



Request for Proposal Our Vote Live 3.0

Summary

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law seeks proposals from database developers for the deployment of a new Our Vote Live (OVL) database system. This database provides essential information and infrastructure for a national voter protection legal program. The project will contain two phases; the first will involve building a simple and sustainable system that contains the core functionality of OVL to be deployed for the 2014 election cycle. If the project is successful, the second phase includes expanding the capacity and ability of the OVL system for the 2016 election. Below you will find additional information to provide more context and background to understand the needs of Our Vote Live and guidelines to submit a proposal. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Melody Fields, Manager of Legal Mobilization and Strategic Campaigns at 202.662.8334. Brief proposals that include scope of work, budget, and timeline should be sent via email to cfields@lawyerscommittee.org, no later than January 22, 2014.

Overview & Background

Election Protection ("EP"), the nation's largest voter protection program is led by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Right Under Law ("Lawyers' Committee"). The public centerpiece of the program is the 1-866-OUR-VOTE Hotline, which is staffed by highly trained volunteers to provide support and answer questions from voters about voter registration, early voting and absentee voting options, voter ID requirements, and other questions relating to voting. In addition, both Hotline and legal field volunteers work with election officials and other voting rights advocates to solve problems that voters encounter when attempting to cast a ballot. The Lawyers' Committee works with NALEO Educational Fund which administers the 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA to provide Spanish-language assistance to voters. Through a partnership with Asian Americans Advancing Justice and APIA Vote, Election Protection recently began to provide Asian-language assistance.

The internal backbone of the Election Protection program is Our Vote Live ("OVL"), an online database used to track and monitor issues and problems reported to the Hotline and field program. The data collected through OVL informs the story of the American voting experience by both collecting voter questions and complaints and the steps Election Protection takes to address and solve those problems. OVL is not merely a static internal database, however, because through OVL's public face also provides real time information used to help Election Protection track issues and deploy volunteers to precincts and contact election officials to resolve problems. It is also vital to post-election advocacy by the Lawyers' Committee and its partners can use the information gathered to work with election officials to improve elections, push proactive election reform, and litigate if necessary. The biggest upload into the database is on Election Day, when EP runs between 25-30 call centers across the country with hundreds of volunteers entering data into OVL at a given time through desktop computers and/or laptops.

The first version of OVL was first developed in 2004 and since then has taken several forms. In 2009, Our Vote Live was developed with pro bono help from the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) on a shoestring budget that did not contain all the components the Lawyers' Committee envisioned. The system was unreliable and we could not guarantee the system would not crash again as it did in 2008 and 2010. As a result, in 2012, an effort was made to revamp OVL with the help of New Organizing Institute (NOI) and Ushahidi. Unfortunately, Ushahidi experienced substantial delays in completing the project, which did not allow time to properly test and debug the system before Election Day. The revised OVL was unusable on Election Day and remains unusable to this day. Many of the items that the Lawyers' Committee requested in OVL 2012 were never implemented.

Our hope is that the third time will be the charm and a new developer can build a database that contains all the components deemed essential below that can sustain data from hundreds of concurrent users at the highest level of entry into the system on Election Day. Our number one goal is to first develop a dependable OVL with basic functionality to deploy in 2014 with the capacity to add functionality for the 2016 presidential election cycle.

Specific Vendor Deliverables

1. Build the most cost efficient mechanism for the OVL database that contains the essential elements listed below and is thoroughly secure and stress-tested before final deployment. Ideally the developer will be able to replicate full deployment of OVL for Election Day which has the highest number of users entering data into the system and largest capacity of entries (numbers below).
2. Provide support to the sustainability and deployment of OVL specifically Election Day support to address deployment issues.
3. Thorough documentation of the system that is transferable to another person, specifically a Lawyers' Committee staff member that will be in charge of the day-to-day management of the system, including the ability to add and remove users and edit data entry fields if necessary.
4. The system must be backed up to a cloud server that needs to scale up and down depending on usage (cost should be included in proposal).

The Essential Components of Our Vote Live

The core function of OVL is to provide real time documentation of the issues and problems voters are facing throughout the election cycle. OVL is in essence a database that captures the reports entered in by Election Protection hotline and field volunteers, but is also required to have the "live" component so that voting advocates, partners, media and the public are aware of the incidents reported in OVL. The new system must contain the following:

Interfacing with database

1. Public component to allow key stakeholders, partners, media and others to see the information tracked through OVL, however, this level of access cannot contain personally identifiable information (voter's name, phone number, etc.) to protect the privacy of the voter.
2. Making the distinction between private vs. public information on the intake form for volunteers.
3. Ability for users with elevated OVL credentials to search and sort the data coming into the system to determine trends and issues for follow up and deploy field volunteers.

Database components

1. Capacity for 1,000 distinct users to be able to log into the system at one time to enter reports into the system from locations across the country. While OVL is used throughout the election cycle the heaviest traffic days are the four days leading up to Election Day, with Election Day being the highest level of data entry into the system. The highest traffic days will be the day before and on Election Day, with the morning of Election Day being the largest amount of people logging in at once. Of those users about 750-800 will be data entry only and the remainder doing both data entry, querying data, and updating and editing reports (see description under user section).
2. Ability to hold between 80,000-100,000 entries depending on the election cycle. Data from a previous election cycle can be archived.
3. Ability to have several levels of users with different types of access into OVL (expanded below in user descriptions).
4. Ability to update and edit the reports entered into the system based upon user level.

