

iBallot

Final Report

OVERVIEW

iBallot is a young voter's best friend to North Carolina state and local elections. Young voters in North Carolina say that they face challenges when attempting to vote for the first time. This can lead to them not showing up to the polls at all. The median age of voting is 57 years old, with residents older than 65 years being fifteen times more likely to cast a ballot than residents ages 18-34.

This low turnout rate of young voters creates a critical problem in North Carolina. North Carolina is a swing state and can influence the outcome of a presidential election. In 2016, President Trump barely won North Carolina with 49.8% of the vote.

iBallot solves this problem by creating a simple, easy to use app that gives young voters a complete guide to state and local elections. It tells voters when elections are, where elections are, what candidates are running, and what issues and policies are being debated in North Carolina state and local levels of government, giving voters the confidence they need to head to the polls and cast their ballot. And, it's available to download for free on the app store.

The iBallot app first asks the user to input his/her address before taking the user to a home screen. The home screen gives four options: who the candidates are, when and where you can vote, a voting FAQ and local policy updates. Each of these four sections provide comprehensive information specific to local and state elections in North Carolina.

iBallot is a non-profit that is economically viable and sustainable through a business model that harnesses grants, donations, partnerships and sponsorships, and advertising revenue.

FEASIBILITY

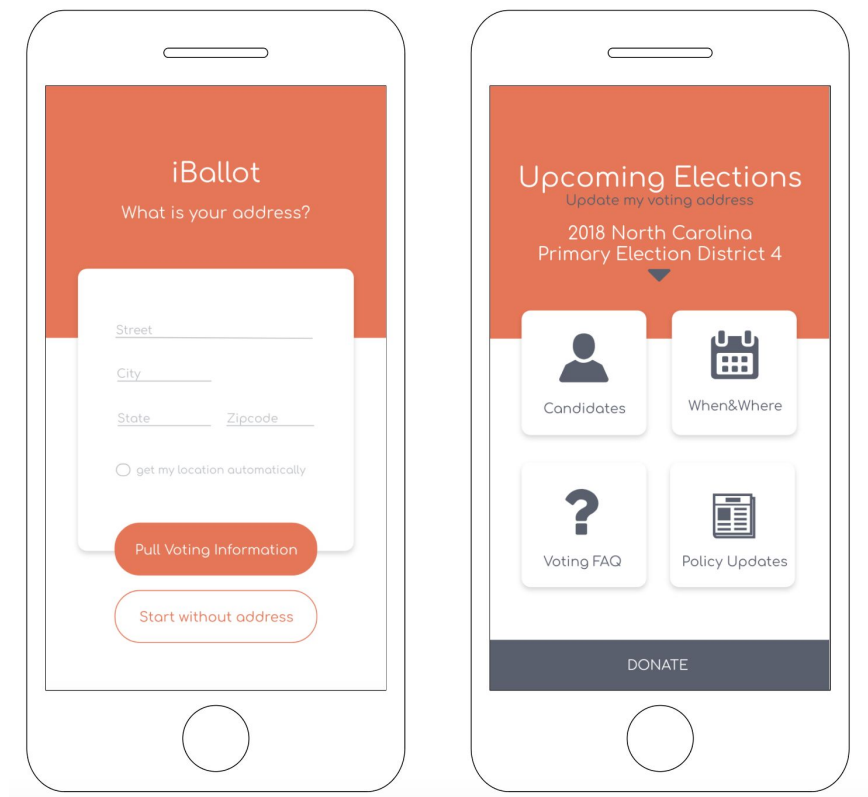
What's our solution?

