



News Media Contacts

Amy Blalock, Public Affairs Manager, City of Durham
919.560.4123 x11253 | 919.475.7735 (mobile)
Amy.Blalock@DurhamNC.gov

Dawn Dudley, Sr. Public Information Specialist, Durham County
919.560.0008
ddudley@dconc.gov

News Release

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Innovate Durham Seeks Entrepreneurs for 2019 Program

*Durham City and County Are Turning Local Government into a Laboratory for Startups & Entrepreneurs;
Applications Accepted Until July 22*

DURHAM, NC – Local startups and entrepreneurs looking for a way to develop and test their products and services can now apply for the [2019 Innovate Durham program](#).

In its third year, the Innovate Durham program is partnering again 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](#) from now until Monday, July 22. 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 Ben Kittelson, senior budget & management analyst with the City's Budget and Management Services Department, the City and County are looking to build on the successes of the first two years. "This program has been mutually beneficial for City staff and the startups that participate," Kittelson said. "The startups get access to local government in a way that just would not be possible otherwise, and we get to work with companies doing some truly amazing things. Just last year, we got to test out an internet of things device in a dumpster and use design data to improve the safety of streets."

During the [2018 program](#), the City and County partnered with seven companies to tackle a wide range of issues, such as a software platform that connects residents to HIV resources and services; using artificial intelligence to check the health of security systems; implementing augmented reality to display information about development projects; and using technology to make waste pick-up more efficient.

According to Kittelson, working with the City or County helps selected entrepreneurs by allowing them to get direct feedback on their idea from staff and a valuable use case for their product. "We want this to be a testing ground and a place to do research in partnership with the experts in our departments," Kittelson said. "Our staff can provide insight and feedback that companies cannot get anywhere else, and in return we get to learn about new technologies and push ourselves to think about delivering services in new and better ways."

Participants will get that same access and mentorship in working with Durham County, according to Eric Marsh, strategic initiatives analyst in the County Manager's Office. "These public-private partnerships expose Durham County to new tools and ways of thinking," Marsh said. "As we continue to embrace innovation and organizational change, these connections and approaches are hugely meaningful to how we learn and grow as a local government. We hope this program allows our startups and entrepreneurs to learn in safe, supportive spaces within County operations."

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.](#)

An application form must be completed to apply for the [2019 Innovate Durham program](#). 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 Kittelson at (919) 560-4111, ext. 20289 or by email at Ben.Kittelson@DurhamNC.gov, or Marsh at (919) 560-0018 or by email at emarsh@dconc.gov.

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