



**IMPACT
HUB**

Houston

Catalyzing Impact Entrepreneurship & Innovation Ecosystems

Presented to the Houston City Council Technology and Innovation Committee

Grace Rodriguez: Co-Founder/Executive Director, Impact Hub Houston

August 2026

IMPACT HUB

Workforce Solutions GULF COAST

STATION HOUSTON

TMC | X

TED

TED ACTIVE

CITY OF HOUSTON TEXAS

Mercury Fund

WOMEN IN TECH HOUSTON

this

DIVERSITY FUND HOUSTON

CITY OF HOUSTON OFFICE OF BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

HARRIS CENTRAL APPRAISAL DISTRICT Texas

Magnolia.Fund It's Your Neighborhood. Own It.

TEXAS SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK

BEAM

downtown district

Kracker Nutz

ayn BRAND

CREATE

CULTURE PILOT

VISUALIZED

HOUSTON EXPONENTIAL

Impact Hub Houston <https://houston.impcet>

ABOUT US

IMPACT HUB HOUSTON: Locally Rooted

IMPACT
HUB
HOUSTON

Since 2018, Impact Hub Houston has inspired, connected, and enabled local talent, companies, organizations, and communities to develop and access resources, leverage collaborative efforts, build real-world solutions to local challenges, and grow a thriving regional economy.



Cultivate Community



Facilitate Ecosystems



**Empower
Entrepreneurs**



Develop Infrastructure

32,860+

Event participants

120+

Community Partners
engaged

2,030+

People upskilled &
empowered

\$56M+

Contracts & capital
raised (non-dilutive)
in 2024-2025 alone

ABOUT OUR NETWORK

IMPACT HUB NETWORK: Globally Connected

IMPACT
HUB
HOUSTON

Since 2005, Impact Hub has fostered impact-driven entrepreneurship and ecosystems for a more just and sustainable world, recognized by the United Nations as the world's largest community accelerating solutions for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