In order to solve the problem of information crisis of young voters in local/state election, our solution is to design an app that provides them with those information. There are four main categories in iBallot: candidates, when & where, voting FAQ and local policy updates. We have designed a simple, user-friendly app prototype in Adobe Experience Design, which allows potential users to understand our product as well as for us to test our product ideas. Our

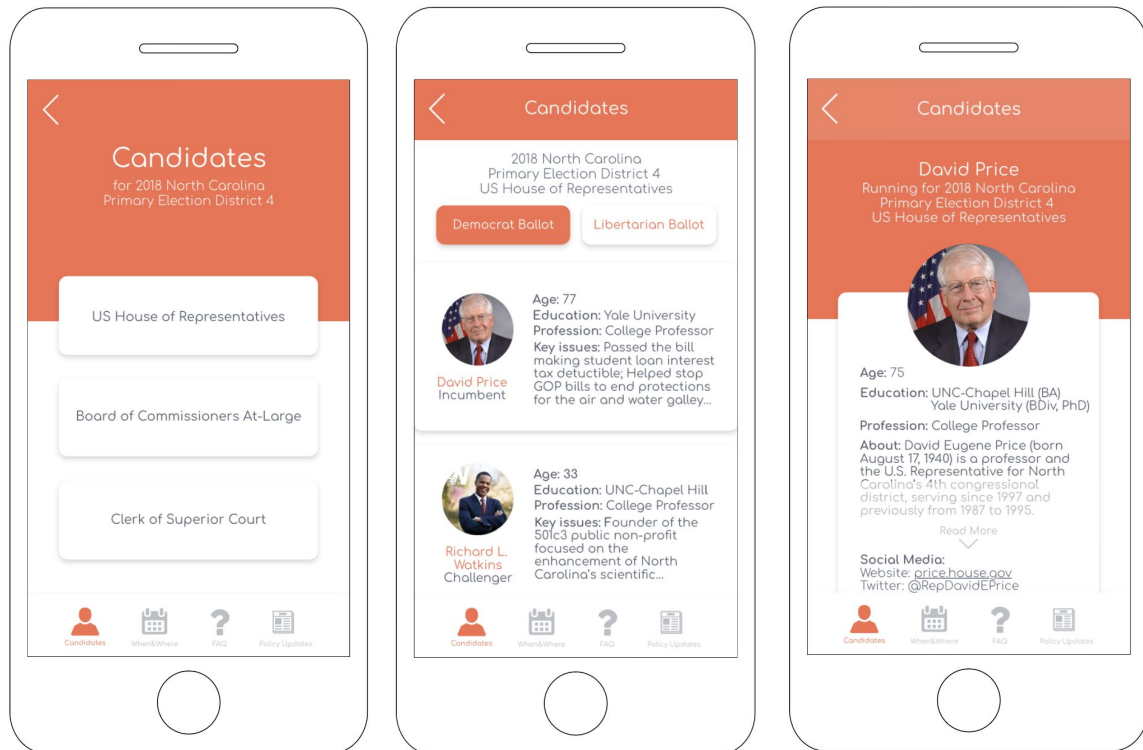
prototype right now specifically targets at the upcoming 2018 North Carolina Primary Election.

How does it work?

By clicking on “get started” on the home page, user will be asked to enter his voting registration address and iBallot will pull up voting information specifically to that address. Let’s say the user is from Chapel Hill, then he is in District 4 in the primary election. On home page, with specific district selected, the user will see the main menu with four main voting information categories iBallots provides: candidates, when & where, voting FAQ and local policy updates.



