#HACK CORRUPTION

PROBLEM STATEMENT BRIEF

TRANSPARENCY AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology and digital systems are increasingly becoming part of our lives, and when used by governments, those systems, algorithms, and decision-making tools impact large groups of people. As these technology systems—such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, personal data collection, facial and voice recognition, deep fakes software, and algorithmic decision-making—become more prevalent, greater transparency is needed about how these technologies impact the public and the provision of goods and services.

DIGITAL SYSTEMS, REAL WORLD IMPACT

Each year, banks and other financial institutions approve and reject tens of thousands of loans and lines of credit; telecommunications companies set up internet and cellphone towers and administer millions of cellphone plans; and governments approve and implement tens of thousands of payments or projects for medical care, education, construction, infrastructure, electricity, public law enforcement, fire and environmental protection, and more. The provision of these goods and services—and many more—is increasingly achieved through the use of advanced technology systems about which the public is not well informed.

While new technology systems carry the promise of making products and services more useful, efficient, and productive, they can also be harmful, discriminatory, or used for corrupt ends. Transparency is required to ensure that the use of technology does not contradict democratic principles of fairness, citizenship, and equality before the law. Transparency will allow that whatever end an algorithm, system, or process is being used for, both ends and means are being shared and accounted for.

CASE STUDIES IN TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSPARENCY

The government of Austria has turned to blockchain to provide an increased level of security and transparency for citizens. With the help of a private communications firm called A-Trust, the government is establishing centralized, transparent communication about the COVID-19 pandemic between authorities, institutions, and citizens on the Ardor blockchain platform. Crucially, citizens can control the use of their own data using qualified signatures. Naturally, this transparency allows for greater buy-in into the government's pandemic-related communication, reducing the risk of infection for all.

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In New Zealand, efforts have already begun to address the upcoming issue of artificial intelligence. Its "algorithm assessment" program requires government agencies to assess their own use of algorithmic decision-making and machine learning and then consolidate those results into a report available online. This allows citizens and professionals to evaluate how the government is employing artificial intelligence and whether it is honoring their data privacy.

IDENTIFY AND UNCOVER "DARK" PROCESSES

"Dark" processes are those which occur behind closed doors or without transparency, such as administrative decisions about small-business applications or discriminatory lending practices. Hackathon teams should identify examples of these processes which could be brought to light online, whether through publication of relevant information and regulation, consolidated user portals, providing individuals with access to existing databases, moving paper processes online, increasing journalistic access to information, and more. Ideas can be drawn from innovative approaches to technology transparency across the world.

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