500,000+

Impact Makers uniting
the network worldwide

€300M+

Raised by impact
enterprises in 2024–25

15,554

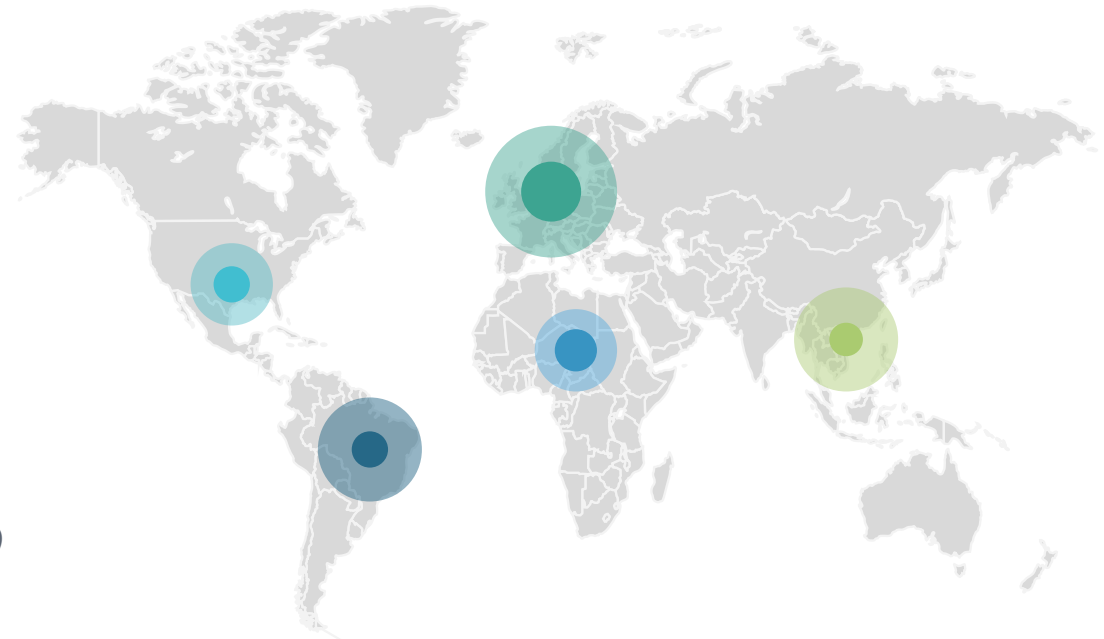
Impact enterprises
supported in 2025

11,186

New jobs created per
year across the network

IMPACT MAKERS WORLDWIDE

- Nearly doubled in two years — from 320,000 Impact Makers (2022–23) to 500,000+ today.
- 55% of network entrepreneurs reached double-digit growth; 54% of network companies have women co-founders.
- 300+ support programmes delivered across five regions: Africa & Middle East, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America.



Source: Impact Hub Global Impact Reports, 2022–23 through 2024–25 (impacthub.net)

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Impact Hub Houston
<https://houston.impacthub.net>

HOUSTON HACKATHON 2025

THANK YOU
PARTNERS & SPONSORS

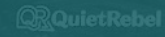


TECH23

January
Advisors



Energytech
Nexus



IMPACT
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Houston

HOUSTON HACKATHON

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September 25: houstonhackathon2026.devpost.com

HOUSTON HACKATHON

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The Houston Hackathon brings people together to tackle challenges and collaborate on projects with potential to improve life in our region.

Founded by Sketch City in 2013 and inherited through its merger with Impact Hub Houston, Houston Hackathon is an annual civic hackathon held in partnership with the City of Houston Office of Innovation that invites people to apply their creativity and skills to build helpful solutions to challenges in our region.

People can bring an existing idea to work on, or explore the challenges submitted by the City, community groups, partner organizations, and neighbors-at-large that will be posted online and presented during the kick-off. Mentors and experts from the City, Impact Hub Houston, Anthropic, and ESRI will be available to help hackers, as well!

[SUBMIT A CHALLENGE](#)

[VOLUNTEER!](#)

[DONATE TO THE CAUSE!](#)

[CLICK HERE TO RSVP](#)



Impact Hub Houston
<https://houston.impacthub.net>



A Decade of Civic Solutions

Over 140 solutions have been developed and submitted since 2013. Last year, five teams out of eleven scored wins — including these four, directly addressed to City-proposed priorities:



Houston Ready Hub

2025 Winner

AI-powered disaster-preparedness app with multilingual support, real-time shelter info, and personalized checklists.



Emergency Preparedness Wizard

2025 Winner

Multilingual, community-centered storm-readiness guidance — "the simplest way for every Houstonian to get storm-ready."



Digital Bulletin Board

2025 Winner

Replaces outdated physical postings with a secure online system for public meeting access and civic transparency.



HelpingHive

2025 Winner

Real-time platform matching volunteers with neighbors in need — turning goodwill into coordinated action.

A Year Later: From Prototype to Launch!

The clearest proof the Hackathon works: What winning teams built just one year ago is now live, funded, and serving Houstonians.



2025 HACKATHON → LIVE PROJECT

Community Exchange

What began as StepUp is now Community Exchange (<https://communityexchange.us>) — a project of The Change Lab, fiscally sponsored by Impact Hub Houston.

Community Exchange centralizes Houston civic information — from 7,500+ organizations and 5,500+ verified resources across 89 neighborhoods — in English, Spanish & Vietnamese.



2025 HACKATHON WINNER → LAUNCHED

Friendr For Life

The 2025 “People’s Choice” person-pet matching concept is now live at <https://friendrforlife.org>, launched by Friends For Life Animal Shelter.

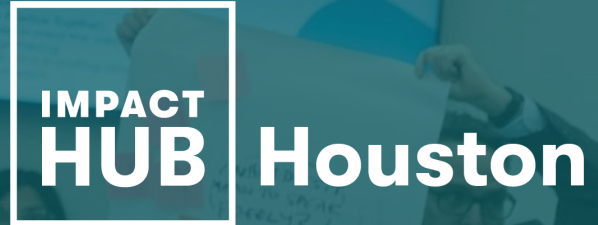
Built out by the shelter’s behavior manager and a volunteer developer, it uses a dating-app-style algorithm to match adopters to pets by behavior — tackling the #1 reason pets are returned.

