

# Hack SF Nonprofit Brief

## Organizational Background

1. What is your organization's vision, mission or goal?

The mission of the Eviction Defense Collaborative is to preserve affordable housing, to prevent homelessness, and to protect the unique diversity of San Francisco's neighborhoods.

2. Who does your organization serve?

EDC's legal team will help any person who has been sued for eviction – no one seeking help with their unlawful detainer (eviction) lawsuit is ever turned away.

The vast majority (97%) of the tenants EDC helps are low-income, and typically around half (50%) of the households we work with include a disabled family member. About 30% of EDC client households include a family with minor children – with two-thirds of all EDC client families headed by a single mother. A significant number (15%) of EDC client homes include an elderly family member, similarly 15% of those households had limited English language proficiency.

3. What specific things do you do for them?

EDC's attorneys and volunteers provide assistance with the initial response to the eviction lawsuit – a response which must be filed within 5 days of the tenant being served with the lawsuit paperwork.

In addition to help meeting that crucial, initial deadline EDC provides support and tenant counseling throughout the legal process – helping tenants manage the paperwork and deadlines necessary to assert their civil rights at Court.

EDC attorneys are also available to represent tenants sued for eviction in their jury trial for cases that do not settle.

EDC's rental assistance department – RADCo – provides one-time rental assistance and case management to help income qualified families and individuals who have a temporary financial setback keep their affordable home.

4. How do you measure your success? ie, what are some key metrics that should be included in the brief to help hackathon participants better understand your organization and what you do? Examples could include:

- a. Number of constituents served per year broken out by program / initiative
- b. Number of dollars raised and invested in programs per year
- c. Number of people who have moved from high risk to lower risk, etc.

The most important measure of success is in being available to any person sued for eviction. EDC's fundamental purpose is in ensuring equal access to justice in eviction cases at the civil courthouse – success in this goal means being truly accessible and affordable for all tenants seeking help with their case. Since the agency opened in 1996, over 25,000 homes have been defended with EDC's help.

However, simple access to the broken civil court system is not enough – success at EDC is also measured by how many tenants keep their home after withstanding the onslaught of the eviction lawsuit. Typically, more than two-thirds of tenants sued for eviction settle their case with an agreement to move out of their home. Reducing the overall percentage of tenants that are displaced from their homes as a result of an eviction lawsuit is a key measure of success at EDC.

Unfortunately, most displacement in San Francisco right now happens outside of the formal court system – through harassment, buy-outs, threats of Ellis Act/Owner Move-ins, and other illegal and quasi-legal means. Success for the HackSF project can be measured in the number of tenants who are reached with the core message of the campaign – “Don't Move!” – and in the number of tenants who then access information about their housing rights

5. What one event, program, project, etc. has your organization been responsible for that stands out in your mind as epitomizing the type of success and effectiveness you'd like to have on an ongoing basis if you could?

The recent Citywide Tenants Convention – held February 8, 2014 – exemplifies the type of success EDC and our partners in the tenants rights movement look to emulate on an on-going basis. The Citywide convention was the culmination of a series of neighborhood based conventions - large meetings open to the public, designed to produce new and innovative laws to protect tenants and to prevent unnecessary or illegal displacement.

With over 500 tenants in attendance at the Citywide convention – and more turned away for lack of space – participants spent an afternoon working in either a Spanish, English, or Chinese speaking small group to discuss eight proposals for new laws that had been submitted by the various neighborhood conventions. At the end of the afternoon, each person completed a ballot of their personal priorities for new tenant protections. EDC and the other organizing agencies – collectively known at the Anti-Displacement Coalition – will now take those legislative priorities to City Hall and if necessary, the November ballot.

This event epitomized EDC-style success for a number of reasons. First and foremost – it was truly a collaborative effort; EDC was one of dozens of tenants’ rights agencies who contributed to the process of organizing the neighborhood and citywide conventions. Equally important was the inclusive nature of the event – with the program offered in three languages, with free child care, in a space accessible to persons of all abilities. The diversity of the crowd in attendance mirrored the City itself – with wealthy tenants, middle class tenants, and working class tenants all coming together to discuss the proposals.

