

CODE FOR AMERICA'S

FIRST INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS



This case study examines Code for America's first partnerships with international groups to run civic technology programs to use technology to make their governments work better. It is based on CfA's International Programs Manager, [Lynn Fine](#), work with these groups in 2014.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WE LEARNED SEVEN IMPORTANT LESSONS IN 2014:

1. **KEEP IT SIMPLE.** Our partners had the most success when they concentrated on improving existing government digital services or solving very small pieces of larger problems. Design-thinking approaches, like those used by [Code for the Caribbean](#), were a successful way to decide what part of a problem to tackle using technology.
2. **LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN BE EFFECTIVE AT RUNNING CIVIC TECH PROGRAMS.** Working from within government, as in [Mexico City](#), can make it easier to sustain an application after a Fellowship ends. Good results also rely on keeping citizens and their needs at the center of these projects and independent of politics.
3. **NO MATTER THE COUNTRY, WE MUST BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT INVOLVING WOMEN, MINORITY GROUPS AND THOSE FROM LOWER ECONOMIC CLASSES IN OUR EFFORTS.** Worldwide, men and people from higher classes are more often drawn to civic technology work.
4. **PROCUREMENT POLICIES CAN BE A BARRIER TO GOOD CIVIC TECH.** Many procurement rules, intended to counter corruption, also make it hard for governments to pay for fellows. These rules also end up upholding special interests, and tie government to large vendors who sell systems that are not best fit for purpose.
5. **PHILANTHROPY CULTURE IS VERY UNIQUE TO THE U.S.** Fundraising was a big challenge for all three of our international pilot partners.
6. **IN A COUNTRY WITH LOW INCOME LEVELS THERE IS A BIG OPPORTUNITY COST TO VOLUNTEERING ONE'S TIME.** [Code for Germany](#) was able to tap into a vibrant volunteer civic tech community and organize their efforts to benefit local communities. This is much harder in lower-income countries (though some exceptions could shed light on how to get these efforts going in more places).
7. **THERE'S A GLOBAL COMMUNITY THAT'S HUNGRY TO PARTICIPATE IN CIVIC TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS.** People all over the world want to work together to make their government work better with technology – the greatest challenge is finding the best possible ways to harness those efforts for sustainable and effective impact.





INTRODUCTION

Almost immediately after Code for America's founding four years ago, people from dozens of countries began to approach us who were interested in adapting our programs locally. It quickly became apparent that we had much to share, but could also learn how our programs worked by seeing them adapted in other places. We also learned from groups running their own unique programs.

In May 2013, we launched Code for All, Code for America's international program, with three very diverse pilot partners in Mexico City, Germany and the Caribbean. All three take distinct approaches in very different places. That diversity allows the Code for All partners to learn as much as we can about the ways civic technology projects work across contexts—from cities to federal ministries, urban to rural, developing to developed.

These three original partners along with Code for America comprise the four founding partners of the Code for All network, which has now grown to 11 organizations from 10 countries. We are teaching and learning from each other, sharing insights and tools, and making sure that all of our work is better because we are connected.



THE THREE PILOT PARTNERSHIPS

CODE FOR THE CARIBBEAN

Code for America partnered with the [SlashRoots](#) Foundation to run a variation of Code for America's Fellowship program in Jamaica. SlashRoots is a civic technology non-profit organization that uses technology to create solutions to social problems in the Caribbean region. SlashRoots' work took off when the organization collaborated with groups throughout the Caribbean to organize a regional open data conference and code sprint called, "[Developing the Caribbean](#)," (DevCA) in 2011. The event brought together people with technology skills and started to evangelize the concept of "civic technology" which is pretty new in the region. The event has since evolved to become one of the largest technology events in the region.

However, while DevCA effectively raised awareness about open data, civic tech, and the potential of technology to address development challenges, it wasn't an effective way to deliver the culture change needed in government to tackle long-term challenges. The SlashRoots team began to learn more about innovation fellowship programs such as those run by [Code for America](#), [Code for Kenya](#) and the Presidential Innovation Fellowship. They decided to start a [Code For the Caribbean](#) (CftC) fellowship program. They recruited and trained three technologists for a six-month fellowship program in partnership with the [Rural Agriculture Development Authority](#) (RADA), an agency within Jamaica's Ministry of Agriculture, responsible for supporting farmers throughout the island. After intensive research the technologists identified praedial larceny (the theft of agricultural goods and livestock) as a pressing issue, costing the agriculture industry more than [US\\$5 million each year](#). The Fellowship team designed technological solutions to combat this economic toll. These include:

- I. HARVEST API, an integrated database of farmer registration, crop production, price information, and agricultural receipt information published through an open application programming interface and
- II. CLIP: a prototype of an SMS-based tool built on top of this API that allows police officers to text in a receipt number and get back information that will help them validate a receipt in the field.



