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Cc:
Subject: [Test] What do Code for America and Code for Asheville stand for?

News, updates, and announcements from Code for Asheville

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What Do Code for America & Code for Asheville Stand For?

Last week Jen Pahlka, founder and Executive Director of Code for America, attended the American Technology Council meeting at the White House. Knowing that many would disagree with that decision, she wrote a Washington Post op-ed and a Medium post explaining why.

She argued that "the principles and values of the movement for 21st century government MUST be in that room," that those same principles and values made it imperative that she attend, in spite of deep concerns over the current administration's disregard for American values and the rule of law.

In addition to the posts, Code for America hosted an open forum Thursday "to discuss the values that drove this decision and how folks feel about them as a framework for future decisions". In preparation for that, they shared a draft document on the vision, mission, values and operating principles of Code for America and the Code for America brigades.

We'll have a chance to have a conversation with Jen herself in a few weeks, so it seemed appropriate to share that document as part of our rethinking of who we are and where we're going. Here are the key operating principles for both the national organization and the brigades:

Code for America Mission & Operating Principles

Code for America uses the principles and practices of the digital age to improve how government serves the American public, and how the public improves government.

1. **To inspire change**
   To inspire public servants, people from the tech sector, and community organizers to create change by demonstrating that government services can be simple, beautiful, and easy to use.
2. **To make change real**
   Providing government with access to the resources and digital talent they need so that together we can meaningfully impact some of the worldâ€™s toughest societal challenges.
3. **To make change stick**
   Connecting and convening people from inside and outside government, and from all over the world to inspire each other, share successes, learn, build, and shape a new culture of public service for the 21st century.

   To do it all at scale, serving those who need it most

These are the ideas that guide the decisions we make:

- **Solve real problems**
  We solve problems that real people have, we make sure what we build works for them, and we continuously improve it. We solve real problems instead of creating elegant code and robust systems to solve imagined ones.
- **Work with, not for the people we serve**
  We respect our users by actively including them in the process of design and delivery. We respect and support public servants, and when we are critical of government outcomes, we blame the system, not the people.
- **Start and end with the user**
  Start by understanding the needs of the people government serves. Work with real people to understand who they are, what they need, and how they behave throughout the process.
- **Move fast, iterate quickly**
  Get a working minimum viable product (MVP) in front of users as early as possible and make continuous improvements based on how they use the service.
- **Make it better with data**
  Inform iterations with data about user behavior. Evaluate programs based on data about outcomes.

Brigade Principles

Brigades work with local government and citizens to bring positive change to their local communities. The National Advisory Council for the brigade network has added the following rally cry and operating principles reflecting the unique values of the local brigades.

Rally Cry: We're a national network of community organizers & technologists who are putting technology to work for the benefit of our local communities.

- **Change Starts Locally**
  Change starts in our neighborhoods, our city halls, and our community centers. It is at the local level that we can most directly impact people's lives.
- **The People = All People**
  We create inclusive communities where each and every person can participate, not just those with access to power and resources.
- **We Learn From One Another**

We work in the open, we invite participation and feedback, and we share what we are learning with the rest of the network along the way.

There is more to explore in the document and you may suggest additions or changes yourself there. We also expect that there will be another open forum opportunity. If you are interested, we'll announce in the Slack channel as soon as we hear, or email us at code4asheville@gmail.com and we'll get the information to you.

And, if you have any questions for Jen, bring them to the event on July 13!

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Have a story to share? Email us at code4asheville@gmail.com.

Upcoming events

Monthly Community Meetup
Jen Pahlka, the founder and executive director of Code for America, will be joining us for our July 13 Community Night! In addition to her role at Code for America, Jen recently served as the U.S. Deputy Chief Technology Officer in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, where she architected and helped found the United States Digital Service.

Jen is visiting us to talk with **you**. She told us she would love to "hear about any projects, and [would] love to talk to people in Code for Asheville about what motivates them and what we should be doing to help all volunteers."

The event will be held at 5:30pm on July 13th at the Burton Street Community Center. Please RSVP for this one so we can make sure we have enough space and pizza for everyone.

Community nights occur on the second Thursday of each month. The location rotates around the different Asheville community centers.

Reentry Project Work Session
We and Code for Greensboro are planning a session to work on the new reentry resources hub project on Saturday, July 22. We'll work locally but stay connected with the CfG folks through Google Hangouts. Tentative time is 11am-3pm - follow the event on meetup for final times and details.

Monthly Planning Meetup
Our next brigade planning meeting is on Tuesday, July 25, at 5:30pm at the Battery Park Book Exchange. RSVP here. These planning meetings take place on the second Tuesday after each community night.

Help CfA Rethink How We Work

Code for Asheville has operated under a captain-centric model since our founding in 2012. It is time to rethink that and to create a more inclusive, collaborative leadership structure.

We are gathering a small team to help lead this effort and we would like you to be a part of it. Our job will not be to decide on the leadership structure, but to facilitate a process that engages all the members of our community in creating a better model.

If you are interested in participating, please sign up here.

Help Us Reimagine Code for Asheville's Leadership

News from the network

Women In Tech: Where the Meaningful Work Is
Christen McNamara, who maintains the City of Asheville's open data portal, recently visited Southwestern Community College in Sylva, NC to meet high school and community/technical college professors interested in how to talk about women in tech with young women about their future careers. Check out Christen's blog post on the experience.

Report from the National Advisory Council
The National Advisory Council (NAC) was formed late last year to represent the Code for America brigades and to be a focal point for building resources that can be shared across the network. The NAC met face-to-face in Baltimore last month and shared highlights from the meeting in this post. You can find more detail on the forming and purpose of the NC here.

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