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# News Release

For Immediate Release: June 11, 2018

## **Innovate Durham Seeks Entrepreneurs for 2018 Program**

*Durham City and County Are Turning Local Government into a Laboratory for Startups & Entrepreneurs;  
Applications Accepted June 15-July 23*

DURHAM, NC – Local startups and entrepreneurs looking for a way to develop and test their products and services can soon apply for the [2018 Innovate Durham program](#).

New for its second year, the Innovate Durham program is partnering with Durham County Government for entrepreneurs to use both local governments as a laboratory to develop, test, and scale innovative ideas. The program will accept [applications](#) beginning Friday, June 15 until Monday, July 23. Selected startups and entrepreneurs will begin testing their products or services with access to City and County staff, data and facilities in mid-August, followed by a 'Demo Day' to showcase the results of their work in early December.

According to Josh Edwards, director of the City's Office of Performance and Innovation, the City and County are looking for local partners that can help advance each organization's Strategic Plan. "We live in a community with a robust startup scene, and we want to tap into the innovation in our backyard to help us improve the quality and efficiency of our services and learn about new ideas and technologies that we otherwise might not know about," Edwards said. "After the success of the first year we wanted to expand the program, so we sought a partnership with Durham County to create more opportunities for startups and entrepreneurs that want to work with local government and improve their community."

During the [2017 program](#), the City partnered with four companies to tackle a wide range of issues: creating a mobile app to find, reserve, and pay for downtown parking spaces; using gamification to help train employees; improving wireless communication between two downtown City facilities; and using virtual reality to help envision a future City affordable housing development.

According to Edwards, working with the City or County will help the selected entrepreneurs in two ways: the chance to receive direct feedback on their idea from staff or residents; and the opportunity to build a valuable use case for their products or service. "Being able to do research in partnership with staff will help participants improve their products, and the exposure of being a part of Innovate Durham can help attract investors or clients," Edwards said. "In return for opening our doors to become a laboratory, we hope to learn about new technologies and ideas that could improve the delivery of services or solve problems for staff."

Participants will get that same access and mentorship in working with Durham County, according to Michael Davis, manager of the County's Strategic Initiatives Division. "We are really excited that the City of Durham wanted to work with us on Innovate Durham. This innovative partnership will allow the County to grow knowledge and skills within our departments, allowing staff to tackle problems or improve operations with the help of program participants," Davis said. "This partnership also is an exciting way for the County to support and learn from our local business and startup community."

Durham was the first city in North Carolina to start a public-private partnership program and modeled its pilot program after existing programs in in [Kansas City, Mo.](#), [Pittsburgh, Pa.](#), and [San Francisco, Calif.](#)

To apply for the Innovate Durham Program, interested organizations must complete an [application form](#). Applicants will be evaluated on a variety of criteria, and a select number will be invited to partner with the City and County in this 12-week program. For more information or to submit an online application, visit the [City's website](#) or contact Edwards at (919) 560-4111, ext. 20102 or by email at [Josh.Edwards@DurhamNC.gov](mailto:Josh.Edwards@DurhamNC.gov).

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