

## VoteApp Civic Engagement Platform

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### **Challenge**

Since 2011 and the rise of the so-called 'Arab Spring' Egypt has undergone unprecedented changes. Two revolutions and two constitutions later, Egypt has emerged from this tumultuous period as a young democracy. Access to social media and citizen generated web content has become central to Egypt's young technologically-oriented population. Additionally, the emerging tech-based start-up scene in Egypt is burgeoning. With an estimated 75% of the population under 25 years old, a huge opportunity has arisen for Egypt to become a leading democratic state in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In October 2015, Egypt held its first fully democratic national parliamentary elections since the second revolution of June 30, 2013.

Egypt has moved quickly towards a fully democratic system of governance. However, there is a paucity of civil engagement and a lack of accompanying institutions to support this transition. Navigating politics in a young democracy with over 100 political parties can be an overwhelming process. As a result, electoral turnout, especially amongst the young, was disappointingly low in the 2015 Parliamentary elections. The low turnout can, in part, be attributed to the lack of available information about candidates, elected officials and political parties. Furthermore, entrepreneurs in Egypt often suffer from the lack of access to experienced mentors and capital, both of which are crucial when it comes to turning a great idea into a great business. If Egypt is to continue to develop, it will need a healthy democracy and thriving small and medium-sized enterprises in the private sector.

### **Project Overview:**

The VoteApp is a civic engagement platform designed to educate voters about their political representatives. It will take the form of a web-based application that will help voters become more engaged in the democratic process in Egypt. By making information simple, accessible and informative, the platform will help users make more educated voting decisions.

A technology conference will be organized aiming to link the startup ecosystems of both Egypt and the United States. The conference is to be held in New York City, at which the VoteApp mobile application will be featured as tangible proof of the collaborative development effort between the East and the West, alongside startup demonstrations, industry speakers and investment seminars.

### **Project Goals:**

The vote application aims to allow users to:

- Discover candidates and elected officials, learn about their accomplishments, voting record and positions on issues
- Save favourite candidates onto their 'online ballot'
- Express public support by using support/trust buttons and share candidates' profiles on social media
- Explore political parties based on your views
- Compile campaigning material
- Allow politicians and candidates to more easily connect with their electorate

The East/West start-up conference aims to:

- Bring together start-ups and entrepreneurs from the East and West

- Provide an opportunity to discuss respective ecosystems
- Help start-ups from the East and West collaborate to overcome challenges
- Launch the VoteApp application
- Explore the investment climate in the West

**Population Served**

Vote App target population includes technologically-oriented citizens with access to a smartphone. Today, 30% of mobile phone users in Egypt are smartphone users (World Bank).

**Project Milestones:**

Phase 1: Research and gather business requirements

Phase 2: Development

Phase 3: Quality Assurance

Phase 4: Release and Conference

**Expected Outcome:**

Egypt has a unique opportunity to develop into the economic and democratic powerhouse of the Middle East and North Africa region. The VoteApp project aims to play a part in this journey by compiling and organizing information and by bringing talented people from the East and West. Through civic engagement, use of technology and support for small business, the East and West can both share a better future. We aim to improve civic engagement, keep electorates informed and foster entrepreneurial relationships between the East and West.

