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# News Release

For Immediate Release: January 14, 2021

## **Innovate Durham Seeks Entrepreneurs for 2021 Program**

*Local Government to Become a Laboratory for Startups & Entrepreneurs;  
Applications Accepted January 14 — February 15*

DURHAM, N.C. – Local startups and entrepreneurs looking for a way to develop and test their products and services may now apply for the [2021 Innovate Durham program](#).

Innovate Durham, a partnership between the City and County of Durham that allows entrepreneurs to use local government as a laboratory to test products and ideas, is now taking [applications](#) for its fourth cohort from Thursday, January 14 through Monday, February 15.

An informational webinar will be held on Thursday, February 4 from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and will include time for questions about this year's iteration of the program. Interested parties can register for the webinar now on the [Innovate Durham webpage](#).

This year, the program will be conducted virtually in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Selected startups and entrepreneurs will begin testing their products or services with access to City and County staff, data and facilities in May, followed by a 'Demo Day' to showcase the results of their work in late September.

According to Monica Croskey Chaparro, director of the City's Office of Performance and Innovation, the City and County are looking for local partners to help advance each organization's priorities. "Innovate Durham has been instrumental in advancing our City's vision," Chaparro said. "We're excited to have Innovate Durham return in a modified, virtual offering because if 2020 taught us anything, it's that we must be able to adapt to effectively manage, and even excel, through disruption. The mutually beneficial tools that startups and local governments share through Innovate Durham cultivate the process of discovery, engineering and transformation necessary for innovation to continue in our community."

During the [2019 program](#), six Durham-based companies worked closely with the City, County, and Durham Public Schools in order to bring new innovative solutions to local government. Some of these solutions included an air conditioning and refrigeration monitoring system; a calendaring app to improve school event scheduling; technology to assess existing recycling infrastructure; a real-time needs registry for crisis response; technology to automate complex business processes; and critical reasoning assessments for prospective employees.

According to Chaparro, working with the City or County can help the selected entrepreneurs by providing them with direct feedback on their idea from staff or residents while also serving as a valuable use case for their products or service. "In return for partnering with the start-ups, our organizations hope to learn about new technologies and ideas that could improve the delivery of services or solve problems for our staffs," Chaparro said.

Participants will have the same access and opportunities in working with Durham County, said Michael Davis, strategic initiative manager for Durham County. "As we continue to pursue new ideas and encourage organizational learning, Innovate Durham has been an exciting way for our departments to partner with companies," said Davis.

“We’re thrilled that our local governments can collaborate again with entrepreneurs, allowing us to be learning labs across sectors.”

To apply for the Innovate Durham Program, an application form must be completed. 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 16-week program.

For more information or to submit an online application, visit the [Innovate Durham webpage](#) or contact Strategy and Performance Analyst Darin Johnson with the City’s Budget and Management Services Department at [darin.johnson@durhamnc.gov](mailto:darin.johnson@durhamnc.gov), or ICMA Fellow Nathalie Floyd for the City and County of Durham at [nfloyd@dconc.gov](mailto:nfloyd@dconc.gov).

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