

CIVIC  
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HALL



# Report on Reach and Engagement January - June 2017



## Introduction

In the first six months of 2017, Civic Hall has continued to thrive and grow. We've settled into our new home on the top floor of 118 West 22<sup>nd</sup> St, taking advantage of its abundant light and open layout to foster a greater level of community and collaboration across our diverse membership. While we miss our large event space from our original location, we've kept up a rich pace of engaging events building the civic tech ecosystem in New York and beyond, as this report describes. In June we hired a terrific new Managing Director, Jessica Quinn, the former CEO of the NY Tech Alliance/NY Tech Meetup. We also started working more intensively on the planning and development work involved in fleshing out our vision for Civic Hall @ Union Square, our eventual new home, with COO Jessica Goldfarb stepping into a new role as Senior Planner alongside Senior Advisor Sarah Holloway and Civic Hall co-founders Andrew Rasiej and Micah Sifry. And we continued our steady growth in membership. This report covers key new developments in our three core areas of work: growing the civic tech community, fostering collaboration, and broader public outreach and engagement.

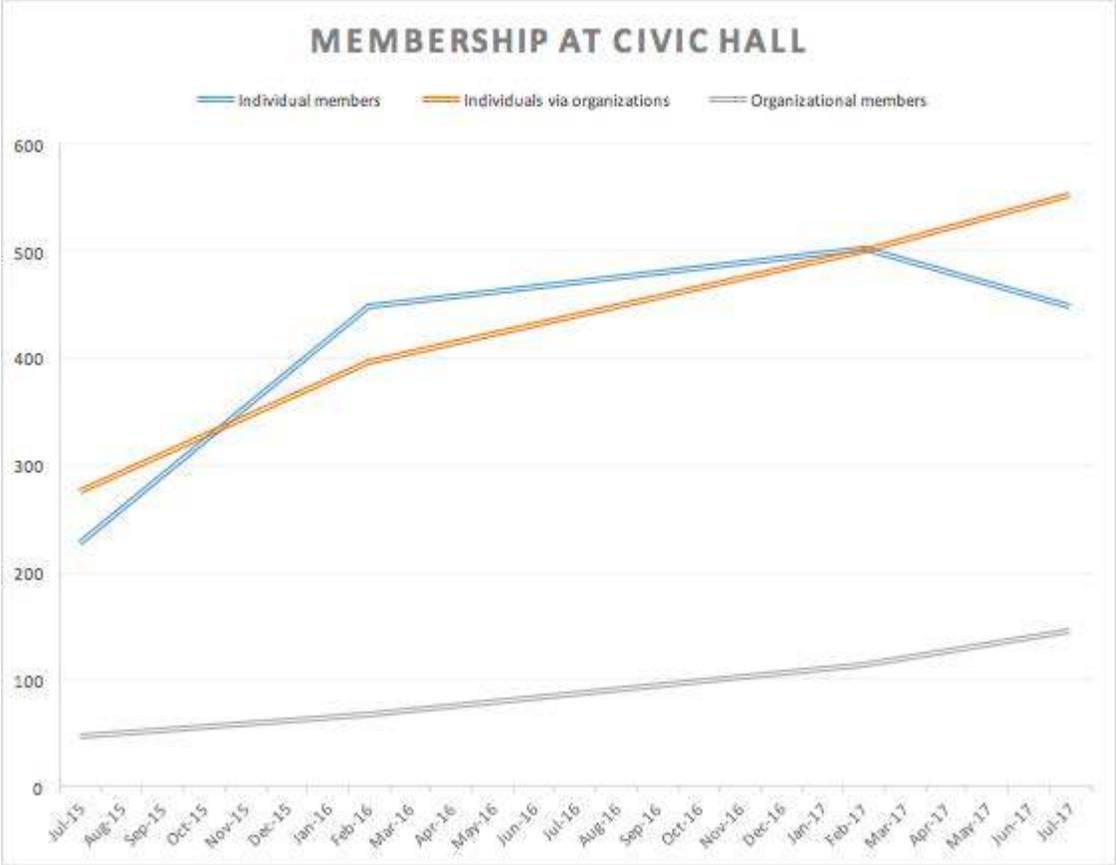