Because of the collaborative, inclusive and open nature of the conventions, they were particularly successful on a number of grounds – most importantly, the development of viable new laws. They were also successful in that hundreds of tenants were connected with information about their rights and how to access help fighting displacement. Critically, the conventions also took advantage of the current coverage of tenants’ issues to contribute more effective messaging around displacement than what has been found in traditional media – which seems stuck in the shallow, limited narrative of “tech is evil”. The event was also successful as a “movement builder” – where tenants who had not previously volunteered or protested for housing justice were plugged into the growing collaboration of agencies and communities which have a stake in preserving as many of San Francisco’s affordable tenancies as possible.

Creating more effective laws to fight displacement, growing the movement for housing justice, getting out a constructive message of creative problem solving, and increasing awareness around tenants rights were all byproducts of an inclusive, collaborative program designed by and for a diverse set of San Franciscans: in all these ways, the Citywide convention exemplifies the type of on-going success needed to prevent any more unnecessary displacement of tenants.

## **Hackathon Project Brief**

6. We suggest two different ways to think about how to approach defining the problem you’d like hackathon teams to work on:
  - a. Is there an organizational challenge that you want solved? For example, do you have certain resources available but no means to get them to the people who need them most? OR
  - b. Do the people your organization serves have a need that your organization isn’t currently addressing?

For example, **are there people who could benefit from your organization’s services but lack the awareness about the value of what you have to offer? →YES!!!**

There is widespread – if surprising! – agreement throughout the housing and tenants rights community as to the greatest system-wide need right now: a city-wide tenants rights education campaign, which loudly sends out the message of “DON’T MOVE” to tenants – and which connects them to local, neighborhood based tenant counseling services. We are excited to turn to HackSF for help filling in this critical, much needed gap.

The formal lawsuits EDC fights to keep our clients in their homes represent the mere “tip of the iceberg” of total tenant displacements in San Francisco. Far more tenants are displaced through extra-legal, quasi-legal and straight up illegal methods. Many landlords will simply ask tenants protected by rent control / who have every right to stay to move out of their homes - tenants who do not speak English, elderly tenants, and tenants with a disability are particularly vulnerable to the simple “ask-out” (where a landlord illegally evicts a tenant just by asking them to leave).

Many, many tenancies could be saved just by educating tenants about their basic right to stay when they are asked to leave.

When the “ask-out” doesn’t work, many landlords turn to the “buy-out” – offering a small, but attractive sum of money to the tenant to vacate their unit. Those facing “buy-out” offers rarely get the counseling they need to completely understand the long-term consequences of such a transaction. Too frequently, the ask-out and buy-out offers are coupled with a threat – sometimes implied, sometimes as clear as the eviction attorneys letterhead it is sent on – that if the tenant does not voluntarily move out, that the landlord will invoke one of the “no-fault” just causes for eviction: owner move-in, or the dreaded Ellis Act.

Many, many tenancies could be saved just by connecting tenants to the multiplicity of local agencies who can help them fight every variety of attempts to evict them.

Tenants facing aggressive attempts at displacement often get repeated letters and eviction notices from their landlord – a campaign which often becomes the real reason the tenant leaves: they are tired of the harassment from the landlord. The various forms of “harass-outs” are perhaps the hardest type of eviction efforts to fight, since they tend to involve a complicated combination of legal and illegal tactics, tailored to the tenants particular vulnerability. A long-term harassment effort by the landlord is one of the most common reasons tenants leave their rent controlled homes: they are simply tired of the day to day trouble and struggle.

Many, many tenancies could be saved by empowering and supporting those facing harassment, so that they do not face that fight alone.

In sum our organizational challenge is the marketing, messaging and promotion of a “Don’t Move” public information campaign for tenants and if possible, a public-

facing site that can channel those in need of eviction defense to already existing resources and help.

