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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CHICAGO ONE OF EIGHT CITIES TO WIN CODE FOR AMERICA INNOVATION FELLOWSHIP

Team of innovators to live in Chicago, develop "Open311" service request system as Mayor Emanuel continues commitment to improving service delivery, efficiency and innovative solutions

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced that Code for America has selected the City of Chicago as one of only eight cities to be a part of its 2012 national fellowship program due to Chicago's demonstration of cutting-edge thinking and its willingness to invest in long-term change through the development of new web-based technology. The City of Chicago's application for the fellowship will implement innovative solutions, including "Open311," that will ensure the City is more efficient, open and responsive.

"The City of Chicago is breaking ground every day, increasing efficiency and delivering services in innovative ways," said Mayor Emanuel. "As I said during my campaign, 'Open311' is long overdue and something we should pursue. Through this important project, Code for America will help modernize the way service requests are received, executed and tracked, and better serve Chicagoans."

Across the country, governments have been adopting a common standard for 311 reporting known as "Open311," which means that applications built on 311 data anywhere can be used everywhere. The City of Chicago has requested that the Code for America fellows deploy this "Open311" standard in Chicago, which would open up access to dozens of web and mobile applications that would essentially revolutionize the way Chicagoans make service requests to the city. Through "Open311," Chicagoans would be able to easily track the status of their requests, and city officials will be allowed to monitor these requests more efficiently and respond more quickly.

The City Council today approved $300,000 in grant funding from the non-profit Chicago Community Trust's "Smart Chicago Collaborative" to pay for the associated program fee and costs associated with the Code for America fellowship program that will develop an open online interface for the City of Chicago's 311 system in early 2012. The Code for America Fellowship program requires a $150,000 participation fee and up to additional $150,000 in program costs associated with the fellows who will live in Chicago for one month in February 2012.

Since taking office in May 2011, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has made significant reforms and investments in information technology and data transparency. Emanuel's Chief Technology Officer John Tolva and his team have been tasked with leveraging technology to ensure that the City delivers better services at a lower cost to taxpayers.

"One promising aspect of the program is to join the best thinking from the web industry with the best thinking from cities," said Jennifer Pahlka, founder and executive director of Code for America. As part of the program, Code for America will be conducting brainstorming sessions with each city, when web industry innovators and thought leaders are invited to meet with key stakeholders inside city government to further develop and solidify the conceptual projects they've proposed. Once the partnership and problem are clearly defined, three tech-savvy individuals (fellows) recruited by Code for America will begin to develop a light-weight creative solution that solves the problem. The solution built for Chicago will be available to other cities facing similar challenges.

Code for America, a non-profit loosely based on Teach for America, recruits the top talent from the technology industry to give a year of service to build innovative web applications for city governments. Through a competitive process, Code for America chooses cities whose proposals reflected a deep understanding of the power that technology can bring to cities. The 2012 Fellows will build on the success of Code for America's inaugural projects in Boston, Philadelphia, and Seattle. For the 2012 program, over 20 governments applied, and eight finalists were selected.

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