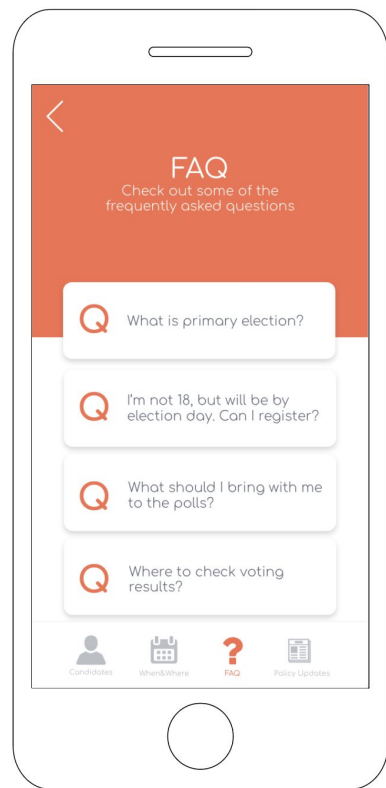
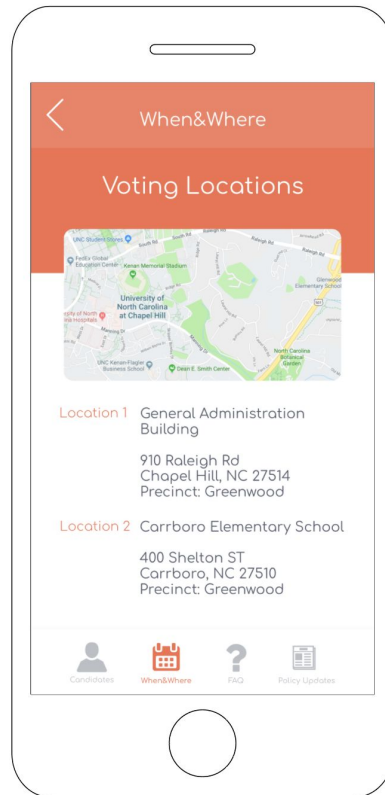
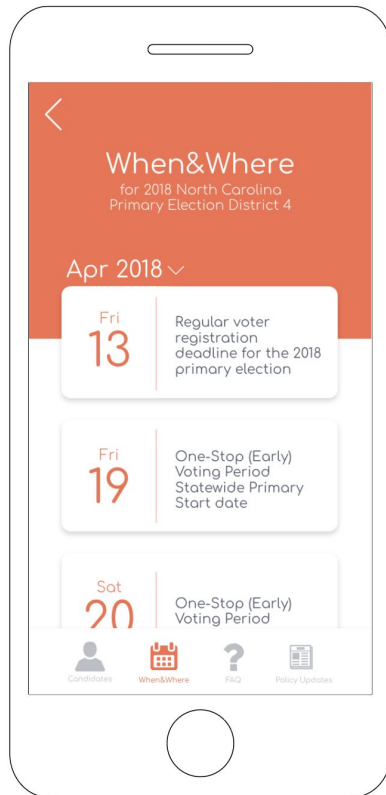
Within the candidates category, user will first see a list of positions under running in his district. If the user wants to see the candidates for U.S. House of Representatives in district 4, for example, iBallot then will pull up the list of candidates from different parties, each with an overall description. By clicking on the specific candidate, iBallot will provide a more detailed description of that candidate, which includes age, education, profession, key issues, social media etc.



After learning about the candidates information, under when & where category, user can find a calendar that reminds him about key dates of that election, such as voting registration deadline, voting period and election day. Upon clicking on the specific date on that calendar, there would be a location section that shows the voting locations in his district.

Voting FAQ section includes the most frequently asked questions young voters may care about, such as “What is primary election?”, “I’m not 18, but will be by election day. Can I register?” etc. By providing quick responses to those questions, we support young voters with directions to tackle commonest problems they may meet in the voting process.

The last section on iBallot is local policy updates. Pulling news around local policy from major government website, iBallot aims to provide local policy updates specific to the user’s registration district. When it’s not voting season, local policy updates will be the main source for iBallot to keep connecting with the users.



How did we test our solution?

To test our solution with customer, we first conducted a survey with 99 UNC student responded. When the respondents (N=99) were asked how likely they are to download a voting app to give them more information about state/local election, 58% (n=57) respondents said they would download the app. The result from the quantitative research validates that our solution is desirable. We also set down our four main categories through our survey, which all of them are highly wanted from our survey respondents. After we designed our prototype, we tested our solution in a more qualitative way. We found several potential users and walked through the whole app with them. Putting them in a scenario that they wanted to learn more the upcoming primary election, we observed how they actually used the app. From this approach, we optimize our functionalities and user flow to give them better experience.

DESIRABILITY

Who are our target customers?

Our main target customers will be young voters who are either currently enrolled in higher education or have recently graduated. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, in the 2016 election young voters made up 27 percent of the electorate- only second to the baby boomers, who made up 31 percent. By the 2020 election, young voters are expected to make up the largest part of the electorate. This is one of the reasons that we decided to focus on young voters- they are a huge part of the voting population, and their impact is increasing.

Another reason that we targeted young voters is because young voters do not vote at the rates of other generations- in fact, only 51% of eligible young voters actually voted in 2016. This is the lowest out of all of the other generations, compared to 70% of the silent generation, 69% of baby boomers, and 63% of Generation X voters who actually cast their ballot in 2016.

