

Technically Philly

Philadelphia and the Art of the Public-Private Partnership

Juliana Reyes | October 16, 2014



In fall 2012, the StartUp PHL program was announced. Left to right: Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation President John Grady, Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Cirrimize CEO Khushboo Shah, First Round Capital Managing Director Josh Kopelman, Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Alan Greenberger and Artisan Mobile CEO Bob Moul.

A social enterprise accelerator, a city-backed venture fund and a network of free computer labs to combat the digital divide.

Several of the buzziest, most exciting projects to emerge from Philadelphia's tech scene in the last five years have been public-private partnerships.

Through them, the Nutter administration has declared its dedication to growing the Philadelphia tech scene, with the help of local venture capital firms, accelerators and universities. It's also tried to take cues from the startup world.

When **Mayor Michael Nutter** opened his office of **New Urban Mechanics**, an incubator for public-private partnerships, he told directors [Story Bellows](#) and [Jeff Friedman](#) (now with Microsoft) that if they didn't fail, they weren't trying hard enough, [Bellows has said](#).

We'll be talking about how cities along the East Coast are crafting their public-private partnerships at [Rise](#), our civic innovation conference held from Oct. 22-24.

Continue on next page.



Philadelphia and the Art of the Public-Private Partnership (continued)

Here's a look at three Philly public-private partnerships and how they're faring:

FastFWD: The city, **GoodCompany Group** and the **Wharton Social Impact Initiative** won \$1 million from the **Bloomberg Foundation** to launch a business accelerator that would groom companies who could solve city problems. It'd be a way to reimagine the outdated procurement process, or how the city normally works with outside companies. [The second Fast FWD class is under way now, with several changes, after the first class got mixed reviews.](#)

KEYSPOT and the Freedom Rings Partnership: Fueled by \$18 million in federal stimulus funding, KEYSPOt aimed to close the digital divide by opening more than 80 computer labs that offered digital literacy training. The city and dozens of partners like the **Urban Affairs Coalition**, **Drexel University** and the **Philadelphia OIC** opened computer labs. [The funding has since run out and about 30 labs have shut down, but the remaining 50 still operate, with or without city funds.](#)

StartUp PHL: The city's marquee effort to grow the Philly tech scene is a \$3 million seed fund, matched and run by prestigious venture firm **First Round Capital**. (The program also earmarked \$500,000 for other efforts, like internship programs and a developer boot camp.) Since StartUp PHL's [launch](#) in October 2012, it's only announced one investment, however: [\\$200,000 to Real Food Works](#).

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