A Report on Our First Year:
February 2015 - February 2016

CIVIC HALL

Civic Hall is a collaborative work and event space that supports civic tech, the use of technology to serve the public good. Located in the heart of New York City's Silicon Alley, Civic Hall is where diverse civic innovators work, network, learn and organize to solve civic problems. Founded in February 2015, one year later our community has grown to more than 850 technologists, social entrepreneurs, government officials, philanthropy professionals, journalists, activists and change-makers.

In this short time, **Civic Hall is proving itself to be a new kind of civic tech itself: a collaboration engine.** As we keep signing up individual and organizational members, catalyzing connections between them, convening timely and diverse gatherings, nurturing early stage civic start-ups, and serving as a hub for community leaders and policymakers seeking to engage civic activists, we can hear that engine revving up.

As this report will detail, there is something unique and valuable happening at Civic Hall: hearts and minds are coming together in new ways to support innovative approaches and partnerships working on national and local civic problems that matter.

Who is at Civic Hall?

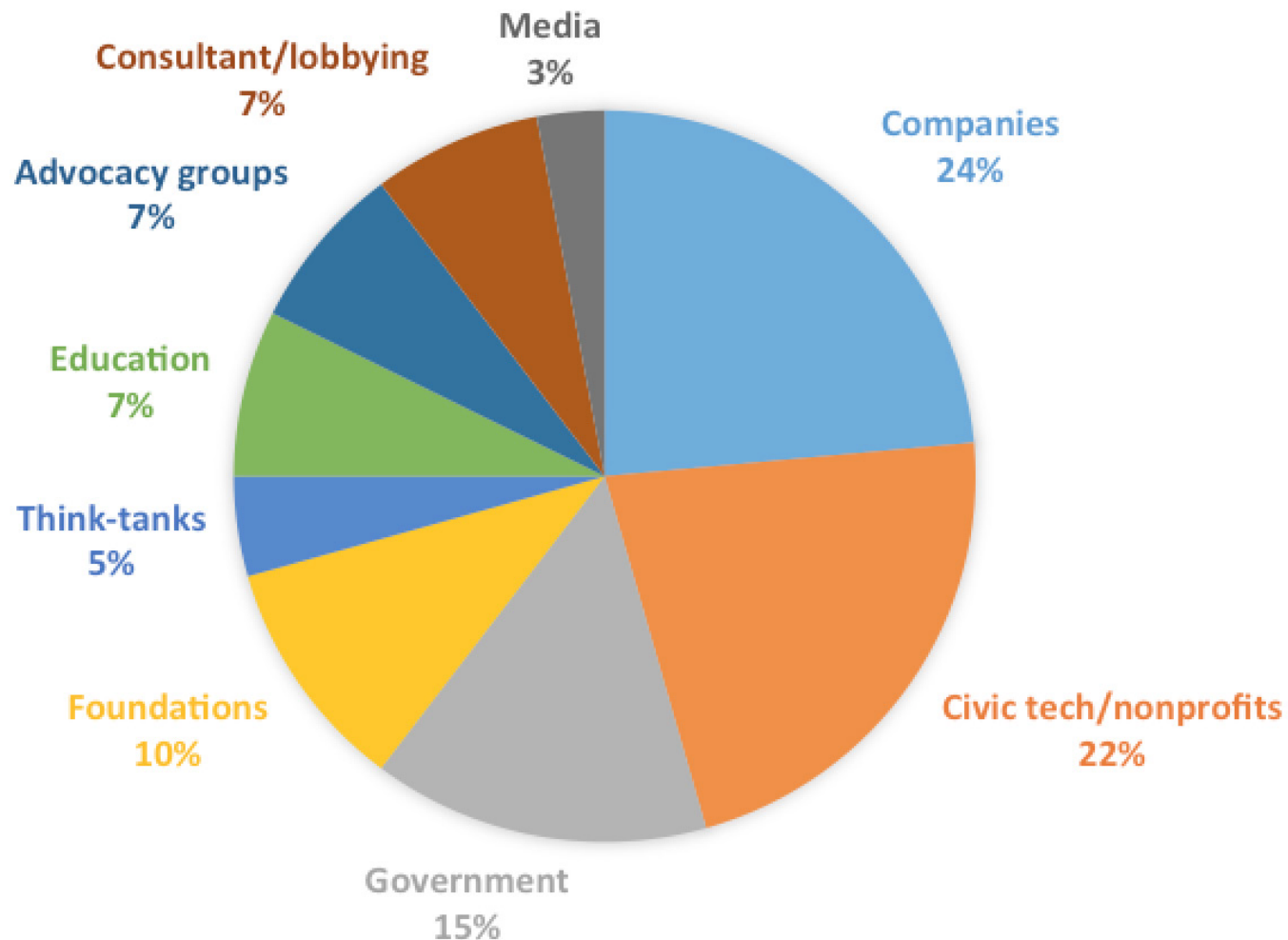As of the beginning of February 2016, Civic Hall had a total of:

- 448 individual members
- 844 total members, including those from organizations
- 68 member organizations (including founding partners and sponsors)

In just the last six months, our total membership has grown 67%. In addition, we've hosted 358 events over the whole year, with more than 20,400 attendees. Of that total, 208 events took place during the second half of the year. As we head into 2016, we are seeing both membership and events continue to grow at a healthy pace.

A SPECTRUM OF MEMBERS

A full list of our organizational members is attached as an appendix below. By sector, they break down as follows:

CIVIC HALL ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS BY CATEGORY

- Media 3%
- Consultant/lobbying 7%
- Advocacy groups 7%
- Education 7%
- Think-tanks 5%
- Foundations 10%
- Government 15%
- Civic tech/nonprofits 22%
- Companies 24%

A SPECTRUM OF MEMBERS

Many of our member organizations have chosen to hold major events at Civic Hall. In just the past six months, those have included the New York Attorney General's Summit on Tech and Government, the New York City Comptroller's Red Tape Summit, the New York City City Council Speaker's Digital Summit, the New York City Economic Development Corporation's Big Apps Competition launch, the Code for All Summit, Microsoft's Civic Tech Demo Night, and Robin Hood Foundation's Blue Ridge Labs Product Showcase.

Civic Hall has also become a primary destination for many other institutions and actors seeking to influence the public arena. We've also been happy to host events sponsored by non-member organizations like the presidential campaign of Senator Marco Rubio (who delivered a policy speech on the on-demand economy), Fast Company (which anchored its entire 20th anniversary celebration at Civic Hall), NASA, All Star Code, Global Futures Group, the Knight Foundation, Lesbians Who Tech, Liquid Talent, the Municipal Arts Society, the Startup Institute, UN Women, Warby Parker, Witness Media Lab, Audience Engine, and the Helmsley Charitable Trusts.

In addition, Civic Hall has become the ongoing home for a number of recurring community gatherings that exemplify the variety of interests and constituencies that intersect here. Regular Meetups happening at Civic Hall include Civic Hall's own #CivicWomen Meetup, BetaNYC's Hacknights, the NYC Internet of Things Meetup, the New York Linux Users Group Meetup, the HubSpot Meetup, Apache Mesos Meetup, and Microsoft and Datakind's "Machine Eatable" lunch panels.

And all of those are just the highlights of the last six months!

People join Civic Hall for a variety of reasons. When we surveyed our membership in January 2016, the most common responses we got (as illustrated by the word cloud on the cover of this report) were these: To strengthen their ties to the civic tech community, to work around people with similar interests, to plug into a virtual network (and lively Slack channel), to support collaboration, to be part of a community of doers, to expand their horizons beyond their professional specialization, and to work with socially-engaged problem solvers.

