

**TECH FOR  
SOCIAL  
JUSTICE  
KICKOFF  
MEETING**

**MARCH 25-26, 2017 @ THOUGHTWORKS NYC**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Convening Goals	4
Day 1 Schedule	5
Day 2 Schedule	7
Partner Organizations	9
Attendee Bios	13
Research Phase 1 Summary	21
Research Phase 1 Interview Questions	30
Research Phase 1 Demographics	32
Map of Area	36
Blank pages for notes and sketches	38

# CONVENING GOALS

- ✔ Build solidarity, relationships, shared project values and vision
- ✔ Refine and Confirm Research Goals, Focus (define 'the field', participation, users/audiences, outputs), Outcomes and Methods
- ✔ Develop project data privacy and retention agreements and policy
- ✔ Develop project implementation plan (including what needs to be done, timeline, and commits)
- ✔ Define project advisory roles and nominate potential project advisory board members

# DAY 1 SCHEDULE

9:30–10 **Coffee + Sign in**

10–10:30 **Welcome!**

1. Welcome!
2. Names/Orgs/Location you are coming from
3. Announcements about space, logistics, etc.
4. Community Agreements
5. Review Agenda for the weekend
6. Project to date introduction, Q & A

10:30–11:30 **Introductions & Mapping**

Using prompts and artwork we create, explore our individual journeys or paths that lead each of us to our own work; to this moment, and even to this space. why this project is useful/meaningful to each of us (and our work). Share back with each other.

11:30–12 **Points of Unity**

We are a diverse group of folks who work in different ways with different communities. What values and principles unite us in this project overall and the research specifically.

12 **Lunch**

Lunch provided

12:45–2:15 **Research Design I: Data Gallery**

**Research Agenda:** What were our primary research goals and overarching research questions for the preliminary research?

**Data Gallery:** Reflections on what we've heard so far

2:15 **Energizer Break**

2:30–3:30 **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**

**The Field:** When we say 'the field' of T4SJ, what do we mean? We narrow our focus.

**SWOT:** What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats do we anticipate (internally and externally) that might impact the viability of the project (and its aims)

3:30–4 **Closing**

Evaluate the day, Announcements & Close out  
Group photo

4:30–7:30 **Break & Dinner**

Dinner on your own

7:30–10 **Karaoke!**

Karaoke Duet 35

53 W. 35th St.

New York, NY 10001

(See map on page 36)

# DAY 2 SCHEDULE

9:30–10 **Coffee + Snacks**

10–10:15 **Welcome Back!**

10:15–11:30 **Research Design 2**

**Research Agenda.** Refine our primary research goals and overarching research questions (building on discussions of data initial goals, preliminary research)?

**The Field.** When we say ‘the field’ of T4SJ, what do we mean? We narrow our focus.

**Participation.** Whose stories are we trying to tell? Who was missing? Who do we want to reach?

**Practitioner stories.** What do we want to know? What themes emerged from the preliminary research that we need/want to examine more deeply?

**User Stories.** Who are the primary audiences/users for our research? What outputs will be most useful/needed? What actions will they be able/want to take?

11:30–12 **Research Methods**

Given the scope of our research, what data methodologies are the most appropriate and feasible?

12 **Lunch**

Lunch provided. Keeping it short, so we can end early!

12:30–1:15 **Data Retention, Privacy & Security**

Identify potential harms for participants and harm reduction practices. Develop data retention, privacy and security agreements and policies

1:15–2 **Workplanning**

**Research implementation plan.** develop specific workplan including timeline, activities (tool development, outreach, etc.) commitments, next steps

**Comms.** Identify coordination & comms plan and tools

2 **Energizer Break**

2:15–3 **Advisory Board**

Clarify the rationale for and role(s) of advisory board. Identify sectors, areas of experience/knowledge, positioning to prioritize. Brainstorm nominations (who, sector/experience).

3–3:30 **Closing**

Evaluate the day, Recap next steps, Close out

# PARTNER ORGS



## **Allied Media Projects**

<https://www.alliedmedia.org>

Allied Media Projects cultivates media strategies for a more just, creative and collaborative world. We serve a network of media makers, artists, educators, and technologists working for social justice. Our definition of media includes all forms of communication, from videos and websites to theater, dance, design, and interactive technology. Through the Allied Media Conference and the Sponsored Projects program, AMP shares and supports models for using media for transformative social change.



## **Coworker.org**

<https://coworker.org>

Coworker.org allows you to start, run, and win campaigns to change your workplace. Have an idea for improving your workplace? Start by creating a Coworker.org petition and talking to your coworkers about your campaign. Every day, people are launching and joining campaigns around issues large and small -- from improving an office breakroom to providing paid sick leave to employees. Anything is possible

when coworkers join together.

## THE ENGINE ROOM

### **The Engine Room**

<https://www.theengineroom.org/>

The Engine Room helps activists, organisations, and other social change agents make the most of data and technology to increase their impact. We are a non-profit organisation ourselves, and our international team is made up of experienced and committed practitioners. Since 2011, we have supported more than 200 organisations, big and small, from every corner of the globe. Technology and data have the potential to dramatically accelerate the impact of any group or organisation that promotes equality, justice, human rights, good governance and accountability.

