IBM and YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles Collaborate to Empower and Inform Voters with New Tech Solution for Underrepresented Communities

Open source Call for Code for Racial Justice solution "Five Fifths Voter" deploys during National Voter Education Week to help educate voters and make their voices heard

ARMONK, N.Y. and LOS ANGELES, Oct. 5, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- IBM (NYSE: IBM) and the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles announced today during National Voter Education Week the deployment of a new solution designed to help improve awareness of local, statewide, and national issues in communities lacking traditional access to and education about voting. Five Fifths Voter is a web-based application built using open source-powered technology to help educate, empower and enable disenfranchised minority voters to overcome setbacks incurred by voter suppression.

Five Fifths Voter, available for both desktop and mobile browsers, provides one place where users can check their registration status, register to vote, and access information about deadlines, ballot drop-offs, and polling locations. It also offers resources tailored for specific circumstances including parents requiring childcare, people with disabilities, convicted felons, and senior citizens.

"For decades, the YMCA has been an invaluable resource for young Angelenos and their families," said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. "Through this collaboration with IBM, the Y will foster civic engagement and help to make our democracy more accessible to young people across the region."

The web app was customized to the diverse needs of Metropolitan Los Angeles' communities based on input from YMCA-LA and members from its Teens and Government program who participated in design thinking workshops with IBM and identified challenges they have encountered in voting. The customization includes

translation of the app in 11 languages prevalent in the area, resources for young voters to prepare themselves to vote in upcoming elections, and clear steps people can follow to help their community engage in the civic process given the YMCA's focus on the youth and underrepresented demographic.

"The collaboration with IBM gives the YMCA-LA the virtual tools to educate and empower our communities with essential resources to participate in the voting process," said Mario Valenzuela, Vice President of Equity and Inclusion, YMCA-LA. "We're thankful for this opportunity to provide realistic solutions to this youth-led initiative to get out the vote and encourage community members to use their voice to facilitate positive change."

Five Fifths Voter was one of seven projects IBM made available for anyone to contribute code to last year through open source as part of Call for Code for Racial Justice, an effort to bring the developer community together to create practical tools that help tackle one of the greatest challenges of our time: racial injustice. The code is containerized and can be deployed across hybrid cloud environments, including multi-cloud with Red Hat OpenShift. Some of the open source frameworks and languages used include Vue.js, Node.js, Python, Apache CouchDB, and Carbon Design System. The web app is hosted on IBM Cloud; was built using technology including IBM Watson Tone Analyzer and Watson Natural Language Understanding; and uses the Google Civic and Google Maps APIs.

The Call for Code for Racial Justice projects, including Five Fifths Voter, are shared online so anyone can contribute code to enhance them with a focus on three key areas: police and judicial reform and accountability, diverse representation, and policy and legislation reform. Call for Code for Racial Justice is part of the broader Call for Code tech-for-good initiative in which more than 500,000 developers and problem solvers across 180 nations have participated since launch in 2018 to address problems such as climate change and COVID-19 with open source-powered software.

"Working with strong community organizations like YMCA-LA was our goal when we first created Call for Code for Racial Justice," IBM Call for Code Director Ruth Davis said. "We believe bringing together developers, ecosystem partners, and communities around the world can drive lasting impact in the fight against systemic racism and are looking forward to enhancing Five Fifths Voter's capabilities and bringing it to more communities."

IBM and YMCA-LA invite developers in the Greater Los Angeles area and around the United States to contribute their ideas and code to the solution to further enhance it and make it even more relevant to their local communities' needs.

About IBM
IBM is a global leader in hybrid cloud and AI, serving clients in more than 170 countries. More than 2,800 clients use our hybrid cloud platform to accelerate their digital transformation journeys and, in total, more than 30,000 of them have turned to IBM to unlock value from their data. With this foundation, we continue to leverage Red Hat OpenShift as the leading platform to address our clients' business needs: A hybrid cloud platform that is open, flexible and secure. Guided by principles of trust, transparency and support for a more inclusive society, IBM also is committed to being a responsible steward of technology and a force for good in the world. For more information, visit: www.ibm.com.

About YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles
The YMCA-LA is committed to rebuilding communities by providing equitable programs and services to

empower all Angelenos. The Y-LA is focused on fighting food insecurity, providing equity in education, making sure every child has the opportunity to experience the joy of sports, ensuring kids and teens have a safe place to grow, learn and live a healthy lifestyle. The LA-Y's health and wellness initiatives offer medical and mental health resources to ensure everyone has access to basic health needs. During the pandemic, the LA-Y became the safety net for millions of Angelenos. They provided millions of meals, hundreds of hours of free child care, arranged critical blood drives, provided showers for the homeless, flu and COVID vaccines as well as medical and mental health assistance. Visit ymcala.org for more information.

IBM Media Contact:
Mike Sefanov
mike.sefanov@ibm.com
650-281-8099
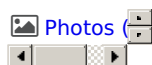
YMCA-LA Media Contact:
Lisa Vega
lisa@lisavegagroup.com
213-247-3075

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[1] https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/p20/585/table04b.xlsx

[2] Real-time data from the California Secretary of State

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Additional assets available online: 🖼 Photos (

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