



Civic Hall Toronto: Year 1 Summary

2018-2019: Our first year

Our first year

Launched in May 2018, **Civic Hall Toronto is a program that strengthens the civic technology ecosystem in the Greater Toronto Area. We build relationships** between government innovators, entrepreneurs, technologists and residents, to **enable them to learn, share and collaborate on civic challenges** using technology and design.

A program of **Code for Canada** run in partnership with the **City of Toronto, the Centre for Social Innovation, and Civic Hall in New York City**, Civic Hall Toronto works to foster a culture of collaboration across sectors, provide a supportive space for learning and testing ideas, and facilitate greater resident involvement in the design of public services.

"Civic Hall Toronto is bold and will bridge the gap between the city and citizens. It is unlike anything Toronto has ever seen."

– Adil Dhalla, Executive Director, Centre for Social Innovation





Growing the civic tech ecosystem: Government

With their annual membership, our [13 government members](#) get access to a **suite of ongoing programming** to further their civic innovation objectives.

Learning: Training in digital government

Our **regular, half-day training workshops** help build the capacity of our members to **deliver on digital in government**. With a focus on practical application and relevant case studies, our workshops introduce participants to the key concepts, frameworks and tools that they need to lead digital transformation. So far we've delivered **12** workshops to a total of **202** participants. Topics include:

Digital Government 101

Our introductory workshop, Digital Government 101 highlights core concepts and emerging best practices for beginners looking for first steps and the experienced looking for inspiration in furthering digital government projects.

Human-Centred Design for Public Servants

Delivered in two parts, *Human-Centred Design for Public Servants* introduces the human-centered design framework, the double diamond process, and practices of research, synthesis, ideation and prototyping for tackling complex issues.

Agile for Public Servants

A novel take on a popular project management framework, *Agile for Public Servants* emphasizes lightweight techniques for prioritization, execution and iteration so that busy leaders and teams can learn how to apply agile concepts quickly and effectively.

Civic Tech Engagement 101

A how-to for government teams looking to engage civic tech communities on projects, Civic Tech Engagement 101 builds from Code for Canada's [Civic Tech Playbook for Canadian Municipalities](#).



"We benefited greatly from the training. It helped to explain to management what we're doing and develop a proof of concept."

– Carolyn Taylor, Project Manager, StreetARToronto, Transportation Services

"[Civic Hall Toronto] gave us the support and training we were looking for, such as engagement with a population we hadn't typically been having conversations with and access to a design world that we didn't have expertise on in-house."

– Annette Synowiec, Acting Manager, Unit for Research, Innovation and Circular Economy, Solid Waste Management Services

Sharing: Events & space for networking

Our **monthly member events** showcase expert speakers and model case studies on topics that our members care about – like innovation in hiring, procurement, service design and data visualization. Our most popular events so far include:

- Our lunch and learns on [hiring modernization](#), [service delivery](#) and [rapid prototyping](#).
- Our [Procurement Innovation](#) event with speakers from the Municipal Innovation Exchange project and the City of Toronto's Civic Innovation Office. [Read our event recap here](#).
- Our coffee hour [Data 101 in Government](#) event, the first in a four-part series in Spring 2019 focused on working with data in a public service context.



"There's not a lot of opportunity to network with colleagues within the City. Civic Hall Toronto events provide a space for that. Having access to the community, including non-government members, is very valuable and opens up additional opportunities"

– Rod Silva, Manager, Business Innovation & Transformation, Toronto Children's Services

Through our partnership with the Centre for Social Innovation, our members **gain access to co-working space and meeting rooms** at CSI Spadina in central Toronto. As one member said: "We did our management team planning day at CSI, and it was so great to be in another space! We've been using the meeting space a lot."

Collaborating: Projects for digital transformation

We help members move the needle on challenging initiatives or innovative prototypes by **facilitating collaboration with the city's vibrant civic tech community**. Civic Hall Toronto plays a matchmaking role, making it easy for talented community members to bring their skills to bear on member projects – especially those that would benefit from a strategic capacity boost, specialized knowledge and expertise, or community connection. Some examples of completed projects include:

Solid Waste Management Services: Design sprint on recycling contamination

On November 9, 2018, we **facilitated a design workshop** to better understand residents' sentiments and behaviours regarding Blue Bin recycling contamination, to improve future programming for the Solid Waste Management Services team. The event was [profiled by the Toronto Star](#).

"Using human-centered design for an event was a dream and working with CHT made it possible. We're not aware of any other municipality that has used human-centered design to tackle recycling contamination."