## hack the hood

### **Hack the Hood**

[www.hackthehood.org/](http://www.hackthehood.org/)

Hack the Hood is an award-winning non-profit that introduces low-income youth of color to careers in tech by hiring and training them to build websites for real small businesses in their own communities. During 6-week "Bootcamps," young people gain valuable hands-on experience, build a portfolio, and learn about opportunities in the tech industry, as well as building critical technical, leadership, entrepreneurship, and life skills with mentorship from staff and tech professionals working in the field.



## **May First/People Link**

<https://mayfirst.org>

May First/People Link engages in building movements by advancing the strategic use and collective control of technology for local struggles, global transformation, and emancipation without borders. Flowing from that mission, our organization redefines the concept of “Internet Service Provider” in a collective and collaborative way. Like any democratic membership organization, we gather together each year to evaluate the past year’s experiences, plan the coming year’s work and elect a Leadership Committee to apply what we’ve decided. Like a coop, we pay dues, buy equipment and then we all use that equipment as we need to for websites, email, email lists, and just about everything else we do on the Internet. As a movement organization, we participate in (and often lead) campaigns, struggles, coalitions and network of left, progressive and social justice organizations in the U.S., Mexico and Internationally.



## **Media Mobilizing Project**

<https://mediamobilizing.org>

The Media Mobilizing Project builds leaders – leaders who use their stories to make our organizing stronger; and who build the movement for human rights and to end poverty. Since its founding in 2005, MMP has used strategic media, arts and communications to intervene in critical human rights struggles from public education to healthcare, media reform and public services. MMP does this through working with low-wage workers, youth, immigrants and other communities on media collaborations, narrative development, training and education in

audio/video production, digital literacy and human rights.



## **Palante**

<https://palantetech.coop>

Palante Technology Cooperative works to help progressive nonprofit organizations move forward with the aid of technology. We come to this work with technical expertise, a deep understanding of the particular needs of community organizations, and a long-standing commitment to working for social justice.



## **Upturn**

<https://www.teamupturn.com>

Upturn works to give people a meaningful voice in how digital technology shapes their lives. We break down barriers between policymakers, technology-builders, and communities, so society can maximize the benefits and avoid the risks of new technology. We produce clear, incisive research and analysis of emerging issues in technology and public policy that guides the public conversation.



## **Vulpine Blue**

<https://vulpineblue.com>

Vulpine Blue prepares growing organizations for unsure environments.

# ATTENDEE BIOS

## **Alfredo Lopez**

MAY FIRST/PEOPLE LINK

Veteran activist and writer Alfredo Lopez is a founder and member of the Leadership Committee of May First/People Link, the country's largest progressive Internet membership organization. In his 50 years as a movement activist, he's been involved in many struggles and issues. He has written five published books and currently writes on technology for the website This Can't Be Happening ([thiscantbehappening.net](http://thiscantbehappening.net)). He lives in Brooklyn.

## **Bex Hurwitz**

RESEARCH ACTION DESIGN

Bex is a codesigner and maker of media and technology for social justice.

## **Berhan Taye Gemedo**

FORD-MOZILLA OPEN WEB FELLOW

Berhan is a social justice activist, a peace studies practitioner, and an avid advocate for open data and the open web. Berhan previously worked at a Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Center mitigating violence in East Africa. She has also conducted research on transitional justice and criminal violence at the University of Notre Dame, consulted for intergovernmental bodies in Addis Ababa

and Nairobi, and engaged legislative processes related to land rights in Cape Town.

## **Brooke Hunter**

NEW AMERICA'S OPEN TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

Brooke Hunter is Chief of Staff and Director of Strategic Initiatives at New America's Open Technology Institute.

## **Bryan Mercer**

MEDIA MOBILIZING PROJECT

Bryan Mercer is a Philadelphia native who began volunteering with Media Mobilizing Project after returning home from college. Bryan is now Executive Director of MMP, using strategic media and communications to strengthen and connect communities organizing for their human rights. Bryan also works on state and national media policy advocacy as a board member of the Media Action Grassroots Network to create a ground-up approach to securing media rights and access. Bryan received his bachelors degree from Columbia University in Anthropology and Comparative Ethnic Studies.

## **Chris Schweidler**

RESEARCH ACTION DESIGN

Chris Schweidler is co-founder of Research Action Design (<http://rad.cat>), a worker-owned cooperative that partners with grassroots organizations on research, tech, media and secure digital strategies. Chris has spent more than a decade supporting rigorous community-led research and popular communication as a part of social justice advocacy and movement building. Chris has collaborated on community based research across a broad range of interlinked struggles including low-wage worker rights, immigrant rights, health equity, racial justice, LGBTQ rights and struggles against criminalization and mass incarceration. She is also committed to the growth of the Research Justice Network, a community of rabble

rousing researchers that seek to bring forth stories of struggle, change and liberation with a transformative research agenda. You can find Chris in Joshua Tree, California.

## **Diana Nucera**

DETROIT COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

Diana Nucera, media maven and accomplished cellist, has worked in media arts for sixteen years. She attended the first Allied Media Conference in 1999 as a 17 year-old. She joined the AMC advisory board in 2006, and joined AMP's staff in 2008 to produce the "How-to" track and coordinate the Hands-on Media Lab of the AMC. In 2009 she became a Co-Director of AMP. In 2011, Diana led the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition in developing the DiscoTech fair, an event that demystifies, engages, and informs communities on Internet policies and technology tools. She co-authored the How To Discotech zine, a guide to producing these events. The following year, Diana worked with the Open Technology Institute to develop the Detroit Digital Stewards program, the first curriculum and training program for wireless mesh networks.

