


2018 Open Data Challenge Brings Together DeLDOT, DNREC to Improve Access to Recreation for All Delawareans

DOVER – Citizen coders and civic technologists from across Delaware are set to take on the state’s second annual Open Data Challenge, harnessing the power of public datasets to come up with new solutions to big statewide problems.

Coordinated by Open Data Delaware and the Department of State’s Government Information Center, ODC18 is a series of events and workshops that will allow participants to review and analyze information hosted on the state’s Open Data Portal, then design new apps, websites or programs that will put the data to good use. Teams with the best ideas and the most promising prototypes will be eligible for grant funding to allow them to continue their work.

“The Challenge is designed to get people to think  differently about solving problems in our communities,” said Secretary of State Jeff Bullock. “We’re encouraging a new way of approaching citizen engagement, collaboration and innovation based on the public data collected by state government.”

For ODC18, two of the state’s largest public agencies, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, have posed a simple question: How can we make sure that all Delawareans have full access to our state’s public forests, beaches and parks – and that they know which roads, buses, trails and bike routes can

take them there?

“Delaware has so many recreational options across the state, and we want to make sure everyone who has a desire to visit these destinations has the ability to do so,” said Secretary of Transportation Jennifer Cohan. “Partnering with DNREC and Open Data Delaware, we can harness the creative energy of anyone who would like to participate and offer their ideas.”

“We use the Open Data Portal to share data and information about the natural resources the Department manages,” said DNREC Secretary Shawn M. Garvin. “We are excited to join DelDOT and other partners in this challenge and take the next step toward full public use of our data. We can learn more about how people enjoy Delaware’s great outdoors and our outstanding recreational opportunities. We will find new partners, in and outside of government, and we will gain new perspectives that will help us do our jobs better.”

Examples of the datasets that ODC18 participants could use for their projects include traffic counts and bus schedules, and maps of bike routes, public lands and nature preserves – all available via the state’s Open Data Portal at data.delaware.gov or the GIS Mapping Tool, firstmap.delaware.gov.

The launch of this year’s Challenge was coupled with Gov. John Carney’s signing of [Executive Order 18](#), which gives executive branch agencies until Sept. 30 to deliver an inventory of new data sets that can be added to the portal.

The first major event in the ODC18 series is an “Ideation Session” scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 25, hosted by the Horn Program in Entrepreneurship at the University of Delaware. The Challenge culminates in May after a month-long Data Jam where teams will take what they’ve learned from Delaware’s data and design prototype solutions to address the challenge prompt.

Challenge teams will be eligible for a total of \$32,000 in

grant funding, contributed by DelDOT and DNREC, including a top prize of \$20,000 for any prototype that combines data from both agencies and serves to advance each of their missions. Tech Impact, a nationwide nonprofit that helps community groups develop and use technology, will administer the grant awards.

“Last year I saw firsthand the social innovation that was unlocked by the use of these data sets,” said Patrick Callahan, executive director of Tech Impact. “Gov. Carney’s recent executive order to expand the data sets, coupled with this year’s Open Data Challenge, will surely allow that innovation to continue. It will be really exciting to watch as this year’s competition focuses on using some of the new data to focus on developing civic solutions.”

For more information on the 2018 Open Data Challenge [watch this short video](#) and visit opendatachallenge.com.