

Good afternoon to all of you, and I want to thank you for joining us as we welcome Code for America to Miami-Dade County.

Let me start by thanking Jen Pahlka for her vision and leadership in founding Code for America which the Washington Post has referred to as "the technology world's equivalent of the Peace Corps..." that brings us "an alternative to the old, broken path of government IT."

Thank you Jen!

Code for America coming to Miami-Dade County did not just happen by coincidence. It is a confirmation of all our efforts at positioning our community as a tech hub and center for innovation.

From the time I became mayor, I have understood that the future of Miami-Dade County and our ability to create employment opportunities for our young people would be contingent upon grow technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship at the local level.

I've often said that our community needed to be the place where the next Twitter or Facebook was born, and we could become the next Silicon Valley, but our version would be Tech Beach.

I also understood that government had to go from being a barrier to becoming an enabler. This is why we set out to support accelerators and incubators, our colleges and universities, and all the places that serve as creation centers for innovation.

In just a short amount of time, we have celebrated the first ever Microsoft Innovation Center in the United States at Venture Hive; the inaugural "eMerge Americas" conference that attracted 6,000 attendees from over 400 companies; and the Mayoral Innovation Summit.

Just last week I was in New York with the President of IBM. They know that the future lies here in Miami.

The excitement for technology that is taking place all over our community is also happening inside our government. We cannot attract innovators without being innovative ourselves.

This is why Miami-Dade County is on a path toward open data that is throwing the doors to County Hall wide open in unprecedented ways.

I am proud of the fact that Miami-Dade County was chosen as the only community in Florida, and among a select few in the nation, to host Code for America fellows this coming year.

Code for America bridges the gap between private sector and government use of technology.

The CFA fellows will help us organize a network of people and projects that are already dedicated to making government services simpler, more effective, and easier to use.

Already, our entire budget and all of our expenditures, including all public employee salaries, are available online. And, in addition to the traditional budget town hall meetings, I held budget meetings

on Twitter and Facebook that allowed for citizens to voice their opinions and provide suggestion on the County budget.

Ultimately, technology will help us achieve a community of 2.5 engaged citizens that use a mobile app to become “eyes and ears” helping us report crimes, expand the coverage audience for Amber Alters and other advisories, leading to an increase in social interaction and involvement.

Beyond connecting citizens to government, expanding technology also translates to another benefit: jobs.

Technology companies are proven high wage job creators. By creating a welcoming environment for them in our community, we are able to slowly reverse the brain drain that has plagued us and instead keep many of our young people here.

Just think, prior to the emergence of this new sector, opportunities such as the ones created by Venture Hive and the Microsoft Innovation Center or through Code for America did not exist. You had to leave Miami in order to access these jobs. Not any longer.

By positioning Miami-Dade County as an emerging leader in technology for this hemisphere, not only are we using technology to increase the interaction and participation of our citizenry, but we are creating a better future for our children and grandchildren.

I want to thank you once again for being here as we take another step toward becoming the next great technology and innovation hub. Thank you!