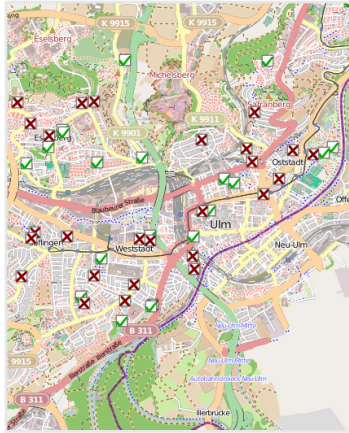
To learn more about the CftC Fellowship program click [here](#).

CODE FOR MEXICO CITY (CODIGO CDMX)

Code for America worked with the Laboratorio Para la Ciudad (Mexico City Government Innovation Lab) to implement [Codigo CDMX \(Code for Mexico City\)](#), a Fellowship program run by a government partner. The Lab is run as a creative think tank and experimental space for the government of Mexico City, the first of its kind at the city level in Latin America. Working with Code for America, Codigo CDMX recruited, trained and guided five skilled technologists as fellows for a nine-month program in which they worked with six Mexico City government departments (approximately one per department). Working with these departments, they devised digital solutions to problems facing city residents. These projects ranged from an application to help residents distinguish between fake and illegal taxis to an easy to understand map of free public health clinics throughout the city. To learn more about the Codigo CDMX Fellowship program click [here](#).

CODE FOR GERMANY

Code for America partnered with one of The Open Knowledge Foundation's (OKF) established chapters in Berlin, Germany to start a "[Code for Germany](#)" (CfG) program. The CfG team began with plans to launch a Code for America-inspired Fellowship program. They quickly learned that the German government's inflexible procurement policies made it difficult for cities to pay for fellows. They decided to run a variation of CfA's [Brigade](#) (citizen volunteer) program and created a national network of citizen-led volunteer chapters who work with their local governments to use technology to improve the places where they live. There are now over 13 Code for DE Labs throughout Germany. To learn more about the CfG program click [here](#).



LESSONS LEARNED: FUNDING

Fundraising is a challenge for most socially-minded non-profit organizations. CfA receives funding for its programs from four main sources: Corporations (most of which have special funds allocated to corporate social responsibility programs) individual donors, foundations and matching funds from governments and community partners who we work with on our Fellowship program.

OVERALL, WE FOUND THAT:

- Other countries don't have the same culture of philanthropy and number of foundations as the U.S.
- Some U.S. based philanthropic organizations will fund initiatives in other countries based on regional and thematic priorities, but accessing these funds is very competitive.
- With a few exceptions, locally based corporations in countries outside of the U.S. aren't very interested in funding civic technology programs.
- Wealthy individuals are not a reliable source of funding for social initiatives in countries outside of the U.S..
- Sometimes governments outside of the U.S. are willing to pay for civic technology programs.
- Organizing regionally might help groups with fundraising efforts.
- The Fellowship program is very cost-intensive and other programs are good alternatives when there is limited funding.



LESSONS LEARNED: CODE FOR THE CARIBBEAN

Of the three pilot partners that CfA collaborated with, fundraising appears to have been the most challenging for the CftC team.

THEY RECEIVED:

- Some funding from the [International Development Research Centre](#), Canada's main international development agency
- Support from the [Mona School of Business and Management](#), a long-time partner of Slashroots, based in Kingston, Jamaica
- In-kind contributions of office space, transport to agriculture communities, and staff time from their government partner, RADA.

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THESE FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES INCLUDE:

- Jamaica (and the Caribbean region in general) is not a priority for most donors. Donors tend to group it with Latin America but Jamaica has unique challenges.
- Jamaica does not have a robust "Silicon Valley" style eco-system which limits opportunities for corporate funding in the tech space.
- The Jamaican elite is weary of supporting an unproven initiative and can be suspicious of experimentation, which makes it hard to secure funds from them.
- Most Caribbean governments have high debt burdens and are facing pressing governance challenges such as providing basic services, which makes it hard to make the case for a program. This impacts the willingness and ability of government agencies to pay for Fellowship programs.
- The corporate sector doesn't have a culture of giving and is unlikely to donate to programs that involve government agencies because they could be seen as corrupt.



MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM CFTC'S FUNDING EXPERIENCE

The fundraising challenges that the CftC team faced will likely be relevant to other groups, especially those working in low-income countries. There were a range of benefits and challenges to their funding experience:

BENEFITS

- RADA's not paying for fellows fostered a very collaborative spirit of partnership with the CftC team. RADA was especially open to working with fellows, eager to learn and exchange and didn't make many specific demands. Instead, RADA treated the fellows as partners, not vendors. This suggests that it is much more difficult to engage in traditional employer-employee dynamics when money doesn't change hands.
- By not using government money and having funders on the same page, the program was able to operate very independently, shifting and evolving as the fellows learned more about the problem they were trying to solve. This ultimately helped them to pick the right problem to solve using a design-thinking approach.

CHALLENGES

- Unclear future funding sources pose a threat to the sustainability of the projects. While the CftC fellows worked with RADA's technical staff throughout the program to facilitate learning, RADA has yet to integrate the applications into their organization (though collaborations with SlashRoots are underway to do so).
- Working with limited resources required an enormous investment in time and energy on behalf of CftC program staff, without sufficient compensation for them to be able to dedicate themselves full-time to the program. This sometime slowed down the program and took its toll on the team itself

LESSONS LEARNED: CODE FOR MEXICO CITY



The Code for Mexico City program had a unique funding situation, receiving funds from:

- Mexico City's municipal budget (approximately 40% of total program costs), because it was a Mexico City Government Innovation Lab project
- Private foundations such as the Omidyar Network and the Hewlett Foundation (approximately 60% of total program costs).

MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM MEXICO CITY'S FUNDING EXPERIENCE

Overall, government funds were important for sustained government buy-in for the program but also constraining because they could only be used for certain things. This made having other funds available important.

There were a range of other benefits and challenges to this unique fundraising structure:

BENEFITS

- Receiving funding directly from the government gave the program legitimacy and likely increased investment in the project outcomes. It paved the way for the different government department to work closely with the fellows and was a clear sign of political buy-in.
- The Lab had a level of autonomy, and free range for experimentation and creativity that is distinct from other government offices in Mexico City.
- The program's clear institutionalization and financing support from the government gave it a useful degree of credibility and access to government departments.
- Each project that the fellows were working on is now housed within those government departments, though how widely each project is used varies a lot.

CHALLENGES

- Inflexible spending and procurement policies for government meant the Lab had to have other resources to use. It was very difficult for the Lab to spend that money on less structured, creative parts of the program because of the bureaucratic red tape that accompanied spending government money.
- Because the program was so heavily funded by government, the fellows may have had to take political considerations more into account than if the program had been privately funded. For example, the fellows projects were loosely based on the strategic plans for the government departments they worked with. The fellows and Lab staff worked really hard to make sure that the projects were as citizen-centered as possible within this structure.



LESSONS LEARNED: CODE FOR GERMANY

Similar to CftC, the CfG team had a difficult time finding a government partner who would pay for the Fellowship program. In CfG's case, a lack of government resources wasn't the main barrier. Germany has very strict government procurement policies that make it hard for government partners to pay fellows.

CfG decided to run a program that is much less cost intensive and scaleable, which they called the "OK Labs," modeled after [CfA's Brigade program](#). CfG had received funding from Google.org to pilot the Fellowship program and when they hit this government procurement wall and realized the funds they had wouldn't be enough to fund the Fellowship program, Google.org approved the shift in funds towards the Labs program. While CfG sent proposals to various companies (including Microsoft, SAP, Esri, Siemens, IBM, Cisco, Deutsche Bahn, Deutsche Post, Telekom, GitHub, Rackspace, and Xing) they weren't able to receive additional funding from these companies nor from other donors.

SOME POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THESE FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES INCLUDE THAT:

- The lack of a philanthropic culture in Germany, which is likely the case in other parts of Western Europe, makes it difficult to find independent funding for civic technology initiatives.
- International donor agencies generally don't have regional focuses in Western Europe and aren't especially interested in funding programs in Germany (likely because it is considered a wealthy country).
- Government procurement policies are especially rigid in Germany, making it very difficult for the German government to fund civic technology programs (it's unclear whether or not this is particular to Germany or a trend throughout Europe).
- Companies in Germany are not especially interested in funding civic technology programs, possibly because of the relative newness of the field in the region.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM CODE FOR GERMANY'S FUNDING EXPERIENCE

- By relying on funding from an organization like Google.org, CfG had autonomy over the OK Labs program.
- In places where governments have strict procurement policies, a Brigade-style program is a less expensive alternative.
- When funds aren't available specifically for that region from international agencies, organizing regionally can be a good workaround. For example, CfG and other groups in Europe are exploring EU funding options together. Other groups from established regions could do the same.