We decided to pinpoint our market even further to college campuses, because in the 2016 election, 80 percent of young voters were either currently enrolled in higher education, or had a college degree. In North Carolina alone, there are 300,000 students currently enrolled in higher education.

We surveyed 100 UNC students. 73 percent of them said they were very interested (chose 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5) in voting for state and local representatives, 57 percent said they were very interested in local policies, and 58 percent said they would download a voting app.

Reaching our customers



We plan to reach customers with social media and local advertising as the base of our strategy. We'll be present on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and post regular updates on how iBallot is progressing, as well as any major policy updates and voting information. We are also going to advertise on a local level. We have already spoken to small businesses on Franklin Street such as Sugarland who have expressed interest in advertising with iBallot.

Next, we plan to hold campus events, such as tabling in the pit and speaking in political science and law classrooms, as well as posting flyers throughout campus. At these campus events, we plan to giveaway iBallot swag such as stickers, t-shirts, and other items, which will further promote our app. Following campus events, we plan to partner with social media influencers and hire ambassadors to promote iBallot both online and in public spheres. Finally, the last aspect of our marketing strategy is by partnering with larger organizations such as Democracy NC and Rock the Vote to further publicize iBallot.

VIABILITY

Our organization will start operating by covering the Research Triangle Area and expand all across North Carolina until year 3. Starting year 4, we want to develop our app in Southeastern America.

Below is our five year expansion plan illustrated by a map.

- **2018:** Launch in the Triangle Area
- **2019:** Expansion across Eastern North Carolina
- **2020:** Expansion to all of North Carolina for presidential elections
- **2021:** Expansion to South Carolina and Tennessee

- 2022: Expansion to Georgia and Alabama



The simple business plan below focuses on the first three years of expansion, across North Carolina.

Market potential

We surveyed 100 students and will be using our data from that survey to extrapolate to determine the average number of how many people we hope to reach. 58 percent of the people we surveyed said they would download a voting app, so we used that percentage and applied it to the number of college students in each state, which we found via public domain college data from College Simply.

Year	State	Number of College Students	Projected percent of users	Projected number of users
Year 3	North Carolina	300,000	58%	174,000
Year 4	Tennessee	224,000	58%	129,920
Year 4	South Carolina	176,000	58%	102,080
Year 5	Georgia	337,000	58%	195,460
Year 5	Alabama	207,000	58%	120,060

TOTAL: 721,520

Almost all of those that we surveyed said that they wouldn't pay for a voting app, so we aren't relying on that in our revenue projections and the app is free. We plan on attracting and reaching these customers in the way outlined previously in this report; through social media and local advertising, campus events, social media ambassadors and influencers, and large-scale partners.

3-year cost structure

Because our app advocates for civic engagement, we have decided to adopt a non-profit model.

iBallot's content must be perfectly trustworthy, non-partisan, and fact-checked. We also want to make it simple to understand. We realized that this goal required a significant amount of money: information flows are important and must be analyzed for absolutely every election concerning our users -- and these are many. Expertise must be at its highest, the app extremely clear and succinct.

Our goal is launch iBallot in the Research Triangle Area, and to cover North Carolina as a whole by 2020. This date has not been randomly chosen: it corresponds to the 2020 presidential elections, for which we know that North Carolina will play a major role as a swing state.

Below is a detailed analysis table of our costs over three years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Head developer	\$45,000 (1 full-time)	\$45,000 (1 full-time)	\$45,000 (1 full-time)
Office manager and marketer	\$45,000 (1 full-time)	\$45,000 (1 full-time)	\$45,000 (1 full-time)
Content developer for newly reached areas	\$0	\$22,500 (1 part-time)	\$35,000 (1 full-time)
Website and app building	\$2,716	\$0	\$0
Website and app licensing	\$500	\$500	\$500
Promotional items	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,500

Registering as a 501(c)(3)	\$1,934	\$0	\$0
Office space	\$1,800	\$1,800	\$1,800
Local student policy updaters (unpaid internship)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Local student ambassadors (unpaid internship)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$98,950	\$117,800	\$135,800

Initial startup costs

Our initial startup costs are the following:

- **Website and app building: \$2,716.**
This amount has been calculated as follows:
Squarespace business plan: \$216
Website coding - done in-house: \$0
App development: \$2,500
- **Registering as a 501(c)(3) in North Carolina: \$1,934**
This amount has been calculated as follows:
Non-profit compliance specialist: \$1,499
Filing articles of incorporation fee: \$60
Applying for 501(c) status using 1023-EZ form: \$275
Registering for charitable solicitation fee: \$100

Total: \$4,650

Operating costs

Our main operating costs for year 1 were calculated as follows:

- 1 full-time developer: \$45,000
- 1 full-time office manager/marketer: \$45,000
- Website and app licensing: \$500
Calculated from iOS, Android and Google licensing fares.
- Promotional items: \$2,000
Calculated from 4imprintUSA fares for large commands and advertising (<https://www.4imprint.com/tag/2870/Low-Minimums>).

- Office space: \$1,800
Price of unassigned workspace at a communal table, Launch Chapel Hill, for a year.

Total: \$94,300

Business revenue streams

Following a non-profit model, our revenue sources would gravitate around four main areas. It will be ensured that none of these sources are politically affiliated.

1. Donations

Through the 'Donate' button on the iBallot App, users can donate very limited amounts, as low as \$1. This revenue source remains minor, because our survey showed that only 4% of potential users would be willing for a voting app. Our estimates rely on this proportion of donations out of the potential number of downloads among the student population in the area.

2. Sponsorships/Partnerships

iBallot wants to propose two main types of sponsorships. The 'Title sponsorship' would sponsor the entire app and be seen each time the app is launched. It would cost \$400 per month, which equals \$4,800 per year, and would be increased to \$500 per month/\$6,000 per year starting year 4. The 'Page sponsorship' would sponsor an individual page in the app and be seen each time users visit the page. It would cost \$250 per month, which equals to \$3,000 per year and would be increased to \$350 per month/\$4,200 per year starting year 4.

Our goal is to obtain as many sponsors as possible over the years. Furthermore, civic engagement organizations have shown interest in our project. These organizations have proposed to help iBallot's expansion through partnerships and shared resources. Democracy NC, for instance, would be willing to provide us with its communication and politics specialists' services. This would allow us to limit significant expenses for content checking, communication, and would give us the opportunity to organized joint marketing events.

3. Advertisers

Local and non-partisan businesses can advertise on our app and website for \$100 per week, which equals to \$400 per week and \$4,800 per year. Rates have been compared to local advertising platforms such as the Daily Tar Heel's 2018 Product List. Prices would increase starting year 4 to \$500 per month, which equals \$6,000 per year.

4. Philanthropy and grants

Grants represent our main funding source. iBallot wants to apply to a variety of micro-funding grants designed for non-profits. We were able to contact Joshua Stearns, Director of the Public Square Program at Democracy Fund, and our main objective is to obtain a grant from the Democracy Fund (democracyfund.org). Rock The Vote, one of iBallot's competitors, received \$300,000 from the Democracy Fund over two years. This considerable resource could cover iBallot's yearly costs, if our project proves to serve the Democracy Fund's approach to promote democracy through many investees.

	Price per year from year 1-3	Price per year starting year 4
Title sponsorship	\$4,800	\$6,000
Page sponsorship	\$3,000	\$4,200
Advertising	\$4,800	\$6,000

Our 3-year revenue projection is the following:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Donations	\$1,000	\$3,500	\$5,000
Sponsorships	\$10,800 (1 "title" + 2 "page")	\$16,800 (1 "title" + 4 "page")	\$16,800 (1 "title" + 4 "page")
Advertisement	\$19,200 (4 yearly advertisers)	\$38,400 (8 yearly advertisers)	\$57,600 (12 yearly advertisers)
Grants	\$50,000 (multiple micro-grants)	\$75,000 (With Democracy Fund grant or equivalent)	\$100,000 (With Democracy Fund grant or equivalent)
Total	\$81,000	\$133,700	\$179,400

Because iBallot is a free app and a non-profit, users will not be the ones who finance the app. They will contribute to our revenue by their number and by their

donations via the “donate” button on our app. To know how we will target and attract our users, please see desirability. To find an estimate of how much these users would be willing to donate to our app, please see aforementioned the “donations” part in our revenue model.