And when we asked if people had gotten what they were after in joining, or were on their way, the vast majority said yes. 93% said they would recommend Civic Hall to a friend or colleague, in fact.

It's not easy to pin down the precise value of Civic Hall to our members, since each person and organization comes here with their own unique story and path. But perhaps no one has encapsulated it better than Zephyr Teachout, a political reform activist and constitutional law professor, who joined Civic Hall last year in her capacity as the head of MayDayPAC, a campaign finance reform organization. On a day when she was here for a meeting with her executive director, but kept bumping into other friends, former colleagues and people interested in her work, she tweeted: **"Civic Hall: just sitting there your networks strengthen."**

A few testimonials from members illustrate this well.

Erin Mazursky, the founder and executive director of Rhize, which consults with and supports social change groups around the world, says:

> CH has been a game-changer for us! At the beginning of this year, I was just working out of coffeeshops with an intern, until I realized CH had finally opened. The space gives me a place to come everyday, which has made me a lot more sane. It's given us the opportunity to bring in partners/thought leaders and have

them feel like we're not just Rhize but a part of a bigger community in New York. On top of that, **it's helped my team coordinate better and have better communication, and overall our productivity is through the roof** in comparison to the beginning of this year!

Daniel Latorre, a product manager working in civic tech, engagement, and urbanism, who runs The Wise City, says:

> Generally the space has been socially supportive given the birds of a feather density ratio each week, especially with folks who live elsewhere but come swing by when here. As one example it's been great to see Emily Jacobi [of Digital Democracy] each time she's been in town, in past times we had to coordinate a place and time to meet which was tricky, but now Civic Hall, the place, makes all that moot since it's a watering hole people now congregate around. **This is the power of a good co-working space which is a mix of social workspace and "third space" in urban sociology terms.**

Nancy Vitale of Eyes Up Here Productions says:

> In the last year, I was feeling rather at sea as a writer and freelance producer. Though I had been working sporadically as a cultural activations producer for non profits, I didn't feel as if I was in control of my career. **Since joining CH and being around so many proactive, brilliant people, I was buoyed by their energy and enthusiasm and how they were taking chances for the greater good.** By the end of 2015, I had begun mapping out how I would take control of my career in 2016. The support, encouragement, skill sharing, coffee machine conversations, etc. have all given me the tools and, more importantly the confidence, needed to launch my creative production company, Eyes Up Here Productions, which specializes in brand ideation, strategic storytelling, and producing moving content and live events with the mission to direct your gaze to the unexpected. We shine a light on the work of social justice, entertainment, civic tech and other organizations that share our commitment to making the world a better place. So thank you, seriously. This scholarship, this time to redefine success in a way that incorporates the hearts and minds of so many great people has meant the world to me.

Joel Natividad of Ontodia, an open data solutions provider, says:

> **CH is a civic tech serendipity engine. It connected me to people, orgs, govvies, ideas**

that I would not have otherwise found on several occasions. The proactive outreach from CH staff (e.g. invite to procurement event, biz of civic tech event, etc.), promotion on its network when we launched CivicDashboards, my annual pilgrimage to PDF, its active engagement with the City, etc. provides multiple opportunities for engagement.

In a recent post for Civicist, Civic Hall's news platform, Erin Vilardi, the founder of VoteRunLead, talks about how being a member of Civic Hall accelerated her organization's success, including one new element beyond the value of the network, connections and talent she tapped into that she advises other members to take advantage of. She writes, "Name-drop Civic Hall. Use it in your grant proposals. Get in the weekly Civic Hall newsletter. Consider it an endorsement. Leverage it for your brand—it tells folks that you are a certain type of innovator. Seriously."