LESSONS LEARNED: KEEPING THE PROJECTS GOING

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

Both CftC and Mexico City fellows worked closely with their government partners throughout their respective Fellowship programs.

However, due to the differences in their program structures (especially with regards to funding and the fact that Mexico City fellows operated from within government, while CftC Fellows were external to government), these groups faced distinct challenges in sustaining their Fellowship projects. Code for Germany encountered even more challenges because the OK Labs program is so different from Fellowship programs.

HOW IMPORTANT IS FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION FROM GOVERNMENT?

OVERALL, WE FOUND THAT:

- The Fellowship program is only long enough to build a prototype, and Fellowship projects aren't ready to be used once the program ends. There is no clear "owner" of the project once the Fellowship program comes to an end. There must be a plan to sustain each project.
- Government partners are not equipped with the technical capacity to maintain many of the civic technology applications that Fellows and volunteers from the Ok Labs create. Lots of government workers have technical skills, but not those needed to continue to build or maintain these projects.
- Volunteers sometimes lose interest in maintaining certain applications or in building them beyond the proof of concept or prototype stage.
- Some technology projects don't satisfy a real, researched need of the community or instead address a need where a non-digital solution is more appropriate, so are not successful.
- Buy-in from government partners is very important for project sustainability when the problem being solved is one government is responsible for, like business permitting.
- Community groups are a great way to sustain projects as long as there are effective product management practices in place
- Projects are more likely to be sustained if they:
 - Are developed with partners who understand the problem the technology aims to address (for example, an affordable housing non-profit if the tech is aimed at housing inequity) and that those partners are bought-in from the very beginning of the technology development process
 - Solve a real problem facing the community
 - Are accompanied by capacity-building for those expected to maintain the applications (for most cases this refers to government counterparts).



CODE FOR THE CARIBBEAN

The CftC fellows worked side by side with RADA's technical staff throughout the Fellowship program to deliver two projects. RADA gained significant technical expertise from this collaboration. However, it is unclear if RADA has the capacity and resources to maintain the tools. RADA and CftC are exploring the possibility of piloting CLIP in a specific parish in Jamaica, and further integrating HarvestAPI into their operations. Piloting it would give CftC and RADA staff both the opportunity to further develop the tool, improve it based on user feedback, and would also likely increase RADA's interest in adopting and maintaining the tool in the future. The second tool, Harvest API, might be maintained separately from RADA but continue to use data from RADA.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM CODE FOR THE CARIBBEAN'S EXPERIENCE

- CftC's commitment to working closely with their government partner was key to sustaining government interest and use of the tools
- Limited resources for maintenance, mismatched government technical expertise, and the short time frame CftC had to get the tools up and running pose challenges to sustainability.
- Working outside government means that CftC can not require RADA to maintain the tool they created or to use it. This makes continued use difficult but also gives the team the independence to continue development of both platforms and engage other agencies in using the data published through the platforms.
- Having external interest in a project is one way to drive its sustainability. For example, other agricultural agencies as well as civic startups have engaged with the CftC team to build on top of the platforms they created, prompting more interest from RADA in continuing to work on the tools.



CODE FOR MEXICO CITY

Similar to CftC, when the Fellowship ended the projects that the Mexico City fellows built were prototypes. They hadn't been fully tested with users and the ability of the government departments' to maintain them on their own varied a lot. Many of the fellows are committed to maintaining their projects and some have kept working on them even though their Fellowship is over. Two of the projects were chosen by the city for additional work because of their potential. Lab staff have met with the heads of the government departments that worked with the fellows to develop these two projects. Those projects will continue to be hosted on the Lab's server and will be launched with a government media and publicity campaign. One of these projects, [Eventario](#), wasn't adopted by the government partner but has been forked and is now being used with data from the regions of Mexico City, Toluca, and Pachuca. The other Fellowship projects are at a standstill. Some of them need more data from their government partner. Others require additional development before they will be fully functioning.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM CODE FOR MEXICO CITY'S EXPERIENCE

- Additional government technical and PR support is key when a fellowship ends to make sure the applications are good enough to make a difference in the lives of everyday citizens.
- Working from within government opens up ways for a project to keep going, especially when that project is aligned with political objectives.
- Fellows continuing to work on a project once a Fellowship ends is one way for a project to keep going. In Mexico City's case, some of these former Fellows are considering converting their projects into civic startups.



