

ICTs and Constitution Building Tech Fair

Call for Ignite Talks and Tech Booth demonstrations

Background

The making of a Constitution is one of the most difficult processes a nation can embark on. As well as critical political hurdles of reaching agreement among disparate groups regarding the basic structure and vision for the country, there are a number of other challenges that must be overcome if the constitution making process is to succeed. These include learning from the vast experience of other countries, ensuring the citizenry are kept informed and involved in the process and allowing opportunity for citizens to participate in the process, such that the constitution results from the voices of the people - their hopes, dreams, fears and concerns.

In the past five years alone, a number of innovative technology solutions have been developed and used by various constitution making processes around the world, but there is no effort to catalogue these products and practices such that new processes can learn from, and build upon, existing knowledge and experience.

To this end, International IDEA and the National Constitutional Center, together with Google Docs and Google Ideas, plan to host a "Constitution Building Tech Fair". This will provide an opportunity for technology entrepreneurs to present services, platforms and products that could help in a constitution making process, with explanations regarding how they have been used in practice - as well as discussions amongst leading experts and practitioners regarding currently unmet needs and challenges for which existing technologies could be adapted.

Participants will include technology entrepreneurs in the field of constitution building, public engagement, direct democracy, transparency in government, data visualization, mining and social media, international and national organizations working in the field of constitution making and individuals from past and current constitution making bodies.

Hosting Organisations

- [International IDEA](#)

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization mandated to support transitions to sustainable democracy globally. As part of this mandate, IDEA's Constitution Building Programme provides assistance in processes of participatory and democratic constitution building. Recognized as a thought-leader in constitutional transitions, IDEA has supported constitution builders throughout the world, including in Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, South Sudan, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Ukraine.

- [National Constitution Centre](#)

The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia inspires active citizenship as the only place where people across America and around the world can come together to learn about, debate, and celebrate the U.S. Constitution. The Center serves as America's

leading platform for constitutional educational and debate, fulfilling our Congressional charter “to disseminate information about the U.S. Constitution on a non-partisan basis.” As the **Museum of We the People**, we bring the United States Constitution to life for visitors of all ages through interactive programs and exhibits. As **America’s Town Hall**, we bring the leading conservative and liberal thought leaders together to debate the Constitution on all media platforms. As a center for **Civic Education**, we deliver the best educational programs and online resources that inspire, excite, and engage citizens about the U.S. Constitution.

Curating Organisations

- [ICT4Peace Foundation](#)

The ICT4Peace Foundation explores and champions the use of ICTs for crisis management, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding, and offers insights, strategic guidance and conduct after-action reviews of ICTs designed and deployed for such purposes.

In partnership with

- Google Ideas
- Google Docs
- Comparative Constitutions Project

Call for participation from technology community

Constitution building today is a site of a range of technologies more often associated with data and semantic analysis, mainstream media, civic or participatory media, real time collaboration, participatory governance mechanisms and web or mobile based social media apps, services and platforms. Each technology driver brings with it opportunities and challenges. Each constitution building process offers its own dynamics and intricacies. There is no one size fits all approach and yet, the adoption and adaptation of responsive, iterative and agile technology frameworks in the service of constitution building remains embryonic. Key learning from initiatives and technologies respectively embarked upon and used in the recent past remain scattered. The two markedly different worlds of technologists and constitutional theorists do not meet or exchange ideas, physically or even virtually. The organizers believe this must change, and the workshop is an invitation to those in the technology community to engage leading minds from constitution building to address key problems, challenges and opportunities.

Applications are called for:

1. Ignite presentations of no more than ten minutes around the themes the workshop is anchored to, **listed below**
2. Tech presentations, which can include interactive demonstrations, around platforms, apps and tools that can be leveraged in a constitution making process

Applications will be open until 10 September 2015 and will be carefully selected through a rigorous process that will determine the value of the technology to challenges faced by, the potential within and the general context of constitution making processes.