And Kristen Rouse, the founder of the New York City Veterans Alliance, which won a big victory this past year in convincing New York city to create a full-fledged independent Department of Veterans Services, had this to say when we honored her at our first anniversary community party:

I joined Civic Hall last June when I heard about the Craigconnects scholarship for veterans. I had no income from any of my advocacy work, and I was overwhelmed with writing and editing the first ever in-depth report on NYC veterans policy. It was a lonely process that mostly involved me sitting by myself in pajamas in my tiny Brooklyn apartment, feeling isolated and like I might never see any of this through. The Craigconnects veterans scholarship got me into Civic Hall, and Civic Hall got me out of my apartment and out of my pajamas, and interacting with a community that...could definitely understand what I was going through.

....Because of Civic Hall, I learned about NationBuilder, and chose that as the online platform we've used for our website and for outreach to the NYC veterans community. We've also used it to create a consolidated Community Calendar that since August has listed more than 250 events for veterans across the New York Metro area—something that never existed before.

Civic Hall has been where we've brought members and stakeholders to talk about policy issues that matter to them. Last December, some of you came to our Policy Design Workshop, where veterans who've served in every era since Vietnam were able to collaborate in a new way to solve problems for our community. I wasn't sure how to put on a design workshop, but when I mentioned it to [Civic Hall's] Jenn Shaw, she connected me with Ange Royal-Kahin from Engine, who showed our team of veterans how to do it and make it a success.

But we're not just telling you about our success—you're taking part in it. We're developing partnerships with [fellow Civic Hall members] Melanie [Lavelle] from Benefit Kitchen and David [Moore] from Councilmatic, and I've personally benefited from webinars put on by Rhize, and

we're getting involved in VoteRunLead to hopefully get women veterans into elected office. (And we want our veteran men in office, too!) All of this, I hope, is just the beginning of having veterans involved as an integral part of the civic tech movement.

"Civic Hall is my second home," Minerva Tantoco, New York City's CTO, recently exclaimed during an event on innovative approaches to procurement. Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, who has a long history as a tech innovator, has often said something similar, most recently at the workshop we co-hosted with her office on the day of NYC's Open Data Law's annual update. Diane Levitt, the director of partnerships for Cornell Tech told a group of computer science educators assembled at her event that "Civic Hall is an extraordinary example of new civic thinking in the 21st Century."

Beyond the individual goals and experiences of Civic Hall members, the larger impact of this unique community center for civic tech collaboration and innovation is being generated by the change-making organizations and partnerships being fostered here.

Civic Hall has become the home base for many early-stage civic startups, including BetaNYC, the Citizen Input Project, City Globe, CityMart, CTZNWELL, Daily Clout, Dynamite Labs, the Economic Hardship Reporting Project, Engine.is, Explore NYC Parks, FutureAir, HeatSeek, Hiccup. co, ISOC-NY, Little Big Girl & Co., Nature of Work, Participatory Politics Foundation, Rhinobird, Rhize, ShiftSpark, Skillcrush, This.cm, Vizalytics and VoteRunLead.

Two of these organizations—HeatSeek and VoteRunLead—have thrived so well in the past year that, with our enthusiastic recommendation, they were invited into the prestigious and highly selective BeeSpace nonprofit incubator program. And starting in January, the five winners of the New York City Big Apps competition—Addicaid, Benefit Kitchen, Issue Voter, JustFixNYC, and Treasures— were given full-time memberships for the spring to gain additional coaching and support as they develop their ventures. (Two of those winners— Benefit Kitchen and Issue Voter—were already Civic Hall community members, we should note.)

