



Best Practice: NYC BigApps Competition

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CITY: NEW YORK CITY

POLICY AREAS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BEST PRACTICE

The **NYC BigApps Program** (NYC Economic Development Corporation) and competition is a suite of programs that challenges developers to create valuable web and mobile applications for New York City residents using open data from New York City government and public sector agencies.

ISSUE

The BigApps program addresses two key challenges: 1) How can data from city government agencies be made available and useful to the general public? 2) How can city government continue to encourage and support the creation of great technologies and companies in New York City?

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the program are fourfold: 1) To make open and available New York City's government data 2) To create great and useful apps for New York City residents 3) To encourage and create entrepreneurs and tech companies in New York City and 4) To highlight the city's growing Technology Ecosystem.

IMPLEMENTATION

Launched in 2009, Mayor Michael Bloomberg introduced the NYC BigApps Competition as one of five technology initiatives to improve transparency, accessibility, and accountability across City government.

The NYC BigApps program is overseen by the New York City Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with DoITT (NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications) as the Open Data Partner. ChallengePost is the consultant administering the competition platform and competition itself, and BMW iVentures is a sponsoring partner. Over 140 apps have been created and as of the launch of BigApps 3.0, over 750 datasets have been made available to the general public.

Through the program, software developers will compete for \$20,000 in cash, wide exposure for their work, and a meeting with the Mayor. Submissions may be any kind of software application, be it for the web, a personal computer, a mobile handheld device, SMS, or any software platform broadly available to the public

NYC BigApps is open for cash prizes to U.S. residents ages 16 and over and legally-registered organizations (with fewer than 50 employees) domiciled in the U.S. Organizations employing fifty or more employees are eligible for the Large Organization Recognition award, which has no cash prize. High school, college, or graduate school students may compete for the Student Award. All entrants will retain all intellectual property ownership in their submissions and must comply with the official rules of the competition.

COST

The first year investment was around \$80,000. As the program grows and adds value, with the help of BMW iVentures, the ongoing cost of the competition itself is valued around \$130,000. Additional programs such as hackathons, Ideas Challenge, Founders Network and other events are estimated to be an additional \$70,000 per year.



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RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The competition has so far resulted in over 140 applications being created with over 15,000 people voting in the competition. Many companies have been formed and one company, MyCityWay, has received venture capital funding through the NYC Entrepreneurial Fund and BMW iVentures. The amount of available data has gone from only 100+ in the first year to nearly 800 datasets in the second year.

TIMELINE

Each year, the planning process starts in the summer, where the Data is collected for the OpenData platform. The data is collected until launch day, which happens in early October and is announced at NY Tech Meetup. Then over the course of the competition, some hackathons are created to encourage app creation. The competition ends at the end of January and the awards ceremony is at the end of March. Each year, the cycle repeats, with the individual support programs happening throughout the year.

LEGISLATION

A Local Law was created for Open Data requiring all New York City agencies to comply with releasing data to the OpenData repository.

LESSONS LEARNED

Annual data mine updates require significant coordination between multiple agencies, requiring extensive outreach to get data to the Open Data platform.

TRANSFERABILITY

Every city can learn from the BigApps experience – as long as government agencies provide data, a competition can be held.

CONTACTS

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