## **Georgia Bullen**

NEW AMERICA'S OPEN TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

Georgia Bullen is the Director of Tech Projects at New America's Open Technology Institute. She has been a long-term activist in the Internet Health movement, both through her work with OTI and as an individual who keeps her finger on all the pulses of the global transparency and open internet fight. She's passionate about issues such as net neutrality and community engagement to ensure fair access to technology, and leverages this passion to support a breadth of projects with management, visualization, architecture and design. She has a background in human-centered design, urban planning and software development, and is an advocate for women in technology.

## **Harlan Yu**

UPTURN

Harlan Yu is a principal at Upturn, based in Washington DC. Upturn works alongside social justice leaders to shape the impact of new technologies on people's lives. Recently, Harlan has been working closely with major civil rights organizations to examine law enforcement's use of body-worn cameras and other emerging police technologies. Harlan holds a Ph.D. in computer science from Princeton University and has extensive experience working at the intersection of technology and policy. He has worked at Google in both engineering and public policy roles, at the Electronic Frontier Foundation as a technologist, and at the U.S. Department of Labor.

## **Helyx Chase Scarce Horwitz**

MEDIA MOBILIZING PROJECT

Helyx Chase Scarce Horwitz is the Technology Manager at the Media Mobilizing Project. Based in their hometown of Philadelphia, Helyx is an independent video artist and activist who is passionate about storytelling as a means to draw connections. Their video art is built by, about, and for televisions and computers and lives at the intersection of experimental video and technology. Helyx holds a B.A. from Hampshire College where they studied Video, Social Movements, and Youth Development.

## **Jack Aponte**

PALANTE TECH

Jack Aponte is a genderqueer Black Boricua and a worker-owner at Palante Technology Cooperative. Jack has worked at the intersection of tech and social justice since 2003, with roles including website builder and developer, project manager, open source contributor, tech consultant and trainer on a wide range of topics. Jack has been involved in activism and organizing for many years, working primarily within LGBTQ and people of color communities. They serve on the board of Aspiration, the Backdrop Project Management

Committee and the LOL Makerspace steering committee. Jack is also a writer, leftist gadfly, casual musician and all around geek.

## **Jamie McClelland**

MAYFIRST/PEOPLE LINK

Jamie is co-founder and Leadership Committee member of May First/People Link, a membership organization of progressive groups nationwide who use the Internet. In his work with MF/PL, Jamie does political organizing, systems administration, and support for the members of May First/People Link.

## **Jess Kutch**

COWORKER.ORG

Jess spends her days (and nights) thinking about how people can improve their jobs and workplaces through technology, social media and smart campaigning tactics. Before launching Coworker.org, Jess spent time at Change.org and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). She is a former Senior Fellow at the New Organizing Institute and a 2014 Echoing Green Global Fellow. Jess lives in Washington, DC with her wife, Rebecca, and their son.

## **Maya Wagoner**

NEW AMERICA'S OPEN TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE/MIT

Maya M. Wagoner is a research assistant at the Open Technology Institute and a Master's student in Comparative Media Studies at MIT who is interested in building digital platforms with principles of social justice, collaborative design, and critical pedagogy. Prior to studying at MIT, she grew up all around California, worked as a UX designer and usability researcher, and was an organizer of both the UC Santa Cruz African/Black Student Alliance and Code for San Francisco. She currently lives in Somerville, MA and fosters wayward cats in her home.

## **Michelle Miller**

COWORKER.ORG

Michelle Miller is the co-founder of Coworker.org, a digital platform for worker voice. Since its founding in 2013, Coworker.org has catalyzed the growth of global employee networks advancing change at companies like Netflix, Starbucks, REI and Wells Fargo. She is a 2014 Echoing Green Global Fellow, 2015 JM Kaplan Innovation Fellow and 2017 Future for Good fellow at the Institute for the Future. In 2015, Michelle was proud to join President Barack Obama as co-moderator of the first ever digital Town Hall on Worker Voice, bringing the voices and concerns of workers directly to the White House.

## **Kim Garcia**

HACK THE HOOD

Kim Garcia is a researcher and evaluator currently living & working in Oakland, California. Born in the Philippines and raised in Toronto, her research background spans from homelessness and poverty, aging among people living with HIV/AIDS, access to health care among vulnerable communities, and sex-positive youth development. She currently works for Hack the Hood and actively volunteers with Bay Area community-based organizations. Kim is passionate about reducing inequities facing communities of color, especially womxn. Outside of research, she enjoys being outdoors, supporting community arts, and smashing the patriarchy & imperialism with other womxn.

