CIVIC TECH

FREDERICTON

Civic Tech Atlantic Canada
Toolkit

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Land Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge that the work of Civic Tech Fredericton, and future work of Civic Techs across the Maritimes, takes place, and will take place, on the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk (Maliseet), Mi'kma'ki, Wabanaki, and Passamaquoddy Peoples. These territories are covered by the Peace and Friendship Treaties, first signed in 1725, and do not surrender the lands and resources. These treaties recognized the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk (Maliseet), Mi'kma'ki, Wabanaki, and Passamaquoddy Peoplest title to this territory and established an agreement to an ongoing relationship between nations.

To learn more about Indigenous land, languages, and treaties: https://native-land.ca

Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide an outline of what makes Civic Tech communities across Canada successful, and how you can establish your own Civic Tech community to expand our Atlantic community. This is all in hopes that you'll join us in this national movement to find technical solutions to social issues!

The Civic Tech community is a volunteer based organization that collaborates with local government and community partners to build technical solutions and tools addressing local social issues. Atlantic Canada has a growing information technology (IT) sector and stands to benefit from having the Civic Tech community unite the IT sector with local government and non-profit communities.

I'm proud to be a Civic Tech volunteer. Giving back to my community has been my greatest joy. It gave me the platform to contribute to projects like Meal Planner, Caring Calendar and Getting Seniors There and while doing so, always learning something new. Less I forget Civic Tech is my home and Sandi is my adopted Mum.

Ade Adeyemi

About Civic Tech

The Civic Tech community network is a national group of grassroots organizations that tackle local challenges using technology, design, and collaborative decision-making. They bring together residents, technologists, designers, activists, public servants, and policymakers to craft real solutions that make their communities better places to live. The resources and tools that all Civic Tech communities develop are free and available to all other Civic Techs involved in the movement across Canada.

I love solving problems, making connections, learning new things and making a difference in my community!
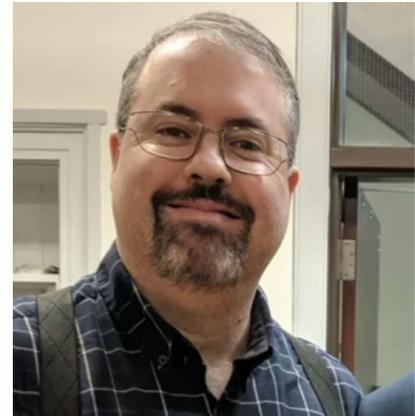
Rick McCaskill

The national Civic Tech movement is supported by Code For Canada, which serves as a platform and resource hub for Civic Tech organizers across the country. Code for Canada supports and connects existing Civic Tech groups and helps community organizers start new ones by:

- amplifying the impact of existing community groups by broadcasting local civic tech success stories
- helping local groups connect to share the knowledge and expertise they need to make in an impact in their communities
- helping mobilize Civic Tech community organizations through guidance, resources, and relationship building
- collecting and sharing stories and resources from grassroots Civic Tech groups across the globe

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Civic Tech Fredericton is a volunteer-led group organized by Greater Fredericton Social Innovation's Executive Director that connects Fredericton's tech community with local government and non-profit organizations. We work collaboratively to build digital tools that address social issues that our non-profit community brings to our attention. To date, we've worked on projects addressing enhanced transportation to alleviate social isolation of older adults, measuring health equity in our province, what it would cost to end poverty in our province, helping our local food banks and more. A list of our projects can be found here.

Civic Tech Fredericton meets regularly at the Gathering Place, hosted by Greater Fredericton Social Innovation. Greater Fredericton Social Innovation acts as the organizing and governing structure for Civic Tech Fredericton, ensuring funding, a venue, and community partnerships. This has provided our Civic Tech with a sustainable model and community connections.

I can use my skills to make a difference in the lives of those around me and help to build a better community for all of us.
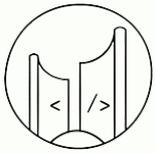
"

Ricardo Nicolini

I'm proud to be a Civic Tech volunteer because it provides me with the opportunity to share two of my passions - coaching and testing. Not to mention with the new family it provided me with. My favourite part is the camaraderie my Civic Tech community never fails to provide.