Members have shared a wide variety of examples of informal collaboration and formal partnerships that have developed as a result of rubbing shoulders with other members at Civic Hall. For example, Microsoft's Civic Innovation team, led by John Paul Farmer and Matt Stempeck, has practically set up shop in our community space, and their innovative CivicGraph.io project, which is a living resource guide to the civic tech ecosystem, has been largely developed by them (and a group of summer fellows) while at Civic Hall. Alex Torpey, the outgoing mayor of South Orange, NJ, connected serendipitously with Erin Vilardi, the founder of VoteRunLead, and

they partnered on a VRL leadership training event at Civic Hall. Jeanne Brooks, formerly of Hacks/Hackers, was hired by fellow Civic Hall member DataKind, to be its director of global communities. Dorian Benkoil, a self-employed digital strategist and member, put together a self-employed accountability group, to help individuals who are often working on projects alone or remotely. Democracy 2.1, an organization experimenting globally in collective decision-making processes, worked with city councilors they met through Civic Hall to launch pilot projects in participatory budgeting in New York City, and used Civic Hall as a base to acquire, train, and deploy volunteers.

Knowledge and connections are the currency of collaboration, and being at Civic Hall makes those flow more easily. For example, Daniel Beeby, the co-founder of Benefit Kitchen, says "Civic Hall members helped me think about my business not as a niche 'software as a service' for nonprofits, but as an open-data-platform that could also impact the for-profit and government worlds." Beyond the many serendipitous connections fostered here, since our doors opened a year, more than a dozen formal partnerships have been established between Civic Hall and government agencies, city officials and statewide offices, including:

- ° The New York State Attorney General's Office
- ° The Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation
- ° The New York City Council Speaker's Office
- ° 311, Mayor's Office
- ° The New York City Economic Development Corporation, Mayor's Office
- ° The Office of Manhattan Borough President's Gale Brewer
- ° The Office of Councilmember Corey Johnson
- ° New York City Department of Education
- ° District Attorney Cy Vance
- ° The Office of Councilmember Ben Kallos
- ° The New York City Comptrollers Office, Scott Stringer
- ° The New York City Department of Environment Protection
- ° 18F

These partnerships have fostered a host of activity including special events, newly-formed initiatives and ongoing public office hours, all coordinated to discuss and address issues in the civic tech field, and to foster greater collaboration between various levels of government and civic tech community members and organizations at Civic Hall. The highlights have included:

- **The New York State Attorney General's Office:** In a major address at Civic Hall on September 15, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman laid out his vision for ensuring that New York's economy serves the interests of tech entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers. The event featured experts on expanding tech infrastructure and ensuring data privacy, and opening up data sharing. In the fall of 2015, the Attorney General's Office kicked off regular office hours at Civic Hall to interact with members, and to brainstorm about how to improve transparency in government data and work more collaboratively.

- **The Mayor's Office of Technology & Innovation (MOTI):** Civic Hall has an on-going unique partnership with MOTI, the city's first chief technology office. MOTI hosts regular office hours called "Alley Hours," where key staff meet with members at Civic Hall to talk about the city's latest initiatives and to learn about member projects. This provides an opportunity for both parties to learn about their challenges and successes, and to continue to foster an ongoing relationship with government and open data. To date, MOTI hosts regular Alley Hours and works out of

Civic Hall once a week to maintain a regular presence in the space.

- **EDC (The New York City Economic Development Corporation):** EDC's NYC BigApps, a competition that empowers the sharpest minds to solve New York City's toughest challenges through technology, data, and collaboration, officially began accepting submissions at a launch event hosted by Civic Hall on July 16, 2015, where prospective contestants were able to connect, network and begin to collaborate on their projects. Mayor de Blasio and EDC officially announced the competition at a press event at Civic Hall the

next day. Since then, Civic Hall has partnered with EDC and HR&A Advisors as advisors to the competition.

- **NYC 311:** In the Spring of 2015, NYC's 311 office launched a series of office hour events at which it presented three different design challenges to Civic Hall members. The main question posed was: "When 311's services end, how can it help give access to services to follow up on needs?" Members responded with gratis workshops, brainstorming sessions and data analysis. One Civic Hall member, Marianne Bellotti, who runs a small open data SAAS service company, Exversion, is now helping NYC 311 with data management issues. 311 is hosting on-going office hours on a monthly basis at Civic Hall.

