

## Second Civic Innovation Challenge: Overview

The Civic Innovation Challenge brings together startups, public agencies and community partners to design and test practical solutions to real civic needs. After a successful first round, we're expanding the program in Round 2 with additional partners.

The Exchange Northwest anticipates awarding 4-6 recipients in the second event. The Challenge is open to individuals, teams, start-ups and businesses. Participants must be at least 18 years of age and authorized to sign a contract on behalf of themselves or their company.

A key benefit for participants is the opportunity to co-design solutions directly with a government or education partner.

The City of Bellevue, King County Information Technology (KCIT), Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech), and Bellevue College value this opportunity to support early-stage civic startups and innovation ideas. Civic design partner staff gain insight from collaborating with companies and people pushing the envelope of innovation and helping to shape future civic products.

### Pilot Project Summary

The Civic Innovation Challenge pilot projects bring together small groups of civic design partners and participants to validate a solution in real workflows, gather feedback and determine readiness through a timebound Proof-of-Concept phase. Civic design partners and participants can expect light weekly engagement, open communication and meaningful influence on the final product.

### Participant Benefits

1. Coaching and mentoring from seasoned entrepreneurs, advisors and investors.
2. Civic design partnership with City of Bellevue, KCIT, WaTech, and/or Bellevue College staff to help test, optimize and/or refine a product or service.
3. Opportunity to showcase solutions for a civic tech audience and build relationships across the innovation ecosystem.
4. Between \$15,000 and \$45,000 stipend. Stipends will depend on the complexity of the solution, whether they are applicable to more than one government or education partner and maturity of the product. Most solutions will likely receive a stipend at the lower end of the scale from a participating design partner public agency.

### Timeline

- Challenge opens on October 14, 2026
- Office hours and Q&A sessions for general questions:
  - Option 1 (In-Person): Bellevue City Hall October 14, 2026, 7:30 pm – 8:00 pm PDT following The Exchange Northwest Forum
  - Option 2 (In-Person): Tukwila Community Center October 26, 2026, 6:00 - 8:00 PM
  - Option 3 (Virtual): [sign up for a virtual 10-minute timeslot on November 4, 2026, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm PDT](#)

- Proposal Submission Deadline: November 13, 2026, 5:00 pm PDT
- Initial Submission Review between November 13 and December 10, 2026
- Finalist Interviews and agreements developed between Exchange Northwest participating design partner public agencies and selected teams December 10, 2026 through January 18, 2027
- Selected participants announced and program start date: January 19, 2027
- Program Completion: July 3, 2027
- Final Debrief Meetings between July 5 and August 4, 2027

## Proposed 2026–2027 Cycle

| Challenge Launch                     | Selection & Contracting                            | Pilot Deployment                            | Closeout & Showcase                              |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| October 2026                         | November-December 2026                             | January-May 2027                            | June-July 2027                                   |
| Submission Open                      | Participant scoring and finalist selection         | Milestone 1: Install + onboarding           | Debrief sessions and participant survey          |
| Office hours and Q&A sessions        | Negotiations, SOW creation, and contract execution | Milestone 2: Testing + feedback loops       | Publish 1-pager summary + annual findings report |
| Design partner review of feasibility | Pre-kickoff orientation with design partners       | Milestone 3: Impact measurement + reporting | Showcase at 2027 Innovation Exchange             |