## Membership

The heart of Civic Hall is people, our members. As we've learned over our first two-and-a-half years of growth and development, whether a person is a sole practitioner or part of a large organization, engagement always happens at the people-to-people level. As our previous reports have recounted, when we launched in 2015, we imagined that the Civic Hall community would be primarily made up of individual members--people with their own civic start-ups and projects who were looking for a home base where they could find like-minded souls, share ideas and skills, and ease some of the isolation that comes with being a sole practitioner. What we learned very quickly was that people in larger organizations, including government agencies, established nonprofits, tech companies, media companies, and social change organizations were also attracted Civic Hall's community and vision, and collaborative work setting.

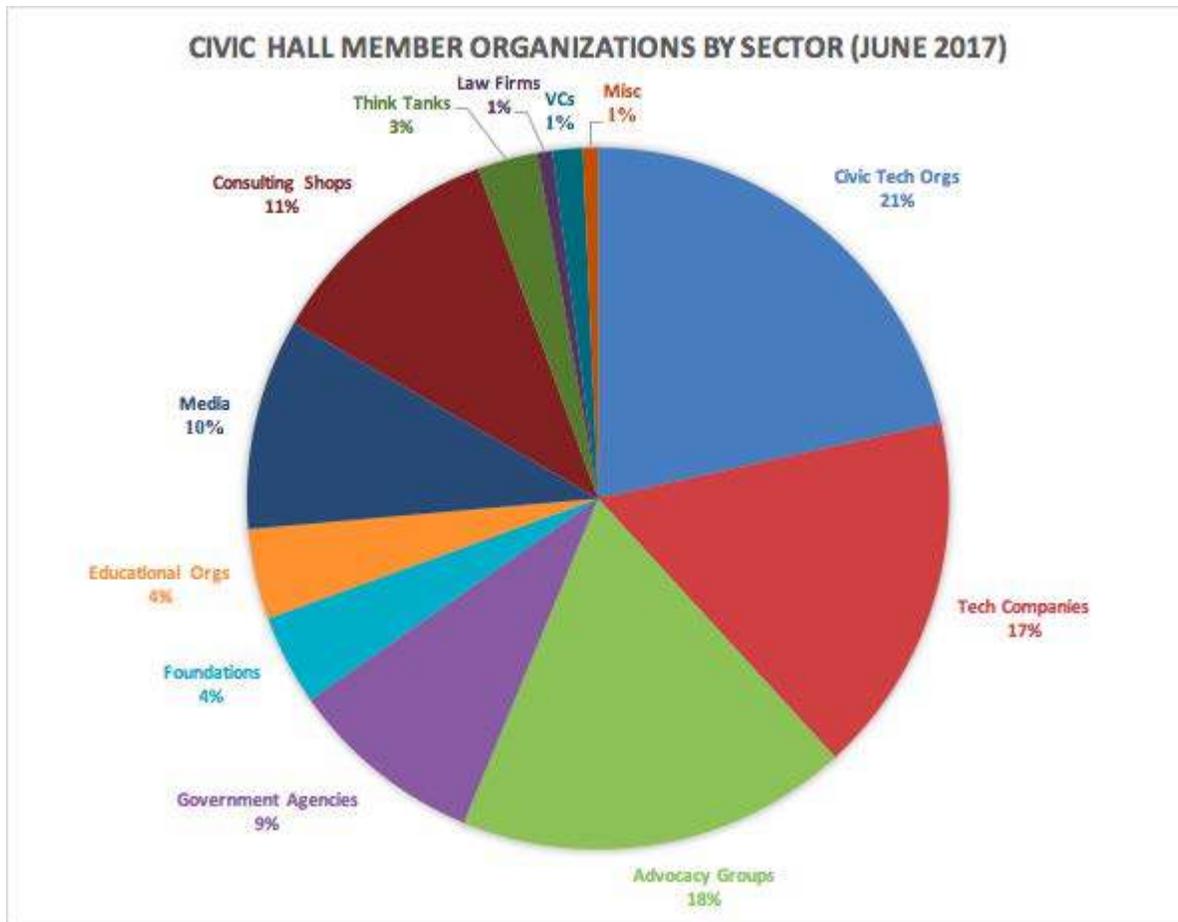
Since our move to our current location, we have strategically shifted our approach to member recruitment and community engagement to place greater emphasis on organizational members, or, to be precise, to people with organizational identities. If Civic Hall's unique contribution to the public square is how we foster creative collaboration at scale, then making it possible for civic innovators to come together across sectors and around common interests has the greatest potential for positive change when those actors bring institutional strengths.