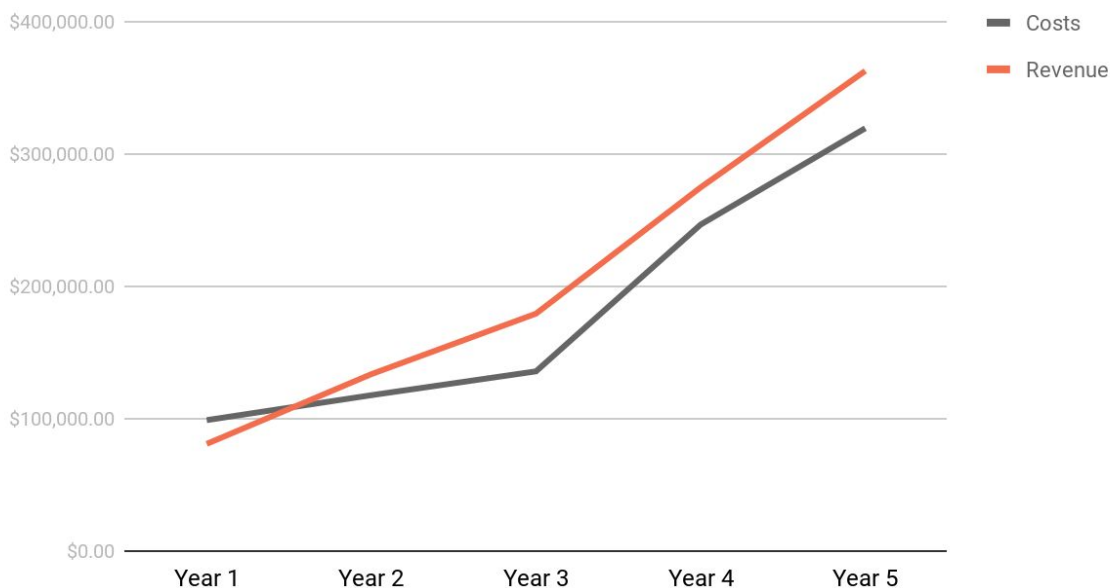
Spreadsheet and business plan

We plan to make our revenue exceed our costs by year 2. The table below shows our cost and revenue projection over three years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Costs	\$98,950	\$117,800	\$135,800
Revenue	\$81,000	\$133,700	\$179,400
Difference	\$-17,950	\$15,900	\$43,600

The graph below shows our cost and revenue projection over five years. The increased costs at year 4 and 5 are due to our expansion to other Southern American states.

5-year projection



Industry competitors:

iBallot has no competitors in our primary market of individuals ages 18-24 who are enrolled in higher education in North Carolina. While there are various

organizations in other states or on a national scale seeking to increase civic engagement in national elections, there is no direct overlap in the primary market or product purpose of iBallot.

iBallot has evaluated five organizations listed below that have similarities to iBallot in their purpose. Each of these organizations overlap with iBallot in that they are seeking to increase civic engagement by providing some form of voting information, yet the full function, geographic location, and primary audience diverges from iBallot.

These organizations include:

1. Vote Smart
 - Geographic reach: All 50 states and District of Columbia
 - Key Function: Provide citizens with information on candidates for national elections including each candidate's voting history on legislation, positions on issues, previous speeches, and funding information.
2. Vote 411
 - Geographic reach: All 50 states and District of Columbia
 - Key Function: An online voter's guide compiled by the League of Women's Voters Education Fund. On this guide, a voter can see which races will be on the ballot and which candidates are running for it. It also gives instructions on how to register.
3. Ballot Ready
 - Geographic reach: Illinois
 - Key Function: Provide citizens with information on every candidate and referendum on the ballot in state and local elections by pulling information from Board of Elections website, candidate's websites, social media, and other public sources.
4. Brigade
 - Geographic reach: All 50 states and District of Columbia
 - Key Function: Connects voters to tools and people they need to make real demands of their elected officials.
5. Think Voting
 - Geographic reach: Texas
 - Key Function: Has designed an app called The Voting App which provides citizens in Texas with the who, what, when, where, why and how of election information.