## **Sasha Costanza-Chock**

RESEARCH ACTION DESIGN

Sasha Costanza-Chock is a scholar, activist, and media-maker, and is currently Associate Professor of Civic Media at MIT. They are a Faculty Associate at the Berkman-Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, Faculty Affiliate with the MIT Open Documentary Lab and the MIT Center for Civic Media, and

creator of the MIT Codesign Studio ([codesign.mit.edu](http://codesign.mit.edu)). Their work focuses on social movements, media justice, and community-led design. Sasha's book *Out of the Shadows, Into the Streets: Transmedia Organizing and the Immigrant Rights Movement* was published by the MIT Press in 2014. They are a board member of Allied Media Projects ([alliedmedia.org](http://alliedmedia.org)), and a worker/owner at Research Action Design ([RAD.cat](http://RAD.cat)), a worker-owned cooperative that uses community-led research, transformative media organizing, technology development, and collaborative design to build the power of grassroots social movements.

## **Seamus Brugh**

VULPINE BLUE

## **Susan Mernit**

HACK THE HOOD

Susan Mernit is CEO of Hack the Hood, which co-founded while running Oakland Local, an impactful hyper-local news site and working as a technical support for The Knight Foundation's Community Impact Challenge program. A former VP at AOL & Netscape, & a former Yahoo! Senior Director, Mernit has been a consultant for organizations including Public Radio International, Salon.com & TechSoup Global.

## **Willow Brugh**

VULPINE BLUE

Willow Brugh, known as [willowbl00](https://twitter.com/willowbl00), works with digital tools to enable coordination between response agencies and emergent response groups in areas affected by fast and slow crisis. She studies citizen engagement and combining distributed and centralized decision making structures at the Center for Civic Media at MIT's Media Lab. Previously she's been a Professor of Practice at Brown University, an affiliate at the New England Complex Systems Institute, and a fellow at Harvard Law's Berkman Center for Internet

and Society.

## **Zara Rahman**

THE ENGINE ROOM/DATA AND SOCIETY FELLOW

I'm Zara - feminist, researcher and writer. I'm a Fellow at Data & Society Research Institute, where I'm looking at the skills and roles needed to successfully implement technology and data projects among human rights defenders and activists. I'm also Research Lead at The Engine Room, where I carry out research to support our work in strengthening the effective use of technology and data in social change and advocacy, and lead our Responsible Data programme looking at the ethical implications of using data in new ways. I write about digital policy and technology in Bangladesh for Global Voices.

# RESEARCH PHASE 1 SUMMARY

## ‘Public Interest Technology/Technologist’ as a frame

In interviews, data gallery discussion, and literature review, we explored the resonance of ‘public interest technology’ as a frame. We also asked people if they considered themselves a ‘public interest technologist,’ and why or why not. We Found:

- » **There are a number of intersecting communities of practice in the broader field that we have been calling “public interest technology.”** There is some overlap between these communities of practice, but each has its own history, network of key actors, value system, and ways of working. The most prominent of these are: open data, civic tech, tech policy, and community technology. Based on the literature, our scan of existing organizations and projects, and our phase 1 interviews, we created this taxonomy of various communities of practice within ‘public interest tech.’
- » **Only tech policy advocates currently use the term public interest technology.** The only practitioners in the field who currently use the term “public interest technology” or “public interest technologist” are those involved in developing

technology policy at public interest legal organizations. Among all other interviewees, reactions to the term was mixed. Some, mostly within the civic tech community, find the term interesting and exciting; some feel it might be a useful umbrella but don't have strong feelings about it. Some argue that the term is problematic, and discuss the potential harms of introducing a new term (see next point).

- » **Some interviewees feel that it may be harmful to use a new, funder-driven term.** They note that doing so decenters the terms and ways of thinking that have emerged organically from community-driven technology work. This marginalization has material impacts. As one interviewee noted, people scramble to reframe their work according to funder 'hype cycles;' these cycles also enable those with access to social capital in funding circles (typically, highly educated white cismen) to capture resources and momentum even in areas that have longstanding community-led activity.
- » **Support for the field must not be limited to people who identify as 'technologists.'** For example, several interviewees said that people who can "translate" technology play an important role in many public interest organizations, often more so than technologists who develop software.
- » **Community technology, social movement technology, and/or technology for social justice, may be frameworks that better capture the most effective approaches to using technology for social good.** Whether or not NetGain and the broader field continue to use 'public interest technology,' we feel it is crucial to include the voices and perspectives of those who work within the frameworks of community technology, social movement technology, and/or technology for social justice. These communities are the closest in practice to the ideals of community-led, community-based, and accountable use of technology that are espoused by many across the broader field.

## Personal Pathways, Barriers, and Support

We asked people about the type of work they do, their pathway into the work, the biggest barriers they face, and crucial support they received along the way from other people, institutions, or events. Key takeaways from this section:

- » Pathways are **split between those who moved from ‘tech to public interest’ and those who moved from ‘community organizing to tech.’** Some moved from a career in the technology industry or a background in computer science into activism and/or a public interest organization, or, more commonly among those we interviewed, from activist or public interest work into a stronger focus on using technology to support those goals. In other words: many public interest technologists began as activists and taught themselves how to be technologists; some public interest technologists began as computer scientists but later pursued public interest work.
- » **Educational pathways are unpredictable; most are predominantly self-taught, or learn outside of a university classroom.** Most participants struggled to define where exactly they had learned the technology skills they use in their work; many emphasized that they acquired skills through relevant work experience, online, or through ad-hoc skillshares and workshops.
- » **Race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, disability, and other axes of structural inequality continue to shape people’s access to tech work, in all of the areas of ‘public interest tech.’** The majority of visibility and funding in the space go to white straight cis men with educational and class privilege. However, this is less often the case in the community technology space,

which has more leadership by people from marginalized groups, and where structural inequality is openly understood and discussed. At the same time, these spaces receive far less funding and visibility overall, despite best implementing many of the practices described as desirable by most interviewees, such as participatory design, diverse participants, and sustained community ownership of projects.

