**Installation and Operations Guide**

**Prerequisites**

* **Node.js and npm installed on your machine**
* **MongoDB instance running (either locally or using a service like MongoDB Atlas)**
* **Clerk account for authentication (optional, if used)**
* **Cloudinary account for cloud storage (optional, if used)**

**Steps**

1. **Clone the Repository**

**Open your terminal and clone the repository:**

**git clone https://github.com/your-username/ConnectIn.git**

1. **Navigate to the Project Directory**

**cd ConnectIn**

1. **Install Dependencies**

**Install the required dependencies using npm:**

**npm install**

1. **Set Up Environment Variables**

**Create a .env file in the root directory of your project and add the following environment variables:**

**MONGO\_URI=your\_mongodb\_connection\_string**

**CLOUD\_NAME=your\_cloudinary\_cloud\_name**

**API\_KEY=your\_cloudinary\_api\_key**

**API\_SECRET=your\_cloudinary\_api\_secret**

**CLERK\_FRONTEND\_API=your\_clerk\_frontend\_api**

**CLERK\_API\_KEY=your\_clerk\_api\_key**

1. **Run the Development Server**

**Start the development server:**

**npm run dev**

**Your application should now be running at http://localhost:3000.**

**Project Structure**

* **pages/ - Contains the Next.js pages for your application.**
* **components/ - Contains React components used across your application.**
* **models/ - Mongoose models for MongoDB collections.**
* **lib/ - Utility functions and server actions.**
* **public/ - Static files such as images.**
* **styles/ - CSS files for styling.**

**Database Connection**

**The connectDB function in lib/db.ts manages the connection to your MongoDB database. Ensure your MongoDB URI is correctly set in the .env file.**