

2021 City of Design Challenge

A Multidisciplinary Design Challenge Focused on Community Tech Hubs in Detroit

Published March 15, 2021

Call Opens April 1, 2021

CALL FOR TEAMS

[APPLY HERE BY MIDNIGHT MAY 16, 2021 \(Link will appear on April 1\)](#)

ABOUT

In partnership with Detroit's Office of Digital Inclusion, Design Core's City of Design Challenge invites participants to develop **community tech hubs** to improve access and opportunity in Detroit neighborhoods.

The digital divide prevents many Detroiters from participating in an increasingly digital world, and the situation has only gotten worse as COVID-19 has forced schools, libraries, and many other city services online.

This challenge invites teams to develop concepts to **deliver public services in a more flexible, innovative, and resident-centered way**. Successful concepts will focus on improving the experiences of residents and offer greater access to public services in community spaces.

GOALS

This challenge aims to support the development of community tech hubs that:

- Increase access to services for community members in Detroit, Highland Park, or Hamtramck
- Are grounded in an inclusive design process that puts community members at the center
- Demonstrate quality design and innovation through the development of functional accessible, and sustainable concepts that improve digital access and quality of life in neighborhoods

Teams are encouraged to:

- Employ a wide array of strategies and solutions that address digital access and civic engagement in a way that is authentic to the local community

- Focus on access TO technology, and/or access THROUGH technology, using it to accomplish a broader goal. Examples: teaching youth how to produce media, helping residents to get more involved in their communities, or supporting community literacy.
- Build on an existing space or concept
- Utilize sustainable materials or incorporate blue/green or other environmental infrastructure

BACKGROUND

As the first and only UNESCO City of Design in the United States, Detroit is proud of its rich and diverse design legacy and eager to highlight inclusive design as a powerful tool for creating equitable communities in Detroit and beyond. Inclusive design centers itself around people who are often left out of the design process in order to create places, products, and services that allow more people to fully participate in society.

A partnership between Design Core and College for Creative Studies, the City of Design Challenge is a program that invites designers, residents, policymakers and others to collaborate around ideas that make life better for more people in Detroit and cities everywhere.

PROCESS

All eligible teams are invited to submit a proposal outlining who they are, a high-level concept of their vision for a community tech hub, and what they hope to gain through participation in the challenge.

The jury will then review the proposals and may ask applicants additional questions via email. At the conclusion of this stage, the jury will vote to recommend up to six teams to participate in the challenge.

Selected participants will develop their concepts over the summer with resources and community input before debuting virtual models during Digital Inclusion Week in October 2021. A smaller group of participants will receive additional funds to test their concept and document the process, showcasing results the following year during Detroit Month of Design and the Cumulus Conference in Fall 2022.

INCLUSIVE DESIGN TRAINING

- 7-session cohort-based program delivered over 11 weeks (JUN-AUG), open to selected teams and community jurors with portions open to the public.

- Blended learning format with facilitated live, virtual 90-minute sessions with guest speakers, panel discussions, individual and group work.
- Participation required for two primary team members and voluntary for others.
- Covers cultural competence, social justice, systemic oppression, and power asymmetries as they intersect with the design process so that designers and other participants can contribute their creative skills to address the complex social challenges of the 21st Century.

TIMELINE

MAR 15	Brief shared
APR 1	Applications open
APR 21	Due date to submit questions to organizers
MAY 1	Answers posted
MAY 16	Applications reviewed
JUN 1	Teams notified
JUN-AUG	Training experience
AUG-SEP	Concept refinement
OCT	Concepts shared with public, jurors
NOV	Teams notified of additional funding

ELIGIBILITY

This challenge is open to teams of any size. The application must identify two primary applicants and at least one applicant must satisfy the eligibility requirements at the time of submission:

- **Age Requirements:** Must be at least 25 years old
- **Experience:** Three years relevant experience related to the Challenge theme (design, community engagement, city-building, information services, community technology, creative technology, civic technology, neighborhood/community development, etc.)
- **Financial:** Eligible to receive taxable income in the U.S.
- **Commitment:** Must be able to commit to working on the Challenge project idea from June - September 2021. Two primary team members must be able to fully commit to participating in the inclusive design training program components.
- **Idea:** Projects must be an original idea of the applicant. Work in progress ideas are eligible. Projects must manifest in some physical form, even if the solution is only partially physical or deployed across multiple sites.
- **Language:** This program will be delivered in English for the 2021 edition and primary team members must be able to participate in the Training.
- **Geography:** Projects must address one or more neighborhoods in Detroit, Hamtramck, and/or Highland Park. Exclusively national/international teams are not

eligible, although teams may include, as additional, members based outside of metro Detroit.

ACCESSIBILITY

- Majority of program to be delivered virtually with closed captioning, transcription, and recording of sessions available for all team members
- In the event in-person events are possible, accessibility will be considered and communicated to participants in advance
- Sessions have been designed with consideration for screen time fatigue
- Additional accommodations for people who are Blind/Low Vision, Deaf/Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind including additional support for ASL interpretation and screen readers are available as needed and will be assessed through the application
- As access to technology is critical to participation, the application will also ask about needs regarding equipment such as computers or wifi access in order to ensure participation is accessible

JURY

The jury is comprised of the following individuals:

Seven community jurors who will participate in the review process and the summer challenge:

- A nonprofit manager at a neighborhood based education institution
- An artist, educator, and arts organizer who recently graduated from college
- A musician, music residency manager, and neighborhood organizer
- A librarian specializing in technology and librarian instruction
- An architect and educator active in design and community development
- A social worker who specializes in aging and disability
- A designer and content producer with a background in engineering and business

And three at-large jurors will participate in the review process:

- A government official committed to digital inclusion
- An educator who specializes in systems design
- A librarian, coder, and community leader from Cossitt Library in Memphis, TN

CRITERIA

- Project demonstrates a **transformative impact** in its approach to the Challenge theme and commitment to engaging residents, understanding of neighborhood and stakeholder priorities, and desire for social benefit. (35%)

- Project has a high potential for **visibility** and raises awareness about the benefits of inclusive design (30%).
- **Feasibility** of project (25%).
- Applicant(s) demonstrate commitment to **developing/deepening their knowledge** and use of inclusive design practices (10%).

Selections will be made based on a percentage weighting of criteria and scored to get to a short-list for review, discussion and final ranking/scoring. Jurors will be obligated to abstain from reviewing submissions from teams or projects where a personal or professional relationship would create a conflict of interest.

COMPENSATION

Challenge applicants: There is no compensation for submitting a proposal.

Challenge participants: Up to five semi-finalist teams will each receive a \$3,000 stipend and participate in our summer program, including the inclusive design training program and a variety of other learning opportunities, resources, and support. The teams will present their final concepts during Digital Inclusion Week in October 2021 and compete for additional grants to test their concept.

Grant recipients: Up to three winning teams will each receive up to \$30,000 to test their concept and document their inclusive design process over the next year. Final concepts will be presented during Detroit Month of Design and the 2022 Cumulus Conference.

HOW TO APPLY

This brief will be updated with a live link on April 1 through midnight, May 16, 2021.

DEADLINE

May 16, 2021 (midnight)

QUESTIONS

For questions contact competitions@designcore.org by April 21, 2021. All questions submitted by will have answers posted publicly by May 1, 2021.