Thus, over the last six months we have started to deemphasize outreach aimed at finding full-time individual members. As noted in our last six-month report, in February, changes we started implementing in membership prices and options took full effect, and as expected, we now have a mix of individual (sole practitioner-type) members that tilts more towards part-time and less towards full-time. The result is a culture that is more focused on people in the space using it intensively and collaboratively on the days when they are here, less on a “coworking” style of usage made up of people spending all their time on their own work and little on collaboration.

As of the end of June 2017, we had 449 purely individual members and 146 organizational members representing an additional 502 member accounts, for a grand total of 1003. Consistent with the trend lines of the past year, we are continuing to grow at a very healthy rate.



The diversity of our membership is demonstrated by the vibrant mix of civic tech organizations, tech companies, advocacy groups, government agencies and foundations who have joined as organizational members, along with a smattering of educational/academic offices, media entities, consulting shops, and think tanks.



Compared to six months ago, we've seen a few notable changes in that mix. While the three largest groupings at Civic Hall are civic tech organizations, advocacy groups, and tech companies, the percentage of civic tech organizations has inched up slightly, from 19% to 21%, while the percentage of tech companies has dropped slightly, from 19% to 17%. The representation of foundations and educational organizations has dropped as our overall organizational membership has grown, with the two categories now amounting to just 4% each of the total. Meanwhile, organizations in the consulting sector (which includes political consulting, tech consulting, digital strategy and design firms) now make up 11% of Civic Hall's organizational mix, more than double from six months ago. And we've also seen an increase in the overall percentage of media companies, both startups and established enterprises, from 8% to 10% of the total.

The daily hum of activity at Civic Hall is punctuated by a number of regularly recurring member-centered events and workshops. These include a Monday 5:30 p.m. "What's Your Week" workshop led by our community ambassadors, which regularly draws several dozen attendees who share what they're working on and how members can help each other; a biweekly "Call to Action" lunch group facilitated by co-founder Micah Sifry that is centered on

people organizing in response to the current political challenges; a Friday morning “WeSparq” workshop where members share tips on how to be most productive; a series of Storytelling Workshops led by one of our ambassadors, Asher Novek; a monthly “Machine Eatable” lunch talk by and for data scientists, curated by Microsoft’s civic innovation team, which spends roughly half of its time at Civic Hall; a monthly “Press How To” lunch conversation with top tech journalists from publications like TechCrunch; and a monthly “Member Show and Tell” that features quick demos and talks by members describing their projects’ progress.

Individual members at Civic Hall also celebrated many personal successes generated in part by their participation here. For example, one of Civic Hall’s scholarship recipients, Abigail Edgecliffe-Johnson of RaceYa, was featured on Good Morning America for her company’s innovative approach to engaging girls in STEM education, and she was profiled in AlleyWatch’s Women in NYC Tech series. ResistX, another early stage civic start-up nesting at Civic Hall also got featured on AlleyWatch’s Women in NYC Tech series. Civic Hall member Larry Lieberman got hired by Civic Hall organizational member Charity Navigator to be the group’s new chief operating officer, a connection that would not have happened if CH Ambassador Ellen Mendlow hadn’t made the introductions.

## EVENTS AND COLLABORATIONS

Civic Hall’s mission is to foster the use of technology for the public good by nurturing the growth of the civic tech ecosystem through curated collaborations, partnerships and events. Through the end of June 2017, Civic Hall has hosted 259 events with 8343 attendees. On a monthly basis, we are holding more events here than we did in 2016: 43 on average per month, compared to 31 per month last year. However, because we no longer have the kind of large stand-alone space that we had at our first home at 156 Fifth Ave, the size of events here has gotten smaller, or as we like to put it, more intimate. At the same time, we have branched out, partnering with other local and national civic institutions to bring the Civic Hall brand and message to broader audiences.