A hackathon idea became a working nonprofit product within a year, run by the organization it was built for.



How This Helps Houston: Innovation Pipeline

- Gives the City a low-cost, high-yield R&D pipeline — dozens of community-built policy ideas and open-data solutions each year, at a fraction of consulting cost.
- Deepens City relationships with communities, organizations, and businesses already participating in the event, connecting City staff directly with engaged, motivated stakeholders.
- Builds civic trust and participation by giving everyday Houstonians a real seat at the table on the challenges they're passionate about and that regularly affect them.
- Feeds directly into Impact Hub Houston's other pipelines: winning teams can enter our accelerator and Google-certified workforce pathways, turning a weekend of ideas into sustained economic activity.



FRWD: FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Hurricane Harvey exposed a hard truth: in a disaster, Houston's public, private, educational, and nonprofit responders were disconnected and lacked coordination, and the region's talent wasn't sufficiently prepared for the jobs that recovery required.
- In December 2022, JPMorgan Chase invested \$3.3M in Houston, anchoring a \$1.8M, 17-member Resiliency Workforce Collaborative (RWC) led by Houston Community College.
- Founding members included the City of Houston, Harris County, Workforce Solutions, and Impact Hub Houston, aligned to the City's Complete Communities initiative for underserved neighborhoods.
- Goal: A coordinated, cross-sector talent development ecosystem spanning clean energy, disaster response, resilient infrastructure, and skilled trades.

IMPACT HUB HOUSTON: FRWD IMPACT

- While we started with developing an Ecosystem Playbook and Platform for the Collaborative, Impact Hub Houston now offers Future-Ready Workforce Development (FRWD) Impact: Digital Skills Training, Credentialing, and Employer Engagement inside RWC's coordinated model.
- People can gain free/low-cost, industry-recognized Google Professional Certificates — AI, Data Analytics, Business Intelligence, Project Management, Cybersecurity, Digital Marketing.
- We offer a dual pathway unique among RWC partners: Participants are prepared to get a job AND to grow a business that creates jobs, with mentorship and capital-access navigation through our impact + innovation ecosystems.

Pending a proposed JPMorgan Chase Foundation grant that builds on a prior grant cycle that successfully engaged 64 employers and served 2,828 individuals.

How This Helps Houston: Talent Pipeline

200

Learners enrolled

150

Certified

100

Placed in quality
jobs

50

Transition to
entrepreneurship

12-month program targets

- Certificate fields carry median salaries of \$96,000+ — more than double Houston's \$42,430 per-capita income — turning credentials into real household wealth-building.
- Builds the AI-, data-, and cyber-ready workforce Houston's energy, healthcare, and logistics employers already need, while strengthening disaster-response capacity for the next Harvey.
- If all outcomes roll into the shared measurement dashboard being built by Impact Hub Houston, RWC will offer one coordinated view of workforce resilience instead of a dozen disconnected reports.