- **NYC Council Speaker's Office:** In the spring of 2015, Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito's office announced "Council 2.0," an initiative to help make the New York City Council more transparent and accessible through digital technology. The announcement included a convening in mid-August of a Digital Inclusionary Summit at Civic Hall with the Speaker, the Mozilla Foundation and an

audience of more than 90 nonprofit and social services leaders. Participants engaged in a day-long symposium of workshops and plenary sessions around bridging technology and community. Building on this summit, the Speaker's Office has started hosting monthly office hours with various divisions including Land Use, Finance, Community Affairs and Legislative Affairs to offer '101' educational briefings on how the council works, current projects and initiatives, especially as they relate to the civic tech community. Most recently, the Speaker's Office hosted a hackathon for members to engage in a dialogue about the Council district office data sets and other efforts to increase government transparency.

HOW CIVIC HALL IS MAKING AN IMPACT

- **Manhattan Borough President:** Since Civic Hall's opening, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's office has hosted a variety of different events and workshops. In spring 2015, she hosted a mixer with public school tech teachers. Around the same time, her office hosted an event at Civic Hall for both community board members and Civic Hall members to train them to analyze and visualize open data (with the help of GovLab and beta. NYC) in order to make better decisions in their districts. She has also hosted a brown bag lunch to get feedback on and encourage active participation in land use and urban planning issues, and to discuss the incredible backlog of landmarks currently under review.

- **New York City Councilmember Corey Johnson:** In May 2015, Councilmember Johnson's State of the District meeting, held at Civic Hall, drew over 200 residents throughout District 3 in Manhattan to engage on issues around technology, parks, education and urban planning. At his request, Civic Hall spearheaded a working group with representatives from office, community members and Meghan Lazier, a graduate student at the New School who designed a pilot app for access ride users who are primarily elderly and disabled adults. Last spring, the working group presented the app to the Director of MTA's Access-A-Ride program and his senior team. They are now in discussions to pilot the app.

- **New York City Councilmember Ben Kallos Office Hours:** New York City Council Member Ben Kallos, who chairs the Council's Committee on Governmental Operations, has personally held office hours at Civic Hall. As an attorney and a free and open source software developer, he has authored or co-sponsored legislation to increase government transparency, streamline access to benefits and help residents find affordable housing through a central registry. The goal of his interaction with members is to not only hear about projects they are working on that might be of interest to his district, but to also discuss and get feedback on ideas and initiatives that he is working on as a legislator.

- **New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer:** In December 2015, the Comptroller's Red Tape Commission took place at Civic Hall and

drew over 200 small business owners and entrepreneurs to testify and share their stories about the obstacles they face dealing with city government. This public hearing allowed for an open and honest discussion about how the commission can help make it easier to cut through government bureaucracy.

- **DEP Green Infrastructure Grant Program Workshop:** Civic Hall is pleased to regularly host the NYC Department of Environmental Protection's Green Infrastructure Grant Program Workshop. The workshop offers grant funding for the design and construction of green roofs, rain gardens, permeable pavements and other types of green stormwater management projects. Participants get an in-depth understanding of the eligibility requirements and application process.

Beyond these partnerships with government offices and leaders, in Civic Hall's first year of operation, we have also fostered several ongoing partnerships with private sector leaders, community organizers and NGOs. These include:

- **Symposium on Innovative Procurement:** Hosted by Civic Hall in July 2015, this symposium included a cross-section of leaders in technology and government who are championing various initiatives to streamline procurement systems for IT services in both the public and private sector. Speakers included: Jessica Lawrence, NY Tech Meetup; Gino Menchini, National Strategies LLC; Sergio Paneque, Government Sourcing Solutions; Jeff Merritt, NYC Mayor's Office of Innovation and Technology; Julia Haseymayer, Citymart; Bryan Sivak, US HHS; Heidi Sieck, Civic Hall (and SF 311), Claude Millman, Kostelanetz Fink LLC; Scott Anderson, Control Group; and Terri Matthews, Town+Gown. The event, which drew over 100 attendees, has now spawned an ongoing Google Group devoted to continuing to explore the challenges and opportunities around modernizing how government procures tech.