Submissions process

- A total of nine Ignite Talks will be accepted and up to twenty booths will be available for demonstrations.
- [Complete this form](#) to submit your application. For clarifications and queries, please email CBPTeam@idea.int

Workshop Themes

The Tech Fair and discussions will be anchored to three key themes:

Access to information

Today, almost ubiquitous access to the web and Internet, including through smartphones and tablets, opens a world of information literally at one's fingertips. From cross-language translation including of the spoken word to knowledge resources, from experts on demand to the crowdsourcing of questions, from vast web based full text libraries, to new ways of thinking around complex challenges, the web and Internet today offer a diverse range of knowledge resources and information critical to a constitution making process. Information sought by constitution builders can include constitutional provisions of other countries, advice and answers to questions from national and international experts, technical data on the government's performance and socio-economic indicators. Can ICTs help create digital networks of learning and experience, so as to help constitution builders with options around not just process and substance, but also technology? Can geo-spatial distance be rendered irrelevant in a process of consultation with the advent of new tele-conferencing and other asynchronous remote working technologies, and how can this new paradigm of real time engagement as well as asynchronous interactions meaningfully help those spearheading a constitution making process? What role is there for 'digital samaritans', able to bridge technology tools with those who are more interested in and focused on substantive matters?

Relevant technology apps and platforms could include real time translations services, crowdsourcing and web based micro-tasking services in support of research, information verification, digital and dynamic libraries, wikis, teleconferencing services that work over high-latency and comparatively low bandwidth connections, online collaboration platforms, organizations dealing with democracy, governance issues through enabling ICTs

Transparency in the process

Can ICTs help in translating Track 1 or high-level processes to a broader public, not just in terms of language but also by communicating core concepts, issues and themes in a non-legalistic expression that also embraces infographics, trans-media storytelling and the ubiquity of modern day mobile communications apps and services? What is the tension between making a process of constitution building as transparent and participatory as possible, and at the same time robust enough to accommodate the necessary privacy and security to have sensitive discussions around key issues? Do ICTs that help with the former, by definition, undermine the latter? What impact does ICT have on the Chatham House Rule, a venerable cornerstone of Track 1 meetings?

Relevant technology apps and platforms could include secure online collaboration services and platforms, secure (mobile) messaging services, content production apps, tools and platforms to publish and produce output around constitution making over social media

Encouraging public debate

If constitutions are made by “we the people”, how can the diverse voices of citizens make themselves heard in constitution building processes? What does ‘radical transparency’ mean for constitution making, and how can a process of (re)fashioning a constitution be facilitated by ICTs, without overwhelming it? Furthermore, how can technology help in creating safe spaces online for the discussion of highly divisive and emotive issues? What is the role of technology versus human curation around complex, sensitive issues? How does one manage something as complex as a public engagement over social media - what tools are out there to help with aggregation, curation, data mining, and data visualization? What is the state of the art in terms of machine translation? How can a constitution making process quash false rumors and present information, depending on the medium, audience and issue, in an easily digestible format that can go ‘viral’?

Relevant technology apps and platforms could include data and information visualization platforms, mobile publishing platform, real time social media verification tools and services, more general social media curation apps and services, mobile content generation apps, services and platforms, creatives dealing with communicating core concepts around complex processes via engaging (and interactive) visual productions designed for the web

Guidelines

All Ignite Presentations must,

- Not last more than 10 minutes and follow a PowerPoint template provided by the organizers
- Be aimed at a non-technical audience
- Include: (1) the description of the product, (2) how it is being used, (3) how could it be applied in constitution-building processes.
- Inspire and reflect rather than narrate and or merely showcase
- Either be informed by robust, real world use cases or demonstrate original thought on how existing technologies can meaningfully impact one or more of the workshop themes
- Be solutions and context-driven with the focus on outcomes rather than in the technology itself
- Propose solutions to existing challenges that are replicable and sustainable
- Propose ideas as well as tech solutions that can take root locally

Furthermore, participants must be open to critical engagement and feedback. Presentations that demonstrate robust and original engagement with the overarching themes of the workshop will be more highly considered.