

Caribbean Open Data: “Developing the Caribbean”

26-27 January 2012

Port of Spain – Kingston – Santo Domingo

WHY:

Caribbean societies share a wide range of pressing economic, social and environmental demands in many areas such as agriculture, fishing, trade, tourism, entrepreneurship, safety and education. However, most attempts at solutions have traditionally been discussed in isolation and with typically limited access to quality information for evidence-based decision-making. Now, this is about to change. Greater stores of information and more accessible technologies are creating opportunities to further and more effectively develop collaborative solutions to our traditional problems.

WHAT:

The Open data movement, which is gaining momentum around the world, recognizes that Web 2.0 technologies in conjunction with free access to existing data sets can facilitate a plethora of innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing problems. The concepts have been described by many visionaries including [Tim Berners-Lee](#), the creator of the Web, and [Hans Rosling](#), chairman of the Gapminder Foundation. Many governments including the US, UK, Canada and Kenya have opened up their data on sites such as [data.gov](#), [data.gov.uk](#), [data.gc.ca](#), [Open Data.go.ke](#), with many other countries well on the path.

The “Developing the Caribbean” Conference and Developers Competition, focused on Open Data Web Development, is the first regional Code Sprint of its kind. It brings together:

1. Governments and Institutions in the Caribbean that embrace Open Data as an essential component of their information dissemination strategies and a way to work towards development goals.
2. Members of Civil Society that are able to identify Caribbean priorities and challenges that demand evidence-based information for decision-making and problem-solving
3. The Community of Developers that will make use of available data to create new services and provide new ways for communicating valuable information and positively impacting and empowering different communities to achieve developmental goals.

Together, these different communities will work together to build open institutional data approaches and use new information and communication technologies as catalysts for increased regional collaboration in finding indigenous solutions.

Building on the initiatives of institutions in Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago that embraced open data, a simultaneous event will be hosted across all three territories. Such an event intends to significantly raise the awareness about the relevant public datasets and engage local developers and their ability to solve relevant problems.

The aim of the event will be to highlight commonalities in many of the problem spaces within our nations and how these can be solved, or in the least mitigated, through the use of ICTs. In support of the theme special emphasis will be placed on engaging private, public and civil sector to provide a number

of problem spaces for participating developers to tackle. The conference will combine technical workshops and related presentations. It will be scheduled for Thursday and Friday with a developer code sprint. This makes the event attractive to both developers and other members of the ICT fraternity.

HOW:

- *Idea Sourcing:* In the months before the conference, thematic areas and databases will be sourced from interested organizations.
- *Solution sharing:* In the weeks leading up to the conference, experts, researchers and the wider civil society will be encouraged to “think aloud” about solutions to common challenges identified, or even post their own problems. This will provide a catalyst for developers to contemplate solutions to the various problems and ideas.
- *Code sprint begins:* After an initial period of orientation in the social challenges chosen by experts in the area, and exposure to the available Open Data APIs, the teams of developers will have 24 hrs to work on designing and developing innovative applications for tackling a range of problems identified.
- *Code sprint judging:* Three teams of experts will evaluate and identify national and regional champions. Awards will include mobile phones, international training and networking opportunities with other international groups. Moreover, as the applications will be developed using Open Source formats, all the applications created during the event will be made available for further improvements, modifications, and implementation, ultimately helping overcome the problems of the countries and citizens of the Caribbean.

The three independent conferences will be synchronized and developers will collaborate through live video streaming of all presentations, shared idea and problem pool and other communication tools. Also, interest groups from other territories will be encouraged to participate virtually. Moreover, the conference will be recorded and the live stream opened up to the public.

WHEN:

26-27 January 2012, including 24 consecutive hours of coding

WHO:

The Caribbean Open Data Conference is more than just an event. It is a process of engagement that seeks to demonstrate the power of “Openness”, specifically Open Data, Open Innovation and Open Source as a catalyst for innovation, collaboration and ultimately value-creation for Caribbean individuals, organizations and societies at large.

Participation in this uniquely Caribbean experience can take place at several levels:

Data Contributors

Government Ministries, Departments or Agencies that are custodians of public sector data in any of the selected thematic areas, can contribute this data to be a candidate Open Data source for the Code Sprint competition. The following guidelines apply:

- Data in any of the following thematic areas can be submitted: *Agriculture, Fisheries and related or supporting themes; Training/education; Trade and Tourism; Telecommunications access; National Statistics (Census, etc.)*
- Any privacy-related information should be scrubbed from the data before it is submitted
- The data will be used for the Caribbean Open Data Code Sprint, where programming teams from Trinidad and Tobago, Dominican Republic and Jamaica will access the various contributed data through read-only APIs' to create competing mash-up applications.
- Your organization will be recognized and given full attribution for issuing your data.
- The data will be available in the public domain, in read-only format and will be licensed under the Creative Commons agreement.

Idea Contributors

We invite any member of Caribbean Civil Society (i.e. Public/Private sector, NGO's, individuals), that have an interest in local and/or regional priorities and challenges that are amenable to evidence-based information for decision-making, problem-solving or innovation to participate in this process. As part of the event, we will be establishing an ideation platform that allows participants to submit problem/solution ideas and to vote or comment on submitted ideas in any of the selected thematic categories.

Technical Contributors (Software Developers)

While providing access to data is an essential first step, the ultimate value in the Open Data movement lies in how agencies and the public can make use of the data. It is the members of the local and regional software development community that will ultimately create this value by building the applications and services that can provide new ways for communicating valuable information and positively impacting and empowering different communities with access to collaborative solutions to our indigenous problems. We welcome all members of the tech community (academic institutions and individuals) to participate and contribute creativity and talent to this unique event.

Sponsors

Private Sector sponsorship is encouraged and facilitated in a variety of ways. By contributing to this conference, you are investing in the future of the social and political development of each of these Caribbean countries. Your organizations will have the chance to participate and be part of the innovative ideas and technological initiatives, alongside global leaders that we will be engaging through our international partnerships.