**City Name**

New York, New York

**Background**

* New York City is the largest metropolis in the United States with a population of nearly 8.4 million inhabitants.
* There are 4,666,535 registered voters in NYC according to the latest (Feb. 2020) enrollment report from the State Board of Elections.
* New York State was ranked 42nd for overall election performance and 41st in voter turnout in 2016, according to the MIT Election Data & Science Lab.
* During 2019, the state passed a package of voting reform bills aimed at removing antiquated and confusing aspects of the election system and improving ease of voting for all. While these reforms are an excellent start to modernizing the voting process they do not go far enough with providing New Yorkers a full suite of voting options.
* Outstanding issues: low voter participation, long poll lines on election day, obstacles involved in absentee (vote-by-mail) system, inequity of polling place distribution
* Opportunities include: improving voter turnout and participation in the democratic process, a more engaged and informed electorate, reaching underserved communities for whom traditional voting methods may be difficult

**My Focus**

I plan to propose a mobile voting platform to allow New York City residents to cast their vote in city-wide elections through a web portal accessed via an Internet-connected computer or smartphone device. The intent of this platform would be to:

* Improve voter turnout and participation in local and city-wide elections
* Reduce the number of people disenfranchised due to various obstacles
* Provide an alternative option to traditional in person voting and to vote-by-mail

**Why is this necessary?**

* Participation in the democratic process is fundamental to improving quality of life
* COVID-19 has demonstrated that the existing election systems are not adequate. Had the election been happening during the height of cases, NYC residents would have been particularly at risk due to the cities high rates of the virus
* Expansion of vote-by-mail programs are good alternatives but come with their own anticipated pitfalls

**Initial Resources Reviewed**

* Existing electronic voting infrastructure
  + i-Voting program in Estonia, in use since 2005
* Pilot programs or trials being conducted
  + Mobile Voting Project, Tusk Philanthropies - King County, WA local election
  + Voatz (for profit, electronic voting application) - 2018 West Virginia pilot
* 2019, 2020 election reform legislation from New York Senate
* Brennan Center for Justice report on protecting 2020 elections
* Various articles on election reform and remote voting (both vote-by-mail and mobile voting)

**Future Resources**

* Interviews with: NYC Board of Elections Commissioner(s), NYC Public Advocate Jummane Williams, nonprofit New York Civic Engagement Table, staff from Brennan Center for Justice, particularly in area of “Voting Reform; Right to Vote”
* Continue to review existing mobile voting platforms that are operating
* Examine cyber-security concerns around implementing such a platform
* Review data on voter participation and demographics of various groups
* Review distribution and equity of polling locations; map visually
* Develop a map of targeted sub-populations to reach through this program

**Noted Risks and Concessions**

* Mobile voting trials have been conducted in the past with poor results.
  + A 2010 Washington, D.C. Internet voting pilot was hacked within 48 hours of launch and ultimately scrapped due to vulnerabilities
* Mobile voting may not be the ideal answer to improving participation in elections
  + The platform may be more appropriate if rolled out to select groups of people who may have difficulty accessing traditional voting methods (citizens abroad, disabled, infirmed, homeless)
  + Security and fraud protection is a major concern with any of these platforms
* Most election policy is set from the state level and NYC may only be able to do so much independently

**Anticipated Challenges**

* Difficulty to set up interviews both due to the pandemic and the added busyness of a presidential election year
* Lack of full understanding behind the technology most likely utilized in existing platforms
* Want to make sure this platform is addressing an issue that is actually present in NYC