5. Data characteristics must include information about the person calling into the hotline or field report (name, address, phone number, state, polling location, email address), categories of the type of inquiry or problem from the call/field report (polling place inquiry, voter identification problem, registration problems.), narrative information from description boxes (what the problem was and how it was addressed), categorizing the issue for follow up, and additional demographic data than can be collected from voter. Making the distinction between private vs. public information on the intake form for volunteers.
6. Ability for the Lawyers' Committee to export the data from the system and run reports.
7. Capability to run a query of the data for external applications, for example a GIS system to create a map to show the trends across the country. In the past this has lived within the OVL system and we believe it should be external to cause less stress to the system.

Non-essential items/long term:

1. If possible, import previous OVL data into system so the data exists under one central database (database functionality).
2. Mobile enabled version (interface functionality).

Interfacing with OVL—Types of Users

The different types of users that interface with the system are:

- **Hotline volunteers**—These volunteers have the initial contact with Hotline callers and they are who most interface with data entry into the system. As volunteers take calls into the Hotline they receive information from the caller and try to solve the issue at the same time. For Hotline volunteers, it is critical that the data entry form is easy to use and does not hinder their ability to assist the voter. Usability is affected by the fact that not all Hotline volunteers are tech savvy. **Access level:** Data entry only
- **Field volunteers**—In the past Election Protection field volunteers used paper forms, or called into the Hotline or their Field Captains, to report issues and resolutions. In the 2012 version, the hope was by using the Ushahidi platform we would also have a smartphone enabled data entry form that would allow field volunteers to directly enter in reports, this functionality was not fully realized. **Access level:** Data entry only
Note: In 2012 we deployed over 5,300 (over 8,000 in 2008). We mentioned this as a non-essential item but the developer should have the mobile enabled version in mind when developing phase one of OVL.
- **Call Center Captains and Call Command Centers**—If an issue cannot be resolved over the phone or requires additional outreach to election officials or election law experts, Hotline volunteers flag a Call Center Captain to aid in troubleshooting the problem. In the event that the Captain cannot resolve the issue, the Captain works with the Command Center to reach out to problem solve. These users need a higher access to the database because they can go back and edit reports that have been flagged for follow up. Additionally, there may be volunteers in the command centers that are monitoring OVL to view trends in states, cities, and precincts that may require additional intervention (mostly national call centers that have multiple states). The ability to search and sort OVL reports is critical to their work. **Access level:** Data entry, ability to edit reports, and search and sort reports.
- **Field Command Centers and the National Command Center**—Field and National Command Centers do not typically interact with voters. Field Command Center Leaders collect reports from field volunteers and enter in reports or watch OVL with specific locations and precincts where either field volunteers in place or may be need to be deployed. The National Command Center tracks OVL

and voting trends across the country. It is staffed with voting experts both from the Lawyers' Committee and Election Protection coalition partners to work with Hotline and Field Command Centers to address problems. The search function in OVL 1.0 was incredible difficult to use and it needs to be enhanced. **Access level:** Data entry, ability to edit reports, and search and sort reports.

- **Administrative user**—Senior members of the Election Protection (3-4) team need “super user” access to be able to add/remove user, run exports, change data entry fields, etc. **Access level:** Highest—data entry, edit reports, search reports, and administrative features to database.
- **Public**—As mentioned above there is a “live” component to OVL that allows the public to see information about voting issues coming in across the country. This public data does not contain personally identifiable information about the voter. This public interface should not stress the core operation of the system. Previous versions of OVL allowed the public to search reports for specific locations or by issue and this functionality should be maintained (see <http://electionawareness.appspot.com/>). **Access level:** Limited. No data entry. Search capability limited. No access to personally identifiable information.

Budget

Since the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is a non-profit organization, the entire project must operate on a limited budget. Proposed budgets should not exceed \$40,000. Those that do should provide explanation as to why, and the maximum said cost could reach.

Timeline

This RFP is dated January 8, 2014. Proposals are due NO LATER than January 22, 2014 at 3:00 PM Eastern.

- The proposal will be selected by February 17, 2014.
- A contract must include specific dates and time frames for this project, based on the required timing for production of the final product:
 - Beta version needs to be ready for testing NO LATER July 14, 2014 to provide time for initial testing and focus groups with key partners.
 - The FINAL product must be completed by August 29, 2014 to begin roll out and use during the early voting period.

If you have any questions, please contact Chris Melody Fields, Manager of Legal Mobilization and Strategic Campaigns at 202.662.8334. Brief proposals that include scope of work, budget, and timeline should be sent via email to cfields@lawyerscommittee.org, no later than January 22, 2014. Please note that developers will have access to previous Our Vote Live versions and notes to help with their proposal and will get credentials from Chris Melody Fields upon request.