Here are some of the highlights of major events hosted and organized by Civic Hall during the first half of the year. As in the past, a strong vein of activities and events at Civic Hall involve partnerships with public sector organizations. These also manifest as private convenings, public events, and ongoing series.

\*At the end of January, Civic Hall partnered with the Knight Foundation and the New York Public Library to put on a full-day symposium on [Tech, Politics and the Media](#). More than 200 thought leaders from across the fields of journalism, technology, campaign organizing, the law and academia attended

for in-depth discussions of the issues raised following the surprise results of the 2016 election.

\*Also in late January, we held the first of an ongoing quarterly series of workshops for Civic Hall members from public sector organizations. This one was done in partnership with Lux Digital and focused on social media, titled, “What is Emotional Resonance and Why Does My Digital Strategy Need It (Desperately?” Led by Civic Hall members Deanna Zandt and Sonal Bains, twenty-five folks attended from various city agencies that included NYC Parks Department, Taxi & Limousine Commission, Mayor’s Office of Film & TV and the Mayor’s Office of Innovation.

\*Starting in January, the NYC Big Apps competition held a series of packed workshops at Civic Hall designed and run by Civic Hall Labs, engaging hundreds of community members and civic entrepreneurs and a process of discovery and refinement that ultimately led to a doubling of the number of prize applicants.

\*Book authors have started appearing more regularly for launch events and talks at Civic Hall. We were proud to host launch parties for David Karpf, author of the new book *Analytic Activism*; Trebor Scholz, author of the new book *Uberworked and Underpaid: How Workers are Taking Back the Digital Economy*; Eric Liu, author of the new book *You’re More Powerful Than You Think*; David Callahan, author of the new book *The Givers: Wealth, Power and Philanthropy in a New Gilded Age*; and Jonathan Smucker, author of the new book *Hegemony How To*.

\*Civic Hall has developed a series of strategic partnerships with community centers that share our innovative mission, starting with LMHQ, a community center in lower Manhattan, to highlight the work of Civic Hall members working on women’s political and social empowerment. This started with us bringing our #CivicWomen Meetup to a wider audience by connecting it with LMHQ’s monthly women’s breakfasts.

\*In tune with the times, the Democracy Alliance, a Civic Hall organizational member, began a regular series of “Resistance Talks,” bringing together top strategists and organizers to share how they are thinking about the fight for democracy and civil rights. The first well-attended evening session featured Deepak Bhargava of the Center for Community Change; Dan Cantor of the Working Families Party and Deirdre Schifeling of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. The second session brought Ezra Levin and Leah Greenberg, the co-founders of Indivisible, the largest new “resistance” organization, in for an intimate conversation that was attended by many community members as well as activists. More are planned for the fall.

\*The veterans community continues to be an integral part of Civic Hall’s fabric, with several events highlighting our deep connections and

contributions from organizational members. This included an IBM THINK-sponsored Leaders evening with Seth Moulton, a NationSwell-sponsored event organizing veterans to run for office, and the NYC Veterans Alliance hosting former Representative Charlie Rangel and Congressman Chris Murphy for a weekend-long workshop in April training vets with the tools they need to run for office.