- **Platform Cooperatives Working Group:**
  After Civic Hall convened an event discussing Trebor Scholz's pathbreaking article in Medium titled "Platform cooperatives vs the sharing economy," a working group was launched that has met several times for lunchtime conversation and information sharing. This group includes representatives of the Freelancers Union, Fair Care Labs, Blue Ridge Labs, the Robin Hood Foundation, and others. Scholz is now organizing a two-day conference on this topic this fall at The New School, which Civic Hall is co-sponsoring. Civic Hall held a follow-up event after the conference in January 2016, and plans to continue hosting the working group on a regular basis.

- **The Civic Hall Innovation Breakfast Series:**
  Launched in February 2016, Civic Hall and the NY Tech Meetup have begun hosting the Civic Hall Innovation Breakfast Series, a quarterly breakfast event, offering prominent New Yorkers working in the fields of technology, civic and social innovation an opportunity to hear from leaders in government and industry, and giving professionals the chance to meet and network around common interests. The series kicked off on February 18 with inaugural keynote speaker, Maria Torres-Springer, President of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, and special guest moderator, Baratunde Thurston of "The Daily Show with Trevor Noah." The second breakfast, which will be held on April 22, will feature keynote speaker US Senator Charles E. Schumer. The series is sponsored by Idealist and Microsoft.

CONCLUSION: LOOKING FORWARD AND UPWARD

As we head into our second year, we expect Civic Hall to keep growing at a healthy pace. The community workspace is buzzing every day of the week. We are now hard at work on a longer-term strategic plan for Civic Hall, and look forward to sharing more details soon.

APPENDIX

Civic Hall organizational members as of February 1, 2016 (* denotes founding partner/sponsor)

COMPANIES
- Access Now
- Airbnb
- Bloomberg LP
- Blue State Digital
- Change.org
- Fedcap
- General Assembly
- Google*
- Heat Seek NYC
- IBM
- Idealist.org
- Inventure
- Knoll
- Microsoft*
- NationBuilder
- NuCivic
- Placemeter
- Quartz
- Salesforce.org
- Techonomy
- This.cm
- Uber
- Yelp

NONPROFIT/CIVIC TECH
- BetaNYC
- Charity Navigator
- Code for America
- CSNYC
- CTZNWELL
- DataKind
- Democracy 2.1
- Digital Democracy
- DoSomething.org
- Engine.is
- Friends of the Highline
- Games for Change
- ICANN
- Mission:Restore
- NY Tech Meetup*
- Omega Institute
- Rhize

ADVOCACY GROUPS
- Consumer Reports
- FWD.us
- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Civic Hall organizational members as of February 1, 2016 (* denotes founding partner/sponsor)

EDUCATION
° Brooklyn Law School
° Columbia University - School of International and Public Affairs
° New York City Foundation for Computer Science Education
° NYU Center for Urban Science and Progress
° Parsons eLab
° The New School Civic Innovation Group
° University of Chicago - Computational Analysis & Public Policy Program
° Urban Arts Partnership

GOVERNMENT
° 18F
° Manhattan Borough President's Office
° New York City 311
° New York Attorney General's Office
° New York City Council Speaker's Office
° New York City Department of Education
° New York City Economic Development Corporation
° New York City Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation

FOUNDATIONS/ THINK TANKS
° craigconnects
° Demos
° Harnisch Foundation
° Independent Diplomat
° New America*
° Omidyar Network*
° Rita Allen Foundation
° Robin Hood Foundation
° Sunlight Foundation

CONSULTING/LOBBYING
° Baker Hostetler
° CGI Group, Inc.
° Curmudgeon Group
° Gerson Lehrman Group
° Public Works Partners