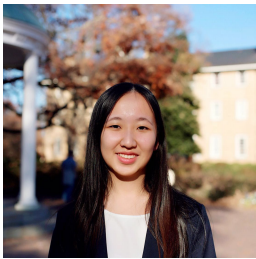
CONCLUSION

iBallot has a unique market, allowing us to reach college students and quickly expand. Research has shown young voters have the desire to be more informed, they just need a convenient way to do this. Our easy to use app will fulfill every voting need to assist the voting population in having a more informed decision when it comes time to vote in local and state elections. Research has also shown that college students would download this app if it became available. With no direct competitors in the area, iBallot has a path for success. iBallot is the voting best friend college students need.

WHO ARE WE?



Raphaëlle Aubert is an exchange student from France, majoring in political science. She has decided to study journalism at UNC Chapel Hill for her last year of Bachelor's, before joining a journalism graduate school in Paris. In her spare time, Raphaëlle enjoys theatre, traveling, coding and drinking tea.



Yujie Tao is a sophomore student from Shanghai, China, who is majoring in Advertising and Computer Science. With experience in UI/UX design, front-end development and marketing, she wishes to pursue career in product management, where she is able to work with cross-functional teams to bring inspiring products come to life.



Emily Wakeman is a junior from Cornelius, North Carolina who is double-majoring in political science and broadcast/electronic media. She is looking to enter the field of political correspondence after graduation and hopes to work in Washington D.C. covering breaking news surrounding the White House and Congress. Emily enjoys hiking, cooking, and blogging in her free time.



Rachel Bridges is a senior from Raleigh, North Carolina who is double-majoring in reporting and comparative literature. She is moving to Lille, France in August to work as an au pair for a year and then plans on pursuing a career in radio production and podcasting. In her spare time, Rachel hosts and produces a sports talk show on WXYC-Chapel Hill, UNC's student radio station.



Raven Norton is a senior from Rocky Mount, North Carolina who is double-majoring in broadcast journalism and psychology. After graduation, she will be working in media relations in New York City. In her free time, she likes to travel, exercise, cook, and perform music.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why would people want a voting app?

We surveyed over 100 people, and the majority of them indicated that local policy issues were very important to them. They also said that they didn't know much about local and state elections, and wished they knew more.

Why would people want to advertise with a small, localized app?

We talked with journalism professors and Rose Hoban from North Carolina Health News about the decline in local, small business advertising opportunities. Since the close of the Chapel Hill Times, local businesses have apparently been searching for other ways to advertise. iBallot would provide a cheaper opportunity than the Daily Tar Heel, and would be able to reach potential customers on a different platform.

Would the app be relevant when there aren't elections?

In addition to providing voting information, iBallot will also keep users updated on local policy updates and any changes or events in the legislature. While it's true that it would get the most use during election season, iBallot is a useful tool for anyone who wants accurate, up-to-date information about what the lawmakers in their state are doing.

Are you ever going to expand beyond Eastern South?

iBallot plans on expanding to every American state in the future.

Why are your operation costs so high?

While designing our prototype, we realized how numerous and confusing elections were in America. We also want our app to be adapted to every user's elections, and this is not that simple. It proved a point: our app is needed! Our costs come mainly from our expansion objectives, and from the importance of hiring highly qualified professionals who will be able to make our content perfectly accurate. The primary content research that has to be done about the new locations we plan on expanding to is a huge workload. Once iBallot reaches its expansion objectives, its costs will decrease significantly.

Is it normal that your revenue model relies on philanthropy every year?

As a nonprofit, our revenue model differs significantly from for-profit businesses. It is not unusual for nonprofits to rely on grants for a major part of their revenue. And this is not limited to their first years of existence: some major nonprofits still benefit from philanthropy, decades after their creation. iBallot's revenue coming

from advertising will increase significantly over the years thanks to an expansion that allows for more and more local businesses to target our users, but this does not mean that we will stop applying for grants.