SYNC: ECOSYSTEM PLATFORM

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THE CONTEXT: HISTORY



HOUSTON

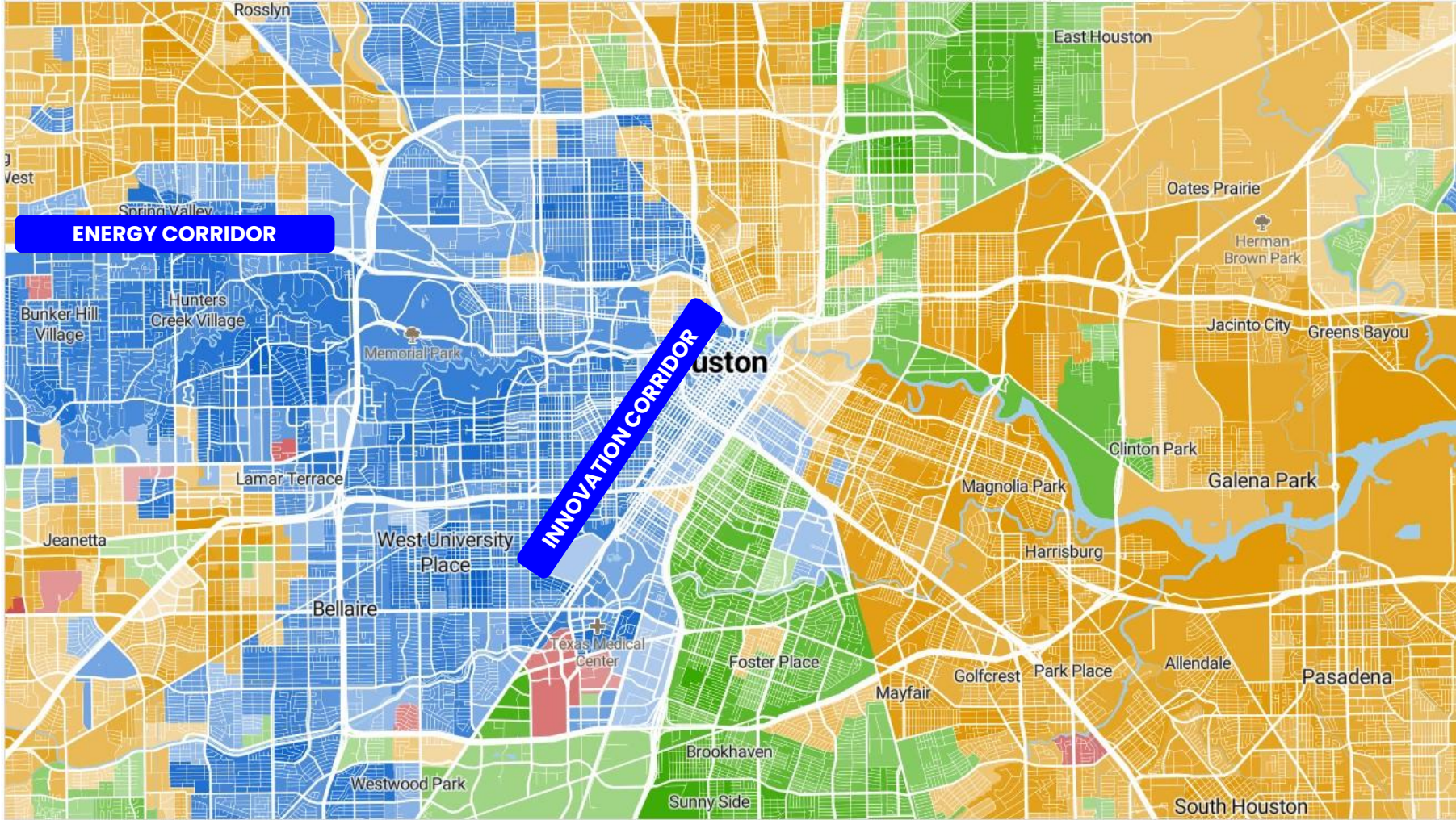
METRORail lines

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THE CHALLENGE: WE'RE BIGGER THAN THIS



Majority Race Key



THE CHALLENGES: CONNECTION. COLLABORATION. COORDINATION. CAPITAL.

- **Locally:** The Mayor's Women & Minority Business Task Force (now BEAMW) identified 24 distinct gaps limiting the profitability and sustainability of Houston area businesses — operational acumen, capacity, capital, and ecosystem navigation chief among them. Houston's 80+ support organizations largely operated in silos, making some referrals but lacking ability to share data and track longitudinal and systemic impact across networks. There was also little incentive to share resources and provide mutual support, as knowledge and programs were kept close as competitive advantages for philanthropic funding.
- **Globally:** Impact Hub's network of 132+ Hubs across 68 countries faces the identical problem at scale — decentralization, capacity challenges, varying programs, and siloed knowledge mean the resources, expertise, and funding opportunities already exist somewhere in the network, but Hubs struggle to find and collaborate with each other.
- **Overall:** Siloed work means duplicated effort, inefficient resource allocation, invisible expertise, and entrepreneurs missing out on resources and support — local and global — that already exist.