"

Sree Ananthasayanam

CODE for CANADA

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The Impact of Civic Techs Across Canada

Civic Tech Toronto is working on human-centered design projects that will have a meaningful impact on the homeless and under-housed youth under 30, TTC communication with riders, the disability justice community, local independent food producers and farmers, and more. You can read more about the development of these projects on their website.

I am proud to be a Civic Tech volunteer because I am able to serve the community while working with awesome and talented people. I am also able to practice my skills and learn so much in a safe and fun environment.
Joy Iloreta

Civic Tech Fredericton has developed and is working on projects that have a meaningful impact on the caring community by providing services to those in the circumstance of poverty, local food bank service provision, and flood forecasting. Civic Tech Fredericton also participates in yearly data visualization competitions, providing detailed analysis of ending poverty in NB, health equity distribution across the province, and the disparity of data maturity in the nonprofit sector.

Civic Tech Calgary is working on projects that use Blockchain technology to better meet the needs of volunteer organizations, increase accessibility for volunteers to be matched with lesser known nonprofits, use mapping technology that is more personalized to municipal and provincial features, and increase engagement with public art through layers of enriched experiences.

Being a part of this family that has a great impact on the community and makes a difference is what makes me proud.
Ahmed Shaltout

Ottawa Civic Tech has developed projects that calculate the cost and barriers for successful project proposals and meetings, a democracy kit that provides accessible civic engagement resources, analyzed the tools available to federal public servant departments that enable effective work, and analyzed how much the federal government spends on contracting.

I am proud to be a Civic Tech volunteer because of the positive impact created by our work and because of the opportunity to give back to the society

Badri Seshadri

Other Civic Techs

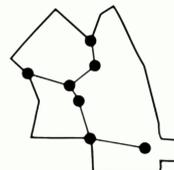Beta City YEG

London Civic Tech

Civic Tech Vancouver

ctMontreal

Civic Tech Waterloo Region

Civic Tech Saint John

Starting your Local Civic Tech

While the goal of Civic Tech is to work on civic projects that address social issues, you'll likely need to start small to build up your foundation. We recommend organizing an information session / opening night followed by a trial hacknight to gauge interest in your area, as well as identify people who might be interested in being organizers or co-founders. This will help indicate any potential that is waiting to be tapped into in your community. Reach out to your diverse networks and invite people to the information session and trial hacknight, and remember to make use of your social media pages to expand your reach.

Information Session / Opening Night

To gauge interest in your community, host an information session / opening night that will introduce the Civic Tech movement and the impact that your volunteers can anticipate having.

Consider:
- Inviting guests of honor from your community & other Atlantic Civic Tech communities
- Connecting virtually with other Civic Techs to build excitement around the movement
  - Civic Tech Fredericton & Saint John meet on Tuesday at 6:30 or 7pm
- Creating promotional material to share widely across social media
- Begin the session with an informal meet and greet & introduction to the Civic Tech movement
- Anticipating being able to accommodate approximately 40 people
- Looking for champions / co-founders during this first meeting

It's the best place to help associations in the Tech field and It improves your employability, but the main thing is that we are a family with a sweet heart mom (Sandi)

Mohammad Al Khateeb

I'm proud to be a Civic Tech volunteer because it is a great way to use the knowledge and skills over the years in areas where they wouldn't normally be accessible. The Civic Tech community we've formed and its sense of being connected to the larger community helps us to see the impact we can have beyond our regular jobs, and that keeps me coming back for more

Rory Bray

Identify your Co-Founders

Identify people who are passionate about volunteering and/or interested in starting a Civic Tech group. By doing so, "co-founders" encourages and promotes ownership and dedication to the community and sustainability of Civic Tech. These are your champions.

- Civic Tech communities are best organized by a small group that can share the responsibilities of running hacknights
- Contact people in your network who have expressed interest in Civic Tech, or have a passion for volunteering

Host a Hacknight

Most Civic Tech communities are based on a recurring hacknight, which is a meetup where volunteers work on projects together. Hacknights may serve as a work focused event, learning & training opportunities to build capacity, or organized discussion around the issues that interest those involved.

