, responsible for spearheading low-cost, highly innovative initiatives designed to improve the citizen experience with government (for instance creating opportunities for public participation in government).

Chief Data Officer

In recent years many major cities, including San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York, have established Chief Data Officer positions. Within in the District government, the Chief Data Officer (CDO) would be the primary leader in promoting and coordinating open data activities and establishing clear, coherent technical standards.

The Chief Data Officer would:

1. Identify points of contact within departments on data related issues and be responsible for leading intra-departmental open data initiatives.
2. Emphasize the culture behind open data and the benefits so that opportunities to increase efficiency through open data practices can be sourced from those with the most direct expertise.
3. Identify and overcome challenges with existing systems and facilitate the ease of transfer from legacy systems to an open data architecture.

Moreover, a CDO should function as a data ombudsman for the public, fielding public feedback and ensuring it is folded into a long term data strategy. The creation of this position will ensure that there will always be a strong advocate within District government for high quality open data.

Office of Civic Innovation

In recent years, several municipalities have moved to create something like an “Office of Civic Innovation,” which share in common the charge of conducting pilot programs and experiments in public participation, technology and urban planning. The District has the opportunity to be on the vanguard of this powerful new approach to increasing innovation, openness, and public participation.

In 2010, Boston was the first city to establish such a department with its Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics (MONUM). Philadelphia soon followed suit, establishing the Philadelphia Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics in 2012. The web presence for each of these departments can be found at NewUrbanMechanics.org, which describes their shared mission:

New Urban Mechanics is an approach to civic innovation focused on delivering transformative City services to residents.

While the language may sound new, the principles of New Urban Mechanics—collaborating with constituents, focusing on the basics of government, and pushing for bolder ideas—are not.

[..]

To speed the rate of municipal innovation in their respective cities, Mayor Menino, in 2010, and Mayor Nutter, in 2012, created Mayor's Offices of New Urban Mechanics. Part of the local government, this office serves as each City's innovation incubator, building partnerships between City agencies and outside institutions and entrepreneurs to pilot projects in Boston that address resident and business needs.

The Mechanics focus on a broad range of areas from increasing civic participation, to improving City streets, to boosting educational outcomes. The specific projects are diverse as well—from better designed trash cans to high tech apps for smart phones.

As described by Philly MONUM Director Story Bellows, her department serves as,

an internal Research and Development shop and civic innovations incubator. We're looking to pilot prototypes for small-scale innovative solutions to challenges in the civic space. We're really embracing the lean startup principles. So, instead of the large scale changes and projects that much of the city government is working on, we're really looking to start small, test things out and create a safe space. We serve to aggregate the risk associated with experimentation in the public space.³

Outside of the New Urban Mechanics partnership, San Francisco is tackling similar questions with the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Civic Innovation, which defines its goals [in two telling ways](#): "We keep government accountable, accessible, and responsive," and "we champion new ideas, tools, and approaches in city government."

For each of these cities, the results have been striking. A [case study](#) released this year by Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet & Society examined the first three years of Boston's program found that, overall:

Even without budgetary authority or staff, [...] the Office of New Urban Mechanics has been able to nudge, encourage, and facilitate collaborations inside City Hall and across academic institutions, technologists, and other city governments that have been productive.

The researchers remark that "Boston's experience in pursuing partnerships that facilitate opportunities for engaging citizens may provide scalable (and disruptive) lessons for other cities." Code for DC strongly believes that DC is one of those cities. Projects like [Textizen](#), which allows for social media style community feedback via text message, San Francisco's [Living Innovation Zones](#), which seek to bring a spirit of innovation, playfulness, and experimentation directly to public spaces, and Philadelphia's [Social Enterprise Partnership](#), which engages "entrepreneurs in framing social challenges and seeking solutions" could bring immense good to DC by challenging our preconceptions about the relationship between government and the people, for the good of all.

³ <http://www.flyingkite.com/features/storybellows1204.aspx>