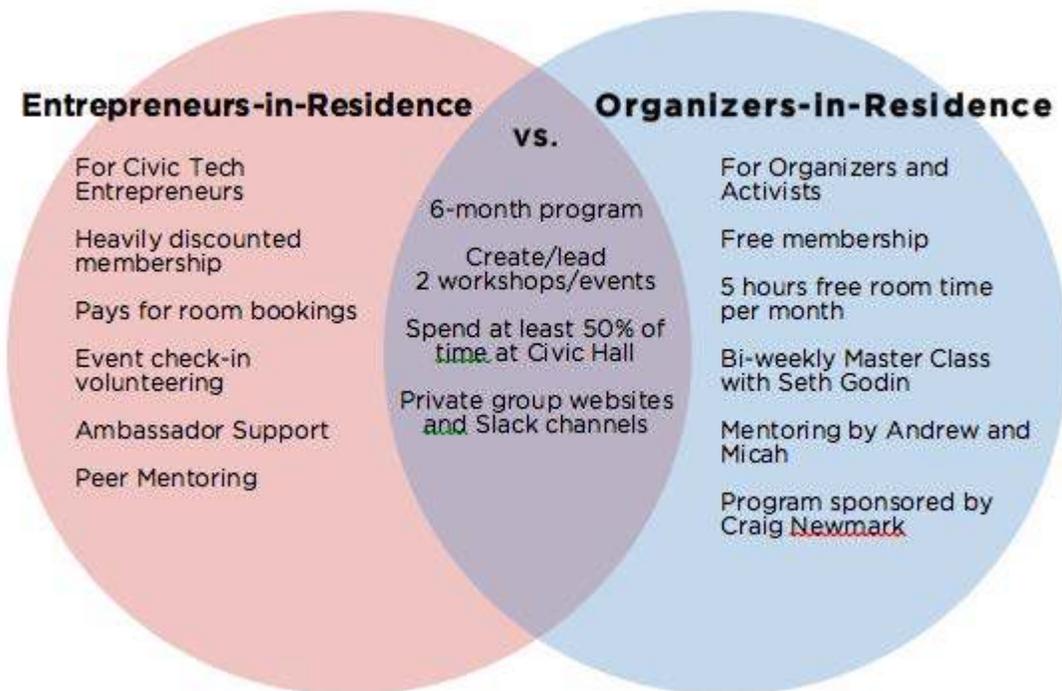
\*Every quarter, the Department of Environmental Protection, a Civic Hall member organization, holds a Green Infrastructure Workshop on a grant program for private property owners in combined sewer areas of New York City. Attendees come to learn how to participate and get DEP funding for green infrastructure. Eligible projects include blue roofs, rain gardens, green roofs, porous pavement and rainwater harvesting on private property in combined sewer areas.

\*This year on International Women's Day, we held an array of member-driven events, capped by a powerhouse panel on "Advancing Gender Equality" featuring Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer; Azadeh Khalil, Executive Director of the Commission of Gender Equality, Mayor's Office; Diana Franco, Director of Women's Entrepreneurship NYC, Mayor's Office of Small Business Services; and Wendy Garcia, Chief Diversity Officer, Comptroller of New York City. More than 80 Civic Hall members were in attendance for that session, and over the course of the day's activities several hundred attended overall.

\* In May, the NYC Mayor's Office of Data Analytics hosted a "send off" at Civic Hall for Chief Analytics Officer Dr. Amen Ra Mashariki who, in his years of service to the city of New York, pushed the Open Data laws to be accessible to all New Yorkers.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

From the very first days of Civic Hall, we have welcomed members based on their commitment to the public good and to civic tech, without regard to their ability to pay. Thus we have always had a robust scholarship program, in part supported by the Craig Newmark Foundation, which funded memberships for veterans and their family members. This spring, we decided to add more structure to the scholarship options at Civic Hall, and ended up creating two new frameworks: Organizers-in-Residence and Entrepreneurs-in-Residence. Each program offers some common benefits to people doing creative and vital work on behalf of the public good, and also strives to create a common identity for participants as they move through a residency period as a cohort. As the chart below shows, there are some significant variations in the two options.



Our initial group of Organizers in Residence are [profiled here](#); our Entrepreneurs in Residence are [here](#). Both groups formally began their tenures August 1st (while our past cohort of scholarship members have finished their terms at Civic Hall, with a number carried forward into these new programs). We are looking forward to working side-by-side with all of them.

Last but not least, the planning for Civic Hall @ Union Square is starting to accelerate. For people interested in learning more about the ambitious project, we have launched a dedicated website, [CivicHallAtUnionSquare.org](http://CivicHallAtUnionSquare.org), where we've begun sharing details about the vision and process going forward. In brief, fundraising for the planning work is moving full-speed ahead, and our team has also begun interviewing potential consultants to assist with everything from architectural design to organizational structure. As part of the development work, we've also started surveying an array of individual leaders and organizations in the nonprofit and public sectors, to better gauge their needs for workforce development and digital skills training. Civic Hall members and friends should see the first fruits of this planning work start to emerge later this year, when we are planning to begin offering some digital skills pilot courses and workshops.