CODE FOR GERMANY

The CfG team finds itself in a unique position compared to the CftC and Code for Mexico City teams. Unlike the Fellowship program, the OK Labs program does not “end” like Fellowship programs. The maturity of the projects that come out of the labs and the specific challenges they face vary greatly. The OK Labs sometime struggle with follow-through on projects because, as volunteer groups, the people who lead the Labs can’t require people to continue work on them. Labs are working closely with government partners and news outlets to keep their projects going and to maximize their impact. The Labs are also collaborating to varying degrees with their government partners; this affects how projects are sustained, adopted and used by the community. Because Labs projects are suggested by the volunteers themselves, the projects are more likely to be sustained. The main challenge is to get people to continue to work on projects and to see them through to the degree necessary for them to be fully functioning, useful for everyday people, and maintained and continuously improved.

You can learn more about specific Labs projects and their status [here](#) and [here](#).

MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM CODE FOR GERMANY’S EXPERIENCE

- Civic technology programs that rely heavily on volunteers are a great way to sustain projects, but these projects need strong product management guidance. Without it, they often die.
- Working closely with a local government or other partner with specific expertise in a problem from the very beginning helps a project continue.
- Volunteers are much more likely to sustain projects that they are personally invested in. Groups managing volunteers need to thoughtfully strike the right balance between steering volunteers towards certain objectives and preserving their freedom to work on what matters to them.



LESSONS LEARNED: IMPLEMENTING THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Through these partnerships, CfA has learned how the Fellowship program model translates to other locations. We found that there are important criteria that make it easier to implement a CfA-style Fellowship program.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS ABOUT THE CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTING THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

- A robust community in the region with technology skills (ideally young people in their late twenties or so) to make recruiting Fellows possible.
- A government agency that is particularly interested in working to find technological solutions to service delivery challenges or to foster civic engagement.
- Interest from a government partner that is able to “procure Fellows” (pay a stipend to Fellows).
- If there is no government agency with the funds or capacity to pay fellows and cover the costs associated with running a Fellowship program, the existence of other possible funding sources such as corporate social responsibility programs, foundations, etc.



LESSONS LEARNED: IMPLEMENTING THE BRIGADE PROGRAM

The experience of partnering with these three groups has provided valuable insight on whether a Brigade-style program could work in a wide range of situations. Brigades are most successful when they're community, instead of government-led, likely because volunteers are unlikely to maintain commitment when they don't have ownership over a project. They need to feel the project is their own and is giving them a voice as opposed to contributing to someone else's program without the power to work on an issue they care about in their community.

CODE FOR THE CARIBBEAN

The CftC team has not prioritized running a Brigade style program so it's difficult to comment on whether a Brigade program would work in the Caribbean. SlashRoots has successfully gathered a developer community mainly through [regional community](#) building and leadership in organizing the [Developing the Caribbean](#) conference. Many of the people in these communities use open source and are somewhat familiar with civic technology. Overall, the CftC team has been skeptical about a Brigade program being successful in the Caribbean because they have seen that in a country with low income levels there is a significant opportunity cost to volunteering one's time. Income levels and free time for volunteering appear to be inversely correlated. This likely makes volunteer programs like a CfA-style Brigade more challenging to implement in lower income countries. It is also possible that in a region such as the Caribbean, where trust in government is relatively low, people would not want to volunteer their time because it is seen as "working for free" for an institution that is not known for serving the people's needs. The SlashRoots team is still evaluating how best to convene and activate the technology community around civic issues.



CODE FOR MEXICO CITY

While the Lab who ran the Codigo CDMX program didn't organize a community-based Brigade program, a separate organization called [Codeando Mexico](#) started after the Fellowship program was underway. This group is now organizing volunteer civic technologists in cities throughout Mexico (Monterrey, Guadalajara, Mexico City and Puebla), and is contributing to reimagining how citizens engage with their government and contribute to making it work better. The experience of Codeando Mexico shows that under the right circumstances, even in a place with lower income levels, community members can be motivated to volunteer to use technology to make a difference in their communities. More work needs to be done to better understand why the Brigade program has taken off in Mexico and the implications of this for places like the Caribbean.