San Francisco has many strong protections for tenants in its laws. Dozens of local agencies exist to help tenants assert these rights and keep their homes. Tenants across the City are desperate for more information about their situation and how to keep from being displaced. A multi-lingual, multi-phase, multi-media campaign that sends a strong message of “DON’T MOVE” – and that connects tenants with the help available in their own neighborhood, in their own language – is the missing link in the growing movement to preserve as many tenancies in San Francisco as possible.

7. What background information do you think hackathon participants will need to have in order to brainstorm potential solutions?

The demographics of the tenants we are trying to reach with this campaign would be important for participants to have in mind. Tenants from vulnerable populations – particularly those who have limited English or do not speak English – are the primary target of the campaign. Tenants with disabilities, elderly tenants, families with children, and tenants living in the hardest hit neighborhoods for displacement (the Mission/Protrero/Bernal Heights, Chinatown, the Tenderloin/SOMA, and Bayview/Hunters Point) are a high priority.

We hope to leverage from the participants is their unique knowledge at how to deliver the particular message of “Don’t Move” to a target population throughout the city through as many venues and methods as are necessary to carry the message effectively.

In addition, participants should have access to the list of agencies throughout the city where tenants can get help asserting their civil housing rights. That list is attached at the end of this brief.

8. What resources should participants consider as being available to them when thinking about your challenge (key internal staff, relationships with influential people, physical stores, products, existing advertising / marketing channels, technology platforms / websites, etc.)?

There are some capital resources available to apply to the programs/ideas that come out of the hackathon: \$50,000 for hard costs/ads/other campaign materials + any matching funds/donations from the LetshackSF sponsors.

There are significant language/translation resources available. Although we may not be able to staff the hackathon with both Chinese and Spanish speakers, we have significant access to staff and volunteers within the eviction defense community whom we could call on to translate any materials coming out of the hackathon.

As the central office fighting formal evictions in San Francisco, EDC has well-developed relationships at all levels of government. Especially in partnership with the sponsoring companies in this event, cooperation with and support for any hackathon project at City Hall seems a potentially valuable resource.

EDC's website and the websites of our partnering agencies should be considered both a resource – and a potential challenge – for the hackathon participants. On the plus side, almost all of the tenants rights information we would hope to connect uninformed tenants to is already posted somewhere on one the various websites; there is a lot of good information for tenants out there – it just isn't easily accessible if you don't know what you're looking for!

Accordingly, one of the challenges of the education campaign is figuring exactly where and through what channels/portals people who don't even know these tenants rights agencies exist can get connected to basic information. Determining the best way to leverage these existing resources and agencies is one of our goals for the hackathon.

The lawgives.com team is also a resource for hackathon participants, and will be on hand the day of the event. Lawgives.com has developed an innovative platform that connects communities of users with specialized legal knowledge – a model it has been exploring with EDC around eviction defense in San Francisco. The lawgives.com team are helpful in that they “speak tech” and can help bridge the knowledge gap between EDC staff and hackathon participants. In addition, the lawgives.com platform offers a potential model/ framework/resource for how to connect tenants to information and attorneys.

Finally, EDC offers some resources to help support the efforts of the participants. The Executive Director will be on hand throughout the event, as will key program staff and volunteers. After the event, EDC has a number of resources that could help sustain any project or campaign that emerges from the hackathon – including both our current paid vendors (Design Action Collective and EIS computer consultants) and on ongoing volunteer IT team being put together in coordination with local tech companies. Both on the day itself, and moving forward, EDC is excited to bring the limited resources and support at our disposal to the project.

9. Is there anything else you think hackathon participants would benefit from knowing about your organization or your constituents (annual report, testimonials, additional facts, data or metrics)?

It might be helpful for participants to visit EDC's website and view the 2012 Eviction Report: [http://www.evictiondefense.org/EDC\\_report\\_6\\_smaller.pdf](http://www.evictiondefense.org/EDC_report_6_smaller.pdf). This report gives some context to the EDC's work (including highlighting the high eviction neighborhoods) – as well as showing how far behind the curve we are in terms of our website and media development.

