

Startup-in-Residence Grows to 31 Agencies, Welcomes Its First State

Zack Quaintance | August 22, 2018



The Startup in Residence Program (STiR) has expanded to 31 participating government agencies for its 2019 cohort, organizers announced Wednesday morning.

While the increased number of participants is the clearest sign of STiR's expansion, the program is growing in other ways this year, too. To date, participating governments have included cities, counties and regional transportation authorities. This year's group welcomes its first state, Pennsylvania.

Jay Nath, STiR founder and the co-executive director of its organizing body City Innovate, said the program is hopeful that it will eventually extend to more states and potentially beyond. "We're excited about that and we hope to bring in more states," Nath said, "and as we look forward, we don't see any reason that it won't include federal agencies as well."

STiR started back in 2014 as an initiative located in San Francisco. Over the years, it expanded regionally within California, before launching its first national cohort in 2018. The program features a simple solution for a complex problem: it embeds startup companies within local government, where they spend time collaborating on technology

solutions to overcome obstacles, thereby solving the complex problem of how can government do a better job while benefiting from expertise in the private sector. The entrepreneurs, meanwhile, get a pathway into government, which remains a somewhat untapped tech market.

The other changes that the program stands to undergo this year are quite nuanced. For example, STiR for the first time will have specialized tracks, the first of which is mobility. This will give transit agencies that are part of STiR's network — as well as governments that are interested in transportation — the chance to collaborate.

“They’ll be able to share what’s really working and what some of their challenges are, and how they’re dealing with things like micro-transit, etc.,” Nath said. “So, it’s not just sort of a technology-based conversation, but really a peer-to-peer community practice where individuals can very candidly and openly share those challenges and opportunities with their peers.”

STiR's aim is to give agencies and jurisdictions that can benefit from each other's knowledge a chance to do so in a more concentrated setting than places like industry conferences.

Another area where the program could have an impact is procurement, which is regularly cited as one of the primary barriers between governments and the startups that have ideas and expertise. Nath said STiR is always exploring “how do we continue making procurement easier and better.”

In addition, the program is taking steps to improve its ability to facilitate ideal connections, educating its participants on the differences between working with an early stage startup — which is less likely to have a readied product but more likely to be eager and agile — and working with an established company that already has a healthy number of customers — which is less likely to be eager and accommodating but more able to guarantee its work will come to fruition.

Many of the changes and improvements to STiR this year are of the incremental variety, Nath said, while organizers continued to explore new ideas like facilitating startups that can take on one problem that might be shared by two separate jurisdictions.

The program is also working with its first international partner, Edmonton, Canada, with ongoing discussions about adding more.

Nath also emphasized that STiR continues to present a fantastic opportunity for startup companies, noting that he anticipates somewhere between 50 and 75 RFPs for gov tech work will go live through the program in late September, and that interested companies would be well-advised to register via STiR's website and start preparing now.

Click here for more information about [applying to the program](#) or here for a full list of [current 2019 STiR cities](#).