- » **Mentorship** is critically important for training and retaining new practitioners, especially those from groups are underrepresented in the sector(s).
- » Crucial support also came from **fellowship opportunities and conferences**. Several interviewees mentioned the Allied Media Conference as an important space for support and growth, as well as the Code for America Summit, Netroots Nation, the Chaos Communication Congress, DEF CON, bootcamps, and hack nights, as well as self-paced online learning tools, among other spaces.
- » **There are already many ‘accidental technologists’ from underrepresented backgrounds in community organizing, advocacy, and nonprofit work, who should be recognized and supported.** Many don’t think of themselves as ‘technologists,’ and are not plugged into the networks of technologists mentioned above, but are still key to the success of existing community technology infrastructures. Too often these people do incredible work but are under-resourced and not seen by the broader, professionalized civic tech space. Funders should develop mechanisms to support and lift them up. One interviewee put it this way: “It’s about bringing the expert out in people, not bringing the expert to the people.”
- » The inability of nonprofit and public sector work to offer **competitive salaries and a positive working environment** are perceived as issues for recruiting and retaining technologists.

- » Tangible support for **cultural transformation is needed to build the field in ways that are inclusive, diverse, equitable and aligned with the values of technology for social justice.** Sexist and racist culture pushes people out of certain types of public interest tech work. Lack of resources for cultural transformation within the field and sustaining work limits any individual's ability to work on these issues.
- » **Organizations need more support understanding the kinds of technology and data work their organization needs, the kinds of skill sets a person requires to do this work and how to support this person to be well utilized and placed within their organization.** When people, with public interest technology skills, are able to connect to opportunities, they are frequently underutilized or misutilized.

## Future of the Field

We asked interviewees and data gallery workshop participants to discuss the future of their field, including: examples of successful and unsuccessful projects; key people in their field; who is under-resourced; what needs to change for the field to thrive in the future; and key lessons for funders.

- » **The most successful projects emerged directly from the goals of an existing, non-tech-focused organization;** more broadly, **successful approaches included collaborative design, user research, and/or human-centered design processes.** According to our interviewees, participatory design is a vital factor in ensuring that new technological tools are useful to the communities they are intended to serve.
- » **Most participants pointed to a lack of community input or involvement as a central problem in many public interest software projects.** Some participants more specifically highlighted the problematic focus on software

development expertise to the detriment of community organizing, or other types of expertise, and the recent trend of sending technologists into distant communities temporarily, rather than building capacity from within that community.

- » **Projects that focus only on ‘innovation’ tend to fail; community ownership, maintenance, and long-term sustainability of tech projects are crucial, but too often overlooked, aspects of success.** Far too often, resources are concentrated in ‘innovation,’ prototype development and initial rollout, done by experts who parachute in; such projects collapse after the funding ends and the outsiders depart. After a temporary infusion of technology and technologists, through a “tour of duty” or fellowship model, maintenance and sustainability of the new technology is often an issue.
- » **Basic tech support and ongoing maintenance** is the most critical need for many nonprofits and community-based organizations, but is ‘unsexy’ and underfunded compared to resources for ‘hot new prototypes’ and the latest platform.
- » **Worker-owned tech cooperatives** provide a possible sustainable approach to building community technology capacity; with initial support from foundations, credit unions, city economic development programs, and other sources of startup capital, they may be a mechanism for long-term tech capacity that can outlast temporary funder trends in the nonprofit sector.
- » Many public interest technologists believe that it is important to use **Free/Libre and Open Source software (F/LOSS)**. F/LOSS provides opportunities for resource pooling, sharing, improved security, community control, and autonomy. However, creating and maintaining open source alternatives to common corporate platforms requires widespread coordination that has often been hard to organize in the absence of long term resources (funding and business models) to support this work.

- » **Alternative educational approaches to tech skill development, such as code bootcamps, after school programs, and hackerspaces, especially those focused on learners from groups currently underrepresented in tech, are an important piece of the puzzle.** These are increasingly available, in spaces such as Black Girls Code, Liberating Ourselves Locally, Hack the Hood, #YesWeCode, Digital Stewards, Mayfirst's People of Color Techie program, alternative credentialing systems, and others, but need to be better resourced by funders in the space.
- » **Funders can support existing citywide coalitions of community-based organizations to integrate technology access and community control into their goals.** Successful models include Philadelphia, Detroit, and NYC, all cities where strong networks of CBOs worked with city administrations to secure federal broadband funding, secure concessions from telecommunications firms, increase broadband access for low income residents, and more.
- » **Public interest technologists are often focused on doing work where markets fail, where they harm people, or where they mishandle public goods.** In contexts where there is market effort, solutions are often terrible and still do not actually solve the problem that non-profits/mission orgs face. Many public interest technologists lament a lack of research into whether technology projects work or have significant impact. At the same time, open source tools have insufficient resources or support for community use to provide stable, viable solutions.