TIMELINE

- March 6th, 2018: Original pitch
- March 20th, 2018: Market pitch and evaluation
- March 27th, 2018: Prototype maunch
- April 3rd, 2018: Business plan pitch
- April 20th, 2018: Final pitch for project idea

Projections for the end of 2018:

- June 1st: meet with developers
- July 1st: Launch landing page and social media accounts, start marketing
- August 1st: Soft Launch
- November 1st: Official product launch

APPENDIX

Full prototype link:

<https://xd.adobe.com/view/7ca9f7d7-bdc3-475b-bfea-c0247098b16e?fullscreen>

Years 4 and 5 costs and revenue

You will find below a detailed projection of our costs and revenue after 2020.

Costs

Year 4: Expansion to South Carolina and Tennessee

- 1 full-time head developer: \$50,000
- 1 full-time office manager/marketer: \$45,000
- 4 full-time content developer covering newly reached areas: \$140,000
- Website and app licensing (iOS, Android, Google): \$500
- Promotional items: \$4,000
- Office space: \$7,200 (Unassigned workspace at a communal table, Chapel Hill N.C, Columbia S.C., Nashville T.N.)
- Local student policy updaters: \$0 (interns)
- Local student marketers/ambassadors: \$0 (interns)

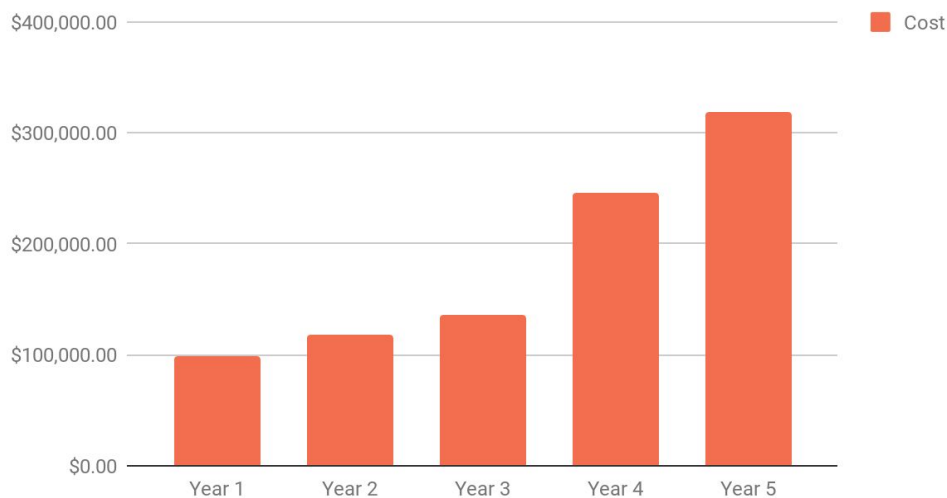
Total year 4: \$246,700

Year 5: Expansion to Georgia and Alabama

- 1 full-time head developer: \$50,000
- 1 full-time office manager/marketer: \$45,000
- 6 full-time content developer covering newly reached areas: \$210,000
- Website and app licensing (iOS, Android, Google): \$500
- Promotional items: \$5,000
- Office space: \$9,000 (Unassigned workspace at a communal table, Chapel Hill N.C., Columbia S.C., Nashville T.N., Atlanta G.A., Montgomery A.L.)
- Local student policy updaters: \$0 (interns)
- Local student marketers/ambassadors: \$0 (interns)

Total year 5: \$319,500

Cost



Revenue

Year 4: Expansion to South Carolina and Tennessee

- Donations: \$7,000
- Sponsorships (1 title sponsorship + 4 page-sponsorships, prices increased): \$22,800
- Advertisement (equivalent to 20 yearly advertisers): \$120,000
- Grants (Democracy Fund and various grants): \$125,000

Total year 4: \$274,800

Year 5: Expansion to Georgia and Alabama

- Donations: \$10,000
- Sponsorships (1 title sponsorship + 4 page-sponsorships): \$22,800
- Advertisement (equivalent to 30 yearly advertisers, increased prices): \$180,000

- Grants (Democracy Fund and various grants): **\$150,000**
- Total year 5: **\$362,800**

Source

- Market research survey of over 100 students, led by our team.
- Pew Research Center: *Millennials approach Baby Boomers as America's largest generation in the electorate*
- CollegeSimply.com