MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT

A GRAND CHALLENGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

GrassRoot – South Africa

Technology (Information Security) Fellowship

About Us

Making All Voices Count

Making All Voices Count is an international initiative that contributes towards effective governance and accountability by enabling citizen engagement and open, responsive government in twelve countries across Africa and Asia. This Grand Challenge is committed to promoting transparency, fighting corruption, empowering marginalised citizens, and harnessing the power of new technologies to make government more effective and accountable.

Making All Voices Count is supported by the U.K Department for International Development (DFID), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the Omidyar Network (ON), and is implemented by a consortium consisting of Hivos (lead organisation), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Ushahidi.

Ushahidi is responsible for the Innovation Component of the Making All Voices Count challenge focusing on innovative ideas and technology solutions. Ushahidi leads the consortium work with - and connects to - the fast growing technology ecosystems in the Making All Voices Count countries, especially the network of existing and emerging technology hubs. Ushahidi works with its global network of developers to strengthen innovation support and to guide experimentation. Ushahidi also connects tech communities to ensure broad coverage, inclusiveness and connections with civil society and governments on all levels.

You can read more about Making All Voices Count at http://www.makingallvoicescount.org/

About the Fellowship Programme

The Making All Voices Count Project Fellowship is a six-month programme that supplies Fellows that further our grantees work by providing skills and expertise not currently available in their teams. The appointment of Fellows is need-driven with the dual purpose of improving project outcomes for the grantee, whilst enabling the Fellow to apply his or her skills to a socially beneficial cause. The process of requesting, identifying and placing Fellows is implemented through collaboration between grantees and their Country Engagement Developers, with oversight provided by the Capacity Development Officer.

A second stream of the Programme seeks to appoint what we call Government Fellows - champions of government who are committed to transparency, accountability and fostering citizen participation in the democratic process in their country.

Vacancy Details

Title

Making All Voices Count Fellow: GrassRoot, South Africa

Duty Station

This is a remote position, although candidates in South Africa (Johannesburg) or East Asia, Europe or Africa are preferred because of the time difference for team communications.

Type of placement

Full time.

Duration of project

Six months

About the Organisation

GrassRoot is a start-up whose vision is a nation self-organizing from the ground up. GrassRoot aims to use mobile technology to create tools that will reduce the cost, time and skill it takes to organize in marginalized communities in South Africa. The voiceless find their voice and the teeth to compel a response when acting together, and historically it is organizing that has generated accountability to the marginalized. In South Africa, the density of organizing in local communities was instrumental in defeating apartheid. After the transition to democracy, that organizing capacity was co-opted or closed down, which has severely weakened downward accountability in the country.

GrassRoot currently has prototypes of some of their tools and are actively developing more. They have been deploying and iterating with a network of partner social movements in and around Johannesburg since September 2015, and are currently seeing user numbers doubling each quarter, and are now at several thousand. GrassRoot has an in-house development team with a mix of backgrounds and time commitments, with several senior developers experienced in building large data systems.

Project Name

GrassRoot Community Action Platform

Focus area

Johannesburg, South Africa

About the Project

Grassroots is creating mobile-phoned based solutions for men and women who seek to organize their neighbours in marginalized communities in South Africa. The tools — and the platform that combines them — will connect to, leverage and complement systems that already exist and are in use. That includes general platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook, as well as other campaigning, reporting and open data platforms. GrassRoot intends to use and combine the aforementioned technology with tools that can work on feature phones through SMS and USSD to close the gap that occurs for users who do not have smartphones.

Given the use cases and design of our tools, the project will obtain and store a significant amount of highly sensitive data. As a result, the security of the application and of the server storage will be vitally important, especially as GrassRoot grows. That implies the need to design and build for security from early on, as well as bring to bear the best possible specialist knowledge in security.

What We Need from a Fellow

We are looking for a Fellow with security expertise who would be responsible for reviewing the architecture and details of Grassroot's platform, in detail and over time, and suggesting and implementing system-level and function-specific improvements. The Fellow would also put in place processes and procedures to ensure active and on-going defence and security, both during the latter part of their tenure and to maintain robust and continued defence after their departure.

The Fellow must be able to demonstrate:

1. Familiarity with the particular threats and risks associated with mobile development for low-income users, e.g., security threats specific to USSD/SMS applications, second-hand/low-specification Android devices and feature phones.
2. A track record of diagnosing, responding to and mitigating security risks in a hosting and development stack similar to Grassroot's.
3. A track record of specifically security-related contributions to open source projects.
4. A track record of contribution to security-related in coding projects such as competitions, hackathons, and other such group based initiatives.
5. Experience and / or comfort working in distributed development teams.

The Fellow will also be expected to contribute his / her expertise to several other Making All Voices Count projects with information security needs.

Minimum Qualifications

1. At least three years' experience in software development and systems engineering.
2. A significant (>50%) proportion of that time spent in specialist security roles.
3. Familiarity with Java, Spring, and PostgreSQL (our core stack).
4. Familiarity with security vulnerabilities and means of protection on a cloud based platform, specifically Linux (Ubuntu 14.04 LTS) instances on Amazon Web Services.
5. Familiarity with Agile methodology, version control systems and working in distributed teams.

How to Apply

To apply, send the following to the Capacity Development Officer – **akabari@ushahidi.com** – quoting the reference 'GrassRoot Fellowship.'

- Link(s) to your code repository containing security related projects you have undertaken in the past
- A cover letter detailing your location, expertise and explaining why you think you are suitable for the role.

Closing Date

This position is available for an immediate start, and will remain open until a suitable candidate is found.