## Threats

In interviews and workshops, many participants discussed threats they felt must be addressed by the field. The following stood out as repeated concerns:

- » **Top-down approaches to using technology for social good are not only unsustainable and likely to fail, in some cases they are actually harmful to the communities they intend to benefit.** For example, in NYC, one interviewee noted that well-meaning techies who focused on setting up free wireless access points in low-income neighborhoods without involving existing residents contributed to gentrification; in Boston, open data advocates who meant to help low-income residents secured open access to housing court data, but the data was primarily used by landlords to blacklist tenants.
- » **Now more than ever, organizational security is crucial for advocates in general, and for the most targeted communities specifically.** Funders need to support the already existing networks of domestic QT, POC, and WOC-led security trainers who are being asked to provide digital security trainings to grassroots organizations across the country.

## Funding approaches

Interviewees and workshop participants raised concerns about funding models and methods. The following are some of the themes:

- » Funding structures need to take into account the **different kinds of timelines** that exist for technology projects.
- » Some participants were frustrated by what they perceived to be **funding for projects based on hype rather than on strategic vision.**
- » Funders should understand that **a venture capital strategy may not work for nonprofit organizations**, even if that organization is making technology products.
- » **Technology projects need different kinds of funding than typical philanthropic projects.**

- » **Many groups, especially volunteer software development projects, do not know how to write a grant or find funding.**

# RESEARCH PHASE 1

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## **A. Organization (what your org does)**

- » Tell me about your organization.
- » How long you have been with the organization, and what is your role there?
- » Do you have a sense of what community your organization serves?
- » Alternate: who your audience is?
- » Alternate: what kinds of clients you take?
- » Which aspects of the community your organization works with are well represented in your staff? Which aspects are not particularly well-represented?

## **B. Personal Journey**

- » How would you describe the kind of work you do, and what do you call your field?
- » Do you think of yourself as a 'public interest technologist'? Why or why not?
- » What was your pathway into the work you do?
- » What is the biggest challenge or barrier you have faced in this field?

- » Can you describe a person, institution, or event that provided crucial support to you / was important in your path into this work?

## **C. Future of the Field**

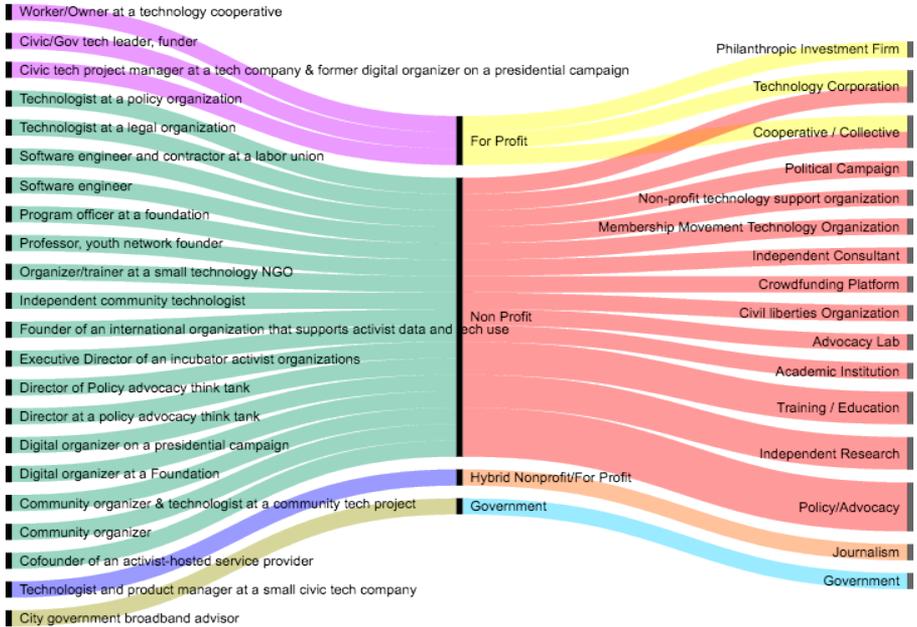
- » What is a great example of a public interest tech project, one that you feel has been really successful, and why?
- » How about a public interest tech project that didn't work out so well?
- » Who do you think of as doing the most important work in your field?
- » Who do you think of as leaders or organizers in your field?
- » Who do you feel is under-resourced?
- » What needs to change to ensure that public interest technology becomes a thriving field in the future?
- » What should funders understand about how to best support public interest technology in the future?

## **D. Open-ended**

- » If you were in a room with other folks involved in public interest technology, what would you ask them?
- » Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't touched on today?
- » Lastly, can you think of anyone else you know who might be a good person to interview?

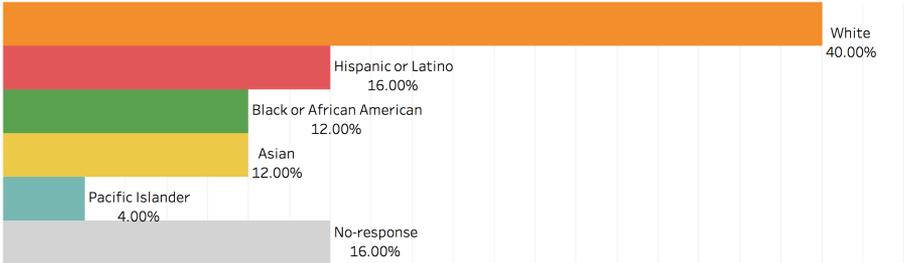
# RESEARCH PHASE 1 INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS

In the first phase of research, we interviewed twenty-three individuals from twenty-two organizations who use technology for social justice. These individuals hail from organizations in the nonprofit, for-profit, and government sectors.



