OPEN SOURCE VOTING SYSTEM
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Christopher Jerdonek, Chair
Larry Bafundo, Vice Chair
Carl Hage
Roan Kattouw
Tony Wasserman

ELECTIONS COMMISSION
City and County of San Francisco

January 5, 2017

To: Elections Commission

From: Open Source Voting System Technical Advisory Committee (OSVTAC)

RE: OSVTAC Report #2 (January 2017)

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This is the second report of the Open Source Voting System Technical Advisory Committee (OSTVAC, or TAC) to the Elections Commission.

Below is a description of the TAC's activities since its last update on September 5 , 2017. Prior updates to the Commission are available at https://osvtac.github.io/past-meetings.

Meetings

Since its last report the TAC has had three meetings:

Wednesday, September 21, Thursday, October 19, and Friday, November 16, all of which were held at 6:00pm at City Hall.

This approved minutes from the December 14th meeting are attached.

> **Comment [1]:** My assumption is that we'll want to include this.

Developments in Election Technology Modernization:

The TAC has been monitoring developments in the election technology landscape, particularly when open source is being used to modernize elections systems. It has learned that Colorado is conducting a risk limiting audit using an open source solution to rescan a statistical sample of ballots. Similarly, Los Angeles County is designing a custom made voting booth and has submitted a portion of its tally system for state certification; although it is unclear if any part of its voting system will be made open source. Meanwhile, Travis County, Texas abandoned its pursuit of an open source voting system due to concerns around cost and complexity.

Building Awareness for the SF Open Source Voting Effort:

Various members of the TAC attended or spoke at conferences in their personal capacity to help educate the public around the value of open source and build awareness around the modernization effort in San Francisco. Member Kattouw attended a conference in Berkeley and Member Wasserman spoke at an open source conference in Bangalore, India. Member Bafundo spoke with Slalom, a consulting firm that is working with the City to assess the feasibility of an open source system, about how governments have used modular procurement techniques to deliver solutions with less risk.

Evolving Recommendations Document:

The TAC continues to work on a "recommendations document" that is aimed at informing the City's approach to developing an open source voting system. This document is being developed iteratively and in public view on Github.

Presentation by 18F on Modular Procurement:

Ms. Jesse Posilkin, an innovation specialist at 18F (a consultancy within the federal government that helps agencies modernize their digital services) was invited by Member Bafundo to present to the TAC on the value of modular procurement. Ms. Posilkin leads 18F's state and local practice and shared some of her experiences helping governments adopt more agile ways of buying and developing technology. She describes an approach where governments define what they hope to achieve in terms of broad "capabilities", rather than as specific features or functionality, and engage with vendors to deliver solutions iteratively, through small and independent "modules", rather than a single contract.

Modular procurement minimizes risk to software projects in several ways. It creates flexibility for the "highest value solution" to emerge based on what is learned through development and the timeline and budget available, rather than specifying everything in an request for proposal (RFP). The latter approach often leads to unexpected costs and delays as more is learned about the problem space and the feasibility of specific aspects of the solution. A modular approach also provides the buyer with greater control over project costs and direction, as the solution is

delivered iteratively, allowing for teams to demonstrate progress with stakeholders and course correct if necessary.

Applying these principles to San Francisco's open source voting effort is encouraged and the TAC plans to incorporate them in its final "recommendation document" to the Commission. It will require a high-level vision for the new voting system, in terms of key capabilities and components, and a perspective on how the various modules to be delivered should be sequenced. This may also represent an organizational and cultural shift for the City's technology and contracting teams, as it will require greater "product ownership" as the modules are delivered iteratively from various vendors and contracts.

Attachments

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