Examples of other how other Civic Techs started out with Hacknights:

- Civic Tech Toronto hosted an initial hacknight with a small group and named all participants who were interested in continuing "co-founders"
- Ottawa Civic Tech ran a six month trial where they tested variables in their hacknights before advertising the event to the public

"Every man is guilty of all the good he didn't do."
Voltaire
Thanks Civic Tech for opening the door for us to help and do good for our community.

Sara & Nagy

I'm proud to be a Civic Tech volunteer because it is not only about sharing your time and skills. But also, it is about having a home away from home, where everyone is like family.

Sheena Valdez

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What does a Hacknight look like?

- 2-3 hours in the evening (this is not a requirement but simply what we and other Civic Tech groups have found that works)
- Have an Agenda (introductions, code of conduct, welcoming new members, and recapping project summaries leading into hacknights)
- Regular scheduling: weekly, biweekly or monthly meetups held at a regular schedule helps people plan to attend hacknights in advance.

What are the characteristics of a successful Hacknight?

Environment
It is crucial that hacknights foster a healthy, collaborative and welcoming environment. The code of conduct as well as allocating some time at the beginning/end of each meeting for socializing and introductions for new members has helped Civic Tech Fredericton foster such an environment. We even have an annual barbecue for our members!

The Civic Tech family is one which I am very proud to belong. We are all one family. As a newcomer to Canada they made my settling down period a lot easier through connecting me with potential employers and helping to refine my resume.

,,

Olusayo Obajemu

Attendance
It is important that there is a diverse range of people attending the hacknights. This will encourage collaboration of people with different skill sets to work together. This could mean hosting in spaces that are more accessible to a wide audience or allowing for virtual attendance.

Projects
It is a good idea to ensure that there are at least two projects to work on so that people have a variety of choices.

Attention to People's Needs
Every community will have different needs – make sure you customize your hacknights to fit your particular community. Perhaps multiple project choices or food are required for participants to be motivated to attend (at Civic Tech Fredericton we usually order pizzas when meeting in person, always accommodating with a vegetarian pizza). Whatever it may be, it is important to listen to the needs of your group.

When should we host the Hacknight?

Tuesday evenings are a popular meeting time among Civic Techs across Canada! This facilitates collaboration across Civic Tech communities by allowing for different communities to meet virtually during regular hacknight times for presentations, co-working, etc. However, meet when your members are available and keep it consistent!

Who do we invite?

A Civic Tech community does not only need those with the technical skills to realize project ideas. For example, engaging social activists and those working in the non-profit sector will provide useful understanding of community needs and a passion for improving their community.

Invite and encourage people with diverse backgrounds to come:

- Tech (developers, designers, data analysts, etc.) to provide the technical skills to realize project ideas
- Government (current and/or former civil servants) to provide an understanding of government needs and procedures
- People who are passionate about improving their communities (social activists, non-profit) to provide context and storytelling around nuanced social issues your projects may address

Clearly communicating expectations for volunteer hours, how they will be able to give back to their community, use their valued skill sets, mentor other volunteers, and receive training to expand their skill sets are all key points that will attract devoted volunteers.

Civic Tech is like a home for us. Here, we are a family from all over the world.
99
Omar Eissa

Joining Civic Tech amplified my ability to help my community. A project I was not able to achieve alone, the Civic Tech team was able to complete in a few short months.
99
Bernie Connors

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Where do we host the Hacknight?

Having a sustainable venue for your Civic Tech community is crucial to getting new and returning members to keep walking through the door. At Civic Tech Fredericton, we are able to use the same meeting space each week with the help of one of our partners, Greater Fredericton Social Innovation. We feel this gives a warm and cozy setting as members stay familiar with our space each and every week. Again, each community will have different needs, so talk to your members or experiment to see what works best.

To start, reach out to people in your network who may be able to provide an accessible meeting location. Local non-profits, community centres and schools may be open to hosting your community. At minimum you'll need somewhere that is accessible and has WiFi, suitable workspaces, and a projector setup for presentations. Places located on bus routes and near walking trails will most likely increase your turnout. You may choose to have virtual meetings in combination with in-person when possible or necessary!

Example venue locations:

local tech firms or other startups, shared workspaces, universities/schools, conference rooms, libraries, community centres, etc.