We also learned that a Brigade-style program run by a government did not prove successful. Mexico City attempted to bring together community members to collaborate on the Fellowship projects on a volunteer basis. These "Brigadistas" for the most part lost interest in collaborating and did not stay involved with the projects throughout the course of the Fellowship program.

CODE FOR GERMANY

We've also seen that countries with high income levels, such as Germany, appear to be ripe for Brigade-style programs. These countries usually have many people with technology skills, high education levels, and sufficient free time to volunteer.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS ABOUT THE CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTING THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

- A robust community in the region with technology skills (ideally young people in their late twenties or so) to make recruiting Fellows possible.
- A government agency that is particularly interested in working to find technological solutions to service delivery challenges or to foster civic engagement.
- Interest from a government partner that is able to "procure Fellows" (pay a stipend to Fellows).
- If there is no government agency with the funds or capacity to pay fellows and cover the costs associated with running a Fellowship program, the existence of other possible funding sources such as corporate social responsibility programs, foundations, etc.



LESSONS LEARNED: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Technology is generally a higher-income endeavor and people with limited education and resources are traditionally left behind. Also, people with technology skills are often limited to higher classes. This is especially true in lower income countries. This reality can trickle down into civic technology work. We've seen this at CfA and our international partners confronted similar challenges to building inclusive civic technology projects.

CODE FOR THE CARIBBEAN

In the Caribbean, as in most of the world, those with technology skills are disproportionately male and are more likely to be from higher economic classes with improved access to education. The CftC team made a concerted effort to recruit female fellows. This informed the recruitment process from outreach to selection. As a result, the three original CftC fellows were two men and one woman (though one of the men had to leave the program).

CODE FOR MEXICO CITY

The Codigo CDMX program engaged in a very involved recruitment process which included a digital media campaign, promotional [video](#), and a range of other initiatives. Despite persistent outreach efforts, the hacking culture in Mexico City is still mostly male and, though the program received 150 applications, very few of these applications were from female technologists. The Codigo CDMX program ended up with an all male Fellowship class.

CODE FOR GERMANY

Volunteering time appears to create a very high barrier to entry and only certain people can "afford to volunteer." Generally, people with higher economic standing are able to carve out more time for volunteering. In Germany, this has resulted in the Labs' being primarily comprised of men who are relatively well off economically.

The similar challenges that the partners face in engaging a representative group of fellows and volunteers to contribute to their programs points to some important shared challenges about diversity and inclusion for global civic technology work. Some ways to prevent these problems include supporting targeted STEM training for women and underserved groups to get them in the technology pipeline. These challenges also point to the need for civic technology organizations to engage in more targeted outreach to better involve females in programs.

LESSONS LEARNED: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



The experiences of these three partnerships showed that the international community is hungry to participate in civic technology programs. CftC and Code for Mexico City's programs both received much greater interest to participate in the Fellowship program than either group had expected. In the Caribbean, interest in contributing to civic technology continues to be evidenced by civic startups sprouting up and by sustained interest in HarvestAPI.

In Mexico City, civic hackers lined up around the block outside the Lab, with 500 people eager to participate in a government run hackathon (and a wait list to join once the event reached capacity). Enthusiastic citizens such as these are being organized through a Brigade program that is running independently of (but in close collaboration with) the Codigo CDMX Fellowship program (Codeando Mexico). Former Fellows and Codigo CDMX staff for example, are very engaged with the Codeando Mexico team.

In Germany, the CfG team has received so many requests from people who want to set up OK Labs that the work of the teams has culminated in 13 labs, 50 apps and prototypes, 200 volunteers and over 10,000 hours of civic hacking. The staff running the OK Labs has had to put a temporary cap on accepting more groups. These 3 partnerships show us that people all over the world see value in collaborating to make their government work better through technology - the greatest challenge is finding the best possible ways to harness those efforts for sustainable and effective impact.



WRAPPING UP

CfA had no idea what to expect when we embarked on these initial partnerships. All the organizations we worked with were really different and working in completely unique contexts. We're excited to see what these groups do next.

This experience made us realize how groups like ours, doing similar work in different places, can learn from each other and build off of each other's efforts. This is why we formed The [Code for All](#) network, made up of groups from all over the world working in civic technology programs to make their governments deliver better digital services and foster civic engagement. The Code for All community will continue to document our programs, share lessons learned, and create resources to support others in their efforts to use technology to improve their communities in partnership with government.

We, as Code for All, will strive to be a platform for anyone, anywhere to start a civic technology project where they live.

Click [here](#) to get involved or learn more.