

January 13, 2020

An open letter to the City and County of San Francisco, the Elections Commission, Linda Gerull City CIO and Executive Director of the Department of Technology at the City, and John Arntz the Director of Elections.

The purpose of this letter is to share with the City and County of San Francisco (CCSF) an alternative approach to funding the development of an open source voting system that we believe is at once both achievable and will significantly reduce the costs and risks to San Francisco. While there are different ways to achieve the goal, we hope that any RFP issued by the CCSF for a future elections system will permit the approach we describe as a way to meet the needs of the CCSF.

The need for secure and affordable elections systems has never been greater. We are excited that the city has taken the lead in pioneering the future of the security of our democracy. This process has led to the recommendation of an **open source elections system** -- an approach we believe, from our own experience, aligns the interests of trust, accuracy, security, and affordability.

Building an open source election system will be a complex and costly process that, by some estimates, could require tens of millions of dollars spent over a period of several years. We see creative avenues being pursued by the CCSF to fund the development of this system and would like to mention an alternative funding approach that would **eliminate the upfront cost to CCSF and not exceed CCSF's current annual costs**, while at the same time ensuring that the system is built to meet the needs of the CCSF, including certification by the state. The CCSF is not the only government with this problem: election systems cost US taxpayers billions of dollars today. The choice of open source provides the opportunity for San Francisco to leverage its leadership and influence, in addition to, and in some cases as an alternative to, purchasing power. We are building a certified, secure voting system consisting of entirely open source software. Based upon our understanding of the requirements from the CCSF's past RFP, if CCSF were to issue an RFP for an open source voting system, we would bid on this new RFP with similar terms to, and at a cost not greater than what the CCSF is currently paying for its closed source solution. Based on the decades of experience that each of us has in open source and technology business in California, combined with an indication of interest from the CCSF in an approach like ours, we believe we can fund this business through investments from California investors and corporations.

We are Open Source Election Systems (OSSES). Our team consists of serial entrepreneurs who are experts in open source business models, cyber security, and, specifically, open source election systems. Team members include: Brian J. Fox, first employee at the Free Software Foundation, creator of the Bash shell and an early version of a complete open source voting system; David Henkel-Wallace, founder of the original open source company, Cygnus (now Red

Hat) among other successful businesses, and Alex Kehaya, an educator and entrepreneur who has founded several businesses.

We have the experience, network, and the will to succeed and we view this as one of the greatest services we could provide to our democracy and democracies across the globe. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time with questions or suggestions.

Regards,
The OSES Team
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