One point of clarification about EDC's role in the broader tenants rights community: EDC is unique in our accessibility to tenants because every single tenants who actually get sued for eviction is mailed a notice - directly from the Court, on the day the lawsuit is filed - that points them to EDC. We do basically zero outreach because a) folks who get sued get a notice from the Court to get over to EDC (and all the other non-profits/rent board/etc. all send tenants to EDC if they have an eviction lawsuit and b) we really don't want more tenants/clients - especially if they haven't been sued for eviction - to come to EDC. We're swamped!

What we'd really like to do is get to tenants BEFORE they get sued/get to folks who are being put out without any formal lawsuit - and get them better information about their rights / better information about the tenant counseling agencies in their neighborhood where they can get direct help. Tenants find their way to the counseling agencies through a variety of mechanisms, but mostly through referrals from other agencies/ city departments. A fundamental goal of any "Don't Move - Stay and Fight" campaign is connecting those who aren't presently making it into the counseling agencies with information about their rights - and how to get connected to the support already available in their neighborhood.

Two elements seems essential: an ad/media campaign that gets the message of "don't move" out around the city as broadly as possible - and a means to connect tenants to the counseling agencies/ information about their rights. Some have suggested that the second element be a stand alone, easy to navigate website ("[www.dontmovesf.com](http://www.dontmovesf.com)" or something) that can be widely promoted in the ad campaign - and that when tenants visit it, the site helps them find both the information they need and the tenants rights group that is most helpful for their unique situation.

Often, the information they are pointed to will actually be on the website of a group that can help them - so for example, if a Spanish speaking tenant in the Mission is looking for help with harassment, the [www.dontmovesf.com](http://www.dontmovesf.com) website would direct them to the website of Causa Justa Just Cause - where they can both get informed about their rights in a harassment situation AND get connected to CJC's services. Below are the agencies best equipped to educate and support tenants facing displacement.

## Partners

ACCESS Center (SF Superior Court Self Help Center)  
AIDS Housing Alliance  
AIDS Legal Referral Panel  
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment  
Anit-Eviction Mapping Project  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus  
Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach  
Bay Area Legal Aid  
Bayview/Hunters Point Community Legal  
Causa Justa :: Just Cause  
Chinatown Community Development Center  
Curry Senior Center  
Dolores Street Community Services - MSROC  
Homeless Prenatal Program  
Housing Rights Committee  
Independent Living Resource Center  
Justice and Diversity Center - Homeless Advocacy Project  
Legal Assistance to the Elderly  
PODER  
San Francisco Rent Board  
San Francisco Tenants Union  
San Francisco Veterans Equity Center - BiSHOP  
Self-Help for the Elderly  
Senior and Disability Action  
South of Market Community Action Network  
Swords to Plowshares  
Tenants Together  
Tenderloin Housing Clinic - Ellis Act  
Tenderloin Housing Clinic - CC SRO Collab

## Website

<http://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/self-help>  
<http://www.ahasf.org/>  
<http://www.alrp.org/>  
<http://www.calorganize.org/chapter/949/home>  
<https://antievictionmap.squarespace.com/>  
<http://www.advancingjustice-alc.org/>  
<http://www.apilegaloutreach.org/>  
<http://baylegal.org/>  
<http://bhpcommunitylegal.org/>  
<http://www.cjjc.org/>  
<http://chinatowncdc.org/>  
<http://curryseniorcenter.org/>  
<http://www.dscs.org/content/view/152/146/>  
<http://www.homelessprenatal.org/>  
<http://www.hrcsf.org/>  
<http://www.ilrcsf.org/>  
<http://www.sfbar.org/jdc/legal-services/hap/index.aspx>  
<http://www.laesf.org/>  
<http://www.podersf.org/>  
<http://www.sfrb.org/>  
<http://www.sftu.org/>  
<http://bishop.vetsequitycenter.org/>  
<http://www.selfhelpelderly.org/index.php>  
<http://sdaction.org/>  
<http://www.somcan.org/>  
<http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org/>  
<http://tenantstogether.org/>  
[http://www.thclinic.org/legal\\_services.php](http://www.thclinic.org/legal_services.php)  
<http://www.ccsro.org/>