Have a project for the trial Hacknight(s)

One key component of Civic Tech is to have projects that members are working on together (Click here for some project examples from Civic Tech Fredericton). Be sure to have at least one project ready for the first meeting. As your community grows and you engage with community partners, you'll be able to encourage people to come forward with new project ideas and invite speakers to pitch projects they need assistance with.

Implement a Code of Conduct

Establishing a code of conduct fosters a welcoming, supportive environment for all volunteers and community partners and will discourage any harmful behaviours within the group. As your Civic Tech community grows, this should indicate to new volunteers that they are entering a safe and inclusive space, and establish the expectations of their involvement.

Civic Tech Fredericton is dedicated to providing a safe, inclusive, supportive and respectful environment for all volunteers.

Our Civic Tech Team:
- *Welcomes diversity*
- *Is kind to each other*
- *Listens deeply and shares airtime*
- *Brings curiosity and openness*
- *Ensures everyone can fully participate*
- *Respects the confidence of what is shared*

Your participation and attendance is conditional on your agreement to this Code of Conduct.

Successful Continuation of Civic Tech

Core Roles

Having Civic Tech members serve as project managers, organizers, and other key roles may keep things running smoothly and help people stick to their projects. These roles may be best suited to consistent or committed members of Civic Tech, who the co-founders can count on to show up to and participate consistently at meetings. Your core group may be limited to your co-founders at first, but more people will put themselves in some sort of role naturally. Of course, the group may change over time due to changing needs and the abilities of each member.

Energy and genuine interest for the community are good traits to look for in volunteers holding core roles!

Project Selection

Civic Tech projects can be selected based on whatever criteria your team decides is most important. For your first project, you might find someone in your network who is already working on something. You may also want to open up a dialogue with your local municipality or non-profit community in need of technological solutions to see where and how your Civic Tech community can help out most effectively. We think most Atlantic Canadian cities benefit here, as we live in mostly close knit communities where everyone has an ear to the ground.

Tip: Projects proposed to us at Civic Tech Fredericton are usually vetted to make sure they're not commercial solutions, and then selected and prioritized on a democratic basis. Your Civic Tech community may benefit from having someone (or a small group) to work on project vetting & selection.

Remember that not all projects need to be taken on, and that, at times, a project may be too big to complete, or won't pan out the way initially expected. It's always okay to take a break to think about things! Check out the Civic Tech Graveyard https://civictech.guide/graveyard/ for their examples of projects that didn't endure over the years from various Civic Tech groups.

Partnership

Close working relationships with municipal government and other organizations that increase community engagement are key components to the successful continuation of Civic Tech. The City of Fredericton hosts Civic Tech Fredericton's AWS licenses and has been a very important partner for projects and community engagement. Other community partners have included Remsoft and the Fredericton Community Foundation, providing sustainable funding for ongoing operational costs and expansion of key projects that align with their values.

Other organizations to increase community engagement:
1. Chamber of Commerce
2. Local tech companies
3. Local Universities
4. New Brunswick Skilled Worker Stream
5. Multicultural Associations

Useful Tools
- **Slack:** Civic Tech Fredericton uses slack as a communication tool. We really enjoy slack for its collaboration features as it integrates well with Google Drive, it also has the ability to form a separate channel for each of our projects/teams.
- **GitHub:** Developer platform for collaborating on projects
- **Facebook/Twitter:** Useful for posting updates for the general public to see, building interest in your area, and maintaining a social presence
- **Meetup.com:** Most civic techs utilize Meetup, a platform for organizing meetings.
- **Zoom:** Civic Tech Fredericton uses Zoom because of its useful breakout room feature for facilitating multiple project meetings during COVID-19 restrictions

Our Supporters

Our team would like to extend a huge thanks to our supporters for making the creation of this toolkit a possibility.

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

GREATER FREDERICTON SOCIAL INNOVATION

INNOVATION SOCIALE DE LA RÉGION DE FREDERICTON

Additional Templates and Resources

1. Agenda and MC talking points
2. Civic tech 101 slides
3. Code of conduct
4. Hacknight roles
5. Toronto slide deck
6. Speaker scheduling
7. Code for America Brigades
8. Civic Tech Field Guide - Sharing knowledge and productively growing the field