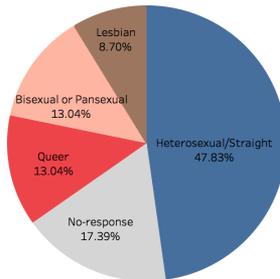
After the interview, we sent out a demographic survey. Nineteen interviewees completed the demographic survey.

Race/ethnicity. Ten of our interviewees identify as White, four as Hispanic/Latino, three as Black or African-American, three as Asian, and one as Pacific Islander. Four individuals did not respond to this survey



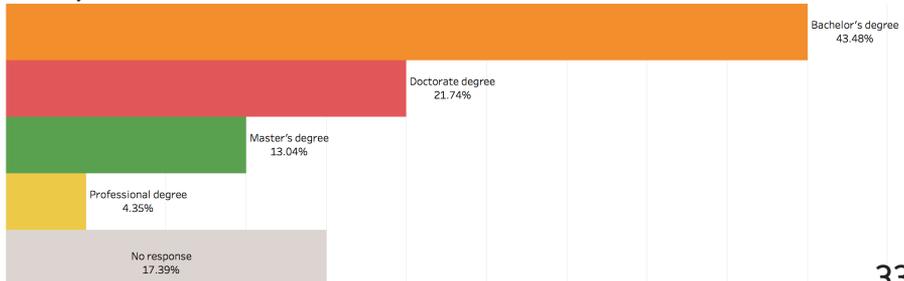
### Sexual Orientation

Eleven of these individuals identify as heterosexual, three as bisexual, three as queer, and two as lesbians.



### Education

Their educational background is relatively diverse. Ten have a bachelor's degree, three have master's degrees, five are Ph.D. holders, and one has a professional degree. Four did not respond to this survey.



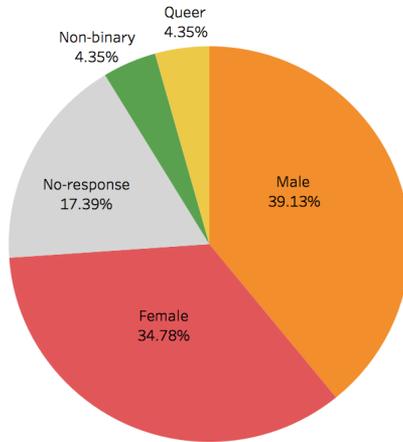
These degrees are in various disciplines like American History, Community Studies, Computer Science, Urban Planning, Media Studies, Informatics, Creative Writing and English Literature, Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality studies, Sociology, Information Systems, Astrophysics, Juris Doctorate, Law, Fine Arts, Arts and Technology, New Media, Science, and Technology Studies, and Philosophy.

## Personal Income

Their incomes range between \$10,000 to over \$150,000. Two interviewees are in the lowest margin earning between \$10,000 - \$19,999 and four are in the highest margin making more than \$150,000. The remaining ten earn between \$30,000 and \$100,000.

## Gender Identity

Out of the twentythree that received the demographic survey, nine identify as male, seven as female, one as non-binary, and queer. Four individuals did not respond to this survey.



## Age

Eight of the interviewees are between the age of 25 and 34 and seven are between 35 and 44 years of age. Four individuals did not respond to this survey.

## Roles

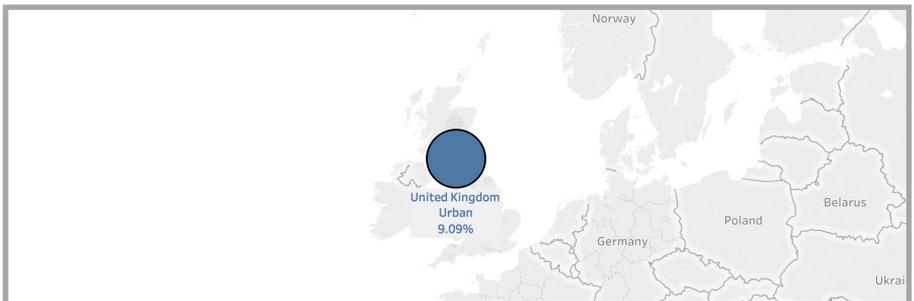
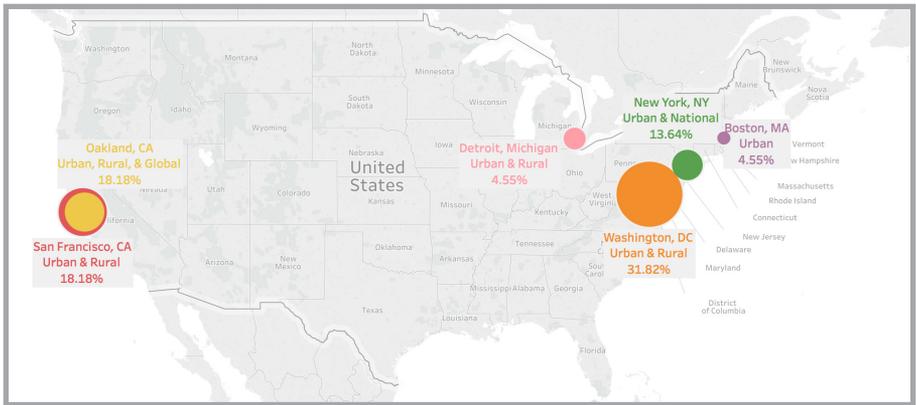
Almost all of the interviewees embody more than one role; they identify as community organizers, educators, researchers, coders/developers, policy advocates, and technologists.