OUR SOLUTION: SYNC — SYstem for Network Collaboration



LOCAL

SYNC Local

- Single source of truth connecting Houston's chambers of commerce, academic institutions, capital providers, business support organizations, and other stakeholders
- Streamlines intake, matches entrepreneurs to the right resources, and gives partner organizations individual and shared dashboards instead of manual tracking
- Being built as a superset of Impact Hub Houston's existing Support Stack, already coordinating 60+ regional partners



GLOBAL

SYNC — SYstem for Network Collaboration

- AI-powered platform led by Impact Hub Houston, Stockholm, Aruba, Hyderabad, Global, with 25 Hubs across 5 continents committed to Pilot
- Features: Dashboard, Resources, Makers, Hubs, Opportunities & Marketplace libraries already built and testing
- Owned and governed by the Impact Hub network, not gatekept by a private/public company
- Connects Houston directly to 132+ national and international Impact Hub communities & markets

SYNC — SYstem for Network Collaboration



SYNC

SYstem for Network Collaboration

Dashboard

Resources

Makers

Hubs

Opportunities

Marketplace

Ask the Network

Inbox

Admin

Grace Rodriguez

Impact Hub Houston

All content on this platform is demo content, created to illustrate how the platform works.

HOUSTON

Welcome back, Grace.

Here is what is moving across the network today.

Ask the Network

Browse

5

RESOURCES IN YOUR HUB

130

MEMBERS IN YOUR HUB

11

OPEN OPPORTUNITIES

24

HUBS IN THE NETWORK

Matches your hub's focus areas

AcceleratorIncubatorConsultingProgramsWorkshopsEvents

Youth Employment Program Playbook

Stockholm

StrategyNetwork

Community Onboarding Playbook (Demo)

Demo

StrategyNetwork

Impact Measurement Starter Kit (Demo)

Demo

TemplateNetwork

Activity

Browse all →

REAL OPPORTUNITY (Ask Grace!): Investor Connections for your Deep Tech Startups

Project · Houston

21d ago

REAL AID REQUEST (Ask Grace or Claudia!): Please Help IH Caracas Recover from Venezuela Earthquakes!

Partnership · Houston

21d ago

Co-create the Demo Hub Learning Festival

Partnership · Demo

26d ago

Coworking Space Financial Model (Demo)

Template · Demo

26d ago



How This Helps Houston: Support Pipeline

- Increases Coordination: Dedicated decentralized platform governed by the participating organizations enhances capacity, transparency, trust, and collaboration among stakeholders.
- Increases ROI: Shared referral and reporting infrastructure increases organizational and ecosystem efficiency and efficacy, and reduces duplicated public and philanthropic spend.
- Local + Global Integration: Both platforms are being built to interoperate, so local ecosystems can plug into our global network, and vice versa.
- Positions Houston as a connected node in a worldwide impact economy, giving local entrepreneurs and City initiatives a direct channel to global expertise, partnerships, resources and templates other cities have already built.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

How YOU Can Help: Champion Impact Innovation!

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Champion the Houston Hackathon

Recruit City departments to provide open data and bring real challenges for teams to solve, and join us on September 25 at the Ion!



Champion FRWD as a core workforce resilience strategy

Connect us to potential partners and supporters to scale up the Google Career Certificates Scholarship opportunity.



Champion public-private investment

Identify matching funds, in-kind spaces, procurement pathways, and pilot opportunities our ecosystem can leverage to help Houston-grown solutions scale.



Champion SYNC as an Ecosystem Coordination Resource

Connect us to potential partners and funders that can strengthen development and implementation of the platform to support ecosystem stakeholders across the region.

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Let's Build Better, Together

Grace Rodriguez

Co-Founder/Executive Director

<https://houston.impacthub.net>