– Annette Synowiec, Acting Manager, Unit for Research, Innovation and Circular Economy, Solid Waste Management Services

StreetARToronto: Interactive online map of street art

Developed in collaboration with the civic tech community, we **built an online map of Toronto's street art and a new online application form for StreetARToronto's grant programs**. These new tools enable staff to better serve artists and other stakeholders, and for the public to discover the street art in their neighbourhoods. Launched in November 2018, in time with an art exhibit and networking event at the Centre for Social Innovation, the beta version of the map has received [widespread media coverage](#).



Entrepreneurship Services: Co-creation events with Indigenous entrepreneurs

Throughout the fall of 2018, we supported the **design and delivery of four community engagement sessions** regarding the forthcoming Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ICIE). We brought a human-centered design lens to the sessions with Indigenous entrepreneurs in order to get their input on the centre's governance, services, space and culture. The events were [profiled by the CBC](#).

"Civic Hall Toronto had a lot of expertise around design workshops... They were clearly experts in being able to draw out people's interests and feelings around what ICIE could be."

- Nina Gesa, Economic Development Officer, Entrepreneurship Services





Growing the civic tech ecosystem: Community

Entrepreneurs and community innovators bring amazing ideas and energy to civic innovation, but insight and experience from those in the public and nonprofit sectors can be critical to refining their ideas and enabling them to scale. Civic Hall Toronto's activities are specifically targeted to enabling cross-sectoral relationship-building, learning and collaboration.

In our first year, our community work has been focused on delivering public events that bring people together from across sectors around topics of mutual interest, and supporting civic tech entrepreneurs with programming that's responsive to their needs.





Public events

On the first Friday of every month, we gather public servants and civic innovators of all stripes for our **Office Hours events**, aimed at building connections between people inside and outside government. Office Hours are a response to civic tech innovators' biggest complaint: that it's difficult to find the right people in government to answer questions or get feedback. Our most recent Office Hours event (in April 2019) had over 40 participants, representing a dozen city divisions, entrepreneurs, startups, nonprofits and social innovators.

In October 2018, in collaboration with the Centre for Social Innovation, we **hosted Civic Tech Toronto's Tuesday hacknights** at CSI locations across the city, in order to drive more participation from public, private and non-profit organizations. We also run frequent 'guided' trips to Civic Tech Toronto hacknights for Civic Hall Toronto government members who want a soft introduction to the civic tech community.

Starting in March 2019, our three-part **Tools for Civic Tech workshop series** builds the capacity of civic tech startups and projects to scale. Topics include *Developing a Theory of Change*, *Value Proposition Design* and *Agile for Civic Tech*.

"It was great to get a broad overview of what public servants were up to in their respective divisions, and also to have more intimate conversations afterward."

– Office Hours attendee

"The framework helped us better articulate our project goals and make a plan for next steps."

– Developing a Theory of Change workshop participant

Project incubation

For six months beginning in November 2018, we've supported the two winning teams of the City of Toronto's **Vision Zero Challenge** with customized coaching and training, in topics like product roadmapping and storytelling. We've also **facilitated custom workshops for these early-stage startups and civic leaders**, enabling them to better understand government's needs, and develop their value propositions with potential users.



What's next

Looking ahead to Civic Hall Toronto's second year, we will continue to cultivate a strong local civic tech ecosystem. We'll do so by **building on our success** enabling government and community to address civic challenges, together, using technology and design. In order to scale, we will focus on:

- **Delivering more value to members** by developing new training offerings and events, and delivering them more frequently.
- Moving into a **dedicated space** at the Centre for Social Innovation-Spadina, to offer members an exclusive collaboration and workspace, and to open new opportunities for events and sponsorship.
- **Delivering value to entrepreneurs** by creating more opportunities for civic tech and govtech innovators to meet, learn from and collaborate with public servants. We'll use our new space as a hub for civic tech startups and projects, offering public events, workshops and workspace, and building more relationships across sectors.
- **Increasing resident participation** through more public events, and as usability testers for civic websites and apps, through **GRIT Toronto** (Gathering Residents to Improve Technology).
- **Growing and diversifying our government membership base** by recruiting more teams from the City of Toronto, as well as teams from other jurisdictions in the GTA.

"Around the world, entrepreneurs are finding success and sustainability delivering technologies that inform, engage and connect residents with government and one another to advance civic outcomes. Civic Hall Toronto will grow the commercial civic tech sector in the GTA by helping civic entrepreneurs connect and collaborate with technologists, public servants and potential users."

– Councillor Michael Thompson

"New ideas need new spaces where collaboration and outside the box thinking are encouraged. Civic Hall Toronto will break down siloes, unite passionate and talented people with an interest in civic innovation, and enable the best ideas to be shared across sectors."

– Shea Sinnott, Program Manager, Civic Hall Toronto