## Organization Type

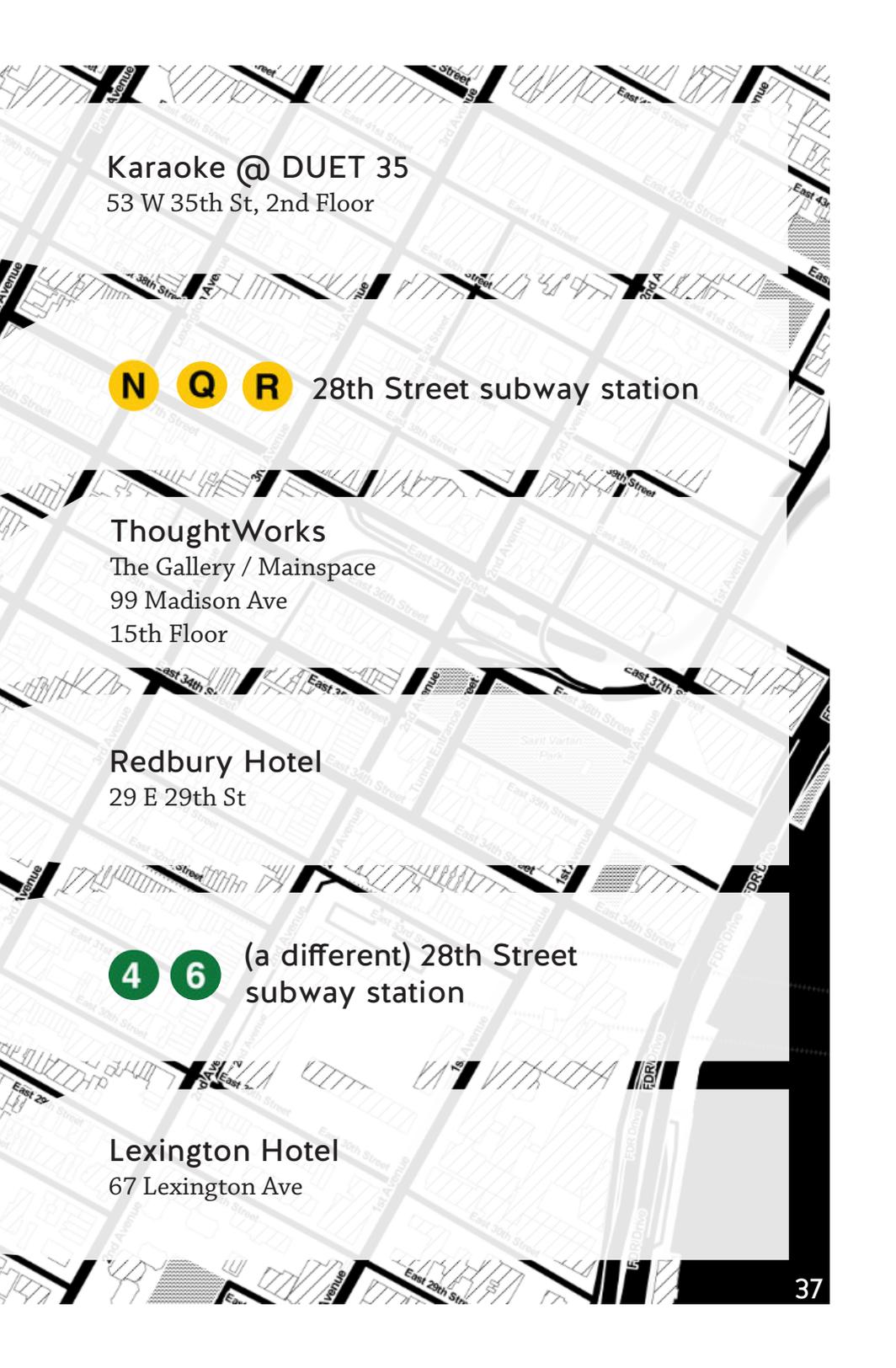
Half of these organizations exclusively serve urban communities, a quarter work both in urban and rural areas. The remaining are national and global organizations.

## Geography

Twenty of the interviewees live and work in the United States, with the majority from the metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C., the San Francisco Bay Area, and New York, while the remaining two are in the United Kingdom. Four people did not respond to this survey; however, three of the locations are included in the chart below.







Karaoke @ DUET 35

53 W 35th St, 2nd Floor

**N** **Q** **R** 28th Street subway station

ThoughtWorks

The Gallery / Mainspace

99 Madison Ave

15th Floor

Redbury Hotel

29 E 29th St

**4** **6** (a different) 28th Street subway station

Lexington Hotel

67 Lexington Ave

# NOTES

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