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Obama Embraces Seattle Start-Up



President-elect **Barack Obama**'s transition team has a reputation for being tech-savvy -- and that extends to its record-keeping and disclosure through Change.gov. In keeping with Obama's pledge to run the most open and transparent transition in history, his staff is voluntarily releasing the names of its donors on a monthly basis through a nascent Web application called Blist. The Seattle-based start-up launched its program in beta form in February and is backed by Frazier Technology Ventures and Morgenthaler Ventures.

Having buy-in by Obama isn't a bad start for Blist founder **Kevin Merrit** who previously worked for FrontBridge Technologies and Microsoft. His invention is similar to an online spreadsheet, but users can join tables together, create nested tables, and layer on social networking features that allow users to find data created by others. As of Dec. 15, 2008, \$3.8 million had been raised from 53,853 donors, according to the transition team's latest figures. The average donation is \$70.62 per donor. Blist has raised \$6.5 million in a first round of funding from venture capitalists, according to the VentureBeat blog.